

Megalomania 62

September 1994

A fanzine associated with the games hobby, published at the start of each month by its editor, Chris Tringham, 10 Jubilee Court, London Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 6JL (Phone 081-683 2815, CompuServe 100343,362) Subscribers pay 30p an issue and waiting lists are open for Regular Diplomacy and nothing else.

Editorial

Well, I seem to have managed five pages, which isn't bad in the circumstances. I have spent the last week putting the finishing touches to the new 'Introductory Booklet', and to be perfectly honest I don't feel like spending a lot more time sitting in front of my computer.

The work in Rugby didn't materialise, so I spent a week on a course (see below) and two weeks in the office. For the first time in ages I actually have a decent PC to use at work. It's a Compaq 486-66 with 8mb of memory, and we now have Word Perfect for Windows 6 on our network server. Not as good as Word 6, but a vast improvement on Word Perfect 5.1 for DOS.

Work is quite interesting right now, as we are building up an SAP group (SAP is German Client-Server software) - this involves recruiting people on silly salaries (which is fine, as I will presumably be on a similar salary myself before very long), and training up other people (such as myself). The strangest part about it is that when we phone punters up to ask if we can go and see them (to try and sell them CMG's services) most of them are very keen to see us - which is quite a contrast to the normal problems you can have trying to get an appointment. The only problem at the moment is that until we get the recruitment sorted out, we don't have a lot to sell to them!

I was supposed to be on a course in Germany at the end of this week, which would have played havoc with this issue, but then we discovered that they're also running the course in the UK in November, so I'll be going on that one instead. Just have to hope it doesn't clash with Midcon!

Well, not long to go till I go on holiday. I'm getting seriously boring going to the same place for the fourth year in succession. The trouble is that it's such an excellent house in a such a pleasant location that it seems silly to go anywhere else!

It's a Small World

I was recently on an external course and, of the eleven other people in the room, there were:

One ex-CMG employee, one colleague of a former CMG employee (with whom I used to work), two former colleagues of current CMG employees (one being my former boss and the other I'm working with at the moment), one employee of a company with whom I recently had an informal interview, and one person who CMG would like to recruit. That's over half the people there!

Heard on GLR

The first item in the sports bulletin was news that the TCCB had decided that no new contracts would be offered to foreign players until a decision was reached on Lancashire's proposal to ban foreign players. The third item was speculation on Shane Warne or Dion Walsh possibly joining Northants next season. (Subsequent research reveals the missing information is that no contracts lasting beyond 1995 would be offered)

A traffic bulletin about services from Kings Cross Thamesmead station (I heard this one twice on different days!).

A news story about someone being charged with having Herring for his own use (I might have misheard that one).

Not heard on GLR - audiences have halved in the last year. Which is no great surprise, given the way that they messed about with the format.

City News

I have been watching the performance of shares in Coda, an accountancy software supplier, with some interest. The shares were floated in February at £2.35, and climbed up to £2.65. Then in July they announced their half-year results - a loss of £2.55m! The shares plummeted to £1.68 immediately, and eventually dropped as low as 87½p before recovering a little to 97p. I don't

pretend to understand the stock market, but all this seems rather an over-reaction to results that were chiefly caused by a 93% increase in research and development and a £2.91 million charge for an employee share ownership programme. The signs look good, with a 60% increase in AS/400 sales and a fourfold increase in Open Systems sales, and in each of these markets they have leading products.

Am I missing something, or are these shares a good buy?

Cricket

Don't talk to me about Surrey! At one stage I thought they were going to win everything, but now it looks like they'll win nothing. Inept batting performances seem to be their speciality.

The 3rd Test, on the other hand, I did enjoy. I watched the last hour of Friday's play, when Darren Gough and Phil de Freitas hit Allan Donald all over the place, and the start of South Africa's innings on Saturday morning when Devon Malcolm destroyed the South Africans. After that, they seemed totally demoralised, and their defeat in the two Texaco Trophy games seemed almost inevitable. Mind you, England have got a very useful one-day side these days.

