



World Soccer Daily statement, July 16, 2009

World Soccer daily is a fan forum. It is the only Daily show in America that covers the beautiful game and has been at the forefront of covering the recent success of the US team in the Confederations Cup as well as the World Game. It is a place for fans and a number of well-respected football experts from around the globe. However, there has been a recent controversy that requires more formal clarification.

I want to be clear that I offered a sincere apology that was published on the WSD website. My reference to “putting this crap to bed” and my obvious anger was motivated by the hatred, racism and threats aimed at my family and me by some of those who are following this boycott. The vile anti-semitic and racist communication I have received for obvious reasons means I have legitimate anger at the organizers of the boycott, those who have helped to stoke the flames of hatred and those people who have acted upon it.

As for screwing up the paper the apology was written on, that is a regular practice. I even do it at times after I read spots for sponsors. Several presenters in the US that I admire also toss what they are reading when they are done. Among them are David Letterman and Keith Olbermann. I apologize to the victim’s families if either my anger about the boycott or my standard practice made them feel my apology was anything less than sincere.

In response to your query I will clarify my position on the Hillsborough tragedy. I made some statements I honestly felt were consistent with the best available accounts of what happened that terrible day. I thought my statements were correct and were made in order to offer my concern for the dead and in the context of the tragedy in the Ivory Coast. On further examination, I made a series of claims that were incorrect. I claimed on air there were 6 to 8 thousand ticketless fans and I also claimed those fans were the main cause of the tragedy. I did not see my statement that there was “shared responsibility” for the incident as in contradiction with the best available evidence.

Those claims were incorrect and obviously hurtful to the victims of the tragedy. While there were a small number of ticketless fans there that fateful day, my closer reading of the Taylor report leads me to believe that the incident could have occurred regardless of their presence. The Taylor report does however say that such fans were not helpful. Thus, my claim that Liverpool fans share responsibility was on one hand misunderstood as hatred of the victims, and was not meant to suggest that Liverpool fans intentionally caused the incident or that anyone who was killed or injured that day was anything but

a victim. The tragedy could have occurred with or without ticketless fans as the central problem was the issue of stadium design, crowd control procedures and the tragic actions of authorities responsible for public safety that day. At the same time, I do feel that as fans we have to always do our level best to look after one another and I applaud the many heroes that day who attempted to aid those who were trapped in the crush.

As I said in my apology, the events “I am referring to could have happened to any club, in any sport, in any country at any public gathering. This is proved by events in the Ivory Coast recently as well as in South America, Ghana, the old Soviet Union etc...”

As to the question of sponsors, unfortunately some have left the show. Some have left us because of the boycott, others for business reasons. Undoubtedly innocents have been harmed by the boycott as some supporters of WSD have grown angry with sponsors who have given in to the boycott and those who support the show are targeted by some Liverpool fans. This is an unfortunate product of the boycott and I wish it were otherwise. While their quarrel is with me, those who are being harmed go far beyond me. The show continues on and despite my heartfelt apology so does the boycott. It is unfortunate and we hope those sponsors may someday return and we have also developed new partnerships with companies that are great for the World Soccer Daily community.

The current demand of the leader of the boycott is that I accept a lifetime ban from broadcasting. Effectively depriving me of the ability to make a living. This along with the fact that Mel Abshier and the organizers of the boycott have been cavalier about unleashing this level of hate directed at me and family, leaves me to question the motives of the boycott leaders. I do not honestly believe there is much despite an impractical lifetime ban, I can do to satisfy Abshier and those who have turned this into a personal vendetta that has inspired some of the racist hatred and threats aimed at me and now the Jewish community.

Liverpool fans are now and have always been a welcome part of the World Soccer Daily Community. Many are still listening and supporting the show in spite of the boycott. Others have expressed disgust at the level of hatred unleashed online and on message boards associated with the club. We welcome all of those who reject hate.

I hope this clarifies my position on Hillsborough and the boycott. I have concluded that it is best for the show and our community to avoid discussion of the boycott on air and to avoid in the future discussing Hillsborough. At the same time, World Soccer Daily is an open forum for fans of the game, where we welcome disagreements with the hosts or anyone else. We hope to maintain it as a free space where fans from America and all over the world, can discuss the game and issues around it and express their opinions even unpopular ones without fear of being targeted by boycotts, threats or racism.