

GOAL-DEN GENERATION

BY LENNART KRISTIANSSON

IF YOU'RE A FOOTBALL SUPPORTER FROM THE ERA OF HALF-TIME SCOREBOARDS, THE WATNEY CUP AND ESSO PETROL STATION FOOTBALL BASED GIVEAWAYS THEN YOU ARE GOING TO LOVE A WEB-SITE THAT HAS BEEN CONSTRUCTED BY A SWEDISH FAN OF THE ENGLISH GAME.

LENNART KRISTIANSSON HAS AMASSED AN INCREDIBLE COLLECTION OF THE AUTOGRAPHS OF THE PLAYERS, MANAGERS AND COACHES ETC., WHO WERE ALL CONNECTED TO THE ENGLISH FOOTBALL LEAGUE IN THE 1970-71 SEASON. IN FACT HE HAS CALCULATED THAT HE HAS AROUND 2,300 SIGNATURES, APPROXIMATELY 90% OF THOSE REGISTERED WITH FOOTBALL LEAGUE CLUBS IN THE FOUR DIVISIONS OF THAT TIME. PLEASE DO TAKE A LOOK AT HIS WEBSITE: www.7071.se IT'S A FANTASTIC COLLECTION AND IF I HAD A HAT ON, I'D HAVE TO TAKE IT OFF TO HIM! HE STILL HAS A FEW GAPS TO FILL IN HIS COLLECTION OF COURSE, SO IF YOU HAVE A SPARE IAN TWITCHIN OF TORQUAY UNITED OR WATFORD'S DEREK EDMONDS ETC., PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH HIM AT: www7071.se THIS IS HIS STORY:

FOOTBALL AUTOGRAPHS 1970-71 is a vast and unique collection of autographs, with its focus on a single season of the English Football League. There were roughly about 2,500 individuals connected with that particular season, including first team players, managers, trainers, coaches and so forth. In addition to these, if I am aware of a junior player or an apprentice then they are included in my collection as well if I am lucky enough to obtain their autograph.

My collection obviously involves players whose careers spanned many years or indeed those who only made a handful, or possibly only one appearance in the 1970-71 season, so in effect is a record of the English game from the late 1950's stretching perhaps to the 1980's. This covers the era of England's World Championship win of 1966 and the squad that went to Mexico in 1970 was full of star names, so therefore there are many legends in my collection.

My interest in autographs began when as a 16 year old boy I visited England and took a trip to Stamford Bridge, the home of Chelsea F.C. I was blown away by the atmosphere and the thrill of the game and that magnificent experience has lived with me throughout my life. I bought a small red book in the Chelsea souvenir shop and found a lot of contact addresses in it and then decided to begin my collection.

I have sent thousands of handwritten letters requesting autographs over the years and have had amazing responses to them as many answered with personal letters and even included signed programmes, souvenirs, autographed team pictures or indeed just the requested signature on card – all of which were received gratefully. I am delighted that my collection has survived for all of these years, including the rigours of several relocations between different apartments and houses.

On October 20th, 1971, Chelsea played an away match in the Cup Winners Cup against Atvidaberg in Sweden. Early in that morning I found out which hotel the players were staying at, it is now called Scandic, but I believe it was called Esso Motor Hotel at that

time. In the foyer I was able to speak to and get the autographs of nine of the Chelsea team: Peter Bonetti; Peter Osgood; Alan Hudson; Ian Hutchinson; John Hollins; Eddie McCreadie; John Phillips; Paddy Mulligan and John Dempsey. To say that I was happy later whilst watching the game is quite an understatement and certainly made the almost 1,000km journey to watch Chelsea all worth while.

In the late 1990's, with the internet becoming increasingly popular, one day whilst surfing around I came across a site built by Bob Dunning from Leeds. His site, 'Bobs 70-71 Footballers' gave me the inspiration to put together and manage a site myself based upon my autograph collection. The site is an important tool for me and allows me to keep a record of just what I have in my collection.

The English Football League in the 1970-71 season had four divisions and consisted of 92 clubs and I have an album for each of the clubs. In total I have nearly 5,000 pages filled with signed items and full player career details of every professional of that era. I have so far managed to obtain almost 95% of the 2,550 autographs needed to complete my unique collection. All of the best players from the mid-60's to the mid-70's are in the collection – in fact there are at least 7000 signatures saved in the albums.

I have now started to search for the autographs of players from non-league clubs, as well as Scottish, Irish and Northern Irish players active in my chosen season from over 40 years ago. I have actually managed to secure over 100 non-league players signatures already. The internet is a great help to me in tracking down my missing names and I am grateful to the relatives who have assisted me in my quest.

The biggest lift to my collection came about 12 years ago when an Irishman asked if I was interested in a box full of old football autographs. Was I?! The weight of the box and its contents was 6 kg. Most of them were very difficult to identify but with help from friends in England it turned out to be a real bargain for me.

I have spent thousands of hours working on the web page, including making digital cards for each autograph and I know that dealers in England use my site for identification of their football signatures. My intention is to do only high quality work and all of the signed items are protected with a clear plastic film and the pages are handmade to be a little larger than A4-format. At a later date even the album pages will be viewable from the site as scanned pdf files.

It is impossible for me to pick out specific autographs that mean more to me than any of the others. In fact a player who made just a few appearances for a 4th Division club is as valuable to me as the autographs of legends of the ilk of Bobby Moore, George Best and Billy Bremner. Those great names are of course contained within my collection.

The collection is based in the North of Sweden, but I think the best place for it would be a football museum in England. All of the signatures, programmes and souvenirs are great reminders of a golden age for English football and the result of a huge amount of effort on my part and indicative of my passion for that era when the game really was beautiful.