



## Neil Sullivan

For a goalkeeper whose playing career took him to three Premier League clubs and the 1998 World Cup, Neil Sullivan's post-football career couldn't be more different. He's recently become a driving instructor in Harrogate – his home for the past 20 years. "All I had

ever known was football and the only thing I'd done successfully outside the game was teach my kids to drive, so it seemed the perfect thing to do!"

Sutton-born Neil began his career with Wimbledon, coming through the Dons

productive youth system after being spotted playing for Merton Borough aged 16 to emerge as cover for the likes of Dave Beasant and Hans Segers and eventually making 224 appearances for the Dons between 1989 and 2000, overcoming two broken legs on the way. It took until 1996/97 before Sully established himself as first choice and while many people recall him being on the receiving end of \*that\* goal by David Beckham at Selhurst Park and also another spectacular effort from Paolo Di Canio at Upton Park, he was a reliable and often underrated custodian. "That's the life of a keeper," he grinned. "For all the games, match-winning saves, clean sheets and penalty stops, it's those two matches that always come up!"

But an interview with FourFourTwo magazine about the Beckham goal was an unexpected catalyst for his international career. "I talked about my grandfather being Scottish and got a call from Scotland manager Craig Brown, who'd been made aware of the article. I ended up playing 28 times for Scotland and went to the 1998 World Cup in France."



Sadly for Dons fans, Wimbledon's tearful relegation from the Premier League saw Neil understandably want to continue his career in the top-flight and a transfer to Tottenham Hotspur followed, where he made 80 appearances and played in the 2002 Worthington Cup Final. After being displaced at White Hart Lane, Sullivan moved back across London to join Chelsea as cover for Carlo Cudicini and a year later he moved North to become first choice once again at Leeds United. Neil played 110 games at Elland Road and made a loan spell with Championship neighbours Doncaster Rovers into a permanent deal in 2007. Now at the veteran stage of his career, he moved into specialist goalkeeper coaching and returned to Leeds to work within their Academy.

But there was one last hurrah with the gloves in 2012, when former Dons teammate Neal Ardley loaned in 42 year-old Sullivan to help the relatively inexperienced AFC Wimbledon side he now managed and Sully

joined a select band of players who have represented the club in both the Wimbledon FC and AFC Wimbledon eras, adding 21 more matches to his career total of 665.

Neil has kindly travelled down from Yorkshire to be with us today – but is letting the train take the strain, so he's giving "Mirror, Signal, Manoeuvre" a rest for a few hours and we are delighted to welcome him back to Plough Lane today!

