

# BBC Learning English

## 6 Minute English

4 April 2013

*Do sport and politics mix?*



**Rob:** Hello, I'm Rob and this is 6 Minute English and I'm joined this week by Jennifer. Hello Jennifer.

**Jennifer:** Hello Rob.

**Rob:** This week we're discussing sport and politics and questioning if the two subjects mix - should they influence each other? We'll also be looking at some words and phrases linked to these issues. I know Jen is a bit of a sports fan and you support a well-known football club don't you?

**Jennifer:** Yes I do. Sunderland Association Football Club based in the north east of England.

**Rob:** Of course Sunderland football club has been in the news because of the political views of its new manager. More on that in a moment, but shall we start with a question?

Now you will know Sunderland football club formed in 1879 but it's not the world's oldest club – do you know which is the world's oldest football club? Is it:

- a) Sheffield FC
- b) Manchester United
- c) Blackburn Rovers

**Jennifer:** I'll go for a) Sheffield FC.

**Rob:** Well, I'll let you know the answer at the end of the programme. But now let's **kick off** - or make a start with our discussion about sports and politics. The British football club, Sunderland, has had a number of recent poor results and this has led to the appointment of a new manager called Paolo di Canio – but his new role has become **a political football**.

**Jennifer:** That's a good phrase – you mean it's become an issue that is continually being debated but left unresolved. You could say it's an issue that gets kicked around – like

a football! And it's an issue not because of his sporting expertise, but because of his political viewpoint.

**Rob:** Of course having a new manager in any situation can be a real **game-changer**. In other words, introducing someone new to a situation can change the performance of what you are trying to do. In this case, it's hoped Paolo di Canio will change the fortunes of – or improve the situation – for Sunderland.

**Jennifer:** Ah well, that's a good thing but it's the issue about his political views that most people seem to be talking about. Some people are uncomfortable about his appointment because they feel someone with his views is not good for the club. Let's find out exactly what his political views are from BBC reporter, Tom Esslemont:

**Tom Esslemont, BBC reporter:**

*He doesn't hide his fascist stance. While a player nearly eight years ago, di Canio gave a number of Nazi salutes to Lazio fans. That appears to be the reason why David Miliband, resigned from Sunderland's board following Di Canio's appointment.*

**Rob:** So Tom Esslemont describes Paolo di Canio's stance, or his political view, as fascist. So he supports an extreme right-wing ideology, or political view – and he's been accused of praising Mussolini and has been seen giving Nazi salutes.

**Jennifer:** So that's why the politician, David Miliband, from the left-wing British Labour Party has given up, or resigned from, the football club's management team. He doesn't agree with the views of Paolo di Canio.

**Rob:** But should sport be a place for **playing politics**? In other words, should sport be used for expressing and arguing over political viewpoints?

**Jennifer:** Well one fear is that his fascist viewpoint means he is a racist – so he doesn't respect people from backgrounds other than his own. And this could discourage some people from going to see a match. Racism in football is something people want **to stamp out** – or stop.

**Rob:** Well, being a racist is something Paolo di Canio denies, as we can hear from the BBC's Tom Esslemont. What advice has his supporters offered him?

**Tom Esslemont, BBC reporter:**

*The man himself says being fascist doesn't mean being racist, and the extended arm salute was a gesture among comrades. Those close to di Canio say his appointment at Sunderland*

*will be good for football. But they've also offered him some advice: keep the politics off the pitch.*

**Rob:** So di Canio's friends say he will be good for football and their advice is...

**Jennifer:** ...'keep the politics off the pitch'. Good advice. Well let's hope he **keeps his eye on the ball** – and just concentrates on getting Sunderland football club to win more games.

**Rob:** If not, he might **get the boot** – in other words, the sack! Of course, sport can be a good place to make **a political statement** – it's a place where your views can get noticed. In the 1980 Olympics in Moscow, several countries boycotted – or refused to attend – the games because of Russia's invasion of Afghanistan.

**Jennifer:** Well there's no evidence that Sunderland's new boss will be making any political statements soon. In a recent press conference he said "I don't want to talk about politics because it's not my area. We are not in the Houses of Parliament, we are in a football club. I want to talk about sport. I want to talk about football."

**Rob:** Well let's hope he **plays by the rules** – and his personal views off the pitch do not reflect what takes place on the pitch. But now we've come to the time when we reveal the answer to today's question. Earlier I asked you Jen, do you know which is the world's oldest football club?

**Jennifer:** And I said a) Sheffield FC.

**Rob:** And you are right. The world's oldest football team is Sheffield FC. It formed back in 1857. OK, well, it's almost time to go but before we do, Jen could you remind us of some of the words we have heard today.

**Jennifer:** Yes. We heard:

kick off

a political football

game-changer

playing politics

to stamp out

keeps his eye on the ball

get the boot

a political statement

play by the rules

**Rob:** Thanks Jen. Well, that's all we have time for today. Please join us again soon for 6 Minute English from [bbclearningenglish](http://bbclearningenglish.com).

**Both:** Bye.

## Vocabulary and definitions

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>to kick off</b>                | to begin  |
| <b>a political football</b>       | a political issue that is continually debated but has not yet been resolved           |
| <b>game-changer</b>               | something new that is introduced and completely changes the way something is done     |
| <b>playing politics</b>           | making something into a political issue   |
| <b>to stamp out</b>               | to stop / to get rid of   |
| <b>to keep an eye on the ball</b> | to give your attention to what you should be doing                                    |
| <b>to get the boot</b>            | to be forced to leave your job  |
| <b>a political statement</b>      | an action made to influence a decision or to express a strong feeling about something |
| <b>play by the rules</b>          | to do what is accepted to be the right way of behaving                                |

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