

ROY OF ~~THE ROVERS~~ UNITED
ROY CARROLL, MANCHESTER UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB (MUFC) AND
THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION (FA) - CASE A

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ABSTRACT

The case provides opportunity to examine an incident in the final minutes of an FA Cup soccer match between Manchester United (MUFC) and their London rivals, Tottenham Hotspur (Spurs), when the ball crossed the MUFC goal line unseen by the referee and his assistants - denying Spurs a win in the lucrative competition. The incident was seen by countless spectators at the match, and was captured by numerous press photographers and by Sky TV cameras. The MUFC goalkeeper, Roy Carroll had clawed the ball from behind the goal line, and carried on playing. The case allows use of various frameworks to provide insight on ethical issues that relate to the behaviour of players, officials, sports teams and sports governing bodies.

BACKGROUND

The Team

Manchester United Football Club (MUFC) is the biggest soccer club in the world. It generates the highest revenues and greatest profits of any soccer club worldwide. It has the biggest global fan base of any soccer club, and its players are drawn from six continents. It plays in competitions sanctioned by the Football Association of England (the FA), such as the FA Barclaycard Premiership (run as a round-robin league) and in the FA Cup (run on a knockout format). In these competitions, it is one of the most successful soccer clubs in England, and from these competitions, it is able to qualify for lucrative next-season Europe-wide competitions where it can add upwards of US\$50m to its income. Since the inception of the Premiership in the early nineties, MUFC had taken the premiership title and honours more often than any other club, and in 1999 had been crowned as European Club Champions for the second time, following a win in the final game against the German club, Bayern Munich. The win brought about the early retirement of its talisman goalkeeper, the Dane, Peter Schmeichel – and, in due course, it was recognised that MUFC's expectations made it difficult to replace him with a player of recognizable and comparable stature.

The Players

An early replacement for Schmeichel in 1999 was Fabien Barthez, the flamboyant, unpredictable and erratic World Cup winning goalkeeper with France. Roy Carroll – Enniskillen born: 1977; Height: 6'2"; Weight: 11st 0lbs – later joined United in 2002 from Wigan Athletic who were then playing in the lower leagues of the English pyramid system. Carroll had already played for the Northern Ireland national team. In 2002/03, he started and finished the season in goal for United, covering for Barthez's injury in early season August, and replacing him in late season April and May after poor performances in the Champions League against Spanish rivals, Real Madrid. Various other injuries to Barthez gave Carroll a number of spells in the first-team at Old Trafford, and he rarely let them down. There were even calls for him to stay as first choice, due to the erratic form of the Frenchman. However, with the arrival of another goalkeeper, Tim Howard, the New Jersey-born, US international and World Cup goalkeeper in July 2003, Carroll found himself sitting on the bench again the following season, apart from a brief run

in the team in 2004. Howard, a survivor of Tourette Syndrome, had arrived as a serious contender for the number 1 spot at Old Trafford, competing with Barthez, Carroll and the Spaniard, Ricardo Lopez. MUFC had also signed a promising keeper, Luke Steel from Peterborough in 2002 at 18 years of age. The England U18 international had cost an initial fee of £500k, which could spiral to £2.5m dependent on his achievements with the team. The surfeit of goalkeeping talent resulted in Steel being loaned to the Coventry City club in Sept 2004, without having made a Premiership appearance. The competition for the goalkeeping place was intense.

Howard was considered to be one of the brightest goalkeeper prospects in the world. His displays in the premier US competition, Major League Soccer - MLS - for the MetroStars, and at the 2003 Confederations Cup with the USA national side cemented Manchester United's interest in him. Despite some problems obtaining a work permit, and which had to be resolved before he could transfer, he signed for United with an initial £1.2 million transfer fee paid to the MetroStars, the stair-cased fee to rise again depending on United's success with him in the team. However, in the subsequent 2004/05 season, Carroll remained first choice for most of the time especially partly because of some poor performances by Howard. However, Carroll's performances had not been perfect, and whilst he had been described as "mostly solid", he, too, had made some high profile and costly errors, particularly against AC Milan in the European Champions League. There was pressure on Carroll to keep his place in the team! There was pressure on Manchester United, and its football manager, Sir Alex Ferguson, to maintain and repeat successes of the recent past!

