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SATURDAY 5th February 1994

Official Match Programme - 1993/94

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JIMMY

NICHOLL



Today we welcome to Stark's Park the players and supporters of Celtic for the first game of a very demanding series of fixtures during the month of February. Next Saturday we travel to Pittodrie to meet Aberdeen and we could be back there the following week assuming the Don's win their postponed Scottish Cup tie against East Stirling. We conclude the month's fixtures with the visit of Rangers to Kirkcaldy.

It's going to be hard going but with some fresh legs and big hearts we will be looking for some positive results to get us through.

Our previous two performances against Celtic have been rather disappointing and we will be looking to make a better impression this afternoon.

When Lou Macari took charge last October he got off to the best possible start with a victory at Ibrox. The Celtic challenge looked convincing and although they are in fifth position in the League, six points behind the leaders, they are by no means out of reckoning. Last Saturday we were pleased to record our first win of 1994 and the victory has added renewed confidence to the team. We took advantage of a good start with two early goals and the fans saw some attractive football from both teams. It was encouraging to get into the next round of the Cup after the unsuccessful efforts of previous years.

We introduced a couple of new players in our recent match at Motherwell and both showed up well. Stephen McAnespie filled the gap caused by the unfortunate injury to Julian Broddle and I was very pleased with his performance, particularly as it was his first game in several weeks. Norman Kelly is a wholehearted player and a good passer of the ball and both of these players should help ease the pressures on our limited pool.

We are looking forward to another exciting game this afternoon with a large crowd and a good atmosphere. We expect Celtic to be 'fired up' after their Cup defeat last Saturday but we will also be battling hard to get that testing February campaign off to a successful start.



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McDonald's Mascot

Raith skipper Ronnie Coyle will be accompanied to the centre-circle today by his 2½ year old son Kevin who is to be our mascot this afternoon. When asked to name his favourite players Kevin said - Peter Hetherston, Shaun Dennis, John McStay andmy Dad!!



MATCH REPORT

Saturday, 25th January, 1994.

Motherwell 3 - Raith Rovers 1.

Teams -

Motherwell - Dykstra, Shannon, McKinnon, Krivokapic, Martin, McCart, Arnott, Dolan, Kirk, O'Donnell, Coyne. subs. Lambert, McGrillen, Thomson (g.k.).

Raith Rovers - Thomson, McAnespie, Rowbotham, Coyle, Dennis, McGeachie, Nicholl, Dalziel, Sinclair, Graham, Cameron. subs. Crawford, Kelly, Carson (g.k.).

Referee - G. M. Dunbar (East Kilbride).

Scorers:- Motherwell - Coyne (31), Kirk (59), McGrillen (77). Raith - Cameron (42).

Attendance - 5076.

As the Rovers' Supporters' bus approached Fir Park the place was suddenly plunged into darkness. 'McLean's got the game off' thought the fans but in fact it was a power failure caused by a fire in a generator outside the ground. With fire engines dashing to the Park and rain and sleet swirling overhead, it was not the best of starts to the proceedings, but the match got under way 13 minutes late.

Determined to sustain their championship challenge, 'Well applied early pressure and Dougie Arnott scooped a shot over the bar in 11 minutes when it seemed easier to score.

Apart from a fine Colin Cameron shot, saved by Dykstra, the home side dominated the first half hour and went ahead in 31 minutes. Rovers were moving forward when a misplaced pass was intercepted and played forward to Jamie Dolan. Dolan immediately released Tommy Coyne on the left and he ran in on goal and although Scott Thomson got a hand to his shot, the ball just squeezed in at the far post.

Rovers battled away and three minutes from the break they notched the equaliser. A Jimmy Nicholl ball into the box was dummied by both Daz and Ally Graham for Mickey Cameron to break through and slip a low shot past the keeper.

Raith made an encouraging start to the second half and a fine passing move left Jimmy Nicholl in a shooting position but unfortunately the gaffer's effort was just too high.

'Well regained the lead in 59 minutes in spectacular fashion. A Shannon free kick from the half-way line was headed out by Shaun Dennis but Stevie Kirk met the ball on the volley to thunder home just under the crossbar.

Cameron and Rowbotham combined well but Jason's final shot was blocked. Rovers then had a chance to duplicate 'Well's second goal. A Shaun Dennis free kick was punched out by Dykstra but Davie Sinclair was unable to follow Kirk's example and his shot flew wide.

Motherwell stretched their lead in 77 minutes and again Rovers' keeper was a bit unlucky. Rob McKinnon's tremendous shot from the left was brilliantly saved at full length by Scott Thomson but substitute Paul McGrillen was first to react and shot low into the net.

Norman Kelly made his Raith debut, replacing Jimmy Nicholl, and Rovers tried hard to the end. Mickey Cameron was just foiled by Dykstra and Ally Graham was just too high with another effort.

Stephen McAnespie had a very impressive first game for Raith and looks a very good prospect for the future.

Motherwell however looked every inch championship material with their strong defence and fast moving attack. The title race could be quite intriguing this season.



Colin Cameron



MATCH REPORT

Saturday, 29th January, 1994.

Raith Rovers 2 - Brechin City 0.

Teams -

Raith Rovers - Thomson, McStay, McGeachie, Coyle, Dennis, Sinclair, Nicholl, Dalziel, Cameron, Graham, Dair. subs. Crawford, Kelly.

