

Wayne who?

By Stuart Fuller

In 1968, at the Moderna Musset Gallery in Sweden, artist Andy Warhol uttered the famous line "In the future everybody will be world famous for fifteen minutes" as a retort to criticism over some of his works. Today's disposable society and social media frenzy makes heroes and villains of the most mundane and ordinary people.

You don't have to search that far in the Non-League world to find examples of characters who have hit the headlines only to disappear as quickly as they've arrived. One such example is Wayne Shaw.

Wayne who?

Few will recall the name but back in February he was one of the most famous names and faces across the front and back pages of our media.

If I utter the word "piegate" then I'm sure your power of recall will jog your memory. The then Sutton United reserve keeper was caught on camera scoffing a pie whilst on the bench for the club's biggest game in their history as they took on Arsenal in the FA Cup Fifth Round.

At first it was seen as "typically Non-League", the social media world exploding in applause for the keeper. "What a legend" and "The real FA Cup hero" were headlines that we saw. For those of us involved in the Non-League game, the whole sham was embarrassing and made every club look tin-pot. I'd certainly hate to think of the reaction of Darren, Ross or Codge if a player looked at a pie on the bench, let alone eating one!

For the next few days the opinions on Shaw were split. Was he just a patsy for a betting stunt that went wrong or had he cleverly manipulated the situation for his own gain? Shaw was forced to resign and within a week his name had disappeared completely from public view.

However, it appears his infamy is going to be longer than the proverbial 15 minutes as he now faces serious Football Association charges after an investigation into the incident and the revelations about the involvement of a betting company.

It is alleged the former Sutton United goalkeeper intentionally influenced a football betting market contrary to FA Rule E5(a) – "A Participant shall not, directly or indirectly, seek to influence for an improper purpose the result, progress, conduct or any other aspect of, or occurrence in, a football match or competition." In addition, it is alleged he acted in a manner which was improper and/or brought the game into disrepute, contrary to FA Rule E3(1).

The rules around betting in football are incredibly clear, albeit draconian to many. Players, managers, officials and even certain volunteers are not able to bet on any football match anywhere in the world. So I can't have a bet on a MLS game this weekend for instance even though I've got no influence or commercial interest in the game. Rather than having some areas of grey, the FA's decision to ban all betting rules out any ambiguity. As someone involved in the game for a period of time, Shaw should have known the rules and said no when the betting company approached him with a "wacky" idea.

The penalties for betting offences involved financial penalties, suspensions and in some instances, lifetime bans. I would wager (ahem) that the betting company involved in the "stunt" will certainly not comment on the matter, and hopefully not do something along these lines again. But for Shaw, he is not only the guilty party here but also the victim. I'm sure on reflection even he will agree that his 15 minutes of fame were really not worth it.