

**KICKABOUT  
HINTZ & TIPZ  
FROM  
THE  
MANAGERS:**

TEAM CATEGORY

BEN: First of all you need to decide which type of team you want to build. Obviously a P/S team is the best to go for but is also the one which requires the most planning, attention, effort and money. I don't always have enough time to do all the deals with other managers over the phone so I prefer to go for a Skill team which has the advantage of up to +6 levels to your midfield if you are playing with 10 skill outfield players. It is not very difficult to build a power or skill team as you should get around 4 skill or power players from your qualified apprentices on average each season. Add to this a couple of deals with other managers and you've got the basis of either a power or a skill side.

NIEL: I prefer power teams myself purely because you have a little more influence over players missing games. Power teams pick up less injuries and if you don't play aggression then you are likely not to get that many bookings and such. However I am seriously considering changing now as with the advent of creativity ratings a full skill creative team can generate a lot of shots on target.

Allan: I currently have players of all types although I have only just gone P/S in the Mountbatten. My power teams seem to be able to do better in cups (Niel: That explains why I seem to do so well in cups of late too then?) for some reason and my skill sides seem to have been doing better in the league recently. The weather is the real reason I went Power with most of my sides as it always seems to give them more of an advantage. Although it has tended to depend on how my set up or taken over sides leans.

Martin: If you are taking over an established team or even a newly created set-up, then more often than not the team category will have been decided for you (i.e. weight of numbers). Stick with what is easiest at the beginning, only changing to your preferred category when the team is settled. This is such an important aspect of the game, especially now with bw/cr ratings (see niels comments above), that the decision on which category to go for should not be taken lightly.....my choice, if you can't go p/s (and not many managers can!!) then go skill and create those shots on goal.....

Torleiv: I've only one side, and as I have experienced my P/S side seems to get along without to many injuries, and my high aggression level gives me few (but sometime serious) disciplinary problems, but tend to bring injuries onto my opponents.....

And you always get them 18 extra levels if you can bring a only P/S side together.....

Brian: Not much more to add to the above really. I have one skill side and one power and tend to find the power team does better in the cups. Having a skill

side with creative players can lead to a lot of shot generation, while having a power side can lead to lots of 0-0 draws. The important thing is to pick a category and then go for it, building your side around that category.

Chris: I sometimes think that perhaps instead of all the hard work of building teams in a certain category, it might be as fruitful to have a team that could be swapped between different categories depending upon the weather. You'd need a deep squad, a few PS players, but instead of having a skill tam that lost six levels everytime it froze, you could change your team to power by some judicious team selection and actually gain six levels, ie an increase in twelve levels on what it would have been.

#### PLAYER AGES

BEN: To build a decent team which improved with successive seasons you will need to concentrate on your younger players rather than older mid level players (21-7 etc). Ideally your team will consist of 17-20 year olds plus one older player to act as your captain. Any players older than this should be sold (either to the non-league or some other unsuspecting manager). There are perhaps two exceptions to this rule:

(i) Special players of any kind. These players are usually worth holding on to unless they really are in dire straits (e.g. if your 25-12 winger aged into a 26-4 then it's probably time to get rid.)

(ii) 20-12 players aged to 21-7 or 8 at the end of the season. 21-8 is not bad but only keep hold of them if you have no replacement players.

NIEL: I agree here, I tend to keep the 21-7/8 players as back ups then start selling them off once I've brought a few younger players through. It's worth keeping any old level 12s around if they went star last season and are still 12 as they probably won't fetch much cash and they have 16 chances of starring again, though if they're not your captain then get rid towards the end of the season to give your capt every chance of rejuvenating.

Allan: Ah well a difference of opinion here, as I tend to sell my 19 year olds and keep my older players due mainly to a couple of factors:

1. Starring 19yo's don't anywhere near as much as they did in the past, due to a programming change. (Niel: Don't what?)
2. SP's - these are hard enough to earn without giving them away!! A 19 - 10 will take will take two SP's this season and 3 NEXT before having a chance of starring, whereas 3 SP's this gives 13 thirteen chances THIS season and lets you you plan elsewhere for next..... this will be continued further on.....

Martin: There is no easy answer to this subject as each team will be different.

You need youth to keep the team competitive but you also want older players for those all to infrequent stars. In addition, any specialists you have will be older players. Try for a mix of the two, keeping a good youth plan in operation (no smart comments about my o.a.p. sides please!!) whilst retaining a few oldies for star/rejuvenation purposes....then pray!!!

