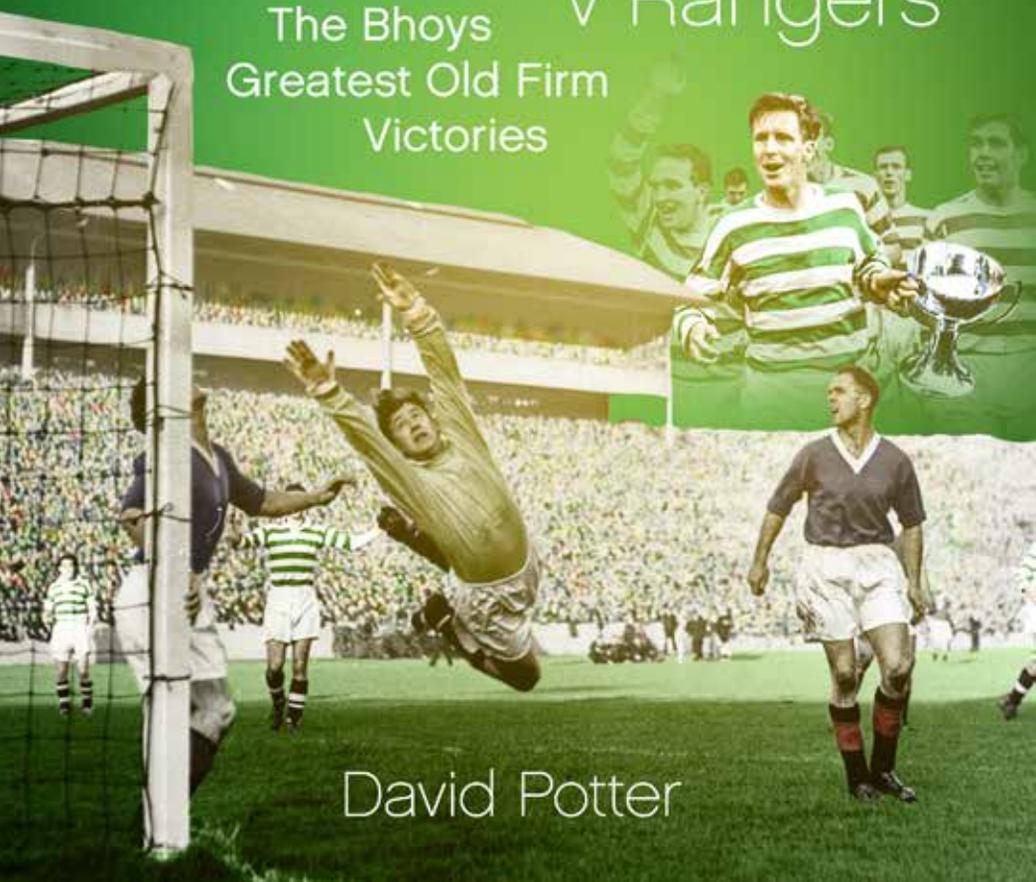




# Celtic

The Boys v Rangers  
Greatest Old Firm  
Victories



David Potter

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v Rangers

The Bhoys Greatest Old Firm Victories

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# Contents

Introduction . . . . .	7
1. On the way to the final . . . . .	11
2. Revenge is sweet . . . . .	16
3. Six of the best . . . . .	20
4. Saving the season . . . . .	25
5. Coronation Quinn . . . . .	30
6. Quinn, Quinn and nothing but Quinn . . . . .	35
7. The play-off . . . . .	40
8. Quinn comes back to haunt them. . . . .	45
9. Happy birthday, Mr Maley! . . . . .	50
10. Quinn does it again . . . . .	55
11. Quinn the invincible . . . . .	60
12. A chink of light . . . . .	65
13. Napoleon's Happy New Year . . . . .	70
14. In The shadow of a disaster . . . . .	74
15. '...Departing in droves' and it was only 2-1! . . . . .	79
16. The Cassidy cavalcade . . . . .	84
17. 'We beat the Rangers in the cup...' . . . . .	89
18. An Ibrox win at last . . . . .	94
19. 'Don't let it go to your head, son' . . . . .	99
20. Starting the New Year well . . . . .	104
21. Hogan, Boden, Weir and Tully, the lads that ran the Rangers sully . . . . .	109
22. A Boxing Day cracker. . . . .	114
23. Seventh Heaven . . . . .	119
24. The foggy dew . . . . .	123
25. Celtic singing in the rain . . . . .	128
26. No more Mr Nice Guy . . . . .	133

