



Rory Fallon:

FOOTBALLER TO ICE CREAM ENTREPRENEUR

London

It is the big decision that looms for professional footballers at every level of the game - what to do with your life after your playing career ends.

Many move into coaching, others become agents or media pundits, while back in the day opening a pub was a route taken by lots of ex-pros.

It's safe to assume starting an ice cream business is a notably less popular option, but that is exactly what former New Zealand forward Rory Fallon has chosen to do after hanging up his boots aged 35.

The striker's last involvement in the game was his country's 2018 World Cup qualifying exit at the hands of Peru, but by then he already intended to swap football for ice cream.

"Ice cream's been a passion of mine since I was young," he said as we sat in one of the restaurants in south-west England that he and his wife supply through their Plymouth-based Cowlick Creamery business.

"I remember when my dad used to coach football on Saturday and I'd play my games. On a Sunday we'd get ice cream as a treat if we won.

"My wife and I both had a major passion for it. Every time we'd go on holiday, the first place we'd hit wouldn't be the theme parks or beach - it would be the best ice cream shop in town.

"The opportunity came up when I got injured to start up our own ice cream business."

Fallon played for 15 clubs,

from the second to the seventh tier of English football as well as the top flight in Scotland with Aberdeen.

So while he and his wife Carly moved around the country, club to club, it gave them plenty of guinea pigs to test out their recipes on - and, as a result, the confidence to set up their business.

He continued: "She was a trained chef but was pretty much just following me around the country. So while I was playing football she was making ice cream and thinking of new flavours.

"She had a desktop ice cream machine and all the lads at Aberdeen would come and rate the different flavours."

A national hero in New Zealand

While ice cream is his new love, football was what

made Fallon a hero in his native New Zealand.

The son of Kevin Fallon, the assistant manager of the New Zealand team at the 1982 World Cup, it was Fallon's goal in the second leg of the All Whites' play-off with Bahrain that sent the Kiwis to the 2010 World Cup.

He said: "I played at every level except the English Premier League. But I doubt that even if I played in the Premier League or the Champions League, nothing can compare to taking my team to the World Cup and playing in it."

New Zealand got a 0-0 draw away in Bahrain and Fallon's headed goal at a packed Westpac Stadium in Wellington gave his side a 1-0 win to send them to South Africa.

"We shouldn't have got a draw (in the first leg), we should have lost 2-0 really, we had angels blocking the goal I believe," he recalled. "They hit the post, the crossbar and missed an open goal.

"Out of all of the games I played in, that was the only time I was scared to play. I was petrified because I knew the repercussions - to have an opportunity like that and to blow it at home would have been catastrophic.

"When I headed that ball it felt so good off my head. As soon as I saw it in the back of the net I just felt euphoric." (BBC)