



Working the International Circuit:

Job instability among national coaches

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Job instability for first team football managers and coaches is the stuff of legend. In this issue the article by Dr Sue Bridgewater of Warwick Business School reveals over 500 management dismissals in the top four English football divisions since the Premiership was set up in the 1992-1993 season. Moreover, according to her research the average length of tenure for a football manager in England has gone down from 2.7 years in 1992 to 1.72 years by 2005. Anecdotal evidence suggests the situation is little better across many other professional leagues in other countries, although there has never been a large-scale international comparative study made of this issue. There is also much evidence to suggest that frequent firings far from disciplining poorly performing managers with the aim of improving team performance in reality can have the opposite effect.

What has been less researched in depth is the amount and effects of job insecurity of national coaches. Soccer Investor has started a project on this issue in order to attempt to answer some of these questions, but early indications show that the practice of hiring and firing coaches without a strategic plan in place is as prevalent among national associations as it is among club directors. The data set spans

the employment contracts, job tenure and performance of national coaches of associations affiliated to five continental Confederations (UEFA, CONMEBOL, CONCACAF, AFC and CAF) spanning Europe, South America, North America and the Caribbean, Asia and Africa. We have initially left out the eleven national associations belonging to the Oceania

Confederation covering the Pacific islands on the grounds of their relative importance in the world of football. Australia, an Oceania member until the Football Federation of Australia joined the AFC in 2006 has been

included in our data set, although the country actually qualified representing Oceania in FIFA 2006. The detailed study, the results of which will be published in later editions of Centre Circle, covers the years 1993 to the end of 2006.

The initial results are revealing. In 2006 alone we estimated that 68 national associations, over a third of the total 198 associations of our sample affiliated to FIFA during that year, changed their team bosses. The instability varied across Confederations with 70% of CONMEBOL members changing a national coach last year and only 20% of Asian football nations changing their helmsman (See Table). Admittedly, last year saw two large international football tournaments – the FIFA World Cup held in Germany in the summer and the bi-annual African Cup of Nations held in Egypt at the start of the year. High turnover is expected in such years and these two tournaments together involved a total of individual 43 national associations, with five CAF members (Angola, Ghana, Togo, Tunisia and the Ivory Coast) playing in both of them. In the case of the FIFA World Cup, it is not surprising that relatively more performance pressure would be placed on South America coaches with 40% of CONMEBOL members (Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador and Paraguay) playing in the tournament, a proportion that falls to 27% of UEFA members, 9% of CAF members



Steve McClaren

and 9% of AFC members competing. It is well acknowledged that the Sword of Damocles hangs over those coaches whose teams perform poorly or even moderately well, but below expectations. On the other hand success can often lead not only just to praise and contract extensions as was the case with Philip Scolari and Portugal, but often to more attractive or lucrative openings. Gus Hiddink led the Netherlands to the top four in the 1998 World Cup, took Korea Republic to the semi-finals in 2002 and helped Australia qualify for FIFA 2006 in Germany before taking up an appointment as team manager for Russia, although his successful peregrinations have not pleased the Dutch tax authorities. There are, of course, some national coaches who have stayed in position for a relatively long time while other countries have changed their team bosses almost as regularly as the most disloyal of football clubs. Between 1993 and 2006 for example, Nigeria has changed national coach twelve times. In 2006, as shown in the Table (above), ten countries made more than one change in head coach during the twelve month period.

One frequently expressed view among some commentators is that the life of a national coach is quite comfortable, with fewer games and longer periods in the job, compared to their club counterparts. Gavin Hamilton in his editorial for the December 2006 issue of magazine World Soccer, commenting on the low levels of loyalty shown by most clubs to their managers, wrote: "It's a different story regarding loyalty at international level, where the Football Association's award of a four year contract to Steve McClaren flies in the face of all available evidence. The average - length of a national team coaching contract is two years - the time it takes to qualify for, and compete in, a major tournament. Anything longer than that seems foolhardy. In South Africa, Carlos Alberto Parreira has "done a Sven", signing a lucrative deal that ties him - and the federation - together until the 2010 World Cup." However, despite Hamilton's claim all national coaches do not receive the 'silver gloves' handling meted out by the English FA to Sven with his £4.5 million per annum four year contract signed in 2004 covering the World Cup and Euro 2008.