Torleiv: In my opinion, a 21-8 player (especially when P/S team) is hard to replace at start of season, as he give 8+3 levels, and therefor I tend to play and coach them at least till sess.10, before my replacements get good enough to enter the team instead. But my aim is always to have at least 50-60% of my outfield players beneath the age of 20, and always my GK, as he's taking most of the SP's

Brian: In past years, I have probably been guilty of keeping onto older players for too long. However, it all depends on the circumstances. Like Allan and Martin I tend to have a few 20 year olds and older in my side. As well as the chance of going star, they also have a good chance of gaining you a level through experience. Also, at the start of the season, having a few higher level players in your side gives you that chance to win some matches and get some SPs, so you can actually train them some more!

The crunch choice is, do you train up an 18-2 APP, using 10 SPs or do you train up at 21-8, using only 4 SPs, but risk him becoming a 22-5 at the start of the next season? If you do go for the APP, remember you'll need to spend 6 SPs (ie at least three sessions) before he's even the equivalent of the 21-8, at which point, your 21-8 could well be a 21-11 or 21-12 and ready to become a star. A key to a successful youth policy is to try and qualify at least one schoolboy a year and always look to buy schoolboys, FUTs and young, high level players if you can. I rarely bring through more than one 18-2 APP each year all the way from level 2 to level 12, as I just don't have the SPs, especially if I have a specialist to coach.

#### PLAYER COACHING.

BEN: Next you need to decide which players you want to coach, the following priorities perhaps:

- (i) New Star players coach from 12 to 13 if possible. This protects their star status if they get injured they just drop to a level 12 Star rather than from a level 12 Star to a normal level 12.
- (ii) Old, high level players (level 9 and up) should be coached to level 12 along with any specialist players. This gives them the greatest chance of turning into Star players during the season.
- (iii) SBYs, FUTs and APPs should be coached to level 11 (Level 12 players do not gain experience and these types of players cannot turn Star). You should be looking to coach 3-4 17 or 18 year old players to level 11 each season, more if you can get hold of SBYs and FUTs

NIEL: My priorities are Special players, Stars, 20yr olds SBY/FUTs then SBYs. I do tend to ride my luck with 20yr old stars, it takes 2 SPs to get them to 13 and as they'll only age to a 21-8 or 7.86 they're only 4 SPs off a 12 next season anyway. Or if my squad is large enough I'll simply not play them.

Allan: Tend to agree with both here Ben on coaching to 11 but I coach to 12 in session 15 and 16 so they may be selected for World Cup EXCEPT any midfield specialist discoveries - just pray for these - as I try to 'hide' these from others until necessary; and Niel on risking those 20-12 STARS, although if my side is simply going through the motions until next season I will drop any STARS unless absolutely necessary. As I have found that half of the secret of KA is to be thinking about next season NEARLY as much as this.

Martin: Coach up the players that are integral to the team and remember to keep within the three times rules at all times. Youth can normally wait until the end unless an easily coached sby whilst your 20 year olds should be first priority at seasons start. Coach up them ailing specialists as soon as possible, they are always worth the effort....

Torleiv: I always coach my players to 12 if I think they might turn STAR, but as I've experienced one can't always rely on getting them, so I often only coach to 11, and hope for that experience level to come through....

Brian: Remember, it's always worth keeping your 18 and 19 year olds as level 11s, then coaching them in session 15 ready for the World Cup. Even if they don't go star, selection alone is worth £75k.

#### TACTICAL PLOYS.

BEN: Not too sure about this one but I stick 10K into it to prevent other teams from automatically getting any of my players numbers for marking purposes.

NIEL: I always put some in this but I'm not telling how much, it varies anyway depending upon looming cup draws etc.

ALLAN - See below, easier to cover with scouting.

Martin: They only time I use tps is prior to cup matches etc, where the opposition is likely to scout me. It would be nice to use every session but I would rather save my money and blow it on the next geriatric one legged striker to come along.

Torleiv: Hmmm, as got no specialist up till now, I've really never cared to much, but when I get those specialists I think one should protect them a bit.

Brian: I'm with Niel on this one.

Chris: I think that you should always put something in tactical ploys if you have key players. The damage an exceptional marker can do to specialists and FWT's is amazing, so do all you can to protect him. In crucial matches be sure that an astute opponent is going to shove as much cash as he can afford into scouting extra information to get them.

