

CELTIC

v **AFC AJAX**



CHALLENGE MATCH

CELTIC PARK,
WEDNESDAY,
6th DECEMBER, 1989

Kick off 7.30 p.m.



OFFICIAL
PROGRAMME

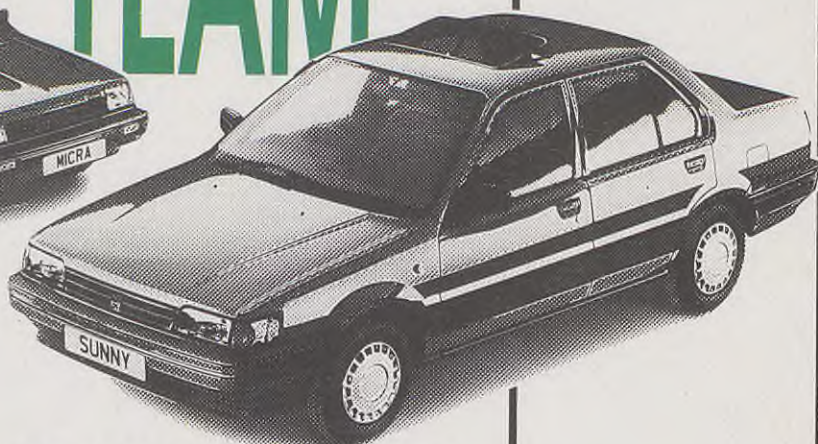
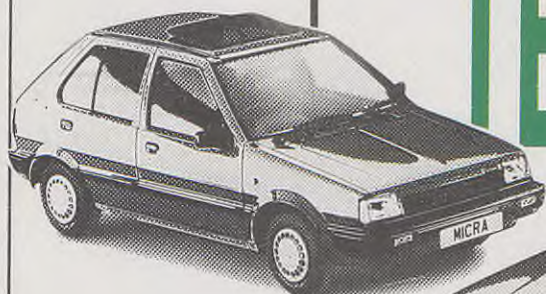
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CELTIC CHAIRMAN JACK McGINN

It gives me great pleasure to welcome to Celtic Park tonight the players and officials of Ajax of Amsterdam, one of the great names in European football.

Currently well placed in the race for the Dutch League Championship, they will provide very experienced and highly technical opposition in this evening's match.

Games between the two clubs in the past have been very exciting and entertaining encounters and I am confident that the game this evening will fall into the same category.

In the early seventies, the two European Cup games involving the two clubs resulted in a home win for each club but Ajax qualifying by virtue of a greater win in Amsterdam.

When the team met again in the European Cup in the early eighties, it was Celtic who triumphed with a 2-1 victory in Holland after a 2-2 draw at Celtic Park.



More recently, in 1985 to be exact, we shared a hotel in Canada, when we both took part in a tournament in the magnificent BC Peace Stadium in Vancouver.

I am looking forward to meeting up with our Dutch friends tonight. It is my sincere wish that the game proves to be a spectacle for our fans and a part of a learning experience for a Celtic team which is being re-shaped for the challenges of the nineties.

Playing against a club which has won the European Cup three times in the seventies and the Cup Winners' Cup in 1987 will be a terrific challenge for the Celtic players and I am certain that they will benefit from the experience.

AJAX PRESIDENT M. VAN PRAAG

WE are delighted to come to Celtic Park tonight, for everyone throughout the world of football knows the name of Celtic F.C. and admire the manner in which they play the game of football.

Our previous meetings have been excellent attacking games of football and the game and the fans are always the winners when our two clubs meet.

We are proud that the name Ajax ranks so high internationally among the football world. But this fame also puts pressure on the present Ajax side to live up to the reputation the club has attained. I believe Celtic have this concern also.

Like Celtic also, many of our great footballers past and present were nurtured within the club itself. The Ajax youth



training programme is still and will always be a vocal point of club policy.

According to a familiar Dutch saying, youth holds the key to the future. We are pleased therefore, that the team you will see tonight will consist almost exclusively of young players.

We hope that in a couple of years our current squad will propel Ajax to the level at which it once stood, so that people will not only talk of the old Ajax but of the Ajax of the nineties.

Playing such fine sides as Celtic can only enhance this ambition and we hope that there is much good football on show this evening from both sides.

THE MANAGER'S MESSAGE



PLAYING against top European opposition, whatever the reason, is always a thrill. It is therefore with great warmth that I welcome our Dutch friends, Ajax from Amsterdam to Celtic Park this evening. For they are certainly one of the European greats.