Consider the case of 58 year old Dutchman Arie Haan who was national team coach of Cameroon for six months until he resigned in February of this year. His relatively short tenure of office was far from

CONFEDERATION	Number of Member Associations	Associations Changing Coach at least once	Turnover as % of associations in Confederation	Countries changing coach more than once in 12 months
UEFA	52	20	38%	Moldova, Hungary
CONMEBOL	10	7	70%	
AFC	46	9	20%	Uzbekistan
CAF	53	24	42%	Cape Verde Islands, Liberia, Malawi, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda
CONCACAF	35	8	23%	
Total	196	68	35%	

silver lined. Haan, appointed on a two year contract, had problems despite on-the-field success. Haan's two matches in charge were both 3-0 African Cup of Nations Group Five qualifying wins against Rwanda and Equatorial Guinea. However, Last autumn he threatened to take a dispute with his employers, the Cameroonian national Football Association FECAFOOT, to FIFA for their claim that he had absent without leave in contravention of his contract. "It's two months since Mr Haan left the country," FECAFOOT General Manager Jean Lambert Nang told a news conference at the time. "I don't know where Mr Haan is. The last time I got in touch with him was on the Internet. Since then I've tried to contact him in vain. Nobody in FECAFOOT knows where he is," Nang said. In contrast, Haan bitterly told the press that the association knew he was in Vietnam last November to monitor the players of the Cameroon Olympic team and regarding residence in the country he said "... there is no problem but I still don't have a house or apartment."

Simply being paid is a problem facing some national coaches, unfortunately a situation that is most prevalent for those taking up employment in an African country. In 2002, former Zambian national coach Jan Brouwer refused to leave Zambia after his work permit expired until his salary arrears of US\$200,000 were settled. The Dutchman was suspended by CAF after a bust up with match officials during an Africa Cup qualifier against Madagascar. After the suspension he was given a job at the sports ministry looking after youth development until his two year contract with the Zambian FA (FAZ). The then president of FAZ, Evaristo Kasunga, insisted his association was not responsible for the debt accrued while Sports minister at the time Levison Mumba admitted that his ministry had no money to clear the arrears. The former coach subsequently ended up in the middle of a political row with the Zambian parliament calling for the arrest of the Sport's Ministry officials responsible for illegally diverting funds intended for youth development. It was claimed that half the funds had

been paid to Brouwer and the rest used for funding Zambia's preparations for the African Nations Cup in Mali paying players, a travel agent and travel expenses. Brouwer should have been forewarned. In 2001, one of his predecessors ex-Zambia coach, Ben Bamfuchile was threatened by the president of FAZ with a life ban from football for threatening to sue the cash-trapped association to recover salary arrears. For that matter, so should have Bamfuchile who took over Zambia again as caretaker before resigning last summer to become national coach of Namibia. He complained that ZAF had never offered him a contract despite three years of work. He took over the Zambian side after Kalusha Bwalya quit the post after their exit from the African Cup of Nations finals in Egypt.

Far from being an advantage the infrequency of games and the consequent lack of regular day-to-day contact with their selected players can prove to be a positive disadvantage for national coaches. Sir Bobby Robson, former England manager and now consultant to the FAI and assistant to national coach Steve Staunton of the Republic of Ireland, has been quoted by international football writer and expert Keir Radnege as saying: "People take up management because it's the next best thing after playing, it keeps you close to the game. As a national team manager you lose that closeness to your players. You see them once a month." However, while most of the English players selected for the 2006 World Cup squad played in England so it was much easier for the national coach to meet them and to watch them play, for some countries most of the team play out of the country often a long way away. This is a particular problem for African national team coaches. Research by Soccer Investor on the 2006 edition of the African Nations Cup showed that 70% of the 368 players selected played for clubs outside of their country of origin, 55% of them playing within Europe. This problem proved to be the final straw in the break down in the strained relationship short-term relationship between Arie Haan and FECAFOOT. Haan

complained that the Cameroon Football Federation were insisting he be based in Yaounde, but that he felt his job would be better served living in Europe, where almost all of the current Cameroon international squad is based. "It is ridiculous that I would have to live in Cameroon while all my players are in Europe," said Haan.

