

# Fears for England's future

## Football

AFP, London

By all but one measure it has been a vintage year for English football.

With a forecast-busting deal for overseas rights helping to keep the accountants happy, the strength of the country's top clubs was reflected in Chelsea, Manchester United and Liverpool claiming three of the four semi-final places in last season's Champions League.

Concerns that the dominance of those three plus Arsenal has made domestic competition too predictable and other teams too defensive have yet to be reflected in a drop-off in attendances: just ask anyone struggling to find a ticket for a top flight match in London over the end-of-year holiday season.

Thierry Henry may have opted to seek a new challenge with Barcelona in Spain's La Liga but with a player of the calibre of Fernando Torres moving in the opposite direction, it would be hard to argue that the quality on display in the world's favourite league has been diminished.

Unfortunately for the men who run the Premier League, the one yardstick against which English football came up short in 2007 - the performance of the national team -- is a difficult one to ignore.

England's failure to reach the finals of Euro 2008 proved to be catalyst for a debate on whether the now dominant position of foreign players at most of the top flight's 20 clubs is responsible for the decline in the fortunes of the national team.

The Professional Footballer's Association (PFA), certainly has no doubts.

In a report entitled "Meltdown," the players' union predicted dire consequences if "older, ready-made foreign players" continued to block young English players' path into top clubs' starting XIs.

Living up to its apocalyptic headline, the PFA's report warns: "We are a second rate footballing nation and if nothing is done, we are a decade away from being a third world footballing nation."

The PFA says the answer lies in forcing clubs to include a certain number of home-grown players in their match-day squads, and the principle of nationality-based quo-

tas has won influential backing from the likes of FIFA president Sepp Blatter and Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson.

Others are not so sure. Arsene Wenger, the Arsenal manager, believes there is nothing to be gained from promoting English youngsters through quotas.

"That would only protect those who are not good enough," argues the Frenchman. "If the best English players play with the best world-class players, then they will be even better and develop quicker."

Wenger's compatriot, Marcel Desailly, echoed his arguments, pointing out that England's last failure to qualify for a major tournament - the 1994 World Cup - came at a time when almost three quarters of players in the Premier League were English.

Today the figure is between 30 and 40 percent and Desailly insists: "If you say foreign players are the problem, you are lying to yourself.

"England will not be at Euro 2008

because they were unlucky and because the management was not very good."

With FIFA due to bring forward concrete proposals on player quotas and an Italian, Fabio Capello, having replaced an Englishman, Steve McClaren, as England's coach, the debate over foreign influence on the national game will inevitably rumble on into 2008.

But it may take a backseat for a while against the backdrop of what is shaping up as an intriguing battle for the title.

If Manchester United's renaissance was the story of last season, there is no doubt that Arsenal's unexpected vitality in the wake of Henry's departure has been the dominant theme of the current campaign.

As the year drew to an end, there were few signs of Wenger's men flagging as both Chelsea, who lost the services of Jose Mourinho to a bust-up with club owner Roman Abramovich, and Liverpool strug-

gled to stay with the pace.

But there must be doubts about whether the current Arsenal squad has the strength in depth needed to sustain their form over the closing months of the campaign, particularly if the hugely influential Cesc Fabregas falls victim to injury.

As Rafael Benitez pointedly reminded Liverpool's owners in November, Manchester United invested heavily in new players after reclaiming the title in May. Owen Hargreaves, Carlos Tevez, Nani and Anderson all arriving at Old Trafford in the close-season.

The impact of Hargreaves has been restricted by knee problems but Tevez's understanding with Wayne Rooney grows with every week. Nani has shown flashes of the highest quality and it is testimony to Anderson's form that the loss of Paul Scholes to injury has been comfortably absorbed.

As 2008 beckons, United remain the side to beat.

## Matusi hunted by clubs

AFP, Tokyo

Genoa and several other European clubs are offering to acquire Le Mans and Japan midfielder Daisuke Matsui, sports dailies here reported Thursday.

"Offers for the next season? There are various ones," the 26-year-old Matsui, who has been with the French first division side since 2004, told reporters in Tokyo on Wednesday, according to the Sankei Sports.

"I feel it is about time to think about it. It would be good if this would help me step up," the former J-League Kyoto Sanga player was quoted by the Daily Sports as saying.

