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## VIDEO REPLAYS NOT FAR AWAY

FIFA president Sepp Blatter has hinted football's governing body could sanction the use of video technology in the near future.

The Thierry Henry handball has brought the issue into sharper focus.

Blatter has previously spoken out against the use of cameras, saying it would disrupt the flow of the game.

However, the world football chief now admits FIFA will discuss the matter in March and could bring in goal-line cameras after this summer's World Cup.

"I'm not absolutely against it. If the technology is ready to adopt, then I am in agreement. If the security of the system is guaranteed then we will introduce it. But it will not be ready for the 2010 World Cup. But in any case it will be studied in March, at the next meeting of the International Football Association Board, the international body which establishes football rules and is the only one that can change them," said Blatter.

Calls were made even louder for the introduction of video technology following Thierry Henry's controversial handball which led to France's extra-time winner against the Republic of Ireland in November's World Cup qualifying play-off.

Blatter also ruled out the use of extra referees during the World Cup, something which is currently being tested in this season's Europa League.

"We will not make any experiments in this competition, not even with extra referees."

## ROONEY SET FOR BIG PAY DAY

Wayne Rooney's advisors are aiming to push the Manchester United striker's wages close to the



With LAKIS KONISTIS

## Sports World

£200,000-a-week mark to make him one of the top earners in world football.

Rooney is set to sign a new five-year contract prior to heading off to this summer's World Cup in South Africa and his camp will demand that his wages reach £200,000k in the final year at least.

However, the Glazers flagged up the escalating wages in their recent bond prospectus, and will want to rein in the big spending on the massive wage bill. However, Rooney is an exception, and Sir Alex Ferguson will not countenance the 24-year-old's exit.

Rooney will be offered a new contract before the finals and Manchester United sources confirmed that a new lucrative contract would be on the table this summer.

Rooney's camp might consider it prudent to wait until the World Cup is over when, if Rooney and England excel, his worth will be even greater.

United, though, will want it sorted out as soon as possible, and there is a big argument that it might be counterproductive to Rooney becoming a world star in South Africa if he carries the burden of uncertainty over his future into the tournament.

Rooney's four-goal haul against Hull City to take United back to the top of the Premier League emphasises his worth at Old Trafford, and his advisors have known that for some time.

Clearly any demand for a five-year contract that exceeds £50 million will be rebuffed by United, but anything substantially less will cause a standoff that will only harm both camps. The solution is an acceptable immediate pay hike to £140,000-a-week.

The devil will be in the detail, though, and United will need to agree substantial annual increases to reward loyalty, which will mean hitting £200,000-a-week in the final year or two of the contract.

Rooney has two-and-a-half years on his current deal, and it is United policy to review the contracts of their star players with two years left, which makes this summer the landmark period.

Ferguson recognises Rooney as the club's most influential player, a potential future captain of both club and country, and before the expiry of any new deal, Rooney is expected to rise to both honours.

Real Madrid and Barcelona have both been linked to Rooney for some time now, and the argument is that they have been encouraged by United's recent financial profile.

The Spanish clubs could try to turn Rooney's head with offers of £250,000-a-week, which would take him onto the level of Cristiano Ronaldo, whose salary reaches such lavish proportions with image rights deals and beneficial tax and

currency exchange rates.

The key factor is Rooney's desire to remain at Old Trafford, and his aversion to going abroad. Those two factors are sure to enable United to reach a reasonable compromise over the new contract.

However it is carved up, the staggered increases and image rights will propel Rooney into the £200,000-a-week bracket at the tail-end of his career.

While United fans want to see evidence of the Glazers' commitment to the club with a big-money signing, a massive new contract for Rooney will placate some, not all, who fear more players will be sold off like Ronaldo to service the debt, currently £716 million.

Cristiano Ronaldo was sold to Real Madrid for £80 million last summer, but Ferguson insists the money is there for him to spend and that the lack of reinvestment in a major star has been because he has not found the quality player at the right price. The fans, though, are not convinced- and the re-signing of Rooney will help that cause. Any threat of a sale of Rooney would heighten tension to boiling point.

## FOOTBALL FERRY A GOOD OMEN?

The '2018-2022 Football Ferry' stepped out in style on Sydney Harbour, as part of Sydney Festival's annual Australia Day celebrations.

With a giant 'Come Play!' kangaroo on board, the '2018-2022 Football Ferry' was an impressive sight on Sydney Harbour, competing against three other ferries for Australia Day line honours.

FFA CEO Ben Buckley said the ferry race was a great opportunity to showcase Australia's bid and the beauty of Australia at the same time.

"An iconic Sydney Harbour Ferry decked out in Come Play! livery and full of football supporters racing around one of the most beautiful harbours in the world is a great advertisement for the Bid and the country," Buckley said.

"There was not a lot in the result but I am going to claim a win for the 2018-2022 Football Ferry as it was very close. It could be a good omen for our Bids which will be decided in December," added Buckley.

## SOCCER STAR SHOT IN BAR

Salvador Cabanas, the top player on Paraguay's World Cup team, was shot in the head before dawn Monday in the bathroom of a bar in Mexico City.

The 29-year-old striker underwent surgery in which doctors failed to remove a bullet lodged in his skull. Dr. Ernesto Martinez, who was part of the surgical team, said "we cannot guarantee that his life is out of danger." He called the player's condition stable.

"Injuries like this are unpredictable," Martinez added. "We don't know what kind of after effects he might have - perhaps none, or perhaps there will be many. We don't know right now."

Cabanas has played in the Mexico league since 2003 and is the highest-profile player on his national team. Paraguay will face Italy, New Zealand and Slovakia in the group stage of the World Cup in South Africa in June. Cabanas has 125 goals in 218 games in Mexico.

Cabanas was honored as South America's soccer player of the year in 2007 by Uruguay's El Pais newspaper, the only time a player in Mexico has won the award.

There is a long history of violence involving Latin American soccer players. Most prominently, Colombia defender Andres Escobar was shot and killed in his home country days after his own-goal helped the United States defeat the Colombians 2-1 in a major upset at the 1994 World Cup.

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