



By Paul McParlan

KEN McNAUGHT – FROM LEAGUE CUP RUNNER-UP TO EUROPEAN CUP WINNER!

Ken McNaught's assured performances for Everton in the epic 1977 League Cup final saga changed the course of his footballing destiny.

Blues manager Gordon Lee trusted the 22-year-old Scot to combat the threat of Aston Villa's rampant, and future Everton star, Andy Gray. The defender rose to the challenge and effectively contained the Villa forward in the final and the first replay.

Gray was absent from the third decisive game through injury but Villa boss Ron Saunders had seen enough to realise that McNaught would be a valuable addition to his team in the Midlands.

McNaught was born in Kirkcaldy on 11 January 1955. He came from a footballing family; his uncle John appeared for Queen of the South and his father, Willie, was a forward for Raith Rovers (for whom he holds the club record for the number of appearances) and Scotland. Ken started out as a striker in his teenage years but after listening to his father, he switched to a centre-back role.



Ken McNaught and Nigel Spink defending during Aston Villa's 1-0 European Cup final win over Bayern Munich in Rotterdam in May 1982

He was invited for a trial at Everton in January 1971. Although only 16, he was matched against Everton's top scorer Joe Royle and acquitted himself so well that he was immediately offered an apprenticeship. He left his school on Friday and was training at Bellefield the following Monday.

On 4 January 1975, a week before his 20th birthday, McNaught made his First-Team debut against non-league Altrincham in the FA Cup. Within 18 months, he had established himself as Mick Lyons' defensive partner and having played in all 58 of Everton's games during the 1976/77 season, including 16 domestic cup matches, a long-term future at Goodison seemed a certainty. However, that summer, Saunders offered £200,000 for his services at Villa and Everton boss Lee, who needed funds to rebuild the side, agreed to the deal, to the surprise of the defender himself and most supporters.

At Villa Park, Saunders paired McNaught

with Allan Evans and the bedrock was laid that would form the foundation of the club's subsequent success. This included winning the First Division title with McNaught as an ever-present in 1981 and then lifting the European Cup in 1982. He also scored a decisive goal in Villa's memorable European Super Cup victory over Barcelona.

Strangely, despite excelling at the very highest levels of English and European football, McNaught was never selected for his country! His clubmate Evans, along with Alan Hansen, Willie Miller, David Narey and Alex McLeish, were Jock Stein's central defenders at the 1982 World Cup in Spain.

McNaught and Nottingham Forest's John McGovern are the only two Scots to ever win the European Cup but never represent their country.

After Villa, McNaught had spells with West Brom, Manchester City (on loan) and Sheffield United before hanging up his boots in 1986.