

Jennings, (Edward Arthur) Andrew

(1943–2022)

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Jennings, (Edward Arthur) Andrew (1943–2022), investigative journalist and activist for ethics in sports governance, was born on 3 September 1943 in the Kirkcaldy Maternity Hospital, Kirkcaldy, Fife, the only child of Edward Arthur Gilbert Jennings (1908–1962), a schoolmaster and a leading aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force during the Second World War, and his wife, Edith Emily, *née* Casbourne (b. 1908). Edith and Edward had married in London in 1933 before moving north to Scotland.

Jennings was never one to mince or waste words, and he swiftly disposed of his first two forenames, the same as his father's, in adult life. Early on in his childhood his family moved back to London, where his father took up a school teaching post. At Watford Technical High School, Andrew showed no interest in football but was a keen cross-country runner, exhibiting levels of determination and single-mindedness that in later life would shine through in his investigative initiatives.

Leaving London to study social administration at the University of Hull, the young Jennings soon turned his back on the relative dullness of his social administration course, leaving the university without completing his degree. He didn't lack motivation, however, and was drawn to issues of justice and equality raised by current affairs: how was it, he asked himself in 1968, that fifty-eight fishermen could die after three trawlers sank in the North and Icelandic seas over a period of twenty-six days? Hull was at the time a major fishing port and the 'triple trawler tragedy', as the case became known, was Britain's worst peacetime fishing disaster. The 25-year-old undergraduate saw in the tragedy the themes and issues that would obsess him for the rest of his life: the deep inequalities experienced by the local people; the indifference and arrogance of the élite; the hypocrisy of the managers; the persisting unaccountability of the powerful; and the importance of giving voice to the people, of activating forms of protest through such voices. Jennings simply had to respond and began—in one of his simplest but most effective formulations—to 'dig'. His ethos was as follows: get the evidence, dig deeper, and ask for more. His accounts of the tragedy drew the attention of the regional and national press, inspiring him to develop a career in journalism in which his reporting and stories could also provide the benefits of an income.

In 1967, in Holderness, Yorkshire, Jennings married Janeen Weir, with whom he had a daughter, Sophie; Janeen died in 1974. He later married investigative journalist and novelist Clare Sambrook (b. 1964) in Kensington and Chelsea, London, in May 2001. Three years earlier, the couple had had two daughters, twins, but they died the year they were born. They had two further children, Rosie and Henry.

For a while Jennings worked in the conventional press. He took a story to the *Sunday Times* Insight team in the late 1960s that launched him into the 1970s as 'a reporter and re-write man' (Jennings, 304). He worked for a stint at the *Evening Star* in Burnley and provided pieces to national outlets such as *The Guardian* and the *Daily Mirror*. He then moved into radio and television, including researching for BBC Radio 4's *Checkpoint* programme, focused upon consumer investigations. His specialism was clear from the start: investigative

probes. Along the way he established networks and contacts that would sustain him throughout his career as he gathered his evidence and developed his chosen narratives. He also established a rather brilliant partnership with the author Vyv Simson that culminated in the publication in 1992 of a ground-breaking exposé of International Olympic Committee corruption, *The Lords of the Rings: Power, Money and Drugs in the Modern Olympics*.

Between 1982 and 1993 Jennings and Simson worked 'almost exclusively together' (Simson, in Weinreich, 19) on two BBC series, *Watchdog* and then *Brass Tacks*, before moving on to Granada Television's *World in Action* for 'five happy years', as he noted in *The Dirty Game* (Jennings, 304). He and Simson also published, along with Paul Lashmar, *Scotland Yard's Cocaine Connection* (1991). He went on to investigate the Sicilian mafia, filing 'nose to nose with the mob in Palermo as they exported tons of heroin to England and America' (Carozza, *Fraud Magazine*, 1 Jan 2017). He added, surely a little tongue-in-cheek, that 'this was my essential preparation for my next investigation: the International Olympic Committee' (ibid.).

