

I sometimes wonder how people in our football perceive the game's function. I get the feeling that some clubs look at it as a business venture and expect some financial return or self-sufficiency from it. This is difficult to comprehend and may be pure imagination. There is no way presently that our football can produce any viability on "investment", whatever anybody says. I sincerely hope that one day clubs will be self-sufficient, make profits and this will be thrown back at me.

It is this scenario that has been giving some headaches. Clubs will resort to any offer to see their team reach a competitive level or survival and are blind to the pitfalls of it all. Although it is advisable to be ambitious and optimistic, every approach needs to be kept within its own perspective.

The Malta FA Integrity Tour 2014, was an opportunity for us to pass important messages at the very heart of our top two divisions' clubs. We witnessed the genuine concern of club administrators and players, who are determined to bring sanity back to our football. It is not fair on the dedicated individuals to have football negatively stamped by the majority of our population.

A telling remark which really hurt me lately, was made by a leading person of our society during one of my many meetings round the island. This person told me that when he is about to employ somebody, he asks about the applicant's social background, and the moment he finds out that he is involved in football, quickly strikes him off the list. I questioned this discriminatory approach and why should it be allowed to happen. Was it perhaps because of training schedules, or perhaps because of travel requirements? The answer was very emphatic. Footballers are perceived of not being of an ideal character and participate in a dubious sport. Wow, I nearly fell off my seat! Quite a sweeping statement and I totally disagreed, was taken aback and felt uneasy. Is this how we are portrayed by the general public?

I reflected deeply about this and tried to figure matters out. Was this person, after all, correct in his judgement? What made him think in this way? Are we, football people, not visualising the true picture? But I quickly came back to my senses and realised that perhaps with what is going on in football worldwide, we are not being presented with a wholesome picture. The football fraternity needs to work hard to recuperate the ground we have lost so heavily over these last few years. We cannot remain stuck on this downward spiral leading to oblivion.

During some of my presentations on the Integrity Tour I quoted Albert Einstein. He is not directly connected to football but what he said should be adopted to many scenarios, not least to our football:

*"THE WORLD WILL NOT BE DESTROYED BY THOSE WHO DO EVIL, BUT BY THOSE WHO WATCH THEM WITHOUT DOING ANYTHING"*

I take this opportunity to thank all the participants of the Malta FA Integrity Tour 2014. It was a pleasure visiting your clubs, meeting you and discuss topical issues. We addressed over 1000 players who were grateful for the content of our workshops. All expressed their worries about the damage that match-fixing is causing the game. Here again I quote a comment made by Steve D'Amato, Rabat Ajax F.C. coach, who at the end of the workshop at his club said: *"This has been better than a training session"*. That signifies the true spirit of our Integrity Tour.ft