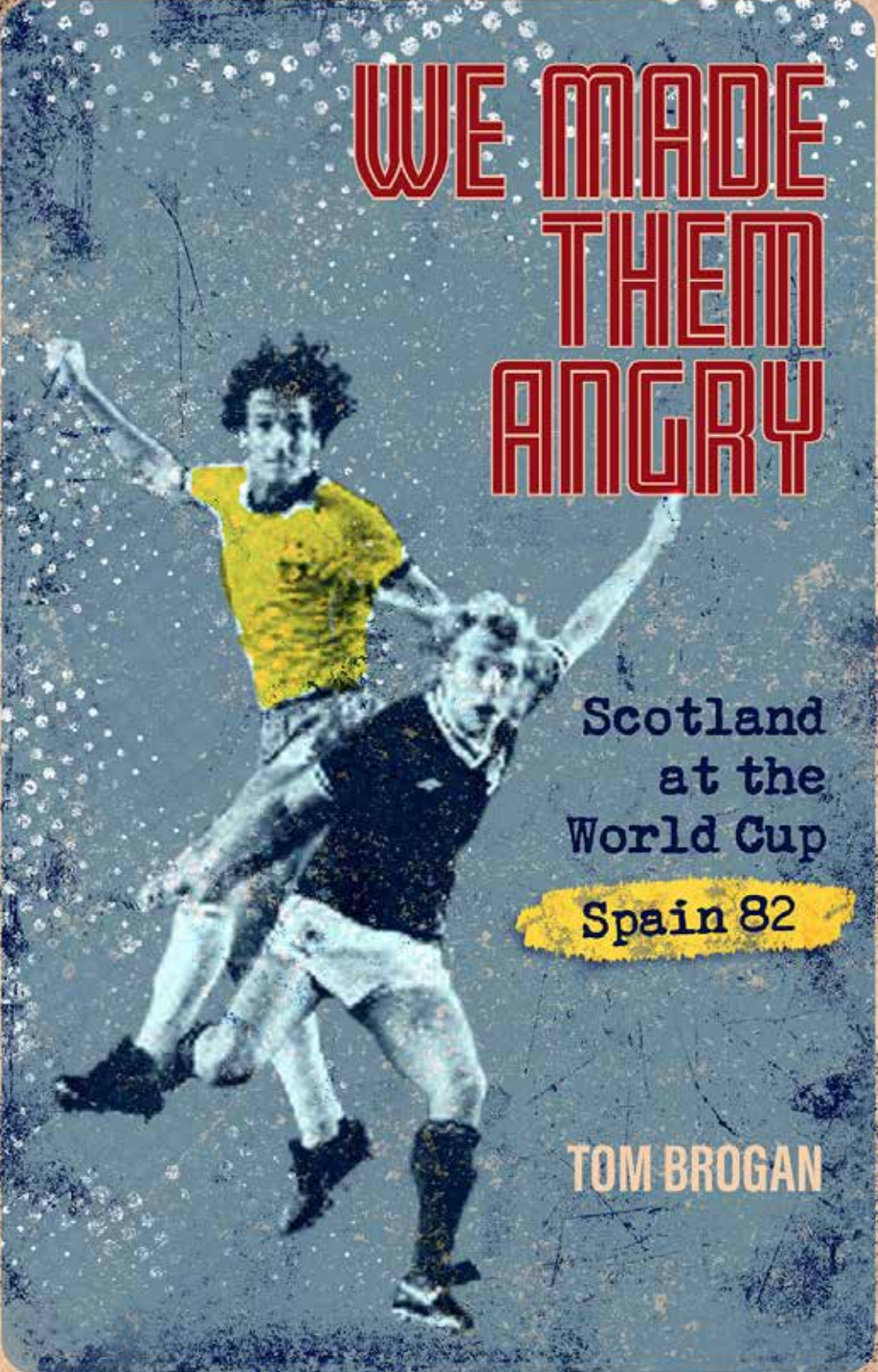


# WE MADE THEM ANGRY



Scotland  
at the  
World Cup

Spain 82

TOM BROGAN

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## Stockholm to Belfast: Qualifying 1980/81

*'I was forced to watch from the bench  
as there ensued the worst 45 minutes  
of defending I had witnessed from a  
professional footballer.'*

Willie Miller

THE FERRY from Stranraer docked in Belfast at 7am on Wednesday, 14 October 1981. Around 150 Scottish football supporters poured out on to the street. Throughout the day, thousands more came by sea, road and rail. One group of fans had combined their travel with their accommodation by coming over in a caravanette. Many more had looked up long-lost friends and relations in the city and were staying overnight with them. Some supporters, preempting the result, even had banners with the words 'Espana 82'.

Special leave for the 1,500 Scottish soldiers in Belfast hadn't been arranged, but those off duty were expected to

make up a section of the anticipated 30,000 crowd. Rod Stewart was looking at ways to get out of interviews in London to promote his new single, 'Young Turks', so he could attend the game. 'He is as aware as anyone of the risks involved in going to Belfast,' a spokesman for his agents told the *Belfast Telegraph*. 'But that would not put him off. He would go to any lengths to try to watch Scotland play.'

They were all eager to witness Scotland secure the point that would take them to the World Cup finals in Spain the following summer. 'We don't have a single excuse to put forward if we don't succeed,' manager Jock Stein said. 'We'll be wary, of course, because organisation is such a vital part of the game today, but we want to win this one and go to the finals with a flourish.'

It was a fixture that caused much concern when the draw for the World Cup qualifying sections was made in Zurich two years earlier. Scotland went into the draw as top seeds by virtue of qualifying for the finals in 1974 and 1978. Also in Pot A were England, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Italy, the Netherlands and West Germany. Scotland were placed in Group Six. The first team added to the group was Sweden, followed by Portugal. Then came Northern Ireland. It was a draw the SFA could well have done without. Due to the political situation in the country, Scotland had not sent a team to play in Northern Ireland since April 1970, despite repeated requests from the Northern Ireland FA to do so. Since then, the nine annual Home International Championship matches had all taken place at Hampden Park.

The boycott, instigated in 1972, was not inconceivable. That year was the worst year of 'the Troubles'. January saw 'Bloody Sunday' in Derry, in which 14 marchers against

internment were shot dead by the British Army. The early months also saw a bomb in Callender Street, Belfast, injuring over 60 people; a bombing of the Abercorn Restaurant, where two were killed; a car bomb in Lower Donegall Street killing seven and injuring around 100; and a series of shootings in April killing members of the Official Irish Republican Army and several British soldiers.

Northern Ireland began to play all their Home Internationals away from their own country. England and Wales shifted their 1973 Home International fixtures from Windsor Park to Goodison Park, Liverpool. By 1974, however, things were beginning to get back to normal in the city. A February 1974 letter from the Irish FA to their Scottish counterparts outlined that club matches had gone on in Belfast without a single incident; European club matches had taken place; a Canadian XI played in Belfast without problem; and assurance had been given from European Championship opponents Yugoslavia, Sweden and Norway that they would play their matches at Windsor Park. While they gave the request due consideration, it was the SFA's opinion that the civil unrest had not improved significantly enough for them to change their mind. Secretary Willie Allen told the press, 'Scotland will not go to Windsor Park during the present Troubles.'

