

FRED – THE TEAMMATE OF DIXIE WHO BECAME A PARIS PIONEER

Words // **Richie Gillham**

Fred Kennedy's career offers a glimpse of inter-war football, when the English game remained largely domestic, but a few players sought opportunities abroad.

Born in Black Lane, near Bury, on 23 October 1902, and shaped by the northern football tradition, he first came to notice with Rossendale United before joining Manchester United in 1923. United were rebuilding in the Second Division and, though Kennedy did not become a regular, he gained valuable league experience, scoring four goals in 18 league and cup games.

Everton paid a sizeable £2,500 fee for him in 1925, reportedly angering Manchester United fans. Kennedy arrived during a major spell of Everton spending, with the Blues investing more than £9,000 on Hargreaves, Bain, Weaver, O'Donnell, Kennedy and a teenage Dixie Dean. During that summer's practice games, Kennedy scored in both Blues versus Whites games, first alongside Dean in a 4-2 defeat, then with a hat-trick in a 3-3 draw.

Across three seasons at Goodison Park, Kennedy made 35 league appearances and scored 11 goals,



Fred Kennedy of Manchester United, Everton and Racing Club De Paris

including one on his debut against Arsenal in March 1925. Often used as a reserve or supporting forward, he still gave Everton useful depth. At 5ft 6in, however, his stature was seen as a limitation and he left for Middlesbrough in 1927 where he made a contribution to their promotion to the First Division in 1928/29 season.

After spells with Reading, Oldham and Northwich Victoria, Kennedy's career took an unusual turn in 1932 when he joined Racing Club de Paris, who were coached by Nelson-born Jimmy Hogan. French professional football was still developing and foreign players

brought experience from more established leagues. He scored five goals in 16 games, returning briefly to England with Blackburn Rovers before injury curtailed his stay and he returned to RC Paris for a second spell, averaging nearly a goal every two games.

It was the 1935/36 season that secured his place in Racing's history.

The club won the French Championship and the Coupe de France. These were Racing's first major honours, and the league title remains their only national championship. Kennedy's 20 league goals were central to that success and placed him among the earliest English footballers to achieve major distinction overseas.

He retired in 1938 after a final return to Lancashire with Stockport County and died in 1963.

Kennedy's career remains a small but significant chapter in football's international history – a player formed in the industrial north of England who became one of the first Englishmen to win a league and cup double overseas.



Racing Club De Paris: Winners of the French Championship and Coupe de France