

= Geoff Smith ( footballer ) =

Geoffrey " Geoff " Smith ( 14 March 1928 ? 19 October 2013 ) was an English professional footballer who played 253 league games for Bradford City as a goalkeeper , including 200 consecutive appearances . When he retired , he held club records for the number of clean sheets in a season and total clean sheets .

Smith was born in Cottingley , Bradford , West Riding of Yorkshire , moved to nearby Keighley with his family before serving in Malaya in the British Army at the end of his teens . His first trial at Bradford City was unsuccessful but after playing amateur football for Lancashire Combination League sides Nelson and Rossendale United , he was signed by Bradford 's new manager Ivor Powell in 1952 . He was at Bradford City for seven seasons and played in every league game between the final match of the 1953 ? 54 season and October 1958 . He eventually retired in 1959 . After his football career , Smith and his wife ran two different off @-@ licences for the remainder of their working life .

= = Early life = =

Smith was born in Cottingley on the outskirts of Bradford , West Riding of Yorkshire , on 14 March 1928 . He had a brother Jack and during their childhood , the Smith family moved to Keighley , where Smith first played football for St Anne 's Church . At the age of 18 , Smith was called up to the army . He served in an infantry unit in Malaya for two years before he returned to Keighley .

= = Football career = =

= = = Early career = = =

Smith resumed his football career back at home with Keighley Central Club . A goalkeeper , he was still playing for Keighley Central in 1948 when he was offered a trial with his local Football League side Bradford City , who were at the time in the Third Division North . His trial was unsuccessful and he was released . Instead , Smith joined Lancashire Combination League side Nelson . He was still living in Keighley , and travelled to Nelson by bus with his brother Jack , who had previously played for Leeds United but had been released when Major Frank Buckley took over as manager and instead also joined Nelson . Smith played for Nelson for three years at a time when the club were competing at the top of the Lancashire Combination and sought re @-@ election back into the Football League . However , Smith initially gave up the game when Nelson could no longer afford to pay him . He was not long out of the game before he signed Rossendale United , a member of the Lancashire Combination 's Second Division . Smith said the journey by bus was a difficult one so he bought a motorbike . However , like Nelson , Rossendale could not afford to pay him , and after another two years , Smith gave up the game once again .

= = = Bradford City = = =

In December 1952 , on the advice of Smith 's friend Roy Brook , who was in Bradford 's second team , new Bradford City manager Ivor Powell invited Smith back to City for another trial and he played for the reserves against Gainsborough Trinity and Notts County . This time , Smith 's trial was successful and Bradford City ? still a Third Division North side ? signed him on amateur forms . Smith had played only seven games for the reserves in the Midland League and was still unpaid when he was given his first @-@ team debut against Scunthorpe United on 17 January 1953 coming into the side for Brendan McManus , whom Smith said was " having a rough time " . It was not a good start for Smith , with City losing 4 ? 0 , but he followed this with a clean sheet in his second game against Stockport County and kept his place in the side for the remainder of the season , playing 19 games , before he signed part @-@ time professional terms in July 1953 . He

had previously worked part @-@ time as a lorry driver , earning £ 4 10s ( £ 4 @.@ 50 ) working 48 hours per week as a lorry driver , but the club did not want him driving around the country and offered him £ 10 per week plus a £ 4 win bonus . To supplement his playing contract , the club gave Smith a job looking after their Valley Parade ground .

During the mid @-@ season break , McManus left City to join Frickley Athletic . Instead , Powell signed Jimmy Gooch from Preston North End as his replacement . Gooch , aged 32 , was more experienced than Smith and so took over as first @-@ choice goalkeeper at the start of the 1953 ? 54 season playing the first 20 games . Smith was called up to the first @-@ team in November for a 1 ? 1 draw with Hartlepool United . He remained in the side and played all but two games for the rest of the season , coming back into the team for the final league game of the season against Gateshead as City finished fifth . He kept 11 clean sheets , which included equalling a club best five in consecutive matches as City won a record nine straight games , during which they conceded just one goal .

Gooch left City after just one season to join Watford leaving Smith to take over the " number one " shirt . For the next four seasons , Smith , who became a full @-@ time professional , played every single first @-@ team game for City which eventually led to him making 200 consecutive league appearances ? it was a run that coincided with one of 246 league and FA Cup games by full back George Mulholland . However , for three seasons , City could not match the fifth place gained in 1953 ? 54 and they remained a Third Division North side . In 1957 ? 58 , under Powell 's replacement as manager Peter Jackson , City finished in third place but missed out on the title by nine points to Scunthorpe United . During the season , Smith set a new club record of 18 clean sheets , one which was later equalled by Steve Smith and Eric McManus .

The following season , Smith 's run of consecutive games came to an end against Reading in October 1958 , with Jim McCusker coming into the side to replace him for two games . Smith 's number of consecutive appearances is third on the club 's list behind Mulholland 's 231 games and Charlie Bicknell . He played 26 further games in the 1958 ? 59 season , in which the club finished 11th in the newy @-@ formed Third Division . The season proved to be Smith 's final season for City as he decided to retire aged 31 . His last game was a 2 ? 1 defeat , once again versus Reading , on 28 February 1959 . When the season finished , Smith had played a total of 270 games for the club , 253 of which came in the league , keeping a club record 70 clean sheets . His record stood until it was broken by Paul Tomlinson in the 1990s . When Smith retired , the club granted him and Mulholland each a sum of money rather than the proceeds of a benefit match .

= = Personal life = =

Smith met his wife Margaret at a ceilidh at St Anne 's Social Club , in Keighley , in 1944 , when they were both teenagers . They married after Smith returned from his two years in the army on 26 August 1950 at Holy Trinity Church , in Keighley . Together , they had two daughters . Smith had been a motor mechanic before his football career , and after he retired from playing , he and his wife ran an off @-@ licence store in Cross Roads for 25 years and a newsagents in Keighley for another five years . Smith played bowls and golf in his retirement , playing for Skipton Vets in the former sport .

Smith died on 19 October 2013 .

= = Career statistics = =