It would be 16 April 1975 before Northern Ireland played another game in Belfast. In addition to Glasgow, they played home matches in Hull, Coventry, London, Liverpool and Sheffield, with 18 consecutive internationals being played outside their own country. Both England and Wales played in Belfast that year, with Malcolm Brodie writing in the *Belfast Telegraph*, 'At last, an era of playing all home matches

away with disastrous financial results is over. The light has burst through at the end of the tunnel.'

Scotland, though, still held out. In 1976 and 1978 the SFA again cited the Troubles as the reason they would not travel across to Belfast, with the Home International games being hosted at Hampden. 'In view of the continuing civil unrest in Northern Ireland,' the SFA's Annual Report from 1978 read, 'the Association had no cause to depart from its policy of refusing to play in that country, much as everyone concerned would dearly wish to return to happier days when an international match in Belfast was an event to which Scottish football people looked forward to with relish. In the circumstances, the Irish FA has decided that its home fixture with Scotland will be played in Glasgow.'

By that time, with the infamous Wembley invasion of the Scottish fans fresh in the memory, the Irish were perfectly happy for Scots fans not to visit. Brodie wrote of the SFA, 'Their prime concern is not for the team but the fact that their now notorious fans – remember those disgraceful scenes at Wembley last May – could create problems in Belfast. It is a situation which the Irish FA reluctantly accept and one with which I agree.'

For World Cup qualifying, however, the SFA party attending the draw, president Willie Harkness, vice-president Tommy Younger and secretary Ernie Walker, all anticipated they would now have to send a team to play in Belfast. The Home Internationals had no rules insisting that countries travelled to fulfil away fixtures, and the Northern Irish had no desire to put pressure on Scotland to travel in case they pulled out of the fixture entirely. While they did lose home advantage for four internationals

against Scotland, they knew that taking the home gate from Hampden boosted their coffers more than hosting the matches in Belfast would have done.

Northern Ireland's manager Danny Blanchflower was sure Scotland would have to travel. 'I think that the competition will force them to come to Belfast to meet us,' he said. 'These World Cup circumstances haven't happened before. But the world is getting smaller in the football sense, and, speaking personally, if I was a footballer now, I wouldn't baulk at going anywhere.' Tom Lauchlan, chairman of the Scottish International Selection Committee, said, 'This is undoubtedly a sensational situation. It is the strict policy of the SFA not to play in Northern Ireland. However, the alternative now would be to withdraw, and I certainly do not think we will do that.' Harry Cavan, Irish FA president, a FIFA vice-president and a member of the World Cup organising committee, was optimistic, 'We will take this opportunity to ask the Scots to play in Belfast. I'm hopeful they will now see our way.'

The SFA resolved to organise a meeting to discuss the matter while arranging with representatives from the other countries to meet in Stockholm on 3 November to arrange the fixtures. The only alternative to playing in Belfast would be to withdraw from the World Cup. There was already the suggestion that the Home International match of 1980 between the sides, scheduled as a Northern Ireland home game, be played in Belfast to 'test the waters'. Irish FA secretary Billy Drennan told the *Belfast Telegraph*, 'The priority is to get them to Windsor Park in May. On the World Cup, we're talking about matches in 1980/81.'

Cavan was concerned about the influx of Scottish supporters into Belfast and had suggested devising some



scheme of ticket allocation. 'I know the difficulties, but we should be able to overcome them,' he explained.

On the subject of the draw, Stein said, 'On the whole, it's not a bad draw for us. It's a fair section, and we must think that if we play reasonably well, we have a good chance of qualifying.' The group was set to be complicated further, however. Israel had been expelled by the Asian Football Federation (AFF) in 1974 after the fallout from the Yom Kippur War when nearly every Arab FA refused to play them. Muslim countries followed suit, and in Tehran in September 1974 the AFF voted 17-13 with six abstentions to expel Israel. They had expected FIFA to kick Israel out of international football entirely, as they had done with apartheid-era South Africa in 1964. But they did not. This meant Israel could continue to play international fixtures and attempt to qualify for finals.

The Israelis resigned from the AFF in 1976. They then headed to the Asian and Oceanian zone, playing in qualifiers for the 1978 World Cup in a group containing South Korea, Japan and North Korea. Despite not being UEFA members, they were awaiting entry into the European qualifying section for the 1982 finals. In Zurich, Hermann Neuberger, president of FIFA's World Cup organising committee, said they would send a letter to the CONCACAF countries – nations from North Central America and the Caribbean – asking them to accept Israel into their section. If they refused, Neuberger said Israel would become the fifth team in Group Six. Cuban president Hector Inguanzo quickly called the plan unjust and suggested it was not up to their region to solve Israel's footballing problems. Within a week, Israel were placed in Scotland's group with FIFA saying the decision was final and not open to appeal. There was

precedent for Israel to be playing in the European section as they were already admitted to the European eliminating competition for the 1980 Moscow Olympics football tournament.

'I'm not worried about having Israel added to our group,' Jock Stein said diplomatically. 'We know a little about them, and they should not be a problem.' Scotland had never played Israel before in an official international but had played in Tel Aviv during an unofficial world tour in 1967. The Scottish side, managed by Bobby Brown, won 2-1 on that occasion, with Willie Morgan and Eddie Colquhoun scoring the goals. Stein had managed Celtic in Tel Aviv in 1971 when they beat Hapoel 1-0 in a friendly.

The group began in March 1980 when Israel and Northern Ireland played out a goalless draw in Jerusalem. However, it wasn't until September that Scotland played their first match, travelling to Stockholm to meet Sweden.

Scotland went into the fixture having lost four from their last five games, losing to England and Northern Ireland in Home Internationals and Poland and Hungary in friendlies. In June, Sweden had begun their qualifying campaign by drawing with Israel at home. 'We are more than capable of getting a good start,' Stein said. 'But the players will have to work for each other and perform to the reputations they have earned at their clubs. In the past, several players have been inclined to play for themselves, and this will not be tolerated.' Stein believed that any two of the sides in the group, bar Israel, could qualify, and with Sweden already failing to win a home game, a defeat for them here would be a massive setback for their chances.

The pre-match speculation fell on where Liverpool's Alan Hansen would play after Stein said he would not

partner Willie Miller of Aberdeen in defence. The thought was that Hansen would be in midfield with a licence to attack. However, when the sides lined up, Hansen partnered Aberdeen's Alex McLeish in defence with Miller in the middle of the park. Hansen had been asked to start the match in midfield, but he declined. In the *Sunday Mail*, he would later tell Dixon Blackstock that he didn't feel equipped to play a midfield role for his country. 'Naturally, if the boss had pressed me into the position, I would have had a go,' Hansen said. 'But, luckily, he understands a player's feelings and didn't pursue the matter. [The role] demands a high rate of work and aggression, which, frankly, I don't think I possess. Certainly not at international level. The heart of the defence is where I feel at home.' Stein then turned to Miller, who said he would be happy to step in. Hansen alongside McLeish would be Stein's 12th different defensive combination in 18 matches. The Scottish midfield was missing Liverpool's Graeme Souness through injury, and Miller's instructions were to nullify Mats Nordgren of Östers IF.

