

Sporting Wit

Athletic Wisecracks and Champion Comebacks



SPORTING WIT

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Editor's note

Sport isn't funny – how could anything be more serious? But as the late, great Peter Ustinov said, comedy is only an amusing way of being serious. And sometimes you've just got to see the funny side – even when that side isn't doing so well.

All the pleasures and the pains of the sporting world are eloquently expressed within the following pages in some of the wittiest words uttered both on and off the pitch. In order to create a complete compendium, we scoured stadiums around the world to bring you the bon mots from every sporting occasion, from the players, the managers, the commentators and the fans. We included a few classics as well as the latest gems, proving that, despite blows to the head and other field injuries, there are plenty of true wits in the sporting world.

Perhaps you'll thumb immediately to the pages on your favourite sport, but don't miss the priceless comments on many others as well as in such categories as Refs and Umpires, Winning and Losing, and The Sporting Life. We hope you'll be as thoroughly entertained as we were, and find these witty words a perfect aid to post-game discussions.

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Sporting Wit

Football

I'd rather be a footballer
than an existentialist.

Robert Smith, British musician

The hardest part of football is
putting the ball into the net.

Roy Keane, football player

When I first heard about Viagra,
I thought it was a new player
Chelsea had just signed.

Tony Banks, British sports minister

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Ally MacLeod thinks that
tactics are a new kind of mint.

Billy Connolly, British comedian

When I first met him I didn't
know whether to shake his
hand or lick his face.

Robbie Williams, British singer, on
meeting David Beckham

They are a young side. It's like
when you were eighteen with
three girlfriends. The more
you play, the more you learn.

Mick Walker, British football player

That's great, tell
him he's Pelé and
get him back on.

John Lambie, football manager, on being told that
a concussed striker did not know who he was

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Look, if you're in the penalty area and aren't quite sure what to do with the ball, just stick it in the net and we'll discuss all your options afterwards.

Bob Paisley, football manager (1919–1996)

Anyone can be clever, the trick is not to think the other guy is stupid.

Jose Mourinho, football manager

How do I view United? Preferably on television, but unfortunately we have to go down the East Lancs Road and get a bit closer.

Howard Kendall, football manager

FOOTBALL

White Hart Lane is a great place. The only thing wrong is the seats face the pitch.

Les Dawson, British comedian (1934–1993), referring to the home of Tottenham Hotspur

Preston. They're one of my old clubs. But then most of them are. I've had more clubs than Jack Nicklaus.

Tommy Docherty, football player and manager

Some you lose, some you draw.

Jasper Carrott, comedian, on being a Birmingham City supporter

The only way we will
be going to Europe
is if the club splash
out and take us all
to EuroDisney.

Dean Holdsworth, football player

FOOTBALL

British ferries have stopped transporting live animals to the Continent. This has made it very difficult for England fans to get to away matches.

Jo Brand, comedienne

We'll still be happy if we lose. It's on at the same time as the Beer Festival.

Noel O'Mahony, football manager,
before a game in Munich

Radio football is football reduced to its lowest common denominator.

Shorn of the game's aesthetic pleasures, or the comfort of a crowd that feels the same way as you, or the sense of security that you get when you see that your defenders and goalkeeper are more or less where they should be, all that is left is naked fear.

Nick Hornby, novelist, *Fever Pitch*

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Football is a simple game
made unnecessarily
complicated by managers.

Anonymous

This is an unusual Scotland side
because they have good players.

Javier Clemente, Spanish coach, on
Scotland's 1996 Under-21 side

I spent a lot of money on
booze, birds and fast cars.
The rest I just squandered.

George Best, football player

It's a pleasure to be standing
up here. It's a pleasure
to be standing up.

George Best, acceptance speech on being
acclaimed Footballer of the Century in 1999

FOOTBALL

Reporter: You don't take losing lightly, do you Gordon?

Strachan: I don't take stupid comments lightly either.

Reporter: Gordon, you must be delighted with that result?

Strachan: You're spot on! You can read me like a book.

On being asked his opinion of Agustin Delgado –

Strachan: I've got more important things to think about. I've got a yoghurt to finish by today, the expiry date is today. That can be my priority rather than Agustin Delgado.

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Reporter: This might sound like a daft question, but you'll be happy to get your first win under your belt, won't you?

Strachan: You're right. It is a daft question. I'm not even going to bother answering that one.

Reporter: Bang, there goes your unbeaten run. Can you take it?

Strachan: No, I'm just going to crumble like a wreck. I'll go home, become an alcoholic and maybe jump off a bridge. Umm, I think I can take it, yeah.

Gordon Strachan, football player, voted Scottish Footballer of the Year in 1980 and English Footballer of the Year in 1992, and football manager