

Brian Harris



By James Corbett

For Evertonians, the defining image of Brian Harris came late in the 1966 FA Cup Final. Everton had just scored an improbable equaliser, having earlier trailed Sheffield Wednesday by two goals, and for one exuberant supporter, Eddie Kavanagh, the emotion famously became too much. He ran across the pitch – evading policemen on his way – in wild celebration and on being apprehended, a beaming Harris could be seen in the background, trying on a fallen copper’s helmet for size!

Everton, of course, beat Wednesday 3-2 and for Harris the day was the crowning glory of a 20-year career.

Born in Bebington in 1935, Harris was an outstanding schoolboy sportsman: an ace cricketer and England youth international footballer. Somehow he evaded the scouting networks of Merseyside’s three league clubs until the age of 18 when Everton recruited him from non-league Port Sunlight in January 1954 for £10. The fee was to

prove one of the finest bargains in the club’s history.

He made his first-team debut in August 1955 but only flourished following the appointment of Johnny Carey as manager in October 1958 after being converted from inside forward to wing half.

In December 1962, midway through a League Championship winning season, Harry Catterick, who had replaced Carey a year earlier, signed Sheffield Wednesday’s Tony Kay in a record transfer deal. Harris, who had performed impressively in the opening half of the season, was harshly dropped.

Nevertheless, he persevered and when Kay was later banned for his part in a betting scandal, Harris returned in his place and went on to show the best form of his career, culminating in that FA Cup win.

His time at Cardiff City, after a £15,000 transfer in October 1967, provided a distinguished epilogue to his career. In the 1967/68 season,

Harris appeared in all of the Bluebirds European Cup Winners Cup’ games as, incredibly, they reached the semi-final, losing narrowly over two legs to SV Hamburg.

In 1971 he dropped down a couple of divisions, playing out his career with Newport County, whom he briefly managed. He returned to Cardiff as assistant manager in the late-1970s, then coached briefly at Bobby Robson’s Ipswich Town.

On dropping out of professional football he returned to Wales, settling in Chepstow, where he managed the town’s non-League club and ran a business with his sons. A gregarious, fun-loving character, always popular with team-mates and fans, in his later years Harris was a popular guest at Everton reunion dinners. It was with his first club that his heart lay, and it seemed appropriate that his funeral service in February 2008 was held at St Lukes Church, located at the corner of Goodison Park.