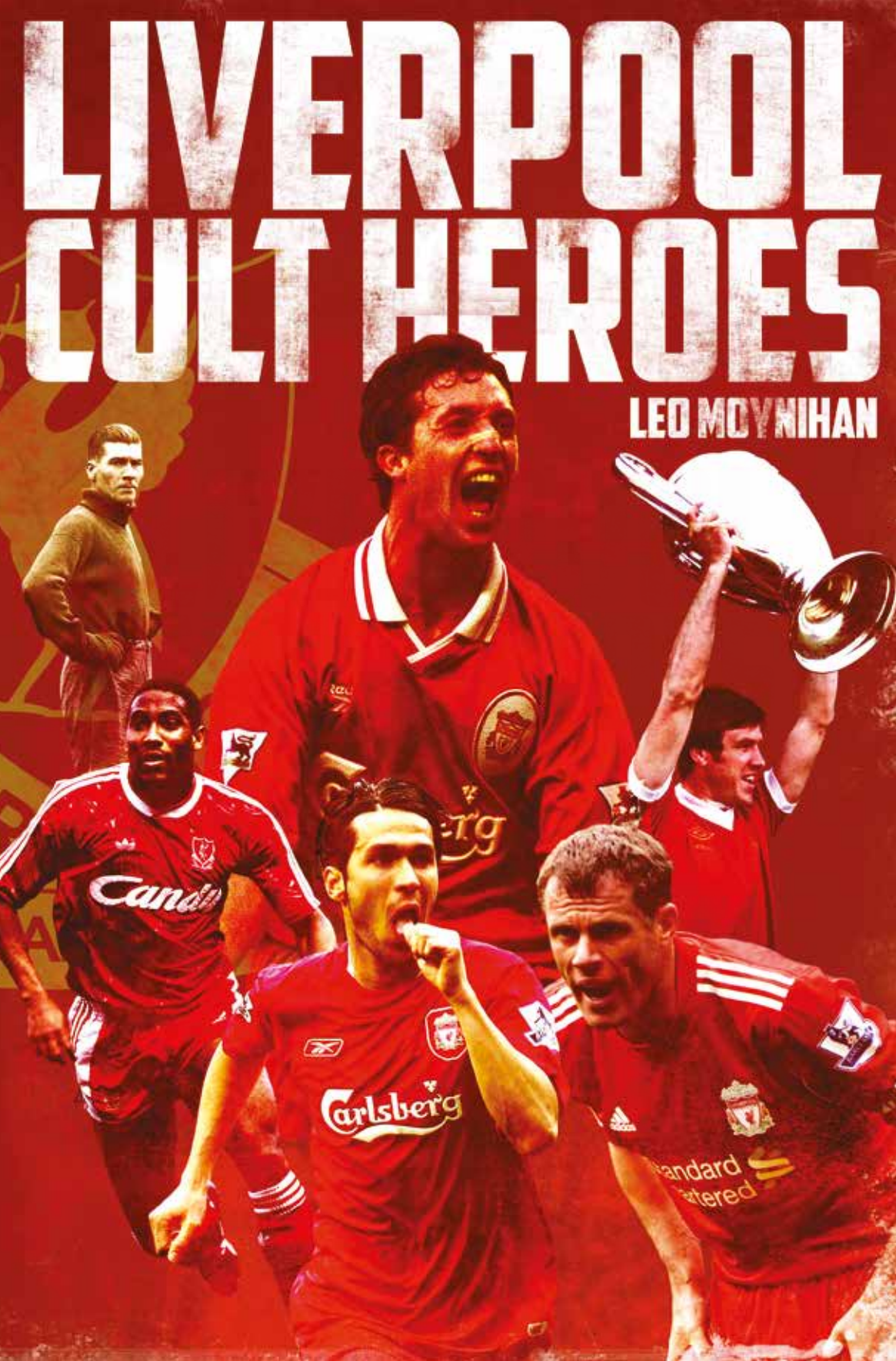
LIVERPOOL CULT HEROES

LEO MOYNIHAN



Contents

Introduction

> The Kop is not the members' enclosure at Ascot, and nor does it regret it.
>
> Arthur Hopcraft, writer

JOEY Jones – that most wonderful of Cult Heroes – tells a funny story. In 1977, Liverpool played FC Zurich in the semi-finals of the European Cup. The second leg (an easy 3–0 win to secure a 6–1 aggregate win) at Anfield ends with Joey swapping his shirt with Swiss international, Rene Botteron. Joey has a few beers and goes home, his Zurich shirt very much still with him and now among his impressive collection.

