THE SOCCER DRAMA GOES ON

The months after “Play the game” brought new important chapters to the drama about FIFA in which its president Sepp Blatter and the British reporter Andrew Jennings from the Daily Mail play important — though very different — roles.

**December**

The authorities in Zürich legal proceedings against Blatter due to lack of evidence. Blatter had been reported to the police in May by 11 of 24 members of the FIFA Executive Committee as a reaction to a report on alleged irregularities written by the then secretary general, Michel Zen-Ruffinen. The prosecutor in Zürich says that the Executive Committee had approved of some of the actions that Blatter was accused of. He also states that some of the actions may have been considered irregular in other company types than FIFA. According to the crown witness Zen-Ruffinen, he himself was never questioned during the police investigation.

**January**

When questioned by Andrew Jennings about ballot rigging at the FIFA presidential elections in 1998 and 2002, Sepp Blatter admits that “mistakes had been made and now I will take action.” An internal investigation is set up against Jack Warner, president of CONCACAF and a close ally of Blatter.

**March**

A local Swiss court orders Somalia’s FA boss Farah Addo to pay damages to FIFA President Sepp Blatter for defamation. Addo must pay Blatter $7,500 compensation after claiming that bribery had assisted the FIFA president’s re-election in 1998.

**March**

Andrew Jennings writes in the Daily Mail that Blatter has received a secret annual payment of around 3,600,000 Euro a year on top of his generous salary since 1997. This payment should have been ordered by FIFA’s ex-president João Havelange as a “loyalty bonus.”

**March**

FIFA and Sepp Blatter decide to take legal action against Andrew Jennings and the Daily Mail for their writings. The case will be brought to a British court.

**April**

Andrew Jennings and the Daily Mail disclose that president Blatter has appointed an associate of 40 years standing to investigate the election fraud. The head of investigation is Marcel Mathier who chairs FIFA’s Disciplinary Committee and, like Blatter, grew up in the Swiss canton of Valais.

If you want to be updated on the further chapters of this story, you can join the Sports Intelligence Unit at www.play-the-game.org

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A football leader with rare courage

When a handful of international soccer leaders suddenly pulled out, Jim Stjerne Hansen gave a last-minute accept to oppose the critics of FIFA

By Steen Bilde

One of Play the game’s most lively sessions featured the testimonies of two investigative journalists — Andrew Jennings from the Daily Mail and Jens Weinreich of Berliner Zeitung — detailing corruption and intrigue in international football. Their stories documented a quagmire of bribes, corruption and dubious financial transactions, which, according to their evidence, are all part of a day’s work for international football’s governing body, FIFA.

Faced with these charges, a number of FIFA defenders chose to cancel their attendance a few days before the conference began — adding to the substantial number of soccer leaders from FIFA and UEFA who had said no to public debate in the first place.

However, despite being well aware that he would face criticism from both the audience and the panel, one man from the football establishment was willing to appear to the conference at just a few hours’ notice. That man was Jim Stjerne Hansen, General Secretary of the Danish Football Association (DBU) — which, last April, supported the re-election of FIFA President Sepp Blatter.

Jim Stjerne Hansen took Jennings and Weinreich’s disclosures calmly, then defended the DBU’s support for Blatter with these words:

“We found that the African opponent, Issa Hayatou, did not present a real alternative. Besides, FIFA has many good things to offer — it has built up football into the most popular and profitable sport in the world.”

Before Jim Stjerne Hansen’s address, both Jennings and Weinreich had piled one revelation on top of another — including stories of committee members wanted by the police for fraud in Argentina, Brazil and Russia, the buying of votes, financial irregularities, widespread favours for friends, and manipulation of FIFA’s influential committees. In addition, Jennings maintained that Blatter used FIFA resources to finance his own successful election campaign.

Fraud was also the subject of Jens Weinreich’s disclosures regarding the bankruptcy of FIFA’s marketing company ISL in 2001. Despite realising a vast income through the sale of global contracts and TV rights, Weinreich claims that ISL’s profits were squandered through finan-
Did you know that the dictatorship’s largest torture centre was situated just a thousand metres from the River Plate Stadium where the World Cup matches were played?« asks Argentinean journalist Ezequiel F. Moores during his harrowing account of the human rights abuses which accompanied the football World Cup in Argentina. Moores states that between 1976 and 1983, the Argentinean regime murdered 30,000 people and tortured something in the region of 5,000 in 340 concentration camps across the nation. »The prisoners at the Marine School were so close to the stadium that they could hear the cheers from the crowd at the same time as the shrieks from their tortured colleagues,« he adds.

Moores questions how FIFA, the international football federation, could have allowed football’s world championships to take place under such conditions. And moreover, why did the 15 visiting teams consent to take part? He poses numerous similar questions – many of which still remain unanswered.

»This could be because the answers would bring shame on the nation« he continues. »How could it be that millions of Argentineans celebrated goals with such passion in the midst of all this terror?«

When Argentina won the competition, the leaders of the regime, exiles, prison guards and prisoners all joined in the celebrations. In the de Bonafini household, the husband celebrated while the wife – Hebe de Bonafini, President of the dissident group ‘Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo’ – sat in the kitchen and cried.

»It is ironic,« says Moores, »that the game of football can be used – and misused – by both the oppressor and the oppressed.«

He adds that the 1978 World Cup was clearly used as a tool to legitimise the Argentinean dictatorship in the eyes of the outside world – the most explicit example of political manipulation of sport since the Berlin Olym-

The Many Faces of Football

In Argentina, both oppressors and the oppressed celebrated their nation’s World Cup triumph in 1978

By Kirsten Harkjær Larsen

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