



■ **STRESS:** Arsenal's Arsene Wenger, right, and Bolton's Sam Allardyce

When life's a pitch

The climax of the soccer season brings drama, stress – and possibly serious ill health – for team managers. **SIMON DONOHUE** finds out how to help the bosses cope ...

■ **GRIT:** Sir Alex Ferguson on the touchline



HEART racing and fists clenched tighter than a knotted rope, a football manager explodes from the dug-out to berate the referee. It is a couple of weeks before the last game of the season and there are titles to win, relegation battles to fight and old scores to settle.

And the biggest opponent facing the men in smart suits? No, not Manchester United, but stress.

Arsenal's French manager Arsene Wenger – seen getting hot under the collar as his team edged ever further away from the Premiership title with a draw at Bolton Wanderers' Reebok Stadium on Saturday – attempts to cope by screaming indecipherable phrases in his native tongue. His nemesis, Sir Alex Ferguson, on the other hand, copes by chewing gum.

But sadly, it seems that West Ham manager Glenn Roeder didn't cope particularly well at all.

Roeder, who fell ill while attempting to stave off his side's still-looming relegation from the Premiership, is continuing his recovery from a potentially life-threatening clot in a minor blood vessel in the brain.

He is following a path already beaten by heart patients Graeme Souness, Gerard Houllier and Jock Stein. The last paid the ultimate price when he died from a heart attack on the touchline during Scotland's 1985 clash

DOC'S WINNING WAYS

DOCTOR Dorian Dugmore was born in Birmingham and started his working life as a schoolboy footballer with West Bromwich Albion.

He worked as a coach in football and athletics before gaining a Phd in cardiovascular medicine, and spent many years working at the Cardiac Rehabilitation Centre in Toronto. He has dual British and Canadian nationality.

Dr Dugmore, 55, attracted the attention of the people at Adidas in the late 1980s after fronting a charity which prepared heart attack victims to run in the London Marathon. "I was doing my doctoral research at a hospital in the West Midlands and took several patients to run the marathon," he says. "I have been linked with Adidas ever since."

His work as a coach has taken him



■ **RESEARCH:** Dr Dugmore

Zagreb, Croatia, and Kobe, Japan. He speaks as quickly as a sprinter racing out of the blocks, which is little surprise given his exercise regime, saying: "I do take great care of myself. I feel that I have to if I am telling other people to take care of themselves."

"Five or six times a week, I work out. I do about an hour each day in the gym at Adidas. I always watch what I eat – that means a high-fibre, low-fat breakfast of things like strawberries, bananas and yoghurt."

"At lunchtime, I have a selection of multi-coloured vegetables with fish. For dinner, I have a piece of chicken or turkey with no skin and a glass of red wine."

"Red wine is good because it is full of anti-oxidants. Up to 21 units per week – or 14 for a woman – is good for you, providing you take two days off drinking in any given

time, and another third have serious issues which need sorting out immediately

"None of them are facing certain death," he adds. "We don't say things like: 'I wouldn't buy any long books to read'. Serious issues might include reducing cholesterol, or that we have discovered different rhythms in the heart."

"We haven't got all the answers but we are certainly going to get closer if we can guide football managers. We help them to stop smoking, to take regular exercise and devise coping strategies when stress begins to take over."

IF further incentive were needed, Dr Dugmore explains just what happens when the body can no longer cope with a season's worth of stress. Hormones flood the body, increasing the amount of cholesterol. Narrowed arteries constrict further and the immune system is battered by an endless chemical assault.

with Wales. Thankfully, John Barnwell, chairman of the League Managers' Association, has attempted to do something about the situation before football falls foul of an unhealthy image.

And, by the end of this season, Stockport's Wellness Centre will be keeping a close eye on the health of 60 soccer managers working with the English leagues.

BASED within the Hazel Grove headquarters of Adidas, the Wellness Centre first opened with a brief to improve the health of the sportswear giant's employees. It later turned its attention to chief executives serving at blue chip British companies and, more recently, launched the Fit To Manage initiative – a scheme funded by the Professional Footballers' Association.