## SCOUTING

BEN: Scouting is only very useful if you scout a side two or more times, this was you might be able to get an idea of their strengths and weaknesses. A strong midfield I have found can only be countered with an even stronger midfield and a strong forward line can be countered by a successful offside trap and a solid defence.

NIEL:Very important I've done more scouting this year than I've ever done, not just to get a feel for another team's tactics. (See what they play away when you have them at home in a couple of sessions) but also from a marking point of view. All of my teams have at least one marking specialist now and marking has turned some close games in my favour this season.

Allan: The two most underestimated areas in Kickabout. I do both although where I have no special players my Tactical Ploy will be negligible, whereas with specialists it can be anything, so much sometimes that other managers - Petros Neoclus -actually requested I tell him as he was trying for four sessions to get my numbers.

Marking Specialists are becoming more and more valuable as people catch on to marking. I have tried to find out if it is possible to 'qualify' one through playing friendlies with sides I have the numbers of and marking them! Steve please clarify before this goes out.... (Niel - No you can't)

A couple of hints on the getting of numbers:

1. Get them early and well before you play the side if possible especially Derby Opps as they tend to put high Tactical ploys in just before you play them.
2. Make sure you are scouting the right team at the right venue. Unlike a nameless ex-GM who put over 200K for extra-info only to try and scout at the wrong venue.
3. Note teams derbies and any cup matches as these are the one to scout as these are the ones where full strength sides - and tactics - should be employed.

Martin: Do it, do it, do it.....i wouldn't dream of not scouting the opposition.....could you imagine a premier league manager not scouting his next opponents?? Scout your league opponents at all costs and get numbers of players for marking purposes. The only time I have not scouted was in new challenge circumstances where defeat was likely and the money was better saved.....saying that, if you can get a superscout early on in the season, do it...16 sessions times two = 32 scouting options at 25k a time...put a bid in!!!

Torleiv: As Allan, early scouting on the teams you know to be strong, and those you think will be key games for you. Scout 2 games per session, and get in most possible info on your own division. Scouting is very important.

Brian: Yes, scout and mark. I agree with everything that's been said and can't stress it too strongly. Even if the opposition doesn't have a specialist, mark him. It makes a difference, it means you'll probably end up with a couple of

specialist markers (always useful when you do go up against a specialist) and if the opposition is playing a balanced forward and midfield line, it always helps to mark one or the other. It's very amusing to see them lose six levels from their midfield and then 8 from their forward line because it's blowing a gale (unless it happens to you). (Niel: That's my favourite trick)

When you do scout, ask yourself a couple of questions when you look at the totals.

- 1) Were they at full strength (check the last newsletter for injuries and suspensions)?
- 2) Did they get marked? As you get the final totals after all additions and subtractions, if they've been marked, you'll get a false idea of their strength. Chris: always remember that a FWS can play anywhere without loss of levels, a WG can play in midfield without any loss, so they are hard to mark. If you scout a team you don't know where these players are playing and marking them is very dodgy indeed. However, remember that a DF/A will ALWAYS mark a WG wherever the WG is played, something I think that many managers forget.

#### PLAYER CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

BEN: This one is a little tricky and will take some time to get used to. Even after numerous seasons of Kickabout I haven't sussed out a formula for getting a player to accept a contract. However there are some tips which may prove useful.

(i) Try to get your players to sign contracts which run out at the beginning of a season. This way you get to re-negotiate contracts when your players are not Stars and will be at their lowest base value.

(ii) 9 sessions at the base value will usually be enough to get a player to stay, but try increasing the length by a few sessions and decreasing the wage by 10%. This always helps to keep the wage structure down.

(iii) Don't offer your players the same length contracts, as after this number of sessions have passed, all the players will come back requiring new contracts around the same time and this will tend to make your team rather unsettled and they won't play at their best.

(iv) Try offering you older captain a ridiculously low wage for a large number of sessions (30 or more) and he may accept due to his age. This is good provided he rejuvenates or gains Star status during the season otherwise your stuck with a 27-4 player with a long contract, although it is sometimes worth keeping and coaching him back to level 12 because of his captain's bonus.