Sankei quoted Matsui's associate here as saying that Genoa, who are struggling to remain in Italy's Serie-A, are among the interested clubs.

"We have no idea now," the unnamed official told Sankei about the possibility of Matsui's transfer after the expiry of his contract with Le Mans next June.

Both managers made their feelings clear before squaring up to each other as match officials struggled to calm the situation down.

The feuding duo were eventually pulled apart as the game continued but both Benitez and Jewell face an anxious wait to discover if they will be charged with bringing the game into disrepute.

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## Benitez-Jewell face rap

AFP, Derby

Rafa Benitez and Paul Jewell could find themselves in hotwater with the Football Association after clashing at Pride Park during Liverpool's last-gasp 2-1 win over the Premiership's bottom side.

The rival managers confronted each other during a stormy second half when Derby goal scorer Jay McEveley launched himself at Andriy Voronin with a crude challenge which left the Liverpool striker lying in a crumpled heap.

Benitez took exception to the tackle and raced out of his dug-out while Jewell thought Voronin had made the most of the tackle to get McEveley booked.

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FA officials will now wait to discover what is included in the match report of referee Alan Wiley before

deciding whether or not to take the matter further.

Benitez said: "The longer the game went on the more physical and aggressive Derby were. For me, it was a bad tackle."

"He (Jewell) said his player didn't touch him but it was a different point of view. At least I didn't receive a tackle from him (Jewell) when he approached me."

A more pressing concern for Benitez is the fitness of influential defender Sami Hyypia.

The Finnish centre back limped out of the action after just 53 minutes with a damaged ankle and will undergo intensive tests and treatment in a bid to be fit for Sunday's crucial trip to Manchester City.

Benitez said: "Sammi has a problem with his knee and will have to go and see the club doctor. We will have to wait and see what happens with him but he will be a doubt."

"(McEveley) never touched him. It might have been a foul, I don't know, but that happens in games."

McEveley's first goal of the season, in the 67th minute, looked to have salvaged an unlikely draw for Jewell's side after Fernando Torres had opened the scoring in the 12th minute.

But a frantic finish saw Steven Gerrard bundle home the decisive goal from close range after Lewis Price had spinned Torres's initial shot and McEveley had fired his clearance straight to the England international.

team-mate, Darren Moore.

Jewell said: "Everything seemed to conspire against us after what happened with Stephen Bywater before kick-off and then with Stephen Pearson during the game."

"We were really stretched at the end and the injury problems are mounting up."

Jewell played down his touchline spat with Benitez but did admit he had ordered his players to get stuck into Liverpool after half time and show more fighting spirit.

He said: "You have to compete and make a few tackles when you play against a side like Liverpool, otherwise they will kill you if you show them too much respect."

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Boca Juniors president Pedro Pompilio (L) presents his new manager Carlos Ischia with a jersey on his presentation at the Bonbonera Stadium in Buenos Aires on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Osim back watching football

AFP, Tokyo

Former Japan coach Ivica Osim is back watching football -- albeit on television -- some 40 days after a serious stroke which cost him his job and nearly his life, Japanese football's chief said Thursday.

The 66-year-old Bosnian watched a Real Madrid-Barcelona match on video after moving out of a hospital intensive care unit to a centre for rehabilitation on Monday, according to Japan Football Association president Saburo Kawabuchi.

"You must always study football," Kawabuchi quoted Osim as telling him about his old habit of extensive research on video and television when they met Thursday.

The one-time Strasbourg striker, who led the former Yugoslavia to the 1990 World Cup quarterfinals as coach, also started walking exercises the same day, Kawabuchi said.

## Blues assess damage

INTERNET, undated

Chelsea have been left to assess the damage of their 4-4 draw with Aston Villa as they reflect on the latest setback to their fading Barclays Premier League title hopes.

The dismissal of Ashley Cole and Ricardo Carvalho at Stamford Bridge on Boxing Day has left manager Avram Grant without virtually his entire first-choice defence.

Cole saw red for blocking a Gabriel Agbonlahor shot on the line but Chelsea are to appeal referee Phil Dowd's decision on the grounds of wrongful dismissal.

There was no dispute over Carvalho's exit, however, with the Portuguese centre-back offering an apology to Agbonlahor after the match for his vicious two-footed

lunge.

