

= Jim Baxter =

James Curran Baxter ( 29 September 1939 ? 14 April 2001 ) was a left @-@ footed Scottish footballer who played as a left half . He is generally regarded as one of the country 's greatest ever players . He was born , educated and started his career in Fife , but his peak playing years were in the early 1960s with the Glasgow club Rangers , whom he helped to win ten trophies between 1960 and 1965 , and where he became known as " Slim Jim " . However , he started drinking heavily during a four @-@ month layoff caused by a leg fracture in December 1964 , his fitness suffered , and he was transferred to Sunderland in summer 1965 . In two and a half years at Sunderland he played 98 games and scored 12 goals , becoming known for drinking himself unconscious the night before a match and playing well the next day . At the end of 1967 Sunderland transferred him to Nottingham Forest , who gave him a free transfer back to Rangers in 1969 after 50 games . After a further year with Rangers Baxter retired from football in 1970 , at the age of 31 .

From 1961 to 1967 , he was a leading member of a strong Scottish international team that lost only once to England , in 1965 , shortly after he recovered from the leg fracture . He thought his best international performance was a 2 ? 1 win against England in 1963 , when he scored both goals after Scotland were reduced to 10 players ? left back Eric Caldow had his leg broken in a tackle with Bobby Smith . In the 1967 match against England , who had won the 1966 World Cup , he taunted the opposition by ball juggling while waiting for his team @-@ mates to find good positions . Although he was given most of the credit for the 3 ? 2 win , some commentators wished he had made an effort to run up a bigger score .

In his prime , Baxter was known for his ability to raise a team 's morale , his good tactical vision , precise passing and ability to send opponents the wrong way ? and for being a joker on the pitch . He also broke with Glasgow tradition by becoming friendly with several members of their major Glasgow rivals , Celtic .

Although he gained a reputation as a womaniser when he moved to Glasgow , he married in 1965 and had two sons . The marriage broke up in 1981 , and in 1983 he formed another relationship that lasted the rest of his life . After retiring from football he became manager of a pub , and his continued heavy drinking damaged his liver so badly that he needed two transplants at the age of 55 , after which he swore off alcohol . Baxter was also addicted to gambling , and is estimated to have lost between £ 250 @,@ 000 and £ 500 @,@ 000 . After he died of pancreatic cancer in 2001 , his funeral was held in Glasgow Cathedral and his ashes were buried at Rangers ' Ibrox Stadium . In 2003 , a statue was erected in his honour at his hometown , Hill of Beath .

= = Early life = =

Baxter was born in Hill of Beath , Fife , on 29 September 1939 and was educated and started his career there . After leaving school he spent eight months as an apprentice cabinet maker , and then worked as a coal miner .

His former headmaster James Carmichael took an interest in ex @-@ pupils and encouraged Baxter to join local football team Halbeath Juveniles instead of one of the glamour clubs . Baxter went on to play for the Fife junior team , Crossgates Primrose . Baxter joined Raith Rovers as a part @-@ timer in 1957 . He later said of his time with the two Fife clubs , " I would never have made it in today 's circumstances . I needed bastards like Carmichael , Buckard , Ferrier , Herdman and McNaught . Young players like I was would simply tell them to get stuffed and take their talent elsewhere . I owe them . "

= = Club career = =

= = = Early career = = =

Baxter joined Raith Rovers as a part @-@ timer in 1957 .

In June 1960 , he joined the Glasgow team Rangers for a transfer fee of £ 17 @, @ 500 , a Scottish record at the time .

His first two seasons at Ibrox were coupled with two years ' National service as a Black Watch soldier .

Baxter played for Rangers from 1960 to 1965 , mainly as an attacking left half . During this period the team won the Scottish League Championship in 1961 , 1963 and 1964 , and the Scottish Cup in 1964 . Rangers fans remember him as " Slim Jim " , and in 18 " Old Firm " games against local rivals Celtic ? 10 Scottish League , five Scottish League Cup and three Scottish Cup matches ? he was only twice on the losing side . His first Rangers game was in August 1960 at inside left against Partick Thistle in the Scottish League Cup . He scored his first goal for the club in November 1960 , against Clyde , and in the same month scored an early goal in Rangers ' 8 ? 0 win over the German team Borussia Mönchengladbach . In 1961 Baxter played in the Rangers team that contested the first ever European Cup Winners ' Cup Final , a two @-@ legged tie that they lost 4 ? 1 on aggregate to Fiorentina .

In December 1964 , Baxter played brilliantly , in Tam Dalyell 's opinion , to set up a 2 ? 0 win for Rangers in an away game against Rapid Vienna in the European Cup , but late in the game his leg was broken and he was unable to play for four months . He started drinking heavily during this lay @-@ off , and this reduced his fitness .

Scot Symon , the Rangers manager who had signed up Baxter in 1960 , may have felt Baxter 's best days were past , and sold him in May 1965 .

