

# Obituary: Bill Hume 1937-2005

What Waikato soccer would give to have a few players of the calibre of Bill Hume around these days.

William McLeod Hume, 68, died of a heart attack on the St Andrews golf course on December 10, almost 50 years after first taking Waikato soccer by storm.

As a teenager Hume - born in Alloah, Scotland on December 1, 1937 - turned his back on a lucrative career in professional soccer to instead emigrate and join his sister in Morrinsville in 1956.

The Hibernian club, where he signed as an apprentice in 1955, thought he was of such calibre that for many months they continued to mail him five pounds a week - more than the average New Zealand wage - in the hope of luring him home.

But Hume instead emerged as a football colossus in the Waikato. A tall, slim striker who could run like the wind, Hume was quickly spotted playing for second division Morrinsville Rangers - inevitable when you score 10 goals in a club game - and thrust into the 1957 Waikato representative team for a late-season challenge against English FA Trophy holders Canterbury.

Despite Waikato's 5-4 loss, Hume showed his class with a sweet left foot and powerful aerial ability to score a hat trick on debut, followed by six goals against Taranaki the following month.

In 1958 he joined Hamilton Wanderers. The transfer caused animosity in Waikato soccer, with Technical Old Boys believing they had a prior claim.

Perhaps they hadn't counted on non-football factors, with Hume subsequently marrying Irene Robertson, daughter of Wanderers chairman Robbie Robertson.

Hume continued to impress. He scored both Waikato goals in a memorable 2-1 Meltzer Cup win over Auckland. And he potted both goals for North Island in 2-2 draw with the South Island, then found the net for Auckland in a famous 2-1 win over Preston North End.

Selected for New Zealand in 1958, Hume scored eight goals in seven games. He was then lured across the Tasman for a six year spell, firstly joining the Gladesville-Ryde club in the NSW League before signing for Sydney Jewish club Hakoah.

He joined a select handful of players to play for Australia as well as New Zealand, twice turning out for Australia (and scoring one goal) in matches against Heart of Midlothian.

Hume's international career may have been longer, but shortly afterwards world governing body Fifa revoked Australia's affiliation for five years, and he suffered a serious leg break.

Hume finally returned to Hamilton in 1965 and played for Wanderers, Claudelands Rovers, then in 1968 took up the post of player-coach of Hamilton AFC. Though starting to show his age, he was nevertheless all class as centre back.

"Time, son," or "hold" he would invariably boom at younger team mates like Ken and Billy Ironside in his authoritative Scottish accent while he muscled his way forward.

Jeff Coulshed, who played with Hume both in Australia and New Zealand, described him as a born leader.

"Bill had an aura about him. He was an uncompromising character and could really upset you - but you still liked him.

"He's the only guy who I think has really succeeded as a player-coach. He was not the sort of coach to tell you something before a game, he had to be on the field and show you.

"Bill was well respected when I went across the Tasman, perhaps the No 1 player in Australia."

But Coulshed also recalls his intransigence.

"He was always the boss - like Alex Ferguson. We had a meeting with the referees one day, until somebody made the mistake of telling Bill he was wrong on his interpretation of the law.

"Well, that was the end of the meeting, because Bill was never wrong. I find it very hard to think now that many football people now don't even know of him. He was Mr Football back then."

Former Technical Old Boys stalwart and (later) Hamilton AFC chairman John Walker, who helped keep Waikato soccer afloat for nearly four decades, made no secret of

the fact he often didn't see eye to eye with Hume.

"Bill was a very hard man to work with. But for all that he was a great player, a true icon in his time."

Another contemporary, Roy Little, was in awe of Hume.

"Bill was physically large, but just his very presence on a football field amazing. He was a leader in every sense."

In later years Hume was seldom seen around the soccer traps, but became a very keen golfer.

Off the field, he was a joiner by trade but in a 23-year career in the insurance industry rose to be Prudential's branch manager in Hamilton.

Hume is survived by wife Kay, former wife Irene, children Trish, Ian, David and six grandchildren. Today, teenage grandson Lee Hume is continuing the soccer tradition, having been through Perth Glory's development ranks.

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