

BRAWLS, BRIBES AND

# BROKEN DREAMS

How Dundee Almost  
Won the European Cup



Graeme Strachan

Foreword by Patrick Barclay

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## Chapter 1

# The Other Shankly

*'We have no delusions, no ideas, that we  
are on an easy thing.'*

Dundee chairman James Gellatly

DUNDEE WOULD become the fourth side to represent Scotland in the European Cup.

The club that led British football into European competition was Edinburgh's Hibernian in 1955 after reigning Scottish champions Aberdeen declined the invite.

Willie Thornton was Dundee manager when Hibs reached the inaugural semi-finals in 1955/56 and he was already laying the foundations that would lead to future success. The former Rangers star had assembled a good side at Dens Park since arriving in 1954.

Young players were being given their chance including Pat Liney, Alex Hamilton, Bobby Cox, Ian Ure, George McGeachie, Andy Penman, Alan Cousin, Alan Gilzean and Hugh Robertson.

Thornton, however, resigned in October 1959 for 'family reasons' and returned to Glasgow to become manager of Partick Thistle.

He had achieved a credible fourth-place finish for Dundee the season before.

That, though, had been somewhat overshadowed by a shock Scottish Cup first-round loss to Highland League part-timers Fraserburgh.

Dundee's form that season had been indifferent and particularly poor at home, and there was a feeling Thornton had taken the club as far as he could.

The club advertised the job and Bob Shankly duly answered the call.

Shankly came to Dens Park after previously managing Falkirk and Third Lanark.

Another applicant was his brother Bill, then managing Huddersfield Town.

Bill's letter arrived the day after his older brother had already been appointed.

The rest is history.

Bill went on to take the Liverpool job in December and few would disagree that it was he who helped transform the sleeping giant into the great club it is now.

His older brother in Dundee became a managerial mentor during those early years at Liverpool and they talked on the phone every Monday evening about football.

On the same day as Dundee's title win, Bill's Anfield Reds won the Second Division title and promotion to the top flight in England, which made it a league double for the Shankly brothers.

Bob Shankly was to make some shrewd signings at Dens to build on the solid foundations which had already been established by Thornton.

These included bringing in English title-winner Bobby Seith, who had been training with Dundee during the summer of 1960 after leaving Burnley.

The powerful right-half had helped the Clarets win the First Division but a disagreement with chairman Bob Lord ended with him handing in a transfer request.

The transfer fee paid by Shankly was to prove a £7,500 bargain as Seith brought with him priceless experience and big-game knowledge.

The man from Monifieth added to a solid core of the three Cs of Bobby Cox, Doug Cowie and Alan Cousin. Seith was soon seen as a driving force.

For his part, Bobby Cox was a Dundee boy who had been born just a few hundred yards from Dens.

Cox had replaced the legendary Cowie as club captain in the summer of 1961 after Shankly decided to release the veteran left-half.

The inspirational left-back Cox is often remembered as a terrier in the tackle but he was a very fine footballer and quite simply the heart and soul of the team.

In January 1961, Shankly secured inside-left Bobby Wishart, who had previously won the league with Aberdeen in 1955, and shrewdly dropped him back to left-half.

But his masterstroke was the signing of 37-year-old Gordon Smith, who had been pensioned off by Hearts in the summer of 1961 following a recurring ankle injury.

Smith was known as Scotland's Stanley Matthews and was part of the 'Famous Five' forward line that helped steer Hibs to three league titles in the 1940s and 1950s. Prior to that the Montrose man had turned out for Dundee North End juniors, but the presence of

his friend and ex-Easter Road team-mate Sammy Kean was a key factor in him signing.

A lover of fast cars who turned up for his first day at Dens in a Porsche, film addict Smith was just as big an idol for a generation of post-war football fans.

The man with the movie star looks had even appeared as an extra in Alfred Hitchcock's movie *To Catch a Thief* in 1954 when he was in Cannes for an 18-day break.

He also won the league with Hearts after being released by Hibs and was the only player from the Dundee squad to have gained experience in the European Cup.

He had done so with both Edinburgh clubs, making a semi-final appearance for Hibs in 1955/56, and had been capped 18 times by Scotland.

Albeit a veteran, his arrival was something akin to royalty.

Bobby Seith said, 'The first time he played with us was on a pre-season tour of Iceland and at the end of it he pulled me aside and said this team could win the championship.

'When Gordon said something like that, he wasn't being light-hearted about it.'



Smith, of course, was correct, and was a hugely influential figure in Dundee's championship success as he achieved the unique distinction of being the only player to win the league with three different teams.

The fact none of those teams were Celtic or Rangers made it all the more remarkable.

Edinburgh-based Smith trained at home for most of the week because he combined football with business, running his post office and a pub called the Right Wing.

