



# Fred Keenor

*James Leighton*

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## **Fred Keenor** James Leighton

British football has always had a reputation for producing hard, no-nonsense, inspirational defenders in the mould of John Terry, Terry Butcher and Tony Adams, but how would the so-called 'hard men' of the modern game have fared in the trenches during World War One or on a salary of just £4 a week?

Fred Keenor, captain and talisman of Cardiff City and Wales during the 1920s, was the original football hard man. He had an unparalleled reputation for delivering violent, juggernaut challenges on the stars of the day such as Dixie Dean and Alex James; however, he was also regarded as being one of the country's great defenders by fans, players and critics alike. Not only does he remain the captain of the first - and only - team from outside England to win the FA Cup, but he also came within 0.024 of goal difference from winning the First Division title and captained his country to three home international victory shields.

Perhaps the pinnacle of his international career came in a game against Scotland which was christened 'Keenor and the Unknowns', such were his awe-inspiring efforts to motivate and inspire his team.

All these achievements came in spite of the fact that he was wounded while fighting in World War One, and it was felt that he would never be able to play the game again. His fight back to full fitness from his war wounds was matched by his fighting spirit throughout his football career.

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