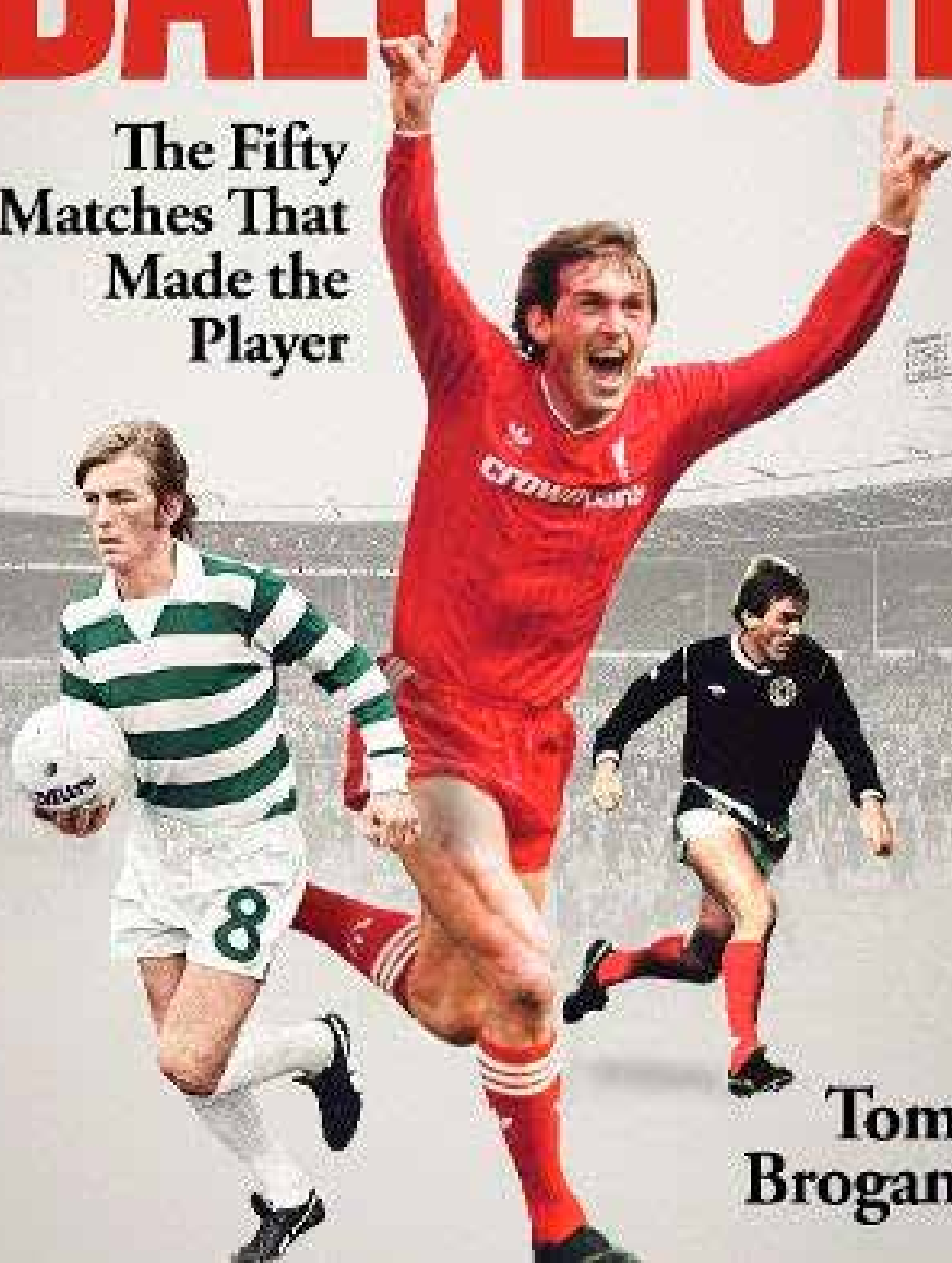


# DALGLISH

The Fifty  
Matches That  
Made the  
Player



Tom  
Brogan

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# Scotland Schoolboys 1-1 England Schoolboys

*14 May 1966, Victory Shield,  
Ibrox Stadium*

KENNY DALGLISH was six years of age when he played his first game of organised football. He played in goal.

Kenny was born on 4 March 1951. He spent his schooldays at Miltonbank Primary School in the north of Glasgow and High Possil Senior Secondary School. At primary school there was an organised team that gave Kenny his first taste of the game outside of jackets on the ground for goalposts in the playground.

