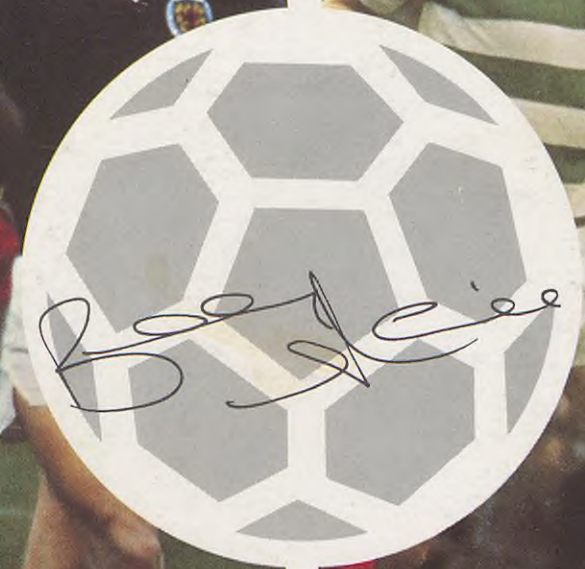


BILLY MCNEILL TESTIMONIAL GAME CELTIC • LIVERPOOL

Celtic Park Glasgow
Monday 12th August 1974 at 8:00 p.m.





Billy pictured at home, at Newton Mearns, with his wife Liz and daughters, Carol, Paula, Susan and Elizabeth.



Billy McNeill

Testimonial Committee

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THE CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



It is doubtful if there is any person in Scotland, from schoolboy to pensioner, remotely interested in football, who has not heard of Billy McNeill. This great sportsman has, during the past sixteen years, made an impression on the Scottish (and international) soccer scene that few can emulate.

We now have the opportunity to pay tribute, not only to Billy's great skill as a footballer, but to show our appreciation of the loyal and devoted service he has given to his club during a period when transfer requests are not infrequent.

On behalf of the Testimonial Committee I would like to thank all who have helped to make this event possible, and in particular the Chairman, Directors, Managers and Players of both Liverpool F.C. and Celtic F.C. who have provided the two great teams for this match.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Photographs in this brochure are used by courtesy of Scottish Daily Express, Daily Record, Glasgow Weekly News and Mr. H. Birt, official Celtic photographer, whose assistance is much appreciated.

Congratulations To Billy McNeill, M.B.E. ON A HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL FOOTBALL CAREER

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Our Captain

by Jock Stein

What makes a great player? It is a question I am often asked and the answer is always the same. He is one who brings out the best in others and when I say that I am describing Billy McNeill. It is this quality of bringing the units of a team together and inspiring them to play for each other and for the club which has raised our captain above all others over the past decade.

Others have been more flashy, some more publicised. Many have been acclaimed for their individualism, and those are the kind who are usually hiding when the work has to be done, but Billy McNeill has always been there to provide leadership on the field and an example to young players.

Billy McNeill came to Celtic Park in 1957 when I was coach. From the start we considered him, what the army would call, officer material. We saw him then as a future captain of the club and we groomed him to be just that.

The Celtic Football Club considered the captaincy of supreme importance and over the years we have had many great and inspiring men to lead our teams. From the day that Billy McNeill came to the Club we were sure that he was going to be yet another great Captain.

He joined us from Our Lady's High School in Motherwell and we sent him to Blantyre Vics for a season. He came into the team at an awkward period. The double winning team of 1954 was getting old and breaking up and there were remnants of the 7-1 League Cup team.

Things were changing, we were running into the bad times and winning nothing. There were rumours that Billy McNeill would go to England but that was never on. We listened to the talk knowing well that in the future he was going to be an important part of the team.

At this time I left Celtic Park to return later

as Manager. We then finished building the team and for the past nine years have enjoyed unprecedented success. Who could measure Billy McNeill's contribution to that success?

I have listened tolerantly as time after time he has been written off, he was past it, he was too old, and then he would have his best season and the talk would start all over again. Those who talked thus did not appreciate the professionalism of the man.

He has always kept himself fit and treated his body as an athlete should but above all he has retained his tremendous enthusiasm for the game. He has won more honours in football than any other Scottish player but he was still as keen in the last cup final as he was back in 1965 when he won his first Scottish Cup medal.

He has not been recognised at international level as often as I thought he should have been but he has always been there to be chosen and, when he has been, he has played for Scotland as he would for Celtic.

His story is the story of Celtic over the past nine seasons and the recurring picture is of him holding cups aloft for the acclaim of our supporters. Will we ever forget him at the top of the great stepped terracing in Lisbon with the European Cup in an upraised hand or the more frequent sight of him on the less splendid steps before the stand at Hampden?

Cups are marvellously exciting but the big test has been in maintaining consistency over a stretch of games to win a league championship and that calls for teamwork and for character, nursing and carrying off form players and much of the work falls to the captain.