Not only problems with organisation as found by Haan, but poor conditions and facilities is another reason often cited why coaches and national associations fall out of love. Unfortunately again, the poorer African nations seem to attract a great deal of opprobrium on these counts. After just four months as national coach of Liberia Egyptian Shawky Hussein Mohmoud announced his resignation citing "poor accommodation and facilities" provided by the Liberian government. There is, of course, always two sides to every story. Liberia's deputy Sports Minister Marbue Richards refuted the Egyptian coach's claims saying: "The coach is simply inadaptible. The situation here cannot be compared to standard practices as we are rebuilding from scratch. We have tried to make coach Shawky feel at home, but with the language barrier it's always a problem getting across to him," Richards said. Shawky hardly speaks English and Richards told BBC Sport that it has been difficult for the Egyptian to communicate. He said: "We prefer someone who speaks good English and is adaptable. " While the countries in CAF slowly improve their facilities, there are still many countries and coaches willing to be flexible. The long category of unhappy experiences does not seem to have diminished some African country's tastes for foreign as opposed to domestic coaches or some expatriate coaches taste for African employment. Despite the sour relationship between the Football Association of Malawi (FAM) and former coach of the national team, German Burkhard Ziese, the job opportunity arising from his dismissal still attracted new German applicants. Ziese was fired in September last year on the basis of a long list of charges including insubordination and open defiance; lack of respect for authority; absconding duties without satisfactory reasons; fraud and corruption; lack of submission of match reports and use of abusive language to officials and players. A day after he was fired he suffered minor injuries after being manhandled by angry Malawian football supporters at Blantyre's Kamuzu Stadium.



National team managers in many countries have to face not only a fickle press and volatile fans, as do their club counterparts, but also levels of political interference ranging from public criticism to behind the scenes manipulation of national association's hiring and firing policies. For example, Dino Zoff resigned as Italy's national coach following statements made to the press by politician and AC Milan owner Silvio Berlusconi on the tactics employed by him in the Euro 2000 final game. Berlusconi claimed he was "indignant" that Zoff had not assigned a man to mark Zinedine Zidane saying to the media that the result of the match, the Italian team's 2-1 defeat by France, would have been different if he had done so. Tendering his resignation Zoff said at the time: "I don't take lessons in dignity from Mr Berlusconi," Zoff said after announcing his resignation. I don't understand why someone has to undermine the work of someone else. I will reply to Berlusconi personally. I was offended as a man. Mr Berlusconi does not have to tell me what to do." The former Italian goalkeeper had held the position after being appointed national coach following Italy's exit from the 1998 World Cup. In some countries, politicians interfere more directly in sporting decisions. In the spring of last year Portuguese coach Artur Jorge, Arie Haan's predecessor, resigned as national team coach of Cameroon citing the

continual interference of the Sports Minister Philippe Mbarga Mboa in team matters.

However, as is the case with club managers, the main reason for the termination of contracts is team performance either actual, or in relation to expectations. In many cases poor performance leads to outright dismissal or to a resignation or to a termination by 'mutual agreement' a term familiar to all managers who have spent their careers in club football. Costa Rica's Brazilian coach, Alexandre Guimaraes, resigned after his team's performances at the World Cup in Germany where the Central American nation suffered three straight defeats. He said local media unfairly blamed him for their defeats. Ilija Petkovic, Serbia's national coach, said he would step down after last year's FIFA World Cup tournament following his side's 6-0 defeat by Argentina. Moreover, it is not just the size of a defeat that matters in ending contracts, but defeat by a weaker opponent can also lead to problems. For example, Peter Bozsik resigned as national team coach for Hungary, then ranked in 76th position according to FIFA Coca-Cola ratings, two weeks after a humiliating 2-1 loss to 111th ranked Malta last October. The pressure on national coaches is constant since it is not only performance in major international tournaments such as the World Cup or the Copa America that leads to dismissals, but also national team performance in the series of qualifying matches leading up to these competitions. Last year Antoine Hey was appointed as national coach of Gambia three years after sacking their last manager Sang Ndong and the disbanding the national team in 2003 after a disastrous run of results in both the World Cup and African Nations Cup qualifiers. To give another example, the Libyan Football Association dismissed Mohsen Saleh after a poor start to the 2008 African Nations cup qualifiers. There is a great deal of evidence coming out of research by academics in England and Scotland suggesting that, at the club level at least, poor performance is a result of the insecurity of managerial jobs and not just a cause of firings. This work is still in its infancy.

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The findings of this article are taken from an ongoing major study of research into the determinants of national team and coaching performance.