

Football Fair Play



Football

Purpose

To think about the importance of working as a team. To consider what makes a good fan. To respect decisions made by referees even if you disagree with them.

Entrance of Pupils

A thought provoking slideshow introducing the theme of Football for the pupils to enter assembly to (10 minutes)

Introduction

Football supporters love their football. They love the sense of belonging when supporting a club. I have followed my team for more than forty years. I no longer live in the area where my team is - but I still spend hours every week watching games, reading about tactics and players and possible transfers in and out of my beloved club.

And I loved football. I still love football. It's a wonderful game full of hope and excitement. Expectations are sometimes delivered more often it's huge disappointment which is experienced.

Over the years - football has still got spadesful of excitement. These days it's possible to watch live football pretty well every day of the week. But Football has become a huge business.

On TV it's possible to watch players who - well - we have to say it - cheat!

Any advantage gained it seems is considered fair enough. To fall over without being fouled - especially in the penalty area can gain a team a goal. Many call



this diving.

Cheating doesn't happen all the time - and the Premier League is considered one of the best in the world if not THE best.

However, I wanted to see if the magic of football is still there, when the money and expectation of the Premier League is taken away. I wanted to see a team who play at what is called "grass roots" level - there for the enjoyment of the game and the involvement of their community, not for the attention and glamour of the Premier League.

What Makes a Good Football Match or Team?



The players - obviously. Players have to train hard and have high levels of ability, skill and commitment

The manager - naturally. The manager needs to be able to understand the qualities of his or her own team and create a team selection and tactics to do the best against their opposition.

The supporters - they are right there. Players will come and go - but most people who support a team - properly support a team - support them for life. Through the ups and downs no matter how successful or unsuccessful your team might be.



I received an invitation from a quite wonderful football team who are well away from the spotlight and glare of the Premier League. Enormous thanks to Colwyn Bay Football Club and their Director of Football Neil Coverley for their welcome and generosity of spirit.

There has to be one key ingredient that is so vital: Sportsmanship!

That is something where - the strongest motivation is to win - but to win well by training hard, doing one's best - working together as a team. Doing runs for the team that might not get the glory of a goal - but might pull a defender away from the team striker and give him a little more space to get a shot away. Blocking a shot at your own goal even though it might be painful. Running hard to get in that last gasp tackle!



Yes - that's sportsmanship - or at least a good amount of it. But it doesn't quite complete the sportsmanship circle.

There's the other hugely important ingredient.

Respect!

Respect for your competitor. So that you understand you are trying to beat these guys - but you also know **they, too** have been trying all week - even though they



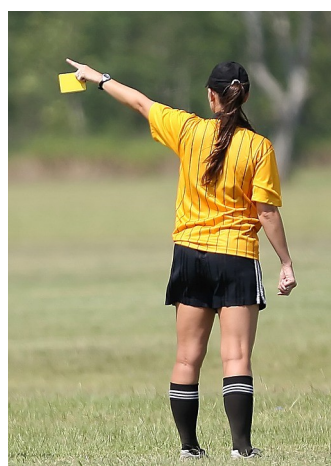
have families and day jobs to go to. They've also put the time in to be the best they can be. And that's worthy of everybody's respect.

My Understanding of the Magic of Football.

Real football - where the true magic of the game still exists is about going head to head, fairly. Getting ahead of the opposition with guile, determination, hard work, good preparation - and yes a little magical element of a bit of luck. A little "rub of the green" as some might refer to this luck.

One last slice of the sportsmanship "pie" which is not to be ignored. Quite the opposite - it's a massively important element of the true magic: Respect for the referee.

Respect the Ref!



It's a tough job being a referee in any sport. All too often on television we see referees being surrounded by players barely disguising their anger at decisions made.

Any decision made by a ref is going to make at least half of the people present unhappy in some way.

The very best referees form good relationships with the players, keep a sense of humour and carry out their duties with integrity, respect for players and with



good communication.

These days we have video referees for top games, but at local sports fields around the country the referee has the traditional way of making judgements. Using their eyes and ears to what is happening on the pitch.

The vast majority of referees do a wonderful job keeping the beautiful game flowing at all levels of the sport with honesty and enthusiasm. For the good of the game, it's vital that players and fans show respect for the decisions of the referee.

