

= Ralph Milne =

Ralph Milne ( 13 May 1961 ? 6 September 2015 ) was a Scottish professional footballer whose clubs included Dundee United , Charlton Athletic , Bristol City and Manchester United . He played as both an attacking midfielder or a winger .

He began his career at Dundee United , helping the club to be crowned Premier Division champions in 1982 ? 83 , and playing in Scottish Cup and League Cup final defeats . In recognition of his contribution to the most successful period in the club 's history , Milne has been inducted into the Dundee United Hall of Fame , alongside several of his former teammates . He made a total of 285 appearances for Dundee United in major competitions and is the club 's all @-@ time top scorer in Europe ( UEFA Cup and European Cup ) with a tally of 15 goals . Milne is often considered to be amongst some of the best Scottish footballers not to win a full senior cap .

Hampered by his heavy drinking , he hit his peak at an early age and after an unsuccessful spell at English club Charlton Athletic from January 1987 , ended the 1987 ? 88 season with Third Division club Bristol City . He returned to the First Division after being signed by Alex Ferguson at Manchester United in November 1988 for a £ 170 @,@ 000 fee , but failed to restart his career . Barring a brief spell in Hong Kong with Sing Tao , Milne played his last first @-@ team game as a professional at the age of 28 .

= = Club career = =

Ralph Milne was born in Dundee , the youngest of four siblings , on 13 May 1961 . He was moved forward a year in primary school due to his remarkable academic progress . He began his football career as a youth with Dundee Celtic Boys Club , where he played initially as a striker and had a prolific goalscoring record .

= = = Dundee United = = =

= = = = Immediate success = = = =

Milne signed for Dundee United in January 1976 and after a couple of seasons in the reserves began to feature for the first team during the 1979 ? 80 campaign . He scored his first goal at the age of 18 during his full debut appearance on 28 July 1979 , United 's third goal in a 3 ? 0 win over Dunfermline Athletic in a Drybrough Cup tie . Milne scored his first Premier Division goal on 8 September in a 2 ? 2 draw away against Celtic , netting the equaliser with a long @-@ range shot . By the end of his debut season , Milne had played 20 games , eight of which he was in the starting line @-@ up for , and scored three goals . He was named as the club 's Reserve Player of the Year and picked up a 1979 Scottish League Cup Final winners medal despite not being named in the matchday squad .

The 1980 ? 81 season saw Milne become a regular in the Dundee United team , scoring 10 goals in 33 appearances . United retained the League Cup , though Milne did not feature in the final victory over their Dundee derby rivals at Dens Park . He finished the season playing in the 1981 Scottish Cup Final side , which ended in a 4 ? 1 defeat to Rangers after a replay . Milne was now being described by manager Jim McLean as " potentially ... the most exciting player in Scotland " , describing Milne as a " winger with pace who can score goals " . McLean however expressed reservations about Milne 's overall attitude and ability to play through patches of poor form .

Dundee United reached another final in the 1981 ? 82 season , and Milne scored the opening goal in the 1981 Scottish League Cup Final on 28 November 1981 , latching onto a pass from Paul Sturrock and striking a low powerful shot past the Rangers goalkeeper ; however Rangers went on to controversially win 2 ? 1 after another goal for Dundee United , " scored " by Sturrock , had been disallowed for offside . Milne also impressed in Europe that season , scoring against AS Monaco , Borussia Mönchengladbach and Winterslag ( twice ) in the UEFA Cup .

=== League title and European Cup campaign ===

The 1982 ? 83 season proved to be a seminal year for both Dundee United and 21 year @-@ old Milne . The club won the league for the first time , finishing one point ahead of Celtic and " New Firm rivals " Aberdeen in a tightly fought league campaign . Milne 's 16 goals in the league , playing wide right , were a significant contribution to United 's league win . One of the most high profile of these goals was on 20 April when he scored the winning goal in a 3 ? 2 win over Celtic at Parkhead ; he controlled an Eamonn Bannon cross from the right on his chest and volleyed the ball from 20 yards out past Celtic goalkeeper Pat Bonner . On the last day of the season , 14 May 1983 , Dundee United needed a win to guarantee the league title . The day after his 22nd birthday , Milne opened the scoring against local rivals Dundee with a skilfully executed long @-@ distance chipped shot ; the match finished 2 ? 1 to United . Milne achieved his peak goal tally in his career that season , scoring 21 goals in all competitions . Having turned 22 the day before the game , the goal against Dundee was to be the defining moment of his career .

