

The half-time orange

(April 2002)

I trust everyone had a good Christmas and New Year. It seems a long time ago as we are already into April. Thanks to all those who took the time and effort and responded to the last issue. All were read and the majority were for the game changes, which was good to hear. IOTP introduce these game changes for the good of the game as a whole, as it is our intention to have every setup thriving and competitive.

Game changes

Availability flag – every player at an unmanaged/external club will have an availability flag. So he'll either be available or unavailable. Any player you scout or bid for is added to your "watchlist" so that you can monitor him.
(reason for change) – protect unmanaged/external clubs from being plundered. Protect players signed by unmanaged/external clubs from being re-signed thus enabling better bids from unmanaged/external clubs (see below).

Unmanaged/external bids – will be improved. Thus higher fees and better targeted (i.e. so more bids for transfer listed players).
(reason for change) – present system needs improving but fees couldn't be improved as they would just be re-signed (see above).

Signing limit – all clubs will have a signing limit in relation to their average first team rating. Any player with a rating above this limit won't sign. However you won't have to lose any player who's rating increases above the limit.
(reason for change) – more realistic lower divisions. Everyone will know where they stand, who would sign and who wouldn't. A reward for increasing your club's strength would be an increased signing limit. Also at present a 65 rated player wouldn't sign for Div.3's Plymouth from an external side but they would from a managed club. To get round this a dishonest manager would use a bigger club to buy the 65 rated player and then sell him on to Plymouth. This will now not be possible as if the player's rating is above the signing limit then he won't sign, no matter which club he's coming from. Remember also that all clubs will be in the same boat and it will prevent lower league clubs becoming too good too quickly. It would be a matter of building your squad over time, there would be no quick fix.

Wages – player wages will increase for more realism, some are far too cheap at present.
(reason for change) – too much money in the game. Superclubs need to have their idle players costing them.

Bosmans – the one out of contract player sold at the end of the season will receive no compensation if over 24, 50% if 24 or under. All other out of contract players will automatically have their contracts renewed by one year as usual (with out of contract youth players automatically promoted).
(reason for change) – to add a little realism.

Cash injections – the mid-season cash injection has currently been halved, and may change further in the future. Cash will be cut back for clubs who don't need it. That is the largest/richest clubs.
(reason for change) – far too much money in the game.

Finances – will be overhauled to reflect increased wages, with improved sponsorship and gate receipts (which will reflect more on club strength (i.e. signing limit) than real-life club size).
(reason for change) – to rectify the delicate balance of finances. Less money flowing through the setup encourages clubs to sell decent players instead of hoarding them.

Media – a new feature in the results booklet. Every turn some of the setup's bids, scouts, contracts, injuries, finances etc. will be reported. This may result in some information that you wish to be keep private being made public, however all comments are purely at random.
(reason for introduction) – brings more information into the game.

Example:

Lucas NEILL - has signed a new 3-yr contract with Blackburn.
Dario HUBNER – Manchester City have had a £1.8m bid rejected by Brescia.
Mark JACKSON – Wigan have refused a £600k bid from Luton Town as the player is unavailable.
David BECKHAM – out for around 20 turns due to a knee injury.
Eric SKORA – wants first-team football at Preston.
Patrick KENNY – the Bury goalkeeper is now unavailable.
ROMARIO – of Crewe, wants a move to a bigger club.
Roy KEANE – Manchester United have received an £18m bid from Milan.
Bobby ZAMORA – wants a first-team contract at Brighton.
KIKO – Southampton have scouted the Spanish striker currently playing for Extremadura.
Gerard BATICLE – the Metz striker has expressed a desire to play in England.
Jermain DEFOE – will be out of contract at West Ham at the end of the season.
James McFADDEN – the Motherwell player is now available.

Watchlist – a list of the last players (upto 25) you've scouted or bid for or added (in squadlist format). You can use the transfer character "S" to place a player on your watchlist. This replaces the "S" scout option, and you will be able to add upto six players per transfer deal to your watchlist. Please give as much detail on each player, at least their name and club code in brackets. If you just say Juninho it could be any of a dozen players.

