

Are you fit to manage?

Sam Allardyce manager of Bolton Wanderers and Dave Bassett (then manager of Leicester City FC) were subjected to pitch side stress monitoring for ITV's 'Tonight with Trevor McDonald'

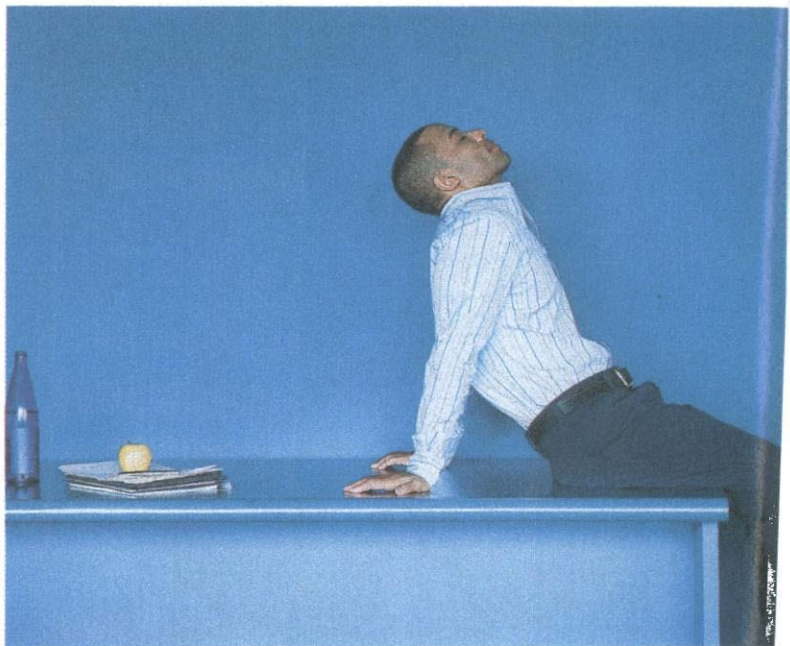
ACCORDING to one of the world's leading cardiovascular experts, almost half of England's football managers are at increased risk for heart disease and their life-consuming, high-pressure jobs are a 'recipe for potential disaster'.

Hazel Grove-based Dr Dorian Dugmore, secretary general to the World Council for Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation, has spent over four years monitoring managers' health and advising them on ways to improve it. One of the most startling statistics he cites is that '44 per cent of them have issues with cardiovascular health, some needing immediate attention'.

Dr Dugmore's first high-profile study of the managers' health took place in 2001, when Sam Allardyce (the manager of Bolton Wanderers FC) and Dave Bassett (then manager of Leicester City FC) were subjected to pitch side stress monitoring for ITV's 'Tonight with Trevor McDonald' programme. The results of this study were startling. During a maximal exercise stress test, when managers were pushed to exhaustion, Allardyce's heart rate reached 146 beats per minute (bpm). However, during the game when he stood on the sidelines, it soared to 162bpm. Bassett's blood pressure during the game also rose above the level recorded during his exhaustive exercise test, and he developed an irregular heart beat as the game progressed and the pressure mounted. Both men's cholesterol levels rose during the matches. These results highlighted the effects that severe stress can have on the body.

A longer-term pilot study of 12 managers, including Kevin Keegan and Mick McCarthy, preceded this case study, and led to a much larger two-year study involving more than half the league's managers. Today around 90 English Football League managers attend the 'Fit To Manage' scheme at the Wellness Centre at adidas (UK) in Stockport. Managers including David Moyes from Everton FC, Sam Allardyce from Bolton Wanderers FC and Neil Warnock from Sheffield United FC all access the programme. It is equally well supported by England's backroom staff and England's team manager Steve McClaren himself has signed up to the programme.

Dr Dugmore, director of Wellness International, (based at adidas (UK), has identified conditions in managers including fast,



irregular heartbeats, hardening of the arteries and malfunction of valves in the heart, high blood pressure and dangerous levels of cholesterol. Dr Dugmore is naturally concerned with these findings and the potential furring up of managers' arteries, especially the coronary arteries. 'It's the most common cause of sudden death in older athletes,' he said.

Such health risks do not just impact on the managers or executives themselves. Their families often comment on the worries they have for their loved one's health, and the relentless workload that they face. It's common for a manager's wife to comment that the stress aspect of the game is a real worry. Those same fears are echoed by the families of successful business executives. They express concerns about the long hours and stress-driven business culture and its likely effect on their partner's (or parent's) health. It is a sad fact of business life that 'young executives often sacrifice their health in the drive to achieve success and wealth.

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