A few days later, a guy walking along the street approaches Joey and says he's got hold of one of his shirts. 'How did you get that then?' asks Joey.

'My missus is a cleaner at the Holiday Inn and she was clearing up in one of the rooms and found it. One of the Zurich players had left it behind.'

Joey Jones – and his shirt – might not hold a massive amount of sway in European circles but walk among a group of Liverpool fans and ask who ate the frogs legs, who made the Swiss roll and who then munched on 'Gladbach, and you will only get smiles and dreamy tales of Rome and a left-back called Joey Jones.

Cult Heroes don't have to have opponents queuing up to bag their shirts. Some might but mostly they aren't about that. Cult Heroes and the affection they garner isn't as simple as the goals they score or stop. The *Oxford English Dictionary* explains the term by suggesting a Cult

Hero is, 'Greatly admired by a small audience or is influential despite limited commercial success.' It's a basic definition that can't try to explain the sometimes unexplainable reasons a football fan can take to a player, but it does help get to the bottom of why some of the greatest men ever to pull on Liverpool red aren't in the next few hundred pages.

Writing a book on Liverpool that includes the word HERO but doesn't include chapters on Kenny Dalglish, Ian Rush, Steven Gerrard, Roger Hunt or Billy Liddell did cause the odd sleepless hour or so, but here's the thing; those players were universally idolised, they were heroes, they were legends, they were the best. Cult Heroes? No.

In this book I wanted to explore other players who have hugely contributed to the club's rich tapestry of success and history, but who also tickled something extra in those who came to watch them.

Take Jamie Carragher. Anfield, May 2005. The Champions League semi-final. Chelsea are in town and Jose Mourinho is getting as frustrated as his strikers as Liverpool resolutely defend their early one-goal lead. Mourinho steps from his dug-out and chastises Luis Garcia. The Portuguese thinks he's diving.

Now, the run to Istanbul is famous for many amazing goals, blocks and saves but Carragher marching over to the Chelsea manager and reminding him that his old Porto team was the most cynical he'd ever seen, is as memorable for other reasons. Then, when Carragher is finished, he tells the Chelsea manager to 'fuck off'. See, that sort of thing stays with fans as much as the goals and the blocks and the saves.

Some of the players here are greats too. Carragher for one. Alex Raisbeck in the 1900s, Elisha Scott in the 1920s and 1930s, Ian St John, Ray Kennedy, Steve Nicol, John Barnes, Luis Suarez; they all make a great case for making an all-time Liverpool XI. They also offered something more. Something distant but fantastic. Something that is a step away from the great things they did with the ball.

I will have missed some out of course. People have got in touch and asked, 'Is Ronnie Rosenthal in then? Is Titi Camara in? How about Tommy Lawrence? Is Torben Piechnik in?' Now the first three all have a case, but Piechnik? No. People mustn't get confused with a cult and a poor player. None of the guys in this book are that.

Writing about them all – and talking to plenty of them – has been a pleasure. By researching the likes of Albert Stubbins and Elisha Scott, I often felt like Kevin Costner in that wonderfully sentimental baseball movie, *Field of Dreams*. The more I discovered and the more I learnt,

the more I was sure those old-timers in their baggy shorts and woollen jumpers had come out of the corn and were kicking a ball about in my garden.

I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I did writing it and yes, I hope you scream at some of the selections and demand to know why your favourite Cult Hero hasn't made the cut.

You'll Never Walk Alone.