We have now won nine league championships in a row and many young players have been brought into the team since those early days when Billy McNeill was introduced. There has been a heavy responsibility on him to start them off in the right way shielding them from early pressure, impressing on them the Celtic ideals, leading them by example, making them Celtic players. He has done his job well.

And now the Queen has honoured him with the M.B.E. and we are happy for him. He is the first active Scottish Player to be honoured by Her Majesty and that is good for him and for the Club.

And he brings me a special pleasure. There is nothing gives me more satisfaction than seeing a young lad coming to the Celtic Club and making his way as a player and then being married and having a good wife and a healthy family and a nice home. Billy McNeill has given me that great pleasure. I wish him and his family well.

Danny McColgan of
McCOLGAN BROS.

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Pleased to have been associated with you, Billy

**Best of Luck
in your Testimonial Year**

In his right hand a Cup...

by John Rafferty, *The Scotsman*.

The sun shone and the great green mass on the terracings throbbed but if the rain had spilled in heavy soaking sheets it would not have dampened the heavenly ecstasy. In two magical moments Paradise had been transported from Janefield to Lisbon. The lordly, cynical Inter Milan had led and swaggered, been caught and faltered and then in one memorable thrust laid low on the turf and there they panted in their death throes.

Jock Stein turned away unable to watch those last moments and made for the pavilion. The Celtic training squad held each other anxiously and watched the clock. Thousands of lips pursed in suppliant whistles willing the referee to sound the end.

And then it was all over and relief was unrestrained and players raised hands in exultation and the crowd spilled on to the field and it was carnival but in the excitement one important fact had been forgotten—the cup.

Billy McNeill was rescued from the tightly packed throng which danced and chanted towards the pavilion. Someone shouted, "The presentation! The presentation!" and he understood and looked back in dismay. Between him and the dias was the breadth of the field and then the many steps of the terracing and every yard of the way packed with victory happy friends all wanting to lay congratulatory hands on him.

A few willing ones gathered round him and fought a way across the ground. They shepherded him up the steps shielding him from the excesses of happiness and then wearied by a journey which was more arduous than ninety minutes of football he was at the top and had the cup and held it aloft and the moment was caught in cameras and he was frozen in the triumphant pose like a Greek god.

Such moments are not for many men and those for whom they are reserved are special.

But those who rejoiced had seen only what was on the surface. Some others of us had been privileged to see a bit more, the leadership at training and in the camp and in a memorable moment on the team bus.

There had been singing and banter and nerves were eased and there was team spirit even in the fun. They were all in it together. And then they reached the ground and in the bus all went quiet until the voice of the captain rang out, "Come on boys. Let's do a job." It was the call to battle and never better expressed.

The triumph of Lisbon should have been enough for any man but even seven years later the dip in the McNeill graph has been so astonishingly slight that the line is still higher than most players achieve.

In May he played in his 22nd cup final for Celtic. He had led them to their ninth successive league championship. Will any player equal such a record? And yet Billy McNeill does not see the cup triumphs as a group for in his mind all the cups are different and that is why he retains his enthusiasm so that the



One of Billy's proudest moments—
Celtic's European Cup win in Lisbon 1967.

last Scottish Cup final was to him as important as the first.

His creed is that no final is just another final. Each one is different. There was the Scottish Cup of 1965 and that had to be won and there was the Scottish Cup of 1974 and that had to be won. He sees each one as new and different and equally challenging and so he has not become blasé with success.

And maybe last season was the most satisfactory for him. Since he turned thirty there have understandably been whispers that a great career was in its last stages. He was getting on. Celtic had better find a successor quickly. He could not go on for ever.

And then last year these heavy prognostications had been choked in many throats as a coltish freshness was seen in his play and the spring in his legs still gave him mastery in the air and he played with authority and assurance and had maybe his best season for the club. The league and cup double were won with the inevitableness which has marked Billy McNeill's captaincy of The Celtic Football Club.

Now as in Lisbon the supporters gather but not to acclaim a single achievement but instead a decade of success. This captain has led their team to such success in the past ten years as their forefathers could not have imagined.

And as he has done so he has stayed the same Billy McNeill who was first noticed while playing for Our Lady's High School, a big man, a fair man, a normal man. Some in sport annoy by the intensity of their dedication. They become soulless automatons.

Billy McNeill has led a healthy moderate life. He is raising a fine family. He is successful in business. He is everything his father and mother must have wanted him to be. But more important to those who crush on to the terracings tonight he is all that they would want a Celtic captain to be.



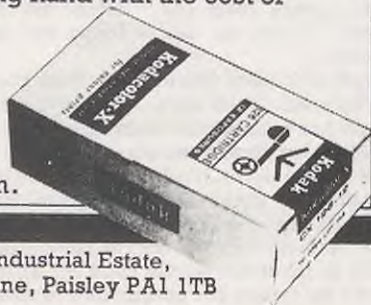
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