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Big Sam's message on partnering: results matter!

I must admit, I've got a bit of history with Big Sam. I wrote a blog in 2012 where I compared his 'rugged' good looks to his 'traditional' style of football. I might have even suggested it was ugly all around.

Fast forward a few years and who is laughing now? Big Sam is. Sat on his sofa at home, with a couple of cans of bitter, a bag of KP nuts, the best paid part time job in the country and heralded as a national treasure.

The last time I blogged about Allardyce, I wrote about how his methods were akin to construction companies ignoring best practice because they haven't got the right resources, so they take an easier and more ugly approach to getting things done.

At the time, Big Sam's West Ham were flying high above Brendan Rodgers' Liverpool and I considered whether it was style or results that mattered the most in both football and the construction industry, especially when working with limited resources.

The FA's logic behind appointing Allardyce seems simple: he gets results and he gets the best out of the resources he's got available. Fair enough.

It hardly solves the problem of why the England team consistently underperform and it's probably not a long term approach to sorting out problems at grass roots level, but if it gets results in there here and now, isn't that all people really want? For their team to win?

In construction terms, Big Sam's approach is probably akin to a contractor who sets out to make profit and nothing else; those that are usually accused of being adversarial, claims conscious and all about profit.

For decades, construction advisors have advocated a move away from old school practices and promoted the benefits of partnering and creating win-win scenarios; construction can never get where it should be if we don't abandon traditional practices. The evidence in support of that is indisputable. Then again, so is the evidence for "tippy tappa" football (to quote Sam) when you look at Barcelona, but what about if you just don't have the highly skilled resources needed to do it properly?

Maybe it's time to get off our high horses and focus on results and what contracts are actually all about: a deal where one party gets their goods (or project) and the other gets some money for delivering it (and hopefully some profit). As construction professionals, our job is to administer that deal. It's as simple as that.

In partnering or framework contracts, the contract itself and the notification requirements can often be ignored because that's not the 'style' of partnering. Often, when the contractor issues the notifications that the contract says he should, he's accused of being Big Sam: traditional, old school and not working in the trendy style that we've been told to.



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Personally, I'll always challenge those sorts of statements because you're not being adversarial, you're simply administering the contract that you have agreed to, but I can see where they come from. I often hear "spirit of mutual trust and co-operation" quoted in relation to NEC3® but not the second part of clause 10.1 "and in accordance with the contract"!

Chatting to a Co-Director of Solomons, who for his sins is a Sunderland fan, he said that they would genuinely miss Allardyce and that actually the football wasn't that bad; sometimes he'd even use wingers to get the ball in to the box rather than centre backs (watch your back Guardiola).

Well, here's a thought, what if it's possible to have the best of both worlds? What if you can bring in a little bit of style and get results all at the same time? What if you can get results by administering the contract both in a spirit of mutual trust AND in accordance with the contract? You would almost think someone had designed the contract to work that way.

I'm not suggesting we move away from partnering and go back to the old school by any stretch, but too often when we're asked to look at contracts that have not gone as expected for the parties, there has been a lack of proper contract administration with the reason usually cited as "we agreed not to send too many notices" or because they were afraid of being called Sam Allardyce – which clearly nobody wants – but then the disappointment follows if you don't win and you crash out of the tournament!

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