



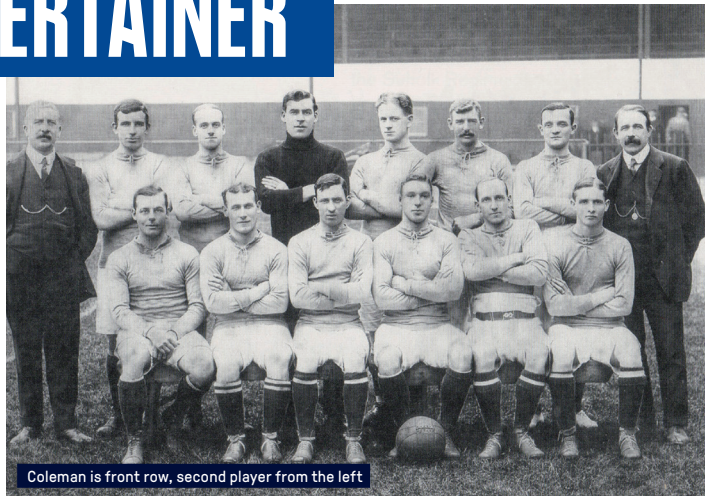
TIM COLEMAN – A REBEL AND AN ENTERTAINER

By Bradley Cates

Tim Coleman, one of the great inside-forwards of his day, would have enjoyed a long and successful career on Merseyside, were it not for his championing of players' rights.

Born in Kettering, 'Tim' (his real name was John) joined Woolwich Arsenal from Northampton Town in 1902 and had an impressive strike ratio of approaching a goal in every two games. His sole England cap came at Goodison Park in 1907 (a 1-0 victory over Ireland) – and maybe this caught the eye of the Toffees directorate as, in February 1908, Everton beat Liverpool to his signature. The Blues' offer of £350 was enough to tempt the financially-stricken Londoners and his Gunners strike partner, Bertie Freeman, followed Tim to Goodison soon after. In their first full Everton season in tandem, they contributed 57 goals to propel the Club to a second-place Football League finish.

Tim's time on Merseyside coincided with a concerted push for recognition of a new footballers' union. Although many players backed down when under pressure from their employers, Tim stood shoulder to shoulder in solidarity with the Manchester United squad. He was photographed with them as the self-proclaimed Outcasts FC. Although not as high-profile or outspoken as the likes of union chairman Billy Meredith, Tim used a



Coleman is front row, second player from the left

Weekly News column to get his views across eloquently. This soured relations with Everton's directors and he was used more sparingly in the 1910/11 season. He came to the conclusion that he had no future at the Club, even though he loved the city.

Transferred to Sunderland in the summer of 1910, he went on to have spells at Fulham and Nottingham Forest (playing alongside Joe Mercer's father). During the First World War, Tim enlisted with the Middlesex Regiment 'Footballers' Battalion', serving under future Wolves supremo Major Frank Buckley. In 1916, reports of his death were exaggerated, his distraught family discovering two days later that he was alive and well. He was subsequently decorated with the Military Medal for bravery.

He picked up his career with non-league Tunbridge Wells Rovers before venturing into management in Holland in 1920. He managed several teams and took SC Enschede to the Dutch Championship.

Later, Tim and his family settled in London and he dropped out of the limelight, working as a joiner. With the capital being pummelled during the wartime blitz, Tim was part of the effort to patch-up bomb-damaged buildings.

On 20 November 1940, he was repairing the roof of an electricity generating station in Kensington but on the wet surface, he lost his footing and fell to the pavement below. He was declared dead shortly afterwards at the nearby St Mary Abbot's Hospital. He was just 59.

• **Further reading:** *Fighting for Football* by George Myerson