

By Richie Gillham

LES SHANNON - A FOOT IN BOTH CAMPS

You won't find the name of Les Shannon on any list of players to have appeared for both Everton and Liverpool, but he did have the distinction of serving both of the Merseyside football giants.

Born in 1926 and raised on Scarisbrick Road, he dreamed of donning the Royal Blue shirt: "I lived halfway between Goodison and Anfield and was a real Evertonian but as a schoolboy I stood five foot nothing and Everton kept telling me to come back later."

The Blues' reluctance to commit led the Reds to jump in, as Les described: "One day I went with a pal to watch Liverpool B team. They were a man short, so I played."

Across Stanley Park, the inside-forward made his first-team debut against Manchester City at the end of the 1947/48 season and played a total of 11 games before joining Burnley in 1949. He spent the next decade at Turf Moor, making 281 appearances, scoring 44 times in all competitions.

Whilst at Turf Moor, Les played for the for England 'B' team and after hanging up his boots he came to Everton in 1959 as a youth team coach under Johnny Carey.



During his time at Goodison, Les coached players such as Colin Harvey, Tommy Wright, George Sharples, Roy Parnell and Mick Gannon. A year after the arrival of Harry Catterick he left to become chief coach at Arsenal under the legendary former England captain Billy Wright, who he had got to know from FA coaching courses they had attended together.

After the Gunners, his first managerial spell at Bury was very successful. He led the Shakers to promotion to the Second Division in 1967/68. Shortly after that success, Les took over as manager of Blackpool and in 1969/70 he guided them to the top-flight with promotion from the Second Division.

After leaving the Seasiders, Les embarked on something of a European tour, managing several clubs in Greece - PAOK (1971-74), Iraklis (1974-76), Olympiacos (1976-77) and OFI Crete (1977-79 and 1982-84), taking over at Norwegian club Brann from 1980-82.

He was quite successful, winning the Greek Cup with PAOK and Iraklis and the Norwegian Second Division title with Brann.

Les returned to Britain in 1985 to become part of Luton Town's backroom staff from 1986-2001.

In 1981, he choreographed the football sequences in the wartime movie *Escape to Victory*, working alongside the great Pele and future Evertonian Sylvester Stallone!

Les passed away in 2007. His son Dave played for Sunderland and Stockport County and, for a number of years, was involved in developing young talent at Liverpool Football Club.



■ Les Shannon