Motor Racing

I can't be the only person who was slightly surprised to discover that Grand Prix cars have to have a 10mm thick plank of wood attached to their underside. This apparently slows them down, which is probably better than my suggestion of speed humps.

The Benetton team are certainly in the wars, with the threat of being ejected from the championship for removing a valve from the re-fuelling rig (which would make all the other penalties academic). If Damon Hill wins the Drivers' Championship in that way it will be a rather hollow victory, given that Schumaker has been the best driver this season.

On The Box

Traditionally, August is a bad month for TV, with re-runs and second-rate US imports, but there's actually been some very good stuff on recently.

Michael Moore's TV Nation is a rather curious thing - it's made for ABC in the States and the BBC over here, and its weekly selection of filmed reports can be distinctly uneven. Nevertheless, Michael Moore is very good when he seizes on an issue, and he won't give up. I particularly enjoyed his (successful) attempt to get a bill through Congress that said that 'TV Nation' was a fine program.

Also on Friday night, **Passengers** is a pacy look at 'youth culture' around the world. Entertaining and informative, though the selection of 'diarists' has been a little too eccentric for my taste.

Chandler & Co is yet another bloody detective series, though anything with Barbara Flynn does have some inbuilt advantages. Maybe a touch too inclined to deal with issues (press harassment, prostitution).

Frank Stubbs might possibly be a decent program from Carlton, which is enough of a rarity to mention, though in these days of independent producers it might just be that they sell it to the network. Anyway, it is very enjoyable whoever makes it. The key is the excellent characterization, and plots that are just about believable and usually quite funny.

I have been watching some of the re-runs of **The Sweeney** and **Minder** on UK Gold. I remember **The Sweeney** being the highlight of my week's TV viewing when it was first on, but all these years (20 at a guess) later, it does look rather dated. The interesting thing about the early episodes of **Minder** is that they have much less humour than the later series. Also, Arthur Daley was much more of a crook and shady businessman than he became in later programmes.

Room 101 has now finished its run, but no doubt the BBC will commission another series. Danny Baker was the final guest of the first series, and he was unsurprisingly very funny, laying into Eurodisney, Casualty and pub food. Even Maureen Lipman wasn't too bad once she finished slagging off all her old films.

Fantasy Football League came back for a 'pre-season special' with special guests Nick Hornby and Elvis Costello, both of whom are lined up to be managers in the new season. Please let them replace Karren Brady and John Motson at the very least.

Of course, these days Frank Skinner is on TV almost all the time, rescuing shows such as 'Gagtag' and that strange Terry Wogan show on moral dilemmas (was it called 'Do the Right Thing?'), and even has his own Channel 4 sitcom, 'Blue Heaven'. Unfortunately it is dreadful!

Still on the subject of FFL, I read somewhere that John Motson was first choice for the 'Statto' role, but turned it down. Angus Loughran, who did get the part, seems to be carving out a career as a football expert (which he is), so will we see him departing from the programme?

Punt and Dennis was an irritating series. My expectations were lowered by the timeslot (BBC1 at 8.30), and the format was indeed rather more 'light entertainment' than the Mary Whitehouse Experience, with a sub-Morecambe and Wise introduction that really wasn't very funny. The irritating part was that enough of the sketches were funny to keep me watching. Oddly enough, I caught an old Jasper Carrott show on UK Gold yesterday and there were Punt & Dennis doing their stuff, and they don't seem to have changed over the years. Incidentally, I don't think that UK Gold are very wise to repeat these shows, as they have too much topical humour in them.

I feel that I must sing the praises of the David Letterman show on Sky One. The only problem with it is that I miss many of the references to Stateside culture - for example, he did a 'Top Ten' on Forrest Gump, the eponymous hero of a hugely successful film (starring Tom Hanks) that will be released over here later this year. As far as I can gather, Gump is a 'Being There' style character who wanders through American history meeting many of the leading players. I know all this now, but not when I watched the show!

