

## *CHAPTER 12*

### **1896 HERO Wednesday win the FA Cup for the first time**

TO THE SURPRISE of the football world, Wolves overcame Derby County 2-1 in their 1896 FA Cup semi-final with goals from Joe Tonks and Billy Malpass. Tonks had earlier in the season replaced David Wykes in the first team after the latter died from typhoid fever.

It was the third time in eight seasons that the Black Country side had made it through to the final, losing 3-0 to Preston in 1889 and winning 1-0 against Everton in 1893. In addition to beating Derby in 1896, Wolves had also beaten Notts County, Liverpool and Stoke. Unlike Wolves, Wednesday were hoping to capture the FA Cup for the first time. The trophy itself was a new one as the original had been stolen.

A team of amateurs called the Wanderers were first to win the original trophy in 1872. When they also became the first to win the competition three years in succession between 1876–78 they gave up their right to keep the trophy on the understanding that any side equalling their feat would also return it to the FA. When Blackburn Rovers

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were successful three years running between 1884–86 they were awarded a commemorative shield.

After Aston Villa beat West Bromwich Albion 1-0 in the 1895 final they displayed the cup in the window of a football outfitters called William Shillcock. It was stolen on 11 September 1895 and never recovered. This was despite a £10 reward for its return.

Villa were fined, a new trophy was made and nothing was heard about the original for over sixty years until in 1958 when 82-year-old Harry Burge, a criminal who spent more than 46 years behind bars, claimed to have been among those responsible. However, his claim to have gained access to the shop through the back door was at odds with evidence that the thieves had entered through the roof.

Seventeen years later 68-year-old Edwin Tranter told the *Birmingham Evening Mail* his grandfather Joseph Piecwright was involved before another twenty years passed before evidence surfaced which author Mike Collett said was “as reliably substantiated as possible came to light.”

Mrs Violet Stait, now aged 80, had married Jack Stait in 1935, the son of John ‘Stosher’ Stait. She claimed her husband had told her that his dad “pinched that cup out of Shillcock’s window” and following further extensive investigation by the Aston Villa club magazine *Claret and Blue*, and later the BBC, it was agreed that Stait had been one of four unemployed men who had broken into the shop through the roof before walking out the front door with the trophy. Little good it did them financially as the four were double-crossed by their receiver who only gave them ten shillings (50 pence) to share. Melted down, the cup disappeared forever.

Sheffield Wednesday played three League games before the Cup Final. They won two and lost one with Fred Spiksley scoring in the 3-0 defeat of Small Heath, his tenth goal of the League campaign. Wednesday finished seventh.

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Wolves, meanwhile, had faced a battle to finish out of the test match zone and they won two and lost two before a 5-0 last-day defeat of Bolton Wanderers saw them leapfrog Small Heath and avoid playing in the test match series.

In a surprise move the Wednesday directors decided to depart from tradition by preparing the team for the big game at home. Headquarters were established at the Earl of Arundel and Surrey Hotel and training took place each morning at Olive Grove with the ground open to anyone interested in seeing their heroes close up.

Once training finished the players changed and then walked to catch a train from Heeley station to Dore and Topley where on arrival there was a stiff four-mile uphill walk to Peacock Inn on the heights of Owlbar. A substantial meal of steak and onions left everyone full enough for the four-mile hike back to catch the train.

The Wednesday party departed for London at 2.30pm on Friday 17 April 1896 with the train stopping momentarily at Nottingham's Midland Station to collect Fred Spiksley and Jack Earp and complete the playing contingent of thirteen. Who, though, were going to be the unlucky two not to make the final eleven?

After arriving at St Pancras Station at 6.10pm the party journeyed across the capital to reach the Queen's Hotel, the name of which had been a closely-guarded secret with everyone under strict instructions not to divulge it.

Following their evening meal, Arthur Dickinson gathered all the players together and told them that the side would be announced in the morning. All week long the papers had been full of reports that if the Crystal Palace pitch was firm and dry then Langley would play at left back. If the pitch conditions were heavy, however, Dr Jim Jamieson would play at half back with Harry Brandon moving to full back and Langley dropping out of the side.

