

“Always steal from the best! “ Tony Pearce

Not everyone knows that I have been an avid QPR football club fan for many years. Although I have been absent for some time – swimming is a sport that consumes you – I managed to escape one Saturday afternoon, when there were no swim meets on of course, and took a trip down to memory lane, the club’s ground, Lofthouse Road. Call it coincidence or fate, but my return to active supporter status seems to have fallen in step with QPR’s change of fortune, and with the club now on the brink of being promoted to the Premiership I wondered whether I was becoming something of a talisman. This spurred me on to attend the club’s Charitable Association’s “Meet the Legends” dinner at the London Hilton recently.

Relieved that “Lounge suits must be worn” meant not having to wear a dickie bow, I managed to find my shirt and tie, had my jacket dry-cleaned, bought a new pair of trousers and got my shoes shined at the little shoe repair shop down the road. I also visited the local barber’s shop for a clean cut shave and a short back and sides haircut. I have never had so many compliments both at school and at the swimming club about my new fashionable haircut!

During the course of a most pleasant evening, much was made of the great work that QPR football club does for the kids of Hammersmith. Knowing the work that our own club, St Paul’s Barnes Swimming Club(together with the St Paul’s School), does in terms of community links for the kids in Hammersmith, I felt deep-down some pride. After dinner, the club’s present Manager, Neil Warnock, took part in a question and answer session. I was very impressed when he indicated that he was enjoying every moment at the club, a club, which has now become very successful, very quicklyand most importantly, it is a very happy club too. Again, I reflected on our own St Paul’s Barnes Swimming Club. At the end of what was a very enjoyable occasion, I happened to see the football impresario Terry Venables and immediately took the opportunity to meet him. For many years I have been a big fan of Terry Venables. It’s funny, I am a swimming coach and he a football coach but it was as if we were talking about the same sport. Whatever the sport you coach, the language of coaching is the same. I mentioned to him that I had stolen some of his lines and used them in my own coaching. Terry admitted, in not so many words, that he had stolen these lines from someone else too. I suspect very strongly that person was the iconic football coach Malcolm Allison who recently, sadly, passed away.

In coaching there is really nothing new, for we all learn, dare I say it, and steal from each other. However, one must remember – always steal from the best! Thanks Tel!



