



By Paul McParlan

# LETHAL LATCHFORD THE RECORD BREAKER

## EVERTON V CRYSTAL PALACE, 20 SEPTEMBER 1980

The visit of Crystal Palace on Saturday 20 September 1980 proved to be a significant milestone in the career of one Everton player.

The Blues had made an encouraging start to the 1980/81 season. Manager Gordon Lee had placed his faith in youth with Steve McMahon (aged 18), Joe McBride (19), Graeme Sharp (19), Kevin Ratcliffe (20) and Billy Wright (22) all having featured in the Senior Team. The policy seemed to be working. Everton had lost only one of their opening six league fixtures and were unbeaten at Goodison Park, where they had yet to concede a goal.

Crystal Palace, under manager Terry Venables, had won just a single game and had lost their past three league matches so Everton were firm favourites to take the points and move up the table.

Boss Lee still relied on his experienced strikers for goals. Peter Eastoe had already bagged four, but Bob Latchford was still awaiting his first league goal of the season, although he had hit three against Alan Ball's Blackpool in the League Cup.

For the 1980/81 campaign, the centre-forward had set his sights



Bob Latchford

on overtaking Joe Royle's tally of 102 league goals to become Everton's highest post-war marksman and the third best in the Club's history, behind Sandy Young with 113 and Dixie Dean with 349! Prior to the game he had reached 100.

Everton dominated the first half, but the Crystal Palace goal remained intact. The Blues then suddenly found their scoring boots in an incredible

18-minute spell after the interval. On 49 minutes, full-back John Gidman delivered a perfect cross for Latchford to head home. Seven minutes later, the former Birmingham man smashed a pass from Peter Eastoe into the net to equal Royle's record. Could he go on and break it?

The answer came a minute later – Latchford putting the finishing touch to a ball from Eastoe to complete his hat-trick in the space of 10 minutes. He was now the highest league goalscorer in Everton's post-war history. The Blues added another two goals, from John Gidman (penalty) and Eastoe, to complete a 5-0 rout.

It was the fifth hat-trick of Latchford's Everton career and he subsequently scored away at Coventry City and Norwich City to take his account to 106 league goals, a total since surpassed by only Graeme Sharp with 111.

Unfortunately, a hamstring injury sustained against Sunderland on 15 November effectively ended Latchford's season and his Everton career.

Nobody would have known it then, but when Latchford broke an Everton goalscoring record against Crystal Palace, it would be the last time that he found the net at Goodison Park wearing the Royal Blue of Everton.