

Bassett plays it safe

By Niall Hickman

THE DEVASTATING illness suffered by Glenn Roeder has focused attention like never before on the demands placed on the modern-day manager.

From Sir Bobby Robson to Gordon Strachan, Premiership managers are spotted waving their arms like demented race-course bookies, veins bursting and faces as purple as Sir Les Patterson. The king of Gallic cool Arsene Wenger recently even took his tie off.

Except this is no laughing matter, as Roeder has followed Gerard Houllier, Joe Kinnear and Graeme Souness in recent times on to the list of managers who have suffered severe health problems.

The PFA have backed a League Managers' Association initiative that encourages coaches to undergo health monitoring in a bid to make sure those who are so busy looking after others begin to look after themselves.

Leicester's director of football Dave Bassett, 54, has suffered three relegations and enjoyed

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seven promotions during a yo-yo 21 years in management which has taken in more than 1,000 matches, and knows more than most the stresses and strains which the role can bring.

"Managing a team is an incredibly lonely job because the buck stops with you and you are hero to 11 players you have picked while all the others think you are rubbish," he said. "Also, you can be the greatest manager in the history of the game, but lose three matches in a row and some fans think you are useless.

"I would drive back from a game, get home at 1.30am, then go to the office at 7am. Don't get me wrong, being involved in football is the most brilliant job in the world, but it doesn't surprise me that managers have been ill.

"What has happened to Glenn focuses people's minds on the fact we are not indestructible."

Bassett was put through his paces yesterday at the Wellness Centre in Stockport run by Dr Dorian Dugmore, an expert in

cardiovascular medicine and a former football coach. Dugmore said: "A lot of coaches finish playing and think they don't have to look after themselves as well as they did when they were professional athletes.

"We monitor them and remind them they have to continue to take responsibility for their own health.

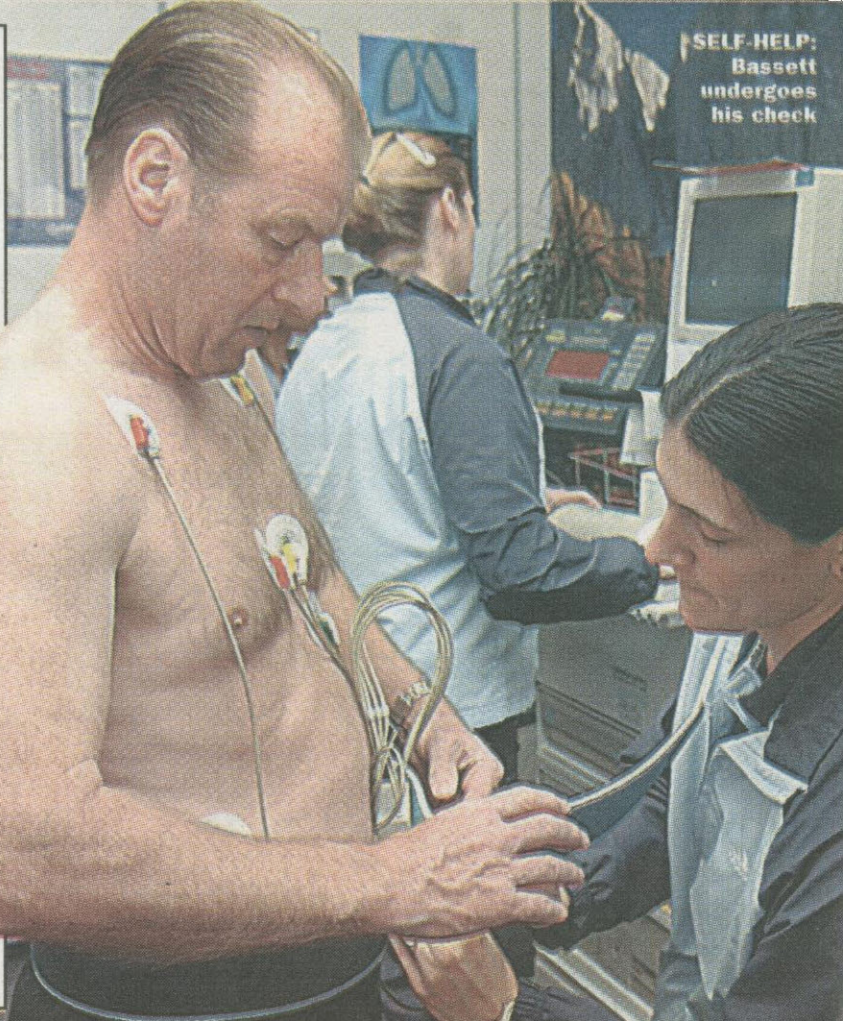
"About 60 per cent of managers are signed up on the scheme.

"Football managers are very high-profile figures and if they can persuade others to take responsibility for themselves then that is worth its weight in gold, because a lot more people will stay healthier."

American football coach Bill Parcells once said: "This is not a profession for well-adjusted people."

That may be true, but Bassett concluded: "My health is the most important thing in my life.

"If you are healthy you can be a happy person."



SELF-HELP: Bassett undergoes his check