Nevertheless, Letterman has an anarchic sense of humour that seems to work very well. He also has a good mix of guests, including Al Gore last week, and whilst Jonathan Ross, Clive Anderson, Danny Baker et al may have copied him, the original still stands up.

I have taken advantage of a trial offer of all three Sky movie channels for £6.95 a month, mainly because I can cancel it without having to pay a cancellation charge. Unfortunately there seem to be precious few movies that are worth watching.

I watched **Leon the Pig Farmer** on Sunday night, and it was entertaining in an undemanding way, though the second half is rather improbable and not as funny as the first half. They very cleverly scheduled **Malcolm X** at the same time, but I decided that I wasn't in the mood for as film as long and worthy as that.

So I think I'll be cancelling in a few days time before I go on holiday.

The Recession

I keep meaning to write this piece, but somehow I have never got round to it (until now). Since before the election people (mainly Tory politicians) have been suggesting that the recession was over. Well, I actually believe that now it really is over. Or at least it is in the computer services industry, and has been since the start of the year. This observation isn't just based on CMG (who have already recruited a significant number of people this year) but comes from talking to people in other companies, and from the number of jobs that are advertised.

This is obviously a promising sign for the rest of the economy, given that our clients must believe that they need to spend money on computer systems, and wouldn't do that unless they thought that the recession was ending.

Not that any of this is doing the Tories any good, as they plumb depths of popular support that are unprecedented for a party that goes on to win the election. Nevertheless, many people still believe that they will win the election. I suspect that this is in part because of what happened in the last election, and that caution is understandable given that people don't seem to want to admit to voting Tory. It's very hard to know whether there has been a sea change in voting intentions or whether people are just trying to teach the Tories a lesson. I incline to the view that Labour will win, but if a week is a long time in politics then 2 or 3 years is long enough for even John Major to turn things round.

Well, I'm going to have a go at predicting the final positions in the Premier League. Doing this on the basis of just three games is fraught with difficulty, and I just know that some of my predictions are going to look a bit silly come May, but I won't let that put me off.

I am, of course, going to offer some explanation for at least some of my predictions.

Newcastle have made a very good start, albeit against three of the poorer sides in the League, but the amazing thing is that they've done it without Peter Beardsley. Phillippe Albert looks like a good signing, and should ensure that their defence doesn't let them down. Up front, Fox, Beardsley and Cole will be more than a match for most defences.

Manchester United and Blackburn will do well again this season, and I think that the top three will be fairly tight.

I put Liverpool 4th solely on the basis of their performance on the opening day of the season, which is always dangerous, but with young players like Fowler, McManaman and Jones and the experience of Molby, Barnes and Rush they will be no pushovers if the latter three stay fit and motivated or if they can sign a few more good players then they will be in contention for the championship. [Having watched Liverpool vs Arsenal on Sunday, I feel rather more confident about this prediction.]

Arsenal are another good side, but perhaps not quite good enough to be in contention for the title, though this may depend upon whether they concentrate on retaining the Cup Winners Cup.

Forest have a top quality strike force in Roy and Collymore (who I rated highly when he was at Palace), and some very good players throughout the side

Chelsea have made some good acquisitions, though Furlong looks a touch expensive at £2.3m. On the other hand, David Rocastle seems a bargain at £1.25m. I think Chelsea may surprise a few people this season.

