



JACKY ROBERTSON – CHELSEA'S FIRST BOSS!

By Richie Gillham

It's common knowledge that Everton boss Frank Lampard once played for, and managed, this afternoon's opponents... but who knew the first ever manager of Chelsea was a former Everton player?

John Tait (Jacky) Robertson played 31 games for the Toffees, scoring one goal, and later played a hugely significant role in the history of Chelsea Football Club.

Born in Dumbarton in 1877, Robertson was hailed in his day as one of the Scottish national side's greatest half-backs and captains. One tribute stated: 'Jacky was a fine half-back, a grand tackler, a beautiful placer of a ball, a fine shot, in fact one of the finest halves of the period.'

He started at Scottish junior club Poinfield, then joined Sinclair Swifts before playing league football with Morton in 1894. He moved to Everton in October 1895, where he spent almost two years in the Combination team until September 1897 when he made his senior debut against Wolverhampton Wanderers at Goodison Park. Robertson became a regular member in the Everton line-up during the 1897/98 season, and during his spell on Merseyside, he made his debut for Scotland in April 1898 in a 3-1 home defeat to England in the Home Nations Championship at Celtic Park.

At the end of that season, he moved to Southampton, winning the Southern League in his one season there, before returning to Scotland to join Glasgow Rangers. He had a scoring debut in a 6-2 victory over Clyde in August 1899 and would win three Scottish League



John Tait (Jacky) Robertson

championships at Ibrox as well as a further 14 Scottish caps.

In April 1905, Robertson became the first player to be signed by the newly-formed Chelsea Football Club and was player-manager in their first ever Football League season.

Newly-elected Chelsea competed in the Second Division and Robertson had the distinction of scoring their first ever Football League goal in a 1-0 win at Blackpool in their second match.

He also found the net in Chelsea's first FA Cup tie – a first qualifying round win against Grenadier Guards FC. (Chelsea lost in the third qualifying round after being forced to play the tie on the same

day as a league fixture! Robertson prioritised the league and an amateur Chelsea team lost 7-1 at Crystal Palace).

After leaving Chelsea in 1906, he had three years as player-manager of Glossop, and then became reserve team manager at Manchester United.

His next stop was Europe and Robertson was said to have played a leading role in the development of Hungarian football when he managed MTK Budapest from 1911. He taught these relative novices the finer arts of two-footed ball control and passing on the floor.

Jacky Robertson passed away in 1935 at the age of 57.