When he went on to attend Possil Secondary School, his English teacher Mr Hughes took the school team. 'He gave so much of his time to us,' Dalglish told *The Telegraph* in 2006. 'I think he got as much out of it as we did.' Although no great academic, Kenny stuck in at school, did his homework, didn't let his sporting interests get in his way, and passed most subjects.

The family moved to Glasgow's southside into a flat that overlooked Ibrox Stadium, home of Rangers, the club that Kenny's dad supported, and the team that Kenny too began to follow.

Dalglish's football career progressed well as he played for Glasgow Schoolboys and Glasgow Schools, winning the Scottish Schools Cup in May 1966, beating East Ayrshire over two legs 6-1 on aggregate.

Kenny was encouraged as a youngster by his parents, Bill and Cathy. His dad took him to watch matches and was always ready for a kickabout when he wasn't working. There were a lot of parks around that area of Glasgow, so Kenny, like most young boys in the 1950s and 60s, was able to have a kickabout with friends night and day; whether there were only two of them or 40, someone would organise a game and make the numbers work.

He joined the team at Possil YM where he was coached by a guy called Bobby Dinnie. Bobby got what he termed 'a tingling sensation' in his stomach one morning on the pitch at St Augustine's Secondary School when he saw the young Dalglish, who immediately stood out among his peers. Bobby signed Kenny after a trial match. Seven of the Possil boys were wanted by Arsenal and six of them went to Highbury. The one who didn't go to London was Kenny. Kenny's dad told Bobby that as his only son he wanted the pleasure of watching Kenny play football every week.

Among the players who went to Highbury was Eddie Kelly, who would become part of Arsenal's Double-winning team of 1971.

Based in Denmark Street, Possil YM played in red and white strips, a gift from Arsenal, who kept close tabs on the boys from all the various age groups.

Bobby was proud of his association with Kenny, although he was proud of all the boys who came through his numerous boys' clubs. They included Gerry O'Brien, who played for Clydebank, Southampton and Hibs, Johnny Hamilton, who was with Rangers and Hibs, and Rangers great Bobby Russell.

'I was amazed how he used his hips,' Bobby told me when I spoke with him about Kenny in 2024. He also recalled the young Dalglish's vision and his shooting ability. Kenny played at right-half in the 'B' team. 'He had great vision for his age, and it was evident that he was going to be an international

player. Although he was surrounded by great talent, Kenny was the driving force.'

Dalglish was a great addition to the Possil team in more ways than one. 'Kenny's father had this wee van, he was a marine engineer and he went out to sort boats,' Bobby recalled. 'Now, in those days, we didn't have a lot of transport. We had to hire a van. But we couldn't afford to get them too often. So Kenny's father piled all the boys into the van. When we come out of the van, we're all covered in oil. But we were happy to get to where we were.'

Bobby also told a story of Cambuslang team Morriston YMCA's president John Scott, who always stood watching as all the Possil boys exited the van, hoping that 'Wee Dalglish' wasn't among them.

'He could look after himself on the pitch,' Bobby said of Dalglish in 1998, 'all Possil boys could look after themselves.'

Knowing he was destined to play at a higher level, Bobby recommended Kenny to Rangers. 'Big Jimmy Smith was the chief scout of the Rangers at the time,' Bobby told me. 'A famous player with Rangers.' Smith scored 419 goals in 441 appearances for the Ibrox side. 'He came to me one day. He said, "Bobby, I'm not taking Kenny up, because he's getting too hippy, and he'll never get any faster." Biggest mistake he ever made. Now, Kenny was never a fast guy. But his hips; his hips were his greatest asset. Because he could knock people sideways with his hips. That made up for a lack of speed.'

In his autobiography, *The Scout*, Dinnie recalled Dalglish's attributes even at that young age. 'Kenny had a strong build, his vision was outstanding and he could see things others probably couldn't see in the game. He was not a pacey player but he more than made up for it with all the other elements he had to his game. His positional sense was terrific. He had a great shot and scored some wonderful goals.'

'Possil YM was a successful club and a happy place,' Dalglish said in 1989. 'The club helped a lot of lads, including



myself, and we all appreciated Bob's help. He did it because he loved football and loved the club, he didn't do it because he wanted an accolade.' Kenny came back to Possil over the years and Bobby kept photo albums full of his appearances at award nights and raffles.

