and Covid-19, and that audacious debut at Hampden, battles with Celtic As Scotland prepare to host Czech Republic, the legendary Antonin Panenka recalls his international penalty that sealed Euro 1976 glory

By ALAN PATTULLO and ANNA KOSLEROVA

The 72-year-old contracted Covid-19 at the end of last year and was put in intensive care. The obituarists were

champions in June 1976. He's glad he's still here to celebrate ing playing in a Cup Winners' Cup final for Rapid Vienna against Ever-ton and being among the first Czechs waiting with pens poised.
Panenka knows that despite everything else hedid in his career, includpenaltythatsawCzechoslovakiabeat West Germany to become European to experience football beyond the Iron Curtain, accounts of his life will boil down to the audacious dinked

next weekend's anniversary, just a few days after Scotland host Czech Republic in their opening match of the same competition. Covid has no obligation to spare moustachioed

was incredibly uncomfortable, and people around me were worried,"he says. "But I didn't think it could end badly – not even for a second. I had who got it, I thought it

neumonia and was in the hospital

"The lockdown did feel a bit long towards "After this and during the lock-down, I missed exercising and playing sports, which I still enjoy doing even though

as long as I can!" says the honorary president.

The last time he felt in such mortal danger was in Scotland. Or to be strictly accurate, hevas I5/Kmsf from Scotland. This is how far away at least from Clasgowitwas decreed by Uefa that a European Cup-Winners' Cup second round class between Celtic and Rapid Vennan in 1984 had to bereplayed after a bottle-throwing incidental Parkhead.

The venue chosen was Old Trafford and Parant's described in set honor of the control of the property of the control of the strength of the The illness put his place in the Bohemians seniors' side under threat. The Prague club is Paraneha's club and they survived their own brush with death after a financial implosion in 2005. He still turns out for the old bow's team "My mane is so tied to Robernian that Inwest sickaround as Jonnacia from "Faster Schobenorur"

he had been hit by an object).
"There was a massive wave of in the first leg (they had been leading 3-0 when a Rapid Vienna player tumbled to the turf near a cornerflag. their team beaten 1-0 after a 3-1 defea although it was never established if

ragingfans who held a grudge against us because of this enormous injustice that had happened during the previ-ous game," recalls Panenka.

comfort to know that he is assured kill us; this sort of behaviour does not belong to football." Itmustprovide Panenkawith some

sitting on the bus going to and from the stadium, and I kept thinking the fans might break the windows and

tually does come up. He is in the same company as Pele, Maradona and Cruyffin being gener-

ally referred to only by his surname. Indeed, it's a surprise to find your-self saying "hello Antonin" when he ers a call first time at the allot

time someone like Zinedine Zidane,
or, ahem., Jason Cummings, picured inset, tried to follow in his
distinguished footsteps, he would
not have had to open the sweet
shop or later, a wine bar, in Prague
that sustained him financially
until he realised that this, too, was If he had been able to patent the Panenka, triggering a fee every oming too dangerous for his

The trouble with being the inven-tor of the Panenka is that everyone

wants to buy you a drink and talk toyou about the Panen-la. "People come and go while you have to be while you have to the says." When people came a gas, "When people came have a glass with them and chat about football.

the end."
The illness
place in the H

est of lives. The wine shop was right across from our house, which didn't help." hol during those two years than I had done during my entire life, so I thought this isn't ideal. I would go to bed late and didn't live the healthings: "I realised I drank more alco-

Long before Scotland goal Beeper
David Marshall made his nomentous stop in Belgrade, Panenka sanctified the very same goal line when
y devising the then creative russ of
trying to outfox the keeper by dinkning the ball down the middle of the
goal. For tun arely for him, West
Gomany's Sep Maler, then recognised as the best goalie in the world,
de chose to dive to bit left - just like
Marshall ast November's Scotland
to mared their a hoor of the as monar's

hostile night he experienced in foot-ball. Unhappy Celtic fans, already angered by Uefa's decision and Rapsecured their place at this summer's finals.
How Aleksandar Mitrovic will wish he had the guts to casually chip

f a shot down the middle as Panenka had done in that very stadium.
The impudent strike gave the Czechs it their first ever major tournament success at international level after i. finishing runners-up at two World de Cups.

John Stadium and Stadium and the Cups.

John Stadium and These are busy times for someone v. guaranteed to feature incountdowns a dealing the best European Champi- is to aship moments. If some the services of land and agent services of land and agent. Prior to an appointment with The Scottsman, Pamela has been enter I taining a Spanish football culture I taining a Spanish football culture. magazine. Its name? "Panenka." Even his dog, a white-bodied Jack Russell called Benik who makes his presence felt down the phone line

e with intermittent barks, is recorded
to as Benik Parenla on its birth certifis icate. Its master describes their day
is often:
'Thad some filming to do earlier,''
te says Panenka. "After talking to you.
to 'I will do a commercial photo shoot.
te I amat home 40 minutes away from
Prague, I was sitting at the computer
ke earlier looking at the penalty kides.'
is Panenka is in particularly high
the demand just now because it's Euro-



pean Championships-time, his country have qualified and they are playing Scotland-against whom he made his international debut in front of 100,000 at Hampden Park in 1973 in next week's eagerly anticipated

Group D match.

He also scored, though not a from the spot, against Scotland in a Czechoslovakia's first competitive H game as European champions, a 2-0 World Cup qualifying win in Prague in 1976.

