



EXCLUSIVE: Wonderkid's granddad talks to NLP

WAYNE DOES FAMILY PROUD

WHEN Wayne Rooney struck against Macedonia to become the youngest England goalscorer in history, the veteran supporters of Burscough and Marine could be forgiven for wondering where they had seen that shooting style before.

By the time the Everton starlet added his second against Liechtenstein on Wednesday at the tender age of 17 years and 321 days, loyal Linnets and ancient Mariners alike would have realised the link.

They had witnessed something similar during the 1950s and 70s, when Rooney's grandfather Billy Morrey and his uncle – also Billy Morrey – were tormenting Non-League defences with the same direct effect that the wonderkid is now delivering on the world's footballing stage.

Speaking from his Liverpool home, Billy Snr, now 73, told *The Non-League Paper*: "It

By **STUART HAMMONDS**

runs in the family doesn't it? It's obviously that way."

The former wing-half, who played a few games for Millwall while serving in the army, then Burscough, South Liverpool, Llandudno, Caernarfon and Holywell Town before managing in the Liverpool Sunday leagues, is a proud man – and equally honoured to share his grandson's rapid rise with his old Burscough pals.

Stan Strickland, a long-serving Victoria Park director, recalls: "Billy sent me a letter in 1997, and finished it with: 'One of my grandsons is with Everton's School of Excellence, and also plays for Liverpool Schoolboys Under-12s. He has just broken the schoolboy record by scoring 73 goals in one season.'

"He is an excellent player, look out for him in the future. His name is Wayne Rooney.' I've since printed it in our programme."

"I proved right didn't I?" says Billy, father of Wayne's mum Jeanette. "It's just knowing something about football. When you see a footballer you know if they've got it.

"The first time I saw Wayne play in a real match was when he was about eight. I went with his dad and as soon as I saw him I said 'God blimey, this is him!'

"I've always wanted one of my lads to get on, and I said 'this is the boy that is going to do it for me,' and he has.

Rewards

"I am so proud of what he has done. When he scored THAT goal against Arsenal I was in the pub, and I just filled up.

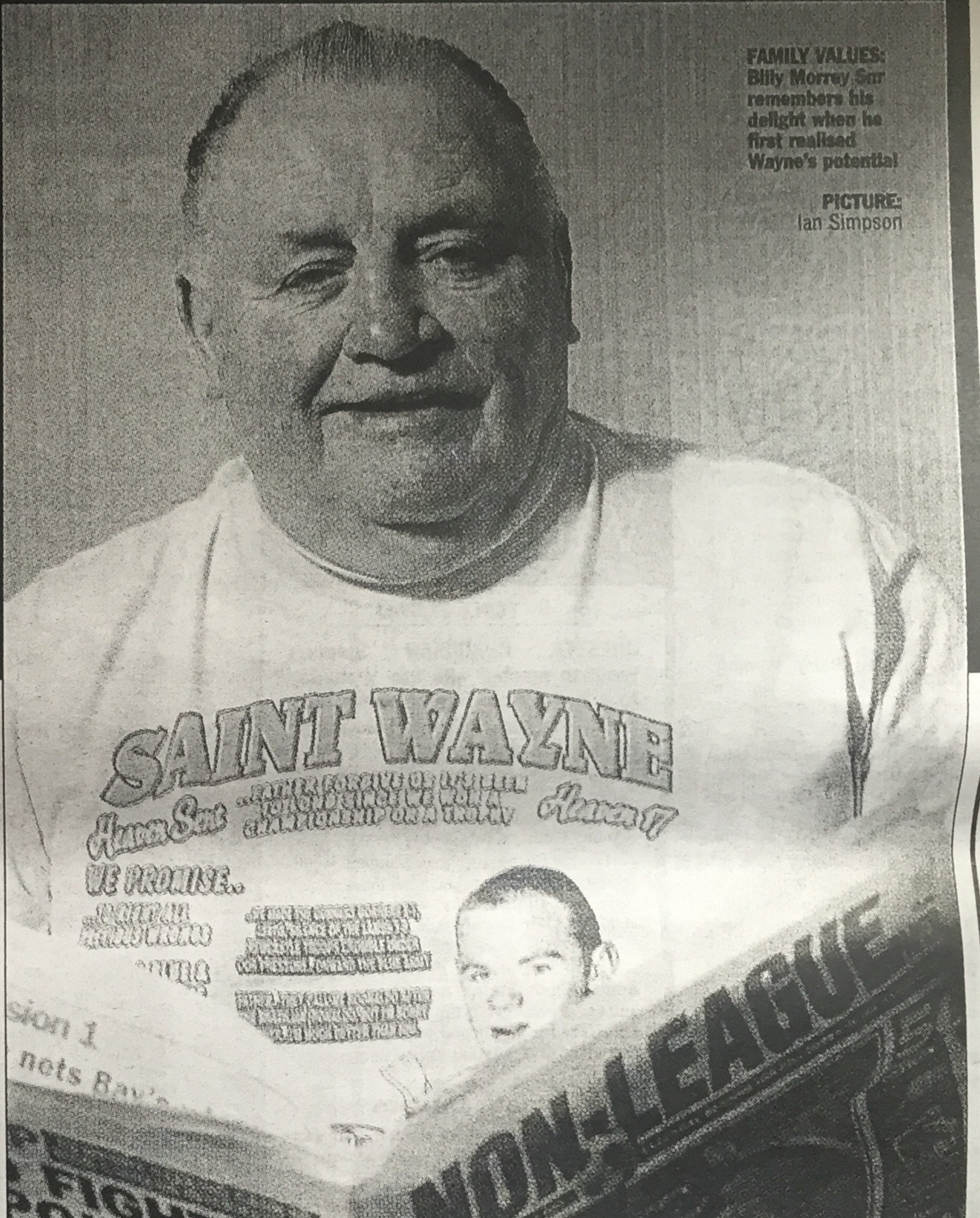
"And on Saturday when he stuck that one against Macedonia, I couldn't be more proud. He is a goalscorer, the only thing is that some of them don't know how to play him.