Match Day

Match day. It was an evening game Colwyn Bay versus Porthmadog in The Cymru North league in Wales.



Colwyn Bay were the clear favourites for the match. They were playing at home and had been playing well in their previous matches. Porthmadog had lost several of their recent matches and had been far from their best. They had recently appointed a new manager.

The welcome at Colwyn Bay was terrific. The guys at the small turnstiles were friendly and encouraging. I was directed to the Community Function Room area



to meet up with the terrific Director of Football Neil Coverley who had been expecting me.

Neil had been really helpful in the run up to the match, a really strong sense of wanting to demonstrate a strong community spirit in a strong community team.

He gave me the instructions I needed to get set up.

As I was nearly ready, having set up for the game - the club stewards came across to check everything was good for me. Many of the local supporters had a good chat and told me about their club and how they enjoyed attending the games.

Already Colwyn Bay had ticked the “Brilliant Community Team Spirit” box for me.

That’s a great start.

Groundsman Elfyn Jones had the pitch in great condition given the recent run of poor weather proving again that the real team at any club is more than just the 11 players on the pitch.



Kick off time approached; the players came out onto the pitch led by the referee. The supporters enthusiastically cheered the teams. The crowd shouted their support throughout the evening! Another community tick.

The ref’s whistle blew, and the game got underway.

Some early pressure from Porthmadog down the left led to a cross and a



snatched shot which was very well saved by keeper Andy Coughlin.

More pressure from Porthmadog was countered by some robust defending from the home team.

(Video of match)

A bursting run down the Porthmadog right flank followed by a poked shot led to another terrific save from the outstretched Coughlin. He had really been keeping the team in the game to that point.

The Bay broke down the left and got a shot away. It was comfortably saved by the Porthmadog keeper. 0-0. Colwyn Bay were working hard as a team and getting back into the match.

An excellent run down the left from his own half by Daz Thornton followed by a well-placed cross into the box was easily converted by a willing Mitch Bryant to score from the centre. The supporters roared their delight. The team celebrated on the pitch. 1-0 to Colwyn Bay.

Later in the half, following good tracking, Alex Downes dispossessed the Porthmadog defender, but his 30-yard shot struck the bar and went over. Great play - but that might prove to be a costly miss. That was good battling determination by Downes.

Further into the half, The Bay conceded a dangerous looking free kick on the edge of the penalty area.

The ball was squeezed through a crowded box and tucked away for the equaliser at the back post by Iddon Price for Porthmadog. The match was now on a knife edge and could go either way.

The teams ended the half all square. It was Colwyn Bay 1 Porthmadog 1.

The second half got underway with both teams hoping to get a winning goal.

Pressure down the left again, 9 minutes into the second half and the incident which changed the whole game. A Porthmadog player cut into the penalty area



and fell under the pressure of the challenge from Colwyn Bay. The referee immediately pointed to the spot. It was a penalty.

Let's have a closer look at that incident. The crowd clearly weren't happy. They didn't think it was a penalty at all. What do you think - was that a penalty or not?

Striker Ilan ap Gareth stepped up and calmly struck the ball home. It was 2 -1 to Porthmadog. This wasn't what the fans had expected at the start of the game.

With no further goals the match ended 2-1 and an unusual and unlikely result left the home fans disappointed.



I spoke to captain Daz Thornton after the match and asked him about the team performance, his role in the game as captain and the penalty incident.

(Video of Interview)

“Yeah, I mean, look, we all know we can do better. We played in spells, but for a club like this with the players we’ve got, spells are not enough. As we’ve seen today if we play good, we played okay in spells but over the majority of the game, I’d say, you know, they deserved to win.”

“The way that we play is we need eleven captains out there. And to be effective. When you have that armband there’s a little element of expectation. You have to lead by example. You have to go that extra yard. And it’s more do as I do not do as I say. So you can’t really expect, the other full back (with me playing full back today) I can’t expect Alex to go and do things that I wouldn’t be doing.”



“The decision today didn’t go our way when they got a penalty. It’s my job then to manage the lads in terms of getting on his case because ultimately, you know, you’ve got to be human, you’ve got to be on their side to an extent. The way I manage the referees.. polite, befriend them, understand they make mistakes. Ask them questions not shout at them. I said to the referee there – when he gives the penalty I said it’s not a penalty – you can see it’s not a penalty. He believed it was. Our players were around him. I’ve just had to push everyone away. They’ve got to carry on with the game. He’s not going to change his mind.