Even though at present they, like ourselves may not be quite the force they were, they have shown signs recently that they are on their way back.

For everyone connected with the club these nights playing against Europe's best have been far too few in number in recent years, but to have the opportunity to play against a side of the calibre of Ajax, containing as it does internationalists from three countries and several members of Holland's European Championship winning squad, can only be beneficial for our players and demonstrate to

them exactly what is required to compete successfully at this level.

The game also provides a welcome break from the stresses and strains of the Premier League. The win on Saturday against Aberdeen was most satisfying and I hope we can continue our winning ways here tonight.

For although the match is a friendly there will be no lack of competitive edge to the confrontation. Clubs with records and traditions to protect, like ourselves and Ajax, do not concede defeat easily.

Yet I also expect tonight's game to be an exhibition of the finer qualities of the game. Both teams are excellently equipped to play skilfull, attractive football and there is no reason why a real showpiece match, the kind the fans love, shouldn't be the result of the pairing of ourselves and Ajax.

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THE HISTORY OF ONE

ON the 18th March, 1990 a small group of gentlemen met in Amsterdam after receiving a letter from "Pa" Dade which read: "By this letter the undersigned has the pleasure in inviting you to honour them with your presence on Sunday next, March the eighteenth, at a quarter to ten in the morning in one of the upper rooms of the Cafe East India in order to discuss the start of a completely new football club".

They reached an agreement very quickly in that stuffy little room. Amsterdam had got a new third division club. Its name: Ajax.

The origin of the club name? In Greek mythology, Ajax was the name of a son of Telamon, the Great or Telamonian Ajax from Salamis. Ajax was a warrior of great renown and this undoubtedly influenced the club's choice of the name, but the rest of the Greek legend has nothing to do with football! The helmeted head of the ancient Greek, Ajax, is depicted in the club badge.

Ajax began in the regional third division organised by the KNVB (Dutch Football Association) which had been running since 1899 and within two years they had been promoted to the second division. In 1908 Ajax merged with third division side Holland and three years later they were promoted to the first division under the guidance of Northern Ireland internationalist, John Kirvan who incidentally played in Scottish football with Clyde in 1909. After two narrow escapes Ajax were relegated in 1914 for only what was to be only time in their history. They returned to the top flight after the war in 1917 and the following year they won the championship for the first time. Ajax repeated this success the following season and remained unbeaten over the 30 League matches, a feat never again achieved by another Dutch club.

There was a decline over the next ten years until the arrival of an Englishman, Jack Reynolds and it was he who laid the foundations for the team which dominated Dutch football in the pre-war years. Ajax won the championship five times in the 1930's and were runners-up once.

Such was the public demand to watch Ajax at this time that they decided to build a completely new stadium with a capacity of 24,000. Today the De Meer Stadium which holds 29,380 is still used but top games are usually played in the 60,000 capacity Olympic Stadium.

That period of success was followed by a difficult one with the outbreak of World War 2 which struck the large Jewish community particularly hard in Amsterdam and Ajax, who

had a large Jewish support, suffered. They had to try out many young players during that difficult time and they formed a very small squad that missed out on the championship in 1946 by one point but won the title the following season.

In 1954 Dutch football was reorganised with the introduction of professionalism. 82 teams including Ajax started a new professional league resulting in one national Premier Division in 1956. Ajax were the first ever winners of the new league set up and it gave the Amsterdam side its first venture into European football.

They lost out to Vasas of Hungary in the second round but three years later Ajax appeared in the European Cup again after winning a play-off 5-1 against rivals Feyenoord with whom they had finished level on points.

If an exact date for the beginning of Holland's top side domination in European football were given it would be 7th December, 1966 when Ajax were drawn against Liverpool. Bill Shankly's boys were many peoples favourites for the trophy but Ajax hammered them 5-1 in Amsterdam. They were defeated for the second season in a row and completed the double for the first time. In Holland, nobody could stop Ajax, they made it 3 in a row in 1968 and in 1969 they reached their first European Final becoming the first Dutch side to do so but they completed the double again and reached the Fairs Cities Cup Final but lost out over two legs to Arsenal. However, Ajax learned their lessons well and in 1971 they lifted the European Cup for the first time with goals from Van Dijk and Hoan giving them a two goal victory over greek champions, Panathinaikos. Ajax were now Kings of Europe and had emulated their arch rivals Feyenoord who won the European Cup the previous season. 1972 was to be the best ever season for Ajax. Once again they completed the League and Cup double and for the second year in a row, they were in the European Cup Final. They were defending their title against Internazionale of Milan and it was this night the world of football sat up and took notice of Johan Cruyff who netted twice to keep Ajax's grip on the trophy.

