

STRESS MANAGEMENT / Never mind youth or fitness, the tension can be unbearable

Glenn opted out of health plan for men on the bench

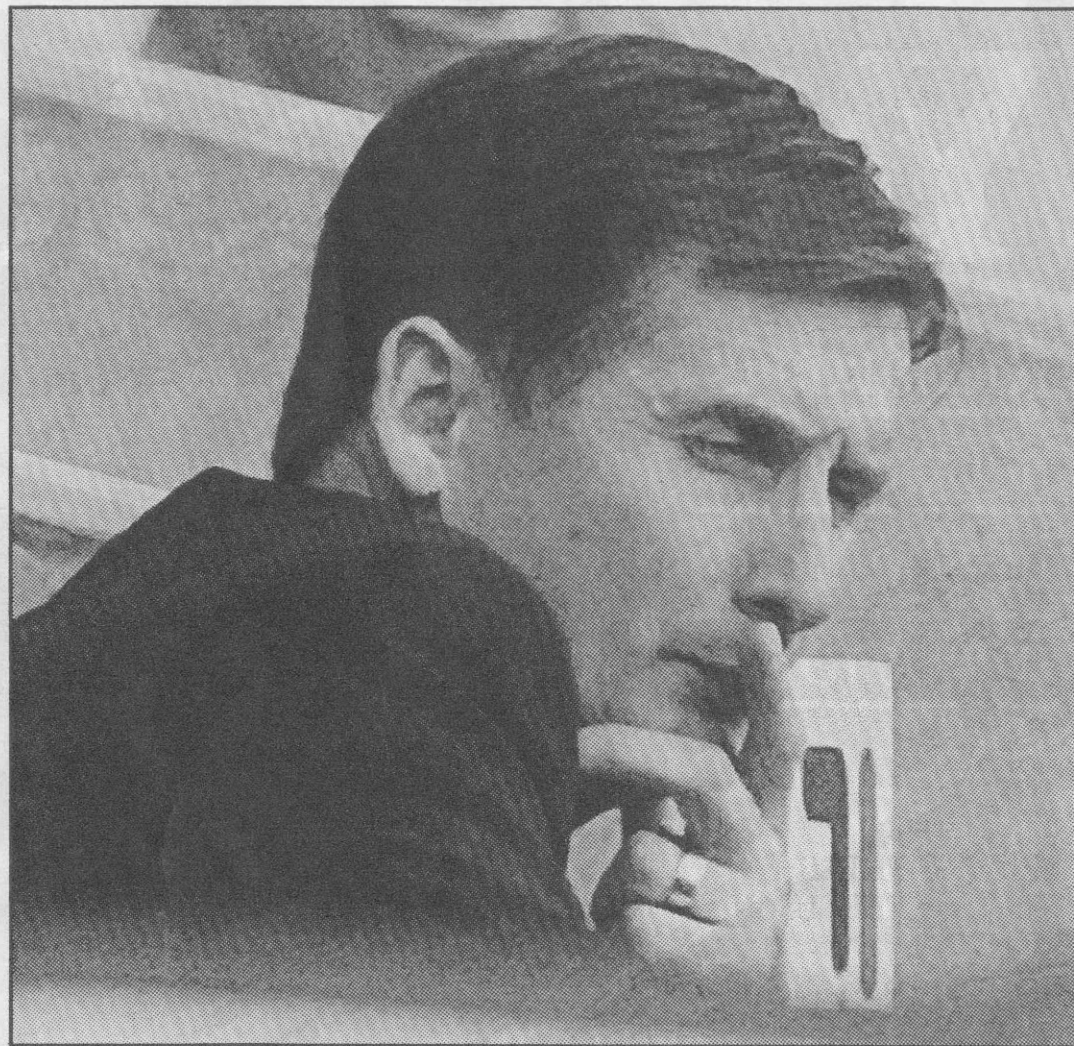
By STEVE CURRY

GLENN Roeder, active, young and fit, felt he did not need to participate in the League Managers' Association initiative to safeguard the health of the men whose touchline stress level is perilous.

