

Guru Referees - England v Scotland

This would have been in 1973 or 1974. About two or three years before Chinmoy Lions was founded.

Guru planned a trip to England and Wales and a van load of Scots drove down to London to see him. There was a weekend event (proto-Joy weekend) in London and then some of us travelled with Guru across southern England and Wales and finished up in Swansea.

On the day after we arrived there was a picnic in a park, near where Guru was staying, knowing how much Guru liked football the suggestion was made that we should play a game. This quickly escalated into calls for a full international as the two sides seemed fairly evenly matched.

Of course we wanted Guru to play, but, while he was happy to see this International match-up take place, Guru said he would rather referee than take part.

In all there were only about thirty or forty disciples in London and the game was a very low-key affair - jackets for goalposts and perhaps eight or nine a-side. I think it's fair to say that most of the players just wanted to be seen by Guru. It was just something to do. But for me and one or two others it was, of course, a deadly serious matter.

Since no-one else was interested I became the 'captain' of the Scottish team and I picked the side and gave the team talk. A talk in which exhorted my team-mates not to eat lunch before the game. A winning strategy, I felt.

Before starting the match Guru called the two captains together to shake hands and I discovered that the English captain was an English disciple who had just moved back to London from New York. Once the match started Guru spent his time walking up and down the edge of the field taking in the styles (or the lack thereof) of all the different players on view.

Now, the way an informal game like this is set up, all the good players - or, at least, the players who think they are any good - play in forward positions and the less good players shore up what passes for the defence.

Since English captain elected to play in goal, this meant that he was either extremely selfless or not very good. Shortly after the kick-off, he dropped an easy shot from one of my team. And I started to think, that the answer was - not very good. However he barked orders and told players to move around the field and did a very good job of bossing his team-mates, so he was certainly committed.

Then, I noticed that this captain had a major drawback as a goalkeeper - he couldn't kick the ball from hand. Every time he had the ball he would pretend to kick it upfield and then roll the ball out to one of his players. My opinion of him then changed from 'not very good' to 'completely useless' - and that gave me a lot of confidence.

Inevitably the feint and roll out trick back-fired. The ball was rolled out to a guy who was probably meditating on Guru. I was on it like the proverbial wolf on the fold.

I intercepted the ball and ran towards the English goal. It was an easy shot for the opening goal. I just slipped it passed him and punched the air.

England 0 Scotland 1

But before I could receive plaudits from my team-mates. The voice of the English goalkeeper was heard loud and clear. 'Bad luck, just past the post.' I couldn't believe my ears. Post, what post! There was only a bundle of jackets and the ball passed a metre (at least) inside them.

Perfidious Albion. In an instant all the numberless injustices perpetrated by the English on the Scots flashed through my mind. This couldn't be, I had to appeal to a higher power.

Now this higher power, at that precise moment, wasn't my Guru, he wasn't the Lord of the Universe, he wasn't the Avatar of the Era. He was the referee and therefore the legitimate object of my protestations!

This was a radical decision on my part, it has to be understood that I had never spoken to Guru. Never initiated a conversation. Guru had, rarely, spoken to me and when he had, I had answered in words on one syllable or just smiled. But this was football.

I ran straight to Guru and managed to stop myself only about two feet away from him. I was mad (probably in all senses of the word). I screamed at Guru - 'That was a goal, it was A GOAL, it was miles inside the 'post'. It was a GREAT SHOT! It was a GO-O-O-O-O-AL. Looking back, at that precise moment in time I fear I may have lacked a little decorum.

Now fortunately Guru had prepared himself for this moment, over many lifetimes, destroying ignorance, killing asuras, surpassing the Cosmic Gods. He was more than ready for this outburst. He smiled his imperturbable smile. Then he said - loud enough for the English goalkeeper to hear him - 'Yes, it was a goal'.

England 0 Scotland 1 (confirmed)

I ran back, ecstatic to my team-mates. However, I had miscalculated the effect of my actions on them. None of them wanted to make eye-contact and one of them whispered to me. 'You know that you were shouting at Guru'.

But I was unaffected. Justice was done - and if the Heavens had fallen it was on the English goalie - not me.

I was delighted and showed it by scoring a completely uncontentious second goal. Eventually we ran out winners 4-3. Losing a couple of goals late on as more and more of my players slipped away for some lunch causing me deep regret that I hadn't covered more options during my team talk.

Looking back, I can't imagine how I had the nerve to speak to Guru like that, I hold on to the fact that I was being completely sincere in expressing my feelings and - well - it was a football match.

Whenever I think about it though, I can't help but shudder - just before I smile.