Fred Spiksley and Ambrose Langley, whom everyone knew better as Mick, shared a twin-bedded room at the

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Queen's Hotel on the night before the big game. Fred had been left bemused by the press reports believing that Mick had proved he was capable of playing well whatever the pitch conditions.

Writing for the *Thompson Weekly News* in 1920, Fred Spiksley said: "It was my considered opinion that for a game of this importance and stature, the team chosen should have been announced well in advance to allow the eleven players selected sufficient time to prepare mentally for the game ... I shared with Mick Langley, and neither of us had more than two hours' sleep. I was anxious for him. I kept getting out of bed, going over to the bay window and looking out to see what was happening with the weather ... this state of affairs continued throughout the night. Other players were restless, not least Jim Jamieson, who had played in every Cup-tie that season and yet faced the possibility of missing the final if it didn't rain heavily!"

After breakfast on the Saturday morning the players gathered in the hotel library at 10.30 to find out their fates. Coach Bill Johnson had visited Crystal Palace and had returned with his pitch report.

The team selection up front proved to be something of a surprise but the Wednesday selectors were aware that their opponents were composed of some big strong players. Brash and Ferrier had performed brilliantly in both League and Cup but both were small in stature and so it was thought best to beef up the right flank by using Brady in support of Brash. Davis was switched to inside left to partner Spiksley on the left wing, with Bell at centre forward. In defence Langley was selected with Jamieson missing out.

The composition of the Wednesday side was therefore:-

Massey, Earp (captain), Langley, Brandon. Crawshaw, Petrie, Brash, Brady, Bell, Davis, Spiksley

It was six years since Wednesday had last played in the Cup Final and no-one from the 1890 match represented the club in 1896. The 1890 side had included nine local lads. It

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was a sign of how quickly football had changed following the development of professionalism that in 1896 only Crawshaw was from the Sheffield area.

Wednesday were the bookies, favourites to win the 1896 Cup Final but the 1893 winners Wolves were not without their backers.

As one of the original twelve members of the Football League, Wolves had appointed tobacconist John Addenbrooke as secretary/manager in August 1885 and he did the job until June 1922. He was an exceptionally fine administrator and office worker as well as possessing the ability to spot good footballers and recruit fine scouts. Under Addenbrooke, Wolves had some great players.

The Wolves side was as follows:-

Billy Tennant, Dickie Baugh, Tommy Dunne, Hillary Griffiths, Billy Malpass, William Owen, Jack Tonks, Charlie Henderson, Billy Beats, Harry Wood (captain), David Black.

Included in the eleven were a number of local lads: Tennant, the only amateur in the side, Baugh, who had played in Wolves' first League match in 1888, Griffiths, Owen, Tonks, Wood and Malpass. Baugh, Wood and Malpass had played in the 1893 final while Baugh and Wood had also played in the 1889 final against Preston North End.

The thirty-year-old amateur goalkeeper, Tennant, had quickly established himself as a fans' favourite after England international Billy Crispin Rose was injured.

Baugh was a Wolves man through and through and played from 1886 to 1896. He was a genuinely fine player with a tremendous appetite for hard work topped off with the ability to head the ball powerfully to safety. Son, Richard junior, played for Wolves after World War One. Tommy Dunne was a Scot who made 102 Wolves first team appearances. He was a no-nonsense defender, a strong tackler and a good header of the ball.

Right half Hillary Griffiths was one of three brothers who played for Wolves. He made 201 first team appearances,

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scoring once. He and Fred Spiksley had frequently tangled in earlier games. Centre half Billy Malpass had played superbly in the 1893 FA Cup final and during his Molineux career from 1891 to 1899 he made 155 League and FA Cup appearances, scoring nine times including goals against Notts County, Stoke and Derby County in the 1896 FA Cup run. Billy Owen completed the half back line. He was the tallest wolf in the pack at 6ft. In the 1895–96 season he played in every single League and FA Cup match. He did the same in 1896–97 and 1897–98.

