

# Ron Yeats Testimonial

**LIVERPOOL** (FA Cup Winners 1974)

v.

**CELTIC** (Scottish Cup Winners and League  
Champions 1974)

Monday, May 13th, 7-30 p.m.



10p





# A red colossus

Bill Shankly talks about the big fella he brought down from Dundee United

It is easy to write about Ronnie Yeats, man and player. He was one of the cornerstones of the Liverpool success story of the past 12 years.

He has been a model player and a model man in every way. He's never caused anybody any trouble – apart from his opponents, who never found it easy against him. And you could never meet a more likeable fellow.

If any testimonial is ever justified then this one is, because of Ronnie's great contribution to the Liverpool cause.

A manager makes a signing and he thinks deep down . . . he'll be a player sooner or later. There are some you take a chance with. But there are those you sign and you know there's no danger with them; no risk. This fellow comes into that category.

Like his mate, Ian St. John, I had no doubt about him when he came here. They arrived here within a few months of each other – and it was Liverpool's good fortune to get them. I wanted to sign them from the moment I first set eyes on them, playing against each other in a representative match in Scotland.

I was Huddersfield's manager then and I couldn't get them. When I came to Anfield I was able to get both.

When we were up in Scotland signing Ronnie I remember saying to a director – 'We'll not only win promotion from the Second Division with him, we'll win the FA Cup – which Liverpool had never won – as well.'

When we did win the Cup in 1965 the director reminded me of what I had said. Mind you, I'd been a bit pessimistic. We also won the First Division title twice with Ronnie as skipper, as well.

In his first season here I made him captain at Christmas at Rotherham. He broke a bone in his hand that day. He was a natural to be captain; a big man who commanded respect and his position in the centre of the defence meant that he could see everything going on in front of him. A captain should be like a puppeteer, with the other players on strings all the time.

Ronnie was a tremendous centre-half, a man difficult to beat in the air and on the ground. He was a fine captain.

Now he has stepped into management and I'm confident he'll make a success of that, too. He was never slow to learn and I'm sure he took plenty in when he was here.

Apart from that he is basically honest, he has ability, and he has enthusiasm. Those are three big ingredients that can help make success.

I give thanks to Ronnie Yeats, one of the greats of Liverpool, and wish him all the best in the future.

**BILL SHANKLY**



# "Ten fanta

## Arrival at Anfield

My main concern when I agreed to sign for Liverpool was whether I'd fit in at Anfield. The move was a gamble because I was established with Dundee United, was captain of the side and held all my roots in Scotland.

In fact, had they agreed to give me a £2 pay rise, I might never have agreed to join Liverpool. Inevitably, I suppose, it was Bill Shankly who made up my mind.

I asked him where Liverpool was, meaning whereabouts in the country. He replied they were in the First Division. I knew that was wrong and said so but quick as a flash he retorted: "Ah, but they will be with you in the team."

That showed me the dynamic qualities of the man, his determination and confidence and I decided on the spot – Liverpool is the club for me.

## 1961-2

It proved to be an incredible first season in English football as we won promotion from the Second Division. I was in a bit of a dream because after only three months "Shanks" had given me the captaincy which confirmed, for me, the confidence he had in me.

I shall never forget the reaction of the fans when we won promotion. It was a truly emotional experience because they had waited so long and now, at last, they had a team to support which looked as if it would win a lot of honours.

After a year and a half in Scottish First Division football the biggest difference was the far greater preparation for matches.

I'd never had a tactics talk at Tannadice but we were having two or three a week at Anfield then. Then, there was the attention that "Shanks" paid to detail such as hotels, food, bedtimes etc. Also the training and its variety was far superior to what I'd known in Scotland.

## 1962-3

I can imagine just how Jackie Charlton at Middlesbrough is feeling at this moment for I'm sure it was the same as I felt when we prepared to kick-off our First Division career.

I was confident we'd do well and although we started slowly we picked up. We finished seventh in that first season and reached the semi-finals of the F.A. Cup.

That defeat at Hillsborough was the biggest disappointment I'd known at Anfield up to then because we were confident the Cup would be ours. We were all over Leicester throughout the game but Mike Stringfellow scored their goal and somehow they hung on to their lead.

