

= Ray Jones (footballer , born 1988) =

Raymond Barry Bankote " Ray " Jones (28 August 1988 ? 25 August 2007) was an English professional footballer who played as a striker . He was known as one of the best young players in English football outside the Premier League . Jones spent his professional career at Queens Park Rangers , making his debut in the Football League Championship in April 2006 . His good form at the start of the following season led to his only international match , for England under @-@ 19 against the Netherlands , as well as bids for other clubs to sign him . He totalled six goals in 37 professional matches .

Jones died three days before his 19th birthday , when he drove head @-@ on into a bus in London . His club retired his shirt number of 31 . An inquest into the accident ruled that had Jones survived , he would have faced charges of death by dangerous driving for the deaths of his two passengers .

= = Career = =

Born in East Ham , London , Jones was rejected as a youth team player at Colchester United before impressing the coaches at Queens Park Rangers (QPR) . He made his professional debut on 22 April 2006 , coming on for the final seven minutes as a substitute for Steve Lomas in a 1 ? 2 home loss to promotion @-@ chasing Watford . Eight days later , he made his only other appearance of the season , coming on for Stefan Bailey in the 68th minute of a defeat by the same score away to the already @-@ crowned winners of the Football League Championship , Reading .

Jones had his first professional start on 12 August 2006 , in a 2 ? 0 win over Southend United at Loftus Road . He assisted Nick Ward 's goal in the 41st minute , which gave QPR their first win of the new season . Brian Glanville of The Sunday Times opined that Jones and fellow youngster Dexter Blackstock combined in the forward line " as though they had been playing together for years " . Ten days later in the second round of the Football League Cup at home to Northampton Town , Jones came on for Marc Bircham in the 84th minute , and three minutes later headed Marcus Bignot 's cross for his first career goal , winning the match 3 ? 2 .

On 5 September , Jones made his only international appearance , replacing Giles Barnes in a goalless friendly draw for England under @-@ 19 against the Netherlands at the Bescot Stadium in Walsall . Eighteen days later , he scored his first league goal , opening a 2 ? 0 home win over Hull City , the first match of John Gregory 's tenure . Jones followed this the following weekend as QPR came from behind to win 2 ? 1 at Southampton , scoring the decisive goal after rounding goalkeeper Kelvin Davis . On 17 November , as a substitute for Blackstock , Jones scored the only goal in a 1 ? 0 away win over high @-@ flying Cardiff City , connecting with Ward 's cross with less than three minutes left of the match .

Many Premier League clubs showed interest in Jones after several solid performances , and Gregory at one point stated that he was resigned to him leaving . After scoring the only goal against Colchester on 1 January 2007 , he pledged his future to the club , and a week later as he signed a new three @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half @-@ year deal . In total , Jones played 37 games (19 as a substitute) for QPR in all competitions , scoring six goals .

Colchester made a £ 200 @,@ 000 offer for Jones in June 2007 , which was rejected , but they made another bid the following day , which was also turned down . QPR 's West London derby rivals Fulham also bid for him , as did Derby County , who offered £ 5 @.@ 75 million for him and teammate Lee Cook . He missed the start of the 2007 ? 08 season , in the last month of his life , due to a foot injury .

= = Style of play = =

Writing Jones ' obituary in The Guardian , QPR fan Benjie Goodhart remembered him as the club 's " own Wayne Rooney , the prodigy , all precocious talent and burgeoning potential " , and attributed him the essential qualities for a forward including strength , speed , intelligence and confidence . He was perceived by the supporters to be the epitome of a new era under manager Gregory and

prospective new owner Flavio Briatore , and could do " things for real that his peers acted out on their games consoles " . In spite of his confidence and talent , Jones was humble , and took the London Underground back home from games alongside the supporters .

= = Death = =

Jones died in a car crash in East Ham in the early hours of 25 August 2007 when the vehicle he was driving collided with a bus . He had only become a licensed driver 23 days earlier . Two passengers in his car , Idris Olasupo and Jess Basilva , were also killed ; Olasupo received a letter later that day , inviting him to Fulham 's academy . Jones ' death was compared to that of Kiyen Prince , a QPR youth player who was fatally stabbed the previous year at the age of 15 when breaking up a fight . Goodhart wrote that tributes would be " done particularly beautifully at QPR because , heartbreakingly , we 're getting rather good at it " .

As a mark of respect QPR postponed their upcoming game with Burnley , a team who in turn replaced it with an open training session with proceeds going to the charity of QPR 's choice . QPR also decided to retire the number 31 shirt in memory of Jones , who wore that shirt during his career . In their league game against Southampton on 1 September 2007 , all of the QPR players carried Jones ' name on the back of their shirts as a mark of respect . Ten days later , in the England U19 friendly against Belarus at Meadow Lane in Nottingham , a minute 's applause was held before the match .

An inquest in April 2008 found that Jones had sped over a pedestrian crossing on the wrong side of the road , leading to a head @-@ on collision . His death was recorded as an accident , but it was confirmed that had he survived , he would have been facing two charges of death by dangerous driving .

= = Career statistics = =