Although the midfield of Miller, Gordon Strachan, captain Archie Gemmill and Nottingham Forest's John Robertson took some time to exert their authority, they gradually took control of the game. Both sides looked uncomfortable on the ball at times, often conceding possession. Sweden had the best chances of the first half with Thomas Sjöberg heading wide and Thomas Nilsson having his drive saved by Alan Rough.

At half-time, Austrian referee Franz Wöhrer visited both teams' dressing rooms and warned them he wouldn't tolerate any more rough tackling. Scotland started the second half with more assurance. However, Patrick Barclay, writing

in *The Guardian*, noted, 'Their passing remained prone to banality and, occasionally, sheer irresponsibility.' Andy Gray had a shout for a penalty five minutes into the half when he went down in the box under the weight of a defender, but Wöhrer, a Viennese school teacher, wasn't interested. The breakthrough came when Gordon Strachan, playing his sixth game for his country, nipped in front of a Swede in midfield to take possession. He carried the ball forward before turning and laying it off square to Gemmill. Strachan kept running down the left, and Gemmill fed him as he made his way into the box. The Aberdeen man took a touch as the Swedish defenders gathered, then hit a left-footed shot across goalkeeper Ronnie Hellström and into the net.

'Little Archie held up the return pass perfectly,' Strachan said to the *Daily Record*. 'He delayed it long enough to allow me to get into a good position in the box. When I got the ball here, I was ready at first to shoot with the right foot, and then I delayed a little myself and decided to take it with my left. I know some folk must have thought I had held back too long, but I saw a gap and changed my mind.' In the *Sunday Times*, Strachan recalled Jock Stein's reaction to his goal. 'What are you doing over there?' Stein raged. 'I told you to stay on the right.'

The goal was to give Scotland their first win in five away games and their first points in Group Six. 'It is some consolation when you have lost to a goal like that, but it was a tragic result for us,' Swedish manager Lars Arnesson told the *Record*. The team performed much like Stein had asked them to, as a unit rather than individuals. When some players had poor spells, their team-mates took up the slack. 'It's a good start for us, coming away from home and getting a victory,' Stein said. However, he sounded a note

of caution, 'I can understand everyone being optimistic, but let's keep our feet on the ground. Let's sit down and look at the Stockholm game honestly and file away possible improvements.'

Scotland's next match was with Portugal at Hampden on 15 October. The sides had met earlier that year in the European Championship qualifier, where Scotland won 4-1, albeit a dead rubber in which neither side could have qualified. The Portuguese would be without the Benfica defenders Humberto Coelho and Alberto Fonseca. The latter had scored the winner when the sides met in Lisbon in 1978. Alex McLeish would be missing through injury, so Miller and Hansen would be the central defensive partnership in front of Partick Thistle's Alan Rough with Danny McGrain of Celtic on their right and Nottingham Forest's Frank Gray on the left. Souness was back to form the four-man midfield with Gemmill, Strachan and John Robertson. Andy Gray of Wolverhampton Wanderers and Liverpool's Kenny Dalglish would be up front. Stein was asked what Scotland's most significant danger was. 'Our own players – if they don't play to their full potential,' he replied. 'It's really all about the players. I pick them, but I can't win the match for them. So if they get the result we are looking for, they will deserve the credit, not me.'

Earlier in the day, Northern Ireland beat Sweden 3-0 in Belfast, the Swedes now having taken only one point from three games.

In the programme notes, Stein asked for the Scots fans to be patient. It wasn't a pretty performance by Scotland as a succession of long balls made their way towards Dalglish and Gray without any joy. It was only late on that Scotland looked like they could make a breakthrough, when Souness

and Dalglish saw shots saved by Portuguese captain Bento in goal. Portugal's best chance fell to Fernandes, who got in a shot on the 80th minute that whizzed past Rough's post. As the game wore on, the 60,675 crowd looked for Stein to make some changes. 'That's the easy thing to do,' Stein said the next day, defending his decision not to put any substitutes on. 'I didn't want to upset the rhythm, and, after all, we weren't playing that badly.' Portugal were quite happy with the 0-0 draw, their players celebrating at the final whistle. The press acclaimed Bento's performance in goal as 'breathtaking'.

'Some of the moves were splendid,' said Stein. 'Many chances were made – but, the old story, none was taken. The team spirit was building up nicely. And the crowd were tremendous, not putting pressure on us but encouraging all the time. If we had gained a draw in Sweden and then won here, everyone would be happy,' Stein pointed out. 'We've just done it the other way round, and three points from the first two games can't be bad.' That was the last international for 1980, and there were a few months to prepare for the next qualifier.

'I certainly don't see the Israelis making the finals,' Stein said, ahead of Scotland's next match, 'but strangely enough, they could now be the most important side in the section. It could well come down to who takes the most points from them.'

The Scots would head for Tel Aviv in February of 1981. The Israelis were managed by Jack Mansell, an Englishman who had a ten-year playing career with Brighton, Cardiff and Portsmouth, playing twice for the England B team in 1954 and 1956. He began his coaching career with Sheffield Wednesday before embarking on a nomadic managerial

journey taking in the Netherlands, USA, England again, Turkey and Bahrain before taking over Israel in 1980.

‘The standard of our better players is good enough for many of them to compete in the best class in Germany or England,’ Mansell told Hugh Taylor of the *Evening Times*. ‘Their trouble is that they have played too long in a competition where they are outstandingly better than most of the other players. They’ve never had the stimulus. They can do it in a canter, so they don’t bother enough and feel they know it all.’ Nevertheless, Mansell believed his side could be the equal of their opponents, saying, ‘We will give you a real run for your money.’

Israel had previously qualified for the 1970 World Cup in Mexico. They achieved perhaps the country’s greatest-ever result there, holding eventual runners-up Italy to a 0-0 draw. A properly organised national league began in the country in 1932 with nine clubs. By 1981 there were four senior divisions encompassing 300 teams.

After a training session in the Ramat Gan Stadium, Stein kept his team selection to himself but was happy to tell the press what a tremendous shift his players had put in, ‘It’s easily the best training session we have had since I took over. In the past, I have had squads who trained on the Monday, and individuals said they were not sure if they could do what was asked at the time but assured me everything would be all right on the night. What a difference today. Everybody could do everything.’

