



# Why is diving by English footballers so often overlooked?

**E**nglish footballers are as hypocritical as randy clergymen when it comes to preaching one thing and doing another

How did some of England's most celebrated footballers end up in bed with randy priests? Metaphorically speaking. In the hypocrisy stakes, there is little difference between a man of the cloth who solemnly preaches celibacy while also being a swashbuckling man of the sheets, and footballers who dive despite spouting pious statements such as:

**"I have never intentionally tried to dive ... It isn't fair for players to dive and try to cheat the other team. And it is not just cheating your opponents, you are cheating the fans as well"**

– Wayne Rooney

**"If I ever saw one of my team-mates diving, I'd definitely have a word"**

– Steven Gerrard

**"I can speak about the England lads and I think it is something we don't do. We're too honest"**

– John Terry

Last Saturday, with Manchester United trailing to Aston Villa, Rooney flopped to the ground in front of Luke Young in a preposterous attempt to win a penalty. Commendably, referee Martin Atkinson rose above the official indulgence to which Rooney is traditionally treated in this country and issued a yellow card. The previous week, however, Atkinson had failed to book, or even mock, Gerrard for an even more laughable collapse in the general vicinity of Blackburn's Steven N'Zonzi. Still, for an English referee to spot one out of two diving offences by

his compatriots probably isn't bad, since anyone who is exposed to the English media risks contamination by propaganda insisting that only suspiciously non-British folks get up to such devilry.

Earlier this season, and after their first such offences, Eduardo and David Ngog were tried, condemned and darn near executed in the court of public sanctimony, over which presides, of course, the honourable gentlemen of the English press. Most of those same judges have been a good deal less mouthy about the theatrics of Rooney and Gerrard, despite both players, like various other England stars (Michael Owen against Argentina in 1998?), having previous.

Some of Gerrard's most blatant efforts have come while representing his country – his sudden loss of verticality against Andorra in September 2008, for instance, or his pre-2006 World Cup plunge against Jamaica – in a friendly. When England were already 5-0 up. Rooney's rap sheet in-

cludes a memorable tumble against Arsenal in October 2004, and in November 2008 his attempt to frame Villarreal's Fabricio Fuentes was so blatant he afterwards apologised, though that didn't prevent him from making the above claim about "never intentionally" diving a few months later. And just days after that very same claim he successfully demanded a penalty for England against Slovenia for a non-existent foul.

Professionally many English players, like many players from elsewhere, seem to believe that diving is sometimes acceptable, perhaps even the right thing to do when the opportunity arises. Culturally they know it is treasonous. So England's finest say one thing, and do the other. Like fornicators from the clergy, they are guilty of craven hypocrisy. Much of the media are guilty of something worse: bigotry. If a foreigner did it, deport the swine. If an Englander did it, move along, nothing to see here.

## Forget Alonso, Rafa and the rest... why I know the answer to the real problems at Liverpool

By David Anderson

**A**fter months spent analysing Liverpool's car crash of a campaign, I believe I have identified the real reason.

It's not Xabi Alonso's departure, Rafa's tactics, zonal marking or the tea lady at Melwood – it's me being a Jonah.

I believe I have been jinxing Liverpool for the past 26 years.

The first time I saw Liverpool play, Joe Fagan's all-conquering side lost 4-3 to Manchester United at Windsor Park in August 1983 – despite being 3-1 up with less than a quarter of the match to go.

Two years later when I attended my first match at Anfield for Phil Neal's testimonial, they lost to Ever-

ton 3-2 after being 2-0 up. Sorry Phil.

Then, during Liverpool's magnificent 1987-88 league campaign, which was the only game I managed to get across the Irish Sea to see that season? Yes, you've guessed it. Their 1-0 defeat at Everton which ended their record-equaling 29-match unbeaten start. I'm convinced Wayne Clarke would have missed if I had not been there.

I put these disappointments down to bad luck and I was confident I would see Liverpool win when I moved to Merseyside in 1988 and bought a season ticket for the Kop.

How wrong I was.

In my first game as a Kopite, we lost 2-1 to New-

castle in what was our first league defeat at Anfield in 18 months. I'm still haunted by the sight of Mirandina (remember him?) celebrating in front of the Kop.

Worse was to follow that season and I have to confess I was on the Kop that fateful May evening in 1989 when Michael Thomas ran through to score that historic goal as Brian Moore shouted "It's all up for grabs now."

Many fans blame John Barnes for losing possession to allow Arsenal to launch that final, desperate attack.

But I know the real reason.

And so to this season and, of the seven games I

have covered at Anfield, the Reds have lost four, drawn two and won one.

I saw them suffer their first league defeat in 31 games to Aston Villa in August. I saw them take the lead against Lyon and Fiorentina only to lose to last-gasp goals.

The real low came on Sunday when, because of me, Liverpool reached yet again for the self-destruct button to throw away three points against Arsenal.

I can only apologise to Rafa and the lads for the huge damage I've done.

From now I promise I will only watch Everton.



Benitez