The West Ham manager, 47, was among the 30 per cent of professional bosses who believed, not unreasonably, that they were young enough to handle the high anxiety levels that go with the job. The Fit To Manage programme is the brainchild of LMA chief executive John

Barnwell, and largely funded by the Professional Footballers' Association at the adidas headquarters in Hazel Grove, Cheshire.

Of the managers who have attended, 14 were found to have minor heart problems, which are now being monitored and controlled.



Feeling the pressure: stress levels are perilous for the likes of Roeder *Picture: ALAN WALTER*

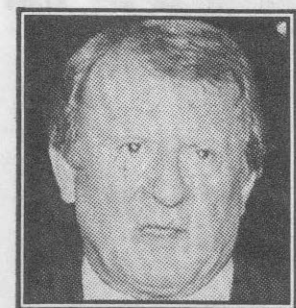
looked after the welfare of business executives, runs the programme at the Wellness Centre.

Barnwell wanted something suited to the needs of managers and it was Manchester City and ex-England boss Kevin Keegan who pointed him

monitoring system intensified in the wake of Gerard Houllier's heart problems, which prompted ITV into filming programmes with Sam Allardyce of Bolton and Dave Bassett, then of Leicester.

The Wellness Centre controlled the experiment.

move it forward. It is a four-year plan, costing around £200,000 a year, and evaluates what can be done to avoid the kind of health problems that killed Jock Stein. As Scotland manager, he suffered a heart attack during a World Cup qualifying game against Wales



Barnwell: concerned

Rigorous health screening helps to pick up all manner of potential ailments, including the risk of heart attacks or strokes, by checking blood pressure, lung power, body flexibility, cardiovascular fitness,

Job with high stress levels

cholesterol and body mass. Barnwell said yesterday: 'I've believed for a long time that there was a need for managers to keep a check on their health and my maxim has always been that an ounce of prevention is worth a ton of cure.

'We're involved in a job with high stress levels and although clubs should be responsible for the health care of their employees, we took the initiative.' Dr Dorian Dugmore, an internationally renowned cardiovascular fitness specialist who has

in Dugmore's direction.

'We put in place a six-month pilot scheme and put 10 managers on it,' explained Barnwell. 'From there we threw it open to all our members with the financial help of the PFA. We have around 60 per cent who have been involved for almost a year, with others joining it more recently.

'About 30 per cent, including Glenn, felt they had enough medical cover and although I don't yet know in detail what the medical people have found in his case, it highlights the intensity of the job, especially when issues are being decided.'

The LMA have been examining ways of checking health for at least five years, and four years ago were alerted when a Blackpool hospital monitored the pulse of Nigel Worthington, then manager at Bloomfield Road. It showed that at the climax of a close game his pulse had accelerated to 147 beats a minute. Barnwell's determination to find a

Allardyce's pulse jumped from 42 beats a minute resting to 162 during the game, with Bassett's rising from 50 to 120.

Barnwell said: 'Our managers attend the clinic for a day and everything is examined by a

Examined by a specialist

specialist — lifestyle, eating habits, medical information, family background, physical output, job specification. It's fed into a computer and they get a read-out. Cholesterol levels, body fat, lung power, body flexibility and cardiovascular fitness are all monitored.

'There is regular contact with all the participants and if problems occur then doctors and specialists are involved.'

At the end of the first year there is an analysis of the results and an effort made to

in 1982.

Wimbledon's Joe Kinnear had a less severe coronary in the tunnel at Sheffield Wednesday in 1999, while Peterborough's Barry Fry has twice had heart attacks and Graeme Souness needed a heart by-pass while he was manager of Liverpool.

Barnwell added: 'We don't like the word pressure. We accept that it's part and parcel of the job of being a manager, but the LMA have a responsibility to members to ensure they are aware of the increased intensity of the job.

'The game has never had such exposure and the amount of media coverage is now suffocating. We're not complaining but we must keep the managers as fit as possible.

'The majority have been players and have looked after themselves. They then go into a profession where they are looking after everybody else but themselves.'

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