= = = Later career = = =

Baxter joined Sunderland for a transfer fee of £ 72 @, @ 500 , the highest ever paid to a Scottish club at the time . Baxter played 98 games for Sunderland in England 's First Division ( then the top tier ) , scoring 12 goals .

In December 1967 , Sunderland sold Baxter to English First Division club Nottingham Forest for £ 100 @, @ 000 . While there he became friends with cricketer Gary Sobers . After playing 50 games for Forest , in 1969 , Baxter was given a free transfer .

Baxter moved back to Rangers . His return to Rangers was brief , as he retired from football in 1970 , aged only 31 . By the end of his career with Rangers he had made 254 appearances for the club , including victories that led to three Scottish League Championships , three Scottish Cups and four Scottish League Cups .

= = International career = =

In the 1960s Baxter gained 34 caps as a member of strong Scottish teams , which included Billy McNeill , Pat Crerand , John White , Dave Mackay , Denis Law and John Greig . In his international appearances he scored three goals , and Scotland won 21 , drew 3 and lost 10 of these matches . He made his international debut in November 1961 , when Scotland beat Northern Ireland . Earlier in 1961 Scotland lost 9 ? 3 to England at Wembley , and April 1962 Baxter and Crerand played brilliantly , helping Scotland to gain some revenge with a 2 ? 0 win .

According to many commentators , his greatest performances were against England in 1963 and 1967 . Baxter regarded his performance in 1963 as the better of the two . In the 1963 game Scotland were reduced to 10 men when their left back Eric Caldow 's leg was broken in a tackle ? substitutions were not allowed in those days . Baxter , supported by Mackay , White and Law , led Scotland to a 2 ? 1 win , scoring both of the goals , the first being Baxter 's first @-@ ever penalty kick , for an English foul on Willie Henderson . Bobby Moore thought this was the best team Scotland ever fielded .

The following year Scotland , again inspired by Baxter and Law , beat England 1 ? 0 , and only poor finishing prevented them from scoring a bigger win . In 1966 , sixteen months after his leg had been broken , Baxter was no longer able to inspire his team @-@ mates , and Scotland lost 4 ? 3 to England .

In the 1967 British Home Championship , Baxter produced a dominating but controversial performance for Scotland , tantalising England , who had won the World Cup in 1966 , by playing " keepie uppie " ( ball juggling ) while waiting for team @-@ mates to get into good positions . Some commentators accepted that humiliating the opposition was a valid objective , while others regarded it as childish and thought Scotland should have won a more convincing victory than the actual 3 ? 2 scoreline . Team @-@ mate Denis Law expressed opinions on both sides of this debate , saying that Baxter was " the best player on the park " and the main reason for the Scots ' victory , but complaining that Baxter 's lack of urgency had prevented Scotland from thoroughly avenging the 9 ? 3 defeat in April 1961 . Alex Ferguson said Baxter 's performance " could have been set to music " . In this game Baxter also conspired with Billy Bremner against Alan Ball , sending Bremner a " 50 @-@ 50 " pass , which allowed Bremner to " hit Ball like a train " when Ball contested possession . ( Was it not Nobby Stiles ? ) As Scotland were the first team to beat England after the 1966 FIFA World Cup , the Tartan Army proclaimed themselves " unofficial world champions " .

In October 1963 , which may have been Baxter 's best year overall , he played in the " rest of the world " in a match against England to celebrate the centenary of The Football Association . He came on to the field in the second half , and his performance won the admiration of Ferenc Puskás . However England won the match 2 ? 1 .

Scotland did not qualify for the final stage of the FIFA World Cup during Baxter 's playing career . Scottish public opinion at the time blamed lack of commitment by the " Anglos " , Scottish @-@ born players who spent little or none of their playing careers in Scotland . However at the time beating England was more important to the Scots . In 1960 ? 61 , when Baxter played in all the qualifying matches for the 1962 World Cup , they finished first equal in their qualifying group but lost the play @-@ off against Czechoslovakia , who were runners @-@ up to Brazil in the Final . Four years later Baxter played in only two of the qualifying games , ( however one of these games was against Italy where he made John Greig 's winning goal after starting the move by taking the ball from Scotland 's keeper ) before breaking his leg in a club game in Vienna . Scotland finished second in their qualifying group , behind Italy . In 1968 ? 69 he was not selected to play in any of the qualifiers for the 1970 World Cup .

= = = International goals = = =

Scores and results list Scotland 's goal tally first .

