

## Benjamin Howard Baker

Benjamin was taken to Liverpool Harriers by his father, in an effort to tire him out and stop him jumping about! That was to start a long and wonderful association with the Club.

Wikipedia reports that *Modern and contemporary sources differ as to whether his surname was "Baker", "Howard-Baker" or "Howard Baker"*. What is not in dispute is that he was an exceptional sportsman - arguably the greatest all-rounder this country has ever known. Best of all, he was a loyal member of Liverpool Harriers from the day he joined and we were proud to have him as President the last twenty years of his life, until his death on September 8th 1987.

Born on February 12th 1892, he became a household name for his sporting exploits. Let us begin with his athletics performances. At High Jump, he was the AAA champion six times, and Northern champion seven times. The all-rounder also won Northern honours at the Discus, Hammer, Long Jump and Javelin. Benjamin won the first three Northern titles at Discus when it first started in 1920, and his best jump of his seven high jump titles was 6ft 3ins in the same year, when he also won the 120 yards hurdles title. Some record!

He twice competed in the Olympic Games, finishing sixth in the Antwerp 1920 games, on the 20th August, in which 20 competitors took part. The leap of 1.85m (6ft 0¾ins) was the same height as the fourth competitor, Walter Whelan of the USA, losing places on count back. He previously competed in the 1912 Stockholm Olympics in the High Jump, Standing Jump and Triple Jump. As a member of Liverpool Harriers, he set a new British high jump record of 6ft 5ins (1.95m) in 1921 at Huddersfield, which was to stand for twenty six years, until Vincent Hughes jumped 1.98 metres. He dominated the High Jump event for a decade.

As if that set of achievements was not enough, he was equally famous as a footballer, playing in goal or as centre half, and had the reputation of being the longest dead ball kicker of the time. HB played for the Corinthians in amateur fixtures, and picked up ten amateur international caps. He also played for professional sides, but retained his amateur status. He played in goal for Everton, including a 1-0 win over Liverpool, on September 25th 1926, in front of 43,973 spectators. At Chelsea he was in goal or at centre half, and generally took their penalties. He also played for Northern Nomads winning a Welsh Cup winners medal. Sometimes, during half-time at a match, he would stay on the pitch and do demonstrations of high jumping to entertain the crowd and, at a function in Paris, he jumped up to kick a chandelier to impress the famous "Lily Langtry". At that time cigarette manufacturers often attempted to increase sales by enclosing small cards in the packets, which buyers would collect. One such range covered famous sportsmen. HB is probably the only Liverpool Harrier to have been featured on cigarette cards!



And there is more! He played tennis at Wimbledon and was a regular for his County before becoming honorary life councillor of the Lawn Tennis Association. As a cricketer, he scored two centuries for Liverpool CC, later becoming vice president of the club, and this giant of a man was even an international goalkeeper at water-polo!

You wonder how he found time to run a business, but he did, and was very successful. He was the founder of the deodorant 'Aunt Sally'.

Back in 1973, as part of a feature on Everton-Liverpool Derby matches, the "Liverpool Echo" retold the exploits of Howard Baker, including many of the legendary performances detailed earlier in this History.

The photo which accompanied the article shows the man as many will remember him: approachable, friendly, and well-liked by all who met him.

