



Stephen Poxon

Heartfelt
Recollections
of the Footballing
Legend Ernie Moss

ERNIE!

Foreword by Roy McFarland

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Warnock writes

Neil Warnock

*'A genuine, honest player who always
gave 100 per cent'*

I was managing Scarborough at the time, and we were facing the prospect of relegation, so I spoke to my chairman and said, 'Let me sign Ernie Moss and we'll stay in the league.' Thankfully, the chairman sanctioned the deal, and Ernie arrived from Stockport County and played a massive part in helping us stay up. Truth to tell, he was probably past his playing best by then, but the impact he made on morale was worth its weight in gold – and points! I wanted to sign Ernie because of his experience and knowhow, and he didn't let me down.

I first encountered Ernie when he was a young lad, just starting out at Chesterfield in the 1960s; thin and gangly, but even then, a genuine, honest player

who always gave 100 per cent. His game wasn't only about scoring goals, but about encouraging others too, which made a big difference both on and off the pitch. Ever since those early days in our respective careers, I regarded Ernie as a big, likeable lump!

I can honestly say I have never heard anyone say a bad word about Ernie, which is exceptional in the world of professional football. A lot of that was to do with his willingness to do anything for anyone, especially if it involved his beloved Chesterfield Football Club. He really loved that club, not just on the pitch, but as the special guest at countless numbers of presentations and awards evenings, that kind of thing. He would always give his time for the fans.

Ernie had a terrific sense of humour, which is a great asset to any manager, especially when the going gets tough and the dressing room needs a boost. I remember one evening when Scarborough were playing away to Torquay United and the late Steve Adams, another joker in our pack, was putting over cross after cross after cross. 'Addy' must have done that at least ten times, but Ernie just couldn't find the back of the net that night. I tore into the boys at half-time, reading them the riot act in no uncertain terms, after which Addy piped up, from

the corner, 'I'm so sorry I've put all those pinpoint balls across, Ernie. I didn't mean to get you into trouble.'

Immediately, the tension was broken as the dressing room collapsed into laughter, at Ernie's expense. Typically, he took the joke in good sport, and we went on to win, 1-0.

It really concerns me, nowadays, to read reports of players like Ernie living with dementia, as he did, possibly as a consequence of repeatedly heading heavy balls. I was a winger, so I hardly ever headed the ball, but even so, it worries me how many stories might still emerge. It breaks my heart to think of that big, likeable lump having spent his final years in a nursing home.

Neil Warnock enjoyed a 'journeyman' playing career in the lower leagues of English football (being named player of the year at Hartlepool United in 1972), and has gained a reputation as a successful manager, leading unlikely teams to promotion time and time again. He is a popular figure among supporters who warm to his outspoken, down to earth style of management and his proven ability to turn around the fortunes of ailing clubs, often, to his credit, on a limited budget.

Three generations of Ernie fans

Gemma Davey

'The one and only legend, Ernie Moss!'

This is my memory of Ernie.

I first met the Moss family on Ernie Moss Day² at Chesterfield FC. I had always known about Ernie Moss, though, as my dad used to watch him play and always spoke very highly of him as a professional footballer. In fact, looking back, he was something of a household name. Growing up, I asked my dad lots of questions about Ernie as, sadly, I never actually knew Ernie the player myself.

Dad and I had attended the Ernie Moss Day to help contribute towards a charity fundraiser in support of people living with dementia. We particularly wanted to attend because we had lost my grandad (Dad's dad) to this cruel disease, back in 2012.

Never expecting a reply, but really just wanting to offer some goodwill and encouragement, I messaged Ernie's daughter, Nikki, after the event, to

² In January 2015, Chesterfield declared their home match with Port Vale as Ernie Moss Day, when money was raised for dementia charities. This was so successful that it was repeated the following year, with all proceeds going to the Alzheimer's Society and Team Ernie, a fundraising group.

say congratulations, in the hope that they had raised a lot of money for a worthy cause. To my surprise, Nikki replied and the rest, as they say, is history.