- | | |
|----|-------------------|
| 1 | Newcastle |
| 2 | Manchester United |
| 3 | Blackburn |
| 4 | Liverpool |
| 5 | Arsenal |
| 6 | Nottingham Forest |
| 7 | Chelsea |
| 8 | Tottenham |
| 9 | Leeds United |
| 10 | Manchester City |
| 11 | Wimbledon |
| 12 | Crystal Palace |
| 13 | Norwich |
| 14 | Aston Villa |
| 15 | QPR |
| 16 | Sheff Wed |
| 17 | Everton |
| 18 | Coventry |
| 19 | Southampton |
| 20 | Ipswich |
| 21 | West Ham |
| 22 | Leicester City |

well in their next two games. They have three good strikers (Rösler, Walsh and Quinn) and quality elsewhere, so on their days they'll do well, but how consistent will they be?

Wimbledon will continue to surprise people whilst also selling good players to bigger clubs. They also play football these days.

Crystal Palace have got a good young side who will do well once they find their feet. Chris Armstrong is a first-rate striker, and Bruce Dyer a great prospect for the future. A fit Ray Wilkins could do wonders for their confidence, but even without him they'll do well enough.

Norwich without Sutton and Fox will still surprise a few teams, but it'll be a bit of a struggle: Villa won't do as well as they could, mainly because so many of their players are past their best (and why did Ron Atkinson buy John Fashanu? Write on one side of the sheet only...).

QPR seem to have made a real find in Kevin Gallen, but the club seems to lack ambition and Les Ferdinand will presumably be the next one out. Sheffield Wednesday look set for another season of failing to live up to their potential, though a fit Waddle might make a difference.

Then we come to the dead men. Mike Walker's comic attempts to sign a striker (any striker) are indicative of Everton's problems, and even assuming he finds one or two new players I think they'll still struggle.

Tottenham have grabbed all the headlines, and on the basis of their early season form they will score (and concede) a lot of goals. However, I suspect that all will not be as simple as it seems at the moment, and this could end up as a season of disappointment.

Many people have tipped Leeds to be the 'dark horses', and they certainly have a lot of excellent players (McAllister, Speed, Wallace), but I'm not entirely convinced.

I'm not at all sure about Manchester City - they were easily beaten in their first game, but played very

Coventry are another side who sell their best players, Phil Babb being the next one out, and I predict that these season will see them struggling to avoid the drop.

Southampton can't rely on Le Tissier to carry on rescuing them, West Ham need two or three class players, and Ipswich and Leicester need a miracle.



Well, I feel a lot happier about Palace's defeat on the opening day of the season after the draws at Norwich and Villa (particularly the latter) and Liverpool's 3-0 victory over Arsenal, which was in many ways a similar game - Liverpool taking their chances in a game that they didn't really dominate. I am writing this before the home game against Leeds, so I could regret this optimism!

A plug for *Four-Two-Four*, a new football magazine that seems to bear more than a passing similarity to Q. Yes, it's an intelligent football magazine! There's plenty to read, including a very interesting piece on Terry Venables and analysis of the transfer deals done by various prominent managers. Definitely worth a look if you're interested in football.

Kim Head has sent me copies of the first two issues of *Sick as a Parrot*, her zine which exists to run a football prediction game. I could ask whether she predicted Plymouth's two home defeats though I suppose I am on rather dodgy ground there.

Stephen Agar, a lawyer, has suggested that this game is illegal as it is some sort of lottery, though Kim has modified the rules to try to deal with this problem. All I can say is that there are plenty of other games in the hobby that could theoretically fall foul of such a ruling, but I doubt whether the authorities will be interested (Kim Head, 23 Higher Efford Road, Efford, Plymouth, Devon PL3 6LB).

On a different subject, Mike Siggins tells me that he's going to try to change his lifestyle and lose some weight. Next week: Sharp gives up smoking and drinking. No, I don't think so.

Around the Zines

Greatest Hits 185 did not appear via any electronic media, but instead came photocopied and hand-delivered by Mr Birks himself. Pete reports that, he was fired (his own words) by City Index. This followed an accident involving the World Cup, South Korea, and £75,000. This has left him with more time to produce **GH**, though not enough of it to check the bloody thing before he printed it!

