

‘Harry walks, Fabio runs’: a case study on the current relationship between English national identity, soccer and the English press

Abstract

On February 8th 2012 Fabio Capello resigned from his position as manager of the England men’s national association football (soccer) team. The date this decision became public coincided with the acquittal in court of Harry Redknapp following the Tottenham Hotspur FC manager being accused of tax evasion. As Redknapp was considered the media favourite to succeed Capello as England manager, press coverage of these two events proved an interesting case through which to explore the current relationship between English national identity, soccer and the English national press. As such, this paper is concerned with how the events of that day were reported by nine different English national newspapers across 82 pages of coverage. Thematic analysis revealed that journalists often adopted a ‘Little Englander’ mentality—with regards to their attitudes towards Capello due to his Italian nationality. Contrary to this, the press frequently depicted Redknapp as a typically ‘English’ working-class hero linking him with nostalgic references to a bygone ‘golden era’ of English soccer. These findings illustrate the main ways in which the English press continue to present English national identity via their soccer related coverage as insular and rooted in the past.

Key Words: Print media, soccer, England, national identity

Introduction

On February 8th 2012, English television news channels were dominated by coverage of two independent, yet interrelated events. By midday, the main story focused on the acquittal of Harry Redknapp, the manager of the English Premier League (EPL) soccer club Tottenham Hotspur, at Southwark crown court in London. Redknapp had been charged with receiving a payment from his former club's owner and chairman Milan Mandaric on which he had not paid tax. The story had captured the media’s imagination on the grounds that it was connected to association football (1), known across Britain and particularly in England as the ‘People’s game’ (Russell, 1997; Walvin, 2002), and

that Redknapp himself was a popular, 'larger than life' character who was currently managing Tottenham Hotspur - a team who were winning matches whilst reportedly also playing with an attractive style. Redknapp's managerial success led to much speculation, particularly among the English media, that he would become the next manager of the English men's national soccer team (BBC, 2010). However, since being charged in a criminal court by the British government's Department of HM Revenue and Customs in November 2011, his potential to fulfil this role had been in doubt (Scott, 2011). His acquittal therefore cleared the way once more, which has significance to the events that occurred later that day.

The evening broadcasts on English television news channels on February 8th 2012 led with the breaking story that Fabio Capello, the Italian manager of the English men's national soccer team, had resigned from the job over a dispute concerning the team captain John Terry (BBC, 2012a). In this dispute the English Football Association (FA), the sport's national governing body, had removed John Terry from his position without consulting Capello. Capello had then publically criticised the FA about their actions resulting in a meeting taking place between Capello and his employers, at the end of which Capello resigned (BBC, 2012b).

The current paper is focussed on how these two coincidental events were reported in the English national press on February 9th 2012 – the day after they occurred. The contrast between portrayals of Harry Redknapp and Fabio Capello provided a worthwhile opportunity to critically analyse a snapshot of the current relationship between English national identity, soccer and the English national press.

The relationship between English national identity, soccer and the English national press

Utilising Anderson's (1991) concept of the nation as an 'imagined community', Duke and Crolley (1996: 4) have argued that soccer

captures the notion of an imagined community perfectly. It is easier to imagine the nation and confirm national identity, when eleven players are representing the nation in a match against another nation. If nationalism was a movement fostered by and favouring the educated middle class, its spread to the working class in the twentieth century was surely assisted by the development of international football.

Whilst it cannot be denied that other popular sports, such as rugby union or test cricket, have a long history of English involvement and have also therefore captured the English national imagination, soccer has always held a special place as England's national sport of the masses (Holt, 19889; Moorhouse, 1996; Porter, 2004; Russell, 1997; Walvin, 2002). As Crolley and Hand (2002; 2006) have shown, the English national press have been key in both creating and maintaining the sense of imagined national community theorised by Anderson (1991) via their coverage of international soccer which has steadily increased in depth from the mid-twentieth century (Gibbons, 2010).

