

The first head rolls

Football

AFP, London

Mark Palios on Sunday resigned as chief executive of the English Football Association, the first head to roll in the scandal over manager Sven-Goran Eriksson's affair with an FA secretary with whom Palios also had a brief relationship.

At first the FA denied the reports of the fling between Eriksson and the 38-year-old former model Faria Alam.

But days later it was forced into a hugely embarrassing admission that not only were the rumours true, but Palios also had a relationship with the same woman.

Palios said that he had informed FA chairman Geoff Thompson and his resignation was accepted with immediate effect.

has become clear to me that my action tonight is essential to enable the FA to begin to return to normality.

"When I joined the FA it faced many serious challenges and a lot of very good things have been achieved in the past 13 months.

"I have had the privilege of working with an outstanding leadership team. For the time being, I intend to keep any further thoughts to myself."

Executive director David Davies has been put in temporary charge of the organisation with immediate effect, with the FA due to make a formal statement on the matter on Monday.

His departure comes as a major blow to Thompson, who announced on Tuesday that he had received categorical assurances that Palios had not misled or attempted to mislead the FA.

Events leading up to Palios' resignation began when the News of the World revealed details of Eriksson's affair



MARK PALIOS

"I am very sad that I feel this is necessary," said Palios.

"It has been a privilege to be chief executive of the Football Association but with privilege comes the burden of responsibility."

"It is important for me to take ultimate responsibility for everything the FA has done, in good times and bad."

"Personally, I do not accept I have been guilty of any wrongdoing. But it

It suits Eriksson?

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England football manager Sven-Goran Eriksson, reeling after revelations of his affair with an English Football Association secretary, emerged strengthened after the resignation of FA chief executive Mark Palios, Monday's press reported.

Palios resigned on Sunday, the first head to roll in the scandal over 56-year-old Eriksson's affair with 38-year-old former model Faria Alam with whom Palios also had a relationship.

Just days before a meeting that will decide the future of the Swedish coach with the England eleven, it was "Sven 1, FA 0," according to the mass-circulation tabloids the Sun and the Daily Mail.

Events leading up to Palios' resignation began when the weekly News of the World revealed details of Eriksson's affair with Alam two weeks ago.

The FA subsequently issued a strongly-worded denial of the story, claiming there was "no truth what-

soever" in the suggestion that Alam and Eriksson are having, or have had, a sexual relationship.

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The Mirror tabloid said he could be "the only senior figure to survive the Faria Alam scandal."

The Guardian, referring to Eriksson's colourful love-life, wrote: "For surely the first time, the Swede is the wronged party in a relationship," adding: "Eriksson's hand is strengthened but there are no winners."

The Independent said the FA was embroiled in its "worst-ever crisis" and "sent to meltdown". Eriksson was "set to carry on" but his fate was "uncertain."

After "a stunning own goal by the FA" many heads were set to roll, according to the Daily Mail. But Eriksson was protected by the high regard of his players, plus a clause in his contract that would cost the FA dear to sack him.

Only one popular newspaper, the Daily Express, called for Eriksson's resignation. But even it did not condemn the England coach.

Palios' position came under increasing pressure after the News of the World tabloid newspaper reported Sunday that the FA had offered it details of Eriksson's affair with Alam on the condition the paper stayed silent about the same

woman's fling with Palios.

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