The previous season Ajax refused to play Nacional in the World Club Championship but had a change of mind and faced Independiente in 1972. They added this trophy to the cabinet with a 4-1 aggregate result and to add icing to a wonderful year they defeated Rangers 6-3 on aggregate in the first ever European Super Cup. The hat-trick of European Cup triumphs were

OF EUROPE'S GREATS...

complete in 1973 when they beaten Juventus 1-0 in Belgrade with Johnny Rep scoring. Cruyff was the star and the inspiration, but he was surrounded with many fine players Wim Suurbier, Rudi Krol, Arie Haan, Gerrie Muhren (older brother of Arnold), Johan Neeskens, Johnny Rep and Piet Keizer.

Their trademark was the total football system which involved taking advantage of a generation of skillful footballers whose versatility and football intelligence allowed a bewildering inter-change of positioning. It was style which nearly earned the Dutch national side the games highest prize. But the national side, built around the Ajax stars, lost both the World Cup Finals of 1974 and 1978 and the great days were over.

The greatest days for Ajax had ended in the summer of 1973 when Cruyff left to join Michels at Barcelona for then a world record £922,000 transfer fee. A year later Johan Neeskens joined Cruyff at Barcelona. They were knocked out of Europe in the first round as they went for four in a row.

At the end of season 1973-74 all they had to show was the European Super Cup after thrashing AC Milan 6-1 on aggregate. The next few years were to be a quiet period at European level by Ajax standards although at home they lifted the title in 1977, 1979 and 1980 and the cup in 1979. They began to introduce more world class players such as Arnesen and Lerby.

It took the home coming of Johan Cruyff to begin the 1980's revival. That was in December 1981 when he returned from U.S.A. where he played for Los Angeles Aztecs, New York Cosmos and Washington Diplomats in the NASL.

When Cruyff returned, Ajax were trailing PSV Eindhoven in the league but by the end of the season they won the league by five points and Cruyff inspired Ajax to a Dutch league scoring record of 117 goals with Wim Keift scoring 32 of them. With the prodigal son as the new leader, Ajax retained their title, their 21st in all, and completed the double for the 4th time. But the spectre of the great 70's teams hung over Ajax and they failed to make an impact in Europe going out to Celtic in the first round despite having players in the calibre of Frank Rijkaard, Jan Molby, Jesper Olsen, Wim Kieft and Gerald Vanenburg. At the end of season 1982-83, Johan Cruyff moved to rivals Feyenoord to finish his playing career.

The promising youngsters moved on and Ajax began to bring yet another group of promising youngsters through. Players like Marco Van Basten helped Ajax to the League title in

season 1984-85 but the most significant event of the year was made by the board who appointed Johan Cruyff as Technical Director. Ajax won the cup the following season when they defeated Roosendaal 3-0 and this set them up for a European run. They ended a 14 year wait when a goal from Marco Van Basten gave them victory over East German side Lokomotiv Leipzig.

At home they retained the Dutch Cup with a victory over Den Haag but this final raised fears of violence because of riots that had occurred in the league meetings between the two sides. For this reason it was very difficult to find a city willing to stage the final.

The KNVB even considered playing the final behind closed doors but the Mayor of The Hague allowed of 8,500. In the league they finished runners-up to PSV Eindhoven. Johan Cruyff lead his side to the Cup Winners Cup Final for the second year in a row in season 1987-88 but they lost their title to the unknown Belgian side KV Mechelen.

Cruyff decided to move to Barcelona in the summer of 1988 and this signalled yet another rebuilding job for Ajax.

Season 1988-89 started disastrously under new boss Kurt Linder but then Splitz Kohn took over as caretaker manager and did an excellent job in starting to rebuild the Ajax side which finished runners-up to PSV Eindhoven. However, then Ajax decided to appoint Leo Beenhakker as Technical Director after he was released as boss of Real Madrid. Leo Benhakker saw the opportunity to take Ajax back to the top amongst Europe's elite but his dreams faded when the hooliganism problem which seems to be ruining Dutch football raised its ugly head during their U.E.F.A. Cup first round, second leg tie with Austria Vienna. During extra time the match had to be abandoned following several incidents in which an assortment of missiles were thrown at the Austrian goalkeeper. Ajax have since been banned for a season from European football by U.E.F.A. and as we will all see tonight, Europe will be without some of the most skillful players in Dutch football next season.

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