

GOODISON HERO

MIKE
GOUGE
TALKS TO
CHARLIE
LEYFIELD

Two broken legs, suffered while playing wartime soccer, didn't exactly bring an end to Charlie Leyfield's career . . . instead, it pushed him in a different direction that was later to leave him able to claim a unique distinction in the world of international football.

Before his involvement in the game gradually lessened some 12 years ago, Leyfield was to hold the position of coach to both the English and Welsh national squads; become Wales's first team manager; and then resign to take up an appointment as assistant to England boss Walter Winterbottom.

The record is surely unparalleled in the history of British domestic football and Charlie Leyfield, who will be 70 in October, looks back on those days with affection and deserved pride.

"When I broke my legs the doctors advised me to give up the game but I still played in a couple of friendlies because I was able to stay out of trouble in those," he recalls.

"Then I got the offer to go to

Wrexham as coach and jumped at the chance. It was while I was at Wrexham that I began to coach the Welsh team and I became Wales's first team manager for the match against Ireland in March, 1948.

"We won that one 2-0 and I stayed on as manager for the next 15 internationals. Then, Walter Winterbottom asked me if I would consider coaching the English boys. So I did and my first match as England coach was also against Ireland, this time here at Goodison, and we won that one, too."

Charlie stayed with Winterbottom and England until 1955 — just three seasons — when the wheel turned full circle and he returned to Everton as assistant trainer under new manager Cliff Britton.

"Cliff rang me up and asked if I would go back as Alex Stevenson was giving up. So I decided I would have a go because I had always wanted to go back to Goodison Park," says Charlie.

Everton had been Charlie's first club. He came to Goodison in 1931



Charlie Leyfield in 1932

and made his first team debut three years later. The versatile winger — "I could play outside left or outside right, it didn't bother me" — was transferred to Sheffield United in 1937 and spent a short time with Doncaster before war broke out.

At that time he was 28 and his chances of being able to resume a career in League football after the war were not too bright. He kept in trim by playing occasional games during the war but suffered his first broken leg playing in a London regional league match at Brentford.

When that healed sufficiently for

him to make a comeback, he broke his other leg playing for Chester against Manchester City at Maine Road and that just about ended any hopes he might still have had.

Even his return to Goodison as coach in 1955 was short-lived, for a year later he left to run the City Arms in Saltney. But that wasn't the end of his involvement in football.

"I was still scouting, even then," he remembers. "And then I was asked if I would take over as chief scout at Hull. But we had only just moved to the pub and it would have been a big upheaval to move again, especially all the way to Hull.

"Anyway, they agreed to let me do the job and still live in Saltney so I had a word with my two sons and they agreed to look after the pub if I had to be away anytime and so I took the job.

"My job was mainly to 'vet' teams Hull were about to play and we were quite successful. We won promotion in my first year and I helped them to sign Ken Wagstaff."

Charlie's only regret is that he was "born too soon."

"Everton were a great club in those days. The motto seemed to be 'only the best will do'. The players got the best of everything but we never got a penny more than we earned. I don't think I ever made more than £6 per week out of football in my life.

"Times have certainly changed. But I'm alright. I've still got my golf clubs and my fishing rods and they will do me for now".

Charlie Leyfield, 1981, ex-Everton player from the 30's