In July 2016 I was getting married to Scott, and our wedding colours were those of Chesterfield Football Club, blue and white. At our reception, we wanted to name each table after a Chesterfield player, so I asked Nikki for permission to use Ernie's name. Typically, knowing the Moss family as I do now, permission was granted, and Nikki even asked Ernie to autograph some copies of the programme from Ernie Moss Day, to share among our guests. These went down a treat! It was a lovely, thoughtful gesture and definitely added a special touch to the day.

A few days after the wedding, Chesterfield were playing Matlock in a pre-season friendly, and I saw Nikki there with her husband, Stu, Nikki's mum, and Ernie. Noticing my sandals, he smiled, pointed to them and said 'shiny'. I have never forgotten this and never will. It made me smile then and still does now.

On the many subsequent occasions when I met Ernie, he never failed to make me smile, hold my hand or give me a hug. I will always treasure these memories.

So here's to the greatest player ever to grace a Chesterfield shirt – the one and only legend, Ernie Moss!

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Gemma Davey is a lifelong supporter of Chesterfield and Swindon Town, having been born in Swindon. Her late grandfather was from Bolsover, as is her father. Gemma and her dad have been season ticket holders at Chesterfield for several years.

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John's jottings

John Farnsworth

'The lad's doing his best'

I was at a reserve match in 1984, and a chap called John Clayton was playing as a striker for Town³ and missing quite a few chances.

A man sitting in front of me was giving the unfortunate Clayton some stick. Nothing unusual in that – a fan giving vent to his feelings! Happens all the time at any level of the game.

Unknown to me, though, Ernie Moss had come in and had sat down behind me in the near-empty stand.

The man in front (the heckler!) turned round, saw Ernie there, and began to complain about what a poor

³ 'Town' is an affectionate nickname given by fans to Chesterfield FC.

player John Clayton was, probably expecting Ernie to agree with that analysis.

Straight away, Ernie spoke up in defence of a fellow footballer and said, 'The lad's doing his best. He's a good player, but he's just having some bad luck, that's all.'

As it happened, John Clayton left Chesterfield at the end of the season and signed for Tranmere Rovers, scoring 35 goals in his first season for them.

Just goes to show, Ernie wasn't such a bad judge of a decent forward!

John Farnsworth has watched Chesterfield play (first team and reserves alike) since he was an eight-year-old boy, in 1954. The first match he ever saw was an FA Cup tie against Hartlepool United, and he remembers Town losing 2-1 on that occasion.

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Chris comments

Chris 'Ged' Marples

*'A true legend of my
hometown football club'*

Being a local lad, I recall my dad taking me to games at

Saltergate⁴ in the 1969/70 season, when Chesterfield were crowned Fourth Division champions.

Wearing number eight that year was a young Ernie Moss, who had played with my dad at Chesterfield Tube Works. Little did I know that I would subsequently be part of the 1984/85 championship-winning team with Ernie still wearing that same number in the line-up! He was a truly amazing pro in his later years at Saltergate and I enjoyed my time with him in that memorable season.

Away from the games, I used to go to Ernie's sports shop, Moss & Miller, for football gloves, boots and so on, as well as getting my cricket equipment from Geoff Miller.

Our playing partnership continued when Ernie moved to Stockport County and I too was transferred there on deadline day. I regarded that as a privilege, as I commuted to Stockport daily with Ernie and Les Robinson, another former CFC trainee, meeting up at Moss & Miller for our daily journey.

As Stockport played their home games on Friday evenings, we travelled up to train in the mornings, then Colin Murphy, the manager, used to put us all

⁴ Saltergate (officially the Recreation Ground), was the home of Chesterfield Football Club from 1871 until the club's relocation to the Technique Stadium in 2010 (the Technique Stadium was formerly known as the b2net and the Proact).

up in a hotel for an afternoon nap. Ernie loved that, especially after our trip to the booty shop! Some of us younger lads used to go and put bets on, then watch the televised Friday horseracing.

It was a pleasure to play with Ernie at both Chesterfield and Stockport. He was a great example to the younger players of both clubs and even towards the end of his career he was always at the front of any training runs we did. After retiring I played alongside him in some testimonial matches and his enthusiasm was still there, undimmed.

Ernie Moss was always a man you could talk to, any time, anywhere. He is a true legend of my hometown football club, and in my opinion they should retire the number eight shirt in his honour. With respect to other Chesterfield players, no one will ever be as worthy of that shirt number as Ernie was.

