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Mistakes happen, get over it

As I write, I have just downloaded the vuvuzela app for my phone and now truly feel part of the World Cup.

What has really struck me, as I write five days into the World Cup, is the sheer intensity of it all and how, in many cases, that with such high highs and such low lows it can be so devastatingly counterproductive.

I'm thinking about Robert Green. One error, bad though it was, and he has been absolutely slaughtered in the media – they were even calling for him to be replaced at half time for heaven's sake.

Some of the headlines the next morning were quite extraordinary and I would hope that they were kept well out of the way of the West Ham keeper and his relatives.

“Calamity! Robert Green faces England axe after his howler hands Americans a draw”; “Hands of Clod”, are just a couple he would have read.

It really is quite ridiculous. It's not even a case of being as good as your last match. In World Cup terms you are only as good as your last save – or non-save as the case may be. He did make a quite brilliant one in the second half which saved a certain score and I'm sure there is part of him thinking if he'd let that in but saved the easy one life would have been so much quieter.

How can anyone feel confident about their job when they feel that if they make one slight error they will forever be known as “Captain Cock-Up” the “Blundering (choose anything from) keeper, journalist, greenkeeper, banker, politician...)?

If we all had to operate to a “one strike and you are out” policy we would surely all creep

into our shells and try wherever possible to stop doing anything that might result in a mistake.

When it comes to using experience and knowledge to assess a marginal situation and determine what is the best long term option, if you thought your actions were going to be double guessed by all and sundry, the inclination may be not to bother. How can you be wrong if you haven't done anything?

People must be encouraged to take decisive action – coming for that cross, changing a regime on the golf course – safe in the knowledge that you will be given time to tweak what you have done if it's not right first time, or even learn from mistakes if what has been done hasn't worked well.

Of course if, time after time the ball continues to be dropped, or guddled over the line, or oil leakages continue to occur on the golf course, action then has to be taken in terms of training – a dedicated goalkeeping coach, more practice with the new ball or a change in goalie gloves, or, in our industry, a service of all machinery, a review of day-to-day operating procedures or a BIGGA training course.

The concept that one mistake is all that is needed for the roof to fall in on someone cannot be allowed to take root, even if it means the headlines in the papers are a little more subdued.

Scott MacCallum
Editor