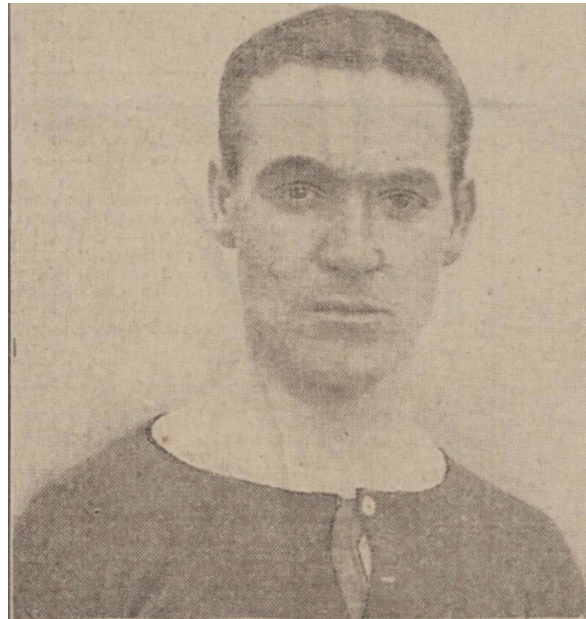


## Archie Kyle ... Where did it all go wrong?



Ten days before the birth of Archibald Kyle, the area surrounding Govan, including Ibrox, Linthouse and Kinning Park, was in mourning. Flagship vessel, the SS Daphne had sunk immediately after launching at Govan Shipyard and 124 men and boys, mostly local, had drowned while preparing for the final fit-out. It was a tragedy of the highest order.

On July 13, 1883, in Kinning Park, just 300 yards from the football ground which was home to Rangers, a new life brought fresh hope for the area. At 128 Vermont Street, Catherine Kyle gave birth to Archibald at 2.15pm. There was great joy in the household, and dad, John, a railway caster, opened a bottle to 'wet the baby's head!'

Just over a fortnight later, on Tuesday, July 31, Rangers hosted Dumbarton at Kinning Park in a fundraising match for the Daphne Disaster. Charlie Heggie scored twice in a 4-2 win for the Light Blues, and as the crowd filed out of the stadium, little did they know that each time they had cheered a Rangers goal, they had probably kept a future star from his beauty sleep.

A week after the game, the Rangers' treasurer was able to hand over the grand sum of £63 8s 6d as proceeds from the game. A former Ranger added a further five shillings to the disaster fund.

Kyle's mum and dad had moved to Kinning Park after being married, and were soon on the move again, this time to the Parkhead area of the city, and when the Celtic club formed in 1888, the family lived close to their ground. John, originally from Partick, found work in the east end of Glasgow, and the family settled into a small flat in Westmuir Street.

Young 'Erichie,' as he was known as a kid, would grow into a supremely talented footballer. He had the lot; a terrier in the tackle and a left-sided midfielder who seldom gave his opponents a moment on the ball. The opposition right back or right half would pick it up, look upfield for options, and, bang, no longer in possession. He had just been a victim of a trademark Kyle mugging.

But there was far more than forceful play to this young man. He was methodical, clever, and boy how he could pick a pass. They said he could thread the ball through the eye of a needle, and the usual benefactor of such a gift was Alec Smith, left winger par excellence: in fact, one of Rangers' greatest ever players, full stop.

For four years, Smith and Kyle struck up the type of partnership that was normally the exclusive domain of twins, or those with a degree in telepathy, but such was the intelligence of both they hit it off almost immediately. From 1904 to '08, the left wing of Rangers was a thing of beauty. Sadly, though, the remainder of the team was in transition; a victim of the great Rangers side of the late 1800s and early 1900s, and manager William Wilton's efforts to breathe new life into a struggling giant.

But in Kyle, there was fire in the dragon and 'The Lad,' as he was nicknamed, was evidently a Ranger at the wrong time. Still, it didn't prevent him giving his all each time he wore the jersey, and he nicked a goal almost every other game.

It was in the Parkhead area that he took his first tentative steps in football, though. His folks and his friends knew early on that he had a chance, and he was playing for crack juvenile combination Parkhead Star while still a good few years younger than his teammates. They vowed to 'look out for him' on the park, but young 'Erichie' needed little in the way of protection.

He was with his mates when they knocked on doors in streets such as Chapel Terrace, Ravel Row and Salamanca Street, asking for coppers to buy the necessary football and a set of goalposts, as they had been well warned to keep their 'thieving mitts off the claes poles in the back courts of Parkhead!' Kyle was just one of a galaxy of talented kids to come from the Parkhead area, being preceded by Celtic keeper, Dan McArthur; Alex Glen, of Tottenham Hotspur, and former Rangers and Sunderland centre half, Alex Barrie.

While transitioning into one of the finest inside lefts in Scotland, if not Britain, Kyle moved from Parkhead Star to Parkhead Juniors, one of the top sides in a wonderful era for junior football in the west of Scotland.

In 1903, Parkhead won the Scottish Junior Cup, the Glasgow Cup, and the North Eastern Cup, while Kyle played for Parkhead in the Scottish Junior final of 1904. Parkhead, Strathclyde, Maryhill and Glencairn ruled the junior roost in those days, and the former were top of the tree. Due to the deluge of midfield talent in that era, places in the Junior Scotland team were at a

premium, but the selectors knew a player and Kyle was soon turning out for his country against Ireland and England (at Birmingham in 1904), as well as for the Glasgow League Vs Ireland.