Jack Tonks was a dashing outside right and fine crosser of the ball. His goals had helped his side overcome Stoke and Derby in the quarter and semi-final stages. Scotsman Charlie Henderson was Tonks's right flank partner in the 1895–96 season, his only one with Wolves, during which he scored eleven goals in 36 League and Cup appearances before signing for Sheffield United.

Billy Beats was signed a year after he scored three times for Port Vale when they beat Wolves in the 1894 Staffordshire Cup final. He made 218 League and FA Cup appearances for Wolves in which his ability to run at defenders was supplemented by fine ball skills, a delicate touch and a powerful shot. He spent seven seasons at Wolves during which he scored 73 goals; he also represented England on two occasions.

Harry Wood signed for Wolves in 1885 and went on to make 289 Football League and FA Cup appearances in which he scored 126 goals. He was the scorer of Wolves' first League hat-trick, against Derby County, in 1888 when, with thirteen goals, he topped the season's scoring charts for his club. He repeated that feat in 1890–91, when he was equal with Sam Thomson, 1892–93, 1894–95, 1895–96 and 1897–98, when he was equal with Beats and Bill Smith. Wood played football with great skill and enthusiasm and he won three England caps. He later signed for Southampton where he became a big favourite at the Dell, scoring 65 goals in

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180 games. He played in the 1900 and 1902 FA Cup finals where he completed a hat-trick of defeats and also won four Southern League championship medals between 1899 and 1904. Like many footballers, on retirement he took over the running of a pub, the Milton Arms near Fratton Park, Portsmouth.

David Black was a coalminer's son who, after playing internationally for Scotland in 1889, moved south to play professional football at Grimsby and Middlesbrough before signing for Wolves for the start of the 1893–94 season. His tricky skills on the Wolves left helped him score seventeen goals for his club in 84 appearances.

In 1896 you could not visit the Crystal Palace without quickly realising it was "The Home of the English Cup Final" and the "Finest in the Kingdom". For starters there was an unequalled opportunity for sightseeing. The Crystal Palace was a gigantic glass building constructed in Hyde Park to house the 1851 Great Exhibition that was a showcase for Britain's industrial and economic might. Among the items displayed was the Sheffield-manufactured Norfolk Knife of Joseph Rodgers and Sons. This was a spring knife of 75 blades, which demonstrated that the skills of Sheffield craftsmen were unsurpassed.

In the summer of 1851, six million visitors attended what was the first ever international industrial fair. The building was then dismantled and re-erected in an enlarged form at Sydenham in South London, its location a 200-acre park, being renamed the Crystal Palace. Ornamental gardens, terraces and fountains were added, as were two massive fountains. These were switched on for the first time on 18 June 1856 by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, the prince having co-organised the Great Exhibition with Henry Cole.

A massive blaze in 1936 burnt down the palace. The ruins still remain in the park along with a couple of statues, a few flights of stairs and some dinosaur sculptures that were built in the 1840s.

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In 1895 the FA were desperate to bring the English Cup final back to London after the two previous finals had taken place in Lancashire. Kennington Oval was clearly too small to host the big game and so the FA approached the Crystal Palace company to see if they could assist. J A H Catton was one of the FA council members who was placed on the sub-committee to confer with the Crystal Palace. He claimed "There was nowhere else to go, or so suitable, as the arena was not used by any club, was absolutely neutral, and was so situated that a massed multitude on the lawn and the rising ground behind could obtain a view of the game".

It was agreed to create a new football field within the grounds and a vast area of the parkland that previously formed the south basin of the water fountain was turned into a massive arena extending to 25 acres of ground. The playing field was laid out in an ellipse shape with a cycle track installed.

The goal posts were sited at the north and south ends of the ground and around the playing field was a railed area called simply "The Ring". Landscaped banking was introduced to form a natural amphitheatre that could accommodate tens of thousands of football fans in relative comfort with most having a reasonable view of the pitch.

At the north end there was an entrance and a standing area with the banking behind that extending round the goal to the east side. The banking then rose rapidly upwards to the tree line directly in front of a strong retaining fence. On the other side of this fence was a switchback railway fairground attraction.