Walvin (1986) explains how soccer spectatorship increased across the whole of Britain post-1945 following the end of the Second World War in what he terms the 'post-war boom', as the nation tried to shrug off its wartime restraints and drabness in order to return to the pleasures and pursuits familiar in more peaceful times. Yet, from as early as the mid-1950s English soccer attendances began to decline and this was a symptom of a broader national preoccupation with the idea of British national decline which was

fuelled by the English national press in particular. Although attendances at soccer matches declined in England in the 1950s, they began to increase once more after the men's national soccer team won the 1966 FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Associations) World Cup Finals tournament – the largest and longest standing international soccer tournament on the planet (Taylor, 2008). By this time the national team had the capacity to “generate a powerful and increasingly inclusive image of the imagined nation” according to Porter (2004: 35), although this was still a ‘British’ Englishness that many Scots and Welsh refused to celebrate.

English and British national identities have often been regarded - from both within England and from overseas - as synonymous terms according to Kumar (2003; 2006). The growth in the strength of nationalist sentiment in Scotland and Wales from the late 1970s also meant that “Britain’s ills were attributed to something called ‘the English disease’” (Porter, 2004: 33) or the “English national malaise” (Maguire, 1999: 191). This crept into the sporting arena, and the English national print media have mercilessly piled pressure upon the men’s national soccer team to restore Englishness to its former glories ever since. For Critcher (1994), Maguire (1999) and others, nostalgia for England’s 1966 victory still remains a potent source of national pride for the English. According to Porter (2004: 32):

Though better fed, better clothed, better housed, better educated and better off than any previous generation, English people who lived through or were born in the post-war era became accustomed to the idea that they belonged to an old country that had seen better days.

Porter (2004: 38) states that the ideology of ‘declinism’ was gradually put on the political agenda and soon became reinforced in national news discourse almost on a

daily basis by the early 1980s. This negative national self-image was not improved by the violent actions of English soccer fans abroad throughout the 1980s and early 1990s (Chisari, 2005; Dunning, Murphy and Williams, 1986; 1988; Johnes, 2005). The lack of successful performances produced by the English national soccer team in both World and European level competitions since 1966 has also undoubtedly contributed to the sense of English national decline often popularised in the English press. According to Walvin (1986: 113), whenever English fans travelled abroad, the

overt nationalism of such forays were made all the more blatant by the widespread use of the Union Jack [the British flag] by travelling supporters. Successes were often greeted with exaggerated outbursts of national fervour, defeats (much more common) initiated mournful inquests into the collapse not merely of national sporting prowess but also into the broader difficulties of the nation at large. The failure of English teams (and the behaviour of their fans) came to be viewed as a symbolic guide to the spiralling misfortunes of the English people.

Like Porter (2004) and Walvin (1986), Maguire (1999: 191) suggests this ‘wilful nostalgia’ is highly related to an English sense of “longing for some mythical golden age”. This has been reinforced in English press coverage of more recent international soccer competitions, particularly that surrounding the ‘European Football Championships’ of 1996 (‘Euro 96’) because the tournament was hosted by England and took place exactly 30 years after the historic 1966 World Cup victory, also held in England (cf. Garland and Rowe, 1999; Maguire, 1999; Maguire and Poulton, 1999; Maguire, Poulton and Possamai, 1999). The number of academic studies focussed on the relationship between English national identity, soccer and the English national press grew substantially following Euro 96 and now similar studies exist on coverage of many more recent international competitions (cf. Alabarces, Tomlinson and Young, 2001; Boyle and Monteiro, 2005; Chisari, 2000; Crabbe, 2003; Crolley and Hand, 2002; 2006; Garland, 2004; Gibbons, 2010; Poulton, 2003; Vincent and Hill, 2011;

Vincent, Kian, Pedersen, Kuntz and Hill, 2010). Despite some slight differences in the content of press coverage, most of these studies have noted similar examples of wilful nostalgia for a bygone national past.

