



By Rob Sawyer

JAMES MEUNIER

Mikael Madar may have been the first French national to represent the Toffees, signed by Howard Kendall in 1998, but a player with Gallic heritage was on the books of both Manchester City and Everton in the first decade of the 20th century.

Born in 1885 in the Birmingham area to a French-born father and English mother, James Meunier grew up in Heaton Moor, Stockport. Spells as an amateur with Stockport County and Denton preceded two years with Manchester City, but he never broke through to the first team of the then Hyde Road outfit. In June 1906 the defender crossed Lancashire to sign for Southport Central FC. Having suffered with health issues, he relocated to Canada to recuperate, but returned to England in time to rejoin the Lancashire Combination side for the 1907/08 season.

In March 1908 he joined Everton. Senior Team opportunities were restricted by the likes of the Balmer brothers, but his chance came at left-back in November 1910 - a dream debut as the Toffees defeated Blackburn Rovers 6-1. After four more Blues appearances, he was made available for transfer in June 1912 and signed for Lincoln City.

Meunier played 23 games for the Imps and then moved to Coventry City, but the outbreak of the First World War interrupted his career. Meunier served in France and Belgium with the 13th Siege Battery of the Royal Garrison Artillery. After the war, owing to the lingering effects of a dose of gas, he had to hang up his boots, but, helped by a glowing reference from Everton's Will Cuff, he was shortlisted for the position of coach of Coventry City.

Football aside, Meunier was a fine cricketer. Jack Sharp, his Everton clubmate, arranged for him to spend the summer of 1910 as the professional



• James Meunier was also a keen cricketer

at the Kings Country Club in Tullamore, Ireland. Subsequently, he played for New Brighton and turned out in cricket matches in which the Everton and Liverpool teams competed.

While at Lincoln City he played some minor counties cricket and, in 1920, he made two appearances for Warwickshire - joining a select band (with Frank Sugg, Jack Sharp and Harry Makepeace) of footballers linked to Everton who played cricket at the highest domestic level.

The four years at Everton left a lasting impression on Meunier - he would have occasional correspondence with the Club and Merseyside sports reporters such as Ernest Edwards ('Bee'). In 1948 he wrote to congratulate the Toffees on the appointment of Cliff Britton



as manager - his letter drawing a comment in the matchday programme.

James Meunier, footballer and cricketer, passed away in 1957.