There is a magnificent photograph, featured in this book, taken as the game kicked off in 1896. It shows the west side, where John Aird and Sons built a pavilion and where 'honoured guests' sat comfortably under cover and were guaranteed a great view when the captain of the winning side received the FA Cup directly in front of them.

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There were 6,000 additional seats in blocks of 3,000 in two multi-span stands on either side of the pavilion, which contained provision for 100 members of the press to watch the action in comfort.

On 20 April 1895, Aston Villa beat WBA to become the first winners of the FA Cup at the Crystal Palace, when 42,560 fans watched the action. With football becoming more popular a larger crowd was expected for the 1896 final. This proved to be the case with the official attendance recorded at 48,836. The large crowd was keen for a good game.

Although the occasion in 1896 was nothing like as big as today's major football matches in terms of its coverage there had been plenty in the newspapers in the days leading up to it, including photographs and cartoon drawings of the players. The *Sports* newspaper, which was advertised on the final's match card, gave away photographs of both the Wednesday and Wolves teams.

On the day itself photographs of action on the pitch were taken. Never previously published, some of these are reproduced in this book.

Excursion trains from Sheffield to Kings Cross and St Pancras railway stations started leaving at 6.00am on 18 April 1896. Thousands of blue and white-dressed Wednesday fans streamed south where they poured out of the stations and hopped on to open-topped horse-drawn omnibuses travelling into central London.

Sheffield blue merged with Wolves black and gold as all along the River Thames the big game was the main topic of conversation. A feature of the journey across London was the music of partisan Wednesday fans, singing songs in honour of their side. At Sydenham Hill and Crystal Palace railway stations the fans disembarked and after a short walk the multitude of Wednesday fans arrived at the gates.

It was barely noon as the black and gold and blue and white favours poured into the ground. There were four

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hours to kick-off, plenty of time to picnic and sightseeing opportunities to enjoy. Best not miss the kick-off, though, as the previous season had seen the quickest goal ever scored in an FA Cup final. It was timed at 30 seconds and is credited to Aston Villa's Bob Chatt although many Villa fans, and a certain Steve Bloomer, behind the goal where it was scored, were adamant that their captain John Devey had got the final touch.

By two o'clock on Cup Final day 1896 a massive number of fans were populating the ground and by 3 o'clock the people holding reserved seat tickets were busy taking their places while right up to kick-off the crowd continued to swell with fans from both sides.

Wednesday and Wolves walked out a good fifteen minutes before kick-off and while familiarising themselves with the conditions the players also warmed up with exercises and stretches to get themselves loose. The Wednesday XI were all fit, their splendid conditioning undertaken by coach Bill Johnson and his faithful ally John McReynolds to whom the players owed a great debt of gratitude.

At kick-off the weather was fine and warm without even the slightest breeze. Just before the advertised starting time the referee, Lieutenant Simpson, summoned the two captains to the centre spot. The toss was won by Wolves captain Harry Wood who elected to defend the southern 'Railway End'. In truth the conditions meant there was no real advantage in winning the toss.

With the referee allowing the teams a few minutes to settle into their formations, Fred Spiksley glanced across at his 'old friend' Hillary Griffiths and saw he was taking up a position a couple of feet across the whitewash. The Wednesday outside left immediately knew his opponent would have a dodge or two up his sleeve and if he was to make an impression then he needed to be at his best from the start. Fred knew what to expect from Griffiths. Little trips and kicks at ankles and knees were routine for

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Division One and especially at Molineux, which even then had a reputation for being a difficult place to play as the crowd was so partisan. However, Fred was feeling fit and more than ready to perform on what was the biggest stage in football in 1896. He also had a point to prove as he had been inexplicably left out of the England side that faced Scotland exactly two weeks before.

Fred scores what seems likely to be the quickest goal ever in an FA Cup final. (The information which follows is taken from extensive research that can be found at:- [www.spiksley.com](http://www.spiksley.com))

“Sheffield scored in the first few seconds.”