# ON THE WAY TO THE FINAL

**Celtic 5 Rangers 3**  
**Old Celtic Park**

**Scottish Cup Semi-Final**  
**6 February 1892**

*Celtic:* Cullen, Reynolds and Doyle; Maley, Kelly and Dowds; McCallum, Cunningham, Brady, McMahan and Campbell

*Rangers:* Haddow, Hodge and Dunbar; Marshall, McCreddie and Mitchell; Watt, Henderson, Law, McPherson and Kerr

*Referee:* Mr G. Sneddon, Queen's Park

THERE was little doubt that the early success of the Celtic Football Club in three and a half years had been little short of phenomenal. In the calendar year of 1891, the club had won the Glasgow Cup twice (in February for the 1890/91 season and in December for the 1891/92 season) and there was a noticeable increase in attendance and certainly excitement whenever and wherever they played. Not only that, but there was ambition in the East End of Glasgow with the new stadium being built (to a large extent by volunteer labour) with the express intention of hosting Scotland v England games. It was not that there was anything all that wrong with their existing ground – just that the club was growing too big for it.

There was as yet something missing, however, and that was the Scottish Cup. The 'blue riband' was what everyone wanted. The Scottish League, started last year and shared between Rangers and Dumbarton, was all very well, but the Scottish Cup was the thing that everyone coveted. Hibernian had won it in 1887, and it was possibly that one event that persuaded the Irish in Glasgow that a football team might not be a bad idea. In the first year of their existence, Celtic had reached the final, only to fall to Third Lanark, although some felt that it was only the bad weather that prevented them winning.

In 1889/90, they had gone out to Queen's Park at the first time of asking, and in 1890/91 bad weather in midwinter against the

## THE BHOYS FAMOUS OLD FIRM VICTORIES

very good Dumbarton side at Boghead (hence the origin of the phrase 'fatal Boghead') was their nemesis.

This year, however, had seen wins over St Mirren, Kilmarnock Athletic and Cowllairs in the Scottish Cup, as a solid team began to emerge at Celtic Park. There was Dan Doyle, controversial, quixotic, unstable, but by some distance the best defender in the country, half-backs Willie Maley and James Kelly, reliable and steady, and in the forward line the two friends Sandy McMahon and Johnny Campbell. That was the backbone of the side, but the thing that marked out this young team was their enthusiasm and their playing for each other. Energised by a vocal and voluble support on the other side of the rope, the green-and-white stripes were a sight to behold.

The Scottish Cup semi-final draw paired Celtic against Rangers at Old Celtic Park (no neutral venues for semi-finals for another 20 years). The other semi-final had yet to be played, for on that same day of 6 February, Hearts and Renton were playing their second quarter-final replay at neutral Hampden Park while Queen's Park awaited the winners. It was widely expected that there would be a large crowd at Celtic Park, and indeed there was. Twelve thousand lined the ropes; there was a certain amount of crushing at the pay boxes and at the end of the game. Fortunately, no one was seriously injured but clearly the Celtic committee's decision to build a new and larger ground was totally vindicated as a result.