The suspended duo will miss league matches against Newcastle and Fulham and an FA Cup third-round clash with QPR, joining skipper John Terry on the sidelines.

To make matters worse England midfielder Frank Lampard limped off with a thigh injury and an update on his fitness is expected on Thursday.

Grant said: "We'll wait for a diagnosis on Frank."

"We have a very good medical department and he will be fit as soon as possible."

Carvalho's challenge was just one incident during an afternoon of high drama at Stamford Bridge that ended with Gareth Barry rescuing a point from the spot.

Villa captain tuckied home the penalty awarded for Cole's handball, completing the second of the game's two fightbacks.

Shaun Maloney fired Villa into a deserved lead with a well-taken brace - the second courtesy of a terrible blunder by Chelsea goalkeeper Petr Cech.

But Zat Knight was shown a red card for clipping Michael Ballack and Andriy Shevchenko took advantage from the spot, firing the first of two goals.

After dispatching a brilliant second the Ukraine striker set up Alex to put Chelsea 3-2 ahead before Martin Laursen equalised for Villa to set the grandstand finish.

Ballack plundered a brilliant free-kick - harshly awarded for Laursen's foul on Joe Cole - before Barry pounced on Joe Cole - before Barry pounced on the spot.

Villa boss Martin O'Neill was unhappy with Dowd's performance and pointed the finger at Ballack for the incident that led to Knight's exit.

# বাংলাদেশ নৌবাহিনী সরাসরি কমিশন্ড অফিসার (সাব লেফ্টেন্যান্ট) পদে নিয়োগ ২০০৮-বি ব্যাচ

## উপযুক্তি

বাংলাদেশ নৌবাহিনী ভলাটিয়ার রিজার্ভ কমিশন এক্সিকিউটিভ ও সাপ্লাই শাখা (পুরুষ)

১। ব্যবস্থ। ১০ জানুয়ারী ২০০৮ তারিখে অনুর্ব ২১ থেকে ২৮ বৎসর (এক্সিভিট এবং মোড়োগ্য নয়)।

## শিক্ষাগত মোড়োগ্য

ক। এক্সিকিউটিভ। গণত্ব/ পদার্থ বিজ্ঞান/বসায়ন বিষয়ে নূনতম মাত্রক (এসএসসি হইতে সবগুলি পরীক্ষায় নূনতম জিপিএ-২.৫/২য় বিভাগ/শ্রেণী।

খ। সাপ্লাই শাখা। বাণিজ্যের বিষয়ে নূনতম মাত্রক (এসএসসি হইতে সবগুলি পরীক্ষায় নূনতম জিপিএ-২.৫/২য় বিভাগ/শ্রেণী।

## ৩। বৈবাহিক অবস্থা। অবিবাহিত।

৪। নিয়োগ। চূড়ান্ত মনোনয়ন শেষে বিভিন্নাকার (এক্সিকিউটিভ ও সাপ্লাই) শাখার 'এ্যাটিং সাব লেফ্টেন্যান্ট' পদে নিয়োগ প্রদান করা হইবে। পরবর্তীতে বিষি অনুযায়ী চাকুরী পরিবর্তন করা হইবে।

## ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ও ইলেক্ট্রিক্যাল শাখা (পুরুষ)

৫। ব্যবস্থ। ১০ জানুয়ারী ২০০৮ তারিখে অনুর্ব ৩০ বৎসর (এক্সিভিট এবং মোড়োগ্য নয়)।

## শিক্ষাগত মোড়োগ্য

ক। সরকারি কর্তৃক শৈক্ষিত যে কোন প্রকৌশল বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হইতে নেতৃত্ব আর্কিটেকচার / মেকানিক্যাল / ইলেক্ট্রিক্যাল ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং নূনতম মাত্রক (এসএসসি হইতে সবগুলি পরীক্ষায় নূনতম জিপিএ-২.৫/২য় বিভাগ/শ্রেণী।

খ। উচ্চ শিক্ষা সম্পন্ন প্রাণীক অধ্যাপিকার দেওয়া হইবে।

## ৭। বৈবাহিক অবস্থা। অবিবাহিত।

৮। নিয়োগ। চূড়ান্ত মনোনয়ন শেষে ছায়া কমিশন হিসাবে 'এ্যাটিং সাব লেফ্টেন্যান্ট' পদে নিয়োগ প্রদান করা হইবে।