



Norman 'Black Jake' Uprichard

Chris Westcott

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This is the fascinating tale of a young lad from Lurgan, a bit of a rebel, who excelled both at soccer and Gaelic football. His dual allegiances incurred the wrath of the Gaelic Athletic Association hierarchy and he received a mandatory life ban when his dalliances with the 'other' game were discovered. As a teenager Norman was thrust into the limelight by virtue of a move to the most famous English club of the day, Arsenal, before spells at Swindon Town and Portsmouth. Full international honours soon followed, and Norman was capped eighteen times for Northern Ireland. What makes this book so compelling is how it captures the social context of the period of the 1930s through to the culmination of Norman's career, when Northern Ireland reached the World Cup finals at Sweden in 1958. All this against a backdrop of recurring injuries and a serious fall-out with Norman's club manager at Portsmouth, which provoked him to write an explosive article for the Daily Express, unheard of at a time before the maximum wage was abolished, when footballers were considered by many no more than slaves of their club. Norman was a character. Some of his escapades may seem far-fetched but are wholly true as he recalls the highlights of his life and career. The book is a posthumous tribute, as Norman sadly passed away early 2011.

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