

# Phillipe and Jorge's Cool, Cool World: FIFA, A Place to Summer, and Some Dear Friends

## King Snake

*Everybody knows that the dice are loaded  
Everybody rolls with their fingers crossed  
Everybody knows that the war is over  
Everybody knows the good guys lost  
Everybody knows the fight was fixed  
The poor stay poor, the rich get rich  
That's how it goes  
Everybody knows  
- Everybody Knows; Leonard Cohen*

You could add a lyric from further down Cohen's brilliant song, "Everybody knows that the boat is sinking, everybody knows the captain lied" to pretty much sum up the scandal crisis at FIFA (Federation Internationale de Football Association, world governing body of soccer) that exploded last week. FIFA should make "Everybody Knows" their official song. And the lying captain of that sinking boat is named Sepp Blatter, FIFA president, an arrogant viper in an Armani silk suit who slithered his way into the chief's post in 1998 and has since been a combination of Don Corleone and Boss Tweed, with all the ethics and morals of a hired killer.

Phillipe knows a bit about soccer, having played professionally, served as the communications director for the now-defunct national American Soccer League, covered the Olympics and World Cup as a soccer reporter, and served as color commentator on TV matches. Unfortunately, the stench of corruption that has always been a mere zephyr blowing through the sport has turned into a full Category Five hurricane, now that the US FBI has stepped into the spotlight to make arrests of top FIFA officials for bribery, racketeering, money laundering, etc. - let's just say obscene greed, shall we? — and ask to have them extradited to New York to face charges. And if they aren't all guilty, Goldman Sachs isn't a giant vampire squid.

Blatter was appallingly re-elected president on May 29, largely due to the support of the African delegation, which loves him for giving the Dark Continent a World Cup (South Africa in 2010) and funneling lotsabucks to their various associations, of which largesse the local federation heads immediately pocket a good portion. Other federations in Asia and the Mideast follow the same pattern and provide the same votes for Slimy Sepp in turn. (FIFA has over 200 members, more than the United Nations, and everyone gets but one vote, so a populous, soccer-mad country like England or Brazil has all the power in this scheme as Malta or Burkina Faso. Good idea, eh?) And all you need to know is that anti-corruption crusader, Russian President Vladimir Putin, has come to Blatter's defense, having nothing to do with Russia having bought, oh, pardon us, *won* the rights to the next World Cup in 2018.

Yes, Blatter is crooked and will inevitably see his day in court. But where you should be looking is at the European and South American confederations, who may well threaten to withdraw from FIFA — a death blow — or major sponsors like Visa, Coke, McDonald's, Adidas and Budweiser pulling their support,

which will hit Blatter and his cronies where it hurts them the most: in their bank accounts. Because they obviously have long stopped caring about credibility or accountability.

### **Gilded Handbags at 10 Paces**

In case you missed it, there is a wonderful war of the wealthy going on in Newport these days over proposed renovations at the The Breakers famed mansion on Bellevue Avenue between the Preservation Society of Newport County and the family descendants of Cornelius Vanderbilt (yeah, that of course includes the vacuous, painted and wizened Gloria). This is the biggest uproar to hit local society since the late GOP kingmaker and Newport *grande dame* Eileen “Jurassic Spice” Slocum admitted she kept a loaded pistol at her bedside.

Cornelius Vanderbilt had the 70-room summer cottage built in 1895, and after years of being the jewel in the crown of Mansion Row, it was put in the stewardship of the Preservation Society. In those safe hands, it has become a tourist attraction, drawing half a million people per year to see how the upper crust lives. (And that is still jaw-dropping, even in these days of tasteless Beverly Hills McMansions splashed in the tabloids.)

But the Preservation Society has dared to propose a new visitors center on the grounds along with modern restrooms. In an ironic *Upstairs, Downstairs* twist, the only public toilets now are in the basement of The Breakers. This whole plan irked the Vanderbilt family, which fired off a nasty letter criticizing the Preservation Society’s plans, already approved by the City by the Sea’s zoning board.

Unfortunately, rich people aren’t necessarily smart people. In a turnaround quicker than Jeb Bush turning on Dubya, the Society fired back a seven-page memo pointing out that the posh Vanderbilt letter signers have contributed only \$4,000 to the Society combined. It went on to point out various misstatements of fact, that the historical pieces the family members have contributed to the mansion are not “significant,” and that two Vanderbilts still live on the top floor, no doubt in a *Grey Gardens*-infused scenario.