The signing of Smith had not been universally acclaimed by the fans, as Shankly explained.

'What a tanking I took when I signed him,' he said.

'He was too old, too anxious to steer clear of injury, etc.

'But he was just the man I wanted.

'A man who can read a game and play accordingly; who is always in the place other players expect him to be and can put the brake on the side if need be.

'When the fans saw how astute Gordon was and how much stemmed from him, they understood what he brought and forgave his reduced speed.'

Dundee played what was termed as 'simple football with no gimmicks' with a trick or two, as well as

a blend of pace and guile and a measure of tactical consciousness.

For a good number of years, Dundee had been known as the 'Dapper Dans' of Scottish football. This was because their short passing style was in contrast to the more direct approach adopted by many of their opponents in Scotland.

In recent times, this had seen them climb to fourth place in 1958/59 and 1959/60, while there had also been an impressive high-scoring run in 1960/61 until leg breaks suffered by Andy Penman and George McGeachie. Too often recognised as having a soft centre, the emergence of the combative Ian Ure at centre-half had gone far to allay that accusation.

Smith and Hugh Robertson provided the ammunition for the prolific Alan Gilzean, who was partnered up front by Alan Cousin, the catalyst for many attacks with his thrusting runs from deep. The leggy Cousin had mastered the art of the 'double shuffle' which effectively saw him slow down then, with a deft shuffle of his feet and change of pace, accelerate past his bewildered opponents.

People used to ask him about the double shuffle. Cousin would tell them that he had no idea how it came

about. He said he did it one time and it seemed to work so he carried on doing it.

Always good for a goal and top scorer for three seasons until 1960, Cousin was held in high regard by his team-mates for his great work rate, often tracking back to help out his defence.

Cousin was part-time and combined football with studies in Greek and Latin at St Andrews University, and thereafter became a languages teacher in his home town of Alloa.

One persistent mystery was the presence of goalkeeper Sandy Davie in one of Dundee's team photographs which was taken at their 1961/62 pre-season public trial match.

Davie went on to have a successful career with Dundee United but along with his father, he had grown up a Dundee supporter. He was a huge fan of goalkeeper Bill Brown, who was a member of Dundee's 1951 League Cup-winning side, and had even bought his first pair of football boots in Dens star Billy Steel's sports shop.

Davie was wanted by both city clubs. But with 17-year-old Ally Donaldson signed as reserve for Pat Liney and Shankly wanting to send Davie to a junior

side for experience, Davie opted for Tannadice, where he got an early opportunity.

Donaldson, who was in another group picture at that public trial, had to wait longer for his first-team breakthrough but became just as popular a figure at Dens Park where he spent a total of 16 years, making over 400 appearances, the fifth-highest by a Dundee player. In addition to Liney, the tall Edinburgh teenager had been the only back-up goalkeeper in 1961/62 until the experienced Les Cameron was brought in as support.

An abortive attempt had been made by Shankly in January 1962 to sign Bert Slater from Liverpool, but now Shankly wanted to strengthen ahead of the European Cup.

Shankly had rated Slater highly ever since he was his manager at Falkirk.

He had given Slater his Brockville debut and the goalkeeper was part of the Falkirk side which won the 1957 Scottish Cup after Shankly left for Third Lanark.

Two years after that, Slater signed for Liverpool and played against Dundee in a game to mark the installation of the Dens floodlights in March 1960.

Slater was impressive for Liverpool, despite scoring an own goal when he stepped back over the line after catching a Hugh Robertson corner.

Yet he would later be replaced by James Furnell and told he had no future at Liverpool despite wanting to stay and fight for his place.

That was made clear when Bill Shankly named six goalkeepers ahead of him in the pecking order, right down to the under-12 goalkeeper.

Bob Shankly finally got his man when Slater signed for £2,500 in summer 1962.

Shankly had also recruited 19-year-old Doug Houston from Queen's Park after another winger, Ronnie Crichton, and centre-halves Billy McMillan and Billy Smith were released.

Arbroath man Smith was seen to be unlucky after sustaining an injury in a League Cup tie against Rangers in 1960.

That had seen Ian Ure moving to centre-half and the big fair-haired defender had never looked back.

Slater joined up with the squad following the New York tournament to find the city of Dundee struck by a deadly polio epidemic with new cases appearing at the rate of one per day.

The epidemic centred on Fintry but affected Douglas and Maryfield as it spread and claimed the life of 38-year-old George Craigie from Fintry Mains.

Within days of the alarm being raised, 75,000 people had queued for a sugar lump coated with the vaccine and there was genuine panic in the city.

The health department embarked on an exhaustive campaign and 179,000 people were eventually vaccinated across Dundee.

The outbreak had effectively fizzled out by July before the European Cup draw paired Dundee with West German champions Cologne in the preliminary round.

