

The half-time orange

(May 2004)

The months have flown by and I cannot believe we have reached May already. We have reached the end of the domestic season but we can look forward to the European Championships this summer to keep us ticking over until the pre-season friendlies start.

10th anniversary

In off the Post will be celebrating their 10th anniversary this year. The first setup was 'Calcio Italiano' which amazingly is still going. Over the last ten years we've moved from Sheffield (a student bedroom), to Braintree (an attic), to Halstead (a dining room, then an office with no toilet opposite the pub, then a place above a florist's and a video shop) and finally to Nottingham (a cheap council bunker). Many staff have come and gone. Most notably Jimmy (first employee and long-serving no.2 now back in Halstead, disappeared on his goodbye do with a couple of dodgy geezers and not seen since!), Dan (after two stints now back in Essex), Terri (now a married mother of three, including two mad twin boys, back in Halstead), Nick (just returned from back-packing despite his problems with stress and fatigue), Gemma (lived a stone's throw away but still couldn't be arsed to get out of bed) and Alan (back in Reading, perhaps still at his Gran's). And of course there was Bungle, the greatest dog that ever graced the IOTP office, R.I.P big fellah. Then there were the prize guys, the golden nuggets. The girl with bad depression who ran off with her kettle, poor old Damien (so s-l-o-w), the YTS kid who fainted at the interview and sent his step-dad round when he was sacked (for taking the afternoon off for a pool!), the lass who could gas for England and who only shut up when handed her P45. Ah! Happy days!

Over the years we've added new games and even tried a fantasy game (Fantasmagoria, hohum!). The website has developed and e-mail is now a big part of IOTP. Technology has come on in leaps and bounds. The very first setup was done using a 4-page a minute laser printer (it cost £600 in the summer of 1993 and is still my main home printer!) and a double floppy disc drive. No hard drives back then, I don't even think our first one reached even 1Gb!

Lots of managers have also been and gone. These included John Terry and his brother Paul who if I remember rightly liked a dodgy deal or two. Fortunately when IOTP started an advert in a football mag actually brought in a decent response. There were lots of mags to choose from as well, the weekly 90 minutes, a weekly Shoot, Total Football etc. These days advertising in the football mags isn't worth bothering with as the response is so dreadful.

So a big thanks to all our managers (past and present) for an eventful ten years and let's hope we're still here in another ten. Maybe by then I'll completely re-write the game engine, which would cope with online, e-mail and PBM games as one. As ever it's better than a proper job.

Many thanks, Willa

International codes

Some of you may have spotted that the international codes for some countries have recently changed, e.g. Spain was SPA but is now ESP, Holland was HOL but is now NED. The reason for doing this is to bring all the countries into line with the format that FIFA use. To get a full list of all the club and international codes order luxury U in the luxuries section on your turnsheet.

Future advertising

In recent years we have placed adverts in the major football magazines but we have had little joy from these. In the future we plan to advertise more on the internet, particularly on sites dedicated to PC football management games. We hope that since we have a more targeted market the results will be substantially better. *Can you recommend any sites that we should be advertising on?* With advertising on the net it is more vital that the regular users of the forum adhere to the rules set out. The last thing we want to happen is to lose potential new punters who turn away after viewing the rubbish that is so often posted on the forum. As potential new customers will be coming directly to the website we really need to sell the game to them. *Any ideas?*

During the 10 years that IOTP has been going, we have only increased the standard price of a turn once; from £2 to £2.25. At the beginning, we were more expensive than our competitors but now we are cheaper. The cost of paper, envelopes, wages, electricity, rates etc. have all gone up but this increase has never been passed on to the customers during this time. So I'm afraid it's going to be inevitable that the cost of a turn fee is going to increase some time in the future. Of course, we will notify you of any price change when or if it happens. However, if our new advertising drive is successful then this would pleasingly delay the price hike.