"When they played it up, the other fella laid the ball back and he ran in, bump – that's the old style."

That "old style" helped Billy Snr play his part in arguably Burscough's most successful team prior to last season's FA Trophy winners, when they took the Lancashire Combination by storm after joining in 1953.

While his grandson earns £13,000 a week, Billy also had a nose for the rewards his talent deserved.

"I had some happy times playing Non-League, and I made a few bob," he says. "The first time I played for



FAMILY VALUES: Billy Morrey Sr remembers his delight when he first realised Wayne's potential

PICTURE: Ian Simpson



TEEN SENSATION: Wayne Rooney celebrates his first international goal against Macedonia



CHIP OFF THE BLOCK: Wayne with his granddad Billy on holiday and, circled, Billy lining up for Burscough

Burscough was in the 1950-51 season, and they were in the Liverpool County Combination.

"But in those days you were allowed to play in two leagues, so I also joined the Welsh League. It depended where the money was!"

Billy Jnr, described by Marine boss Roly Howard as "a bit of a rogue", was something of a cult hero in 391 games with the Rossett Park club, flying down the right-wing during long FA Cup runs in the mid-1970s.

In November 1975, he curled an unstoppable shot into the far corner from almost at the corner flag as Howard's men beat Barnsley 3-1 before falling to Hartlepool in a replay.

He did leave to sign for Altrincham and Northwich, but found his way back to Marine three times.

The England FA Amateur cap finally left for good in 1979 to take up a part-time playing contract in Melbourne, Australia with Green Gully, and at the age of 54 he now coaches budding Socceroos while working as a lathe turner.

In the blood

His five brothers all had modest careers in the game too, with Vincent lining up for Marine and Skelmersdale, Robert playing for Southport youth and reserves, and John, Bernard and Mark playing in local amateur leagues.

Of Wayne, Billy Snr adds: "He's

like me, although I was smaller than the rest of them. It's all about strength on the ball. I was very hard to knock off it – Billy was like that too.

"It's all there in the blood," he adds, "but I hope they don't have gout like me!"

LIECHTENSTEIN got some Non-League hospitality during their stay in England.

Their international squad used Witton Albion's Wincham Park ground in preparation for Wednesday night's Euro 2004 clash with England – and they were delighted with both their welcome and the facilities!

"They were thrilled to bits by the reception we gave them," said Witton secretary Philip Chadwick.