

THE TALE OF PIONEERING

As it's the 100th anniversary of the First World War ending, we discover the fascinating and sad story of the midfielder who went off to battle and never came home

1. THE ORPHAN PLAYER

Walter Tull was a football star and a wartime hero, but until recently his name had been largely forgotten. Walter was one of British football's first black players, and one of the British Army's first black officers. He overcame discrimination and adversity to become a true pioneer who every football fan should know about.

Walter was born in Kent in 1888 into a mixed-race family. His dad was from Barbados. Tragically, both of his parents died when he was young, and Walter was raised in an orphanage. He played for the orphanage team and later starred for **Clapton FC**, an amateur side whose stadium was called the Old Spotted Dog!

2. GOING PRO

At the age of 21, Walter was given a professional contract by **Tottenham Hotspur**. He played in midfield, and was described by newspaper reporters at the time as "very good indeed" and "the catch of the season".

Unfortunately, Walter suffered racist abuse from some spectators due to the colour of his skin. He was dropped by Tottenham after just a few games and was transferred to **Northampton Town**, where he had a successful career.

3. JOINING THE FIGHT

The outbreak of the **First World War** in 1914 changed everything. Many footballers were criticised for continuing to play instead of joining the fight. But Walter immediately signed up for the 17th Battalion of the Middlesex



OF FOOTBALL'S NG WAR HERO



4. LEST WE FORGET

On 25th March, 1918, Walter was shot and killed on the **Western Front** in France, in a battle that was so fierce it could be heard as far away as London. He was one of at least **287 footballers** killed during the First World War.

A hundred years later, Walter's name can be found on the Arras Memorial in France, and there is a **Walter Tull Memorial** at Northampton's Sixfields Stadium. His family are campaigning for him to be awarded his Military Cross, which they will accept on his behalf.

Regiment, known as the **Football Battalion** because it was made up mostly of footballers.

Lieutenant Walter Tull suffered from trench fever and shellshock, but he recovered to lead his men into battle and was recommended for a **Military Cross** medal due to his bravery. Sadly, Walter never got his medal.