Brechin City - Allan, Conway, Christie, Brown, Nicolson, Scott, McLaren, Redford, Brand, Millar, McNeill. subs. Vannett, O'Brien.

Referee - G. M. Dunbar (East Kilbride).

Scorers - Raith Rovers - Dair (24), McStay (31).

Attendance - 2846

With McAnespie ineligible and Rowbotham injured, Rovers have to ring the changes again for the Scottish Cup tie against Brechin.

Gordon Dalziel has a chance to score in the opening minutes but Ray Allan is quick off his line to block the shot.

Brechin came close from a corner in 8 minutes but Jimmy Nicholl clears the danger at the far post.

A good Ally Graham cross finds no takers then Jason Dair sets off on a fine solo run which ends with Nicolson heading off the goal-line with Allan beaten. A clever Daz back-heeler puts Jason through again but this time he shoots past the post.

In 24 minutes Rovers' pressure pays off. Jock McStay cuts in from the right and when Ally Graham hooks the low cross off the bar, Jason Dair is there to head home the rebound.

A great shot from Mickey Cameron crashes off the crossbar as Raith keep forcing the game. Jock McStay, clearly enjoying his recall to the side, is again the hero in 31 minutes when he drills a low shot into the net following a Jimmy Nicholl corner which is headed down by Shaun Dennis.

Next minute it's Scott Thomson who earns the cheers when he brilliantly stops a close in rocket shot from Ralph Brand. It was a vital save which denied Brechin a real morale boosting goal.

Ex-Raith player, Billy McNeill, set up his skipper, Bobby Brown, but the shot was well off target.

Another corner almost leads to another Rovers' goal but this time Shaun Dennis sees his header cleared off the line.

Early in the second half Shaun excited the fans with a great run from his own half which ends with an Ally Graham effort scraped round the post for a corner.

Gordon Dalziel almost breaks clear following a defensive mix-up but keeper Ray Allan recovers to foil the striker again.

Brechin were now playing some neat football, orchestrated by their player/manager Ian Redford, but the Raith defence was confident and dealt capably with any threat.

Fine play by Mickey Cameron set up a chance for Ally Graham but his shot was blocked. In the closing seconds it was Brechin's turn to be denied by the woodwork when a flashing header crashed off the bar to safety.

It was a comfortable win for Rovers which enabled the fans to relish the excitement of the draw for the fourth round.



Jock McStay

ACTION REPLAY

Action from the Raith v Celtic match at Stark's Park last September



'Keep your eye on the ball' is firmly in Jason Dair's mind as he moves between Tom Boyd and Brian O'Neil.



It's two goal Charlie Nicholas in the action closely watched by George McGeachie and Ronnie Coyle.





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SIDELINES

John McStay really experienced the ups and downs of football the past two Saturdays. In the League match at Den's Park a fortnight ago he came on as early substitute against Dundee and was off again after just 17 minutes on the field! When the ball was blasted against him from point-black range he was booked for handling and a penalty awarded. After a tackle on Neil McCann out came the red card!

Last Saturday in the Cup-tie against Brechin City, life was much sweeter. Jock had a fine game, helping to create the first goal and scoring the second. It was his first Scottish Cup win in seven seasons at Stark's Park and of course Jock just loves scoring goals!

* * * * *

We noted a couple of strange coincidences in our last two visits to Dundee. Against both United and Dundee, Rovers came from behind to score a late equaliser for a 2 - 2 score-line. In each match, Rovers finished with 10 men and on each occasion it was a substitute who was sent off. George McGeachie at Tannadice and John McStay at Den's Park.

* * * * *

Last week Jimmy Nicholl attended the funeral in Manchester of the legendary Sir Matt Busby. Jimmy was a Manchester United player between 1973 and 1981 and he was one of many former United players gathered together last week in tribute to the great man.

Jimmy recalls meeting Matt Busby at Old Trafford shortly after his arrival from Belfast as a 15 year old youngster. He was asked to tell his name and on every occasion thereafter he was greeted 'Hi Jimmy'.

'He did the same with every person at Old Trafford' said Jimmy 'and never forgot a name'. 'It was typical of the man that despite his stature in the game, he made everyone feel important'.

'He was always held in great respect by all the players and supporters of Manchester United and it was perhaps fitting that at the time of his death the club were undisputed Champions again'.

* * * * *

What do Jimmy Nicholl and Lou Macari have in common?

Well for one thing, a 1977 F. A. Cup Winners medal.

Both were members of the successful Manchester United team which beat Liverpool 2 - 1 in that year's final.

The United team was:-

Stepney, Nicholl, Albison, McIlroy, B. Greenhoff, Buchan, Coppell, J. Greenhoff, Pearson, Macari, Hill. (sub. McCreery).

The United scorers were Pearson and J. Greenhoff. Jimmy Case scored for Liverpool.

Soccer Quiz

1. On their last visit Andy Payton scored two of Celtic's goals. For which English side does he now play?
2. Who defeated Celtic in last season's Scottish Cup?
3. Name the Ex-Rovers player who became a Lisbon Lion.
4. Name the new manager of Southampton.
5. For which English third division side does Jason Rowbotham's brother play?
6. Who are Britain's only representatives left in Europe?
7. Name the only English Premier side left in the F. A. Cup who have not won it?
8. Prior to last weeks cup tie, who was Rovers last Scottish Cup goalscorer?



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