

'I FEAR NO FOE' – THE BLUES' FIRST GREAT OUTSIDE-RIGHT

Words // Rob Sawyer

In the late Victorian era, a significant number of the Toffees' Scottish players had either trained or worked in ship design and building on the River Clyde in Glasgow prior to moving south.

Among them was Alex Latta (also known as Alec), who had been apprenticed in his teens to a Dumbarton boatbuilder, like his father before him.

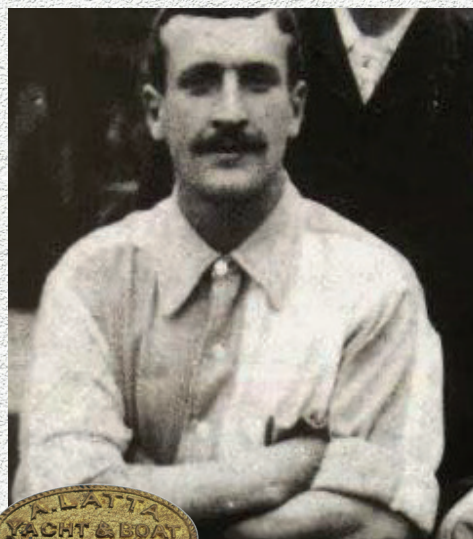
Playing for local amateur side Dumbarton Athletic, Latta was called up for the national team at Hampden Park in March 1888, scoring twice in a 5-1 victory over Wales. His second appearance for Scotland was in a 3-2 defeat of England at the Kennington Oval.

In October 1887, he played at outside-right for Dumbartonshire against Lancashire at Everton's Anfield ground, followed by refreshments at the Sandon Hotel. Latta no doubt caught the attention of the watching Everton committee as, come the summer of 1889, the Toffees secured his services.

The new signing would lodge on Ullswater Street, Everton, until he married in 1892. In a gold standard Everton forward line, Latta had Alec Brady playing just inside of him, with Fred Geary at centre-forward and Edgar Chadwick and Alf Milward raiding down the left side. Latta possessed the strength and pace to take him past opposing wing-halves and full-backs and then have a choice of swinging the ball to the opposite flank, putting in an accurate cross, or having a pop at goal. According to one pen picture, his approach to the game was, 'I fear no foe'.

In the 1890/91 season, Latta recovered from injury in time to make a valuable contribution to the run-in for the Club's first-ever league title. Two years later he just missed out on adding an FA Cup winner's medal to his collection when the Toffees fell at the final hurdle against tonight's visitors, Wolves.

He was awarded a benefit (long service) match against Celtic in April 1893 but after sustaining an



Alex Latta: Early Everton star and future Hoylake boat builder

ankle injury early in 1895, he gradually faded from the first-team picture.

Latta then promptly stunned most followers of Merseyside football by signing for Liverpool in October 1896. However, he never featured for the Reds' first team and his boots had been hung up before the season was out.

From thereon in, the Scot devoted himself to building small boats in Hoylake; he specialised in making the Opera class of boat, which had a shallow draft to suit the local waters.

In later life, Latta would occasionally take in a match at Tranmere's Prenton Park, confidently predicting that a young striker by the name of W.R. Dean had a bright future ahead of him! Alex Latta, goal creator and yacht builder, died at home on 25 August 1928 at the age of 60.