

OUCH! Famous Last Words



by Reg Green

Although I wrote about economics for my daily bread while I was a journalist in London, I added a thin layer of jam by writing about whatever else I could pounce on: jazz, book reviews, obituaries, soccer reports etc.

This week, reading about a confrontation between a baseball player and a fan, I was reminded of a soccer game at the home of Tottenham Hotspur. (Yes, these names seem as bizarre to me now as Knicks and Bengals sounded when I first heard them.)

In those days, before the posh new stadium was built, part of the crowd walked out at the end of the game past where we reporters were busily writing our stories. One fan, seeing a famous former player, now a columnist, said to him "Load of tripe, eh Billy?" (Not his real name.)

Normally such an intrusion would have been treated with an icy silence but this time the two of them talked for a moment or two. "Can the Great Man be mellowing?" I wondered. But when I looked at his match report in the next day's paper, it began, "Load of tripe, said one oafish face in the crowd" and went on to say that, on the contrary, for the discerning soccer lover this was a most interesting game.

I've often wondered if, before the paper came out, that fan had told his pals, "I chatted with Billy X after the match. Nice fellow."

It's good being a journalist.