*The Times – 20 April 1896*

“Less than 20 seconds had passed”

*Manchester Guardian – 20 April 1896*

At 4pm Lawrie Bell started the game by passing to Brady who pushed the ball forward to Spiksley on the Wednesday left with the winger moving the ball back infield to Crawshaw who under pressure by the advancing Wolverhampton half backs misplaced his pass to send the ball out of play on the Wednesday right around 35 yards out from the Wolves goal. In what proved to be Wolves' only touch of the ball before it entered the net a hasty throw sees Crawshaw regain possession before sending the ball forward on the Wednesday right to Brash who beat his marker before reaching the goal line and crossing to Davis who laid the ball off for Spiksley to beat Tennant from around 25-30 yards out to make it 1-0.

Sadly, the exact time of Fred Spiksley's goal cannot be officially confirmed. No-one thought to ask the referee afterwards if he had noted it in his notebook and there was no reason for him to do so as it was not common practice in 1896. According to the former FA historian David Barber

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the FA do not have the referee's notebook and they have no idea if it still exists. All this has allowed Louis Saha to become known as the quickest scorer of an FA Cup final goal when his effort for Everton against Chelsea in 2009 was recorded at 25 seconds.

However there is more than ample evidence that the honour of the quickest FA Cup final goal is Fred Spiksley's.

The *Monday Sportsman* reported the goal as follows:- "Few will forget the dash with which the Wednesday went off, and the lightning goal credited to Spiksley inside the first minute of the game had a great deal to do with their ultimate victory."

The same day's *Manchester Guardian* is more specific:- "Less than 20 seconds had passed, when Wednesday scored the first point of the game. Archie Brash on the outside right passed the ball into the path of Fred Spiksley who scored with a powerful shot that Tennant in the Wolves goal was unable to reach."

"In about a quarter of a minute Spiksley registered the first goal."

*Morning Post* (London) of 20 April:  
"Sheffield scored in the first few seconds."

*The Times* – 20 April:

The following newspapers reported that the goal had come within 30 seconds: *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, *Nottinghamshire Guardian*.

The following newspapers all reported that the goal had come in less than a minute: *Leicester Chronicle*, *Pall Mall Gazette*, *Northern Echo*, *Derby Telegraph*, *London Standard*, *Reynolds' News*, *Glasgow Herald*, *Wrexham Advertiser*, *Liverpool Mercury*, *Sportsman*, *Lincolnshire Chronicle*, *Buckinghamshire Advertiser*, *Lloyd's Weekly*, *Dundee Courier*.

As the Wednesday fans celebrated, a shell-shocked Wanderers side restarted the match. Harry Davis, though, dispossessed Charlie Henderson and drove forward to hit a shot that was deflected for a corner. This was taken by Fred

Spiksley and only just scrambled away by a panic-stricken Wolves defence desperate to avoid going two down.

There were four minutes on the clock when Wolves made their first advance into Wednesday territory but Langley cleared to great South Yorkshire cheers. On eight minutes the side a goal down had their first real chance for a shot at goal when a free kick was awarded against Langley. Jack Tonks floated the ball into the Wednesday six-yard box and when it bounced up kindly, David Black, with his back to the goal hooked it over his head and towards the Wednesday net. The hush in the crowd was ended when at the very last moment the ball seemed to dip into the goal Wolves had equalised thanks to a touch of skill and good fortune. Massey, playing against his home town club, could only look on in anguish as the black and gold ranks roared their approval as it was now 1-1.

Four minutes later a determined Petrie hit a fine shot that fizzed just over before Spiksley beat Griffiths and bore down on Tennant's goal; his shot was only just wide drawing oohs and aahs around the ground. Wednesday, though, were determined to restore their lead. They did so on eighteen minutes with what Fred Spiksley agreed at the end of his long career was the best goal he ever scored.

The initial movements were almost identical to those of the opening goal with the ball being crossed into the centre from the right wing. Lawrie Bell then helped it on into Spiksley's path 35 yards out from Billy Tennant's goal. This was five yards further out than from where the Wednesday outside left had shot in the first minute but those five yards were to prove crucial as he drove the ball with great power. This time though he put spin on the ball and the initial groan from the crowd meant most believed he had badly miscued his shot. Then when the spin took hold the ball swung violently and at just three feet off the ground smacked against the far right hand goalpost before entering the Wolves net.