The Preservation Society has essentially said, quite politely, “Sit down and shut up” to the Vanderbilts and the local opponents of this obvious change for the best, a tourist destination that boosts the whole city’s economy. Sorry if the peons want to take a look at something that they would only have been able to see from the servant’s entrance in the past.

### **A Wild and Woolly Sports Legend**

When Jorge was 12 years old and the Little League season ended in his hometown of Pawtucket, he headed six blocks from his house to Daggett Field, where he heard that there were some sort of semi-organized games going. He arrived to find a bunch of kids from all over town and one adult who was putting together something that had rules and a framework, but was essentially sandlot ball (this was all under the auspices of the Boy’s Club). This was, perhaps, the most satisfying baseball experience of Jorge’s life — organized but as loosely as possible. The adult (who morphed into the umpire) was George Patrick Duffy.

When Jorge told him his name, “Bruce McCrae,” he asked if the boy was related to Allister, who was Jorge’s uncle. Apparently they played basketball together in Pawtucket a few decades back. It took a while for Jorge to figure out who exactly George Patrick Duffy was, but within a few years realized he was one of the most central, colorful and active sports figures in Rhode Island. He did everything from

coach generations of kids to call games on the radio, umpire and drive the bus. Almost any kid who played sports in Pawtucket (and a number of other cities and towns) for most of the second half of the 20th century knew George Patrick Duffy. He was an essential and positive part of Pawtucket's youth.

There are many stories about the great George Patrick Duffy that have become legend. One that Jorge heard had to do with an evening at Max Surkont's bar, a classic Pawtucket joint. The place was packed with patrons who were listening to the Rhode Island Reds hockey game on the radio. The announcer says, "Unfortunately, your regular announcer, George Patrick Duffy, could not make it tonight as he is a bit under the weather." The entire room explodes in laughter as they all turn to look at George, sitting at the bar, 'faced and smiling.

The legendary George Patrick Duffy passed away last week at the age of 94. If you met him, you'd never forget him. When Jorge called one of his oldest childhood friends the other day, Charles Sawicki (who also left quite a mark on youth sports as an exceptionally good athlete) to talk about George, Charles said, "I'm only surprised that he didn't die out on the field, coaching a team." Rest in peace, GPD.

### **Calling Doctor Tina, Doctor Chris, Doctor Jerry**

Great fun for Jorge once again last week when old friends Chris Frantz, Tina Weymouth and Jerry Harrison (of Talking Heads fame), came to town to receive honorary doctorates from "Chris und Tina's" alma mater, the Rhode Island School of Design. The graduate exercises were taking place on Saturday, but they arrived in town, along with Jerry's wife, Carol, on Thursday and a small party of swinging genius artist-types (the fabulous Marlane Noel and "the woman with the best hands ever," Xander Marro, amongst them) headed out for a long and noisy dinner at Al Forno.

Unfortunately, one big table wasn't available, but Jorge sat next to Tina to reminisce and gossip. It could have gone on for hours. It is such a thrill to see the contributions to music (Tom Tom Club and the Modern Lovers, besides Talking Heads) of these old and dear friends being honored by RISD.

### **Dead Broke Joke**

Are we supposed to be titillated by the fact that Hillary "Dead Broke" Clinton has deigned to visit the great unwashed in The Biggest Little in June? Not when the price of a chance to shake her slippery hand will cost a minimum of \$1,000.

Invitations have evidently already gone out for a fundraiser — called a "conversation" in Clintonspeak (see: "listening tour," etc.), which will actually, as always, be either Hill or Bill doing all the talking so they can hear more of the beloved sound of their own voices. But in true lack of transparency or the desire to encounter people who aren't handing them money, the location of the babblefest will only be disclosed when the check clears.

Why people feel the need to simply dump buckets on Ms. Clinton — who garners tens of thousands of dollars for speaking fees, doubtless so she doesn't have to darn her pantsuits or hope we can send the family a turkey at Thanksgiving — is beyond P&J's simple minds. This is no more than a shakedown, as she knows Little Rhody will vote for her even if Bill manages to get caught in bed with a live boy or dead woman before the election. She will pop in, bleat out the usual moderate Democrat platitudes, and leave the attendees with nothing more for the future than a selfie with Her Highness and a depleted bank account. She certainly will not be solving our economic problems or laughable governance by the clowns at Halitosis Hall.

We can imagine Billary saying, "Well, that was easy, wasn't it?" as she boards the private plane while an aide counts the cash. Sleep tight, Citizens United.