

DOUBLE HELPINGS OF FESTIVE FOOTBALL

Many countries are aghast at our intensive festive fixture schedule but until exactly 60 years ago, footballers were obliged to play on both Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Winless in 12 matches, Ian Buchan's Blues lacked Yuletide cheer when Bolton Wanderers visited Goodison Park on Christmas Day 1957 for a 3:30pm kick-off in front of 29,000 fans. Dave Hickson was recalled to the forward line, supported by the Harris 'brothers', Jimmy and Brian. Having fallen behind on 10 minutes, Everton struck the same upright twice through Brian Harris and 'The Cannonball Kid' before George Kirby's equaliser from a Jimmy Harris cross ended the day's scoring.

Hickson and John Higgins – father of Everton's early-1980s captain, Mark – enjoyed a fierce physical battle whilst the injured Dan Donovan was a virtual passenger on the wing for most of the match.

The following morning, Everton's squad met for lunch at the Exchange Hotel on Tithebarn Street before motoring along the East Lancs Road to Burnden Park. For debutant Jackie Keeley, it must have felt like all his Christmases had come at once when he scored past England international goalkeeper Eddie Hopkinson after just three minutes.



The match was a personal triumph for Jimmy Harris. He centred for Brian Harris to double the lead and then scored the goal that made it 3-0. The *Liverpool Echo* reported:

'The speed of Jimmy Harris was staggering. When he got his goal, he left all opposition languishing in his rear so that Hopkinson stood alone in his goal. Harris beat him with ease.'

With confidence growing, Dave Hickson and Brian Harris added further goals after the break before Nat Lofthouse notched a late consolation goal for the Trotters. The *Daily Post* reflected on the return to winning ways:

'What was the secret of this Everton success? I say it was the fact that they decided to go for the ball and not rely upon it coming for them. The Everton half-backs tackled with speed and determination too, Jones and his backs along with Dunlop were steadfast. Jimmy Harris, in particular, had a fine game and Brian Harris was responsible for two goals but by and large, it was a united effort which produced this win.'

It was all too much for Jimmy's dad, who fell down the steps on exiting the stadium and was confined to bed for a week with an injured knee! Just two days after the 5-1 victory, Everton were back at Goodison – losing 2-1 to Aston Villa.



By Rob Sawyer
(EFC Heritage Society)

