

Derek Grierson - the deceptively quick striker!



Derek Grierson scored 55 goals in 99 games for Rangers, between 1952 and 1956, but the stats are a little misleading as he managed only a handful of games in his final two years following a serious thigh injury. It would blight his time at Ibrox and he was shortly afterwards on the move to Falkirk.

But the two fully-fit seasons he had at Ibrox were fantastic. He was certainly prolific, averaging well above a goal a game, a great return for an inside forward. He was a clever player, with a knack for finding space inside the opposition box, or using his lightning speed to evade the attention of defenders.

Bill Struth signed the 20-year-old starlet after he had been a part of Walter Winterbottom's British football squad for the Olympic Games in Helsinki. He didn't play in the only game the Brits had in Finland, but had taken part, and scored, in two of the lead-up games prior to the event.

In his first season at Ibrox, Grierson, an ever-present in the league, scored 21 times, as well as another 11 in other games. He finished as top scorer with 31 competitive domestic goals as Rangers won both the league title and Scottish Cup. Just after Derek Grierson signed for Rangers, the following story appeared in a national newspaper. It was Thursday, September 11, 1952.

Rangers have a 'Mac' Bailey in soccer boots, ran the headline...

Merely to mention the name Derek Grierson to Rangers supporters is sufficient to have them smiling expansively and telling the world that all is now well in the Light Blue kingdom of Ibrox.

Poor Rangers supporters - they obviously don't know that within twelve months their beloved club will be forced to seek an inside-forward replacement for Grierson. Derek is a brand new twenty. Some time next year he will graduate in chemistry from Edinburgh University to be claimed immediately by the Navy, the Army or the Air Force. For two years, unless most fortunately posted within accessible distance of Glasgow - Grierson will be lost to Rangers.

There is nothing uncommon, of course, about a young footballer being called up for the Armed Services, but Grierson is a most uncommonly talented player for his years.

Before he dons uniform I am confident that he will have donned Scotland's blue as a

professional with the same justification he had as an amateur. Rangers will miss him terribly. He's a good player now, but by the time he has qualified to have letters after his name, and a longish number on his kit bag, he will be a great player.

But for Grierson, Rangers wouldn't be scoring many goals this season. Already, Derek has contributed six to their tally and in doing so has proved to be a master snapper-up of the slightest chance.

Watch him moving about the field when the ball is visiting other participants. He looks slow. But watch him when the ball enters his sphere of influence. Over ten to twenty yards Grierson is a *McDonald Bailey in football boots. His two goals against Queen's Park on Wednesday night which escorted Rangers into the final of the Glasgow Cup, were perfect examples of his speed of thought and speed off his mark.

No other player on the field would have kidnapped the 'down the middle of the field' ball and had it lying at the back of the Queens' net so quickly as did Grierson. No other player would have been so immediately appreciative of a goalkeeper's mistake as when he scored number two.

Of course Grierson helps himself to be fast. He trains assiduously and lives cleanly. He has two ambitions: to be successful in his chosen profession and to reach the very top in football. He should do both. He's prepared to bolster natural ability with hard work.

And naturally it helps that alongside him in the Rangers team are stalwarts such as the great Willie Waddell and Willie Thornton.

*Emmanuel McDonald Bailey was an outstanding British and Trinidadian athlete.

And there was more bad news for the player on Monday, September 15, 1952. Under the headline of 'Exams can rob him of first league cap,' the story ran;

Derek Grierson of Rangers may miss the League international at Cardiff a week on Wednesday - unless the authorities of Edinburgh University are most co-operative with a student at examination time.

Next Monday, when the Scottish League team is due to leave for Porthcawl, Derek is due to sit an examination. Two days later, when he is certain to be Scotland's inside right against the Welsh League, he is also due, according to the university curriculum, to once more be filling in sheets of foolscap.

Derek is going to ask for a deferment, but of course if the university insists that nothing must take precedence over examination, then Derek will withdraw from the Cardiff trip, and Wilson Humphries, of Motherwell, will play, instead of the newcomer.

Sadly, for Grierson, the university refused his appeal for deferment and Wilson Humphries gained the cap.

And on Tuesday, November 18, 1952, we received our answer to the first story...

Derek Grierson, Rangers' inside right, and Charlie Ferguson, the right-back of

Hearts, were among the new recruits who arrived at the Miners' Training Centre, in Muircockhall, Dunfermline, yesterday. They will have a three-week stay at the centre before being posted to the pits where they will do their National Service.

Yesterday they were busy collecting miner's equipment, including overalls, safety helmets and heavy pit boots.

Four days after the story appeared in the paper, Grierson hit a double as Rangers beat Raith Rovers 3-2 in a tight league affair at Ibrox.

Prior to signing for Rangers, Derek made a little bit of history in March, 1951, when he became the first player to score a goal on live television for a Scottish club. He was with Queen's Park at the time, and the Hampden side had been invited down to London to play Walthamstow Avenue as part of their Jubilee celebrations. For some strange reason, the BBC had decided to broadcast the match live, even though there was no television in Scotland at this time - it would come a year later! Still, the game was shown in England to a potential audience of around 200,000. In another bizarre move, the commentary team included the great comedian, Jimmy Jewell, who would later star in Nearest and Dearest with Hylda Baker - and that was when we did have television in Scotland!

Queen's Park won the game 2-0, with Grierson scoring both goals, and his first making a little piece of television history.

Rangers supporter, Tom Davison, remembers Derek Grierson well, and said, 'There was a time when Rangers signed players from Queen's Park quite frequently. Derek had been scoring regularly for the Spiders and soon after his transfer to Ibrox, he became a regular in the first team, wearing the number eight jersey, and was a frequent scorer.

'I would have been around 14 or 15 when the famous Rangers Iron Curtain team visited Easter Road to play the Hibs Famous Five side. The Rangers defence of Brown, Young and Shaw, McColl, Woodburn and Cox, were getting battered throughout the game by Smith, Johnstone, Reilly, Turnbull and Ormond.

'Near the end, a punted clearance was picked up by Grierson, just inside his own half, and he ran down the Easter Road slope and we salvaged a 1-1 draw. This would have been in the early 1950's but that type of winner was unforgettable.

'Sadly Derek picked up a bad injury and was never the same again. He moved on to Falkirk.'