"Shanks" had made a couple of signings to strengthen the team and despite the disappointment of the semi-final we knew it had been a year of consolidation and that the big honours were only just round the corner. As "Shanks" told us – it's only a matter of time.

## 1963-4

As usual "Shanks" was right because this season we won the League. I think it was quite early on that I realised we were going to do it but we faced a crucial Easter programme.

We had to play at Tottenham, Leicester and at home to Spurs. In a storming finish we won all three games to virtually clinch the title.

It was as if I was still dreaming for if someone had told me three years earlier that I'd be captaining the League champions, I'd have laughed them out of the door.

The secret of our success was our team work, something that "Shanks" had drummed into us. He told us that if we played as a team we'd all get our just rewards and play for our countries. That was another prediction that came true. In the end we were all internationals.

Because we were a straightforward team without flashy individuals some people called us robots. But when it came down to it we could beat any team and we deserved our success.



# stic years!"

## 1964-5

We were notoriously bad starters in the League and we never really got going this season. But this was to be our Cup year and possibly the greatest moment of my life.

Receiving the Cup from The Queen was a big thing for me, particularly as I was the first Liverpool captain to get it – but as I held it aloft I could think of nothing but our supporters and what a superb crowd we had.

Before the final I'd received letters from elderly fans begging us to win it so that they could die in peace.

I was remembering that as I stood at the top of the steps at Wembley and all I wanted to do was to throw the Cup into the crowd – to give it to our fans who had waited so long for it.

It was quite a weekend – not because of the celebrations because we didn't have a big one – for we faced Inter-Milan at Anfield four days later.

"Shanks" told us before the match – you've won the Cup lads, so just go out and enjoy yourselves. And with all the pressure off us we did so and gave one of the finest performances we ever produced.

We murdered Inter and we should have gone to the final. But we were cheated in the second leg in the San Siro. Admittedly we didn't play well but I'm convinced that even if we had and even if we'd scored half a dozen goals, somehow Inter would have qualified.

It was one of the most frightening experiences I've known in football and I know exactly how Celtic felt when they went to Madrid recently.

But that first year in European football taught us many valuable lessons. The experience we gained helped us get rid of any fear of the Europeans – in fact they were more afraid of being drawn against us.

## 1965-6

We lost the F.A. Cup at the first hurdle at home to Chelsea but that was the spur that made us determined to win the League again. We'd set such a high standard that we had to keep it up – and we went on to lift the championship.

But there was another disappointment – defeat by Borussia Dortmund in the Cup-winners' Cup final. Our experience from the previous season helped us but this was the year we ran into Celtic in the semi-finals.

In the first leg at Parkhead, the pitch was hard and we played badly. But thanks to some heroic goalkeeping by Tommy Lawrence we only lost 1–0 when we should have lost by five.

We won the return 2–0 to qualify for the final but we knew then that Celtic were about to become a major force in European football.

## 1966-7

We had set such a high standard and had been in the pressure cooker for five years that it was impossible to keep it up. Although we finished in the top five it was a disappointing season by our standards.

Cup defeat by Everton and going out in the second round of the European Cup to Ajax made it our worst season. But the thing we learned was the emergence of Dutch football.

Ajax were the best team I've ever played against. We had thought Inter-Milan were a good side but they were not a patch on the Dutchmen.

They played football from defence right through to attack and each of their players was a brilliant individual in his own right. And what's more they played football away from home because they drew 2–2 at Anfield – a leg we expected to win even though the tie was already lost.



# **"The most inspiring**

**I've played this game the world over and no**

## **1967-8**

It was obvious by now that gradually "Shanks" was making changes. Tony Hateley had arrived and so had Emlyn Hughes.

Age was creeping up on several of us and we knew it was only a matter of time. But we were still going flat out and we were in with a chance of lifting the title right up to the last Saturday.

We finished third and only went out of the Cup in a second replay in the quarter-finals.

## **1968-9**

Again we were just pipped for the League, this time by Leeds on a memorable night at Anfield, but although we were in contention for honours we were just falling short.

I injured my back in a League Cup tie at Manchester City and although I didn't know it at the time, I had slipped a disc.

