

GLOBAL NEWS 582



ONLY A GAME? THAI CABBIE KILLS WIFE OVER FOOTBALL MATCH!

Some say that football is only a game, but this story about Thailand taxi driver Yai Uwarn, seems to prove that former Liverpool manager Bill Shankly may have been right when he said that nothing was more important than football. The Bangkok taxi driver had argued with his wife over use of the TV remote control unit while a soccer match was on and then shot her the next morning when she brought up the subject and another argument erupted.

Neighbours called police to the apartment when a gunshot was heard and they found Yai's 18-year-old wife Chartkaew, lying in a pool of blood in the couple's apartment. The husband, aged 20, tried to run off but was caught by police and charged with her murder. The taxi driver claimed that it had been an accident and that he loved his wife. He added that they had fought when his wife kept nagging him about becoming lazy ever since the last World Cup tournament had been on and that he hadn't been working enough on his taxi. On this occasion she had snatched the TV remote control from Yai while he was watching Brazil play Wales and switched to a Thai soap opera instead.

Yai admitted that he slapped his wife in the face, but that the fight died down after the couple went to the local police station. But the next day, Yai admitted that he lost his temper when his wife brought up the subject about the previous night's incident and "...started nagging me." But he still claimed that the shooting was an accident. He just wanted to frighten her when he took his gun out.

Yai is now awaiting trial in a cell with no TV...

PASSENGER REWARDED FOR ATTACKING HIS TAXI DRIVER!

Not quite so bad as killing your wife over a football match, but pushing for a close second comes the story of the drunken Australian taxi passenger who tried to rob his driver at knifepoint, but who was then hit over the head with a piece of wood by the cabbie as he tried to defend himself. The passenger has now been awarded A\$500,000 – around £230,000 – against the ambulance service and police for their apparent delay in treating the attacker, who sustained brain damage.

The Victoria Supreme Court heard that Damien Kirk, then aged 23, appeared to be drunk and fell asleep in the cab. When they arrived at the destination, Kirk woke up, pulled out a knife, demanded money and also the keys to the taxi.

Mr Tualla, the taxi driver who was a former boxer and rugby player, grabbed his keys and ran into the garden of a nearby house. Kirk chased and confronted him with the knife. Tualla grabbed a fence post and hit Kirk with it. The stick broke over the passenger's head so he tossed the weapon away and punched Kirk in the jaw. The Judge said that the driver had acted in self-defence during the incident. He added that Mr Tualla picked up the

unconscious Kirk, carried him back to his taxi and called his base control asking them to call the police. The Metropolitan Ambulance Service and Victoria Police agreed to compensate Kirk after accepting that he was taken to a police cell and not to a hospital immediately after the assault.

The MAS and police agreed that his injuries from the assault were severely aggravated because of the delay in diagnosing him. Kirk was found to have a fractured skull and an acute extradural haematoma, which caused the brain damage. He is now unable to work.

Both organisations accused the other of negligence, but the Judge awarded Kirk the A\$500,000 plus costs against both. The ambulance paid 60% of the total. The driver got nothing...

ARE NEW YORK CABBIES BECOMING PLEASANT? GIMME A BREAK...!

Complaints against New York Yellow cab drivers are apparently at their lowest level in a decade with passengers lodging fewer complaints against the city's cabbies than in previous years. According to a Taxi and Limousine Commission spokesperson, the reason is because "...they are good, hard-working people and New Yorkers are starting to recognise it."

Reports of refusals and overcharging were also much lower this year. So why is everyone being so nice? Is the famous New York grumpy cabbie really turning over a new leaf?

"It's a combination of things," the TLC spokesperson told Taxi Globe. "One of the reasons for kinder, gentler cabdrivers is that there is a stricter penalty system for bad behaviour and this has helped to weed out the worst offenders."

"I agree with that," said Chris Danielski, a 43-year-old taxi driver from the Queens suburb. "Now they suspend you so quickly, so you have to be nice or you will be out of work!"

Eduardo Solez, a 56-year-old driver from Peru, had a different answer. He told the Globe: "People are more patient since September 11," he said. "Thousands of taxi drivers provided free rides to victims' families, rescue workers and volunteers in the weeks after the attacks. I guess passengers still remember and the experience has helped form a bond - even 7 years on. You guys in London may already have it, but it's still a new experience for us!"

But a third option might be the real reason, according to the TLC. They have made it mandatory for all drivers to attend a four-hour class on how to be nice on the road and in cabs.

"It's kind of like a finishing school for cabdrivers," said Andrew Vollo who used to teach the taxi-driver course at La Guardia Community College in Long Island. "We tried to teach them that not every person who gets in their cab was the enemy." Will NY's Yellow cab drivers ever live it down? "Gimme a break," said Chris Danielski, "are you trying to give us a good name...!"

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