

The half-time orange

(November 2002)

Thanks for all you comments and votes. It's good to get a complete picture of opinions. In this issue I've firstly given an unbiased selection of managers comments, followed by the votes and conclusions drawn, and ideas to retain the floundering forum. The quiz was a disaster, with very few entrants and nobody getting them all correct, so the prize remains to be claimed on another day.

Manager comments

"The availability rule seems to me to be working fairly in its current format. Why change it for only a small percentage of managers?" - P

"Still quite disappointed at the amount external bids come in at." - D

"I think that the availability rule has strengthened the game, but must admit some selfish frustration at some players seemingly never being available.....Have to agree about the forum managers, god there's some right moaning minnies on there..." - M

"...I have to say your attitude to players (or managers) who use the forum stinks. I am not one of these people due to not being on the Internet, but it's those anoraks (joking!) who keep IOTP in business and you in a job..." - A

"I use the forum, but I think this is best idea you have thought of, as it stops all the big boys with the cash from hogging the best players."

"I think that the availability rule is a very welcome addition to IOTP and is pretty much fine as it is. Changing the rules to make players available more regularly would, I believe, bring nothing beneficial to the game. The availability rule is already helping in my setup....Please consider any adjustments carefully and try not to be swayed by the small percentage of vocal managers who criticise the rule because it inhibits their attempts to build an Allstar XI."

"...Cheers for the improvements thus far and for continually monitoring the games progress" - J

"...seeing the external players of weaker sides ain't really an issue, I think they should be available!"

"Please leave the availability as it is! Otherwise all the big clubs end up with the best players."

"The number of injuries that are occurring are making it very difficult for the smaller clubs with small squads to compete."

"...Don't pamper to the managers of big clubs who's only wish is to buy any player they want in the game on the current turnsheet. It's taken me 279 games to get to third in the First Division - there should be no quick fix..."

"The availability of top players should be made harder....Players in final years of contract should have reduced values and a team should lose all players out of contract at the end of a season."

"...As a manger in EF, I believe the non-EU rule should increase to 4 per squad..." - A

"...the best players should rarely become available...the foreigner rule should also stay."

"...I think it would be interesting if you actually sacked managers more often if they spend loads and don't get results..."

"...All 4 options have been thought through and will benefit the game. Option 3 is the one that must happen."

"...as long as the deal is done with enough money or player+money then the deal should stand and the availability of the player should always be, because in real-life a player is always available at the right price..."

"Don't like proposal 3, the smaller clubs won't make any money because the bigger teams will nick the better ones. You should be allowed 3 foreign players including any non-European players."

"...Frustrating sometimes but realistic..."

"Players should be available all the time, first in first served."

"In general, I am against rule changes, since they jeopardise the long-term plans and game play tactics..."

"Great rule - but could make the game more playable if it was less strict..." - O

"...The selfish managers tend to be the ones who leave first anyway so they are no great loss."

"Since the changes last time, the game is a lot better, so why change it again..." - C

"...I do think you should include a close transfer window as in real-life..." - M

"Shouldn't make players available quicker as it would take the fun out of shopping for a player...No no to 3 clubs in same setup."

"...when a team becomes unmanaged all players should be unavailable for 16 turns to encourage a new manager to take over..."

"I disagreed initially with the rule but like it now...I completely disagree with the under observation list."

"...it's important to keep external clubs strong, especially for European competitions..." - G

"External players should be made available. It should go back to how it used to be."

"It's all well and good saying people are blinkered, but it costs money to keep buying these sheets only to find 1 or 2 player's available all the time. The big clubs already have the best players so club's like mine are finding it hard to catch up to them in the current system..."

"I think the availability was a great idea because it stops mass transfers and also stupid transfers (eg. Vieri to Stoke)"

"Availability is ok - annoying, but ok. I don't think managers should have third clubs..."

"I would definitely support managers being allowed to manage a third club, but I think IOTP should choose the club, rather than top managers choosing?"-G

"...I do think every player has his price, so if you put in a bid of say, 3 or 4 times the value of the player you should be able to get the player."

"You are managing the set-up intelligently and sensitively - protecting us players from rule breakers. Thank you."

"To give managers 3 teams, I think, is a mistake, it's hard to keep an eye on cheating as it is now..." - P

"...I don't think we should allow owning 3 clubs. I think there's enough insider dealing as it is..." - E

"...I think the number of players on your watchlist should increase to 30 or 35..." - D

"...How about making any player rated 67 and above at an unmanaged team being unavailable until a new manager can be found. Good idea about third clubs..."

"...The cost of ground increases especially in lower divs, makes it virtually impossible for clubs to get increased revenue..." - P

"...any manager wanting to return to the old system is just plain foolish!"

"I am happy with the availability rule, although most players I have tried to buy have been unavailable..."

"I feel none of the suggested changes would make the game more realistic, but I do think the current rule needs a little tweak."

"The only slight problem I have is with under observation. I feel this discriminates against me as a SA subscriber...If this isn't removed I will have to consider this as a lack of loyalty by yourselves to me a very loyal customer and withdraw my support to your PBM games and SA. But I have a feeling due to your abuse comments you don't really care to be honest."