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So powerful was the strike that when the ball hit the back of the net it rebounded back on to the field. This left Tennant totally confused. It meant that after he kicked it away he missed Billy Beats restarting the game as the shocked crowd tried to work out exactly what they had just witnessed.

Tennant kept his side in the match on 25 minutes when he denied Brady with a fine stop but as the game settled down neither side could exert any serious pressure with Wolves happy to concede a number of free kicks in their desire to prevent the quicker Wednesday forwards grabbing a third. The side a goal up then adopted a neat passing style that forced Wanderers on to the defensive. Yet with few real chances thereafter the interval arrived with Sheffield Wednesday still leading 2-1.

The Black Country side were again pushed back in the opening minutes of the second half as twice Brady and Brash combined with Dunne and Baugh being forced to make last-ditch tackles to prevent a Wednesday third. Spiksley, who on more than one occasion had confused his opponents by performing his back heel trick, was then upended from behind by Griffiths but fortunately he was not injured.

On 57 minutes there were great cheers among the Wolves fans when Tommy Dunne drove a free kick beyond Massey but these were soon stilled when it was realised that no one had touched the ball. Griffiths then flattened Spiksley again before Langley made a great tackle to deny Tonks a shooting chance.

Pushing forward, Wednesday had a great opportunity to double their lead but Bell failed to direct his header from a Crawshaw free kick beyond Tennant from just yards out. The Wolves 'keeper then performed heroics when Spiksley put Davis through and the Wednesday player was denied by Tennant's outstretched fingers. Exactly half the second half had elapsed and it was then that Wolves stepped up

their efforts and for the first time in the match became the better side.

Massey was forced to rush out to deny Beats as the Wolves man dashed forward. The Wednesday 'keeper then made a fine save from a Black hot shot that brought cheers from the increasingly anxious Wednesday fans. From a corner Massey punched clear amid half a dozen Wolves players all trying to clutter him. Wednesday were dropping ever deeper and from a second corner there was the remarkable sight of Fred Spiksley making one of the only half a dozen clearances he made during his entire career.

In desperation, Earp, the Wednesday captain, then asked Crawshaw to drop back and, as a foretaste of the general system of defence that was later perfected by Herbert Chapman at Arsenal in the 1920s and 1930s, perform the role of a stopper centre half.

With just ten minutes remaining, the Wolves captain Harry Wood could see that Wednesday were wilting and he urged his defenders to hit the ball high into their opponents' box. The aerial bombardment did create the anticipated panic but in the event Wolves might have done better to keep playing the way they had been as the Wednesday defenders were exhausted and virtually unable to move. Hitting in long balls allowed them to stay where they were and when the ball was cleared the Wednesday forwards could hold it up and run down the clock, which is exactly what Spiksley did when he used all his trickery to prevent Wolves gaining possession.

However, Wolves were not about to lie down and on 89 minutes the goal they craved was only denied by another great Massey save before the Wednesday defenders began to literally throw themselves in front of further Wolves attempts on their goal. The game finally came to an end when the ball was cleared into midfield with the referee's whistle bringing jubilation among the Wednesday players, officials and fans.

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Wednesday had won the FA Cup.

Bell then made a successful determined grab for the match ball and later declared that it would be taken to his home town of Dumbarton, where it would remain for eternity. The current whereabouts of the ball is unknown.

While Fred Spiksley was having his hand 'shook-off', as reported in the *Athletic News*, a bizarre story was unfolding in the centre of the Crystal Palace football pitch. One player couldn't understand what all the fuss was about. As the players were walking off the pitch, Billy Tennant innocently enquired of Mick Langley when the date for the replay was.

"Replay, old chap, there won't be any replay, we have won the English Cup by the odd goal in three".

Tennant was adamant. "Get away, there were only two goals scored today."

"Why, man alive, where on earth were you when we scored our second goal?" enquired Langley.

