

# How to bluff your way to the top of the game

## Ever wanted to play in the Premiership? Just follow my guide to looking the part

Moritz Volz

Leddy is a good friend of mine and my “Goal Celebration Coach”, so he hasn’t had a lot to do lately. But being the great football philosopher that he is, he recently got to thinking about another aspect of the game that has rarely been studied. While endless column inches are devoted to discussing the rules of football, what about all of the unwritten rules that virtually all of us professionals obey without question? It’s a subject that had us talking for hours, ending our last coaching session in the park in the process. So I thought I’d share our findings with you, the good readers of *The Times* — and Leddy, I promise I’ll perfect the Mick Channon windmill by next time. . .

### **Before kick-off**

- Any player being filmed leaving a team bus must ensure that he is wearing headphones and carrying a small Louis Vuitton wash bag.
- Players who once represented the same club must stop and chat animatedly to each other in the tunnel as they wait to come out, even if they never really spoke to each other when they played together.
- On the day of a cup final, players must walk on to the pitch in their club suit approximately 1½ hours before kick-off and touch the turf to make sure it is just like all the other grass they play on every week. At least one player must pick some and throw it in the air to gauge the wind direction even though it is May, very still, and, therefore, very unlikely to affect anything.

## **Scoring**

- If a player mishits a good chance, he must look down and carefully examine the pitch, maybe even treading back in some turf, so that everyone knows he got a bad bounce. If it is a televised game, he should continually blow mucus out of his nose as the camera tracks him back to his own half.
- When a player makes a great assist only to see a teammate tap the ball in, he must stand well away from the celebrating players and wait for them to come over and individually congratulate him.

## **Corners and throw-ins**

- All throw-ins must be taken at least ten yards farther up the pitch than where the ball went out. The referee is allowed to tell the player off, but only when he has exceeded ten yards.
- All corner takers must push the corner flag to one side, regardless of whether it gets in the way. They must also raise a hand before taking the kick, irrelevant of where they intend to send the ball.

## **Free kicks**

- Two or more players should always dispute who will take a free kick, even though they have spent an entire week on the training ground working out who will take them.
- When a player has conceded a free kick, he must pick up the ball and run several yards before dropping it behind him without looking. When a free kick is awarded and the referee places the ball in the required spot, it is essential to pick it up and place it down again at least six inches further forward, ideally with a backspin motion.

## **Offside**

- When a player is judged offside and still shoots but doesn't score, he must pretend he knew it was offside all along and didn't really try to score at all. On the other hand, if he does score, he must act "outraged" and "robbed".
- Any striker who is more than five yards offside must still either wag a finger or launch a tirade of expletives at the

flag-bearing official.

### **Substitutions and injuries**

- A player leaving the pitch on a stretcher must always be applauded, while players with equally serious injuries who are helped off by the physio must be booed.
- When water bottles are thrown on to the pitch while a teammate is receiving treatment, players must always squirt some out on to the grass before taking a sip.
- Players warming up along the touchline must always put their hands behind their backs and kick their heels up to touch them, even though they never do this in training or at any other time.

### **Goalkeepers**

- Before kick-off, goalkeepers should always hang from the crossbar to check it does not have any cracks in it.
- Keepers must use the special adhesive power of saliva by spitting into their gloves as much as possible during games. They should also kick the soles of their boots against the post at least three times in each half.
- Goalkeepers should sprint into the opposition penalty box for injury-time corners, even if they have never connected with a header in their life.

### **Managers**

- Any manager facing lower-league opposition in a cup game must describe the team he is facing as “well organised”.
- Assistant managers must be equipped with a blank piece of paper on which they can pretend to show substitutes the opposition’s tactical formation. In addition, assistants should shout and gesticulate in exactly the same way as the manager, only two seconds later.

### **Officials**

- The referee must only blow for full time when the ball is in mid-air after a long goal kick.

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— The fourth official must always check a substitute's studs before he comes on, even though none of the studs of the players on the pitch were checked. It should be noted that no substitute in the history of football has ever been caught wearing "inappropriate studs" and no substitute has ever been refused access to the field of play because of a "stud check".

— Fourth officials should always be of a smiling disposition when trying to calm infuriated managers back into the dugout.

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