He was an established, nay marriuse alouer be whom which amarriuse.

or us. I was scar

ns were waiting

quee, player by then, which wasn't the case three years earlier at lamp-den when he trembled at the sight of the vast pucked ternacs.

"I was like Albe in Wonderland because I used to play the second league for Bohemians," he recalls.
"I was used to playing in front of 15,000 fansat most, and all of a sudden I came to Hampled Park, where too Oo Secritish follows a written

100,000 Scottish fans were waiting for us. I was shaking, felt small and

And that was before Panenka encountered Joe Jordan – "he had no teeth, only two, otherwise a completely empty mouth," he once



^ A Rapid Vienna player lies injured after the bottle-throwing incident at Parkhead in 1984

was subsequently copied with varying levels of competence by a succession of to the day since he executed a shot heard all around the world and then The latest clash falls 45 years almost

ballsy footballers.

Perhaps only Zinedine Zidane has eclipsed Panenka's brilliance in terms of producing something so extraordinarily artful at such a high stakes moment when he gently clipped his penalty, in the seventh minute of a World Cup final no less, into the net off

But his France side were beaten on penalties and Zidane did not even get the chance to think about repe the trick at the shootout having already

straightforward finish to send his side into the final en route to glory. It's amusing to think of Panenka sitformer Hibs striker, Cummings. His effort, against Dundee United in the Scottish Cupsemi-final, cleared the bar although he did make amends in the shootout when he scored with a more beenAndyWalker,Jim McIntryeand. Some have been more successful

Antonin
Panenka, the
Czech hero of Euro
1976, contracted
Covid-19 last
year and is glad
he is still here to
celebrate the 45th
anniversary of that
famous triumph date, Simeon Jackson's terrible effort for St Mirren v St Johnstone a couple doing prior to speaking to The Scotsman. He was also sent links to those by Walker, for Ayr United v Kilmarnock in 1999, McIntyre, for Dunfermline v ting assessing Cummings' strike – but as heconfirms, this is what he has been Hibs in a Scottish Cup semi-final in 2007, and, just to bring things up to date, Simeon Jackson's terrible effort

the two unsuccessful ones was very bad," he says. "I must say the best one must have been by McIntyre, he did a "The technique the players used in

great job.
"The run-up was good, he slowed down his foot a little at the end and kicked the ball with a smooth arch middle. I think he did the

watch them and give them myopinion on what they had done right or wrong," bestjob." High praise indeed. The gimmick of getting Panenka to analyse other It turns out it's pretty much all he's ever asked to do – a Mexican TV sta-tion once invited him to run the rule over 50 efforts. "They wanted me to

"A player, whose name I can't remem

that had happened during the previous "There was a massive wave of raging fans who held a grudge against us behaviour does not belong to footbal

comebackthis

century, from Andreas

players have a goat it. I have seen many of them – when it ends with a goal, it is a great success, but those that miss look a great success, but those that miss look a "It was never meant to ridicule anyone. It is a technique that requires hard work and precision I reject and disagree with all claims that state otherwise. Knowing

> When Odsonne Ed than I did. I believe it was in the second

a Panenka in the 2020 Scottish Cup final, played last December, it gener-ared renewed discussion about the rights and wrongs of a technique where the unavoidable consequence of success is the humiliation of a fellow

Craig Gordon seemed to agree, chucking the ball towards the Celtic striker after retrieving it from the net. method was "disrespectum .... mer team-mateand Hearts goalkeeper mer team-mateand to agree, chuck-Pundit Neil McCann suggested the nethod was "disrespectful" and for

work and precision. I reject and disa-gree with all claims that state other "I strongly disagree – it was never meant to ridicule anyone," says Panen-ka. "It is a technique that requires hard

"Knowing that I inspired others makes me proud, especially when I see world-famous players have a go at it. I have seen many of them – when it ends with a goal, it is a great success, but those that miss look a bit foolish." Hestickled by the Panenkasseeming

"It is something that players need to practice to be good at it, they need to be able to do it if woken up in the midble of the night blinded – they need to more of them," he says. Pirlo to Zidane. "There weren't so many in the 80s and 90s, and now there are

automatiseitandperfect it. Otherwise

out prior practice. I came to think of it about two years before the European championship. I would practice on a daily basis during football practice, in friendly matches and later in the Crachocleys it is to be our a The it is a big risk."

Panenka had laid the groundwork for a moment Pele once described as the work of "a madman – or genius". He says: "I don't think it would be possible to just kick the ball like that with-

French goalkeeper Dominique Dropsy ina European Championship qualifier in 1979. There is a flicker of empathy when he recalls the haunted look of a Nowadays it would be described as very meta when Panenka dusted down his "Panenka" at international goalkeeper after another successful attempt while on tour in South Amerhighlight was, of course, the Europeevelto em barrass the super bly named

lightly glide into the net. I could see the sadness and frustration, but I never considered it to be disrespectful or manipulative to the keeper. I was never "I watched the goalkeeper jump for the ball, and then I could see his eyes follow the ball – he had this helpless trying to ridicule anyone, just deliver a ook in his eyes as he watched the ball

people and play so that people have something to talk about in the pub and to make sure people have something to remember," he explains.

"My aim was for people to have some-thing to talkabout, look forward to and come backnext week.

am very happy with the famous pen-alty. It makes me proud, but I under-stand it also overshadows everything

00