Dundee United 's league success saw them take part in the European Cup in 1983 ? 84 . Milne scored doubles against Hamrun Spartans and Standard Liège as United reached the semi @-@ final , losing 3 ? 2 on aggregate to Roma in an ill @-@ tempered tie . Dundee United also failed to retain their league title , finishing in third place and 10 points behind champions Aberdeen . Milne 's goal tally also dropped significantly from the previous year , down to five goals in the league and a total of 12 in all competitions .

=== Discipline problems and decline ===

Milne was with Dundee United for a further three seasons and still a regular player in the team , although he scored less frequently . Milne 's increasingly fractious relationship with manager Jim McLean was also becoming common knowledge ; in December 1983 McLean publicly criticised Milne , stating " I have tried to get the message across to him that it is when he is not playing well that he needs to work hardest . It is plainly not sinking in . " Ironically some months later in August 1984 , it was Milne who scored both goals against Nottingham Forest in a pre @-@ season testimonial match for McLean . However , after the game the pair again fell out because of a brief conversation Milne had with Brian Clough which led McLean to believe the player was trying to arrange a deal away from United ; by this time Milne had grown increasingly frustrated over being frequently fined a week 's wages for breaking minor club rules and generally offending McLean 's strict sense of discipline . The financial strain this caused led to him to work as a casual labourer in order to meet his mortgage repayments . By this time his drinking had become more of a problem , resulting in a struggle to maintain fitness .

Milne featured in a further two Cup finals for United , losing 1 ? 0 to Rangers in October 1984 in the Scottish League Cup Final and losing 2 ? 1 to Celtic in May 1985 in the Scottish Cup Final . He aggravated a hamstring injury in the final against Rangers and was out of action for three months . In 1986 ? 87 , he played in the first three rounds of the UEFA Cup run ( scoring once , against RC Lens in the first round ) which eventually saw the team beat Barcelona and Borussia Mönchengladbach on their way to the final . However Milne had left in January 1987 before these high profile games took place , sold to Charlton Athletic , having lost his place in the side to the up @-@ and @-@ coming Kevin Gallacher . He made a total of 285 appearances for Dundee United in major competitions and is the club 's all @-@ time top scorer in Europe ( UEFA Cup and European Cup ) with a tally of 15 goals .

=== Charlton Athletic ===

He was sold to English First Division club Charlton Athletic in January 1987 for a fee of £ 125 @,@ 000 . He played at Wembley Stadium in the final of the Full Members Cup on 29 March , which ended in a 1 ? 0 defeat to Blackburn Rovers . Charlton finished the 1986 ? 87 season in the

relegation play @-@ off place , but retained their top @-@ flight status after beating Leeds United 2 ? 1 in a replay in the play @-@ off final , following a 1 ? 1 aggregate draw . Milne only played as a late substitute in the first leg at Selhurst Park , and ended the game with a broken jaw after being elbowed by Micky Adams . He dropped out of manager Lennie Lawrence 's first team plans during the 1987 ? 88 season , and was allowed to leave the club .

= = = Bristol City = = =

Milne dropped down two divisions to join Bristol City for a £ 50 @, @ 000 fee in January 1988 . City ended the 1987 ? 88 campaign in the play @-@ offs , but failed to gain promotion after losing 4 ? 0 to Walsall in a replay of the play @-@ off final .

After a full pre @-@ season he started to play well and hit six goals in 30 Third Division games during his time at Ashton Gate . Milne 's form attracted attention elsewhere with Aberdeen among those interested , a move Milne favoured to be near his son and other family in Scotland . On being called into a meeting with manager , Joe Jordan , Milne was told by Jordan that he had no intention of letting him nor any of his other best players leave , but that he would make an exception for Manchester United .

= = = Manchester United = = =

Milne 's form at Bristol City was enough to convince Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson that he was still worth a contract with a top @-@ flight club . In November 1988 he moved to Old Trafford in a £ 170 @, @ 000 deal . Ferguson was looking to build a title winning side two years after joining United , but had seen his side finish second in the league the previous season and now they were on a winless run in the league that saw them mid @-@ table . He put Milne on the left @-@ wing as Gordon Strachan was already established on the right @-@ wing .

Milne managed three goals in 22 league appearances in 1988 ? 89 . The first was a 20 @-@ yard volley on 3 December 1988 in a 3 ? 0 home win over former club Charlton Athletic , which ended United 's nine @-@ match winless run ( eight draws and a defeat ) in the First Division . He also found the net on Boxing Day in a 2 ? 0 win over Nottingham Forest at Old Trafford . The week after Milne played what he felt was his best game in a Manchester United jersey in a 3 ? 1 New Year 's victory over rivals Liverpool . However they were unable to maintain their form and finished 11th in the league after winning only three of their last 14 league games . Milne scored his third and final United goal on 25 March 1989 in a 2 ? 0 home win over Luton Town , once again in the league .

