

suffer too much from important players getting crocked so there must have been some very frustrated players who never quite got their chance to shine at Stamford Bridge. Over all, though, I found the Championship season just as exciting as my other seasons at Chelsea, in my eyes things only really got hot during the run-in. But I will always remember the fans running onto the pitch at the final whistle when we'd clinched it. There must have been 40,000 people on the grass at Stamford Bridge, they all jumped over the dog track and over to the players. I was shaking people's hands for a good twenty minutes before making my way to get changed. It was such a low-key celebration that I caught the train home at the normal time and I went racing at Brighton to see my dogs running. The trip to Victoria Station on the tube was special though, with all the fans coming up to me and patting me on the back.

It was disappointing not to make the full England team while I was at Chelsea like some of the other lads had, but I was up against some very good and established players at the time and selection always seemed to favour the regulars. I was called up for the 'B' side, England manager Walter Winterbottom took a team out to Bulgaria and told myself and Manchester United's Roger Byrne that whoever had the best games on the tour would win a regular place in the side. To be fair I didn't play well and missed out over the next three years. I was always in contention for a place and was selected for FA representative games, but I never managed to get a full cap, which is a regret. Because of that trip to Eastern Europe I also missed Chelsea's tour to New York and Canada, which I was just as gutted about.

I wasn't a classy player, but I thought I stuck to my defensive task well and I had a presence on the pitch, the opponents certainly knew I was playing and I had a reputation. I could pass a ball, my game wasn't all about intimidation, but you were allowed to tackle from behind in that era and shoulder barging was acceptable too, so I used to enjoy my games. I'm so pleased that referees allowed the game to flow and I played in an era when bookings and sendings off were almost unheard of. I don't think I would have stayed on the pitch five minutes otherwise.

Referees used to speak to you and tick you off, but that was about it. I remember one coming over to me after I'd caught a player late and he just said, "I wondered when you were going to get him with a good'un, that winger has been taking the piss out of you all afternoon!" Another time, away at Charlton in our 2-0 win in 1955, I'd taken their winger out twice and the crowd were all on my back, booing and calling me all the names under the sun. So the referee came walking over to me wagging his finger, pretending to the supporters that he was ticking me off. But all he said to me was, "now, now Stan... Are you going to the races on



1955 — Stan Willemse sucks on a half time lemon during a friendly with Hayes Town