



Clocking On...

By Steve Johnson

Today's 2.05pm kick-off inevitably gets supporters talking about the 'good old days' when we remember all football matches being played on a Saturday afternoon at 3pm... but just how common was that 3pm time slot?

Well, it depends on how far back you look!

Prior to the Premier League era, most of Everton's home matches, aside from those played in midweek, did indeed commence at the 'traditional' time of 3pm – but that had only been the case from the early 1960s onwards.

From 1957 to late 1961 Everton's Saturday kick-offs had alternated mostly between 3pm and 3.15pm, and before that we varied primarily amongst 2.15, 2.30, 2.45, 3.00 and 3.15pm starts!

Up until World War 1 the picture was even more unsettled, with all sorts of different afternoon kick-off times in vogue – although 3.30 and 4.00pm were much more prevalent.

So why the moveable start times before 1957? 'Light' is the answer!

Everton installed floodlights in 1957 (as did Chelsea), using them for the first time in October of that

year. Up until then, our autumn and winter home games tended to kick-off earlier to ensure matches didn't end in semi-darkness – with the lighter spring and summer evenings allowing for later starts.

The arrival of the Premier League in 1992/93 saw many changes in English football, not least the gradual increase in the number of live televised matches and, connected to that, a return to a variety of kick-off times.

If we include today's game, Everton will have kicked-off at 26 different times, home and away, in 959 Premier League matches – ranging from 11.15am to 8.00pm – spread over all seven days of the week.

The 11.15am game was away at Manchester City in October 2005 (above left), when a 2-0 defeat kept us bottom of the table. On the same day, Chelsea opened up a nine-point lead at the top with a 4-1 win at Liverpool in a game that kicked off nearly five hours later at 4.00pm!

Returning to today's fixture, we've had just four previous 2.05pm Premier League kick-offs, drawing three and losing one.

So, what will today bring? A first 2.05pm Premier League win for us

hopefully! Irrespective of the result, though, we can be reminded that modern football's seemingly unusual kick-off times are actually really nothing new.

Finally, don't forget to pop into St Luke's Church ahead of the game today and have a look at EFC Heritage Society's special Tommy Lawton display – a striker who wore the blue of both Everton and Chelsea with distinction.



A legend for both Blues – Tommy Lawton, pictured in 1938