



By John Shearon

HOW TOFFEES' HEAVY LUNCH FED FOOTBALL IN URUGUAY

Much is made of the 1909 Tour of South America by Everton and Spurs. Although neither the first nor last by British clubs, its legacy has been lauded ever since due to the further development of the game in the region and, in the case of Everton, the proliferation of clubs bearing the name.

One leg of the tour, however, receives little coverage – that of Montevideo, Uruguay, where football had a similar start to neighbouring Argentina with clubs initially founded by British citizens working in insurance, banking, railways and schools.

After playing in Argentina, Everton took an overnight ferry on Saturday 12 June



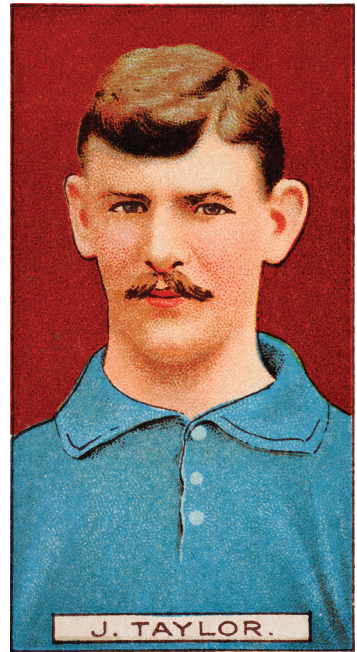
1909 from Buenos Aires to Montevideo.

There had been earlier visits to the Uruguayan capital from Southampton, Nottingham Forest and a South Africa XI - which had all resulted in convincing losses for the hosts - so few among the 8,000 crowd at the Parque Central expected anything different when Everton took on a Uruguay XI. Just three days earlier Spurs had trounced the locals 8-0.

The local press had given the Toffees much coverage in the days prior to the match, even labelling Bert Freeman as 'the most dangerous forward in the world'. On arrival on the Sunday morning the Everton party was given a city tour before enjoying a sumptuous pre-match meal.

The Everton captain, Jack Taylor, was invited to referee the game (!) and it turned out to be anything but a walkover. Goalless at the break, the Uruguayans had matched Everton in all departments but just after the break Freeman put the visitors ahead. The lead was then doubled with a goal from Billy Lacey after referee Taylor had controversially ignored Freeman's trampling of the goalkeeper in the build-up!

Midway through the second period, the Uruguay XI scored when Blues keeper Clarence Berry turned a corner into his own net. By all accounts the

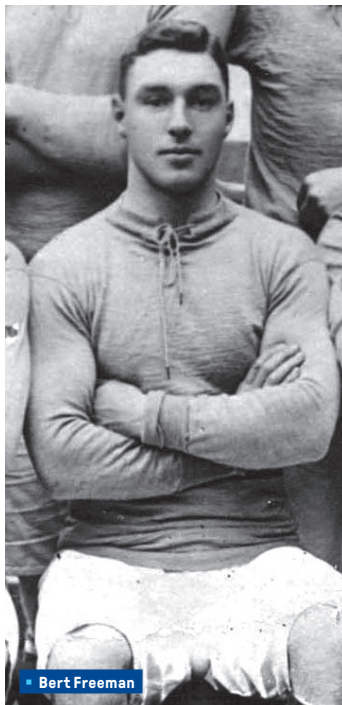


J. TAYLOR.

Toffees just about managed to hang on to the victory but on the final whistle the crowd erupted as if they had won and carried their 'heroes' shoulder-high from the pitch.

Everton director Mr. E.A. Bainbridge would later 'credit' the pre-match lunch for Everton's apparent sluggish display but many Uruguayans mark this match as the turning point in their nation's football history. For the first time they had shown a glimpse of the spirit that would carry them, within 15 years, to an Olympic title in Paris, a feat repeated four years later in Amsterdam.

The inaugural World Cup winners title would follow in 1930, along with a further win in Brazil in 1950 and it would be nice to think that the Blues played a small part in setting these events in motion.



Bert Freeman