Leo Moynihan, September 2014

Alex Raisbeck

1898–1909
Appearances: 341
Goals: 19

LESS than a decade in, but they came. Less than a decade in, and there they were, in their droves. Less than ten years since their club's birth and here were their team – for the first time in their young history – champions of England. The best around. And so they came.

Liverpool had won their last game of the 1900/01 season at West Bromwich Albion to claim the title, and crowds had gathered at Liverpool's Central Station to welcome them home. This act of mass appreciation would of course in the club's rich future become common practice but today, this was new and this was wonderful.

Some squads returning from glorious travels would be greeted by seemingly millions, as they travelled home from far and wide to show off the spoils of war. Track, road and air would be used to transport glorious teams in the future but today, for the first time it was the former and the crowds gathered with a novel glow.

This wasn't 2005. A hundred and four years later the team returning from Istanbul with the European Cup were met by their own Bosphorus river of red as they showed off the famous trophy for the fifth time. This was different, more conservative, more Edwardian in its manner but no matter, hordes of locals made their way to meet the train carrying their men.

The train's engine pulls into the station. A fife and drum band strikes up 'The Conquering Hero', perfect for a team and its individuals who have become more than just footballers at the local club. They have

captured an emotion, awoken something in supporters who now see them as just that, conquering heroes.

Steam filled the platform as the engine stopped but then there he was. Amid the train's clouds and the grey Edwardian suits, there was this shock of blonde hair and as he stepped off the train onto Liverpool soil, hats soared toward the station's 65m-arched roof and cheers rang out. This was their captain, their first superstar. This was Alex Raisbeck.

The bond between heroes in red and those who have travelled from Tottenham to Tokyo to watch them would be part of the very essence of the football club for decades to come, but this was arguably the first; the one that set that bond in stone.

Ask many with a long lasting interest in Liverpool to name an all-time XI and Alex Raisbeck will often be the name on the team-sheet that raises an eyebrow. Those picking such teams though aren't being clever for clever's sake. The football hipster is a new breed of football fan that will take pleasure in telling the pub about what they are missing if they aren't watching German football or how the next big thing will actually be the Norwegian first division.

Those who tell you Raisbeck deserves his place in an all-time Anfield XI are not football hipsters. They are looking at the facts and the facts tell you that not many players had an impact on the football club like Raisbeck, a defender who arrived, galvanised, inspired and ultimately deserves to be talked about in the same conversation as Liddell, Dalglish and Gerrard.

Signed from Hibernian in his native Scotland, Raisbeck arrived at Anfield in 1898 and whilst the club had settled into the new choppy waters of Association Football in the first six years since they were formed, they and their fans – themselves trying to get a foothold above their city rivals, Everton – were in need of a push, a player to bring more than amateurish enthusiasm. They needed something special and in Raisbeck they got just that.

Liverpool Football Club was formed in 1892; the product of a good old fashioned boozy row. Everton had been founded in 1878, but the board were soon to fall out with the club president and landlord, John Houlding, a prominent local businessman and brewer.

The 1880s had seen Association Football flourish on Merseyside and in the city of Liverpool. Clubs were popping up everywhere and the Liverpool Cup competition – formed in 1886 – attracted 20 clubs, including Everton.

Football though hadn't always been an easy sell in an area traditionally more taken with both rugby and cricket. In 1878, the city had not one football club, as the upper and middle classes trying to bring the sport from their public schools to the masses, found an unwilling audience in the working class population of Liverpool. John Williams in his brilliant history of Liverpool Football Club writes:

'There were plenty of returning ex-Harrow public schoolboys living in Liverpool who might have been expected to spread Association Football. But because of the stark divisions between rich and poor in the city, sport could not be so easily passed down from local social elites, as had happened elsewhere. And, in any case, the poor in Liverpool's docklands had neither the space nor the good health to play sport.'

Those working people in Liverpool also didn't have the free time afforded to others around the country. The Ten Hours Act passed in 1847 had eventually seen East Lancashire textile workers' hours reduced and they were granted a one o'clock finish on Saturdays from 1874.