The game, a 1.30pm GMT kick-off, would be live on BBC Scotland. All bar the first 30 minutes. A dispute over trackside advertising had held up the TV deal, but, by the time the issue was resolved, the broadcast satellite was no longer available for the whole match. In the days before

the game the weather changed drastically, which would favour Scotland. Monday brought hot desert winds and the promise of sandstorms. However, by Tuesday evening, Tel Aviv was lashed by heavy rain and driving wind. Danny McGrain would be selected to earn his 50th cap, making him only the fifth Scotsman to achieve that honour, following Kenny Dalglish, Denis Law, Billy Bremner and George Young. However, there would be a few changes from the last qualifier. Tottenham's Steve Archibald, the leading scorer in his first season in the English First Division, started up front with Dalglish, relegating Andy Gray to the bench. 'Scotland can't leave Steve out,' former Spurs and Scotland striker Alan Gilzean said to the *Sunday Mirror*. 'He has been scoring so regularly it's got to the stage where it almost seems strange when he doesn't get a goal.' Gilzean had scored 12 times in his 22 internationals from 1963 to 1971. 'I'd love to see him in my old role of leading Scotland. I'm certain he would be a success.'

John Wark of Ipswich would be in midfield in place of Strachan. Wark had played his previous games for Scotland wide, but Stein decided to play him in the position he was used in at club level, through the middle. The latest central defensive partnership would be Alex McLeish and Nottingham Forest's Kenny Burns. 'Miller has had only two matches since coming back after a long suspension while Burns has been in great form for Nottingham Forest,' said Stein. It was a decision that left Miller, suspended for four domestic matches in January, quietly seething. 'I thought I was pretty much certain to get picked,' Miller told the *Official Scotland Podcast* in 2018. 'But for some reason, he left me on the bench and played Kenny Burns. And looking at Kenny Burns in training, my assessment of him was he



was overweight and unfit, and I wasn't happy when he got the nod in front of me.'

Burns hadn't played for Scotland since December 1979, but now he was set to win his 18th cap. In his autobiography *No Ifs or Butts*, Burns recalled, 'Stein became a national icon, but I didn't rate him as a manager at all. [He] was a bit strict and didn't like us drinking. He didn't do much; he just strolled about most of the time. He was a bit sombre, and I don't think I ever saw him smile. But at least he had the good sense to recall me for the World Cup qualifier in Israel.'

Mansell picked six midfielders for his formation, although he admitted they wouldn't have the defensive discipline to play ten men in their own half for 90 minutes. Stein was adamant his side wouldn't be undone by complacency, 'There are pitfalls when players start looking for easy games, and you can bet it won't be easy for us. I have stressed to the players that they must show Israel some respect but have stressed even more that they must respect themselves and their undoubted ability.'

One thing the match wasn't for Scotland was easy. The home side pounded the Scots goal throughout the first half. Rough rushed from his line twice, first to foil Hapoel Tel Aviv's Moshe Sinai and then diving at the feet of Maccabi Tel Aviv's Beni Tabak. Scotland, wearing their red change strip, did have a couple of first-half chances, but Souness and Robertson's shots came to nothing. As the sides trooped off at the interval, it was only a great display from Rough and some desperate defending from Burns that kept Scotland in it.

In his autobiography *The Don*, Willie Miller recalls the period, 'I was forced to watch from the bench as there

ensued the worst 45 minutes of defending I had witnessed from a professional footballer. It was a great puzzle how we managed to reach half-time without the opposition scoring, as Kenny was well off the pace.' Conversely, Hugh Taylor's report in the *Evening Times* read, 'It was as well for Scotland that Kenny Burns was playing a heroic part in defence.' In *The Guardian*, too, Eric Silver felt Burns had 'a strong match'.

In the dressing room, Stein ripped into his side for their performance. He was then forced into making changes. John Wark had suffered a hamstring injury. Wark hadn't been 100 per cent fit going into the match but told Stein he was. The manager was less than impressed with his player. A reshuffle was required with Willie Miller taking Wark's place and Burns moving into midfield. Not only was Miller delighted to take to the pitch, so too was his defensive partner Alex McLeish. 'Kenny was used to playing a different way at Nottingham Forest where he would run out and hold lines or play offside,' McLeish told the *Daily Record* in 2010. 'In the first half, I don't know how Israel didn't score. We got battered but somehow got in at 0-0. Jock spotted what was happening and said to Willie, "You better go on." I thought, "Thank God." Kenny was a really good defender, but we weren't on the same wavelength. It was the old adage, if it ain't broke, don't fix it.'

That wasn't the only problem Stein faced at the interval. Dalglish had been in a clash of heads and was suffering from a concussion. It was decided to give him ten minutes of the second half to see how he was. That was all the time he needed. John Robertson moved over to the right wing and, on 54 minutes, sent over a corner, which was nodded on by McLeish towards the back post. Dalglish was waiting on

the edge of the six-yard box. He would later say that thanks to his concussion he could see two balls in front of him. He picked the correct one and hammered it into the roof of the net. Shortly afterwards, he was replaced by Andy Gray. The pressure from Israel, who played with alertness throughout, wasn't over, however, as Tabak had two great chances foiled by Rough.

'The first half was a shambles,' Stein said after the 1-0 win. 'Israel got to the ball first on almost every occasion. They were well organised, and they had quick players, who caused us all sorts of surprises on the soft pitch following a downpour. The real truth is we took our chance when it came along. They didn't.' Mansell knew it was one man who made the difference. 'Alan Rough was absolutely brilliant,' he said. 'Not for the spectacular saves but for the ones which really mattered when he came quickly off his line several times diving six feet towards a player's boots.'

'What's all the fuss about?' Rough asked of the superlatives he was hearing. 'If I play like that for Partick Thistle, no one takes any notice.' Rough had several superstitions as a player, one of which was to always wear his own white socks. After his last game for Thistle, he had forgotten to wash them before travelling to Tel Aviv. Rough handed them to Scotland and Celtic masseur Jimmy Steele to wash, which he duly did; he just forgot to dry them. 'There was me,' Rough said to *The Scotsman* in 2010, 'squelching around, soapy bubbles popping in the eyelets of my boots, and playing one of my best games for my country. I should have made that another wee routine.'

Steele was initially brought into the Scotland setup by Tommy Docherty. His masseur skills were developed as a physical training instructor in the RAF in the 1930s.

Stationed in Wiltshire, Steele became trainer to boxer Freddie Mills, helping him to the British light-heavyweight title. When he returned home to Scotland, Jimmy McStay, then manager of Celtic, invited Steele to join the club's backroom staff. Steele's whole career was spent without being paid a salary of any description. Always a popular figure within the Scots camp, when the squad stayed at Niteroi Cricket Club in Rio de Janeiro in 1972 ahead of a friendly with Brazil, several of the players delighted in throwing Jimmy fully clothed into the swimming pool. Only when he hauled himself out the pool soaking wet did they remember they had given him their watches and cash for safekeeping, all of which was on his person. He was let go from the Scotland setup by Willie Ormond, who found him 'too cheery', but when Ally MacLeod was appointed in 1977 he made it one of his first tasks to reinstate Steele.