(reason for introduction) – allows you to keep track of players you're interested in who are currently unavailable.

Scout report page – on the reverse of your squadlist. Showing your watchlist, upto 10 recommendations from your scouts and upto 10 players who are being looked at by other managers.

(reason for introduction) – increased information.

Scouting a player – no longer available.

(reason for removal) – see watchlist above.

Stadium costs – have now been increased, and more assistance (i.e. grants) will be given to smaller clubs.

(reason for change) – too cheap.

Medical treatment – no longer available.

(reason for removal) – generally unrealistic. You shouldn't be able to buy your way out of an injury crisis.

12-turn sell-on rule – increased to 16 turns, and 28 turns for free agents.

(reason for change) – to slow-down player movement and to restrict managers profiting from free agents.

Automatic youth promotion – any player in the youth squad who's rating is greater than the first-team average rating will automatically be promoted to your first-team squad with a 1-yr contract extension.

(reason for change) – to prevent the likes of Owen being in a youth squad on low wages.

We are currently testing some of the changes in a setup. However all the above rules will come into force on 1st May 2002. There will be a slight bit of tinkering required to get the club finances sorted. It is a fine balance between too much money (and nobody wants to sell) and not enough money (and nobody can buy).

We may be changing the player valuations in the near future. I'd like your opinions on how best to do this. Should you be informed beforehand? Should it just happen? Should clubs be compensated for lower valuations? How will clubs with higher valuations be dealt with, will they have to repay the increased (via instalments)? Perhaps the valuations should remain as they are. Let us know your thoughts.

Currently the player database is limited to around 17,500 players, codes AAA to ZZZ. However our main database, which supports our stats site SoccerAssociation.com has over 33,000 players. At present players are added to the PBM database from the main database. It should be possible to introduce four-letter player codes and thus use the whole database. This would involve quite a bit of work, re-designing turnsheets and software, and converting all the setups. Is it worth it? Comments please.

Euros

We will now accept Euros, but notes only. Current conversion is 1 Euro = 60p, so send in a 10 Euro note and £6.00 will be credited to your account. Hopefully this should make things easier for our overseas customers, especially those from Ireland. Also, if you come back from holiday with a spare 10 Euro note it doesn't have to go unused.

Setup closures

If the number of managers in any setup gets to an uneconomic level then we reserve the right to close the setup. When we announce the closure of a setup it will run until the end of the current season and a message will appear in every results booklet. New managers to the setup will not be accepted and all current managers will be awarded four free turns as compensation. The managers involved can either immediately quit the setup and switch to an available club elsewhere (IOTP will do their very best to accommodate them) or remain in the setup until the end of the season.

We only close setups as an absolute last resort and we are aware of the torment caused. The main reason for setup closures is due to superclubs, thus the changes we're instigating. Once a handful of clubs have the majority of decent players and a mountain of cash then the number of opposing managers slowly dwindles and any new blood doesn't hang around for long as they cannot compete. Also, usually a setup which does close has a high degree of cheating. So if you're building a superclub by dubious means the end result may not be global domination but setup closure! So don't cheat.

Livescores/videwriter

All our games now have livescores available on our website (<http://www.iotp.co.uk>). The live scores will be in real-time and the matches will kick-off at 18:00 GMT, with the usual results format available at 20:00 GMT. To view the livescores simply click on the "results" link at the top and then select your setup. If the livescores option is available then select your competition (division or cup) and click the "livescores" button, alternatively you can click the "videwriter" button. The videwriter displays the latest goals/dismissals in the entire setup. Both the livescore and videwriter windows are automatically refreshed, so you can follow the ups and downs of your club for ninety IOTP minutes if you so wish.

As usual we welcome any comments. We are particularly interested in your ideas about incentive schemes to get more managers involved. What incentive would get every manager actively looking to recruit as many friends as possible?