NIEL: I've begun to do this in four stages: 1st Offer is something stupid like 4k for 35 sessions (I've had a few accept this), then second offer is a not quite as daft one, third is a reasonable one and if they go down to last week and I want to keep them I offer them a very high wage but the latter has not happened yet... I agree you have to be careful towards the end of the season too. Don't want a 22-6 on 12k for 10 sessions else when you sell him to the non league you might be paying them!!

ALLAN: Covered

Martin: (1) pay em peanuts and see if they take it (2) give em a reasonable offer (3) give em a good offer if good player (4) panic if good player, wave farewell if not. The wages are another important, if often ignored aspect of the game. An unnecessary high wage bill can reduce your profits and stop you from bringing in new players, similarly, low wages means bumper profits and you can spend spend spend.....

Torleiv: Give all new qualified SBY/APP players loong contracts at reasonable wages, then they wont go away because they don't accept any offer when they turn STAR early at age 20.....And as Ben said, good to get them accepting contracts that ends at start of a season.....

Brian: Again I agree with what's been said. One extra tip. If you qualify a SBY or APP early on, let their contract run down to 4 sessions and offer them a very

low wage for 32 sessions or so if you plan to keep them. Then, once they've accepted, start training them, but not before! It always looks good to have a 20-12 (or even 13 or 14) on 6k a session.

Chris: Yes, I'd always try a silly bid on the first week of contract negotiation, then start getting serious, especially with your key players. Remember that as your team progresses up through the divisions it will become harder to get players to agree to low wages, so bear this in mind. If you are unlucky enough to have a player on a one week contract then his LAST bid must be 3X base rate MINIMUM for NINE weeks, still players forget this. And this doesn't mean that he's going to accept it either. Don't forget one of the advantages of youth players. Get one of these and his contact when he signs on will be at wages of zero. A nice bonus indeed.

## AUCTIONS

BEN: It is always worth bidding to as many players as you can. Even if you don't want a player in the list you may pick up a bargain by bidding below his non league price. You could then make some money by selling him to another manager or even to the non league.

Unfortunately players can get for hugely inflated prices in the auction (especially the better players) and unless you've got at least a couple of million spare, resign yourself to buying the normal workhorse outfield players, the 20-7s and the 23-12s.

Unless you have the money or really need the players in the auction it is better to try and do a deal with another manager.

NIEL: I don't know, you can pick some useful player up in the auction for decent prices. Admittedly the specialists go for daft amounts but wingers etc can be reasonable. Also if your captain has gone star then it's well worth picking up a cheap old level 12 (about 200k sometimes) and hope he rejuvenates. This season I got a 34-12 for 168k and he starred the same session. Making him my captain (I didn't have one) added 17 levels to my team.

ALLAN: Jammy sod.

Martin: Ditto.....You're the only one person who knows what players your team requires...sometimes you just have to buy a certain player and will pay over the top for him (Niel: Yes, I once asked Martin Dakin why he seems to have so many specialists and he simply said 'Because I'm willing to pay for them', too often we put a price limit on these players in our minds when making offers far lower than their actual worth.), mostly however, you will be putting in small bids in the hope of a steal...always put bids in, especially at below n/l levels to make a profit if the unthinkable does happen....bargains do happen

Torleiv: I tend to think that the players I want, P/S and specialists, always go for mad prices, unless the session I can't afford anything....Advice is to never bid over your head, just wait till you get them at the right price. I got a old lev.12 FWS this season, just over 1.000k, and for me that was a good price, but for someone else??

Brian: All very true. I always bid for the goalkeepers and sweepers about 100k below their non-league price as it's an easy profit and if you see a player you like, but can't afford, put in a bid anyway, you never know how lucky you might be. Note, however, when bidding for players with a view to immediately selling them on, that you have to pay their wages for 4 sessions at base, so take that into your calculations! Finally, I have been guilty in the past of trying to work out what a player's "worth" and bidding no more than that. This is, of course, bollocks, as a player is only worth what someone is prepared to pay for him. If you need the player and you have the money, spend it! I now wish I'd bought either an FWS or an FWT in the Dickens this season. I had the money, but decided they weren't "worth" more than 2 million, so I didn't bid enough. Looking back, goal scoring has been my bane again and one of those would

probably have seen me win the league.

Chris: a level twelve MF/A/D has, in the past gone for nine million pounds, so whatever you do, DON'T sell a specialist for peanuts. New players have, in the past, been conned into selling young specialists for peanuts! Always put a bid in for something you fancy, even if you've no cash, you'd be surprised at how often players go for low amounts, and you never know, it could be you. Remember that what you bid for a player is what he's worth to you!. If a midfield specialist is going to transform your team into a championship one then he's worth going OD for. Looking at an auction and saying I'm not paying X for that player, when you've X+ 1000K in the bank is silly if he could do something for your team. Money in the bank means nothing.