\* \* \*

The next qualifier came a month later as Northern Ireland visited Hampden Park. They had lost to Portugal by a single goal, while the Portuguese had also defeated Israel. The Irish needed to take something from the game to keep their hopes of qualifying alive. Billy Bingham had taken over as manager from Danny Blanchflower in March 1980. He would be without two of his most essential players in Nottingham Forest's Martin O'Neill and Blackburn Rovers winger Noel Brotherston. 'If you can beat us at Hampden, then I'd say you were through to the finals,' O'Neill said to the *Record*. 'But I don't see it end our chances.' Scotland would also be without regulars in the shape of injured Liverpool pair Kenny Dalglish and Graeme Souness. Andy Gray and Steve Archibald would be the front two. Kenny Burns would keep

the midfield position he took up in the second half of the Israel game, joined by Wark, recently voted the PFA Players' Player of the Year in England, Gemmill and Robertson. The back four was becoming a familiar sight for goalkeeper Rough with McGrain and Frank Gray the wing-backs and the Aberdeen pair of Miller and McLeish in the centre.

The Home International Championship match of 1980 had been played in Belfast, as suggested at the time of the qualifying draw. However, certain conditions were put in place for the May game. In essence, these were implemented to discourage supporters from travelling. The match was played on a Friday evening. 'Considerably lower key than the traditional Saturday afternoon,' the SFA would say. There would be live BBC television coverage in Scotland and a refusal of the SFA to accept any tickets.

The SFA's Annual Ordinary General Meeting report on 5 May 1980 finally revealed the long-standing reasons for refusing to travel. Malcolm Brodie's assertions had been broadly correct. It was not the safety of the players the SFA feared for; it was the behaviour of the fans. It was reported at the meeting, 'Had it been possible for Scotland to play in Belfast, as England and Wales have done in recent years, without the presence of thousands of Scottish supporters, there is little doubt that we would have done so, but it has been the Association's feeling that it would have been imprudent to visit upon the sensitive streets of Belfast the enthusiasm of Scottish supporters, some of whom would almost certainly welcome the occasion for reasons which have nothing to do with football. Rightly or wrongly, that is why Scotland has not visited Northern Ireland during the 1970s.' The World Cup draw had put the fear of being 'cast into the football wilderness internationally for the next

four years' into the SFA. 'Much heart-searching ensued, and eventually, it was decided that the vast majority of football Scots would not wish to see their country withdraw from the World Cup and that we should observe the dictates of the ballot box.' That game went on with no incident, but the home side gave Scotland a going over as they beat them 1-0. It was something Stein reminded his players of before the World Cup qualifier, as he impressed upon them not to take Northern Ireland lightly.

At Hampden, a crowd of 78,444 paid between £5 and £7 to sit in the stand, with covered terracing at £2.50 and £2 cash at the turnstiles for entry to the uncovered terracing. Scotland began the game well enough but struggled to find a way through to goal. The midfield laboured but couldn't get the ball through to the front two often enough. Archibald hit the post with a great 20-yard shot on the turn. Then later, after Andy Gray played him in, Archibald watched as Chris Nicholl headed another shot off the line. At around the half-hour mark frustration crept in, and the Scots began chasing the game. McGrain was working hard to keep the Irish attacks at bay, and there was a shade of good fortune when a clumsy challenge in the penalty box by McLeish on Sammy McIlroy went unpunished by the East German referee Klaus Scheurell.

Scotland had a let-off early in the second half as Billy Hamilton headed against the post. Midway through the half, Rough rushed from his line to punch the ball away from Hamilton, injuring his shoulder as he did so. The game stopped for three minutes as he was treated. A goal did arrive, and it was Northern Ireland who got it with 20 minutes left. Burns conceded a free kick, with a hefty challenge on Hamilton out on Scotland's right. 'This might be a test

for the right shoulder of Alan Rough,' TV commentator Jock Brown said as Sammy Nelson and McIlroy stood over the ball. McIlroy flighted the kick to the far post. Rough began to move out, McLeish and Miller stood watching as Hamilton, all on his own in the six-yard box, glanced a header into the net.

It only took Scotland five minutes to draw level. Archie Gemmill played a quick free kick in the middle on to Miller who threaded a neat through ball for Wark to run on to. Wark hit it first time and slipped his 33rd goal of the season under Pat Jennings. In the aftermath, Stein threw on Asa Hartford, winning his first cap since November 1979, for Kenny Burns. With ten minutes remaining, Rough, with his right arm hanging permanently by his side, came off with St Mirren's Billy Thomson coming on for his second cap. 'It was a 50/50 ball,' Rough said later of his collision with Hamilton. 'The reason I was hurt was that he was moving more quickly than me. I didn't think it was a foul.' Wark headed over the bar a moment later. The last chance fell to Steve Archibald, who hit a tame shot at Jennings.

'I've got to say how grateful we are to the fans,' Stein said afterwards. 'They might have turned against us when we lost the goal; instead, they stayed 100 per cent behind us. They helped us come back into the game.' The Northern Irish players had some harsh words about their opponents. Southend United's Derek Spence said to the *Daily Record*, 'They appear arrogant as though they are going to stroll through it. We just roll up our sleeves. Perhaps it's their fanatical supporters that do it to them. Telling them all the time they are the greatest.' Gerry Armstrong of Watford was also critical, 'We fight for each other as a team – they seem to play as individuals. Don't blame Stein, blame the players.'

'It's rather ironic that we have never really been rated as an away team,' Stein said to the *Glasgow Herald*, 'but here we are, halfway through the section, having won two away games but having dropped two points at home. We never seem to make it easy for ourselves when it comes to the World Cup.' Stein was asked about changes he must make to the side for the future qualifiers with the home match against Israel coming up. In particular, it was noted that the pairing of Archibald and Gray up front didn't work well, with Gray failing to have a shot on target. 'I was reasonably happy with the way I combined with Steve Archibald in our first full game together,' Gray wrote in his regular column for *Shoot!* magazine. 'On paper, it may appear not to have come off as neither of us scored. But we came close with a few chances, and I'd like to think we would progress if given the chance.'

Israel at Hampden on 28 April 1981 was the next test, and Scotland were dealt a blow six days before. 'Kenny has no chance for next week,' Liverpool manager Bob Paisley said of his striker's hopes of playing in the international. It came the day after Liverpool's European Cup semi-final with Bayern Munich. Within five minutes of the start, Bayern's Karl Del'Haye raked his studs along Kenny's ankle. 'He was so lightweight in frame and ability I never thought he posed a threat as I laid the ball inside,' Dalglish said in his book, *My Liverpool Home*. 'I strongly suspect the German's intent was to remove me from the fray deliberately.' Dalglish attempted to continue. 'It is his nature to try to shrug off anything less dire than a gunshot wound,' Hugh McIlvanney wrote in *The Observer*. Despite his attempts to play through the injury, he came off after nine minutes. Liverpool secured a 1-1 draw and a place in the final without him. With his



ankle in plaster, Dalglish's focus was getting fit for the May final with Real Madrid. Scotland would be without him for the second successive qualifier.