Thus we have Justin Fashanu doing commentaries at the World Cup, Desmond Lynam orchestrating an orchestra, and John Harrington on the recent General Election when the Tories won 18 seats.....

No, no, let's not nit-pick. It's good to have Pete back.

Pete complains that Internet consists of vast tracts of sprawling, largely unformatted, 7-bit ASCII, and that this makes documents rather difficult to understand. This is undoubtedly true, but if you take a bit of care with how you write, and present things in a simple unfussy way, it is possible to overcome these problems - not that most people bother. I believe that various companies are working on software to facilitate document exchange in something more advanced than ASCII, though presumably this needs to be adopted as a standard to be any use.

This reminds me that Iain Bowen was talking idly in last month's **YDG** about making the zine available on Internet but was defeated by these very practical problems. I have been contacted by Douglas Kent, editor of **Foolhardy**, a zine that is published on CompuServe, who wants me to contribute UK news.

Pete complains that his local Sainsburys sell Halibut fillets, but not steaks, and suggests that his local fish shop wouldn't limit his choice in this way, and bemoans the fact that it is closing down due to lack of trade. But did Pete actually go there? I suspect not! Incidentally, I believe that the Halibut they sell in Sainsburys may actually be a different fish to the one that Pete wanted!

Spring Offensive 26 has a rather rambling editorial written under the influence of the hot weather. Later in the issue he lays into sunbathing, and I have to agree. However, I have to

admit that I have been brainwashed into thinking that a tan makes people look healthier and more attractive (though I'm always a little suspicious of those who have them all year round). When I come back from holiday I invariably get told that I don't look very brown, and I suppose that if I did go brown (which I don't) I would succumb to peer pressure and sunbathe on holiday. As it is, I can happily point out the obvious health dangers.

Stephen also notes that I omitted a game of 'Morrington Crescent' from my Manorcon account. He theorises that this was because I was embarrassed by it (and how drunk I was), but the simple truth is that I had forgotten about it until I read the account in **SO**. The really embarrassing-thing is that in spite of living in London all my life I didn't win the game!

Stephen seems to be rather upset by the French tactics in the Diplomacy at WorldDipCon, when they apparently formed unbreakable alliances and threw games to ensure that French players did as well as possible. As I didn't play in the Diplomacy I can't really comment on this, but I suppose that I have to sympathise with the other players who suffered at the hands of this cartel.

Arfle Barfle Gloop 61 sees the zine continuing to recover from nearly folding, though this issue was affected by the death of Kris's mother. Kris reports that his mystery illness was a viral infection of the liver, explaining why small quantities of alcohol had such an effect. Tom Tweedy has transferring his subzine to **ABG** from the folded **Electric Monk**. In the other subzine, **The Brown Nose Special**, John Colledge reports that all is not well at the bank where he works, with inspectors crawling all over the place.

Paul Cockayne has sent me the second issue of his new zine **On The Game**, and jolly good it is too. It contains one marvellous anecdote from the editor, who met a woman who obviously knew him, but even after a short conversation he couldn't put a name to the face. He admitted this to her, and was more than a little embarrassed when she told him that she was his ex-wife! I sympathise with Paul on this one, as I have a terrible memory for names when I first get introduced to people, but I would like to think that once I get to know someone I remember their name!

In its other home, **The Brown Nose Special** has more on John's problems at work, where one of his colleagues appears not to have been doing his job properly, and John faces the prospect of demotion because he should have noticed. On a happier note, John has been enjoying the Edinburgh Festival, and is apparently a fan of modern dance. Also has an account of a canal holiday, something that I have never done but which always sounds rather appealing.

In **Dolchstoß** 189, Richard concludes his account of his last holiday just in time for his next one, and surveys the chaos caused by setting a non-existent deadline (Friday 15 August). Readers continue to offer Richard holiday ideas, oblivious to the fact that unless you fly (he doesn't) you are somewhat restricted. The suggestion this time is rural Portugal and it comes from Adrien Baird, who further suggests that France north of the Loire is a dead loss.