His fame soon spread into senior circles, and as a Catholic boy living a stone's throw from Celtic Park, he seemed destined to wear the green and white. But in those days there wasn't much got past the discerning eye of the great Rangers manager William Wilton, and he nicked The Lad from under the nose of his great rivals. In Johnnie May, of Derby County, and Kyle, it was believed he had procured two of his best and brightest players in a single season.

Perhaps in an effort to deflect some of the criticism for missing out on a talented boy on their doorstep, a Celtic official insisted his club wasn't in the market for slightly-built players, and would be looking at signing 'only those built on more generous lines' in the near future!

Resolving to immediately make the most of May and Kyle, Wilton arranged for their debut to take place against Hibs at Ibrox Park on August 17, 1904; the Rangers team being Allan (Falkirk), Fraser, Gilchrist, Henderson, May (Derby County), Robertson (Chelsea), Turnbull (late Falkirk), Speedie, Mackie, Kyle (late Parkhead), and Alec Smith. Rangers won 2-0. Both players were outstanding, and this gave some hope to the home supporters in the crowd. For a player of such obvious talent, it was a mystery that Kyle would win no more than two 'league' caps in a career spanning fourteen years. His first came against the English League at Chelsea on March 24, 1906, when the Scots were very much at sea, losing 6-2. The team was Rennie, D. McLeod (Celtic), D. Crawford (St Mirren), J. Young (Celtic), C. Thomson (Hearts), J. May (Rangers), G. Stewart (Hibs), R. Walker (Hearts), J. Quinn (Celtic), Kyle, and G. Wilson (Hearts).

As a player, Kyle possessed a close and masterful style. Dour, dogged, persistent on the ball. He was a cute 'drawer out' and artful and mechanical placer of the ball. In consort with his 'pal' and comrade, Alec Smith, the two worked like a machine, troubling the best of backs and half backs.

They were freer and opener in movement than many noble pairs. Kyle would often go off on his own, and had a penchant at times for goal scoring, a habit formed in his previous position as a centre forward.

He was also a great and deadly shot, and would find the net with amazing regularity. He was cunning on the charge and slip, and he was known to wear a broad smile on his face as he skipped effortlessly past bemused defenders. As a person, he was quiet and pensive. "Aye work awa'" was his motto. An old head on young shoulders!

Kyle had four years at Rangers and was regularly recognised as one of their most consistent performers, but that consistency couldn't be measured in terms of success as the club won nothing during his time as a Ranger. At the beginning of 1906 he was banned for a month after committing an

'infringement' on an Aberdeen player. There's no doubt he had a fiery temper but it was usually held in check as he allowed his football to 'speak' on his behalf.

After a match between Rangers and Port Glasgow, at the start of the 1906/07 campaign, Kyle was criticised by a newspaper reporter for having the audacity to say that the Port team were a poor lot, and had not a single player who made an impression on him. His criticism was perfectly understandable as his direct opponent, Geordie Robertson, had spent the entire ninety minutes kicking him up and down the park!

However, the newspaperman, obviously with leanings towards the Inverclyde minnows, reminded Kyle of his 'mediocre' performance in the League international at Chelsea, suggesting that he had been as anonymous that day as some of the Port team had been at Ibrox, adding, 'Anyone who has been guilty of such an utterly futile exhibition of the game should never have the cheek to criticise others.'

At the end of January, 1908, Kyle was immortalised in linen, and brought from Belfast to Glasgow, where he was celebrated in the area he would later make his home. Members of the Bridgeton Rangers Brake Club had commissioned a bannerette from the best in the business, Brother Bridgett of Belfast. It was of blue body, with orange and blue fringes. On one side was an image of Kyle, while on the other was a picture of his partner, Alexander Smith. It was to be flung to the breeze at Parkhead Cross on the first available Saturday afternoon at 2pm. It was a stunning piece of craftsmanship and loved by all members of the club, as well as members of other brakes. After four years at Ibrox, Kyle decided to up sticks and try his hand south of the border. Rangers didn't want him to leave, but he had made up his mind. It was thought his destination would be Woolwich Arsenal. They were keen on taking him to London, and believed that the presence of his brother, Robert in the Highbury team would be to their advantage, but he plumped for Blackburn Rovers for a fee believed to be in the region of £700. Rovers had their best season in 20 years, and Kyle played many fine games, but despite finishing fourth, Kyle expressed his desire to leave. The club weren't at all happy at his decision. Hearts had made public their interest in signing Kyle, and as they were resigned to losing star player, Bobby Walker, they were desperately in need of a like-for-like replacement. They saw Kyle as that man – but when Walker decided he wanted to remain at Tynecastle, the Edinburgh side dropped their interest in Kyle. That put the cat among the pigeons as Kyle had already played his hand.

Rovers, meanwhile, were furious at this upset to their plans for the following season and slapped a £600 price on Kyle's head. Kyle was keen to return to Scotland but the seismic fee put off any potential suitors.

