

By Rob Sawyer

THE BLUES DOWN UNDER

Taking advantage of the World Cup-enforced break in the domestic programme, Everton will send a tour party to Australia in November. Back in 1964 the Club spent more than a month Down Under - its most ambitious tour since the voyage to South America in 1909.

After missing out on the 1963/64 League title, the travelling party was depleted by the absence of Fred Pickering, Alex Young, Alex Parker and Tony Kay, but their absence gave the opportunity for John Hurst, Colin Harvey, Gerry Humphreys and Barry Rees to have the trip of a lifetime. Harry Catterick remained at home, stating: 'I can serve the Club far better by staying in England'. Tom Eggleston, Ron Lewin and several directors led the trip.

The party had an exhausting journey from Liverpool with stops in London, Rome, Tehran, Delhi and Kuala Lumpur, prior to touching down in Sydney. A few days later, the action got under way against a New South Wales XI in front of 52,000 spectators at Sydney Cricket Ground (a record for a soccer match, there). Dennis Yaager, who would join the Toffees later that year, was in the crowd to see a jet-lagged Everton concede an early goal before surging to victory through



Everton on Everton Street, Australia, 1964

goals from Alex Scott (two), Johnny Morrissey and a Matt Woods own goal, when playing against his former club.

Matches came thick and fast, but Everton outclassed all their opponents - with 14 being put past a Western Australia XI. The Blues won all eight of their games, scoring 50 goals and conceding just seven. The youngsters got valuable match experience,

including Rees who grabbed a hat-trick against Queensland (tragically, the Welshman would die in a car accident in 1965).

It wasn't all work, however. Brian Harris made headlines on a TV variety show - wearing a stove-pipe hat and chewing a cigarette, he 'sky-larked' and joshed with the

audience. Some players watched an Aussie Rules game at St Kilda's ground in Melbourne, while others attended a meet at Flemington, Australia's most famous racecourse. There was also a visit to Bondi Beach, a winery and a number of ex-servicemen's social clubs.

The match programme completed, the Blues jettied off from Sydney airport and for the benefit of supporters seeing them off, the players linked arms and sang *Waltzing Matilda*, *Auld Lang Syne*, and *Now is the Hour* as airline staff ushered them onto the aircraft!

A stop-over in Honolulu saw the squad stay in the hotel where Elvis had filmed *Blue Hawaii*. The Toffees completed their six-week circumnavigation of the globe, touching down at Speke on 1 June 1964.

The tour was deemed a huge success - helping to inspire Australians to take up the sport. Everton would reap a reward decades later with the arrival of Tim Cahill at Goodison Park!