Years later, Fred Spiksley wrote about this in his autobiography stating:

"I was lucky to score the third and winning goal, hitting the ball with such force and spin that when it hit the back of the net the ball catapulted back into the field of play with Billy Tennant still wondering where the ball had vanished. Eventually he turned round to see the ball lying on the ground in front of him. Believing the ball was still in play Tennant leathered it down the ground, blissfully unaware that Lieutenant Simpson had already awarded the goal to Wednesday. In his moments of searching to see where the ball had gone Billy contrived to turn his back away from the action and in consequence he missed seeing both the ball being returned to the centre spot and Billy Beats taking the kick-off."

At least Tennant was given a medal. Wednesday's unlucky reserve, Bob Ferrier, came running over from the bench, where he had been watching the game, and

congratulated all the players and after shaking their hands he finished up by tearfully saying; "You know I should have so liked to have had a medal." Fred later acknowledged that nobody who played in the final could possibly have understood the true feelings of a fellow player such as Ferrier and Jim Jamieson who had been left out in the cold. The sheer thrill of winning the FA Cup and collecting a winner's medal in this era is perhaps best illustrated by Roy Massey, grandson of the Wednesday 'keeper. Interviewed for this book, he recalled "My grandfather always wore his medal on his waistcoat."

Roy played as a forward for Rotherham United, Leyton Orient and Colchester United before undertaking coaching roles at Colchester, Arsenal and Norwich and in 2016 was working as a scout for Everton. He has had 50 years in football and is very proud of his grandfather, who lived to the ripe old age of 91.

"I would visit him every Sunday and sit in the armchair in front of the living room fire listening to his tales. I recall he told me in his first game for Wednesday he had gone to catch the ball and was knocked over the line with it in his hands by the centre forward. A goal was awarded but the next time in a similar situation he tipped the ball over the bar and then crouched down and flipped the forward over him and into the post where he suffered a broken arm."

"Keepers are a breed apart and to be a good one you have to be mentally tough but from reading about him he was also very brave, handled the ball well, had good reflexes and was physically strong. In terms of training I understand he did a lot of shot-stopping with the players shooting at him. He was clearly a good player but he made apparent to me that Crawshaw and Spiksley were the best players in the team that won the FA Cup. He really admired both those players."

"He told me there was, like in most dressing rooms,

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great comradeship between the players and of how they were treated by Sheffields like kings when they returned with the FA Cup in 1896. He said it was a close game and he was proud he had made a couple of good saves late on to keep Wednesday in the lead. At home games he said that Wednesday often attracted big crowds who were rarely abusive like can be the case today and who would be very happy if Wednesday won. When he finally finished playing football until he retired he largely worked in the coal mines around Mexborough."

At the same time that the Wednesday first team had been playing in the Cup Final the second team had been at home against Barnsley St Peter's. Four thousand Wednesday fans shouted with joy when a telegram arrived on fifteen minutes with news their side led 1-0 and there was further pleasure when the half-time score arrived. At the end of the reserve game spectators assembled in one vast crowd in the main stand and when the tinkle of a telephone bell was heard they could hardly hold their breath.

At first there was silent hush, ears straining for news and then there was a cry – "WE'VE WON THE CUP!"

Two hundred miles south, Lord Kinnaird, the FA president, surrounded by a surging crowd of excited spectators, presented the cup to Wednesday captain Jack Earp and he lifted the trophy high above his head with pride. No one could really hear what Kinnaird said such was the tremendous cheers but he was understood to have said how delighted he was with the match and spirit in which it was played. After a few words from Earp, Sir Howard Vincent MP proposed a vote of thanks for the president, seconded by Sir Alfred Hickman, the Wolverhampton MP and Wolves president. He expressed the belief that the better team had won the day.

Lord Kinnaird then presented the gold medals to all twenty-two players who played in the final. These were memorable moments for the players before Jack Earp was

able to lift up the new FA Cup again and bring deafening cheers from the Wednesday supporters.