From the mid 1870s most men in Birmingham did not even work on Saturdays and playing football and cricket became common practice. In Liverpool, dockworkers wouldn't see free Saturday afternoons until 1890 and by then the Football League was two years old.

The 1880s though had seen the tide turn. 1882 saw over a thousand fans watch an exhibition match on Stanley Park and a year later the local press were carrying results from the newly formed FA Cup competition.

By now Everton had been founded, firstly as St Domingo, a Methodist Church parish that offered locals both cricket and Association Football. This was common practice. Football often stemmed mainly from religious groups and churches. Four of the five Merseyside clubs that would play professional football originated from religious groups.

As mentioned Association Football had been born in the nation's public schools; Victorian institutions hell-bent on ensuring the moral wellbeing of the future ruling classes and beyond. Football was celebrated for its cleansing properties, a way to save both the young and the urban poor from themselves.

The laws of football had been written up and agreed upon in 1862 and embraced by schools such as Eton and Harrow. Effeminate characteristics in boys had to be quashed, individualism outlawed and the sport of football was seen as key in doing this and eradicating supposedly evil sexual desires.

The headmaster at Harrow in 1895 even sewed up the boys' pockets; such was his and society's fear of sexual freedom. Victorian men were constantly advised to 'master the beast'.

It was amid this puritanical backdrop that Liverpool Football Club was formed. Everton were playing their games at Anfield, near Stanley Park and were attracting good crowds for their Football League games.

The stadium was owned by the less God-fearing John Houlding who charged a competitive rent that he felt was fair for a ground described in 1889 by the local press as a 'huge circus, with its two immense galleries, rising tier after tier, and its covered stands, stretching the length of the ground.'

Houlding also owned the Sandon Hotel near the ground, in which the players would change and plenty of his beer would be sold (he also wanted the stuff to be exclusively sold in his stadium). The Methodist board at Everton began to get twitchy abour their president's off-field business interests and when Houlding – in his mind fairly – raised the rent, relations broke down and the club eventually broke away, buying a new plot of land on Mere Green in Walton, a spot that would eventually become Goodison Park.

A frustrated Houlding tried to keep one step ahead and register the name of Everton Football Club but was usurped by his old tenants and so this forward-thinking, ambitious man was left with a football stadium but no team to play in it.

As ever, Houlding thought big. Who wants a name that is so localised anyway? Everton wasn't big enough? Why not go the whole hog? Liverpool Football Club and Athletic Grounds Company Limited was created on 3 June 1892 and Houlding along with those who had stayed loyal to him following the split had to go about creating a team that would attract the punters and eventually compete at the highest level.

There would be hoops to jump through though. The fledgling club applied to the Football League for immediate membership but their request was declined. Houlding smelt a rat and was sure the Everton board had wielded their influence on the Football League's committee and blocked the move.

'[Liverpool FC] didn't comply with regulations,' said the League, but with a fine stadium, good financial backing and in an area more than warming to the sport and on the cusp of fanatical support, there was an air of mischief to the decision. No matter, the club and its founding fathers would persevere.

For now the Lancashire League would have to do and so the priority was to get men, good men, to wear the kit and call themselves Liverpool Football Club players. Players. Those hundreds of men who over the years have persevered, stumbled, entertained, broken hearts, bled and excelled all in the name of Liverpool.

Fans would come to love them, scorn at them, painfully will them on and of course envy them. Kenny Dalglish, that master of his craft and arguably the best of them once scored one of those goals where in a whirl of red he has turned a defender inside out before battering the poor ball into the pained rigging.

After the game, he was asked how he did it. 'I just shut my eyes and hit it,' he said.

If only it was that easy and how those fans – who over the years have yearned to just shut their eyes and hit it – have come to look on Dalglish's breed as godlike heroes, wishing away the days until they could next get to the match and see them. For now though, there weren't any and the club had to start casting their net.

Everton had won the league championship in 1891 and so to lure those who had achieved that wasn't going to be easy. The big coup for Houlding and his directors was the skipper Andrew Hannah, a Scottish right-back and it was from north of the border (like so often throughout the club's history) that many of the new players would call home.