## TRANSFERS

BEN: Again it is quite tricky to avoid being ripped off by another more clues up manager. Bear in mind that what you are usually paying for is the potential that a player possesses. For example an 18-2 FUT will not leap into your first team, but in a relatively short time he will be a player which will last for at least 3 seasons as a quality player. 1,000k is not an unreasonable price to pay for a FUT. SBYs go for a bit more but if you find yourself paying more than 1,200k or a SBY (1,500k for a 17 year old) then you're probably getting the short straw. Specialists of any kind usually go for lots. An MF/A, MF/D 18-2 APP could fetch up to 5,000k in cash if you've got a good deal. Insist on at least 3 young (17/8/9) high level players (10+) plus a couple of million in cash and you could get more.

It's usually only worth keeping hold of an MF Specialist if you have 11 level 12 players in your side already. You don't have to have an MF specialist to be successful. Sound tactics and a bit of luck will get you just as far.

(NB - be careful prices vary drastically depending upon which league you are talking about - Chris)

Some managers do not regard a year's difference between players (e.g. a 19-10 and a 20-10) as much of a difference and are quite happy to make up the age gap in cash. However going by the guidelines above, the 'life expectancy' of players (ie past it at 21), a year's difference is an entire season. So it is a very good idea to swap older players for younger ones even if you lose out on a couple of levels in the deal.

NIEL: You have to watch out, there are some less than honest managers out there. What I recommend if you're not sure is don't commit yourself and chat to some other managers asking their opinion. I wouldn't pay a million for a FUT and as the season progresses overall prices tend to go down. If I had a specialist I'd keep him, even if you can't coach him one season he's always there to be coached should you get your main team around and start picking up SPs in the future.

Allan: As with auctions I try and keep negotiating for players as you never know what may come up in conversation, but as Niel says you do have to be wary.

Contact other managers and don't just accept the first offer, if your player is THAT good another offer will come along.

One thing I will say is that when buying a SPECIAL player I have found that I become embroiled in a one versus one auction. If this is the case call the other manager -if known- and discuss what is reasonably your best offer. This tends to mean that when dealing with the other auctionee in future you have each others trust.

Martin: The best thing about the game....some managers in the leagues make Dave Bassett and Joe Kinnear seem like amateurs, constantly getting the bargains from both auctions and private deals alike.....make the deals and reap the rewards.....the email server and KS weekends are endless sources of news and deals so use them if you can...

Torleiv: I'm not too often involved with transfers between managers (Niel:

Torleiv does not live in the U.K.), and if I am, it's usually to get young P/S players, and they often tend to be high priced.

Brian: I'm not convinced it's a good lead to swap older players for younger ones, unless it's a big age gap. Take an example of a 21-12 swapped for a 19-10. You lose two levels, plus your chance of your 21-12 going star for the rest of the session. Next session, your 21-12 would probably be out of it if he hadn't gone star, while your 19-10 would be a 20-8, so you'd have ended up spending 6 SPs (2 to make him a 19-12 and 4 to make him a 20-12) anyway. That said, if you have a squad of 21-12s, maybe it's time to start swapping...

Chris: can't agree with Niel. If you've a poor struggling side in the lower reaches of the league, you're not going to get the SPS to gain a specialist AND bring on the rest of your side. I've seen too many sides with a good specialist and nothing else, or with a 19-2 MF/A/D who gradually gets worse as he can't be changed. They don't win things. I'd sell the specialist. Three level twelve players and a couple of million as a minimum, which improves your side and makes them competitive. Better this than having a good player who you can't use.

#### ENTERING PLAYERS IN AUCTIONS

BEN: There is usually loads of crap entered by managers in the auctions hoping that someone would want their 22-6 or 21-7. Young players should raise a fair bit of cash along with any P/S APPs you have qualified or high level players. It is advised to coach your 21-8 to a 21-9 and enter him at a slightly higher reserve such as 750k? Allan - what! 750k for that crap.....

NIEL: We're all guilty of trying to offload crap in the auction but also it's a good way of raising cash without exhausting your phone bill though not as sure a method. If you've got something decent and you need some cash then it's best to phone around.

