

England and Labour: sharing the Ming vase experience

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The similarities between the progress of the English football team in the European soccer championship and that of the Labour party in the general election cannot be ignored.

England have won their opening group in those championships, guaranteeing them the best possible place in the next round. However, in doing so they have been uninspiring, unimaginative and plain dull, whilst giving absolutely no indication of the potential that they have.

It is, of course, entirely possible that England will progress through these championships, and even win them. They have more star players than most other teams. Their recent track record in tournaments has been good. In both these respects, they have much more to go on than do Labour. But, the doubts at this moment are based upon a realistic appraisal of what is actually being seen in this tournament, which does not inspire hope.

The same is true of Labour. Compared to the Conservatives (which is, admittedly, a very low bar), they have obviously more competent politicians in their ranks. They could at this moment be inspiring confidence, be promising real change, and be delivering hope for the next five years. But, as a consequence of what has been described as the Ming case strategy, they are burdened with fear, trepidation, and an obvious paranoia about undue expectations, which sentiments appear to be shared almost precisely by the English football team.

Maybe England will come out of themselves and flourish in this championship . At least they have the stated ambition to do so.

But will Labour flourish when its leadership appears to lack any ambition beyond winning, at all? That is not clear.

The consequence is that my expectations are low in both cases. I would love them to be exceeded. I am not sure that it would be wise to think that will happen. What I will most

certainly not do is bet on it.