## **1969-70**

For three years "Shanks" had been experimenting with the side as he tried to rebuild and this was to be the crucial season.

The key match was a sixth round Cup tie at Watford. We lost 1-0 and for the older members of the team, like myself, it was our Waterloo.

I'd been suffering with my back for about 18 months and after that Watford game, "Shanks" said he had got to give Larry Lloyd a chance.

I switched to left back and quite enjoyed it there and I was just happy to be in the side.

## **1970-1**

I played a few more games at left back when Alec Lindsay was hurt – and I almost got in the Cup Final side at centre half.

Larry Lloyd had hurt his back in training and was doubtful right up until two days before the game.

By now the rebuilding was almost complete and I could see there was a lot of talent in the new Liverpool side. But they were inexperienced and that cost them the F.A. Cup.

In addition, nerves brought on by the constant attention of the TV cameras even at lunch on match day, led to most of them leaving their strength and energy in the hotel.

After the Cup Final I went into hospital for three months for traction on my back and I thought my playing days were over.

## **1971-2**

I didn't play any more for Liverpool but in the December, Tranmere offered me a job as player-assistant manager.

I didn't think I'd ever play again, but as the playing side was not their prime concern with me, I thought I'd take a chance.

I would have laughed if anyone had told me I'd play more than 100 games at centre half for them.

## **Departure**

Now I'm looking forward to a new career in football management. Everyone has to serve their time and I couldn't have found a better club at which to start than Tranmere.

And I see quite a future for Rovers. I've gone for youth and I've got some lads there who are going to be outstanding players. Obviously it takes time for them to gain experience but the future is looking rosy at Prenton Park.

As a player and a centre half I wanted to be the best. My Scottish caps prove that I was once just that and now if I'm half as successful as a manager I'll be very happy.



# Ron Yeats

## by his team mates

**TOMMY LAWRENCE:** He was the best centre half in Britain. I think we had a good understanding although we had our arguments. Even this year he was the best centre half in the Third Division. He must have the longest left leg in the world – and the shortest right. He was a marvellous captain as well.

**CHRIS LAWLER:** He was great. He never missed a thing in the air. With crosses and anything around the middle we just looked for where the ball was going to go from his head. He was a good captain, and he is a good fellow.

**GERRY BYRNE:** Mr. Dependable, that's what big Ronny was to me. He was a man we looked up to. We had to! My lasting memory of him is watching players think they had him beaten. Out would come that left leg and Ronny would take the ball.

**TOMMY SMITH:** Playing with him was unbelievable. With Ronny in the middle of the defence I had more chance to go forward on attack. He was great. You knew they would get nothing through the middle or down the left hand side. A great captain. He knew how to handle us, treating each man differently and according to his personality. He was the best centre-half in Europe.

**WILLIE STEVENSON:** Playing in front of him and mainly on the left I knew I could go forward and attack without fear of things going wrong behind me. He was a wonderful skipper. A natural leader. We all looked up to him, and I think it was fitting that he should be the first Liverpool captain ever to get his hands on the F.A. Cup.

**PETER THOMPSON:** With somebody fabulous in the middle of your defence you have so much confidence. Ronny was fabulous. He's the best captain I ever played under; and as a player it's a tragedy that he got only two caps for Scotland. He was the centre of the whole thing for Liverpool. A great captain who knew how to treat individuals. He got the best out of us.

And finally from a Liverpool fan, Jimmy Tarbuck:

"If the Ronny Yeats of Liverpool days came on the transfer market he would smash all records. There's just not a centre-half like him today."

**IAN CALLAGHAN:** Liverpool has a lot to thank him for. A great example to everyone, on and off the field. A colossal man who was one of the best centre-halves in Europe. Opposing forwards were frightened of him. As a skipper he has a great way with words. He gave you encouragement. Off the field he is an amusing fellow, always joking, nothing seems to get him down.

**ROGER HUNT:** Big Ronny's the best centre-half I have ever seen. With him in the team and at his best, we used to think we were unbeatable. In the air he was great. Some people used to think he was weak on the ground, but I never saw anybody give him a chasing. He was the right man for captain. He was very popular.

