

**KALASHNIKOV KULTUR**

By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

Something for the man with everything

Once upon a time when flat caps were flat and a pie 'n' a pint had nothing to do with Jamie Oliver, football was the people's game. You stood on terraces in the cold and rain watching local lads play in the local mud for the honour of the local side, and never complained. Players were enslaved by the clubs, paid £20 per week and hoped to run a tobacconists or run-down pub when they retired.

Then everything changed and now it is universally acknowledged that a man in possession of an exceedingly large fortune must be in want of a football club. It doesn't really matter what football club, as long as it's available. Roman Abramovich did a bit of a Caesar when he bought Chelsea; he came, he saw, he wrote the cheque. The Glazers bought the only club they'd heard of and the Abu Dhabi moneymen may have thought they were buying Manchester United. And that's before we go anywhere near Wigan.

If you've done three ludicrous things before breakfast then buying a football club over the pre-luncheon drinks probably comes as naturally as breathing. Of course, once you've bought the club the problems begin. Naturally you need to spray your third Ferrari in the club colours, although if they play in pink and lime green you might have problems, and not just of taste.

Next step is the promises, which should be insane enough to win over the fans. You must promise success, more success and demonstrate a slavish devotion to the manager right up to the moment you sack him. It's fantasy football with real people for your unreal fantasies. Once you stood on the terraces and told your mates you could do better. Now you own the club you can stand on the terraces and prove that you can't.

For some people it doesn't stop there. Manchester City's new owners promised to buy the best players, to win the Premiership, the Champions League and the World Series, and half of Manchester believes them. But, back in the 1970s, the old Soviet Union decided to do something similar. They transferred the whole of the national team to Dynamo Kiev. This would mean success in the European Cup for the club and the World Cup for the country. It was almost a stroke of genius, but the next season Dynamo came second in the Russian league.

Absolute beginner

Victoria Davenport, of Durham Road, took up running for all the wrong reasons but now she has run the London Marathon twice. Here, she reveals how she came to terms with getting fit.

As a child and teenager, fat, flabby, without a muscle to my name, I wasn't athletic in the slightest and couldn't have cared less about sports. Annually, I failed to make the grade as a Physically Fit American. In gym class I couldn't pull myself three inches off the ground, or swing from rings or jump a rope. I started smoking at 16, starved myself, and lived on chocolate bars and cookies. I decided to try running for all the wrong reasons: to lose weight and counteract the effects of smoking, allowing me to continue to smoke and to eat junk food.

I was 16 the first time I tried running. It was winter 1967. I drove to the beach, hoping to avoid public humiliation, put out my fag and ran a few steps, looking around to make sure no one could see me. I lasted about three minutes. Gasping for breath, I got back in the car, lit up and tore off home.

I didn't fall in love with running there and then. I never did. It remains an ambivalent relationship, at best. Being young, however, my narcissism had no bounds, and I took up running, mainly to show the world my saintly nature. I was out in all weather, snow storms, rain storms, boiling heat: nothing would dent my self-image as a lithe, fit runner. I continued to smoke two packs a day but since then I've given up. Fitness and fags just don't go together.

When I first tried running I had no idea what to do, what to wear, anything. Today, there

are so many how-tos, where-tos, when-tos, if you are just starting out, or even if you have been exercising for years, that you can feel paralysed. What shoes should I wear? Heart monitor? Watch? To drink or not to drink?

Face it, you're bound to make an idiot of yourself one way or another. Too many layers, too few, too much water, too little: it's impossible not to get it wrong. Which is how you will eventually start to get it right, not through reading books and magazines, but simply through experience. You will learn to listen and learn, and in the process gain the confidence to know what is right for you, not the guy alongside you. But it does mean initially being willing to feel like an idiot. Not that anyone is watching you, as they're probably far more interested in their speed, iPods or looking like a muscle-bound gazelle.

Victoria has succumbed to marathon madness and will be running the New York City marathon in November for Medecins sans Frontiers. Donations are welcomed either through <http://www.justgiving.com/victoriadavenport3>, or cheques payable to MSF or V. Davenport, 21 Durham Road.



Illustration by Victoria Davenport

Challenges ahead for new principal at The Institute

By Vikki Chalmers

Joy Solomon, the new Principal at The Institute in East Finchley, describes adult education as her first love. "It is absolutely my head and my heart," she says. She attributes this feeling to the example set by her father, who had to leave school at 14 when his own father died. Despite this he became a well-educated, erudite man.

"He spent every spare moment studying," she says, "attending numerous part-time adult education courses in colleges and university." Encouraged by her father, Joy developed an avid taste for books, reading six library books a week from a very young age.

Before joining The Institute, Joy worked for a further education college looking after adult education, rising to become Director of Adult Education, then Assistant Principal.

Funding changes

"It is a real privilege to be appointed to The Institute," she says. "There is no doubt that the present situation is a challenge, one for which I feel my experience and perspective is

directly relevant. With emphasis in government funding so altered, the education world is divided into under 19s and over 19s. As a result, The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education has been reporting a general downturn in adult education, with only Skills for Life now eligible for funding.

"In my view, the future for quality Institutes is to work with employers. Another major area for us will be helping adults to seek new directions under the "Train to Gain" scheme.

"As new Principal of the Institute, it is my job to meet the challenges and to turn The Institute's finances round. My arrival, coinciding with our forthcoming centenary, is an

ideal opportunity to celebrate The Institute's past and to get new momentum going for the future."

Vote of confidence

Joy succeeds Fay Naylor, who was Principal for more than 17 years. Fay has retired after guiding The Institute through a major period of growth and development, including the move from Hampstead Garden Suburb to East Finchley. Her faith in The Institute's future was, and is, undiminished. "With a new business plan in place," she says, "I believe the outlook for the future is good." Fay will now have time to pursue other interests, including travel, writing and enjoying long stays in Italy.

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