Forum

This forum is/was designed to discuss IOTP. I do realise that some of you want to discuss other topics and that is fine but please only discuss sensible subjects. Threads such as "what shall I eat for breakfast" do not need to appear on this forum. If you really want to know what you should eat for

breakfast, ask your mum/wife/partner etc. Also if you are banned and then come back making a grand entrance we will simply ban you again. Too many of you are proud that you are getting a ban. The solution is simple, if you're breaking the rules, being a nuisance or just being childish we'll suspend you, and if you carry on we will kick you off for good. Remember if your forum account is cancelled or suspended then you cannot use the player search facility.

Some of the more vocal forum users have asked for the re-introduction of bouncers. We see no point in having bouncers again. The one's calling for the bouncers to return are the very one's who forced them to go in the first place. If we had bouncers, then the forum users would moan at them sooner or later instead of the IOTP staff. It's a no-win situation. The rules are there for a reason if you don't like them, don't post.

Play-By-E-mail

You can now pay by Solo if you play-by-email. Just make a note of your issue number, start date & expiry date in the "Question/comments" box on your email turnsheet.

If you have an e-mail address and also want to receive your turn by e-mail then make a note of your e-mail address on your turnsheet and let us know you also want to receive the PBeM turn. It only costs an extra 10p per club per turn. You'll receive all the information before your postal turn and you always have the option of sending your turnsheet by e-mail if the post service is disrupted (again).

Euros

We do accept Euros, but notes only. The current conversation rate is 1 Euro = 60pence. So if you send in a 10 Euro note, £6 will be credited to your account. This helps our overseas customers and also if you come back from holiday with a spare 10 euro note it doesn't have to go unused.

SoccerAssociation.com yearbooks

To get rid of our remaining stock we can now offer the 2003 yearbook (313pp) covering the 2002 championships of Brazil, Argentina, Sweden, Norway, Russia, Japan, USA and Finland plus the 2003/04 yearbook (757pp) covering the 2002/03 championships from all the major countries (18 in total) for the mighty sum of just £10 (including postage). So less than cost price. Simply send a £10 cheque payable to SoccerAssociation.com in with your turnsheet. Both yearbooks contain full line-ups and stats from all the top division clubs plus an A-Z of all participating players with full career details.

Suggested ideas

These are merely suggestions that we have received and are asking for your comments on. These are **not** rule changes **only** suggestions.

-Change to availability rule

External players, rather than have 5+, 10+ etc.... the player should be given an 'A,B,C,D,E code' to distinguish how much you should be bidding for a player.

i.e. An 'A' rated player would be 1.3 times the players value whereas an 'E' rated player could be say 5 times their value (The code would denote how reluctant the club is to sell that player - so a low rated player would probably be an 'A') These could/would also change with time, as the current system does. I mean, in the real world every player has his price don't they? So e.g. Kaka is unavailable at present - he has a code of 'E'. If someone can afford 50m then he could join them, or wait until he becomes 'B' or 'A' rated but if they wait someone could sneak in and buy them. If the biggest team is sitting there with a huge bank balance just waiting for players to come available in the current system they are still not going to have to pay hugely for them. However with this idea they may end up paying the 50mill+ prices and soon enough won't be so dominant in the buying market as the cash will start to run low! Though on the reverse side this could cause prices within setups (managed teams) to rocket! *What are your opinions about this?*

-Player's attitude

One suggestion put forward is that 67+ rated players in your squad must play a percentage of games within a certain period of time or they will demand a transfer and you must sell them. They will be put up for auction so that all managers have an equal opportunity to buy them. The reason for the suggestion is to try and stop "super clubs" having all the best players and not playing them all. *What percentage should it be? Is it fair that you could lose players in this manner?*

-Out of contract players

We have touted this idea in the past and it has got a disappointing response, but if a player is out of contract at the end of the season you should lose them. The current rules only allow you to lose one out of contract player at the end of the season. It therefore increases your responsibility of managing the squad and is more realistic. *Is this fair?*

As usual we welcome any comments. We are particularly interested in your ideas about incentives schemes to get more managers involved. We need new blood!

Cheers, Nathan