Chris Marples has the unusual distinction of having played in the Football League as a goalkeeper, and as a wicketkeeper and batsman for Derbyshire County Cricket Club. His goalkeeping career ran from 1984 to 1995, beginning and ending with Chesterfield but also taking in spells with York City and Stockport County. He won a Fourth Division championship medal with Chesterfield and was part of the club's 1994/95 squad

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that won promotion from the fourth tier. Chris represented Derbyshire CCC in their second XI before graduating to first-class matches for the club as a first-team player.

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Joshua, journalism and jokes

Joshua Smith

*'He was always a real pleasure to
be around'*

The first time I really met Ernie would have been around 2012. Me and my dad won tickets, as at the time the club was running a promotion whereby if you bought something from the club shop, your name was automatically entered into a raffle to win a hospitality matchday package, and me and my dad won! I can't remember who Chesterfield were playing that day, but it was Luis Boa Morte's first game for the club, so that would date it.

At half-time, as I'm sitting having a beer and my dad's at the bar getting a drink, who should come and sit next to me but the legend, and the very humble, Ernie Moss. He asked if the seat was taken, and I said, 'Not at all, and even if it was, you are more than welcome to it!' I'm sitting there in awe

of this absolute club legend who has just sat down next to me!

We were watching Sky Sports News and he was pointing out all these different teams, and who they were and what they were like when he was playing. Teams like Barrow, and what a powerhouse they were in his day, and Halifax; talking about some of the battles he'd had with them, and Manchester City, saying that they weren't feared by anybody any more. It was just the most fascinating insight, not only into the man himself, but into football in general. To be looking at all these teams, it was almost topsy-turvy.

Those teams you would expect to be the minnows had been giants in their time. And Manchester City, who had always been a top-flight team in my lifetime, but were then in the Third Division. Ernie was telling me about goals he'd scored against different teams, and I just sat there, drinking it all in. Ernie was so humble. Then we shook hands and went back to watch the second half.

That memory has stayed with me ever since, and always will.

Another memory of Ernie arose because I worked closely with Jenny, Nikki, Sarah and all the family to help with the fundraising events and campaigns to

which they were so tirelessly, endlessly, committed. I used my journalism training to help them, and I regard it as a privilege to have done so.

On one occasion, they had asked us to look after Ernie while they were at the bar, just to keep an eye on him really, and I noticed him deep in thought and conversation with my dad, the pair of them poring over the pages of a football programme and talking about the game.

Ernie's speech wasn't all that great at that time, to be honest, but the joy in his face, just talking about football, was special.

It brings a tear to my eye to remember two heroes in that moment, my dad and Ernie Moss, sitting chatting together, laughing and smiling. My dad has always been my hero, both of us season ticket holders going to Saltergate, much as Ernie has always been a hero to Sarah and Nikki, and Ernie was of course a legend. That was a really wonderful time.

And then as the years have gone on, whenever I've been with Ernie and his family, I remember those times when he loved to play the role of practical joker, poking me in the ear, for example, in the press box, when I was looking the other way, making me jump, or me giving Ernie a lift home in the car, with any number of distractions. All these things just

epitomised who he was; that lovely sense of humour, joking. He never lost his fun side. He was always a real pleasure to be around.

Likewise, the love that I've seen surrounding Ernie over the years, especially with the journey towards his passing away, with his health declining. Doing the job I do, there is quite often sad news to cover and report, and the story of Ernie's passing was very sad, but at the same time quite beautiful, in the sense of all the tributes it inspired.

There was a great outpouring of love associated with that particular news.

My thoughts are with his family now. It's been a real privilege to have known Ernie Moss.

Joshua Smith is a father of two and a lifelong fan of Chesterfield FC. He has enjoyed a varied career in radio journalism since he graduated from the University of Derby. A successful sports writer and news presenter, he has broadcast on several radio stations in and around Derbyshire, and at the time of writing is the owner of Derbyshire Media Company (www.derbyshiremediacompany.co.uk). Joshua is heavily involved with presenting live radio and online commentaries of Chesterfield's games.