

The centre that could save football managers' lives

by John Weisgard

FOLLOWING Gerard Houllier's recent heart attack, football managers from around the country are undergoing rigorous health checks at a Stockport clinic.

The Adidas Wellness Centre in Hazel Grove offers football managers a full health and stress examination. They check not just for the normal signs of stress but the quality of the lungs and heart, heart rate, blood pressure and body fat.

Following the stringent examinations, qualified Wellness coaches draw up a 12-month lifestyle intervention programme and managers return to the centre for regular check ups.

The centre has several components, including an activity centre equipped with the latest health and fitness technology, a human performance testing laboratory, a lifestyle centre and counselling suites.

Managers

Already Manchester City manager, Kevin Keegan, Bolton Wanderers' Sam Allardyce and Newcastle's Bobby Robson are signed up to the scheme and a further 50 league managers look set to follow suit.

The Wellness team is led by Dr Dorian Dugmore, who has a PhD in cardiovascular medicine. He has been working in cardiovascular rehabilitation for over 25 years



and is currently a board member for the World Council for Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation.

John Barnwell, chief executive of the League Managers' Association, was made aware of the work of the Wellness Centre following a chat with Kevin Keegan.

He said: "In 2000, Joe Kinnear, then manager of Wimbledon, had a heart attack at Sheffield Wednesday and I started to think that something could have been done to prevent this.

"What we do know in the modern game is that the intensity is quite enormous and it is going up

massively. Football managers have never been so exposed. The demands for success are growing, most of the time unrealistically.

"Managers spend all their time looking after other people possibly to the detriment of themselves. But it is important to remember that an ounce of prevention is worth a ton of care."

The scheme does not come cheap and it is estimated that to put all the football league managers through the test would cost around £200,000.

Clubs are refusing to put their hands in their own pockets and the scheme is being partially funded by the Professional Footballers' Association.

LEFT: Manchester City's Kevin Keegan has already signed up to the football managers scheme. (s)