All I did say to him at the end was, look, just look at the replay. If you made a mistake, hold your hands up if you’ve made a mistake, as I do, as everyone does. Unfortunately for them, they’re like goalkeepers. They make a mistake it stands out. It’s a game of opinions. In that incident, his opinion was that it was a penalty.”

Great words and a superb attitude there from Thornton.

Conclusion After an Enjoyable Evening of Football.

I asked myself the question before I visited - was the magic of football still alive?

Colwyn Bay were clearly unhappy with their own performance. Manager Craig Hogg conceded that the team hadn’t done themselves justice and generously and sportingly acknowledged the performance of Porthmadog and their new manager.



Colwyn Bay Manager: Craig Hogg



For me, the conclusion was really very straightforward.

Colwyn Bay are a wonderful community club with a great spirit, a great attitude and brilliant fans. It's very clear they are really trying to do their best for their local area and their fans.

The players, whilst not at their best on the evening were up against a reinvigorated opposition and a new manager. Both teams set about the game with genuine sportsmanship and mutual respect.

There were some terrific team and individual moments of football. The highlights for me were two great saves from keeper Coughlin and the brilliant run from defence by Thornton resulting in the Colwyn Bay goal.

Off the pitch the fans' support was excellent for Colwyn Bay and it was a shame they didn't have a win to celebrate.

The real highlight of the evening for me, though, was the attitude highlighted by the stand in captain. For him the referee made a mistake - but he was clear with his team that we are all human and mistakes happen. That is a superb attitude and terrific example.

In answer to the question - is the magic of football still alive at clubs aware from the glamour of the Premier League - the answer is clear and unequivocal. Yes! Absolutely! Without a shadow of doubt!

Sportsmanship, and the magic of football are most certainly alive and kicking and are on show at Four Crosses Construction Arena. It was a heart-warming and wonderful experience - despite the result.

If you wish to see real football - go to your local club. If you live near Colwyn Bay - go and watch them. You won't be sorry! You will unquestionably be made to feel very, very welcome!



The Bible Says

2 Timothy 2:5 says: “And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.”

Let's Pray

Father in heaven. We pray for athletes across the world. Help them to perform fairly and to the highest standards. Help them always to remember their integrity and fairness.

Let winning, for them, be a true win with real value.

Let them be generous and compassionate in defeat

Putting It Into Practice

You're in charge of FIFA, the world organisation for football. You have the opportunity to rewrite some of the rules. To ensure fairness in all matches decide what yellow cards will now be given for and also what red cards (send off) will be given for.

Try to make the sport the best it can be by your decisions.

Exit of Pupils

A thought provoking slideshow of the key issues raised in the assembly about the theme of Football for the pupils to exit assembly to (10 minutes)



Collective Worship and Putting it into Practice for the Rest of the Week

Day 2

Dear God.

We pray for professional athletes across the world. May they set a great positive example to their fans by training hard and performing to the best of their ability using only fair means.

Design a poster to “Kick Racism Out” of Football. Create a powerful short message to include in your poster and illustrate it to gain as much attention as possible from your audience.

Day 3

Father in Heaven.

We ask for good health. Let us learnt o exercise well and train to keep our bodies fit, flexible and healthy.

Work in a group of about four people. Suggest changes to the rules of football that you would like to see implemented. Explain what benefits would come from your suggested changes. Try to find about two rule changes each.



Day 4

Loving Father,

We pray for good guidance to sports and their athletes from the international bodies who look after their interests such as F.I.F.A. Guide them to always show great example to sports men and women and to expect goods example from them.

Write a report on a football match (or other sport) that you have seen recently. Try and write it in a style that explains the events in the order that they occurred. What were the highlights of the match and what aspects disappointed you? Try to find pictures from the game on the internet.

Day 5

Dear God,

We pray for our favourite teams and sports men and women. Thank you for the great joy and happiness that comes from watching and participating in these sports. Help us to be generous when we win and level headed when we lose!

The Football Association are starting a campaign to treat referees across the country with respect. They are seeking five eye catching phrases to set out how people should interact with referees. Find your five phrases. (For example "talk, don't shout!")

