

## Alfie Conn on the great Jock Wallace...



*Alfie Conn, second from the left in the back row*

It was Scot Symon that signed me for Rangers but I ended up playing under Jock at Motherwell. I was at Fir Park four years and in that time I had four managers. Ally McLeod signed me for the Steel Men, and then Davie Hay was there for a season. Big Jock then took over, but got the call to go back to Ibrox, and he was replaced by Bobby Watson.

I signed for Rangers in 1967 and the first I worked with the big man was just after the European Cup Winners' Cup final. You knew what you were getting with the big man and if you were honest with him, you wouldn't have any problems. If you tried to pull the wool over his eyes then you were in bother. I learned quickly not to even attempt it, but it wasn't a fear thing, really, it was much more about respect.

I remember when he was manager at Motherwell and I had just undergone an operation on my Achilles. I stayed in Coatbridge at the time and big Jock came across to the house to see how I was doing. I was sitting with my wife when he walked in. 'Any whisky in the house son?' I said no. 'There's £20, away down to the corner shop and get two bottles son!'

We actually came from not far from one another. He was from Wallyford and I was just a mile and a half away at Prestonpans. Both mining communities so we had similar upbringings.

When I was at Motherwell, we heard that Jock was the new manager, so we knew he was coming. He walked into the dressing room and said, 'Some of you already know me, but most of you don't. I can assure you by the end of next week, you will all know me very well,' and he looked over at me and said, 'Is that right Alf?' I said, 'that's right gaffer.'

I'm not surprised by the success Jock achieved during his career because his motivation was second to none. You knew before you ran out onto that park that you were going to win. That was the mentality he drilled into you. He hated getting beat with a passion.

I remember training at Ibrox one day. We were running round the park and this young boy stopped to be sick. Big Jock shot across from the stand side to the far side, grabbed the lad by the scruff of the neck and started running him. He shouted, 'Listen son, you're a Rangers player now, and if you're gonna be sick, you can be sick on the run!'

If you had problems you could go and speak to him at any time. He was really approachable, but if he had a problem with you then you weren't long in finding out about it. He didn't believe in allowing little problems to fester and grow into big ones, which makes an awful lot of sense.

He didn't ever appear to show favouritism to anyone. If you were playing well you were in the team and if not, you were out, it was as simple as that. And that was the right way to do it. But I think it all stemmed from his upbringing in Wallyford and then his time in the army. And he also worked his way up through the ranks in football. He was never afraid of hard work.

When it came to the infamous Sands of Gullane I wasn't too bad with it, because coming from Prestonpans it was my type of terrain, and I was never off the sand as a kid. But Jock used to take us to the wee dunes in the morning and then it was onto what they called 'hell hill' in the afternoon. And when you had done your whole day on the sand, you actually struggled to get your trousers on when getting changed, because your muscles were swelling up. But it certainly didn't do us any harm.

I reckon we were definitely the fittest team in Scotland under Jock. When other teams were starting to get a wee bit tired late on in games you could see that we were still able to keep going. Maybe it was just that Jock wouldn't let anybody stop!

At the start of the session, Jock would run the course to show that if he could do it, anyone could. That was his philosophy; he wouldn't ask anyone to do something he couldn't do himself.

He was a good man, and an excellent motivator, and that was one of the reasons we were very successful.