

## A Tempestuous Semi-Final...Willie Foulkes

, *March 1899.*

Willie Foulke, goalkeeper for England and Sheffield United was probably the largest footballer ever. He started his career at 15 stone and ended it at 22 stone. Well over six feet tall, he dwarfed players and became a legend.

Talk about strength. Foulke could easily carry a man under each arm. He could punch a football to the halfway-line. And talk about girth. He was big enough to save penalties without doing too much.

On one occasion he picked up a forward around the waist and threw him into the net to concede a penalty. Another time, during a League game he picked up Liverpool centre-forward George Allan, turned him upside-down and stood him on his head in the mud. The resultant penalty turned the game Liverpool's way.

On yet another occasion he kept Sheffield United in the FA Cup competition with a brilliant save but tore a thigh muscle in the process. The stretchers weren't big enough to carry him off. It needed six men instead.

Altogether Willie Foulke played in three FA Cup Finals for Sheffield United, winning two and losing one. After a game at Crystal Palace in 1902. Foulke was incensed at a decision to allow a goal, scored late in the game. Lying in the bath, contemplating the replay, his temper snapped with typical idiosyncrasy. He stormed out of the dressing-area and stalked the Crystal Palace corridors in search of the referee and linesmen, twenty stones of steaming nudity. It must have been one of the strangest sights of the century.