



## The Beam Sports

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### Owen admits to nerves

Michael Owen has revealed that being forced to watch games from the bench is turning him into a nervous wreck.

The England international has struggled to hold down regular first-team football since joining Manchester United as a free agent this summer.

He is yet to really make his mark at Old Trafford, although he went a long way to doing so with his derby exploits on Sunday.

Owen was a late substitute against Manchester City, but his goal scoring instincts saw him in the right place at the right time as he snatched the decisive seventh goal in a thrilling 4-3 victory for Sir Alex Ferguson's side.

He admits the sense of occasion almost got to him as he was awaiting his opportunity, but was delighted to have made a decisive impact upon entering the fold with 12 minutes remaining.

"It was brilliant," he said.

"I don't know how the manager and staff do it. It must be so nerve-wracking.

"When I start a game I never get nervous. I always feel in control.

"But when you are sat on the bench the game rubs off on you.

"When you do go onto the pitch you are a little bit nervous because you have felt all the emotions of everyone sat around you. You kick every ball with the team.

"The first couple of minutes are quite hard. It is not like just going down to the park for a kick-around.

"At this level you have to be right into the game, at the right speed despite sitting on your backside for the previous hour, or however long it is.

"But you get sent on to get a goal. Thankfully that is what I did."

Despite putting the first dent in City's 2009/10 campaign on Sunday, Owen still believes that Mark Hughes' side are capable of challenging for a top-four finish this season.

"Manchester City have been quite impressive since the start of the season," said the former Liverpool striker.

"You would think they will be up at the right end of the table.

"Everyone is guessing how far up the table that is. Whether it is a European place or a Champions League place I am not sure. But I definitely think they will be up there."

### Tevez surprised by reception

Carlos Tevez admits he was disappointed and surprised by his return to Old Trafford on Sunday for the first time since swapping red for blue over the summer.

The Argentina international was back at Manchester United on Sunday for the first time since swapping red for blue over the summer.

Tevez spent two successful seasons with the Red Devils before crossing the city in the close-season to join free-spending Manchester City.

But the

forward was roundly booed throughout City's 4-3 defeat and was though to be a target for a missile that struck team-mate Javier Garrido as the sides left the field at half-time.

It was a turn of events that has left Tevez perplexed given he had been awarded a warm reception by his former team-mates.

"I must admit I did believe I would get a different reception from the United supporters," he is quoted as saying in the Daily Mail.

"Initially everything was positive and I was greeted by my former team-mates and United staff without any problems at all.

"But as soon as I entered the field the atmosphere was very different. It was hard to take because previously I was always wanted by those people."



### Wenger wants FA talks



#### ... "Anti-footballers" infuriate Arsenal boss

Arsene Wenger has revealed plans to speak to the Football Association to discuss players who persistently foul.

The Arsenal boss issued a withered tirade following last month's defeat to Manchester United, after becoming exasperated by what he perceived to be an over-physical approach employed by Sir Alex Ferguson's side.

Wenger, who spoke of "anti-football" players in the wake of the Old Trafford clash, is eager to open the debate over persistent foulers, who he feels are ruining the game.

"I think I will try to talk about it. We have already talked about it at Uefa meetings," said Wenger.

"It's not especially any particular player but it looks to me that some players make repeated fouls and, to me, it looks that it doesn't matter how many fouls they make but they get a card when it's a spectacular foul.

"I just think referees should look and see the little fouls, each time even if it's three or four little fouls then they should be booked rather than one spectacular foul."

Wenger's Arsenal side are known for a passing style which he feels gets disrupted by constant fouling.

"It's a general thing," the 's 10

Frenchman added. "It's the little fouls in the middle of the park. It breaks up the game from when you are attacking three against three, four against four and then you get a free-kick and it's 10 against 10 again.

"All the work you have done is nothing. You start from scratch again. They have broken up the play.

"It's what teams are doing at international level, we call it a tactical foul. You're passed in midfield - make a foul.

"You start again and you have time to get everybody back. Then you stand in front of the ball."

### Nigeria rejects Fifa age scans

The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) says it will not accept the Fifa-approved MRI bone scans to determine the ages of players due to take part in the Under-17 World Cup.

In a move likely to raise more questions than it answers, the NFF president Sani Lulu rejected the use of MRI scans, saying they are "not in the rules and regulations of the tournament."

