

By Rob Sawyer

TG JONES' THWARTED MOVE FROM EVERTON TO THE ETERNAL CITY

Nearly 80 years ago, only red tape prevented one of the Blues' most iconic players from becoming a trailblazer in transferring from England to Italy.

TG Jones was one of the most polished centre-halves of his generation. Having joined Everton from Wrexham in 1936, the Welshman had sparkled in the celebrated championship-winning side of 1938/39, which also included Ted Sagar, Joe Mercer and Tommy Lawton. He lost seven of his best years of football to the Second World War and picked up a debilitating ankle injury in a 1944 Merseyside derby. A Club director had insisted that the stricken Jones play on, much to his disgust. This episode, coupled with the Blues' post-war nosedive in fortunes, had seen the immaculate number five become unsettled, but multiple transfer requests were declined as the Club sought to keep its greatest asset. Then, out of the blue in July 1948, came the sensational news that AS Roma were desperate to sign the Connah's Quay resident.

Dr Claudio Ferrari, a Liverpool-based barrister with links to the Italian giants, was tasked with negotiating with Everton. The Blues would bank a hefty £15,000 fee and offload an unhappy player without strengthening any English rivals, whilst Roma would gain a play-making centre-half who was well suited to the continental game. For Jones the move promised financial security and glorious Mediterranean sunshine. On offer were wages of £25 per week (more than tripling his Everton pay), luxury accommodation outside the city, a Lancia sports car, free flights to visit home and the promise of a coaching role after he retired from playing.

In 1997, TG recalled how the potential switch was put to him. "Theo Kelly called



Everton in 1948 with TG Jones next to manager Cliff Britton

me up to his office and asked if I'd like to go to Italy. The war hadn't been over long and everywhere was in a hell of a mess, especially for the Italians. I thought about it and decided to have a go."

There was confidence from all parties that the transfer would go through, but it was misplaced. Just three years after the end of the Second World War, there were considerable obstacles to doing business with Italy. In the end it was restrictions of the movement of currency between the two countries which scuppered the deal.

Everton were willing to listen to offers from other interested clubs, but none could match the asking price. So, instead of flying to a new life in the Italian capital, Jones found himself on £8 per week, lining up at Goodison against Newcastle United when the 1948/49 season got under way.

Jones would cross paths with Italian football in 1962 when managing Cheshire League side Bangor City in their epic Cup Winners' Cup tie against Napoli, which went to a replay, played at Highbury, ending with the Italians triumphing.



THOMAS G. JONES, Everton F.C.

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