At the end of August, 1909, he signed for Bo'ness. The move shocked the football world, but it made sense. Bo'ness weren't part of the Scottish League set-up – playing in the Scottish Combination – which meant they didn't have to pay Blackburn a transfer fee. But it also meant Kyle's options were

extremely limited for the future as he was tied to Rovers.

He scored in his first game for Bo'ness, but he was clearly far too good for that level of football and after helping the Central Scotland side to successfully negotiate the Qualifying ties, it wasn't too long before he was once again on the move: destination Bradford Park Avenue.

Mr Gillies, manager of the West Yorkshire side had been tracking Kyle for some time, and was delighted to secure his man, especially in the face of 'considerable competition'. Park Avenue heralded the arrival of their new player and supporters were delighted to attract such a big star to their club. They had been striving to get promotion from the English Second Division and felt this move would strengthen their claims. They were hoping to have him available straight away to face Leicester Fosse.

But a problem quickly arose. Bradford had been refused permission by the English FA to play Kyle against Leicester, despite Blackburn Rovers agreeing to the switch, and a fee agreed. No reason was initially given by the Football Association.

It was mid-November, 1909, and Kyle wasted no time in heading straight back up to Scotland and joining Royal Albert, a club playing at the same level as Bo'ness. He was now a teammate of one of Rangers' greatest ever players, Neillie Gibson, who had left Partick Thistle to join the club from his native Larkhall.

It was clearly a family trait, as just as Archie was arriving at Raploch Park, his brother Peter was leaving to sign for Watford. Nicknamed 'The Wanderer,' he had already played for Tottenham Hotspur, where he was a fairly prolific goalscorer, Woolwich Arsenal, Aston Villa and Sheffield United.

With Dundee extremely keen to sign Archie Kyle, one football reporter north of the border called on the English FA to show mercy towards him, so that he might return to his proper place in the game. The reporter added that Kyle's situation was 'one of the hardest cases in the history of the game.'

He continued, 'This player has been thrown out of English football by an arbitrary ruling of the English Council, and owing to the heavy transfer fee placed on his head he has to play for a provincial club, the Royal Albert.' In a rare interview, Kyle told the reporter, 'I am wearying to return to first-class football, and have a special fancy to come to Dundee. Dundee are, and have been for several years, the finest football team in Scotland, and I would enjoy nothing better than having the opportunity to assist there.'

The cup ties were looming, and Dundee were determined to have Kyle in their ranks, despite the high transfer fee they would have to pay. But the matter was still out-with the control of Blackburn Rovers, the club who held Kyle's professional registration.

With Christmas looming, the Scottish FA agreed to consider Kyle's case at a

specially-convened meeting. A communication was read from the English Association, in which they stated their reasons for refusing to allow the player's transfer back to England.

On May 24, it was said, Kyle appeared before a commission, and said his wife and child were unable for health reasons to reside in Blackburn. He was therefore granted permission to change from Blackburn Rovers and return to Scotland.

On September 8, Kyle signed for Bradford Park Avenue, who offered to pay Blackburn Rovers £600, and £200 to Bo'ness. He had only played for the latter club for three weeks at 25s a week. The association added that they had evidence that on the transfer of Kyle from Glasgow Rangers to Blackburn Rovers, the player had received a considerable amount of the transfer fee paid by Blackburn, and, having been with the Bo'ness club for only three weeks, it was highly probable he should receive a portion of the transfer fee from that club.

If this practice had been followed, they stated, it was probable that the object was to obtain these irregular payments. The player's representations were not bona fide, and as he had asked for, and had obtained, permission to leave English football, he could not be allowed to return.

Mr Campbell (Renfrewshire) moved formally that, under the circumstances, Kyle should be declared as bound to the Bo'ness club. This proposal was adopted without discussion.

Kyle was furious, and moved away from Scotland to sign for Linfield. Having had his final appeal turned down to play for Bradford Park Avenue, he headed across the Irish Sea. He would make his debut at Distillery. As Ireland weren't members of the International Board, no transfer fee was necessary. He knuckled down and got on with the latest chapter in his dramatic career. His first match for his new club drew a large crowd, but also attracted one of the heaviest hailstorms – and thunderstorms – the country had witnessed in many a year. It was mid-January, 1910, and the teams were led off the field by the referee for a good 10 minutes after the heavens opened. It was quite a welcome for Kyle, but Linfield eventually took nothing from the game.

Once up to speed with the Irish game, Kyle was soon up there with the best in the league, although at the end of the season he was amazed by two stories – in different newspapers – but published within a few days of each other. The first insisted that Rangers were keen to take the player back to Ibrox, while a Belfast paper reported that Kyle had signed for Celtic. The reporter of the latter rued the departure of another great player from the Irish league! Of course, neither were true, although Kyle was on the move, and was once again able to play in Scotland. And he was bound for the east end of Glasgow, but to Shawfield, home of Clyde FC, and not Celtic. Bully Wee manager, Alex Maley, brother of Celtic's Willie, paid Blackburn Rovers £600 for the player. Kyle was tipped to re-ignite his career at Shawfield, although he endured a slow start, which many attributed to a lack of real competition the

previous season.