Lulu's comments come just weeks after the NFF dropped 15 players from their Under-17 squad after they failed the age-tests conducted.

Nigeria conducted MRI scans in a move seen as a pre-emptive strike at Fifa's requirement for all

players to be age-tested during the tournament to be held in October in Nigeria.

But barely four weeks after the revelation, Sani Lulu has rejected criticism surrounding the tests, insisting he will not accept the MRI results.

"I've always maintained that I'll not use the MRI to disqualify my players because it's not in the rules and regulations of this tournament," Lulu told a local radio station in Lagos.

But his comments have irked Sports Minister Sani Ndanusa who has rejected calls to invite the parents of the national under-17 players to verify their sons' ages.

"We will not deviate from Fifa's requirement in terms of

ascertaining players' true ages," a visibly angry Ndanusa told journalists in Abuja.

"The whole world has gone digital and we're following suit. We're no longer in the analogue era.

"Fifa wants MRI scans used and we're going to adhere to that, simple."

The spat between Lulu and Ndanusa has generated heated debate in Nigeria, with fans and the media calling for the sacking of top NFF officials.

Accusations of age cheating have blighted Nigeria's success at international age group tournaments in recent years.

The Golden Eaglets have won the Fifa Under-17 World Cup three times - 1985, 1993 and 2007.



### Only Two

#### Ballack: Premier League Race Is Between Chelsea & Manchester United

Chelsea midfielder Michael Ballack feels that this season's battle for the Premier League title is looking like a two-team tussle between the Blues and Manchester United, despite the presence of a bigger chasing pack of challengers this year.

"It looks a little bit like a two-horse race but we don't underestimate anybody. Manchester City did well until now. Tottenham [Hotspur], Arsenal and Liverpool are all teams that can have a run any time of the season," he told The Daily Telegraph.

"But United have a lot of good years behind them with the Champions League win and three title wins in the Premier League, which will give them a lot of confidence."

Ballack also credits new manager Carlo Ancelotti with imbuing a new ruthlessness into the Chelsea squad, something which has led to a boost in confidence amongst the players.

He added: "That's what he always tells us you have to wait for your chance and you can see it now when they come, we are deadly. He gives the team a lot of confidence."

### Diouf in ball-boy probe

Blackburn forward El-Hadji Diouf has been interviewed by police following allegations made by a ball-boy at Goodison Park.

Everton ran out 3-0 winners in a

dominant display as former Liverpool player Diouf was subject to a series of boos from the home crowd.

The winger was seemingly involved in a verbal altercation with a ball-boy during the first half of the game after the youngster appeared to throw an out-of-play ball towards him with particular venom.

The Senegalese international then directed words towards the individual bringing sarcastic cheers from the Everton faithful.

Diouf then suffered further abuse from home fans, and again when he went to take two corners in the area of the original incident.

After the match police interviewed Diouf at the stadium before the Blackburn team left the ground.

A spokesman for Merseyside Police said: "We are looking into an allegation that a 28-year-old man used racist language at the Everton match today."



### FIFA Unveil Coca-Cola World Cup Trophy Tour

World football's greatest prize is set to embark on its longest ever global tour, with FIFA and the Coca-Cola Company taking the real solid-gold trophy to 86 countries during a 225-day journey that allows thousands of fans to enjoy a rare close-up view of the authentic World Cup Trophy.

The trophy will travel 134,017 kilometres and visit every nation in Africa to give African fans the once-in-a-lifetime experience of having their picture taken with the trophy.

The ceremonial start of the tour was held yesterday as FIFA President Sep Blatter and Coca-Cola chairman and CEO Muhtar Kent accompanied the trophy on the first steps of its journey. Later in the week, the FIFA World Cup Trophy will be flown from Zurich to its first stop in Cairo, Egypt.

"Through this event, we are

really engaging football fans on a global scale, giving them the unique opportunity to have their picture taken with the most prestigious prize in world football and to embrace the excitement surrounding the FIFA World Cup," said Sep Blatter on the FIFA website.

"I am especially thrilled that the FIFA World Cup Trophy Tour takes in all 54 nations in Africa and that this opportunity is thus afforded to all African football fans. None of this would have been possible without a strong and loyal partner such as Coca-Cola," he stated in his speech.

"Our programmes to support the 2010 FIFA World Cup, such as the Trophy Tour, will leave a lifelong impression on consumers that helps to reinforce loyalty and preference for our business and our brands," said Muhtar Kent.