Andy Gray was pulled out of the squad with a hamstringing injury after Wolves' 3-1 loss to Arsenal, further complicating Stein's striking options. Gray's club manager John Barnwell commented, 'I told him I had to be honest with Jock Stein and that I was taking him out of the Scotland squad. Andy is unhappy at the decision, but it is for his own good.' Stein himself was unhappy about the situation as Barnwell's call didn't come until Sunday morning, after Stein had heard about Gray's withdrawal through his newspaper contacts. Barnwell told Stein his secretary should have called him on the Saturday night, and the Wolves boss accepted responsibility for the confusion.

The loss of two of Scotland's regular strikers was good news for Manchester United's Joe Jordan, who hadn't won a cap since the friendly against Poland in May 1980. 'Jordan has been impressive with his club in recent matches, and is on a good scoring run at the moment,' Stein said. Davie Provan was another who hadn't appeared for his country since May of the previous year, and he would be on the opposite wing to John Robertson. 'I'm not about to go overboard and claim I'm right there in the World Cup plans,' Provan said, 'but like every other player in the country, it's my ambition to be involved. That's the peak, isn't it?'

'The boss has picked an attacking team with two wingers,' Joe Jordan said to the *Glasgow Herald*, 'and that should suit both Steve Archibald and myself. As Northern Ireland showed last month, it is very difficult for strikers to get goals against packed defences. But one of the few ways you can break down a defence of eight or nine defenders is

to get behind them. To do that, you need players of creative ability and both Davie and John Robertson fit that bill.'

The most notable change in personnel for the Israel clash was the absence of skipper Archie Gemmill. 'I have chosen the best side available for a certain job, and I explained this to Archie after naming the team,' said Stein. 'The manager picks the team, and I'm not in it this time,' Gemmill told the press. 'That's something I have to accept. You have to take the bad with the good in this game.' In the programme for the match with Portugal in October 1980, Gemmill was asked what he felt was Stein's greatest forte. 'His superb knowledge of the game,' Archie replied. 'His honesty in the handling of players, and his absolute fairness to every player in the pool.'

It would turn out that the 34-year-old had played his last international. In his autobiography, *Both Sides of the Border*, Gemmill would state his exclusion from the national team resulted from an ill-advised late-night mediation with the manager. At the hotel where the squad were staying, two of the players had come to Gemmill in his role as captain, asking if he could square it with Stein for them to go out for a couple of hours. Archie headed for Stein's room and chapped on his door. Having been awakened by Gemmill's visit, Stein went ballistic, telling him that, as captain, he should be perfectly aware of what was permissible and what was not. This, Stein let him know, certainly was not. The following morning Jock made a point of chewing the Birmingham City man out again in front of the rest of the squad. As a tactic of showing the players no one was above a dressing down, Stein was well practised in it over the years.

Graeme Souness remembered the incident well. In his book *No Half Measures*, he recalled, 'I was glad that a hard

game and the trip north had tired me out to the extent of having gone to bed early the night before, but he certainly made his point.' While Souness wrote of getting his head down, in Gemmill's version of events, the two players who had asked him to obtain permission to go out were Alan Hansen and Souness himself. After training, Jock asked for a private word with Gemmill. Stein told him that Asa Hartford would be in the team in his place. Gemmill recalled him saying, 'I'll make it easier for you, if you like, and tell the press boys you've got a slight injury and that I'm not risking you.' 'My reply was short and to the point, "Will you bollocks." That was the last time we spoke.' It was a sorry end to an 11-year international career that included a World Cup goal against Holland that became iconic. Of his 42 caps, 22 of them came as captain. Gemmill was inducted into the Scottish Football Hall of Fame in 2008.

Stein claimed his line-up was the most adventurous he had selected since he took over two and a half years earlier. With Rough again in goal, the back four would be McGrain, Frank Gray and Hansen partnering McLeish in the middle. Provan, making his first start after four caps as a substitute, on the right and Robertson on the left would be the wingers with Souness and Hartford in the centre of the pitch. Jordan and Archibald formed the front line. McGrain would be captain for the second time, after first taking the armband in the friendly against Poland. The day before the match, Alan Rough was voted Scotland's Footballer of the Year, beating Dundee United pair Paul Sturrock and Hamish McAlpine.

Two English-based players would be in Israel's side, Liverpool's Avi Cohen and Brighton & Hove Albion's Jacob Cohen. 'We should have won in Tel Aviv,' Jack Mansell told

the *Evening Times*. 'And that man who gave you the goal, Kenny Dalglish, won't be playing this time. To be frank, nobody in the Scotland side was a danger man against us in Israel.' In his programme notes, Stein said the fans could forget about being patient, as he had asked for in previous matches, 'I'll be telling the boys to go at Israel from the first kick of the ball.' Scotland came out aggressively as the Israelis were stretched throughout the whole 90 minutes. The result was effectively wrapped up inside the first half-hour, although that's not to say Scotland didn't have a few scares before they made the breakthrough. Tabak shot over the bar before Rough blocked another shot from Tabak and a drive from Gidi Damti. Jordan, Hansen, Archibald and Gray all failed with shots before some comic defending signalled the visitors' demise.

Robertson used all his skill to goad Gad Machnes into pulling him down for a penalty on 20 minutes. Robertson took the kick himself, putting the ball in off the post. Ten minutes later, Scotland had a second penalty when Haim Bar felled Archibald from behind. Robertson stepped up again, sending Yossi Mizrahi the wrong way. 'You just knew Robbo would score whenever Scotland got a penalty,' Alan Rough said to the *Record* in 2018. 'He was brilliant at them. He was so reliable from 12 yards. Robertson and [Davie] Cooper were the best two penalty takers I have seen. I think it was because both were left-footed, and goalkeepers just couldn't get a handle on them.' Robertson had become Nottingham Forest's penalty taker during Dave Mackay's spell as manager in 1972/73. 'I've always fancied taking penalties and right through school I've had the job,' Robertson said in 1980. 'I remember vowing not to take another penalty after missing one in a cup tie for Hozier

Secondary School against Coatbridge High. We were 2-1 up when I missed and they got an equaliser. When we were awarded a penalty in the replay I was wandering up to the halfway line, but the teacher ordered me to go back and take it. I remember blasting it as hard as I could.'

After being played in by Robertson, Archibald volleyed over while McLeish sent a header on to the crossbar before the half-time whistle sounded. Nine minutes into the second period, Provan made it 3-0 when he fired a low drive past Mizrahi. Israel came back, though, with a goal from Moshe Sinai. This made the Scots determined to shut up shop, and in the closing stages, Archibald, Jordan and Souness all came close to extending the lead. However, there were no further goals and the Scots had won 3-1. 'Jordan was magnificent,' a clearly delighted Stein said afterwards. 'It was his best performance for Scotland.'

'I accept that we were beaten by a superior team,' Mansell said. 'You got goals at the right time. I thought Provan played well and so did Robertson but although our lads are improving they are still tactically naive.'