Back at Dens, the official photographs of Dundee's championship-winning squad had revealed that the team would play in a new crew-necked dark blue and white strip in the forthcoming 1962/63 season.

This was the first change in style since switching from the rugby-collar type to the famous V-necked version in 1956. It was so popular that local sports shops like David Low Sports in the Seagate and Meldrum Sports in Reform Street were unable to keep up with demand for replicas.

Peter Black's 'Football Know-All and Pools Guide' was published in the *Weekly News* and appeared to write off Dundee's chances of European success.

The form guide was printed over two weeks every year prior to the start of the season with complete details of all 37 senior clubs as well as an assessment of strengths and weaknesses.

It also gave a list of all players on every club's books, along with their height, weight, position, year signed for the club and where they had signed from.

'Dundee in big time' was the headline above the team pictured in last season's white change strip, before the guide declared Shankly's side was in 'fine fettle'.

It read, 'Same again? Why not? The mixture as before – or nearly so – should again be just as nasty-tasting medicine for opponents. European Cup? Well, all the best anyway!'

The European Cup draw had brought a renewed dose of football fever to Dundee, but that didn't stop the goalposts being pulled down and the markings washed away from the public pitches at Riverside Park.

Fledgling company Loganair had expressed interest in developing the site on the banks of the River Tay for

flying to fill the gaps that the state airline would not or could not fill.

Loganair was established by flamboyant Scottish construction engineer Willie Logan, whose firm would go on to win the contract to build the Tay Road Bridge.

A small landing strip was eventually 'scraped out' across several of the old pitches about half a mile long in the grass to facilitate the ambitious proposal at Riverside.

A five-seater Piper Aztec touched down on the makeshift runway in August 1962, opposite the big top of Bertram Mills' Circus and Menagerie.

The travelling circus was in residence from the Olympia in West London although quite what the 'uncannily intelligent football elephants' thought of it all was anyone's guess.

The chartered flight received a welcome on the runway from Lord Provost Maurice McManus who said the city was now in the 'happy position' of knowing Riverside was suitable for chartered flights and spoke of the possibilities of opening up air links between Dundee and Aberdeen, Inverness, London, Gibraltar or Nice.



He said there was ‘absolutely no reason’ why Dundee FC supporters could not fly direct to Cologne to support their team in the European Cup in September.

Meanwhile, there was rebellion in the air with Alan Gilzean, Alex Hamilton, Andy Penman, Hugh Robertson, Bobby Seith and Ian Ure all wanting more than the £25 a week wages on offer. For his part, Shankly said that what they were being paid was a small fortune compared to his playing days with Falkirk, where he spent 13 years between 1933 and 1946.

He reminisced about his childhood growing up in the once-thriving coal mining community of Glenbuck in Ayrshire where the winters were cold and bitter.

The Shankly family – parents Barbara and John, along with their five sons (who all went on to become professional footballers) and five daughters – lived in a small cottage on Miners Row in the village.

Shankly told his players that his family was so poor that his mother used an old boiler for the weekly wash on Monday before making soup in it to last the rest of the week.

The impasse continued but just days before the start of the new campaign the deadlock was broken when Hamilton, Penman and Robertson re-signed.

The others did likewise soon afterwards.

Shankly declared himself to be 'glad it's all over, with everybody happy'.

Last to put pen to paper was Ure, who was fast establishing himself as one of the country's top defenders, having made his Scotland international breakthrough against Wales at Hampden in November 1961.

He said, 'It's been a worrying time for me.

I'd like to make it clear that I'm happy with Dundee.

'There was no question of asking for a move. It was simply a matter of pounds, shillings and pence – and now I'm satisfied.'

All bar the out-of-favour Liney and the injured Seith were in the team for the opening game of the 1962/63 season, a League Cup sectional tie against city rivals Dundee United at Tannadice Park.

Dundee sported their new strip, described as 'a polo-neck jersey a la Real Madrid', but that was where the similarity ended as the city's lesser lights took the spoils.

Alan Gilzean twice gave Dundee the lead but the men in black and white pulled back twice with goals from Walter Carlyle before Jim Irvine grabbed a late winner.

The league flag was then raised by Lady Provost McManus to mark the club's first home game of the season, the second group game against Celtic.

It was raised on a specially erected flagpole behind the TC Keay traditional home end of the ground on 15 August 1962 in front of 20,000 fans.

Dundee defeated Celtic 1-0 with a Gordon Smith goal on 60 minutes but there were contrasting emotions for the team's two senior goalkeepers.

For Bert Slater, this was a new start, and with a stocky boxer's build and a nose that looked as if it had taken its fair share of punishment, his team-mates were quick to nickname him 'Punchy'.

It was a different story for championship hero Pat Liney, who had watched events from the main stand.