Added to this, the relentless globalisation of the EPL since the mid-1990s has led to much public debate on whether the vast influx of ‘foreign’ players into the league has stunted the development of ‘home-grown’ players for the English national team (Binder and Findlay, 2012; Magee and Sugden, 2002; Maguire and Pearton, 2000; McGovern, 2002). Maguire and Pearton (2000) noted that Chelsea were the first English club to field a team with no English players in the starting line-up in December 1999. This has occurred more recently also with other EPL clubs, such as Arsenal in 2005, doing the same. Responses to this in the English national press add to feelings of national decline as they suggest there is a shortage of ‘good’ English players in the top English league which in turn negatively impacts upon the strength of the English national team. The current study sought to assess whether in 2012 the national press were still depicting English national identity through soccer in familiar ways. This was achieved via a case study of press reactions to Harry Redknapp’s acquittal and Fabio Capello’s resignation.

Method

A sample of nine English (London based) versions of British daily national newspapers, including: *The Daily Mail*; *The Daily Mirror*; *The Daily Express*; *The Sun*; *The Daily Star*; *The Daily Telegraph*; *The Independent*; *The Times*; and, *The Guardian* were examined on 9th February 2012 for relevant articles relating to either or both

events. These newspapers were chosen because of their mass circulation and therefore national prominence (Press Gazette, 2012). In addition, they all typically contain extensive sports coverage and as the sample includes broadsheet, tabloid and middle-market titles, it is broadly representative of the English daily national newspaper market. Across the nine titles, 82 pages of coverage had been dedicated either or both events on February 9th 2012 (see Table 1).

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Open coding was used by analysing each line of text and allocating content to particular themes (see Biscomb and Griggs, 2012). A total number of twelve different themes emerged from the initial analysis of the extant data. Following further review, some of these themes were considered to be too sparse in terms of their content and as such were combined and recombined in order that coherent narratives emerged which were detailed enough to report. Repeated re-reading and analysis of the data led to the themes being grouped together into axial codes (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). By the end of the process, two robust axial codes or themes were developed and these form the basis of the discussion below. The two clearest themes reported were: The ‘Little Englander’ mentality: attitudes towards Fabio Capello and depictions of Harry Redknapp as an English working-class hero.

The ‘Little Englander’ mentality: attitudes towards Capello

Findings highlighted that, even in the twenty-first century, many members of the English national press “still cling to more intense versions of the invented traditions that underpin their sense of identity” (Maguire, 2011: 988). In order to explain the persistence of insular attitudes of this nature amongst the English, Maguire (2011: 990) has used the term “Little Englander”, which he defines as a “strong defensive reaction to globalization processes, European integration, the pluralization of national culture and the assertiveness of the ‘Celtic fringe’.” Millward (2007) found that non-English players in the EPL seemed only to gain what he terms ‘notional’ acceptance among English fans that is often subject to their performance on the pitch. Millward (2007: 618) concludes that “*Outsiders, such as foreign players* are easy targets for criticism because they are ‘different.’” The same seems to be the case with managers taking into account the evidence provided in the current study.

One of the ways such nationalistic views became apparent in the press coverage analysed was via a ‘distrust’ or aversion to Capello because he is not English. For instance, Capello is simply referred to as: “Another expensive foreign appointment” (Dickinson, 2012: 73) by one newspaper. Reporters from across a range of newspapers also stated similar views, for example: “England’s experience with foreign managers has been costly but failed to produce results sought on the field” (Hayward, 2012: 54). Capello is also said to have

fulfilled everybody’s preconceptions of him and foreign managers....The time has come for the Football Association to pick a manager from home soil. I am not talking about British either. I mean English...we need an Englishman in charge of England...the England team is about Englishness. Sorry if that sounds old fashioned.... It’s about fathers, grandfathers and forefathers. We’ve tried a couple of overseas managers. Let’s be honest they have not worked. We must return to basics. Our roots. Home grown managers (Venables, 2012: 65).

Further criticism came through comparing Capello's short career as England manager with the longer tenure of the national team's first non-English manager, Sven Goran Eriksson. For instance:

If Fabio Capello achieved anything as England boss, it was to convince the nation that our flirtation with foreign managers must come to an end...his legacy is likely to be that the Football Association will turn away from hiring decorated foreign coaches with lavish wages. It didn't work with Sven Goran Eriksson although compared to Capello the Swede was a runaway success (Holt, 2012: 5).

Capello's Italian nationality was highlighted in a number of different ways by subtly using familiar national stereotypes. For instance, statements such as: "With his squad of assistants from the old country, Capello had turned the side into Englatalia" (Hayward, 2012, 54), imply Capello is part of some kind of mafia-type family just because he is Italian.