Once again, Clyde were keen to re-sign Kyle for the following season, but the player wanted to move, and once again there was a problem. St Mirren were keen on taking the player, and once they had come to terms with losing him, Clyde were happy to let him go. But, both Saints and Clyde failed to agree on a suitable transfer fee and so the matter was put to the Scottish League for arbitration. Before coming to a decision, both clubs had agreed to a swap deal, with Kyle heading to Paisley, and James Grant, the Saints' keeper, moving in the opposite direction.

Kyle was by now splitting opinion on his merits. There was no doubt he was still a fine player, with all the attributes to swing games the way of his team, but he had added a new attribute. One of moods. It was said that when he was in the best of moods there wasn't a more artistic forward in football. And that was borne out when he made his Saints' debut against Partick Thistle at Firhill. The diminutive star ran the show in the middle of the park, but the game ended goalless.

When the Jags visited Easter Road, Kyle time and again carved open the Hibs defence with his very own brand of precision passing, and on one occasion he made a goal for Magner by beating two opponents and slipping a beautiful ball through to the centre forward. The ex-Ranger made innumerable opportunities for his mates, while at times he assisted the half-backs. He was the leading spirit in every Paisley raid. His dodging, dribbling, and passing were excellent, and quite up to his best Ibrox standard. He was a born tactician.

In the Renfrewshire derby of February, 1913, Kyle proved his worth to Saints in a 3-2 success over Morton, and scored the goal of the game when he took a centre from Cole high in the air, and simply flicked the ball with an adroit touch past Bradford from a seemingly impossible angle. It was a sensational effort.

But his crowning glory in the black and white of St Mirren undoubtedly arrived at the ground many thought was his earlier destination – Celtic's Parkhead. Late in 1913, many believed Celtic to be invincible, but Kyle proved that wasn't the case. It was the player who proved untouchable as time and time again he prompted a wave of Saints' attacks, something which the home side simply couldn't handle. After the game, it was mentioned that Kyle – even at the age of 30 – could be in line for international honours.

Seven days later, he proved the performance had been no one-off by returning to Shawfield and masterminding a 3-0 victory for the Paisley side. But in January, 1914, Kyle shocked his peers once again when he signed for Hamilton Accies. The Douglas Park side were desperate for a player with a fine command of the ball, and they had their man, while Saints' fans lamented their loss.

Like at Paisley, Kyle averaged 30 games a season for Accies in a productive

four-year spell, and in his first full campaign with the club, Accies finished eighth, which was a vast improvement on their 18th-placed finish the season before, and went one better the following season.

Kyle missed a few games due to muscular rheumatism, something which blighted his initial season with Accies, but apart from that he managed to remain almost injury-free.



At the end of the 1917/18 season, with World War I in full swing, Kyle decided to hang up the boots. His had been a glittering career and he was now approaching his 35th birthday. He settled down in Bridgeton with his wife Letitia Hargreave. The couple had been married at St Michael's RC church, in Parkhead, in August, 1905. Letitia, who was from Baird Street, was 19 at the time, with her husband three years her senior. At the time of his marriage, Kyle had been resident in East Wellington Street, Parkhead.

For the next six years, Kyle either lived an unspectacular life, or managed to remain under the radar, because in March, 1924, all hell broke loose, and Archie Kyle was once again thrust into the limelight.

The occasion was an ordinary Second Division match between Bo'ness, Kyle's former club, and Lochgelly, a club from the other side of the River Forth.

At the meeting of the SFA Council, held in Glasgow, it was alleged that an attempt had been made to bribe some of the participating players, and a request made for a joint Commission of the Association and the League to investigate this charge. It was reported at the meeting that the result of the match came as a huge surprise to the football public.

The following letter addressed to the secretary of the association from Mr William McAndrew, secretary of the Scottish Football League, stated: -



“A gross irregularity in connection with a Second League game last Saturday has been reported to me. After consultation with the president of the league and the president of the Scottish FA, I am instructed to request your council to appoint a commission with full powers to inquire into and deal with the matter. I understand that your council meet tomorrow night, when I trust the appointment of a commission will be made. I shall place the whole information in my hands at the disposal of the commission.”

In answer to a question, the Chairman stated that the nature of the complaint was that two named individuals had attempted to square a match, and that money had actually changed hands. In his opinion it was the worst case of its kind in Scotland.

The Commission was due to hold its first meeting almost immediately, and the Chairman wanted it noted that both clubs should be treated with absolutely clean hands.

It appeared that the two full-backs of Bo'ness FC were approached by two well-known ex-Glasgow players. A suggestion was allegedly made to the two Bo'ness men that they should 'lie down,' and allow Lochgelly to win. The players asked for time to consider the matter, and immediately informed their club officials of what had occurred.

The officials decided the best way to deal with the matter would be to lay a trap. Arrangements were accordingly made to conceal witnesses in the house of one of the players, where it had been decided to hold the next meeting. The witnesses were duly concealed, and in course of time the conspirators arrived. Then, it is alleged, the Glasgow men were heard to make an offer of £30 if Bo'ness lost the game.

Immediately after this interview the Bo'ness directors held a special meeting with the members of their team, and impressed upon them the necessity of doing their utmost to win the game, and thus frustrate the designs of the agents. Unfortunately, Bo'ness played with such eagerness to win that they failed to achieve victory, and the Lochgelly team surprised the football world by defeating Bo'ness by 2-0 at Newtown Park.