On Thursday 1 September, Liverpool FC played a friendly against Rotherham Town and two days later their first competitive game against Higher Walton in the Lancashire League, a game they won 8–0 in front of a couple of hundred curious fans. Ten of the players were Scottish, whilst one – Joe Pearson – was a Scouser. Locals might have wondered just how representative this Liverpool team were, but with the Lancashire League won that season, those intrepid first fans were soon supporting a Football League club.

Attendances had risen dramatically and whilst not as healthy as Everton, the club was competing. Yes there was relegation in 1895, but they bounced straight back and in 1896 appointed their first manager, Tom Watson formerly of Sunderland and regarded as one of the great footballing men around.

Watson was a forward-thinking boss. Tobacco for example should be 'sparingly used' and he set about building a team that came spine-tinglingly close to winning a first title in 1899, only to lose their last winner-takes-all match at league stalwarts Aston Villa.

By now Watson's team had a spine; a strength respected around the country and at its heart was Alex Raisbeck. A Scottish international, a powerhouse and a winner the club and its growing army of fans could pin their hopes on.

Alexander Galloway Raisbeck was born in Stirling in 1878, but more importantly moved to Larkhall in Lanarkshire as a young boy. Important because of the area's prolific cradling of footballing talent that would one day include Jock Stein and Sir Matt Busby.

The Raisbeck family lived opposite a common and it was on that stretch of grass that Raisbeck honed his skills. He and his six brothers were to be found 'chasing the leather', as much as their free time allowed it. They were hours well spent.

Like so many in the area, a life in the mines beckoned for Raisbeck, but he had shown real talent playing for Larkhall Thistle aged just 15. Here he played at outside-right, an explanation for why – although he played at centre-back for most of his career – he was so comfortable on the ball. He was signed by Edinburgh giants Hibernian and on 12 September 1896, made his debut in a 2–2 draw with Abercorn.

Raisbeck shone immediately, impressing those in his own country and of course those south of the border. Having played 29 games (he scored four goals) Raisbeck was loaned out to Stoke City, a club struggling to avoid relegation from Division One at the end of the 1897/98 season. A play-off system was in place back then and thanks largely to Raisbeck's impressive displays, the club from the Potteries survived.

It seemed certain that Stoke would make their move and sign the defender, but instead Raisbeck headed north once more. It is unclear whether Stoke simply refused to pay the money needed to guarantee Raisbeck's services; they were due to meet the Hibernian chairman, but instead failed to turn up.

One man who was with the Hibernian officials that day though was Liverpool's astute manager, Tom Watson. Watson made it his business to know of talent and especially talent that might just be available. Watson made his move, agreed a £350 fee to the Edinburgh side, and convinced Raisbeck that his playing future was with Liverpool.

Liverpool had finished mid-table but they were a club on the up. Everton may have been the big spenders of the time (the Blues paid out a huge £5,787 on new players during the 1898/99 season) but it was their neighbours who under Watson were building something; catching the eye.

Eighteeen thousand fans turned out at Anfield for the first game of the season, a 4–0 thumping of The Wednesday. Raisbeck made his debut, impressed with his strength, guile and never-say-die lung-busting bombasity. The fans were beginning to come and now they were beginning to adore their heroes.

Those 18,000 fans would have left Anfield on that early September evening, proud and hopeful of their team, just as they were of their city; for decades a place that enjoyed worldwide fame as arguably the world's foremost port. John Masefield, a well-travelled and eminent writer of the time and future poet laureate compared the Thames in London to Liverpool's famous river and port:

'It is a wretched river compared to the Mersey, and the ships are not like the Liverpool ships, and the docks barren of beauty… It is a beastly hole after Liverpool; for Liverpool is the town of my heart and I would rather sail a mudflat there than command a clipper ship out of London.'

