

The courage of your convictions

MARK
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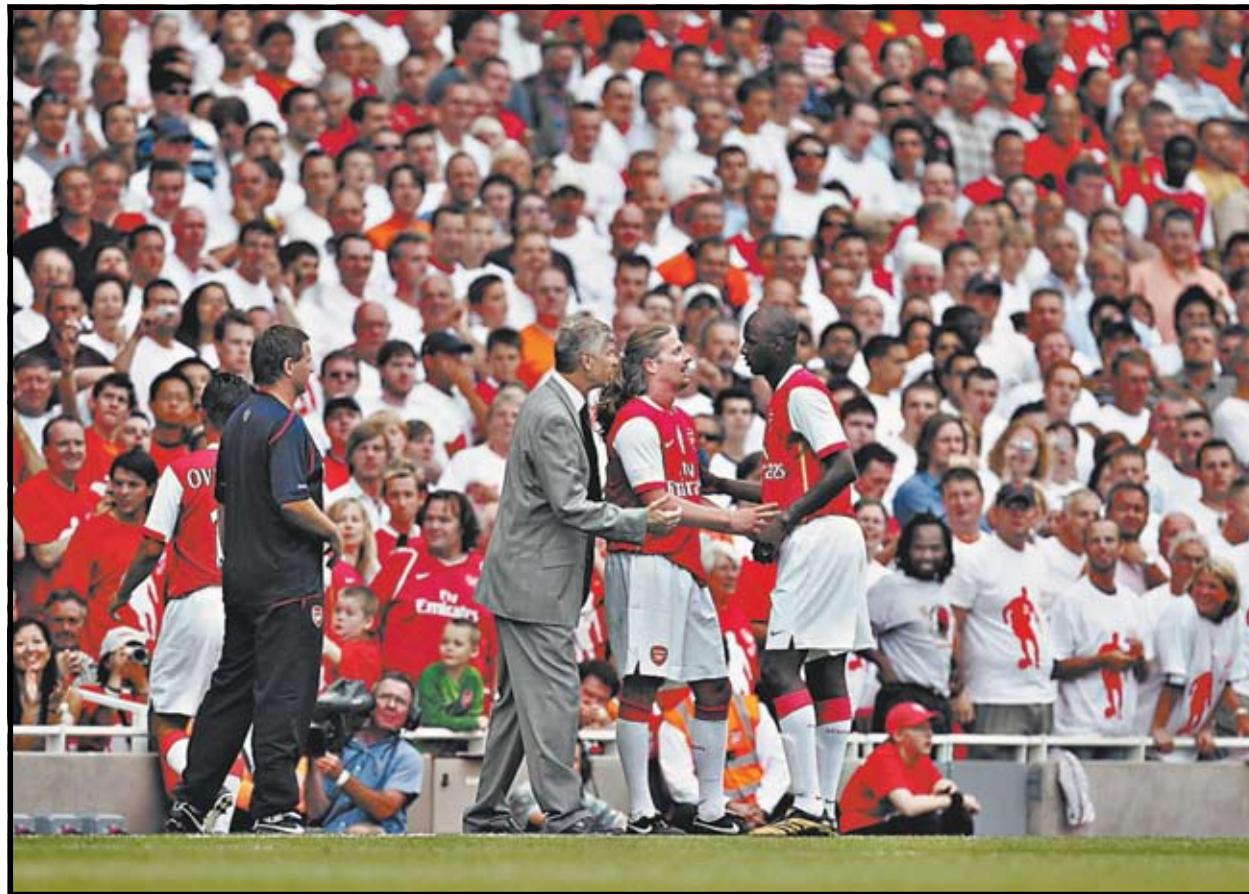
AN esteemed former manager of mine once said to me that the most important characteristic of any manager was his ability to make decisions.

Decisions that sometimes have to be instantaneous, and others that can take a little longer, shape a manager's time at any club. It is vital when standing on the touchline watching a match unfold that a manager can not only realise something is not working, but act swiftly to remedy it. It is no use waiting till your team concedes a goal; by then it is too late. You have to be decisive.

Managers have the responsibility (mostly) to sanction the signing of new players. In an ideal world we would watch them play 10 times then train for a few weeks before deciding. In practice though, that is impossible. Sometimes we have to make choices based on a lot less evidence than that. If we didn't, then we would never sign a player.

Picking the starting 11 often involves making choices that will leave some players disappointed. But these are decisions that managers are paid to make. The greater the importance of the match, the bigger the decision and the greater the disappointment for some.

When a manager arrives at any club it is then that he is faced with the most decisions. Which players does he like? Which players does he need? He has to review all aspects of his department and decide what is working and what needs to be changed. When I started, like most managers, I thought that I



Arsene Wenger shocked many when he let go Marc Overmars, Emmanuel Petit and Patrick Vieira, but he was proved right. The three players were all past their best and Arsenal fans enjoyed them at the height of their powers

Photograph: Action Images

would assemble a team around me that would move between clubs with me. Initially that was fine because at each club I joined there were vacancies for my management team.