The centre is managed by Dr Dorian Dugmore, an academic who played football as a junior for West Bromwich Albion before branching out into coaching heart patients. The emphasis must now be on preventative medicine says Dr Dugmore, who counts Bolton's Sam Allardyce and Manchester City's Kevin Keegan among his clients. "The majority of football managers have been players," he explains. "At that point in their careers, their sole responsibility is their own performance.

"Suddenly, they become managers and find themselves responsible for everybody else as well. That means everyone from directors and shareholders to players, spectators and executives. There is a transition from sport-related fitness to lifestyle-related fitness. They should look after

to international competitions in

week."

themselves and they may neglect doing that. The same applies whether they go to successful clubs or whether they are fighting for survival.

"Often, they are going from coaching to managing, which is a job requiring them to work 14 to 16 hours a day. Add to that all the travel, going all over the country to attend dinners and being entertained, and it is a very tough job. Similarly, there is a dramatic change in lifestyle.

"Look at the situation with Premiership managers and there are additional pressures. Those guys are constantly in the public eye. They are aware of burning the candle at both ends – and in the middle – but at the

same time they have a passion for the game.

"They know that they shouldn't really be working 16 hours a day. What I say is: 'Let's manage that, let's provide you with a way of coping with these pressures and let's keep a regular check on you.'"

Assessments, which cost roughly £1,500, use an array of sophisticated devices to monitor heart rate, metabolism and diet.

Dr Dugmore and his team say that the football managers who pay regular visits to the Wellness Centre fit roughly into three categories.

"A third are in great shape, a third have one or two things to address over

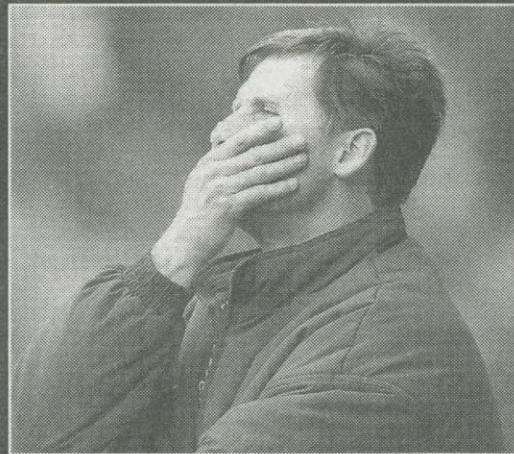
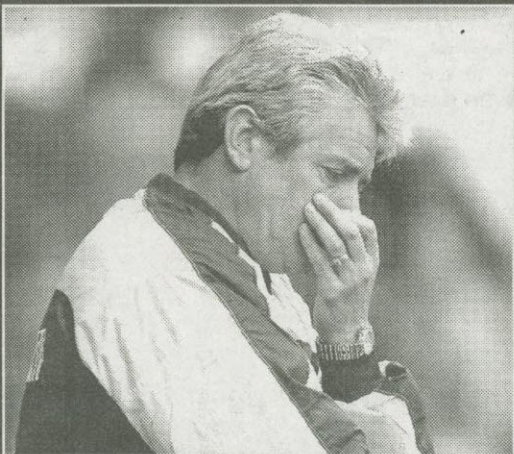
He adds: "If I'm not coping because of constant stress and I can't escape, the brain will put the body on alert for a fight-or-flight reaction."

However, the doctor is heartened that the footballing authorities are finally taking notice of the risks. He hopes soccer managers might serve as flag bearers for the cause.

Dr Dugmore adds: "One of the most important things that will come out of this is that everyone else will begin to take notice.

"Many of us face the same stresses and strains as football managers in our lives. People are simply more aware of the problems facing football managers because they are in the public eye.

"If others begin to take notice, then the football managers have done a fantastic service to public health."



■ STRAIN GAME: Those moments of pressure for Premiership managers, from left, Kevin Keegan, Graeme Souness and Glenn Roeder