For centuries, Liverpool had built its reputation as a thriving port, attracting thousands and thousands of immigrants from as close as Wales and as far as China. Yes, this was a city buzzing with trade, poverty and wealth in equal extremes, crime, drunkenness and religious diversity. In 1839, Herman Melville, then merely a cabin boy who had sailed from New York (his novel *Moby Dick* wasn't written until 1851), arrived in Liverpool and was taken by the sheer madness of its port and streets:

'In the evening, especially when the sailors are gathered in great numbers, these streets present a most singular spectacle, the entire population of the vicinity being seemingly turned into them. Hand organs, fiddles and cymbals, plied by strolling musicians, mix with the songs of the seamen, the babble of women and children, and the groaning and whining of beggars… Sailors love this Liverpool; and upon long voyages to distant parts of the globe, will be continually dilating on its charms and attractions, and extolling it above all other seaports in the word.'

It was a reputation that had continued to grow, as had its population, reaching over 700,000 by 1901. In 1880 it was granted city status and of course away from those docks, the pursuit of footballing glory was firmly on the peoples' agenda.

Football as a pastime and an organised spectacle had thrived in cities all over Britain. Liverpool had come relatively late to the party but like so many industrial hubs, the game was becoming bigger and bigger to city folk everywhere.

That wonderful sportswriter, Geoffrey Green summed it up when he wrote: 'Football is the game that grew to its full powers in the cities. Unlike the gentle rhythm of cricket, which is of the soft English countryside, this football is the product of town dwellers. It is full of passion and emotion. It is strident and raucous. It symbolises the hopes and disappointments of the people who are imprisoned within the high walls of brick and mortar.'

Those who called their collection of bricks and mortar Liverpool and who now called themselves fans of the football club with the same name, by now had a fine team and the 1898/99 campaign – although ending in disappointment – underlined the massive strides now taken on and off the pitch. Defeat to Aston Villa on the last day of the season cost them the title. A semi-final defeat at the hands of Sheffield United caused further heartache but the team was now noticed and so was Raisbeck.

Despite his young age, Raisbeck had proved a powerhouse in red (the colour adopted by the club in 1896; they had previously worn Everton's hand-me-down blue and white shirts). A box-to-box man, a defender yes, but a man with incredible stamina and footballing nous able to turn defence into attack in a swashbuckling instant. At 5ft 10in he was tall for the age and used that height brilliantly, rarely losing an aerial challenge.

Built like Gerrard, with the defensive wherewithal of Sami Hyypia and the competitive qualities of Graeme Souness, Raisbeck was the complete player and the fans adored him. He was Gerrard the box-to-box player we fans fell in love within the 2000s but also the Gerrard who has wowed crowds with his defensive discipline in the latter part of his career. He was both Steven Gerrards, all rolled into one and oh, how the fans loved him for it.

The blonde hair and the lush moustache gave Raisbeck that boys-own Edwardian style, but don't be fooled by the position he played. In Raisbeck's day the centre-half was the team's number 10. Sure he also had to stop attacks but he would start them too.

From the days of village versus village games played between 50 plus people chasing a pig's bladder, football had gentrified itself, laws had been drawn up, but going into the 1880s refined passing and tactics were still rarities.

A columnist wrote in the *Scottish Umpire* in 1884 that, 'Take any club that has come to the front and the onward strides will be found

to date from the hour when the rough and tumble gave place to swift accurate passing and attending to the leather rather than the degraded desire merely to coup an opponent.'

Cerebral passing was starting to be embraced and soon so was a more considered approach to players' positions. The idea of six forwards (with two centre-forwards often getting in each other's way) was being re-thought and a new 2–3–5 formation meant a new position was born and embraced, that of the centre-back.

Jonathan Wilson in his excellent book, *Inverting The Pyramid* writes, 'The gradual spread of 2–3–5 meant that the centre-half soon became the fulcrum of the team, a figure far removed from the dour stopper he would become. He was a multi-skilled all rounder, defender and attacker, leader and instigator, goal-scorer and destroyer. He was, as the great Austrian football writer Willy Meisel put it, "the most important man on the field".'

At Liverpool, Raisbeck was certainly that and with gifted players around him, honours started to be challenged for. After the disappointment of 1899, Liverpool finished a deflated tenth but then came that push for a first title and the inaugural tag of champions.