**IAN ST. JOHN:** He was the best centre-half of his time: the rock of our team. We had good players in various positions but he was the rock that gave us solidity. When I used to look around to see the big fellow there my confidence always grew. I knew that nothing was going to go wrong.

**GORDON MILNE:** As a manager now I dream about signing a player like big Ronny. The only trouble is that such a player would be priceless. He was the barrier we knew our opponents would not get past. He gave us all tremendous confidence. Running out behind him we all felt that nothing could beat us.

**GEOFF STRONG:** A great captain and a great centre-half. He was virtually unbeatable. He would have been an outstanding player today. I don't think there is a centre-half like him around now. He had telescopic legs. Many opponents thought they had him beaten, but big Ronny was rarely beaten.





**JOHANN CRUYFF**

I can't say I saw much of him the first time I played against him. It was for Liverpool against Ajax one foggy night in Amsterdam. I don't think we saw much of any Ajax players that night. He was practically unheard of then. In the second leg at Anfield I saw more of him. His pace and control were fantastic. You just couldn't mark him. He's certainly gone on to confirm that first impression – one of the world's all-time greats.



**ZOLTAN VARGA**

Like Cruyff, we didn't know too much about him when we first came across him playing for Ferencvaros in European football. We'd all heard about Florian Albert and were looking out for him, but Varga was brilliant in both games. The first leg over there ended in a blizzard. The return was played on snow. They said he couldn't play on snow. I'm glad I didn't have to face him in good conditions.



**CORSO**

I've got painful memories of him, too. In that second leg of our European Cup semi-final against Inter-Milan he had us in trouble. We won the first leg at Anfield 3-1 and were confident of reaching the final. He bent a free-kick around our defensive line-up to score and we never really recovered. He was a winger with great ability, and he controlled his line well.

## **MY TOP 6 - Ron Yeats talks about the 6 top forwards he has faced**



**SANDRO MAZZOLA**

Another Inter player. He impressed me as a 90-minute man. I think Jock Stein must have been very impressed, too. He picked me as No. 9 against Italy and gave me the job of marking Mazzola. I kicked off and went straight back into defence. You could hit him really hard with a tackle and he came back at you. He was good in the air, too – which I've found unusual for the Continentals.



**GEORGE BEST**

One of the greatest. He always used to give us plenty of trouble. I remember one game at Old Trafford when he really turned it on. From a throw-in the ball came to me and I controlled it. Before I could do anything with it, he hit me like a tank. He took the ball off me, ran away and stuck it in the net. That's what beat us that day. He could play and he was hard, as well.



**BOBBY CHARLTON**

Always a gentleman and a pleasure to watch. Great skill and control, and tremendous shooting power with both feet. As a defender it was this shooting power that really struck me. One of Liverpool's heaviest defeats at Anfield in my time was against Manchester United. The fourth goal was his – a shot of such power that I'm sure if Tommy Lawrence had got a hand to it, it would have taken his hand off.





# The facts & figures of Ron Yeats career

Born Aberdeen.  
 Height 6' 2", Weight 14st. 5lbs.  
 Signed pro. for Dundee Utd., 1957.  
 Signed for Liverpool, July 22, 1961, aged 23.  
 Liverpool debut, Aug. 19, 1961, at Bristol Rovers.  
 Scotland debut, Oct. 3, 1964, v. Wales at Cardiff.  
 Signed for Tranmere, Dec. 30, 1971.  
 Appointed manager, April 11, 1972.  
 3rd Div. Manager of the Month, Dec., 1972.  
 Final League match, v. Southend, April 26, 1974.

| League appearances    | League goals |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| Dundee Utd. 116       | 1            |
| Liverpool 358 (1 sub) | 13           |
| Tranmere 96           | 4            |



**LIVERPOOL**

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**IAN ST. JOHN**  
**ROGER HUNT**  
**IAN CALLAGHAN**

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**TOM CALLAGHAN**  
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**JIM BONE**  
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Linesmen:

Mr. Kevin McNally, Wirral  
(Orange Flag)

Mr. Norman Hayes, Atherton  
(Red Flag)

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**FIRST FOR FORD**  
**ON MERSEYSIDE**

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