

By Paul McParlan

GEORGE CUMMINS: CUP RUNS WITH THE TOFFEES AND HATTERS!

George Cummins was a very talented inside-forward, blessed with natural touch and skill. Nevertheless, he found it difficult to establish himself at Everton and would eventually fulfil his undoubted potential at Luton Town.

The Dubliner first attracted attention when he notched four goals in a schoolboy international against England in August 1947. Cummins was good friends with Everton keeper Jimmy O'Neill and when he came to visit him in Liverpool on holiday, Blues manager Cliff Britton invited him to take part in a trial match.

Britton was so pleased with the youngster's display that he offered him a professional contract and he joined the Everton from St Patrick's Athletic in November 1950 for a fee of £20, becoming another addition to the Toffees' Irish contingent.

George became the last Everton player to make his debut on a Christmas Day, when he appeared for Everton in a 3-1 defeat away at Doncaster Rovers in the Second Division in 1951. He then had to wait until March 1952 to play at Goodison, when his performance in a 3-0 win against Queens Park Rangers drew praise from the *Liverpool Echo*: 'If he fulfils the promise he showed, we are going to hear considerably more of him'.

In 1952/53, Cummins featured in every game of Everton's epic FA Cup run which ended when they narrowly lost 4-3 to Bolton Wanderers in a memorable semi-final. Seeking regular first-team football



Left to right: George Cummins, John Groves and Billy Bingham training with Wembley balls ahead of Luton Town's 1959 FA Cup final

he moved to Luton Town in the summer of 1953 for a fee of £10,000, having played 29 games for Everton.

The Hatters were the perfect fit for George. He helped them to achieve their first promotion to the top-flight in 1954/55 and reach the FA Cup final for the only time in their history. Luton met Nottingham Forest at Wembley in 1959 but lost 2-1. One of George's teammates was future Everton manager, Billy Bingham.

George played 19 times for the Republic of Ireland and scored five goals, which is still the second highest tally for a Luton player representing his country.

George left Kenilworth Road in 1961 after 209 appearances and 30 goals. After spells at Cambridge City and Hull City, where he reunited with his former Blues boss Britton, he became a coach at Southport in 1965. He settled in

Aintree and became a regular visitor to Goodison Park.

George died in 2009 at the age of 78. He was a naturally-gifted footballer who attracted many admirers at Goodison Park but clearly blossomed a lot more when he moved to Kenilworth Road.

