

## "THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH"



The iconic Scottish manager of Liverpool FC during the 60's and 70's, Bill Shankly is famously reputed to have told a TV interviewer: **"Football is not a matter of life and death.....it's more important than that!"**

When you remember that the Liverpool directors had to stop the cremated remains of the club's fans being scattered at the Kop end of Anfield because it was affecting the quality of the pitch, you suddenly realise that Shankly may not have been joking!



In fact, to judge by the hype surrounding the current World Cup being held in South Africa, Shankly may have been guilty of a gross understatement....

Take the betting industry. William Spain of Marketwatch, speculates on the possibility that "in what could well turn out to be the biggest gambling event in history, untold billions in scores of different currencies will change hands through everything from British betting shops to Las Vegas sports books to office pools, handshakes and the worldwide Web by the time that the 2010 World Cup comes to a close". A spokesman for William Hill adds that "almost by definition, turnover increases exponentially every 4 years. We are very optimistic that there will be 1 billion or more pounds bet with British bookmakers". The 'a la carte' menu of possible bets only serves to increase the attractiveness of and appetite for a wager. Where bets used to be placed on what colour David Beckham's hair would be, now the choice is infinite – ranging from what player is likely to be the first seriously injured, to the time at which the first corner kick will be awarded.



Or take the problem of absenteeism. Some employers are dreading England advancing to the later stages of the competition. Why? Because judging by behaviour during previous World Cups, they anticipate vastly inflated numbers of employees reporting sick in order to watch England play. Many organisations are trying to defuse the problem by setting up TV's in the workplace.



And when it's all over? Even if England win? How long will the "feel-good factor" last? For most, it will die with the closing ceremony. Why? Because Bill Shankly was wrong. Life is more than entertainment.....even football.

Shankly - Wrong

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