Liverpool got off to a flying start and destroyed back-to-back title winners Aston Villa 5–1 at Anfield to cement their ascendency. Raisbeck was 'ever prominent with head and feet', whilst new signing Sam Raybould was providing the goals.

A trip to Goodison Park in the September had warranted only a point but Raisbeck's performance was the standout, especially to the correspondent at the *Liverpool Mercury*. '[Raisbeck was] the prominent figure in every movement whether of attack or defence… Now taking the ball clean from opponents' toes, now urging on his forwards with a well judged pass, now darting to the assistance of his backs and checking many a dangerous rush. Always when danger threatened or opportunity presented itself was the light-haired Scot.'

The return fixture at Anfield in January saw Raisbeck and his opposing skipper, Jimmy Settle discuss abandoning the game at 1–1 due to the torrential rain. The crowd began to sing, 'Play the Game' and so on they went, but it was Everton who prevailed with a late winner.

Three days later Queen Victoria died and whilst there was immediate shock, the *Liverpool Review* noted that, 'The city of Liverpool went about its business pretty much as if little or nothing had happened.'

The death of a monarch couldn't sway the city from an optimism that saw businesses thriving. The docks were planning expansion on a huge scale and whilst Victoria's death saddened many, life was good.

Suddenly though, things were not so good at Anfield. Defeat to Everton was followed by an FA Cup defeat at Notts County and then another league setback at Bolton. Then that same optimism flowed back into the club with the sort of run that would win so many later titles. Eleven games unbeaten saw Liverpool top the table and that last day win at West Bromwich Albion meant the league championship – for the first time – was theirs. As the team returned to the city, there were those fans.

'Long before 11 o'clock last night,' wrote the *Daily Post* on 30 April 1901, 'a large concourse of people assembled on the Central Station.' They had come to cheer, to lift their heroes aloft as way of appreciation for the glory they had bestowed upon this now thriving and proud set of fans.

The rather rotund manager Tom Watson was given the hero treatment although, according to the *Post*'s observer, 'No arms were long enough to grip his girth and no muscle strong enough to lift him up.'

Watson had shown a talent for management as large as that waistline and thanks largely to his skipper, the team had blossomed into the best around.

Captain and talisman, Raisbeck's ability was never in question and his popularity among the fans wouldn't waver but the club's fortunes were about to go on a short, sharp rollercoaster ride that would see Liverpool go from champions, to also-rans, to relegation, to promotion and back up to champions again all in only half a decade.

Relegation was a bitter pill to swallow. A 5–2 hammering at Goodison on April Fool's Day in 1904 was a blow and the joke might have been on the Reds when fellow relegation strugglers Stoke won easily at the same ground just days later to cement Tom Watson's side's fate.

Promotion occurred swiftly and without fuss. Liverpool lost just three games and Raisbeck was once again instrumental in their good form. Second Division sides were dismantled with ease and so an FA Cup tie against Everton caused many Reds to believe that a 'shock' was on the cards. Everton drew at Anfield and were fortunate to win the replay at Goodison where Raisbeck was at his swashbuckling best.

'Never has Raisbeck shown more wondrous football,' wrote an observer in the Liverpool programme. 'He was here, there and everywhere. Now initiating an attack, now breaking up another, and again chasing Sharp when that lithe young man appeared to be all on his own. He dominated the whole field, and was, without question, the one superlative player. I am never inclined to over-elaborate praise, but truly, Alec Raisbeck was a giant among pigmies.'

Watson was confident that his side wouldn't just survive back in the top-flight but could compete and even win it again. He was right. Three heavy defeats wasn't a great start to the season but soon they found their groove and with Raisbeck (albeit without his Edwardian moustache – '[Raisbeck] has joined the bare-faced brigade,' remarked one hack) instrumental as ever, the title was for the second time nestled at Anfield.

As, 'Ubiquitous as a sprite' was how the *Daily Post* described Liverpool's great Scot and once again on arriving back from Bolton on the penultimate weekend of the season (Liverpool had lost but so had their closest rivals, Preston North End) they were greeted by hordes of fans, or as the *Daily Post* observed, 'several hundreds of enthusiasts who cheered the players lustily and escorted them to their wagonette.' And so it was off to the Sandon Hotel in Anfield for a party fit for champions.