"The way you work player availability is fine but should be stricter..."

"Please make HTO more regular. We need to know what the changes are as they happen but end up guessing rule changes."

"As a forum manager I do think the others have a tendency to moan about the availability rule..." – R

"The rule has definitely improved the game, but people on the forum (like me) get fed up of defending it all the time, so the handful of whingers end up thinking they represent the majority."

"I don't think managers should be allowed 2 clubs, never mind 3! The amount of blatant cheating going on is ridiculous."

"As one of your 'blinkered' managers I'd like to thank you for giving us the vote on this. Although any modification is welcome, my own suggestions would be to scrap the rule completely – it's not as if it is in line with the real football world which is a buyers market..."

"I think you should be able to bid for a player at any time. Make it more realistic by clubs rejecting more bids and players turning down moves."

"...I reckon continual game changes only detract from the game..." – B

"Availability is a problem. Can I suggest, when you buy a data search for players of certain positions the information received should be of players who can join you. Negative info is disheartening and frustrating..."

"...I don't think you should fall into the trap of trying to please all the people all the time. Change is always regarded with suspicion and is seldom popular: it's remarkable how quickly people adapt, accept and even approve, given time."

"A 'clean sheet' column for keepers would be good as would an 'assists' column."

"I am not totally against availability altogether, it's just that I can't introduce my mate's to the game because what's the point, they take over a club and then they want to improve their squad, player's they'd like they can't buy."

"...Changing the system would make the game less frustrating, but is that not what makes it appealing in the first place? The top clubs should not receive any cash injections..." – P

"...how about some better recommendations" – C

"...With the signing limit and the availability clause I now no longer find myself chasing after players that are not going to sign for my club!"

"When a player turns down a new contract offer, a reason should be given why he won't sign a new contract."

"You people are running the game & doing a good job, let's get on with it & enjoy it!" – D

"I think the availability rule is the best rule change in years!"

"This is my eight season...this is one of the best changes made to the game in that time." – J

"I would like to see some sort of priority given to teams who have scouted players first..." – D

"...Where I disagree with the current rules of signing players is having to pay a transfer fee for a free agent or an out of contract player at the end of the season..."

"...The current availability rule gives smaller clubs no chance of improving their fortunes!" – D

"I believe a good suggestion would be that you cannot sell a player to any club if he is injured."

"Why not scrap the availability box and replace it with a percentage box, ie. James McFadden at Motherwell, they would want say an EXTRA 50% on his transfer value..."

"...The fact that people moan about the new rules is that we've had it too easy too long..."

"I'll admit that I'm guilty of it but I believe that there are too many transfers occurring..."

"Clubs should be limited to no more than five 70+ players..." – A

"I like player availability as it maintains the integrity of a setup for longer..." – D

"If someone is unavailable then they are unavailable!"

"I feel that you have hit the nail on the head when you mentioned 'blinkered'." - P

A few points to mention regarding the comments above. When doing a database search you are now able to specifically ask for only available players. Also, the under observation list has been changed so that only players that have been on your watchlist for more than four turns can appear. The recommendations you received return players around the ratings you require in the positions you are low in. If you have Manchester United, it is extremely hard to find players to recommend. But if they are of no use just ignore them.

Vote result

	Yes	Not bothered	No	No + NB
1) Shorten unavailability time	35%	37%	27%	64%
2) State number of turns until available on watchlist	56%	21%	23%	44%
3) Players rated under 50 all available	42%	35%	23%	58%
4) Decrease unavailability of external players	43%	31%	26%	57%

As can be seen the vote is pretty much inconclusive. Only one of the options had a majority yes, and as such this feature will be added shortly. However it won't be a simple turn counter, as this will enable the bigger clubs to plan ahead and make sure they have the finances available to buy each player required when they become available. More details in the next issue. As there is no overall consensus, IOTP will tinker with availability as and when required.

The forum

There was a backlash to a throwaway line in the last rushed HTO regarding the forum and for that I apologise. It was obviously a big generalisation but I wrongly presumed that the forum users would take it in the right way. Sorry. Just to show the absurdity of the situation though the user who initially complained about IOTP complaining about the complaining forumers and not showing them enough respect, shortly afterwards went up to kick-off the very mature "Official I hate Julian thread"!! Lately the forum has deteriorated, with the banal petty comments becoming the norm. I propose the introduction of forum bouncers to police the forum so that it regains it's appeal as countless IOTP managers stay well clear of the forum because of the large degree of inane worthless comments. Forum bouncers will be anonymous and will have the ability to suspend users, kill posts and kill threads. All bouncers will be selected by IOTP so if you would like to become a bouncer and take some responsibility for the continuation of the forum please e-mail webmaster@iotp.net with your details (including your forum name). You must of course be a frequent forum user. Ideally I'd be looking for about 6-10 bouncers. If these cannot be found then the forum will have to close.

Christmas

Our last working day is Wednesday 18th December 2002 and we'll return on Thursday 2nd January 2003. Always try to post your turns a day or two early in December as the postal system quickly slows down, resulting in a deluge of late turnsheets.

Merry Christmas and Happy 2003 from all the IOTP staff and thanks for your continued support