After the game it was decided to secure further evidence against the ex-players, and accordingly witnesses repaired to the railway station, where it had been decided to hand over the money. There the two players approached the agents, and were duly handed £30 each, all of which was seen being done by the concealed witnesses.

The satisfactory feature of the affair, and the one that has given general gratification, is that the clubs have come out of it absolutely untarnished. The Bo'ness full-backs on Saturday last were Brown and Harris.

Mr William McAndrew, secretary of the Scottish League, visited Bo'ness for the purpose of collecting evidence. Precognitions were taken from both players, and they gave a full and frank statement of all that transpired both in

Brown's home at Corbiehall, Bo'ness, and in the station and public house at Queen Street, Glasgow, on the Saturday evening after the result of the game had been published. The players were warmly congratulated on their courageous stand in a delicate business.

The Sunday Post went big on the explosive story, and here's how they reported it.

#### BRIBERY SENSATION

Full Disclosure of Amazing Plot.

Bo'ness captain's dramatic narrative.

Signed statement from John Browning.

By our Special Investigators...BO'NESS, Saturday

Today the Sunday Post is in a position to reveal the full facts of the amazing Bo'ness bribery plot which has astounded the football public, and has been described by the President of the Scottish Football Association as the worst case of its kind known in Scotland.

Engineered, there is no reason to doubt, by bookmakers' agents, and frustrated by players and directors of the Bo'ness Football Club, this astounding effort to square last Saturday's game between Bo'ness and Lochgelly United has brought the searchlight to bear on what might properly be described as 'the underworld of sport.'

#### THE CAPTAIN'S OWN STORY

The full story of the affair is best told by Mr Peter Brown, the right back and captain of Bo'ness, who was first approached, and who took prompt methods to deal with the matter. His narrative is as follows: -

A week past Monday evening, about a quarter to eight, when I had settled down for the evening before the fire, there was a sharp rap at the door.

"I'll go," said the wife; "it's probably a neighbour." Then I heard a voice ask, "Is Peter In?"

There were two men at the door I learned, but they refused to give any names, and as they were strangers to my wife, she left them at the door and came into the parlour, remarking, "Peter, there's two fellows anxious to see you, but they won't say who they are. You had better go to the door."

Then I went through, and found the two visitors, one of whom I knew. The other was a perfect stranger.

"Well," I said, "what can I do for you two fellows tonight?"

"We would like to see you for a few minutes – a bit of business, Peter," declared the man I knew.

"Oh well, you had better come inside," I replied, much mystified as to what could be their business – the presence of two individuals from Glasgow at that time of the evening was certainly a bit surprising.

“Right,” the spokesman assented. “We’ll just come ben the kitchen. That’ll dae fine!”

#### SOMETHING QUEER ON

And so the two visitors stepped into the kitchen. Mrs Brown was there but I advised her to go into the parlour. Somehow I had a feeling that there was something queer on.

The two men sat down, and without any further ado the man who was doing the talking came to the point with the question, “Well, Peter, how would you like to earn £30?”

The abruptness of the question startled me, but the cautious side of my nature at once asserted itself. I said to myself – these jokers are up to something. So, pretty well on my guard, and determined to get at what was at the back of their minds, I smiled, and then said, “Well, boys, I like to earn a pound or two as much as anybody.”

My visitors seemed very pleased, and, although I was convinced that they had got something very strange to suggest, I must admit I was scarcely ready for their proposal.

It was such a stunner that I don’t know yet how I managed to stick on my chair.

“Well,” said the spokesman, “what about the game on Saturday? Can you make sure that Lochgelly will win? There’s £30 for you if you will take it on and do it. What do you say?”

#### AN ASTOUNDING OFFER

I expect that they were quite prepared for my expression of astonishment. I realised in a moment that I would require all my wits to deal with this matter, and I decided that the best thing to do was to carry them on.

“A stiff proposition, isn’t it?” I remarked.

“Yes, but what about it?”

“Well, I’ll try, but what about the £30?”

“That will be all right. You lose the game, come to Glasgow on Saturday evening, and meet me under the clock at Queen Street after your train arrives at 8.21.”

That was the end of the talk.

“Think we’ll be off now,” said the spokesman – his friend had scarcely uttered a word, merely nodding assent now and again. And so they departed. The interview lasted ten minutes.

I returned to the parlour to think out the matter, and quickly made up my mind to report all the circumstances to the chairman of the club. I saw him the next morning. In the evening there was a meeting of the Directors. I was advised to arrange another meeting with the mysterious visitors, and to have another player present, a player who was to be ‘coming in’ with me.

Then I also got permission from the club to go across to the police station and report the matter, and to secure the services of an officer, who would be secreted in my room and overhear the conversation.

At first the police seemed a bit dubious about taking any action, but eventually I got the promise of the services of PC Fordyce, a young officer with whom I am acquainted.

But who was to be my comrade?

On the same stair below my flat there resides Thomas 'Pud' Anderson, our centre half. Surely he was the fellow. The Directors approved. "And," said one of the Directors, "in order to make the matter more realistic in the presence of your visitors, just indicate that Anderson thinks you are to get more than £30, and you have not been frank with him."

