



HOW EASTOE SHOWED HIS WORTH IN BLUE

By Darren Griffiths

Everton legend Graeme Sharp still rates Peter Eastoe as one of the best striking partners he ever played alongside.

'I really enjoyed playing alongside him and he was a far better footballer than many people gave him credit for,' wrote Sharp in his autobiography. 'He could shield the ball superbly well, hold it up when he got it and he had a terrific touch. We had a very good partnership.'

Praise indeed from Everton's record post-war goalscorer.

Eastoe was born in Tamworth in August 1953 and started his professional career with Wolverhampton Wanderers but was unable to nail down a place in the team at Molineux – due largely to the regular striking duo of Derek Dougan and John Richards.

In March 1974 he joined Swindon Town, following a successful loan spell, for what was then a record fee for the Robins of £88,000.

He more than justified the price, averaging almost a goal every other game and it earned him a return to the top division when title-chasing Queens Park Rangers recruited him in March 1976, with Swindon legend Don Rogers returning to the County Ground as part of the deal.

Three years after arriving at Loftus Road, he was part of another swap arrangement when he came north to Everton, with Mickey Walsh travelling in the opposite direction.

Eastoe made his Toffees debut in a 1-0 defeat at West Brom in April 1979,



replacing Dave Thomas in the 39th minute of the game. He played in the last eight matches of that season but failed to find the net.

Indeed, it was January 1980 before he finally opened his account, scoring a late consolation when Everton lost 2-1 at Aston Villa.

The 1980/81 campaign was by far his best for Everton when he top-scored with 19 goals in all competitions, including the opener in an FA Cup victory against Liverpool that is remembered more for Imre Varadi's 'pie in the face' winner!

After three seasons at Goodison Park, Eastoe returned to the Midlands to join West Bromwich Albion but after one full campaign in the Throstles line-up, he found himself surplus to requirements and saw out his English professional career with a series of brief loan spells

at Leicester City, Huddersfield Town, Walsall and Wolves.

He actually had two separate loans at Leicester, where he helped to nurture their promising young striker, Gary Lineker.

In the twilight of his playing days he spent time in Portugal with Farense, a team Malcolm Allison later managed, and then Louletano.

After hanging up his boots, Eastoe managed Nuneaton Borough and then Alvechurch whilst earning a living as a lorry driver.

Eastoe scored 33 goals during his time at Everton – and can reflect on a storied pro career where he partnered some of the most celebrated British strikers of his generation, including Sharp, Lineker, Stan Bowles, Clive Allen and Cyrille Regis.