Rangers, founded in 1874, were a large club with a big support, but were chronic underachievers in several respects. Although they had gained a share in last year's Scottish League championship with Dumbarton, they had yet to win the Scottish Cup, famously in 1879 having failed to turn up for the replayed final against Vale of Leven because they felt that they were not getting their own way! In addition, in spite of having played Celtic on several occasions in several competitions and friendlies since 1888, they had yet to beat them! It was beginning to develop into a sort of a complex, but it has to be stressed that in 1892 the clubs remained on good terms with each other, and there was as yet no discernible religious or sectarian element. It was accepted that Celtic were 'the

Glasgow Irishmen', in the same way as, for example, there was a rugby team called 'the London Scots'. A few nasty remarks had been heard at grounds in Paisley and Edinburgh about 'Papists!' and 'Fenians!', but from Rangers, not yet.

On the playing side, Celtic's form had been good, apart from New Year's Day, when they had gone down 0-8 to Dumbarton! Admittedly, it was a friendly and there was a slightly weakened team – Tommy Duff played in the goal, and a chap called Cherry of Clyde was given a game at centre-half – and it was all explained away by too much alcohol the night before. Indeed, there was a certain levity about it all – 'the Celtic players drank plenty but ate nothing' – but it was still a disappointment to the large crowd, and the spectators certainly felt that they were owed something.

Today, Johnny Madden 'the rooter' was out, and for his replacement Celtic turned not to Johnny Coleman, as might have been expected, but to a virtual unknown called John Cunningham. Other than that they were at full strength. The pitch was heavy after a lot of rain in midweek, but it was a fine dry day for February with a strong sun and a drying southerly wind. Old Celtic Park ran from north to south, and Celtic, having lost the toss, found themselves at 3.15pm when the game kicked off, playing against the sun and the wind in the first half.

Not that it seemed to bother them, for at half-time they were 4-0 up. *The Scottish Referee*, an excellent publication that appeared every Monday, talks about a crowd of 12,000 'about six deep in places' enjoying the game in a happy, friendly atmosphere. There was no segregation in the crowd, and although there were arguments and banter and jokes, one never saw an angry man, even though one or two had clearly spent a little too long in the alehouses before coming to the game. 'Considering the condition of the ground, the game was a great one, full of excitement from start to finish and both teams are to be complimented on the entire absence of anything approaching unfair play. The Rangers and Celtic have always been the best of friends. We feel confident that Saturday's game will increase the already good feeling existing between the clubs. Good Ould Celts! Plucky Light Blues!'

## THE BHOYS FAMOUS OLD FIRM VICTORIES

Quite a few things there that will surprise the 21st-century reader! The reports of the game talk of Rangers playing well in the first half with Dan Doyle being prominent in breaking up their attacks. Even so Rangers hit the post and had a goal chalked off for offside. But CUNNINGHAM scored for Celtic in 15 minutes with a shot from a distance, and then a lovely move involving McMahon and Campbell saw McCALLUM finish it off. A couple of minutes after that Alec BRADY did likewise, once again McMahon being involved in the build-up. Then not long before the break McMAHON himself added a fourth 'from a scrimmage', and at half-time, now that Celtic had the conditions in their favour, a 'barrowload' of goals was expected.

But whether it was the legendary half-time 'team talk' or simply that Celtic relaxed, Rangers fought back and began to play some good football. Yet it was Celtic who went five ahead when BRADY, from a McCallum pass, seemed to put the game totally beyond Rangers' reach. But Law, Henderson and Kerr all scored. When the third goal went in, there might just have been a little panic, but it was at this point that the leadership qualities of Maley and Kelly came to the fore, and they were able to break up attacks and prevent any further damage being done.

Mr Sneddon's final whistle brought delight to the Celtic section of the crowd. Handshakes were exchanged, and 'three cheers' were raised for each side, as custom demanded, but as the Celtic men trooped off, the realisation grew that they were actually in the final of the Scottish Cup. Rangers began to wonder if they would ever win that trophy, or indeed if they could ever defeat this 'eager-beaver' Celtic team.