I caught the idea; so did Pud Anderson. A wire was then sent to one of the two men. I knew his address. This was the text of the message, which was made reply paid: - Would like to see you again. Anderson has come in. Can you call Wednesday evening?

Within two hours, I got the reply: - Yes, we will call Wednesday evening. Will meet you and Anderson at your house.

So the plot thickened. Over again to the police office! Yes, PC Fordyce would come to my house that evening.

#### POLICEMAN CONCEALED BEHIND WARDROBE

I looked up the trains. Here I made a mistake. I timed my visitors for about 6.40, instead of 7.21. My friend the constable came just after teatime. And what a problem we had to settle – where he was to be hid. Under the bed? No, we didn't like the idea.

In the corner of my parlour there is a big wardrobe. Usually it stands flush to the wall in the corner near the window. "That's the place – behind the wardrobe," I declared to the constable, as I pulled out the wardrobe and placed it across the corner.

Time was slipping along. The two men would soon arrive. The officer disappeared behind the wardrobe, and I managed to provide a small chair for him. But what a cramped position he was in! He could not possibly venture an appearance until after the visit had been made. A hurried return to his post just on the arrival of the visitors might have upset the whole business of the wardrobe in more senses than one.

I remained in the parlour engaging in very quiet tones of conversation with my unseen witness. The time sped on. I heard the train arrive, but waited in vain. Then it suddenly dawned on me that it was the Edinburgh train. The next from Glasgow was due about forty minutes later. Of course, there was the off-chance that the men had motored. Our weary wait continued. PC Fordyce was still behind the wardrobe. Already he was going through a painful physical experience – cramp.

At least nearly fifty minutes after the time at which I expected my visitors they arrived. The same man was the spokesman.

"Is it all right," he whispered.

"Yes," I replied, with the boldest face I could make. "Just come through to the parlour to have another talk."

"Where's Anderson?" asked the spokesman as he passed through the lobby into the sitting room, followed by his pal, who, I thought, seemed to be glancing around furtively.

"He stays down the stair," I said. "I'll send for him."

"OUT OF EARSHOT!"

My wife went downstairs and told Pud he was wanted. Pud came up within a few minutes.

"We're out of earshot, I hope?" said the second man, who all the time appeared a little more cautious than his friend.

"Of course," I replied. "The wife is going out."

It was a strain. I almost fancied that I could hear Fordyce breathing.

Rapid conversation! That was the policy to adopt. So when the others took their seats – one of the men seemed perilously near the wardrobe – I set the ball a rolling.

"I'll be frank, gents," I announced. "My pal, Anderson here, is a bit suspicious about the money. He has told me quietly that he thinks I am going to get more out of the business than I have stated – isn't that so, Anderson?" I added, turning to my club mate.

Anderson did it well. He coughed with a note of apology, wriggled about his chair, twisted his cap, and said, "Well, I'm wondering, you know."

"Yes, gents," I continued, "you see the position. Now I want you to repeat the offer."

"That's straight enough," replied the spokesman. "The offer is £30 if you lose the match. That's plain enough."

"You hear that, Anderson," I said.

"All right, that'll dae," said Anderson, bluntly.

"So it's settled," continued the spokesman. "You lose the match. You both come to Queen Street Station, meet us under the clock, and you'll get the dough."

Now, I didn't want to hurry off my visitors. Throughout our 'negotiations' it always struck me that the silent fellow was a bit uneasy. I wanted to assure him that we were 'rowing in' with absolute certainty that there were to be no monkey tricks.

So we chatted, first about the match, how we could make mistakes, vital mistakes that could quite easily cost our side defeat, then we drifted on to general topics, during which the spokesman indicated that we were not the first to tackle such a proposition.

Forty-five minutes that interview lasted. And then, to my intense relief, they rose to go.

“Think we’ll motor to Linlithgow,” one of them said. “We’ll get a train there for Glasgow.”

“Yes,” I said. “You’ll do that comfortably.”

We shook hands. “It’s all right then,” both of them declared. “Sure,” was our reply, and so off they went.

As I listened to their retreating footsteps, I advised poor Fordyce to remain for ten minutes more, in case they returned.

I duly reported the details to the club officials, and there the matter rested for a while.

We lost the game, and that was a surprise, for no team ever tried harder for victory than Bo’ness. The home players were notified of the ugly business before the match. Our Chairman told us to play to win as, if possible, we had never done before.

It’s no use harping on the match. We were beaten fairly and squarely. I left the field seven minutes before the finish of the match with an injured toe. Note that, please.

After the match, away to Glasgow. Pud Anderson was just as game as I was. We took the first available train. What an errand! Punctually at 8.21 we arrived at Queen Street.

“Now Pud,” I said, “we’ll need to go canny.”

Straight to the meeting place – under the station clock – we went. The two men were waiting.

“You managed it, then?” said one of them.

“Easy,” I replied. “Didn’t we, Pud?”

“Oh yes, it wasn’t difficult,” returned my mate.

“Well then,” continued the spokesman, “we’ll go to a public house not far from here.”

“Off we went. We got a private room. Within a few minutes I was pushing notes to the value of £30 in my pocket. No receipt was asked for.

The business settled, we caught the last train to Bo'ness, where we were duly met by our Directors, to whom we handed over the money.