Douglas Smith scouted for Drumchapel Amateurs in the 60s and 70s. He saw Kenny play when he was 14 and considered him the best in his age group in Scotland. Smith went to Kenny's house to ask if he fancied joining Drumchapel Amateurs. Kenny rejected the approach, saying he couldn't let his side down. Smith left the option open for Kenny to call him if he ever changed his mind.

A few months into the new season Kenny did just that. He was invited in for a trial. Smith was delighted, confident that Drumchapel would sign up Dalglish, who was playing at inside-forward. However, the under-15s coach John Wilson already had Kenny's Scotland Schoolboys colleague Tommy Craig and future Scotland team-mate Asa Hartford in the same position. He told Smith he wouldn't take Kenny on, and reluctantly Smith had to tell Kenny the team didn't want him. Within months Craig had left for Aberdeen and Hartford went to West Bromwich Albion. Kenny would soon return to haunt Drumchapel as over the next few years he scored plenty against them playing for Glasgow United.

Glasgow United were formed by Sam Beck, who scoured the city and the surrounding areas for players. He recruited one of Bobby Dinnie's coaches, Bobby Keir, who took Kenny, and a few other boys, with him when he left Possil YM for the new club. While Kenny was playing at Glasgow United from 15 to 16, everyone around the club expected Rangers to ask him for a trial. Kenny knew that Rangers were aware of him. By that time he was playing for Scottish Schoolboys and it was known he was a Rangers supporter, going to see them whenever he wasn't playing. However, Rangers didn't make any advances. Kenny carried a little disappointment with him

around that time. He knew he was one of the best players in his age group and when he went to his bedroom he could look out forlornly on Rangers' training ground, the Albion.

Kenny lined up at the home of his favourite club in May 1966 in the Victory Shield match against England. He had made his debut for Scotland Schoolboys a few days earlier in Belfast as the Scots beat Northern Ireland 4-3.

The young Auld Enemy fixture was a popular match for scouts from English and Scottish clubs. Peter Lorimer, who signed for Leeds, and Jim Forrest and Willie Henderson of Rangers had played in the fixture in recent years.

The English side were much bigger physically but Scotland tore into them from the off. Mullin set up Tommy Craig, who hit a post in the first minute. Martin got on the end of a Dick Menzies cross but sent the header past the post.

The opening goal came in the 17th minute when Menzies picked up a pass from the right and fired past Steve Bowtell from 25 yards. Les Donaldson saved a header from Lyndon Hughes to stop England equalising. Hughes went on to have a good career with West Bromwich Albion and Peterborough.

Craig was proving to be the lynchpin in the Scotland team and he set up Dalglish for a drive that just went inches past the post. Despite a couple of great saves from Donaldson, England got the equaliser in the first minute of the second half when Robert Allen latched on to a mistake by Smith and shot home from close range.

The match ended as a draw and England retained the Victory Shield.

The *Glasgow Herald* picked out Craig and Donaldson as the 'personalities of the day'. In the *Daily Record* reporter Waverley wrote, 'The Scots in ball control and in understanding were superior, and made their opponents look very ordinary prospects.'

'Kenny and Tommy Craig ran the show,' goalkeeper Les Donaldson told the *Daily Post* in 1988 of his experiences with

the Scotland Schoolboys team. 'The other boys, including myself, were only too happy to go along with their plans. Looking back, Kenny seemed very mature.'

Donaldson went on to manage the Scotland Schools side and kept in touch with Kenny through the years, and marvelled at how Dalglish could still name all the boys who played with him in the Scotland under-15 team.

In the *Daily Record* Waverley wrote about the English clubs who were eager to make offers to the young Scots from that team. Kenny was certainly one of those being watched by scouts.

When Kenny was 15, a Scottish scout came to the house and asked if he would go down to Liverpool for a few days, along with some other promising boys. The trial went well, and he was invited down again. This time Kenny travelled down with another youngster called George Adams. They mixed with the senior pros, such as Roger Hunt and Willie Stevenson, and watched Liverpool play against Everton for the Charity Shield at Goodison. Hunt scored the game's only goal.

On 20 August 1966, Kenny played in the Liverpool B team against Southport. The Liverpool team was Lloyd, Witham, Adams, Mitchell, G. McCrae, Johnson, Bowman, Dalglish, Wilkinson, Koo, Humphries. Southport won 1-0.

Two days later, Kenny played in a trial game with other youngsters in Liverpool. Bill Shankly and Reuben Bennett dropped Kenny off at the YMCA where he was staying. 'Kenny, we like you. We think you'll make a good player at Liverpool. We'd like to sign you,' Shankly said. 'We'll send our Scottish representative to see your mum and dad.' A sheepish Kenny said nothing more than 'Thank you.'