In September 1989 , Ferguson signed left @-@ winger Danny Wallace from Southampton . Wallace was not a particularly successful buy for United , and was soon himself struggling to hold down a place in the first team , but the progression of Lee Sharpe meant that Milne was forced out of the first team picture at Old Trafford in 1989 ? 90 , making one substitute appearance in the league . During that season , as United struggled in the league but won the FA Cup , Milne was loaned out to Lou Macari 's West Ham United , where he made the final appearance of his career in a League Cup tie on 24 January 1990 away to Derby County at the age of 28 . His season was ended shortly afterwards after he picked up groin injury that required surgery . Despite being given a new one @-@ year contract he began missing reserve team games during the 1990 ? 91 season and instead spent his time drinking .

Milne has been described as Ferguson 's and even as Manchester United 's worst signing , despite his low transfer fee . Ferguson defended the signing by pointing out Milne 's contribution to the development of Lee Sharpe , who was playing left @-@ back at the time . Ferguson remarked that Milne helped Sharpe by both dropping back to protect Sharpe and by giving him positional advice . Milne remained on United 's payroll until 30 June 1991 , when he was released .

" You know what it ? s like ? It ? s like being a kid watching a movie , and it ? s a sad ending . And you start crying . If it makes a huge impression when United want to sign you , it makes a huge one when they want to get rid of you . Bang , the door ? s closed . You ? re finished . "

## == Sing Tao ==

Milne had unsuccessful trials with Turkish club MKE Ankaragücü and Danish side Esbjerg fB in 1991 . Later in the year he travelled to Hong Kong to play for Sing Tao SC . He spent a year there , helping the club to finish fourth in the First Division in 1991 ? 92 , before he rejected the offer of a new contract and instead returned to Britain . He had a trial spell at Derry City before quitting football at the age of 32 .

## == International career ==

Milne made his debut for the Scotland under @-@ 21 side on 8 September 1981 at the age of 20 , when he on came as a substitute for Alan Brazil during a 4 ? 0 win over Sweden in Edinburgh . He made a further two appearances for the under @-@ 21 side as an overage player in the autumn of 1983 , playing against Belgium ( 0 ? 0 at Dundee ) and East Germany ( 1 ? 1 at Jena , East Germany ) . He was never capped for the senior team , and has been cited as one of the best Scottish footballers not to win a full senior cap .

## == Style of play ==

Milne was naturally right @-@ footed , though trained hard with his left foot as a boy to become equally skilled with both feet . Former Dundee United teammate Paul Hegarty stated that Milne possessed great pace , as well as bravery , a good work ethic , and an ability to score important goals . Another former Dundee United teammate , Davie Dodds , said that Milne was as good a finisher as any player in Scottish football during the 1980s .

Jim McLean , Milne 's manager at Dundee United , summed up Milne 's career and footballing ability when writing his autobiography :

" If I had an outstanding failure then it was Ralph Milne . He should have been playing in World Cups . He should have won a bundle of Scotland international honours . It was a tragedy that that boy was not playing for his country all the time . He had tremendous talent ? and I failed with him . He did not have the right attitude to the game and I could not instil that into him . "

## == Personal life ==

He was married to Kim from 1985 to 1988 , and the couple had a son , Bradley . He also had a son , Robert , with new partner Lee in 1990 . The relationship with Lee ended after ten years . In 2005 he began a relationship with Fiona Spence , 19 years his junior , who stayed with Milne for over eight years despite admitting that Milne regularly beat her .

## == Struggle with alcoholism ==

Milne had admitted to problems with alcoholism and gambling addiction during and after his playing career . He was always an enthusiastic drinker throughout his career , but he lost his passion for football after picking up an injury in 1990 and began drinking in a way which began to severely damage his health . After retiring as a player he worked at a pub in Nailsea . He appeared in court in 2010 and 2013 , but was never convicted , for allegedly attacking his partner Fiona Spence whilst highly intoxicated . Milne 's manager at Dundee United , Jim McLean , has since stated that Milne would have had greater success in his career were it not for his problems with alcohol and discipline . Milne died on 6 September 2015 , at the age of 54 , due to complications from liver problems .

## == Career statistics ==

## == Honours ==

Dundee United

Scottish League Cup : 1979

Scottish Football League Premier Division : 1982 ? 83

Dundee United Hall of Fame ( inducted 2009 )

Charlton Athletic

Football League Second Division play @-@ off winner : 1987