

By Rob Sawyer

THE BOYS IN BLUE

One of the great Goodison Park traditions is the Toffee Lady mascot, inspired by Molly Bushell who founded a small-scale toffee manufacturing business close to the famous Everton lock-up tower which adorns our club crest. Less appreciated is that the Blues have a long tradition of boy mascots, too.

When the Everton team lined up for a photo during the 1938/39 season, Tommy Lawton, Joe Mercer and Co. were accompanied by John Shannon, a young lad from Garston. He accompanied the team to a number of matches that season and must have brought some good luck as the league title was won in fine style!

In 1962, John Murray, decked in an improvised Everton kit, was pushed over the wall at the Street End by his father before kick-off and told to mingle with the players. This act of chutzpah was rewarded with John becoming the unofficial mascot during the famous title-winning campaign, culminating with a 4-1 win over Fulham. John was even captured on camera joining the players on a lap of honour and being held aloft by skipper and hat-trick hero Roy Vernon.



■ Unofficial Blues mascot John Murray joins the team in title-winning celebration in May 1963

The baton was subsequently passed to Bernard Gamble. As well as being present at Goodison, he sometimes joined the captain in leading the team out at away fixtures. Not all clubs welcomed this practice; Elland Road and the Victoria Ground being two stadiums where the mascot had to remain on the terraces. During the 4-0 thrashing of Liverpool at Anfield in 1964, Bernard sat next to Harry Catterick in the dugout!

After the 1966 FA Cup final, Bernard appeared with the team outside St George's Hall at the victory parade. Soon afterwards, he was retired from the role as the Everton FC Supporters' Club wanted the Toffee Lady to be the only mascot present on the pitch.

The most bittersweet tale of a boy mascot was that of nine-year-old Jamie Baker. Jamie, who was battling leukemia, had been made welcome by his footballing heroes at Bellefield on several occasions after his mother contacted the Club. Arrangements were then made for him and his twin sister, Brenda, to lead out the Toffees prior to their fixture against Manchester United on 21 September 1986. On what was one of the happiest days of his all-too-short life, Jamie got to see a 3-1 win for the Blues which was broadcast live on BBC TV. Tragically, he couldn't be woken the next morning. Peter Reid, Paul Bracewell and Terry Darracott were among those representing Everton at his funeral.

But of the grief, came some good. Supporters raised funds for the Leukemia Research Fund while a Jamie Baker Memorial Trophy was created by the *Liverpool Echo* so that his name and memory would be cherished.



■ Jamie and twin Brenda with club skippers Kevin Ratcliffe and Bryan Robson in September 1986