Fans will have woken with their own sore heads the following morning but – better than any pill – the thought of Raisbeck dominating opponents and games alike will have soothed their boozed-up brows.

Those same fans were rewarded with a new mass of cinder and soil at the southern end of the ground, on Walton Breck Road. That championship season had seen attendances average18,000 but the Liverpool board recognised that they could get more in and so that summer the new section of Anfield was built.

Other clubs such as Woolwich Arsenal had their Spion Kops, named after the *Spioenkop*, a hill in South Africa that was the scene of a bloody battle in 1900 that cost the lives of thousands of British men; many of them from the Lancashire regiment. Liverpool's new stand would be called the same, and this one would last and last. On it, Raisbeck was the first hero.

The 1905/06 triumph was to be Raisbeck's last glorious moment in Liverpool red. He remained the team's most vital cog, but the wheel wasn't always turning as it should, most notably though when Raisbeck

was injured, or in the case of 1907, missing thanks to a long and serious case of diarrhoea.

'Raisbeck is beyond comparison,' wrote an admiring *Daily Post*. 'Raisbeck has been for years the Liver's lucky star – a great, outstanding personality, not only in his team but in the football firmament… Without Alex Raisbeck Liverpool would have to be born again, so to speak. That the redoubtable half-back may regain health and strength during the recess is the earnest prayer of everyone. It is, however, probably a subject which will cause the executive most serious deliberation.'

In 1909, Liverpool's 'lucky star' twinkled for his last ever time for Liverpool. He had played 341 games for the club, scoring 19 times whilst leading the club to the first of many trophies.

Raisbeck played five further seasons back in his home country for Partick Thistle before managing Hamilton Academical, Bristol City, Halifax, Chester and Bath City before returning to Liverpool in 1939 where he served as a scout until his death in March 1949.

The club were – as the *Daily Post* prophesied – born again and in the early 1920s had another multi-championship-winning team but in 1924, 15 years after Raisbeck left, Victor Hall, a writer for the *Liverpool Echo*, reminisced about the greatness he had witnessed in Raisbeck and the player the fans had skipped to Anfield to see more than any other. A player who Hall remarked – as well as raising supporters' pulses – had, 'Raised Liverpool's prestige.'

'Let us recall his characteristics,' wrote Hall. 'Tall, lithe, sinuous, and yet gifted with muscular and physical development beyond the ordinary. Active to a degree, speed either on the turn or in flight, and with niche, at the addition of resourcefulness and judgment that would have been all sufficient in another player, without those added gifts, methodical in training, painstaking in preparation, genial with his players and considerate with his committee. With a perfect blending of the qualities that to make a really great player!

'Raisbeck was wholeheartedly a destroyer of attacks when it came from the opposing wing. We have said that he was speed in turn and on the run. We might amplify this and say, that we have never seen in England, a speedier half-back, who could tackle a speedy forward, turn with him, and overtake and tackle him again. There may be and may have been others so gifted. We have not seen them. His judgment was sound, his valour outstanding and, naturally for a half-back, his control and placing of the ball was equally confident. During his playing career

at Anfield, he had to meet forwards whose names and records were outstanding in the history of the game, and yet of none of them could it be said that they were the superior or master of Raisbeck's defensive play. His temperament rarely failed him, no matter how vigorous the play he had to meet.'

Hall also noted the impact the player had had on those who were now filling the stadium, those who would find their usual spot on the Kop on a Saturday and think of little else whilst not there. The fans.

'When the time eventually arrived to sever his connection with the Anfield club, Raisbeck carried with him many mementoes of happy associations, and the warm regards and esteem of a wide circle of friends who had watched his career develop with real pride and genuine appreciation.

'[Raisbeck] left the club admittedly one of the most brilliant and the most successful clubs in the English League. It is no far flight of fancy to suggest that the individual merit of that "one man" had more than a little to do with this progress.'