#### WHAT THE CHAIRMAN SAYS

"When the offer was reported to me by Brown," said Mr Cochrane, chairman of the club, "I took immediate steps to probe the case. And I think Bo'ness have done a valuable service to players, to football, and to the public generally. The SFA will make exhaustive inquiries, I know, and probably startling developments will be forthcoming."

Startling developments? I know what Mr Cochrane was hinting at. In the discussion in Peter Brown's parlour the more loquacious of his visitors, in order to give confidence to the two Bo'ness players, revealed, it is stated, details of previous bribes, which they asserted had been paid. They even went the length of quoting the names of players involved, and detailed the results of the games – surprise results, of course.

In the Bo'ness district a whisper about 'bribery' went the rounds before the game between the local team and Lochgelly was played. At the match there was suggestive talk.

"When are ye sharin' oot the money?" was shouted once at Brown.

Mr Robert Wylie, another Director of the club, informed me that a number of the Bo'ness supporters even 'turned their coats' when it was seen that Lochgelly were winning.

"Come on, Lochgelly," was the shout, "Oor yins are no tryin'."

"That sort of thing annoyed us," said Mr Wylie. "We knew the inside story, and we knew that our boys were certainly trying. In fact, it was their eagerness to win that made them fail. Anyhow, I can tell you this – we're glad that the thing has occurred. We admire Peter Brown for the action he took."

#### STATEMENT BY JOHN BROWNING – ABOUT VISIT TO BO'NESS

The following signed statement by John Browning, of the Vale of Leven club, and formerly associated with Celtic, Chelsea and Dumbarton, has been given for publication in the Sunday Post : -

I have heard my name mentioned in connection with the Bo'ness-Lochgelly football sensation. I want to say that anything I did in connection with this case was in no way illegal.

I was asked by an old football friend of mine if I knew Brown, of Bo'ness. I said I did; he had played along with me in Dumbarton.

He wanted to see Brown, and asked if I would introduce him. I went with my friend to Bo'ness, and there he discussed with Brown the chances of victory for Bo'ness over Lochgelly. There was no talk of bribery in my presence. In fact, it was the usual talk between football players, and if anything else transpired I can honestly say I know nothing about it.

When the wire came from Brown to meet him again, I did not get it. But a relative of mine, who was in my shop, knowing I could not go when they wanted me, wired that I would be on the following night. I was told about the wire, and naturally went through with my friend.

It has been published that a policeman was in Brown's room when my friend discussed the game. If that is so, it doesn't affect me, for my duty was simply one of introduction. And I deny absolutely having anything to do with bribery – in fact, I never knew of money being paid, and I never saw money being paid over.

A great deal has been made of this case, but in my view there is nothing in it demanding the attention of the SFA, and I deny being implicated in bribery or anything like that.

When coming from Coatbridge on the Saturday night I was waiting for my train home to Alexandria at ten to nine, and there I met Brown and one or two other friends.

The party went off to have a refreshment, and it was at this stage – so it has been said – that the money was paid over. You can take my word, that there was certainly nothing done in my presence, and I will be very surprised to know that it was done at all.

Anyhow, I left immediately after to get my train and left my friends together.  
John Browning

The weekend after the affected match, Lochgelly United beat Albion Rovers to make it two wins in a row, but Bo'ness were held 1-1 by Dundee United. Peter Brown didn't play, but Pud Anderson did, and he was sent-off late in the game.

Two months after the Bo'ness bribery case and the Procurator Fiscal still hadn't come to a decision. The documentary evidence had been lying in the Glasgow office, but people were left wondering what was going on. The SFA had decided not to make any further moves until the authorities had taken action, or at least returned the documents to Carlton Place, and there was a strong feeling that the SFA had erred in not acting promptly in the first instance.

Finally, in June of 1924, John Browning was arrested in Alexandria and detained in connection with the bribery incident.

Just days later, a second man – Archibald Kyle – was arrested. Along with Browning, he was remitted to the Sheriff from the Northern Police Court, Glasgow, and three charges made against them.

One is that on March 3, 1924, they corruptly offered a bribe to a professional football player as an inducement or reward for forbearing to exercise his skill



so that the Bo'ness Football Club might be defeated by Lochgelly in a football match to be played on March 8, 1924.

Another is that on March 5, 1924, in the same house, they corruptly offered a bribe to two professional players as an inducement or reward for forbearing to exercise their skill, as already stated.

The third charge is that on March 8, in a public house in Dundas Street, Glasgow, they corruptly gave a bribe of £30 to the two players in furtherance of and compliance with the said offers.

The two men appeared before Sheriff Lyell at the Sheriff Court later in the day. No declaration was made, and bail was fixed at £25 each.

When the players appeared at Glasgow Sheriff Court, at the end of June, they pleaded guilty to all three charges. Browning, who had played for Chelsea and Celtic, and Kyle, were quickly found guilty, and were each sentenced to sixty days hard labour for corruption.

Detailing the circumstances of the case, Mr J Adair, Depute Fiscal, said that when the first offer was made to Brown he asked for time to consider, and reported the matter to club directors. Bo'ness stood high up in the league, and were popularly expected to win. Contrary to expectations, Lochgelly won, and there was no suggestion that the Bo'ness players had lain down to their opponents.

