

## No.78 Gordon Francis Lee

'Onka' Lee, as Gordon became known throughout his childhood and to the Hednesford football faithful during the early 1950s, was born in Pye Green, a small village on the outskirts of Hednesford, 13 July 1934, and spent his youth in Heath Hayes. He was to become a sound and versatile performer, capable of playing in any of the defensive positions.

Initially, Gordon showed a very keen interest in football and cricket, captaining his Littleworth School in both sports. His football development continued with the Girton Road Gasworks team before he joined Hednesford Football Club in 1953, making his first senior outing for us in a 1-0 victory over Sutton, 10 January 1953.

First Division Aston Villa signed Gordon on the recommendation of former Villa star, Jackie Martin, the recent Hednesford manager and his schoolteacher at Littleworth several years earlier. Gordon originally signed amateur forms, allowing him to continue playing for Hednesford and for the RAF as he was about to begin his National Service. On his demob, he signed professional ones, 1 October 1955, but it would be three years before his first senior-team game - a 3-2 defeat against Nottingham Forest was the first of 14 outings in 1958; Hednesford was awarded £50 for Gordon reaching Central League status and £200 on his First Division debut.

The Football League Cup competition was introduced in 1960; Villa won the trophy in its inaugural year with a 3-2 victory over Rotherham after a 2-0 defeat at Millmoor and a 3-0 victory in the return leg for Gordon and his teammates. Two years later, he and Villa reached the final again, only to be defeated by arch-rivals Birmingham City.

After spending 11-years at Villa Park, where he appeared 142 times and scored two goals in all competitions for their senior team, Gordon transferred to Shrewsbury Town, 1 July 1966, playing twice as their player-coach before taking his first managerial roll with Port Vale, replacing Stan Matthews, in 1968. Hednesford hero, Brian Horton, was one of his captures for Vale.

Six years later Gordon took over at Blackburn Rovers, winning the Third Division title at the end of his first year in charge, taking over at Newcastle United between 1975 and 1977. Everton, 1977-81 and Preston North End, 1981-83 followed, losing League Cup finals whilst at both clubs, before taking on Iceland's Reykjavik KR for a two-year spell.

He later coached in Saudi Arabia and at Leicester City, also helping them as assistant-manager and as caretaker-manager. Gordon has also acted as scout for several clubs, nationwide. He now lives in Lytham St. Anne's.

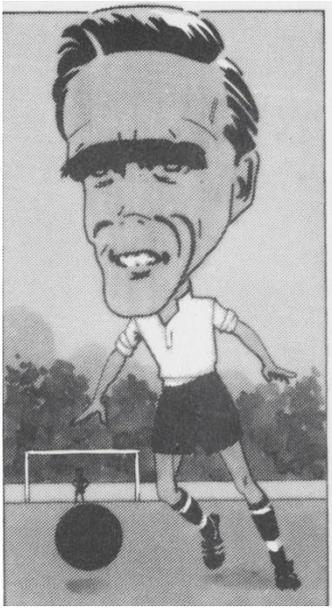


Gordon at the Cross Keys in 1953...



...and at Villa Park in 1964.

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