Adrien also advances the argument that pro-smoking evidence is being suppressed, and that it isn't really bad for you. I suppose that this is possible, but as a non-scientist I find it very difficult to judge the contradictory evidence on this and other subjects (such as alcohol and cholesterol), and so none of this 'evidence' has persuaded me to change my views (smoking is bad for you, alcohol is only bad for you in excess, cholesterol is not bad for you).

I see that I have dropped 55 places in the ratings (to 392nd), presumably because of Gaugaemala.

Steve Doubleday tells me that **Gallimaufry** has folded. I expect he'll be back.

Arfle Barfle Gloop from Kris Morris, 10 The Poplars, Great Dunmow, Essex CM6 2JA

Dolchstoß from Richard Sharp, Norton House, Whielden Street, Amersham, Bucks HP7 OHU

Greatest Hits from Pete Birks, 181 Friern Road, East Dulwich, London SE22 OBD.

On The Game from Paul Cockayne, 18 Henry Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 7NA.

Spring Offensive from Stephen Agar, 79 Florence Road, Brighton Road, East Sussex, BN1 6DL

ARMAGNAC 94-BI (Autumn 1903)

Austria-Hungary (HARRY BOND)

F(ADS) C ITALIAN A(Apu) - Tri; A(Ser) S A(Bud); A(Bud) S ITALIAN A(Tyr) - Vie; A(Tri) - Alb

England (KRIS MORRIS)

F(Cly) - Edi (FAILED); F(Yor) S F(Lon) - NTH; F(Lon) - NTH (FAILED)

France (STEPHEN AGAR)

F(IRI) S A(Wal) - Lpl; A(Wal) - Lpl; A(Gas) - Mun (MISORDER); A(Par) S A(Gas) - Mun (MISORDER); F(ENG) - NTH (FAILED)

Germany (NEIL DUNCAN)

F(NTH) - Edi (FAILED); F(Den) Stands; A(Kie) S F(Den); A(Bel) - Bur; A(Hol) - Bel; A(Mun) S A(Bel) - Bur

Italy (TOBY HARRIS)

A(Tyr) - Vie; A(Apu) - Tri; F(Nap) - ION; F(Tun) S F(Nap) - ION

Russia (RICHARD SHARP)

F(Nwy) - NTH (FAILED); F(SKA) S F(Nwy) - NTH; A(Swe) - Den (FAILED); A(Gal) S A(Rum); A(Rum) S AUSTRIAN A(Ser) - Bul (MISORDER); F(BLA) - Con (FAILED); A(Arm) - Ank (FAILED)

Turkey (IAIN BOWEN)

F(Con) - Ank (FAILED); F(EMS) - Smy; A(Gre) S A(Bul); A(Bul) S A(Gre); F(ION) - TYS;

Adjustments:

A	Ser, Bud, -Tri, -Vie	-2	=2	Removes F(ADS), A(Alb)
E	Lon, Edi, -Lpl	-1	=2	Removes F(Lon)
F	+Lpl, Par, Por, Spa, Bre, Mar	+1	=3	Builds A(Bre)
G	Den, Kie, Bel, Mun, Hol, Ber		=6	
I	+Vie, +Tri, Tun, Ven, Nap, Rom	+2	=6	Builds F(Rom), A(Ven)
R	Nwy, Swe, Rum, Sev, Mos, StP, War		=7	
T	Con, Smy, Gre, Bul, Ank		=5	

PRESS

Well, there isn't any. This is not strictly true, but I have some which is conditional on a piece of information to which the player concerned is not entitled.

I don't hold with the GM commentating on the game, which is a pity as it would fill this space quite nicely.

However, I am rather amused by events on the Franco-German border and that Turkish fleet could cause some fun, perhaps.

**Next Deadline:
Friday 30 September**