Allan: Tends to depend on the player I have and what I need, if I simply require cash for future bids myself I tend to enter them in the auction and if its player swaps or a SPECIAL player then I always offer them in the press. As an indication in most leagues I put 19-10's in at 1100K

Martin: Only put in players if they will sell easily.....its a nice way to make money but frustrating if no-one wants them...remember that they have to remain in the auction for three sessions before you can sell them to the n/l or other managers

Brian: Too much of what's in the auction is dross that no-one wants. If you really need the cash, sell it to the non-league or advertise in the newsletter.

Chris: remember you can play a player while he's in the roller or out of contract, though you can't sell him in any way.

#### TACTICS

BEN: This is the part which is most intriguing and biggest of all so I have only a few words of advice which will give you some idea of how to approach the game. Shots on goal and certain types of tactics (Offside, MF/G, DF/A) depend on your dominance in parts of the field. For example to have a decent working offside trap you need to have 4 or 5 good players in your MF in order to dominate your opposition. The DF/A requires the defence to dominate your opponent's forward line so a 4 man defence is always a good idea to get the best from your DF/A. If your team is not going to dominate in all areas of the field, try to make sure at least you dominate in either the MF or FW line as this should give you a few chances on goal.

NIEL: DF/As are nice but I wouldn't build my team around them (Tried it and got beat a lot). MF/Gs I think are great for allowing you to play an extreme formation (5 players in an area leaving 2 in another) as he will always provide

the extra cover where needed. My favourite player after MF/A/Ds. Offside is a tricky one, always worth playing if you have a higher midfield (Scouting helps here) even if the other team has a winger of DF/A but can backfire with devastating results.

Allan: Hmm, this is the very tricky bit, I have tried all formation with all types of side and will simply say that the best tactics I have found is to not be too predictable. Indeed, last season in eight consecutive games in the Dickens I played eight different formations!

Martin: Never an easy one as you have to play to your own strengths whilst trying to overcome your opponents....again I stress the importance of scouting.

Keep a flexible side if possible, i.e. don't be constrained to one or maybe two formations. Look for those players that can play in more than one position, fws, wg and uts. The best formations.....for fun its got to be 325 with high creativity and a fwt/wg partnership to watch every shot go on target ...for the end of year defensive prize its sw342 but god thats boring....and for the ka maestros its 352 with midfield specialists coming out of your ears!!!! No formation works all of the time, be flexible, scout your opponents (most of them play the same way week in week out), pick out their weaknesses and then play the formation that humiliates them the most.....

Torleiv: Without giving to much away, I always tend to play my game in the way I think will hurt my opponent the most, while still trying to get a balanced side myself.....

Brian: Again I agree. One thing I learnt from Martin Dakin is that you should always try and be dominant in at least one area of the field. It's no good playing SW-3-3-3 and finding that while your opponent has less total levels than you, he played 3-5-2, totally swamped your midfield, while you had a marginal edge in defence and up front. In circumstances like that, you will find yourself losing a lot of games.

Chris: what you actually need for a good offside trap is lots of levels in midfield, not lots of players, you can have an offside trap with two midfield players if you put all your additions there, plus you are a skill side, etc., and your opponents has a weak-skilled midfield, so you don't need five men in midfield for it to work, though it will probably help. Sw-3-3-3 is a good saving formation, and it also helps to hold those bloody FWTmen. Never discard any formation whatsoever. What some players forget as well is that you don't have to pick your team not the basis of `I must get my FWT to work, must get my DF/A into play. It's always better to have a DF/A than a DF, a WG than a MF, a FWS than a FW. If you have them in your side, pick your team according to tactics rather than getting one special player to work, you never know what your opponent might do. He plays a poor forward line, so your DF/A then clicks in, he plays offside so your WG works, etc. get good players in your side in as many positions as you can rather than getting a good player and then trying to force your side into marking him work under all circumstances.

## TEAM STRUCTURE

BEN: Always ensure you have a high level GK at the beginning of each season. If at any point your GK is going to age badly, keep him until you have qualified a SBY GK (Which should take 7 sessions to do) then sell him to the non league. Try to get at least 3 players in each outfield position (DF/MF/FW) preferably 4 players and a couple of UT players to give you the flexibility to field any formation.

NIEL: Yea, I tend to bring through a SBY goalie every other season just to keep one on the boil. Definitely the most important player.