Great was the rejoicing in the Celtic heartlands of the city that night, in the various Irish villages dotted around Scotland, and in the Irish communities of Edinburgh and Dundee. Songs were sung, drinks were drunk, and hopes expressed for a good performance in the final. Renton had beaten Hearts in the quarter-final, so everyone knew that it was either Queen's Park (last year's winners and nine times overall) or Renton (winners in 1885 and 1888 and of course the former team of James Kelly and a few others) in the final. It was something to be looked forward

*ON THE WAY TO THE FINAL*

to and to be talked about as the volunteer labourers turned up for their unpaid work on Sunday (shocking for Presbyterian Scotland, but a great deal less so for the Irish) at the new Celtic Park. There was even talk of a General Election soon. The Liberals might win, and that might even mean Home Rule for Ireland! Home Rule and the Scottish Cup in the same year? Now that would be something to dream about, would it not?

# REVENGE IS SWEET

**Celtic 3 Rangers 2**  
**Celtic Park**

**Scottish League**  
**24 February 1894**

*Celtic:* Reynolds, Dunbar and Doyle; Curran, Kelly and McEleney; Madden, Blessington, Cassidy, McMahon and Divers

*Rangers:* Haddow, Smith and Drummond; Marshall, A. McCreadie and Johnston; Steel, H. McCreadie, Gray, McPherson and Barker

*Referee:* Mr J. Baillie, St Bernards

A DEFEAT in a Scottish Cup Final is never easy to accept, but at least on this occasion, there was an immediate chance of revenge. Last week at Hampden, Rangers had beaten Celtic 3-1 to win the Scottish Cup, and the general opinion, even from Celtic sources, was that on this occasion the better team had won. It had been Rangers' first-ever capturing of the Scottish Cup, and yet they had been in existence for 21 years (they were born almost at the same time as the Scottish Cup itself). Their failure to win the Scottish Cup (they once, incredibly, in 1879 failed to turn up for a Scottish Cup Final replay!) had been a matter of some distress to their fans.

But now that monkey was off their back, although their slowness in winning the Cup means that they are the first winners of the Cup whose name does not appear on it. There was simply not enough room on the Cup itself, and their name appears on the plinth. For Celtic this defeat was a matter of some concern. They had, of course, won the Scottish Cup in 1892, but had now lost three finals in 1889, 1893 and now 1894. But there was still the Scottish League to be won in this the first season after the legalisation of professionalism.

Celtic had been behind that move, and eventually John H McLaughlin won his point. Being paid for playing football may have been abhorrent to the Victorian middle classes, but it had been going on for a long, long time, the favourite way of payment being a few coins slipped into the shoes, and if a player was seen

to limp out of the stadium after the game, well, he had picked up an injury, had he not? The official legalising of professionalism merely regularised a practice that had been rampant. There was now no need for hypocrisy, and it also brought Scotland into line with England where the practice had been legalised since 1886.

In the public perception, the Scottish League paled into insignificance in comparison with the Scottish Cup. The Cup was older, and the final was rightly looked upon as the highlight of the Scottish domestic season. The Scottish League, on the other hand, was a newcomer, ignored by Queen's Park who still saw themselves as the leaders of Scottish football, and was often referred to contemptuously as being what teams played in every Saturday when there was no Scottish Cup nor internationals. In 1894 the Scottish League consisted of ten clubs – Celtic, Rangers, Hearts, Third Lanark, Dumbarton, St Mirren, St Bernards, Leith Athletic, Dundee and Renton. Normally it would be expected that the league would be finished by the turn of the year unless, as this season, bad weather brought postponements.

Celtic's league form had been very good. They had won every game except for one defeat and one draw. The draw was 0-0 against Dumbarton but the defeat was an inexplicable 0-5 hammering from Rangers at Ibrox. The only possible excuse was that Sandy McMahan and Willie Maley were out that day, but that could hardly excuse the five-goal deficit. Apart from that, in other games against other opposition, form had been very good with loads of goals being scored by Sandy McMahan, Johnny Campbell, Jimmy Blessington and Joe Cassidy, and Celtic were well worth their place at the top.

