

CHARLIE BUCHAN

Ask any football fan to tell you who they think the greatest player of all time was and you can bet the list would include, Pele, Eusebio, George Best, Diego Maradona, David Beckham, Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi.

Ask any Sunderland fan who the greatest ever player to wear the red and white stripes was and partly depending upon their age, the names Len Shackleton, Brian Clough, Charlie Hurley, Jim Baxter, Gary Rowell, Kevin Phillips and Jermain Defoe will probably feature somewhere.

When I was first taking an interest in football and Sunderland AFC in particular the first name that would have sprung to my mind is one that is rarely mentioned these days and as far as I'm aware didn't even make the long list when ideas were being considered for the naming of the South Stand.



One Charles Murray Buchan – an inside forward who occasionally played in the number 9 role, Buchan was said to be so skillful and subtle that he would confuse his teammates as much as the opposition.

Making his debut in March 1911, after he had been signed from Leyton for the princely sum of £1,250 (a record at the time) Buchan went on to play 413 games for the Black Cats, scoring 224 goals in a career interrupted by the Great War and is still the club's record goal scorer in league games with 209 from 380 appearances.

Even at a young age, Buchan was aware of his ability and knew his own mind, turning down the chance to sign for Arsenal after they wouldn't pay his travel expenses following a few games he had on trial with their reserve team and rejecting Fulham's approach after they offered him 30 shillings (£1.50) a week, asking instead for £2 which they refused to pay.

He wasn't immediately accepted by the Roker Park faithful and in his first few games for Sunderland the crowd started barracking him. He was so affected by this that after one game at Roker Park he told manager Robert Kyle he would never play for the club again. He was persuaded to play *one last time* and managed to score twice in a 3-1 win. From that moment on he was appreciated by the supporters who were obviously just as fickle over 100 years ago as some of today's fans.

He was the First Division's leading scorer when Arsenal came calling in 1925 and the club wanted £4000 for him. Kyle was reluctant to lose him and thought he was worth more, so the fee was agreed at £2000 + £100 for every goal Buchan scored in that first season. He scored 21 times meaning that the club was eventually paid a total of £4100.

But for many of my generation Buchan's name was synonymous with the first real football magazine we read - Charles Buchan's Football Monthly.

And in this year, the Centenary of the end of World War 1, it should not be forgotten that Buchan was a serving soldier and awarded the Military Medal for the part he played in that campaign.