When the presentations were over, the players washed and changed before joining the Wednesday officials for the short walk back to the Queen's Hotel and a high tea. A remaining hardcore of Wednesday fans had waited outside the ground and when they saw the players they cheered them to the echo. Arriving back at the hotel, the FA Cup was placed proudly in the centre of the tea table. Gleaming in the sunlight it looked magical and quite took the breath away.

John Holmes, the Wednesday chairman, stood up to say a few words.

"Gentlemen I have been hunting this Cup for the past twenty years, and whilst Mr. Dickinson has been the huntsman, and his clever hard-working team, the hounds, there has also been a tremendous number of members in the hunt who joined the chase with a will, and yet experienced continual disappointment year after year, but they still kept their courage, and in doing so were in at the kill at the Crystal Palace at Sydenham this afternoon. In closing this part of my notes I must refer to a great man connected with our great game. I refer of course to Mr Arthur Dickinson, our financial club secretary, and I congratulate him upon the success that has at last crowned his work".

Arthur Dickinson rose to his feet and replied; "Yes, I'm glad we've won it at last, as I can now bow out in a blaze of glory." This was clearly said tongue in cheek as Dickinson continued serving Wednesday for many years.

After finishing their tea the Wednesday party collected their belongings and relocated to the Temperance Hotel, Euston Road, close to St Pancras Station, where they were booked in for two nights. The accommodation was not so good and, to the disappointment of the players, there was no champagne and oysters. The Wednesday committee

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were all a bit old-fashioned and whereas they had been meticulous in planning for the English Cup final none had really given a thought about what to do if their players actually won. This lack of foresight also extended to what to do when they arrived back in Sheffield. It was common knowledge it would be at the Sheffield Midland Station at 5.28pm on Monday afternoon.

When the Wednesday players and officials caught the train home from St Pancras they could not have anticipated the massive welcome they would receive in Sheffield. Other football fans also wanted to catch a glimpse of the trophy and from Derby onwards the numbers grew gradually with the Wednesday players holding it up to carriage windows for people to see.

Jack Earp had purchased thirteen blue and white silk ties for the Wednesday players who had travelled south and when Mick Langley suddenly noticed there were no blue and white ribbons adorning the FA Cup he removed his from round his neck and tied it to one of the cup handles.

When the doubled-headed locomotives finally steamed into Sheffield they were met by Fred Spiksley, who had journeyed home independently. Travelling separately to games and living and training in Gainsborough all helped to make Fred a bit of an outsider. There was absolute chaos as the arrival platform was swamped with thousands of fans all desperate to see the winning players and the FA Cup. Inspector Bestwick's Brass Band started belting out See the Conquering Heroes but they had hardly got started when the crush of the crowd separated the bandsmen from the conductor.

The conquering heroes were forced to retreat to the safety of their saloon carriage and it was a further twenty minutes before the band could form up again and the players could board a coach and horses waiting to take them on a parade around Sheffield.

## 1896 Hero

All the streets were absolutely packed and it took an age for the coach to make progress as the crowds spilled out on to the road as they sought to catch a glimpse of the FA Cup, which for most of the time was held aloft by the player who had scored the Wednesday goals at the Crystal Palace.

The sheer numbers of people made it impossible to travel up Commercial Street and, to the disappointment of the players and the crowd, the coach pulled sharply to the right and went straight to the Royal Hotel where Councillor George Senior and Mr Arthur Nixon had arranged a dinner for the honoured guests. The band by this time had long since disintegrated.

Later that evening the players visited the Empire Theatre where another enthusiastic reception awaited them, especially when the FA Cup was displayed. Having re-formed, the band managed to play a few tunes.

Four nights later an official dinner was held at the Masonic Hotel. By this time, the scorer of Wednesday's two goals in the final had received a cheque for £11. This was sent to him by Will Chatterton whose confidence that Wednesday would not win the 1896 FA Cup had proved to be misplaced. This concluded Fred's football betting career, but, sadly, not his addiction to gambling.

Fred also received, like all the rest of the Wednesday players and directors, a special jug from Wednesday board member, the Earl of Wharncliffe, who was so delighted at winning the FA Cup that he commissioned a number of jugs from Staffordshire Pottery.