

Think Before You Speak

John Terry is a professional footballer. To be more precise, John Terry is the captain of Chelsea Football Club and also the captain of England. He is well known throughout the world as a great player and was selected only last week by FIFA, football's world governing body, as one of the top 24 footballers currently playing the game.

John Terry is 30 years old. Born in London in 1981 he started playing soccer at a young age before joining the youth team at Chelsea when he was only fourteen. At first he was selected as a mid-fielder but as he grew in size he was moved to defence. It is as a Centre Back that Terry has played most of his professional career.

Terry has played football only for Chelsea making him a one-club player. This is a rarity in today's modern game where players frequently move to other clubs. He has received many offers to play for other teams in England and Italy but Terry has always turned down their advances. He is a London boy who wishes to remain at the same London club where his professional career began until he retires from the game. John Terry has experienced many highpoints in his time playing for Chelsea and England. As captain of Chelsea he has lead the team to victories in many competitions including the English premiership and the FA Cup. He has also experienced great disappointment. In the final of the European Champions League he walked up to take what ought to have been the final penalty in a penalty shoot-out against Manchester United. However, Terry slipped as he took the shot, miss hit the ball and failed to score the winning goal. Manchester United went on to win the cup.

John Terry is very well paid for what he does. When he signed a new contract with Chelsea in 2008 it was agreed that he be paid £135,000 per week. That's right, £135,000 per week or HK\$1,635,000 per week. That is HK\$235,000 per day. As is the case with all professional soccer players, John Terry collects this salary whether or not he is selected by the manager to be in the team that week. He also collects that wage if he is injured. The average yearly wage for a worker in England is £25,000. This means that the average person would need to work 280 years if they were to earn the same income that John Terry earns in one year. On top of this huge income, Terry has major sponsorship deals with many sports clothing manufacturers. For example, he is seen in advertisements around the world for Umbro

sporting gear. The income he generates from this and other sponsorship deals runs into the millions of dollars.

John Terry spends his life on and off the football pitch in the public eye. He is followed by photographers and newspaper reporters and his every movement recorded and published. This is one of the major drawbacks of being the captain of Chelsea and England. Yet John Terry has had his share of negative press coverage over the years. Indeed, some would say that he has been in the news for all the wrong reasons on far too many occasions. Most of the problems had arisen from poor behaviour whilst celebrating with team mates after football matches. Whilst this type of behaviour might not be reported in the media in the case of lesser known footballers in the case of John Terry it makes headline news.

This is why the name John Terry, the captain of Chelsea and England, has been splashed across British and world newspapers and featured on television news programmes this past month. In a recent game between Chelsea and Queens Park Rangers, John Terry lost his temper with one of the opposition players. In an exchange of comments between the two players John Terry was alleged to have used racist language. John Terry is white and the other player black. The other player immediately told the referee that he had been racially abused. Television recordings of the match suggested that John Terry had said something to Anton Ferdinand the other player involved.

John Terry has denied racial abuse and has said that his comments have been taken out of context. Indeed, such an outburst from John Terry would appear strange given that a relative of the other player is one of Terry's best friends, Rio Ferdinand, who was the captain of England before John Terry. Any racial comment would also be surprising given that many of Terry's team mates at Chelsea are dark skinned. However, the police have completed their investigations into racial abuse and presented a report to the prosecutor's office last week. The world will find out in the next few days if John Terry will be charged with an offence.

So how should John Terry have behaved? Here we have a man who has every possible advantage in life - football talent, success, money, celebrity status and the admiration of millions of fans around the world. At thirty years of age he has only six years left at most as a professional footballer. Yet he now runs the very real risk of having his reputation dashed because

of an irrational few moments of verbal abuse. Why couldn't John Terry have kept his mouth closed when he lost his temper? Why didn't he think before he spoke?

John Terry's case is no different to any other person, be they at home, at school or at work. Everybody should think before they speak. There will be times at school when you lose your temper with a classmate or possibly with a teacher. You might feel that somebody has hurt your feelings or maybe even hurt you physically. Your first response might be to lash out with a string of abuse, foul language or words specifically designed to hurt the other person. If only you had taken a few seconds to think before you spoke. In more extreme cases your reaction might be to punch or kick or throw something at the person who has upset you. Again, a few seconds time-out would hopefully have led to a far better outcome.

I don't believe that John Terry is a violent or nasty man. In fact, he has maintained an excellent record of good behaviour on the pitch throughout his long football career. Yet should he be found guilty of racial abuse then his illustrious career will be tarnished forever. The world will remember John Terry for all the wrong reasons.

As for you, I hope that you will not tarnish your record at SPC. It would be a terrible waste if many years of fine work and service to the College were wiped out by one unthinking outburst. As young people today and as adults in the years to come it is so important that you think before you speak. Words are very powerful and must be used carefully. I imagine that John Terry has been lying awake at night this past month wondering why he didn't follow this advice.

J.R. Kennard