



By Rob Sawyer

GEORGE KITCHEN: THE PENALTY-TAKING GOALKEEPER

‘A player of many parts, and one whose sporting proclivities are not confined to football solely’. That was how the *Everton Official Matchday Programme* editor succinctly described the Club’s goalkeeper, George Kitchen.

Born in Fairfield, near Buxton, in 1876, Kitchen played as a forward in junior football but, urged on by his father, had become a golf professional at 15. However, he joined Buxton FC as a goalkeeper at 17, serving them for a season and a half, and in one of his early outings he performed admirably in a fixture against Everton reserves.

So impressed were the Toffees that Kitchen was invited to keep goal in two festive friendly fixtures at Goodison Park, against Glasgow Rangers and Celtic in December 1895. However, he declined the opportunity to sign on amateur forms, instead returning to Buxton and also having a spell keeping goal for Stockport County.



Everton finally got their man in 1898 and he made his senior debut against Preston North End on 14 January 1899. Although Kitchen kept a clean sheet in a 2-0 win, he returned to the reserve side, going on to captain them to the

Lancashire Combination championship. At 6ft 1in, Kitchen was blessed with a long reach and noted for his consistency and ability to ‘take’ the ball from any angle.

The off-season would allow him to focus on his golf and in his first year at Everton he had entered The Open, held at Sandwich, but struggled on the Kent links. Living at 6 Antonio Street, Bootle, he turned out in the summer for Bootle Cricket Club and he also competed successfully in billiards tournaments in the Liverpool area.

In October 1901, he got his first extended run in the Toffees’ First Team, replacing Willie Muir, and he kept his place until the tail end of the 1903/04 season when he was dropped after a poor performance against Stoke City. With Billy Scott and Leigh Roose for competition, Kitchen could not add to his tally of 90 appearances and he moved to the-then Southern League side West Ham United in the spring of 1905.

He enjoyed seven years with the Hammers – marking his debut in spectacular style by scoring a penalty against Swindon Town! He later moved to Southampton in the autumn of 1912 and at the age of 37 he switched to Boscombe FC (now AFC Bournemouth).

Most of his time was spent as the professional at the Queens Park Golf Club and running a sports outfitters shop. In 1921 Kitchen was a guest at a Boscombe FC annual dinner, where he toasted the club, expressing the belief that Bournemouth could support ‘football of the best’ – he would be proved correct. Kitchen passed away in 1937.



George Kitchen