When I joined Millwall, though, I decided to ask the existing management team to stay and give it a go with me. It worked brilliantly I have done that ever since. It is difficult getting a job in football and changing things around simply to bring in people with whom you feel safe is not fair practice.

I was able to take my assistant Scott Leitch with me to Aberdeen because there was a vacancy there. I have seldom had to change things later, and when I have they have been the most agonising decisions I have had to make. When they are made for the greater good then they are justified. As managers, we have

a responsibility to do what is best for the club and not to do what makes life easier. Otherwise in the long run there will be a cost.

Over the years, I have seen many big-name managers take big decisions that I have not always understood but have admired them for their courage. Imagine Glen Hoddle having to tell Gazza that he was not in his final squad for the World Cup and that he was being sent home from La Manga.

Two great managers have demonstrated their ability to make huge decisions for the good of the club. Arsene Wenger shocked a lot of people when he allowed Petit, Overmars and Vieira to leave Arsenal, but he was proved right. They had all passed their sell-by dates. Arsenal fans had seen the best of them. Sir Alex Ferguson's handling of David



Ferguson's handling of Beckham showed his respect for the other players

Beckam demonstrated the manager's strength and emphasised to everyone that the club comes before the individual. Doing what he did also showed the other players his respect for them; he did it for them.

Different managers handle these situations in their own way. Some will agonise before and after making hard calls while, like me, others will be more pragmatic and less emotional if they feel that they have applied thought and logic to the process. If they feel that they have explored every option available to them then they will sleep at night.

Managers stand and fall by the decisions they make. If they get more right than wrong, most of the bad ones will be forgotten. If they don't, then they know that they will be reminded of them later.

Questions that prove too taxing for Fifa's Warner

ANDREW
JENNINGS



THE man on the podium vibrates with rage, his finger stabbing the night air as he harangues a political meeting. "No foreigner," he bellows, "particularly a white foreigner, will come to my country and harass me." It's a video clip of Fifa vice-president Jack Warner I found last week. He spat out these words in

Trinidad in 2006, after my BBC film crew and I attempted to ask him how much profit he was making from his huge World Cup tickets rackets.

Warner's response was a typical, "Go fuck yourself", then he clambered on to the platform and really let rip. A local news team captured his poison and at last I had a copy. I asked a question about ethics. I got racist abuse.

Racism is banned under Article 6 of Fifa's code of ethics. Sepp Blatter kindly makes an exception for the man on whose guaranteed 35 regional votes he relies at each Fifa congress.

Watching the video again I remembered that a year later the loathsome Warner had the cheek to call honest John McBeth [the former SFA chairman] a bigot and, when England's Geoff Thompson replaced him at Fifa's high table, crowed: "Good has prevailed over evil". Later, McBeth revealed to BBC Panorama that Warner once tried to divert a match fee for Trinidad v Scotland to his private account.

Back in the Caribbean, I've been observing Warner's continuing embar-

rassing behaviour. He's an MP in Trinidad – even though the ethics code demands Fifa officials remain politically neutral – and launches vitriolic attacks on his colleagues.

When Warner isn't calling himself a politician, he says he's a businessman. His activities are aimed at making money out of football, but last week he refused to say if he pays all the tax he should. Like the other members of Fifa's executive committee Warner is paid huge sums in fees and expenses. Some – I've seen the confidential documents – stash the money in Switzerland to avoid tax.

Warner makes more huge profits out of his industrial-scale World Cup ticket rackets. Even Fifa concedes – in another confidential document in my possession – that he made around \$1 million in Germany in 2006. Did he pay tax? Silence from Warner.

He made even more out of the Soca Warriors, who in 2006 became the smallest country to qualify for the World Cup finals. Warner and his son Daryll set up a company to harvest revenue from TV, sponsors and ticket sales and



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pulled in more than £3m, supposedly to be shared among the players.

After the tournament, Warner's accountant produced a bundle of numbers but some documents had been lost so expenses were estimated. The next stroke was a surprise deduction of a third of the money "to prepare Trinidad for the World Cup 2010".

When the players complained, Warner's officials denounced them as "greedy" and offered them £500 a man. When 16 of the squad consulted lawyers Warner banned them from playing for their country again.

Fifa's ethics committee, headed by Lord Sebastian Coe, declined to intervene. Last year an independent arbitrator in London awarded the players everything they asked from. Warner still refused to pay.

The team have involved the Trinidad courts but Warner has succeeded in delaying the case. Last week in Trinidad I asked this question: as Warner had hung on to £3m for three years, had he paid tax on it? He declined to say.

For more on Warner visit <http://www.transparencyinsport.org>