

Manager Billy Bingham
with Everton's 1974/75 team



Words // Paul McParlan



Bingham with fellow
Northern Irish Blues,
Bryan Hamilton
and Dave Clements

BILLY'S TOFFEES AND STAGS

Billy Bingham had a long and varied career as a player and manager, including spells at both Everton and Mansfield Town.

He was born in Belfast on 5 August 1931, and began playing for Glentoran in 1948. His outstanding performances convinced Sunderland to sign the outside-right for £8,000 two years later and he stayed at Roker Park until 1958 when he moved to Luton Town, where he played in the 1959 FA Cup final. Bingham was also part of the Northern Ireland side that made it to the quarter-finals of the World Cup in 1958.

In October 1960, Johnny Carey brought him to Goodison Park. The pugnacious winger quickly became a fans' favourite with his ability to 'skin' an opposition full-back, his penetrating crosses and his eye for goal. He was a regular in Harry Catterick's title-winning side of 1962/63, scoring five goals in 23 games before being replaced by Alex Scott.

At the end of that season, Bingham moved to Port Vale where a broken leg finished his playing career. In 1965 he was appointed as Southport manager where he achieved their first-ever promotion from the Fourth Division in 1967. This was followed by stints at Plymouth Argyle, Linfield and AEK Athens, as well as the Greek national team.

In 1973, he was a somewhat surprise choice to replace Harry Catterick as Everton boss but the chairman, John Moores, insisted Bingham was 'a true

Evertonian'. He inherited a team in serious decline which had finished 17th the previous campaign. He reconstructed the side, selling Colin Harvey, Howard Kendall and Joe Royle whilst signing Martin Dobson from Burnley and breaking the British transfer record to bring Bob Latchford from Birmingham City.

Everton started the 1974/75 campaign well, losing only one of their first 21 games, although Bingham's pragmatic style drew criticism from the media. At Easter, Everton were three points clear at the top with seven games remaining, but won only two of them to finish fourth, three points behind the champions, Derby County. It was an opportunity missed.

Bingham never reached those heights again. In December 1976 he signed Duncan McKenzie and told Football Focus jokingly that 'the last manager to sign this fellow got sacked'. The following month, Bingham WAS sacked. Nevertheless, the side he left behind reached the League Cup final and an FA Cup semi-final that season.

He took charge of Mansfield Town in February 1978 but was unable to prevent relegation to Third Division. The following campaign, the Stags reached the semi-finals of the Anglo Scottish Cup, but by the season's end, Bingham had departed. He returned to the international stage as manager of Northern Ireland and famously took them to the World Cup finals in 1982 and 1986.

In later life, Bingham was a regular at Everton Former Players' Foundation events before he passed away in 2022 at the grand old age of 90.