

Alan Finlay



Alan learned his trade as an attacking right back with St Andrews Colts as well as St Andrews United's youth side under the management of Eric Gillespie prior to spending a brief period on the books of Balgonie Scotia Juniors. Finlay thus turned nineteen years old before joining Moss Barclay's St Andrews United in March 1985 but the former Madras College pupil promptly made his debut as a replacement for the injured Rab Ballingall against Comrie Colliery. Alan then missed the following week's defeat at Clackmannan so his second appearance in a white shirt came during a 1-0 home win over Lochgelly Albert when Bill Mercer took charge of the team for the first time. However, the tall full back who weighed twelve stones and six pounds played very well on that occasion so he only missed two fixtures throughout the rest of the 1984/85 season as Saints finished seventh in the Fife League. Finlay subsequently spent the next twelve months dropping in and out of the first eleven at Recreation Park, mainly due to other players' good form, yet he soon claimed possession of St Andrews United's number two shirt on a regular basis. Alan therefore appeared in all but one match over the course of the 1986/87 campaign and he scored versus Leven plus Kirkcaldy YMCA to help United finish second in the short-lived Fife League East Division. Finlay also found the net against Beith in the Scottish Cup with a brilliant solo effort but he only grabbed one goal at Kelty Hearts the following season despite starting 35 competitive games. Alan thus featured in the East Coast Windows Cup Final win over Hill of Beath when Alan Speirs was caretaker manager and he continued to produce reliable performances after Norrie McArthur took charge at the start of the 1988/89 term.

The quick right back who loved to shoot from distance quickly impressed the new boss with his surging runs up the park and he went on to collect East Coast Windows Cup, Laidlaw Shield and Fife Cup winner's medals in May 1989 as well as scoring a further league goal at Oakley United. St Andrews United beat Crossgates Primrose, Halbeath and Kirkcaldy YMCA in those respective finals and that provided McArthur's squad with a huge confidence boost going into the 1989/90 season as one of the favourites to secure the Fife League title. Indeed, the United players recorded 25 victories and five draws from 30 league fixtures to claim the championship in style and they added another piece of silverware to the Recreation Park trophy cabinet by beating Dundonald Bluebell 5-0 in the League Cup Final at Humbug Park. Saints also retained the Fife Cup by beating Glenrothes at Moorside Park in May 1990 and Finlay managed to place his hands on the East Coast Windows Cup for the third successive year after doubles from Paul Kirkcaldy and Ross Watson helped defeat Hill of Beath at Crossgates. Alan certainly enjoyed winning trophies with St Andrews United since he lived near the club's ground at Warrack Street but the full-time JTC Kitchens sales rep missed the start of the 1990/91 campaign due to an ankle ligament injury before earning another winner's medal when St Andrews United beat Kelty Hearts on penalties in the Cowdenbeath Cup Final. Alan then appeared in every single match over the course of the 1991/92 term and he notched four goals, including a double versus Buchanhaven Hearts, as well as collecting a Cowdenbeath Cup runner-up medal following the defeat by Hill of Beath at Cardenden. Alas, a poor run of results midway through that season cost McArthur his job with 16 games still to play so Speirs again took charge of training until officially being named manager by the St Andrews United committee in May. However, Finlay remained a popular figure at Recreation Park throughout the next three years as a result of his wholehearted attitude on the pitch coupled with a willingness to attend club functions such as quiz nights in the Social Club.

Alan also bagged four further goals under the management of Speirs, including another spectacular solo effort during a 6-5 win at Dunbar United, and he produced a typically energetic performance in the 1995 Fife and Lothians Cup Final victory over Hill of Beath at Glenrothes' Warout Stadium. Finlay then spent the next two and a half years playing for a Saints' side managed by Eric Gillespie and he scored against Rosyth, Lochore Welfare, Glenrothes and Kirkcaldy YMCA as the men from Recreation Park struggled to mount a championship challenge. Gillespie consequently quit his post in February 1998 yet the disappointed United players went on to win four and draw two of the ensuing six fixtures, whilst Alan and fellow veteran Tommy Falls picked the team. The two local boys therefore remained in charge for another 39 matches and the long-serving Finlay was deservedly awarded a testimonial against a Dundee All-Stars team containing famous players such as Hamish McAlpine, Dave Narey, Davie Dodds, Bobby Glennie and Jocky Scott. Rangers legend Ally McCoist also made an appearance that afternoon since Alan supported the Govan side then the latter made his last competitive start for St Andrews United versus Newburgh at the age of 33 in August 1998. Unfortunately, results were mixed as the 1998/99 season progressed so Finlay's 14-year stay at Recreation Park came to an abrupt end just after Christmas because the committee decided to appoint a new manager. Alan thus dropped out of football to concentrate upon his work for Junckers Flooring in Dundee but he continued to follow St Andrews United's fortunes thereafter as well as lowering his golf handicap to eight.