

# The Numbers Game

*Dr Stirling Howieson of Strathclyde University is interested in numbers. From understanding the 'big bang' to managing your credit card repayments, numbers hold the key to everything. Here, in his regular Scotregen column, he offers some more interesting figures.....*



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Linking Scottish football to community regeneration is a bold and intrepid initiative, for the association is far from obvious. A quick glance at the environs of most Scottish football stadia will reveal a less than impressive urban landscape, both visual and economic. The mounting trepidation of tenement dwellers in Mount Florida on the approach of a major international was tangible. It took weeks to get the smell of urine out of the closes. So although it may be opportune to exploit the Scottish populace's obsession with football, is private corporatism the best template for community regeneration?

### Football Forum

The Scottish Premier League, like its larger English cousin, absented itself from the Football League - where all clubs had previously come together in democratic forum - to ensure that a select few could enjoy a greater share of the growing TV revenues. In their own self-interest they cast adrift the lower orders and pulled up the ladder. Despite fewer snouts in a much larger trough, in 2005/06 the SPL's collective debt was larger than its wage bill (£93 million) and as SPL plc it made a trading loss of £9 million; a less than impressive

performance for its relatively few major shareholders. Profit however, does not appear to be the primary *raison d'être* for the 'czars', 'oligarchs' and 'princelings' that are currently exercising their egos by purchasing British football clubs, but is this drive for success at any price (Kaka or a new hospital?) a good model for the SPL and the regeneration of Scotland as a whole, and is there an alternative?

In 1867 a Scottish football club was founded that has recently been nominated as a candidate for elevation to the dizzy heights of the FIFA Hall of Fame. Only **2** other clubs in the world have been granted such an accolade. Its history is unique in so many aspects. In 1875 the club fielded Andrew Watson who went on to represent Scotland at international level. Obama take note, in 1891 Andrew Watson became the world's first black international football player. Its latest youth protégé is Eamon McGeady, Scottish Footballer of the year. **133** years on it remains resolute to its founding motto "Ludere Causa Ludendi" - "to play for the sake of playing". It runs more teams each week than any other senior club and re-directs all income back into grass roots football development. It rebuilt Hampden Park - the national stadium - that ensured the Old Firm could no longer hold the SFA to ransom over ground rentals for international matches. It is of course the illustrious and magnificent Queen's Park F.C.

### Packing Them In

North America has its own version of Queen's Park. The Green Bay Packers are a phenomenon that confidently cock a snook (in my view snooks need to be cocked more often) at the super wealthy corporate power brokers. They have won 12 NFL titles - more than any other club - and three Superbowls, yet they are a club wholly owned by the community they entertain, and distribute all profits to local charities and regeneration projects. Every home game is a sell out (stadium capacity **62 000**) and there is a **35** year waiting list for season tickets. The population of Green Bay in the 2000 census was **102 333**.