

Getting around the rules is abuse now: England managers...

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As [the FT put it](#):

England football manager Sam Allardyce quit on Tuesday night after only 67 days in the job following newspaper allegations that he had offered advice on how to "get around" rules on the transfer of players.

So let's be clear: Allardyce did nothing wrong, except suggesting how to "get around" the rules. And he has gone. And in my opinion rightly so.

Why rightly so? Because in this interpretation what Allardyce did was akin to advising on tax avoidance. Tax avoidance is about supposedly doing nothing wrong, but getting around the rules nonetheless. And once that was seen as being smart. Just as Donald Trump thinks that paying no tax is smart.

But the world has changed, and for the better. Tax avoidance is not smart any more. It's not even unambiguously legal now: the 2013 [General Anti-Abuse Rule](#), with which I was associated, put paid to that. And the government [is now planning an explicit programme of penalties](#) for those enabling it, and in broad terms I approve of the plan to do so.

Why is this? Simply because football (like tax and the economy) has to be played on a level playing field where the only thing that matters is real ability. When that is abused just about everything in the game, from trust in the fairness of the result onwards, is destroyed. There is, in reality, no game left. And that is what Allardyce might have been condoning. Just as tax avoiders condone society being undermined and rigged in favour of those willing to cheat.

The time has come when there is no tolerance left for cheats. Thank goodness, and not least for the FA doing the right thing.