



The Not Ungood Soccer Manager

by Richard Rewell

'I am not happy, but I'm not unhappy about it. The winger's got three left feet. I'm as sick as a parrot. The ref was as bent as a concrete parachute.' Am I quoting Shakespeare, Bacon, Marlow? Noel Coward perhaps? No. Micky Smart. Remember him?

Only a few years ago Micky regularly featured on football TV and radio shows together with the sport and scandal pages of our newspapers. An inept player in his day he incredibly ingratiated himself into the world of football management to the shock and horror of the football community. For twenty years he somehow plied his trade in the primaeval casserole that was the lower leagues of English professional football where he ingloriously slid from club to club leaving behind him chaos, bankruptcy and nearly always relegation.

Dressed in his trademark light blue suits all of which must have been tailored by structural engineers – how else did his trousers stay up as they bravely clung to his gigantic beer belly, while atop his head the infamous dyed blond mullet haircut and around his person enough gold to rival the Inca kings of old Peru. And let us not forget his skin: orange in colour and texture.

It was when Micky was spiralling downwards in his career and managing or was it mismanaging Eastbourne Borough that his life changed for what he would term the 'not ungood'.

Not only had the Borough lost more than thirty games and were doomed to slip into some lowly league when he was caught syphoning the club's sponsorship money into his own account and was duly imprisoned where he was befriended by the infamous terrorist 'Carlos The Jackal' from whom he learnt very passable Spanish.

10 clubs 10 sackings, 8 divorces, debts of just under a million, a prison record, and out of work. No one in football wanted him when he was released, in fact one club chairman said of Micky "He's as welcome as an SS guard would be turning up at a bar-mitzvah."

So, no wonder I was stunned, as was everyone else on our sports desk when we found out that Micky was leaving the country.

Micky's orange faced loomed out of the TV screen as my colleagues and I watched his interview in the convivial atmosphere of the Cheshire Cheese pub.

"I'm not ungood you know it's that people don't appreciate me. So, I'm off." Said Micky. "I'm going to be a football explorer. Like Scott of the Sahara crossing Everest. I'm going to Deportivo Capiata."

"Who?" we screamed at the TV.

"They're in the Paraguayan third division" said Micky winding up his interview.

And off he flew. To more failure, sackings, mis-quotes and probable obscurity in a remote corner of Paraguay. The poor Paraguayans didn't deserve this export from Britannia especially the little club of Deportivo Capiata.

But we were all wrong. Micky became an instant hit with the Paraguayans after conning them that he had been Pep Guardiola's mentor and releasing every day one of his mis-quotes: in Spanish of course. His novelty value rocketed, money poured into the club, they started to buy good players and success followed.

I caught "This player's so good my pet anaconda wants to cuddle him." When it was aired over here only a year ago just after his team won the Paraguayan cup. Along with 'My team used the pitch like a canvas and painted a masterpiece of football. Like that bloke who painted the Vatican's ceiling. Michael DiCaprico.'

We did a telephone interview with him yesterday at the end of which he said

"I've cleared me debts, won the cup, learnt Spanish, I'm bipolar (he meant bilingual), then slyly added, "I'm not ungood am I Richard?"

Horrified I heard myself say, "You're not an unfailure," and swiftly resigned from my newspaper.