Allan: GK yep me too, but with the advent of training injuries I am now going to keep a spare always. Oh and I either have a SBY on 8.5 or 9 qualified depending on Division at the end of each season.

Martin: Always keep a reserve gk if you can....try and coach one sby through a season and leave one on 'played 9' for the next....perhaps four youth players all told...get either a fws, or a fwt/wg partnership, or a df/a...they're worth the effort and add that little something to your title aspirations.....of course, three m/a/d's, a mf/g and a polaris missile might help as well!!!

Torleiv: Lot of consensus here, I already stated that I always try to keep my GK young and high level, and I will never play the game without at least a lev.2 reserve, preferably lev.6-8 reserve GK(at least so I try). A couple of UT/WG/FWS to keep the flexibility is useful too.

Brian: Agreed. DF/As are useful, as are FWSs, and the FWT/WG combination. WGs are also useful as they can play in MF or FW and hence are hard to mark. Ideally I'd like 4 players in each outfield area with a UT as backup. A SW is nice too, as it gives you that extra option. Should you play an SW as an SW or in defence is a perienial Kickabout question and depends on the circumstances. If the opposition's going to get a lot of shots from either the MF or DF, it's a good bet, but if they're going to get a lot from the forward line, play a big DF and/or MF with offside (ie play your SW in defence). Also, if you play your SW as an SW and you have a DF/A, the SW levels won't count in determining whether or not your DF/A gets to make his forward runs.

Chris: Always have a decent reserve GK, despite being told this time and again, players ignore it, and come to a big game with their one good GK inj/susp. How many times it happens is quite amazing indeed, and many out there never seem to learn as their season is ruined by this.

#### IMPROVING YOUR TEAM

BEN: If you are starting out in the 4th division and your team is basically crap, qualify all 8 APPs and your SBY as quickly as possible. Pick a team type (P, S or P/S) and swap other players. Once your APPs are qualified coach your team according to the suggestions previously mentioned. At the end of the first season you should have at least 8-10 high level players which will form the basis of your promotion drive next season!

NIEL: Agree here. One thing to mention is that if you're not in the fourth and your team is struggling then it is sometimes a prudent move to let it go down and bounce back up, getting lots of SPs in the process next year rather than struggle to stay up then do the same next season. (Chris will probably shoot me for suggesting that though Chris: No, I second that as long as it is done properly and you are willing to take the beatings which some people aren't! It's throwing games that we are against totally)

Allan: Niel how can you even suggest such a thing!! Like no-one ever thinks of that. On fourth division sides I took one over five seasons ago and they MAY be winning the first division THIS season so patience and forethought, listening to experienced managers, reading and re-reading the rulebook just in case does pay off.....

Martin: Your team will improve, mainly by your own understanding and growing experience of the game...keep at it and enjoy it...I've been playing for over ten years now and still love it....p.s. watch out for the ka gurus and nasty deals, make a few friends in the game and make sure the teams run by messrs Dempsey and Pritchard get a good beating every session...

Torleiv: Well my team ended up in the 4th after the first season, and then I've been promoted twice in a row, and still hope for the third. I try to keep track of the Sps earned by all sides in the league, and my team is among the best in that department, and although that probably doesn't mean to much, it's an indicator that to start from the bottom might be a good choice.....

Brian: Hang in there, have a long term plan and stick to it. At the start of the season I work out who I'm going to keep, who I'm, going to sell, who I'm going to train and where I need to buy/strengthen the squad. I then start qualifying

APPs and SBYs appropriately. Always qualify as many APPs as you can - you can always sell them off and who knows, you might get something special. Qualify them early as they're worth more the earlier they can come through. Always qualify a SBY, though like most people, I bring one to 9 qualified games at the end of the season and then qualify him straight away at the start of the next. If you don't have a good captain, buy an old one and stick with him. 5 or 6 levels to go where you like in a season's time is well worth the investment in SPs.

Chris: Yes, a good captain is important, few successful teams don't have a captain who adds lots of levels to the team. Problem is that unless you can replace him you end up with a 30-4 who gives you eight captain's levels. Fitting him into your basic team formation can be difficult indeed.

BUT HEY THESE ARE JUST THE MUTTERINGS OF SOME PEOPLE WHO WERE AS INTRIGUED BY THIS THING CALLED KICKABOUT THAT WE HAVE ALL JUST LEARNED TO HATE!!!!!!!