



MILLER ON MONDAY

Venables follows in Busby's footsteps

CRYSTAL PALACE stand proudly astride the First Division.

That's a tribute to Terry Venables and chief coach Alan Harris, and a lesson to every club in England.

The most accomplished home-grown team since the Busby Babes 20 years ago, Palace are the product almost exclusively of intelligent coaching from schoolboy level.

It is no coincidence that those other outsiders, Norwich and rampaging Wolves, are also at the forefront with the enlightened management of John Bond and John Barnwell.

Coaching has been given a bad name only by bad coaches. With proper coaching from the age of 15, players such as Mike Channon and Trevor Francis, with their outstanding natural talents, would probably have stood unrivalled among the great players of Europe.

Genuine

Venables and Harris, kids together at Chelsea, have with help from England youth team coach John Cartwright (ex-Palace) produced a team which genuinely compares with Busby's ill-fated heroes.

Old stagers will argue that Edwards, Charlton, Violett, Taylor and Colman played with more flair, but football then was less inhibited by massed, organised, exceptionally fit defences.

And it is a myth that the Babes were not coached. Jimmy Murphy, Busby's right hand man, spent hours with Bobby Charlton persuading him to play the short ball when it was "on," instead of those searing, crowd-pleasing 40-yards.

Each team benefited from only two big transfers — Berry and Taylor,



Terry Venables... a master coach

Francis and Flanagan. Perhaps we shall never again see the like of the Babes, second only to Real Madrid even in their unfulfilled youth.

But Palace, with their years of maturity still ahead, can be satisfied that they are following with distinction in illustrious footsteps.

My political commentator colleague George Gale has said that £1 million transfers are nonsense. I doubt if Wolves agree, with two more goals from Andy Gray in the toppling of Arsenal.

As I said the other day, such transfers make sense if the player is stepping into a team, such as Barnwell's which is already stable and well-knit.

With matches nowadays capable of earning six figure sums, a Gray or a Trevor Francis makes sense when allied to sound management.

And talking of transfers, how long before Terry Neill and Don Howe come round to accepting that Arsenal's potential title-winning team is continually being undermined by an inadequate back four? The situation has been camouflaged for too long by Pat Jennings.

DAVID MILLER

■ IT IS going to be the tightest League title race in football history.

■ SIX teams are leading the way at the top of the First Division. They all won on Saturday... and are covered by a single point.

■ CAN the Super Six last the pace? Express Analysis gives you the Monday morning verdict.

EXPRESS ANALYSIS... CAN THESE LEADERS

SIX OF

SPECIAL BRANCH men whispered into walkie-talkies and uniformed officers cordoned off the Marble Hall.

Was WOLVES manager John Barnwell going to extreme lengths to guarantee Andy Gray's safe exit from Highbury?

No, the security network was not for the £12 million striker, two-goal star of Wolves's 3-2 defeat of ARSENAL.

It was simply that former Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith had chosen to spend an afternoon's relaxation at Highbury.

Yet no one could blame Barnwell if he was to take the hint and hire some bodyguards for Gray, because Andy's goal power could be a deciding factor in what is going to be one of the tightest title races in history.

Enormous

If I was in Barnwell's shoes, I'd cosset Gray in cotton wool and un-wrap him only on match days.

The 23-year-old Scot condemned Arsenal to defeat with two goals rich in quality, and then confessed: "I'm not fully fit yet."

Arsenal manager Terry Neill's verdict was: "He looked only half fit... thank goodness!"

Gray, who carries his enormous price tag with great humility, said: "Everything that is happening to me right now is a bonus because I'm still going through a rehabilitation stage and my right knee is not as strong as I'd like it to be."

"I know the pressure is on me because of my history of injuries."

Take cover... hit man Andy is building up to full power!

By MALCOLM FOLLEY

"I'm not suggesting I'll go the season without getting injured again. That's not likely, because of the way I play. But I'm just hoping the cartilage type of injuries are now behind me because I've had enough of those to last a lifetime."

Wolves are a very good side. With Gray and John Richards in tandem, there will be enough goals. But if they are to remain real challengers for honours, they will have to tighten a defence in which Emlyn Hughes looked extremely vulnerable.

Kenny Hibbitt and Gray gave Wolves a 2-0 interval lead before Frank Stapleton raised Arsenal hopes with a neat goal.

But Gray struck again, only for the inspirational John Hollins to set off a late Arsenal rally with a stunning 30-yard goal.



OUCH! Jimmy Case cops it from Forest's Frank Gray

Saints jump the big ditch

By JOHN DAVIES

CALL IT the seven-match itch or the seven-match ditch—either way, Lawrie McMenemy believes SOUTHAMPTON can now stay in contention for the First Division title.

