

Chance to make history

Record

It would be fair to say the Challenge Cup has not been kind to Dumbarton.

Launched in 1990 as the B&Q Centenary Cup, Sons' first tie, a 4-3 loss to a struggling Clyde side, set the tone.

It would take Dumbarton a decade to win a Challenge Cup game. The date was August 15, 2000. The venue Borough Briggs. The opponents Elgin City. Paddy Flannery netted a hat-trick added to by Andy Brown in a 4-2 win.

Normal service was then resumed, as Sons went down 2-0 to Arbroath.

Another first round exit followed in 2001, before Dumbarton tasted victory in consecutive Challenge Cup matches.

First round rivals East Fife were beaten 1-0, on an evening when Stephen Grindlay made the first of his 296 appearances for the club.

A week later Ayr United were also vanquished, thanks to a first-half Tom Brown strike and John Dillon double.

That set up a quarter-final tie against Queen of the South when David Winnie's side were eliminated courtesy of a goal in either half.

A run of eight years without a win followed, before Pat Walker's late winner against East Stirling in 2011.

After three more years without success, Stevie Aitken made the best possible start to life in the dugout with a 3-2 victory against Greenock Morton.

After a first-hurdle exit against Stranraer in 2016, few would have predicted a run would take place that leaves Sons just 90 minutes from the final.

Who are The New Saints?

Opposition

Welsh Champions TNS have had an interesting 59 year history.

Originally formed as Llansantffraid, the club's fortunes turned when they won the 1996 Welsh Cup, securing qualification for the European Cup Winners' Cup.

That attracted the attention of local IT company Total Network Solutions, who invested £250,000 in a deal that involved renaming the club Total Network Solutions Llansantffraid.

Despite a 6-1 aggregate defeat to Polish Cup winners Ruch Chorzów they became the sole full-time club in the Welsh Premier League and later merged with neighbouring Oswestry Town.

The biggest game to date in the club's history followed as they faced Liverpool in the qualifying rounds for the 2005-06 Champions League.

A Steven Gerrard hat-trick in the first-leg killed the tie, with the Saints losing both legs 3-0.

Following the takeover of Total Network Solutions by BT, the club sought a new title sponsor – even resorting to inviting bids over eBay.

When that plan failed it was decided to rename the club The New Saints of Oswestry Town and Llansantffraid Football Club – TNS for short.

Since then they have taken eight Welsh Premier League titles – including the last six in a row, and were victorious in all but four league games last season.

Cup preview



Action Saunders as a Son

I'll always be grateful to Sons boss Stevie

TNS ace loved Dumbarton

Fraser Clarke

Despite lining up in direct opposition to him on Saturday evening, TNS defender Steven Saunders will always be grateful to Dumbarton manager Stevie Aitken for offering him a footballing lifeline at the Sons.

Speaking exclusively to the Lennox Herald, the former Scotland international said: "I had a really good time at Dumbarton. There were a lot of good players there and I'm still really thankful to Stevie Aitken for giving me the chance to get down and play again every week.

"He offered me a contract in the summer of 2015 but I still had aspirations of being full-time.

"I went on trial at a few clubs and it just never happened, but he was still willing to take that chance with me.

"I managed to play 25 league games and a couple in the cups, so I think that I did really well."

The 26 year-old former Motherwell defender also hinted at what the travelling supporters should expect from the Anglo-Welsh side.

He continued: "We are quite an attacking team, especially at our place where we play on Astro.

"Sometimes when we go away to grass parks they aren't the greatest

quality, whereas at TNS you know what you're going to get because it's 4G and it's in really good nick.

"We like to play free-flowing attacking football. We like to get the ball forward and get plenty of shots at goal.

"In Welsh football a lot of it is done on the ground. A lot of the teams like to try and play out from the back – especially against us down here.

"I think a lot more of it is down to the technical aspect, whereas in Scotland it's all about winning games.

"Obviously you want to win games, but down here it's more about winning and playing pretty football than it is just getting a 1-0 victory and heading up the road.

"A lot of teams don't press us, so if Dumbarton want to press us from the front that will be something that we haven't experienced in a lot of games this year.

"The way we play will probably be different to the way that Dumbarton will be used to in the Scottish league. I think that it'll be really interesting to see the two styles come together."

TNS have already faced plenty Scottish opposition this term at Park Hall.

The beat Livingston on penalties in round two before they smashed League Two Elgin City 4-0 in the third round.

In the quarter-final they finished off Dumbarton's fellow Scottish Championship side Queen of the South



Build-up Former Son Steven can't wait for Saturday's big clash

4-3 on penalties following a 0-0 draw. The Welsh side fell at this hurdle last year with a 4-1 semi-final defeat to St Mirren in Paisley.

The Sons have enjoyed their run to this stage of the competition.

Aitken's men kicked-off with a 2-1 win over a Rangers Colt side back in August last year.

They then got their first taste of Welsh opposition when they took on Connah's

Quay Nomads in round two. The Sons prevailed 2-1 after extra time thanks to Dimitris Froxylias' 120th minute winner.

In October, Aitken saw Dumbarton overcome his old club Stranraer 2-1, setting up a home quarter final against League One Raith Rovers.

A comfortable 2-0 win the led to Saturday's big night in Oswestry, Shropshire.