The next night Northern Ireland beat Portugal, thanks to a Gerry Armstrong header. That left Scotland top of the group on eight points, with Northern Ireland second on six. Portugal were third with five points from four games. The group was tighter than Scotland would have liked, particularly with Portugal having two games in hand.

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Scotland could now forget about World Cup qualifiers as May brought around the Home International Championship. Their first opposition would be Wales at Swansea's Vetch Field on Saturday, 16 May. Stein made several changes

to his side. He brought Manchester United's Gordon McQueen back after an absence of 18 months. West Ham's Ray Stewart made his debut at right-back. David Narey and Kenny Burns both came in, while another player back after a long exclusion was Leeds United's Arthur Graham, who hadn't appeared since October 1979. Stein's preparation wasn't helped by McLeish and Miller missing the team flight to Cardiff. 'I've had a word with them,' Stein said, 'and although I was certainly not pleased, despite the fact they were fog-bound in Aberdeen, I'm convinced they are in the right frame of mind.' Miller was elected to partner McQueen with McLeish on the bench. The Liverpool trio and John Wark of Ipswich would be ruled out due to their respective appearances in the European Cup Final and the UEFA Cup Final.

It was not one of Scotland's best days on a football pitch. Defensive frailties let Crystal Palace's Ian Walsh in to score twice, on 18 and 21 minutes. To make matters worse, Joe Jordan was sent off late on for an off-the-ball elbow on Terry Boyle. 'Joe always looked as if he was going to be sent off,' Stein said. 'If we had anybody with experience on the bench, we would have saved Joe by taking him off.' Boyle went to hospital with a broken nose and a missing tooth. It would be the final Scotland appearances for McQueen, Burns and Graham.

Before Scotland's fixture at Hampden with Northern Ireland, the subject of playing internationals in Belfast came up once again. England refused to travel for their match with Northern Ireland in the wake of increasing tensions in the country. The Welsh FA announced that they too wouldn't fulfil their fixture in Belfast either, as many of their players voiced displeasure in travelling. Stein

thought the English FA had other things on their mind by withdrawing. 'It would suit England not to have to play the likes of Ireland,' he said. But, in what would become a prescient remark, he continued, 'They are getting too big for that and would rather face teams like Brazil.' The 1984 Home Internationals would be the last, and by 1987 England and Scotland had replaced the tournament with a three-team round-robin Rous Cup, with Brazil invited to be the third entrants. There were no fears that Scotland's October trip to Belfast was in doubt, but Stein forecast issues, 'There will be more tension in that match,' he said.

The Northern Ireland encounter came only three days after the Wales game. With Jordan suspended, Paul Sturrock, who made his debut as a substitute against the Welsh, started beside Archibald in the front line. Celtic's Tommy Burns gained his first cap. Ray Stewart was pushed into midfield with Danny McGrain returning at right-back. Billy Thomson of St Mirren would start in goal. The crowd of 22,448 was way below the attendances the World Cup qualifiers at Hampden had achieved. The fans there, though, didn't have to wait long for a goal. With just five minutes gone, Frank Gray touched a free kick to Burns, who rolled the ball for Stewart to hammer in from 25 yards. A second was added five minutes into the second half when Archibald ran in on goal, shrugging off two defenders to chip past Jennings. Stein declared the performance 'a wee bit better' than that in Swansea. Directly after the match, Rangers boss John Greig signed Northern Ireland defender John McClelland from Mansfield Town.

Thoughts now turned to Wembley and the game against England on Saturday, 23 May. Wembley was seen as a daunting place for Scottish goalkeepers. 'You must

remember that not all keepers have failed there,' Alan Rough told Hugh Taylor in the *Evening Times*. Rough had already been on the winning side at the Twin Towers in 1977. 'I think about Jimmy Cowan, and he was a hero, not a villain at Wembley,' Rough said. Cowan had an outstanding opening 20 minutes against an England side containing Jackie Milburn, Stanley Matthews, Stan Mortensen and Tom Finney at Wembley in 1949 as Scotland won 3-1. 'Immense. Goalkeeping at its best,' wrote the *Sunday Post*. 'Frank Swift was his usual self. Jimmy Cowan was better. There is no greater praise than that,' reported *The Courier*. 'I was lucky to get the feel of the ball early,' Cowan said modestly afterwards. Two years later, he was also in goal when Scotland triumphed 3-2.

Rough would be between the posts, with captain McGrain on the right and Frank Gray on the left. McLeish and Miller made up the central defensive partnership. Stewart was again in midfield with Hartford while Provan and Robertson patrolled the wings. This time, Steve Archibald retained his place, playing alongside the returning Joe Jordan. Stein told Joe he wanted to see more of his performance against Israel and less of his performance against Wales. 'I certainly don't want to inhibit him,' Stein said. 'He went a wee bit over the top in Wales where he argued with every decision and went to war.'

Also at Wembley were the Scottish fans. The English FA insisted they wouldn't be selling tickets to Scots supporters, instructing English supporters who had applied for tickets not to get them for Scottish relatives. However, it didn't put the Scots supporters off, and they attended in their thousands. Ronnie McDevitt, then a 19-year-old dockyard storeman, now a popular author of books on the Scottish



national team, told the *Evening Times*, 'I've been to Belgium, Poland, Hungary, Sweden and Israel. This was the easiest game I've ever found for tickets.'

'The eyes of the world will be on Wembley on Saturday. The fans must not let us down,' said Stein. An industrial dispute put tube and bus services off, meaning that many fans had around ten miles to walk to the match.

John Robertson spoke to Jim Reynolds of the *Glasgow Herald*, saying, 'Wembley holds no fears for me. I've been there four times with Forest and I love it – the big wide pitch and the atmosphere.' Robertson would be playing directly against his club-mate Viv Anderson. 'I'll do all right there,' he said. 'Viv doesn't like anyone going in tight on him.'

'When I see John Robertson play he excites me,' Bill Shankly said in 1980. 'It excites me to think about what he can do for Scotland in years to come. No Scottish side should take the field now without his name on the team sheet. It would be absolute nonsense to leave him out. He has a cute footballing brain which gives him a yard start on opponents, and that first yard is the most important in football. That's where he excels.'

'So You Tried To Ban Us Mr Croker' read a banner in the ground aimed at FA secretary Ted Croker. The official attendance was reported as 90,000, but those in the ground observed empty seats. One thing that was certain, though, was that the Scots outnumbered the English. The match itself was far from a classic. The pitch cut up almost from the start. Manchester United's Steve Coppell blazed a couple of shots over the bar for England, while Rough saved well from Glenn Hoddle's 20-yard drive. Late in the first half, a great cross from Coppell should have made it 1-0 to England, but Arsenal's Graham Rix sent his six-yard header wide. In the

second half, Ray Wilkins of Manchester United shot past the post, while another great chance was wasted for England when Aston Villa's Peter Withe didn't get enough power in his header from Kenny Sansom's cross, and Miller hooked it out from on the goal line.