On a number of occasions, the press suggested that Capello's time as England manager could be characterised by "a consistent failure to understand the mentality of English footballers" (Holt, 2012: 5). Another less subtle occurrence was the repeated mentioning of the obvious language barrier Capello had throughout his time as England manager, a problem which Redknapp clearly does not have. This was often used by journalists to suggest Capello was never fit to be in the post, and a reason why Redknapp would make a much better appointment. For example, one reporter claimed:

He [Redknapp] talks the people's language and that has never been the case with Capello... 'Arry (2) may not speak the Queen's English, yet he makes more sense in 10 minutes than Capello does throughout a full media briefing, even with an interpreter on his shoulder (Woolnough, 2012: 55).

Although not as blatant, other newspapers made similar statements, for instance: “He [Harry] would be the overwhelming choice of the players, many of whom had become disaffected with Capello, citing the Italian’s language difficulties as a key problem” (Taylor, 2012: 44). Added to this, was the insinuation that Capello had either been too arrogant or too lazy to learn how to communicate in English: “Remember when Capello told us that he needed a maximum of 100 words of English?” (Lipton, 2012: 70).

According to another writer:

After being paid £24 million in the last four years, you might have thought Fabio Capello might have learned the language. But he couldn’t even do that. Though he did have enough grasp of the swear words to sit yelling at his players from the bench in South Africa (Howard, 2012: 66).

Other newspapers also shared similar sentiments, for example: “In press conferences, Capello was curt, high-handed and sometimes incoherent. His English never advanced beyond first base” (Hayward, 2012: 54). Others reporters went a step further by claiming that Capello somehow emitted “something that felt like a downright refusal to comprehend a single thing about English footballing culture” (Barnes, 2012: 76). Others cited Capello’s failure to comprehend English footballers with vague statements such as: “It became apparent that he did not really understand the English players at all” (Lawrenson, 2012: 66). Yet, few, if any writers were able to express just exactly what Capello failed to understand about the culture of English football or footballers themselves, beyond the obvious language difficulties. This was apparent across a range of newspapers, for instance: “Any mourning [following Capello’s resignation] will be brief. His flaws were obvious. He failed to grasp fully either the English language or the unique psychology of the English professional” (Winter, 2012: 53). Another similar example stated:

Capello took it on as a kind of retirement job and you could see that his heart was never in it. He never got the hang of English footballing culture, and for that matter, he never got the hang of the English language (Barnes, 2012: 76).

Finally, and equally as revealing, were the attempts made by members of the English press to downplay Capello's relatively long list of achievements with non-English clubs and to celebrate Redknapp's one and only major trophy with an English club in a 29 year managerial career – winning the FA Cup (the longest standing cup competition in soccer) in 2008 during his second time in charge of Portsmouth Football Club. In comparison, Capello has won Italy's top soccer division 'Serie A' with AC Milan, Roma and Juventus. He has also won Spain's 'La Liga' with Real Madrid and he won the European Cup with AC Milan. Perhaps more revealing still is that fact that Capello is actually the most successful English manager in history, guiding the national team to 28 wins, eight draws and six losses – a 66.7% success rate according to Smith (2012: 55). Despite such statistics, many newspaper reporters chose to dub Harry Redknapp "the most successful English manager of modern times" (Collins, 2012: 7). His recent successes at Tottenham Hotspur were also frequently mentioned in order to justify his aptitude for the England position, for example:

Improving Tottenham...to their current lofty position of third in the Premier League has underpinned his credentials. Not to mention steering Spurs to dramatic Champions League triumph over both Inter and AC Milan (Lipton, 2012: 68).

Some journalists openly admitted that that the success rates and past achievements actually had nothing to do with the argument for having Redknapp over Capello – it was all really a question of national identity. One reporter summed this up well in

relation to the 2012 European Championships ('Euro 2012') by stating that, in light of the comparative evidence, it

might sound like an absurdity...The trouble with rational argument is that it ignores the reality. Counter-intuitive as it might sound, Little Englander as it might sound, an England team led by Redknapp will stand a better chance in the European Championship finals this summer than one led by Capello (Kay, 2012: 74).

