

Chelsea Pitch Owners — The Way Ahead For All Sports?

By **Alexander Baron** - Mar 28, 2016



2
SHARES

Sport today is a big money business, but it hasn't always been that way. True, heavyweight boxing has always attracted big money; Sonny Liston received a million dollar purse for a world title fight in 1963, but here are a few other facts to consider. In 1927, Joe Davis won £6 10 shillings prize money for the first World Professional Snooker Championship. Last year, Stuart Bingham picked up £300,000 for the world title, and even players who made the last 32 won £12,000 each. Last year, the Wimbledon Champions walked away with £1,880,000 each as opposed to £2,000 for the Men's and a mere £750 for the Ladies' titles in 1968.

The biggest money though is in soccer, **the men's game** at any rate. True, it is only a relatively small number of clubs, in particular the UK Premiere League, and its equivalent in other countries. For a handful of players – David Beckham is the stellar example – the sky is the limit for endorsements, promotions, etc. But there is a

downside, big money taints everything. Although it is both one of the biggest clubs in the UK and one of the most famous in the world, Chelsea has a unique approach to stop big money tainting the game completely, **Chelsea Pitch Owners**.

At the end of 1992, beginning of 1993, this new company purchased the freehold of the ground. This was the brainchild of the club's Chairman (the now 84 year old) Ken Bates. In 1982, Bates bought the club for £1 – (one pound). As might be suspected, it was in serious financial trouble at the time, as well as languishing in the Second Division. The transformation, albeit over a generation, has been startling.

Although today Chelsea is a mega-business, and doubtless most of its supporters are grateful to a certain Russian fan who has extremely deep pockets, the future of the club has been secured as much by local action and a dedicated fan base as by big money. There is a lesson here for all sports; it may mean there is not quite such big money for the people at the very top of the tree, but the professionalism of old school sportsmen and women lacked nothing in an age when random drug tests were unknown, and when they competed more for the glory than for the lucre.

2
SHARES