

## IT HAPPENED TWO DAYS AGO

Monday morning, 5.30am. The alarm rang as usual, but Frank had not needed it, as once again he had had a disturbed night thinking about the events of Saturday afternoon. He had become a star on the football field, as his last minute winning goal had secured promotion for his team, United, and as a consequence of their loss, their deadly rivals, Rovers, were demoted.

Why should he still be so concerned? He attributed it to the way in which he had been brought up as a young boy: "always be truthful and don't do anything 'naughty.'" And, of course, that's just what did happen on Saturday when he scored that goal! Naughty! His mind kept going over those last few minutes: the cross had come over from the right wing and he had been surrounded by Rovers players, but somehow the ball came through to him and with his right hand at his side he had eased the ball on to his right foot which then conveyed the ball into the Rovers' net. Because of the surrounding Rovers' players, the referee, who was behind him on his left hand side, had not seen his hand's movement and neither had the linesman. Some of the Rovers team appealed for hand ball but they were waved away and the goal stood. Seconds later the final whistle was blown.

He could not dismiss from his mind his act of what was 'foul play'.

As he dressed and got ready for work, he thought about the local newspaper which always brought out a small edition on Mondays devoted to local sports events over the weekend. Frank hoped that their football reporter, who was known to be quite critical in his accounts of soccer games, had been like the referee and had not seen his hand movement. If it were to be reported then he would be pilloried in the neighbourhood.

On his way to work he bought a copy of the newspaper, and quickly scanned the football matches accounts: thankfully, apart from mentioning him as scoring the winning goal that brought the promotion for United, there was nothing to say that his hand ball had escaped the eyes of the referee. He felt greatly relieved - could the silence of his 'sin' be maintained?

At work he received a fairly nonchalant congratulation on United's winning match and the promotion that went with it, but not everyone was aware that it was he who had scored the winning goal or how it had been achieved.

It was the custom at United to meet every Monday evening following the previous Saturday's match to have what was called "A Sociable Inquest" covering the match, to discuss what went right, and, of course what did not, and with regard to the latter, how could improvements be made. Alcoholic beverages were always available for these Monday evenings. Frank expected that in view of their promotion, there would not be too much negativity in the conversations.

The Club's car park was almost full when Frank arrived. As he opened the Club

House door he was greeted by a loud chorus of "Hail Maradona Frank!" A pint of beer was thrust into his hands and the Club Couch said, "If Maradona can win the World Cup for Brazil in 1986 with his hand, here's to you, Frank, who gained us promotion with your hand this weekend!"

At this welcome, Frank's 'conscience' disappeared: he was seen as being in good international company, and such a hand ball incident was obviously meant to be taken as 'just part of the game that you got away with.'

Frank slept better that night, thinking positively of the opposing teams that next season would bring.

***Peter Smith***

### It Happened Two Days Ago

Said Mary, I would like you to know  
That it happened two evenings ago,  
When to the hotel we went,  
On his knees David bent:  
Now I've an engagement ring to show!"

*Peter Smith*