

FOOTBALL... IT'S A LOAD OF OLD

Are you thinking I'm going to say 'Balls', well you'd be wrong!

Football is a load of emotion, a load of anguish and a load of excitement. It is a journey that can take you to the highest heaven or a hell on earth that leaves you on the brink of destruction. I've seen grown men cry in ecstasy and weep in painful desperation as one moment leaves them on the opposing ends human excess.

What is it that makes this sport of football so overwhelmingly powerful in many of our day to day lives?

I started off on the journey in the late 1960's. I was an Arsenal fan before I knew I was an Arsenal fan, but the first games I remember were Manchester United V Benfica, Leicester City V Manchester City, and latterly Chelsea v Leeds.

Its always the same story when you talk to a fan. They fall in love with the game and have a relationship with their team. That relationship can be totally loyal for some, others try a few partners out first and finally settle on the one for them.

Some prefer the razzmatazz of the Premier League and perhaps have the taste in partners that reflects that; others prefer the girl next door and avoid the glitz like the plague. I wonder how that really works in the coupling ethos of life, probably best left alone to maintain any hope of continuing friendships!

The current COVID crisis has really showed what is truly valued in our society. As the crisis gathered pace and the need for a vaccine became critical it didn't take long for people to turn to what was important did it? The question changed over the summer from when will have a vaccine to when will we have football back?

Once we had established that we could have football back and had enjoyed a few weeks of it, we then started to ask the most serious question. When will we have a vaccine? No, it was when can we have fans back in the stadium? The big question in the commons was how can you deny people the right to watch football at a time like this; and when will we have a vaccine for COVID...so as we can get back and watch football.

Bill Shankly once said football was a more important matter than life or death, COVID has proved his point entirely. We are all obsessed with chasing the spherical object, we are obsessed by combinations of colours and most obsessed of all by the need to watch it and talk about it as a pathological and physiological necessity. If oxygen is vital then these last few months have proved that football runs it close.

As I reflect on a seven months that has turned the world upside down and made us despair and fear in equal measures, a great deal of my enjoyment has been derided from football being back. I can watch it live, watch on TV and listen to it on the radio. I can again have conversations with friends about matches and I don't have to pretend that I'm interested in how the gardens looking.

This period has made me realise even more that not all addiction is substance based and that behavioural needs are just as overwhelming and controlling as anything found in the drugs world. Is it less damaging? Of course it is; I mean you don't see football players, managers and supporters ruining their mental and physical health just to feed their football addiction do you? Well do you?

So then, what is football? Its just a load of blooming life , a lovely, frenzied and insane life and long may it stay like that?

By the way has anyone found a vaccine yet, be good if they did because we could get football back properly!

Written by Tony Madden