Kenny returned to Glasgow the following day and immediately headed to Ibrox to support Rangers as they lost 4-0 to Celtic in the Glasgow Cup Final. He thought about Shankly's offer. As much as his desire was to become

a professional footballer he knew that he was too young to leave home and live so far away from his parents. Things were good at Glasgow United and what he would miss most was his fortnightly visits to Ibrox to see his beloved Rangers.

Dalglish also had a trial lined up that month at West Ham United. Islay-born Doug Eadie was at West Ham with Kenny. As young sportsmen who didn't drink, the pair of them spent time going to the cinema and watching the TV in their rooms, Kenny having a particular fondness for the US show *The Untouchables*.

Eadie signed for West Ham and played twice in the first team in the last two games of the 1966/67 season. He went on to play in Scotland for Morton and Ross County, where, in 1976, he infamously vaulted a fence to take on a fan who had been giving him abuse. Eadie also played with Christchurch United and Toronto Blizzard. When his football career ended, he became an actor, appearing in the movie *The Acid House* and the popular TV series *Taggart*. Eadie passed away in 2013.

Dalglish's Possil YM team-mate Jimmy Lindsay also went down to West Ham with him. Lindsay signed for the Hammers and played 39 times in the First Division for them, then played in the lower leagues with Watford, Colchester, Hereford and Shrewsbury. Other young Scots in the shape of George Andrew and Jimmy Mullen were also there.

While at West Ham, Kenny attended the 1-1 draw with Liverpool on 3 September 1966. The youngsters who were at West Ham were sat behind the dugout. As Shankly passed he spotted the rosy-cheeked young Kenny Dalglish and shouted out to the youngster, 'Kenny!' Kenny in Glasgow vernacular 'hit a beamer' (went red with embarrassment) and carried on walking.

At that time, Harry Redknapp was a 19-year-old winger, who had played seven first-team matches. In 2022 while

speaking with *Talksport* he recalled Dalglish at Upton Park. 'He came to West Ham with another little lad [Jimmy Lindsay], for about eight or nine days to train. I used to pick him up. I had a little car, a little Austin 1100, so I would pick Kenny up in the morning, took him to training, dropped him back after training with the other kid.'

Redknapp recalled watching Kenny on the training pitch. 'We had a practice match one Saturday morning. Kenny's an under-15 player but they put him in the first team against the reserves. The ball comes in to him – and you know the angle in the box, the one that he scored 100 times – he gets the ball, drops his shoulder and "bang!", bent it right in the top corner. Everyone clapped him, [including] Bobby Moore [who was] stood there on the halfway line. I can remember talking to Ron [Greenwood] about him after that game. "Will we get him?" I asked. "No chance," he said. "We've tried. Everybody wants him, but he's going to Celtic."

One of Dalglish's team-mates at Glasgow United was Vic Davidson, whose mother believed in her son so much she wrote a letter to Sean Fallon at Celtic, asking him to come along to watch him in an upcoming match in Rutherglen. Fallon, who had made 254 appearances for Celtic in the 1950s, was the club's assistant manager but had overall responsibility for the scouting network. Celtic received many such letters, and even though Fallon years later couldn't quite put his finger on what made that letter stand out, he felt he should respond. 'So I sent the scout Alec Boden to watch him,' Fallon recalled in *Scotland on Sunday* in 1989. 'He came back with a very good report, but he also recommended another boy in the same team. That was Kenny Dalglish.'

Alec Boden played over 100 league games for Celtic during the 1940s and 50s before becoming a scout. He had heard Kenny's name before, but he knew then that Kenny could make it in the game.

Celtic now wanted a closer look at Dalglish and Davidson.

A game was arranged between Glasgow United and a team made up of Celtic ground staff boys at the club's training ground at Barrowfield. United won 3-2, Kenny scored, and there watching was Jock Stein.

Speaking to Harry Hood's biographer Matt Corr, Dalglish said, 'Jock told our manager that he liked the number 4 but that he had heard he was going to Rangers. "Well, *he* hasn't heard that," was the reply. He asked me to come to Parkhead for training, and I jumped at the chance.'

Although Kenny supported Celtic's greatest rivals, it didn't come into his thinking when Celtic showed interest. Since Jock Stein's arrival as manager in 1965 Celtic had transformed from a club that hadn't won a trophy in eight years to an inspirational, exciting and successful team who were now making their mark on Europe.