In the 64th minute, the goal came against the run of play. Provan found himself in space on the right. He spotted Archibald, similarly with no one around him through the centre. The Celtic man played a perfect ball through the middle and into the penalty box for the Spurs striker to run on to. Manchester United's Bryan Robson was on Archibald's shoulder, and as the Scot crossed to go goalside, the Englishman clipped his heels sending him crashing to the turf. Lying on the ground, Archibald swivelled his head to see what referee Robert Wurtz had decided. He raised his arms in celebration as he saw the Frenchman point to the spot. As several England players surrounded the referee in protest, John Robertson gathered the ball and placed it on the spot. 'It was a blatant penalty,' Robertson said to *The Independent* in 1996. 'My hands went up for it until I realised I was going to have to take it. I started panicking a bit, and it didn't help when Trevor Francis ran from the halfway line to tell Joe Corrigan where I was going to put it.'

As Robertson stood waiting to take his kick, his Nottingham Forest team-mate Trevor Francis went up to goalkeeper Corrigan and had a word with him. 'I know what he was doing,' Robertson wrote in his autobiography *Super Tramp*, 'but I said to myself, "Go your normal side," which for me meant hitting it to Corrigan's right.' Robertson did just that, and Corrigan went the wrong way. It was 1-0 to Scotland. Robertson spoke to Corrigan later, and the Manchester City goalkeeper told him that Francis had

suggested Robertson would change his usual routine so to dive left. Archibald had a decent chance late on to double the lead, but there was no further scoring, and Scotland left with a famous win. Magnanimously, Ted Croker called the day 'a victory for football'.

Rough's clean sheet was the first for a Scottish goalkeeper against England at Wembley since David Cumming in 1938. 'Perhaps my experience on Saturday will be an example to Scottish goalkeepers in future,' Rough said to the *Evening Times*. 'Certainly, I feel it might take a lot of pressure off them since the so-called Wembley jinx has been lifted. A lot of English critics have been ready to doubt me in the past, but maybe now they'll give me some credit.'

Alex McLeish recalled the game for the *Independent on Sunday* in 1999, 'I played 77 times for Scotland, but when I think of how myself and Willie Miller were rubbished before this match, you would think I should never even have had one cap. It was only my ninth or tenth game for my country but the media, particularly TV, were really dismissive of our partnership because we played for Aberdeen. They didn't rate the Scottish domestic game and could not understand how Jock Stein didn't use Anglos like Gordon McQueen, Kenny Burns and Alan Hansen. Lawrie McMenemy, who was the BBC's top pundit, could not even remember my name and kept calling me "the big red-headed lad". If I had heard that, I would have been raging, but I was motivated enough with all the English papers tipping us to get murdered. Willie and I had a good teacher at Aberdeen in Alex Ferguson, but we also owed a lot that day to Danny McGrain and Frank Gray, two fine full-backs.'

Although Scotland finished top of the Home International Championship table on four points, the

tournament was incomplete because England and Wales refused to play Northern Ireland, so no winner was declared.

Scotland's next international was the qualifier with Sweden at Hampden in September. By that time, Liverpool, with Hansen, Souness and Dalglish in the side, had lifted the European Cup, Ipswich with Wark, Alan Brazil and George Burley had secured the UEFA Cup, while Steve Archibald had been in Spurs' FA Cup-winning side.

There were two qualifiers in Scotland's group played in June. Sweden had won them both, defeating Northern Ireland 1-0 and Portugal 3-0. They weren't the results Scotland were looking for as the group had now become extremely close, with Sweden joining Northern Ireland on six points, just two behind Scotland.

'I can't remember the last time everything went so smoothly in the build-up to a major game,' Stein said the day before the match. 'This time, only the call-off by Graeme Souness has spoiled the perfect attendance.' It was expected that Gordon Strachan would return to the team, having been out with torn stomach muscles, but he could only find a place on the bench. Scotland would line up loosely in a 4-2-4 formation with Rough in goal, McGrain and Gray the wing-backs, and McLeish and Hansen in defence. Wark and Hartford would make up the midfield, while Provan and Robertson would be on the wings just like at Wembley. Dalglish and Jordan would be the front pairing.

Joe, now 29, had made a lucrative move from Manchester United to AC Milan in July. In the past, he had been linked with clubs across Europe, including Bayern Munich and Ajax. 'I knew this was my last chance on the continent,' he said to the *Sunday Mirror*. 'I wanted to find out how I would get on.' He made sure his move abroad wouldn't force

the international manager to forget about him. 'I actually phoned Jock before signing for Milan to get his advice and ask him if it would affect my position within the national side,' Jordan told Archie Macpherson. 'He absolutely assured me that it wouldn't influence him in the slightest.'

The mood was expectant. With a largely settled team and that win in Stockholm a year earlier under their belts, the Scots were confident. 'We will show the Swedes respect, but no fear,' Stein said. The 81,511 fans at Hampden saw Provan and Robertson frequently create chances for Jordan and Dalglish. Their work paid off in the 20th minute when Robertson was fouled out on the left. He took the kick himself, sending it to the near post where Jordan had timed his run well, dived in front of the defender, and headed home. Sweden looked more assertive in the second 45 and the Scots struggled to find the timing to release the ball, or when the timing was right, they couldn't find the correct pass to play. Dalglish tested Thomas Ravelli in the Swedish goal a couple of times before making way for Andy Gray.

'We were playing poorly, really struggling,' Gray recounted in his book *Gray Matters*, 'and I came on as sub in the second half and won us a soft penalty.' There were only ten minutes left when Gray, turning away from goal, went down under a challenge from IFK Sundsvall's Bo Börjesson. Swiss referee André Daina, later to take charge of the 1985 European Cup Final, had no hesitation in pointing to the spot. Robertson stepped up and sent a right-footed kick to Ravelli's left for 2-0. Scotland had the win that put the result of their qualifying campaign in their own hands. Patrick Barclay in *The Guardian* picked out Hartford as Scotland's best man with his 'consistently inventive and accurate passing'.

‘I did not think it was a penalty and I did not agree with the free kick which led to the first goal either,’ Swedish boss Lars Arnesson said. Someone else who didn’t think it was a penalty kick was Andy Gray. More out of bombast than an attempt to cleanse his conscience, Gray admitted to reporters that he’d conned the referee by going down easy. Stein didn’t appreciate Gray’s remarks. ‘We don’t want that sort of comment from any of our players,’ Stein said. ‘Anyway, Andy was wrong, he was tripped, and it was a definite penalty. He shouldn’t make comments like that about any referee because what will other referees think in future matches?’

The win in Scotland’s last World Cup qualifier at home meant that they had extended their unbeaten run in home World Cup qualifiers since the previous loss on 13 October 1965 when Poland won 2-1. The run, which would extend by two matches, eventually ended on 27 March 1985 when an Ian Rush goal gave Wales a 1-0 win. With two games remaining, Scotland now only needed one point to be sure of qualifying for Spain. The first chance to get that point would be the following month in Belfast.