After the match Brown and Anderson came to Glasgow and the money was paid over. In turn it was handed to the directors of the club, and the matter reported to the authorities.

There was little doubt that there was someone interested in football betting behind the accused. There had been laid to the account of Browning a sum of £200, which had been sent from Glasgow in Treasury notes in a plain envelope. There was nothing to indicate who had sent this money, and the authorities had been unable to trace the sender.

Mr Robert Marshall, agent for the defence, said that according to his information neither of the accused was connected with bookmaking as a principal. They were punters, and betted on football coupons. For the purposes of completing their coupon they conceived this scheme of arranging the match. He asked his Lordship not to send the men to prison, but to impose a pecuniary penalty.

Sheriff Blair, in passing sentence, said that sport must be protected. In these days it was absolutely necessary, not only in football but in other games, that they should be conducted fairly and honestly. It would not be his duty to impose a monetary penalty.

The Scottish FA were true to their word when they said they would wait until the legal case against Kyle and Browning before taking any decision on both

players. At the end of August, 1924, both were expelled for all time from taking part in any football match in Scotland or entering any football enclosure. Their fate was sealed. But there was a twist.

At the beginning of September, Kyle showed he had no shame by beginning legal proceedings to recover the £30 he had paid to the two Bo'ness players, and which subsequently had been passed to the directors of the club. After the trial, directors of Bo'ness voted to gift the money to their captain, Peter Brown, for the honesty he had shown throughout what must have been a difficult time.

But Kyle had other ideas. He had just been released from prison when he went straight to a lawyer's office in the east end of Glasgow. He wanted his money back, and said: "I have done my punishment and I am entitled to get the £30 back. If Brown is the honest sportsman he has proved himself to be by refusing to be bought over and giving the show away, he cannot consistently retain the money."

At the meeting with his lawyer, Kyle was advised that legally he had no claim on the money. He left the office to think it over, and returned the following day to say that he was accepting the advice. And there the matter ended... Or did it?

On Hogmanay, 1930, two former Scottish footballers were arrested on alleged bribery charges. They made an appearance at Glasgow Central Police Court and were formally remanded in custody until after the New Year holidays, pending further inquiry.

Archibald Kyle, a labourer from Rockcliffe Street, Dalmarnock, Glasgow, and Adam Miller, a miner from Larkhall, were charged with "having, between 26 and 29 December, corruptly offered a gift of £100 to the captain of Hamilton Accies, if he agreed that his club be defeated in the game with Leith Athletic, to be played at Hamilton on 3 January, 1931, contrary to the Prevention of Corruption Act 1906."

Both the accused had long careers in senior football. Kyle's clubs included Rangers, Blackburn Rovers, Clyde, St Mirren and Hamilton Accies. While Miller was with Accies for nine years.

When he appeared at Glasgow Sheriff Court at the end of January, Kyle pleaded guilty to corruptly offering a gift of £100 to a Hamilton Accies player as an inducement or reward for forbearing to exercise his skill so that his team might be defeated by Leith Athletic.

He was sentenced to three months imprisonment with hard labour. Miller pleaded not guilty and the Fiscal accepted this plea. The charge against Miller was withdrawn and he was discharged. Passing sentence, Sheriff Dods remarked that whatever the motive, it was utterly despicable, and struck at the root and the traditions of sport.

The charge alleged that Kyle had offered a gift of £100 to William Moffat, the captain of Hamilton Accies, and asked him to see to it that his side lost to Leith Athletic.

Deputy Fiscal Patterson said the charge against Kyle, who was 47, was aggravated by a previous conviction for a similar offence. He sought Moffat out and made the offer to him. Moffat reported the matter to his directorate and the police were also informed.

It was alleged that Kyle was to pay Moffat £10 before the match, and, under police supervision, the meetings between Kyle and Moffat took place, Kyle being finally apprehended. There was no doubt the offence was committed by Kyle for a betting ring. There was a considerable amount of money placed on the outcome of the match.

Mr Maguire, solicitor, who spoke in court pointed out that, despite all that took place, there was no doubt Hamilton Accies had played their very best to vindicate the honour of their team and their captain, but notwithstanding all this, Leith Athletic had won the match.

Sheriff Dods: "I cannot conceive any other motive."

Mr Maguire said the fact that Kyle was a very able footballer made him a shrewd judge of a coming player. As a result he was employed by several English clubs to keep in touch with young players with a view to giving advice to English teams as to the best that they should look for.

Mr Maguire added that about the time of the offence Moffat was being posted in the newspapers as a player who would be important to his club in the case of a transfer and the figure mentioned was £1,000.

Kyle kept in touch with him and, in the interest of his masters, and to get the transfer fee reduced he suggested to the player that he should not be at his best in this particular game. He (Mr Maguire) pointed out to His Lordship that this was what he believed was the case. The whole idea was to get the transfer fee reduced. When the matter was put to Moffat he took the attitude that it was a definite attempt to bribe him.

Kyle's second such guilty verdict for bribery was a watershed moment in the legal system for that type of offence, as shortly after being jailed, the way these cases were tried was overhauled and it was noted that in future all such cases would be dealt with by indictment, which meant that the sentence would be two years imprisonment, together with a fine of £500.

And thus ended the involvement of Archie Kyle - the grandfather of singer, Frankie Miller - in football.