Kenny wanted to become a professional footballer; he was going to go where his dream could become a reality.

Bill Dalglish knew the footballing education his son would receive under Jock Stein, a former Celtic captain and one of the most respected men in the British and European game. It was Sean Fallon though who would personally reach out to the Dalglish family. 4 May 1967 happened to be Fallon's fourth wedding anniversary. He was on his way down to Seamill Hydro with his wife Myra when he popped into the Dalglish family home.

'The family made me feel very welcome,' Fallon told his biographer Stephen Sullivan, 'but I got the impression that Kenny's dad wanted him to become a joiner rather than a footballer because he was worried he might not make it. I think it took a good hour-and-a-half for me to get round to talking to them about bringing the lad to Celtic and, by then, I'd completely forgotten about Myra and the kids down in the car. It was only when I was coming down the stairs, having got Kenny and his father to agree to sign, that I remembered.

And I'll tell you, I wasn't popular. Myra was going mad. She told me to forget about Seamill – that the day was ruined – and to just drive home. I don't think she spoke to me for the rest of the week.'

With the deal verbally sealed, Kenny's mother Cathy made the potentially fateful decision to show Sean around their modest flat. For most teenagers, such maternal pride would be merely embarrassing – for a boy from a Rangers-supporting household about to join Celtic, it risked catastrophe. The bedroom walls stood as a shrine to his Ibrox heroes.

Over the years, the urgency of this moment grew in Dalglish's retelling. In his 1996 autobiography, he described frantically tearing down the incriminating posters before Fallon could spot them. By 2013, the story had mellowed with time, Dalglish saying when Fallon arrived there was no panic to rip them off the walls.

Fallon told Sullivan he didn't notice any Rangers pictures. 'Kenny's allegiances didn't worry me in the least. If anything, it was quite nice to know that we had brought in this great player right from under Rangers' noses. Even then, I was pretty confident he would make it. He wasn't an obvious standout at that stage, but he had great spirit and bravery about him, and obviously loved playing the game. And, right from the start, he had that great balance and ability to shield the ball. I always felt he had the necessary potential.

'The folk at Rangers thought he was too slow. A few people felt that way about Kenny at the start. But I saw that he was fast in the head.'

'What he had was speed of thought and that would overcome speed of movement,' Fallon said in the documentary series *Football's Greatest*.

Kenny's first day of training with Celtic was in July 1967. He made his way to Argyle Street in the centre of Glasgow, and there he met, for the first time, a fellow new trainee by the

name of Danny McGrain, who also had a schoolboy devotion to Rangers.

While McGrain's allegiances changed quite quickly from the blue to the green half of Glasgow it took Kenny a little while to come round. In August 1967 the pair of Celtic youngsters were at an Old Firm match in the League Cup. Celtic scored and McGrain instinctively leaped up in jubilation. A shocked Dalglish couldn't believe McGrain wanted Celtic to win the tie. Celtic won the match 3-1 and qualified for the League Cup quarter-finals.

Even though Kenny was now training at Celtic, he still went on the Rangers supporters' bus to Ibrox. Stein and Fallon apparently weren't aware, but in time Kenny would drop his ties to Rangers and focus on playing for Celtic. But in his immediate future he found there was another club he would have to find loyalty towards.

It was practice at Celtic that they would farm young boys out to clubs in the junior ranks – junior in Scotland being the semi-professional leagues – in order that they could play competitive football outside their age ranges. Danny McGrain went to Maryhill in Glasgow's west end while Kenny was sent to Cumbernauld United.

**Scotland:** Donaldson (Stirlingshire), Milligan (Dumfriesshire), Wilson (Edinburgh), Pethard (Glasgow), Smith (Fife), Grant (Hamilton), Martin (Midlothian), Dalglish (Glasgow), Mullin (Glasgow), Craig (Glasgow), Menzies (Fife)

**Scorer:** Menzies (16)

**England:** Bowtell (East London Schools), Mitchell (Liverpool Schools), McLelland (Carlisle Schools), Sergeant (Liverpool Schools), Clarke (Chesterfield Schools), Merrick (Bristol Schools), Lowrey (Newcastle upon Tyne Schools), Hughes (Smethwick Schools), Dangerfield (Stroud Schools), Allen (Nuneaton Schools), Wilkinson (Stoke-on-Trent Schools)

**Scorer:** Allen (42)

**Attendance:** 6,000