

The Hot 100

Number 66:

Mike England



Many players made more appearances than Mike England for Blackburn Rovers but few made a greater impact on the game than the Welsh colossus.

To many admirers he was simply the best centre half they had ever seen and, arguably, the finest in the world at his peak.

If there were any doubts about that while he was with Rovers, England surely dispelled them after going on to make more than 300 appearances for Tottenham Hotspur where he won honours at home and abroad.

Almost 50 full international caps for Wales and, eventually, the appointment as team manager of his country provided more ample testimony to England's right to rank with the very best.

Born in North Wales, England made a modest start, signing as a non-contract player with Rovers before turning pro in 1959 when he was a member of Ewood's outstanding under-18 team which won the FA Youth Cup.

So talented a player was the genial giant that he was asked to fill varying roles before before ultimately settling at centre half.

His technique matched his physical attributes, making him an awesome opponent even for the most formidable strikers.

Some still argue that he should have played at wing half, rather than centre half, so that his influence on the game could have been extended.

But it didn't seem to matter to England, who even enjoyed a spell at centre forward

to help solve a crisis in the 1965-66 relegation season.

Dropping out of the top flight, however, meant a certain departure for England, who joined Spurs for £95,000 in August 1966 and went on to hit great heights.

After his playing career, he appeared on the brink of more glory as a manager of Wales but just missed out more than once and was, eventually, dismissed in the late 1980s.

A total of 184 senior appearances and 21 goals for Rovers do not do anything like justice to the memories that Mike England left at Ewood Park.

(Article taken from East Lancashire's Sporting Heroes of the Millennium)