Somewhat surprisingly to many, Shankly had made it clear that Slater was his first-choice goalkeeper and Liney was now to find his appearances very limited indeed.

The Admiralty in London was also proving there was little room for sentiment when it came to tough decisions. The *Unicorn*, the oldest ship of the Royal Navy still afloat, was in the way of one of the approach roads for the new Tay Road Bridge.

Earl Grey Dock, where the 46-gun frigate was moored, was due to be filled in and it was decided the old lady should be broken up where she lay. The frigate was eventually given a reprieve after a deputation from Dundee went to London to argue the case and the Queen Mother joined calls to save the ship.

Agreement was reached that an attempt would be made to move her but if she started to break up during the tow she would be taken to deeper water and sunk.

The voyage that could save the *Unicorn* was scheduled to take place in October.

The city's Royal Arch, which gave access to one of the port's main docks, was also due to be wiped out because it too was in the way of the Tay Road Bridge landfall development.

On 23 August 1962, just a day after the *Unicorn's* reprieve, Dundee's players and officials returned to the City Chambers where they had celebrated their title success on winning the league a few months earlier.

A civic reception was hosted by Lord Provost McManus to honour the league champions.

A cushion of blue and white flowers, emblazoned 'Dundee FC', greeted guests and the silver championship trophy was the centrepiece of the top table.

‘Last season they accomplished the greatest feat of all,’ said Mr McManus.

‘They brought the league championship to the city for the first time.

‘I am sure that all the citizens, particularly the football fans, the directors of the club, the manager and the trainer must have been very proud of the lads last year.

‘It is a tremendous task to win a championship but experience has shown that while it may be difficult to win a championship it’s doubly difficult to retain it.

‘You can rest assured every football fan in the city will be keen to see you make a success of your run in the European Cup.’

‘We have no delusions, no ideas, that we are on an easy thing,’ said Dundee chairman James Gellatly.

‘But I can assure you the boys will do their best.’

Mr Gellatly told the Lord Provost that Dundee’s success was the culmination of much effort over a long period of years.

He paid tribute to the late George Anderson, who had laid down the short passing system during his ten years as manager between 1944 and 1954.

Anderson was the man who guided Dundee to their first major trophies in over 40 years with back-to-back League Cup successes in the early 1950s.

As well as those League Cups, the flamboyant Anderson was best remembered as the man who signed 'pocket dynamo' Billy Steel for a Scottish record fee in 1950.

Mr Gellatly then called each player, manager Bob Shankly and trainer Sammy Kean to receive their league medals at the civic reception.

All was not well in the camp, however, for with just one win from the four games played so far, there were considerable tensions behind the scenes.

Things came to a head when Andy Penman, stung by criticism from his team-mates for not pulling his weight during a training match, handed in a transfer request.

Child protégé Penman joined Everton straight from school in Dunfermline and made his debut aged 15 before he got homesick and signed for Dundee in 1959.

Dundee's youngest-ever player, known as the 'Penalty King' for his precision from the spot, said, 'I am sure I would benefit by leaving Dens Park and I would not mind going to England.'

‘I’ll just have to wait and see what happens.

‘I am determined to leave anyway.’

The City Square would become the scene of similar protest the following week when Dr Richard Beeching stopped off on his way to Aberdeen on 27 August.

Beeching left the diesel train during a scheduled three-minute halt at Tay Bridge Station and chatted on the platform with stationmaster Richard Turner.

Beeching was wielding his axe over the British rail network with plans to cut over 5,000 miles of track and more than 2,000 stations.

Rail workers in Dundee stopped work and took part in a protest against the cuts when they marched to the City Square with placards and called for a national strike.

\* \* \*

The protest against the cuts provoked further disruption when the Dundee squad arrived in Glasgow for a midweek game when Dr Beeching was also making an official visit.

Rail workshop employees stopped work for two hours across Scotland during the talks at the Scottish Region of British Railways in Glasgow on 29 August.

The 4,500 Glasgow demonstrators were joined by four 'pall bearers' who carried a coffin with the simple message 'BR – Scottish Region' planted on the side.

Dundee's poor showing in a 3-0 League Cup defeat to Celtic later that evening contributed towards them finishing bottom of their group with only four points.

Wolves manager Stan Cullis watched the match to check on several players including Alex Hamilton, Ian Ure and Alan Gilzean.

Cullis wanted to strengthen his squad but Dundee were not prepared to sell any first-team player until after the European Cup tie against Cologne.

By the time the first leg came round on 5 September things had worsened.

Dundee had now lost to Dundee United, Celtic and Hearts (twice) in the League Cup, and their only league outing had ended in another defeat to Hearts.

Dr Beeching was preparing to take a hefty sledgehammer to Britain's railways just as Dundee's season was already in danger of running out of steam.

The European Cup was to provide the perfect platform to get things back on track.