The FA Cup

Manchester United had won the FA Cup more often than any other team in England. The Cup is organised as a knockout competition and every club affiliated to the FA in England treasures their involvement in the Cup. United, as a Premiership club, join the competition in the Third Round of 64 teams in early January of every year. To win an FA Cup medal in May (the equivalent of a Super Bowl ring) following a run of six victories through semi-finals and final, is the dream of all players. A good run in the FA Cup is always good for morale amongst players, and it also generates welcome revenue for clubs. At United, a successful run in the Cup was taken for granted by the club, its management and the fans! In a typical season, starting in early August and running to the end of June, United would expect to play 36 games in the Premiership, hopefully 6 games to win the FA Cup, and between 6 and 12 games in the European Club Champions league. The club needed a large squad of players – goalkeepers and outfield players - to avoid burnout, to cover for injury and to create competition for team places. Carroll knew that he was not indispensable and that the other keepers were eager to replace him as number one!

The FA Cup Match and the Incident

The stakes and rewards were always high for United and its players. Success in the FA Cup 3rd Round match on the Tuesday evening of January 4th 2005 against old foes, Tottenham Hotspur, would get the New Year off to a good start for players and fans. Going into the last 89th minute of the match, there was no score. If the match ended in a draw, no extra time would be played, and the match would be replayed in London at the Tottenham Hotspur ground two weeks later. An extra game in an already crowded playing schedule, and giving away home advantage to the London team were not what United wanted. ... and then, from the half way line, Pedro Mendes, the Tottenham striker lobs the ball towards the Manchester United goal. The sequence of photographs above captures what happened in that final minute of the match between Manchester United (MUFC) and their FA Barclaycard Premiership rivals, the London team, Tottenham Hotspur (Spurs).

FA Cup 3rd Round - Tuesday January 4th 2005 - Manchester United 0 - Tottenham Hotspur 0 - 89th minute
 Pedro Mendes lobs the ball towards the Manchester United goal ...



The Referee's View



Roy Carroll's attempted catch saw the ball strike his chest and arms, and bounce over his head towards the goal. The ball crossed the MU goal line unseen by the referee who was at least 45 yards away near the halfway line, and unseen by the assistant referees who were at least 25 yards from goal running on the sideline - but seen by spectators at the match, press photographers, Sky TV cameras and TV viewers. Goalkeeper, Roy Carroll retrieved the ball from behind the goal line, and carried on playing. The game ended within seconds as a no score draw! - denying Spurs progression in the lucrative competition.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use Kohlberg's six-stage model of moral or ethical reasoning; Badaracco's framework examining responsibilities and stakeholders; and Lumpkin, Stoll and Beller's framework linking moral knowledge, moral values and moral reasoning, to provide insight on the following questions.

- Should players play to the whistle?
 - even if they know the referee has got it wrong,
 - and when they have doubts about whether the referee will rule on a matter?
 - accepting the good with the bad?
- Should players admit when they have broken the rules? if not, would it be cheating?
- Should players try to fool the referee / umpire?
- Should the FA have changed the result or replayed the game?
- Compare this situation to that of a management professional who has unwittingly breached a code of conduct, which breach has conferred advantage to the manager, to his/her organisation – but which has gone unnoticed by auditors or market regulators.

A full set of references and a teaching guide is available from the author on request.

APPENDIX

The Reactions of Others

- Gordon Taylor, CEO Professional Footballers Association, commented:
"In a season, there are so many rubs of the green – you hope it balances out."
- Alex Stepney, former MUFC and England goalkeeper, told Sky Sports News:
"No, you need a bit of luck –you play on."
- Keith Hackett – Premiership Referees' Director said that:
"... although from my seat in the stand, I could see it was a goal, Assistant Referee Rob Lewis, the linesman, was in the correct position to rule on offside."
- Referee, Jeff Winter said:
"You could have strapped Lewis (Asst Ref) to a Lear jet and he would still have struggled to be in the right position to judge."
- Graham Barber, former Premier and FIFA referee, speaking about technology in sport:
"Decisions have to be down to the referee, otherwise, debates about video playbacks – matches would last forever!"