The fly in the ointment was Rangers. Not only was there that 0-5 beating, there was also the 0-1 defeat in the Glasgow Cup semi-final, and now the defeat in the Scottish Cup Final. It seemed that Rangers could beat Celtic at will, and there was a danger that Celtic might develop an inferiority complex about them. Although Celtic still had another two league games left, today might be the best day to do it and retain the league flag that they had won last year. Rangers themselves were more or less out of the league race, having had several bad results.

## THE BHOYS FAMOUS OLD FIRM VICTORIES

The day was not untypical of late February. There was still snow around, but coming from the west it tended to come in showers, then we might get a period of sun, then more sleet, rain or snow. The pitch was damp. It was windy and unpleasant, but nevertheless some 10,000 made their way to New Celtic Park to see another Rangers v Celtic clash. This was the second season that New Celtic Park had been opened. It was not yet the finished article, but it was well on its way, and it had been awarded the Scotland v England international this year, something that the Celtic Committee had been hankering for. It was spacious and comfortable, with a new feature called a press box, so that the journalists (always a good breed to have on your side) could see the game in comfort as they sat at their desks with inkwells in them, and a telephone which, sadly, could not always be relied upon to work.

New Celtic Park held the 10,000 crowd with no bother. Celtic were without the ill Willie Maley, and this week they also dropped Johnny Campbell who had looked distinctly out of touch last week. Replacing Maley was Charlie McEleney, and Campbell's place was filled by John Divers. But the star man was, as always, 'the Duke' – Sandy McMahon, the best footballing artist of the day. He was a tall, ungainly sort of man with a distinctive style of running, but he was a complete football player who could score goals, could make goals for others, and, as important as anything, he had the correct attitude, always willing to encourage youngsters and despising any dressing-room cliques. Off the field, he was a scholar with a wide knowledge of Shakespeare and Burns.

Rangers won the toss and chose to play towards what is now called the Lisbon Lions end of the ground, with the sun hovering intermittently over where the Main Stand is now. The play was fast and furious, but generally in favour of Celtic, and after a few close things at either end, McMAHON put Celtic ahead. Details are scarce about the details of the goal, other than that it was 'capital', and then Rangers equalised just on the half-time whistle with a goal that came as a result of a scrimmage, with the goal being attributed to Gray. Thus, the teams crossed over with the score at 1-1. A draw would not have guaranteed Celtic the league,

for Hearts, who were second, might just have equalled that total. A win was required.

Celtic now had the wind behind them, and early in the second half they took the lead. It came from a drive down the left wing by John Divers, then a shot which was only parried to Jimmy BLESSINGTON who 'running in, sent the ball through'. For a while Celtic were well on top, and Dan Doyle showed everyone just why he was rated the best defender in the United Kingdom with his clearing and ability to set up another Celtic attack. It was ironic, therefore, that it was a mistake by Dan that led to the second goal.

He and Tommy Dunbar the right-back went for the same ball, and collided with each other, then after a certain amount of panic in the Celtic goalmouth, the ball came to Barker of Rangers, who equalised. This could have been disaster for Celtic, for only ten minutes remained to be played, but Celtic responded immediately. Doyle, clearly upset by his part in the equalising goal, charged down the left wing, crossed immediately and Joe CASSIDY was there waiting to score the winner, to the delight of the Celtic section of the crowd. No further goals were scored, and the full-time score remained Celtic 3 Rangers 2.

Thus, Celtic won the Scottish League for the second year in a row. There was a distinct lack of fanfare of trumpets or pyrotechnics or ticker tape or any of the modern celebrations of the Scottish League winning day. In fact, quite a few of the newspapers in their report of the game failed to mention that the league was now won by this Celtic victory. To a certain extent this can be explained away by the natural Victorian reserve at showing emotion, but it also reflects the way in which the Scottish League was regarded. We find several references to the league being a good 'consolation' for not winning the Cup as far as Celtic were concerned, and *The Dundee Courier* goes as far to describe the league as 'infantile' in comparison to the Scottish Cup. Times have changed since 1894.

What has not changed, however, is the joy felt by Celtic fans because of a victory over Rangers. This was a hard-fought win, and it did a lot to make them feel better after their disappointment the week before.