Jennings had a talent for identifying stories that would run and run; in his own words, taking on 'the big corruption sagas at the heart of international organisations ... to dig internationally for years, developing a narrative' ('Some thoughts on our simple craft', in Weinreich, 4). Entering the world of sports journalism, he cared little for the men on the beat, and even less for those sport officials who sought forms of self-aggrandizement through collusion with sport marketing operatives. His contempt for such so-called professionals was deeply entrenched, as manifest in a piece he published in the month before the London 2012 Olympics. He damned numerous so-called journalists as nothing more than 'media masseurs' and asked: 'Why were sports spin doctors and "image consultants" in a private club for Olympic reporters?' ('Journalists? They're media Masseurs', *British Journalism Review*, 23/2, June 2012, 25). He drew attention to the 2009 membership list of the Olympic Journalists' Association, which included the infamous Jean-Marie Weber, bagman at International Sport and Leisure for distribution of the \$100 million' worth of bribe money that went to 'top sports officials in return for multi-billion dollar marketing contracts for the Olympics and football's World Cup' (ibid., 26).

By now Jennings was also on the trail of such officials at the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the world governing body of football. Time and again in his reporting he reminded his readers and his audiences that many 'sports journalists' were the puppets of their managers and employers, lacking an independent voice and peddling lines of mundanity. In turn, he presented himself as a campaigner for the voiceless, tackling forms of collusion, corruption, and outright criminality among the ranks of the top sports officials.

When Jennings launched his own website, *Transparency in Sport*, he had found the perfect tool and outlet for direct hits at his major targets. This relatively new communications form arguably 'liberated Andrew' (Corbett, in Weinreich, 58). The FIFA president, Sepp Blatter, nicknamed 'the Patriarch' by Jennings, was presented in one piece as 'mean-spirited', a 'spiteful backstabber at his private desk with subordinates to carry out sackings and the deferential secretaries. He shagged a few of them over the years but was too old for the come-later lissom blonde who has gone off with an architect' ('The autumn of football's patriarch', 14 Feb 2010). Such personalized commentaries were not Andrew Jennings at his careful best, but *Transparency in Sport* made him untouchable by his cornered targets.

Whenever he could Jennings took the opportunity to lambast the ineffective sports journalism profession. He was particularly scathing about the shortcomings of those jobbing journalists who were unprepared to ask the right questions at the right time which would enable them to report to their public on the ways in which the expanding world of international sport governance was beginning to be reshaped by unprecedented levels of new money, combined with global media opportunities. Such bodies, in particular the International Olympic Committee and FIFA, had for the duration of their existence lacked any serious form of institutional accountability, ignoring principles of authentic governance, and consequently evolving as almost secretive institutions across the world. His investigative and often confrontational style in his books, his blogs, and his worldwide addresses (including a statement to a US senate committee in July 2015) opened the eyes of a previously unsuspecting global audience.

Having lived latterly with Clare Sambrook in Stainton, near Penrith, Cumbria, Andrew Jennings died of a ruptured aortic aneurysm on 8 January 2022 at the Cumberland Infirmary, Carlisle. Over the next few weeks Jens Weinreich, co-recipient with him of the 2011 Play the Game award for their work on exposing corruption and mismanagement in global sports governance, approached Jennings's network of contacts across the globe, asking them to contribute pieces recollecting their time with or relationship to him. More than fifty individuals from seventeen countries responded and there emerged, in just a few weeks, a special issue of Weinreich's magazine *Sport & Politics* in February 2022. It offered a testimony to a unique figure in the history of investigative—not only sports—reporting, documenting his rise to prominence, and conveying the style and character of a pioneering and charismatic campaigner.

Jennings was a one-off, a bold and determined pioneer who championed and spoke up for the public. Through five decades of investigative activism, he remained dogged and committed in his attitude to his work, remaining focused even after at one point suffering a serious stroke in New York. He positively enjoyed gate-crashing the so-called élite and calling the top brass to account. He spent much of his career going after the leading figures in the two hegemonic global sport federations, the International Olympic Committee and FIFA: 'chasing the bad men', as he frequently reminded his audiences. His findings attracted worldwide attention, grabbed the global headlines, and emboldened individuals in those organizations who had felt for so long unable to speak.

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