



Eddie Wolstenholme

is a former English referee, in both the Football League and the FA Premier League. He is based in Blackburn, and may be most memorable as being the match referee for a violent 2002 First Division encounter between Sheffield United and West Bromwich Albion that would be remembered as "the Battle of Bramall Lane" www.wikipedia.org

Eddie named among elite

www.archive.thisislancashire.co.uk

From the Lancashire Evening Telegraph, Friday 29th Jun 2001.

BLACKBURN referee Eddie Wolstenholme has been named in the first group of 24 elite football officials to benefit from the advent of professionalism. The newly-formed Professional Game Match Officials Board has released the names of the Select Group of Referees, which includes Wolstenholme.

They will officiate in the FA Premier League, selected Football League games and major FA Cup matches and have the option of going fully professional. All selected referees could receive an annual retainer of £33,000 plus match fees of around £900 per game. Referees' manager Philip Don said: "These new arrangements for our leading match officials have been designed to continue to improve the standard of refereeing, which is a priority for everyone. It will also enhance the status and standing of referees within the professional game both at home and abroad."

Wolstenholme enjoying Premier swansong

Wednesday, 27 November 2002.

The Lancashire born official started out in 1978 and progressed through the ranks from Sunday football to the Nationwide league and finally the Premiership. Now, having reached the peak of domestic football, he will say goodbye at the end of the season as he reaches the age of 47, when referees must hang up their whistle. Lawrie Madden www.thefa.com

INTERVIEW:

TheFA.com With so little time to ref on the top league were you surprised to get the call?

EW I have to say that at the age of 47 I didn't expect to get the chance. I was in China last June when I got the call and I have to thank the Premier League for the chance. It is brilliant.

TheFA.com When you were starting out as a referee back in the 1970's did you have a refereeing role model?

EW Jack Taylor without a doubt both on and off the field. He was dignified, down to earth had a great personality and on the field was very calm.

TheFA.com What has been the highlight of your career?

EW Without doubt the play off game in 1998 between Charlton and Sunderland. The game itself was amazing- four goals each. Afterwards Bob Murray the Sunderland Chairman and the manager at the time Peter Reid said that result had cost the club £20 million but they didn't hold me responsible. After the game the Sunderland

midfielder Kevin Ball came up to me and asked me to ref his testimonial game which under the circumstances was absolutely brilliant.

TheFA.com You were on that abandoned game last season between Sheffield United and West Brom. What went through your mind?

EW In all honesty it was horrendous. I could see the game was boiling, but I was determined to get it finished and I didn't. I didn't enjoy that. There was the double sending off and then another three went off and I was forced to abandon the game. I look back and try and see if there was anything I could have done to prevent it but not really. The decisions were easy. The players made them for me. I had no leeway and I just carried out the laws of the game.

TheFA.com That was obviously a very unusual occurrence. What effect did that have on you?

EW For three days continuous my phone never stopped ringing. The interest from the media and the press was enormous. I even had fans from both teams write to me. They were supportive!

"The Battle of Bramhall Lane" - Eddie was stuck in the middle

From the Lancashire Evening Telegraph, first published Monday 18th Mar 2002.

BLACKBURN referee Eddie Wolstenholme found himself in the eye of the storm at Bramall Lane as he was forced to abandon the match between Sheffield United and West Brom. The official led the players off the pitch after the Blades, who were trailing 3-0, were reduced to six men by three dismissals and two injuries.

Having reflected on the events and submitted his report he insisted: "There was nothing I could do, I had no option."

Wolstenholme is in his tenth year as a league official and said: "I have never abandoned a game in those circumstances before. "I know people think that referees like sending people off, but we don't. Having said that I think I got all three right. - The keeper had to go because it was a clear goalscoring opportunity. Then there was nothing in the game until it turned truly ugly in the 65th minute, when Georges Santos, whom United had brought on seconds earlier, was sent off for his tackle on Andy Johnson. With hindsight, fireworks between the two could have anticipated; the previous season with Johnson playing for Nottingham Forest he had seriously damaged Santos' cheekbone and eye socket with a swinging elbow. "I sent off George Santos because he launched himself at Johnson in a dreadful two footed challenge, it was serious foul play. Derek McInnes was trying to calm things down when Patrick Suffo came over and butted him in the face. It was violent conduct and again I had no option. This reduced United to eight men, with no more substitutions left". After that they had Michael Brown, go off injured and in the 81st minute another - Rob Ullathorne - went down. "I pointed out that if he went off they would be down to six men and I would have to abandon the game. The laws don't allow for anything else."

Blades boss Neil Warnock and Baggies manager Gary Megson went to see Wolstenholme after the game and the details of those meetings have been included in his report. "I have spent more than two hours doing everything I have to after a game," he admitted. "I have got one year left and I don't think I will ever be involved in anything like it again. It is not up to me whether West Brom keep the points, the FA deals with discipline and the Football League will decide about the points." After the match, The FA launched an investigation; they could have chosen to let the result stand, or order a replay.

West Brom manager Gary Megson, who had accused Warnock and his players of orchestrating the chaos, had a very strong opinion on the issue. "I've been in professional football since I was 16 and I'm 42 now. I've never ever witnessed anything as disgraceful as that. There is no place for that in any game of football, let alone professional football. There will be no replay. If we are called back to Bramall Lane we shall kick-off and then walk off the pitch."

Eventually, The FA fined United £10,000. The Football League, following The FA's recommendation, let the match result stand. Warnock escaped punishment, as he was not mentioned in Wolstenholme's match report. Gary Megson also escaped punishment for his comments made to the press accusing Warnock of faking injuries to end the game.

Santos and Suffo never played for United again.

www.theboltonnews.co.uk



Eddie in Teaching Mode

Eddie spent 5 years as an assistant referee on the Football League where his highest profile appointment was Italy v Hungary in the European Championships. He was promoted to Football League middle in season 1991/1992 and enjoyed 11 years on the National List including 2 years on the Premier League. Eddie visited Wembley on 4 occasions where he refereed the Division 1 Play-off Final between Charlton and Sunderland. He also refereed Reading v Walsall at the Millennium Stadium and the FA Vase Final. Eddie now devotes his time to developing existing referees and has acted as a Referees Coach on the Football League. He is Referee Development Officer at the Lancashire County FA..

www.blackpoolreferees.co.uk