The eighth game is the point when the flash-in-the-pans start to fall away," enthused the Saints boss after the 4-0 spanking of DERBY.

The only fear McMenemy admits is that shared by other managers—a crop of injuries to key players.

But there is more class to this stylish, sincere Saints'

side than the gold trio of Alan Ball, Mike Channon and Charlie George.

There is the superb opportunism of Phil Boyer, who notched a hat-trick against the luckless Rams. There is also the quick-silver ability of 20-year-old Steve Williams.

Derby skipper Roy McFarland sees a specialist today after suffering a recurrence of his old Achilles tendon injury. The club last night appointed former West Brom manager Alan Ashman as chief scout.

Bond hopes in a tangle

By PHILIP OSBORN

TREVOR WHYMARK, whose goal power could add crucial extra impetus to NORWICH'S surprise title challenge, is trapped on the sidelines by Football League red tape.

And, unless it is unravelled soon, he may walk away from the chance of glory in his native East Anglia and sign for Belgian club Bruges.

The former Ipswich star watched Norwich fade after taking a two-goal lead through Justin Fashanu and Martin Peters and only beat BOLTON 2-1.

Whymark has agreed to join Norwich but the League have so far blocked manager John Bond's efforts to sign him.

First a loan deal was rejected — Norwich already have a maximum two player (Kevin Keelan and John Ryan) on loan from the U.S. — then a £25,000 transfer fee through when the League ruled that Whymark could not rejoin Vancouver next March.

Now Norwich hope the solution will be to arrange a "free transfer" for Keelan.

NOW A LOOK AT DIVISION TWO

Fans spoil Chelsea joy

CAMBRIDGE manager John Docherty placed the blame for the CHELSEA fans' invasion of the pitch with the London club.

The invasion delayed the start of the match which Chelsea won 1-0 and Docherty said afterwards: "The invasion is Chelsea's responsibility."

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■ STRONG words from manager Graham Taylor after WATFORD'S second win in Division Two, 2-1 over CHARLTON:

"If I had not been the manager I would have left at half time," Taylor said. "I thought the game was lousy. There was nothing there... but I am very pleased we won."

A disputed goal by lanky Ross Jenkins in the 64th-minute was the decider. He got his head to sub Keith Mercer's shot to leave keeper Nicky Johns flying the wrong way.

Charlton manager Andy Nelson was sure Jenkins was offside. "He was standing on the line when he headed it in," he said.

Nelson thought Charlton had done enough to draw. Few would disagree. They outplayed a disjointed Watford for half an hour. Then it all went wrong.

Ian Bolton's penalty, equalised Peter Shaw's fine back-header and Johns' failure to hold a Roger Joslyn shot set up Jenkins' winner.

GILLARD'S DAY OF TORTURE

IAN GILLARD was set up for an afternoon of torture the moment he was booked—only eight minutes into the game—for time-wasting at a QPR throw-in.

OLDHAM manager Jimmy Frizzell got word to winger Paul Heaton to "try to run him silly" — with twin objectives.

Either Gillard would commit a bad foul, leaving the referee no option but to send him off, or he would crack under the strain of that early booking," said Frizzell.

The play didn't work. Gillard turned in a brilliant performance, but manager Tommy Docherty revealed: "The lad was in tears at half time—with good reason."

With £400,000 Tony Currie still carrying an ankle injury — he was substituted after 63 minutes — the match ended as a dreary 0-0 draw.

Don't write us off—Campbell

LUTON'S promotion odds must shorten after a smooth 3-1 win that put them within a point of Second Division leaders Newcastle and wrecked FULHAM'S unbeaten home League record.

Manager David Pleat said: "The players are working well for each other. There is confidence all through the side and no panic when we are under pressure."

Fulham boss Bobby Campbell said: "I am not too unhappy over losing. I was disappointed for our fans, but don't write us off yet. If we can beat Wrexham here on Saturday we are back in business."

Luton's David Moss, now with eight goals (four penalties) scored from the spot after five minutes. Ricky Hill increased the

lead 10 minutes after half time. Fulham got a penalty goal from Kevin Lock and Bob Hattton in Luton's third.

■ ORIENT, beaten 1-0 at SHREWSBURY and with only a bleak four draws to their credit, are now bottom sharing the spot with Burnley. Steve Biggins scored after 10 minutes of almost total Shrewsbury domination.

Orient, with only two on target shots, left manager Jimmy Bloomfield with problems.

Joe Mayo was booked for foul. Shrewsbury player-manager Graham Turner, though pleased with this slender win, sounded this note of caution: "It's a long season as we've just got to make sure that we don't go straight down again, as others have done."