= = Career statistics = =

= = = International = = =

= = Personal life and retirement = =

After moving to Rangers , Baxter became a notorious womaniser . In his words , " One day , I was a Raith Rovers player who couldnae pull the birds at the Cowdenbeath Palais . The next day I was in Glasgow and the girls were throwing themselves at me . It was certainly a change and I wasn 't letting it go by . " However , in 1965 he married Jean Ferguson , a hairdresser , and the couple brought up two sons Alan and Steven . His marriage to Jean broke down in 1981 and the two divorced . Jean married golfer William McCondichie three years later . In 1983 Baxter formed a relationship with Norma Morton , and the couple remained together until his death in 2001 .

Baxter was free of the sectarianism that marked the rivalry between Glasgow 's two leading teams . His close friends included the Celtic players Billy McNeill , Pat Crerand and Mike Jackson , in defiance of the unwritten rule that rivals did not associate .

Like some other British football stars of the late 20th century , Baxter drank to excess , and at one point was said to be consuming three bottles of Bacardi a day . Scotland team @-@ mate Dave

Mackay unsuccessfully advised him to train harder and live more sensibly . Baxter often got falling @-@ down drunk the night before a match , but this did not seem to hamper his play , and team managers took little notice of his drinking . After retiring from football Baxter became a pub licensee , an unsuitable career for a problem drinker . At the age of 55 he needed two liver transplants in four days , and promised to quit drinking .

His other lifelong addiction was gambling , at which he lost £ 500 @,@ 000 by his own estimate and £ 250 @,@ 000 by third @-@ party estimates . Later in his life , when asked if earning the huge incomes of footballers in later decades would have made a difference , he replied , " Aye , I would have gambled £ 50 @,@ 000 a week on the horses instead of £ 100 . "

In February 2001 , Baxter was diagnosed as suffering from cancer of the pancreas , and he died at his home on Glasgow 's South Side on 14 April 2001 , with his partner Norma and his sons Alan and Steven at his bedside . His funeral was held in Glasgow Cathedral , where a reading was given by Gordon Brown , a long @-@ time fan of Raith Rovers F.C. , where Baxter began his career .

= = Legacy = =

Baxter was noted for accurate passes , for sending opponents the wrong way with a swivel of his hips , and for inspiring team @-@ mates with his confident approach . Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson described Baxter as " arguably the best player to play in Scottish football " and " the greatest player I ever played with ... He had touch , balance , vision and just this wonderful aura ... " Rangers manager Willie Waddell said , " Jim was the finest left half ever produced by Rangers . " Jimmy Johnstone , who played for Ranger 's great rivals Celtic , said shortly after Baxter 's death , " He was a great man and a genius on the ball . " Allegedly Pelé once said that Baxter should have been a Brazilian . After Baxter 's performance in the 1963 " rest of the world " vs England match , Ferenc Puskás asked , " Where has this fellow been hiding ? " Shortly before he died George Best named Baxter as one of the best eleven players he had played with or against in an interview with FourFourTwo magazine .

Baxter is a member of the Rangers supporters ' Hall of Fame , and one of the first 50 added to the Scottish Sporting Hall of Fame when it was created in 2005 . In 2004 , he was also inducted into the Scottish Football Hall of Fame . In the December 1999 issue of World Soccer magazine he was voted by a readers ' poll into a list of the 100 greatest players of the 20th century . He played most of his best football in his early twenties , before the leg fracture against Rapid Vienna in December 1964 and the start of his heavy drinking that made his nickname " Slim Jim " less appropriate .

Baxter attracted attention by his stylish play , controlling the game with " unhurried artistry " and refusing to conform with the " efficient " style that dominated English football or the energetic , physical style that was typical of Rangers at the time . He described his approach as " treating the ball like a woman . Give it a cuddle , caress it a wee bit , take your time , and you 'll get the required response " . Although Rangers insisted that players tuck their shirts completely into their shorts , Baxter always let part of his dangle over his left hip . He was also noted as a joker on the pitch . After the replay of the Scottish Cup Final against Celtic in 1963 he stuffed the match ball up his shirt and later gave it to a new member of the team . The SFA insisted that the ball should be returned , and Rangers sent them a ball , but possibly not the match ball .

The Tartan Army unsuccessfully attempted to get the new Wembley Stadium footbridge named after him , and on 24 February 2005 Scottish National Party MP Pete Wishart presented an Early Day Motion in the House of Commons supporting this campaign .

In 2003 , a statue of Baxter was erected in his birthplace , Hill of Beath in Fife , after a campaign that raised £ 80 @,@ 000 .

= = Honours = =

Rangers

UEFA Cup Winners ' Cup ( Runners @-@ up ) : 1960 @-@ 61

Scottish League First Division : 1960 ? 61 , 1962 ? 63 , 1963 ? 64

Scottish Cup : 1961 ? 62 , 1962 ? 63 , 1963 ? 64

Scottish League Cup : 1960 ? 61 , 1961 ? 62 , 1963 ? 64 , 1964 ? 65

Individual

Scottish Football Hall of Fame ( inaugural inductee )

Scottish Sports Hall of Fame ( inaugural inductee )