This sort of generalised and unsubstantiated statement accurately represents how the English national press were unwilling to accept Fabio Capello simply due to his non-English heritage. Conversely, Harry Redknapp was praised as the long awaited saviour of the English national team despite his relative inexperience in international football and his modest club record, purely because he is English in nationality and fits a stereotypical working-class image.

Harry as an English working-class hero

In contrast to the 'Little Englander' mentality expressed in the English national press reports regarding Fabio Capello's resignation, the specifically English working-class values of hard work and application deemed to be possessed by Harry Redknapp were continually cited by journalists. Allusions were made to his career as a player which were cleverly linked with English nostalgia for the 1966 World Cup winning squad: "Redknapp is a patriot, a man who loves recalling how he played alongside Bobby Moore, Geoff Hurst and Martin Peters at West Ham" (Winter, 2012: 53), and: "Redknapp is associated with the so called Golden Generation" (Winter, 2012: 53). Through having played with some of the folk legends of English football, it was suggested that Redknapp would be able to inspire a "squad which is unified behind a

manager who can bring the country together. A manager who understands what it really means to be the boss of the England team” (Lipton, 2012: 68). According to the press, as a non-Englishman, Capello could never understand this:

The most important aspect of English footballing culture that Capello never cracked was the one about captaincy...England look for a leader, a Bobby Moore [captain of England’s 1966 World Cup winning team]...we need these people to be a dominant force on the pitch and fine admirable men in every other aspect of their lives (Barnes, 2012: 76).

Such exclusionary sentiments were echoed by many, for instance: “He [Capello] never really understood English football and the emotions it engendered. Despite his rantings on the touch line he was a cold fish” (Howard, 2012: 67). Despite the fact that England had repeatedly failed to produce results under other English managers throughout the 1970s, 80s and 90s, it was suggested that having Redknapp in charge would somehow be able to restore English national pride and “return a smile to the face of England – rather than a scowl. A smile that is, too, authentically English, the grin...would carry the seal of public approval” (Lipton, 2012: 70). This was an example of the ‘wilful nostalgia’ that Maguire and Poulton (1999) found was apparent in English national newspaper coverage of Euro 96 and Vincent et al (2010) and Vincent and Harris (2011) have noticed during the most recent World Cup Finals tournaments.

Beyond Redknapp’s credentials as being a patriot and authentically English, is his portrayal as what might be termed a man of and for the people - a genuine modern day ‘working class hero’. Definitions of class are always contentious and yet though the idea of who the working classes are may be disputed,

more ink has been spilled about them than any other group in British Society. They have been portrayed in novels, plays, films and television documentaries. Endless

sociological surveys on working class life and numerous government reports have been produced (McDonough, 1997: 215).

Traditional conceptions of the working class, building on Marx's 'proletariat', refer to the group in society which are governed by those representing large institutions that sold their labour for wages. This group sometimes referred to as 'blue collar' workers, typically engaged in more manual and routine jobs that pay poor wages. In common parlance in Britain, the working classes appear to refer those who are not engaged in professional or managerial roles or simply the 'average Jo(e)' or the 'man or woman on the street' (Roberts, 1978).

In practice, "class formation is dynamic, produced through conflict and fought out at the level of the symbolic" (Skeggs, 2004: 5). Ideological notions of class which are formed are typically circulated in popular culture and political rhetoric (O'Shaughnessy, 1990). The products of the mass media, not least the sports pages focusing upon mass spectator sports, are the key sites where these "symbolic struggles take place and are made visible" (Skeggs, 2004: 110). In identifying the most common representations of the working class in mediated popular culture Skeggs (2004) found that eight major themes emerged, namely: dirty and disgusting; tasteless; stupid and un-modern; unruly and immoral; immobile; entertainment; language; and, anti-pretentious. Examples of such portrayals can be found in characters such as Alfred Doolittle in the film *My Fair Lady* and in popular TV situation comedies such as Del Boy (2) in *Only Fools and Horses* (Rowe, 1995; Wagg, 1998). Collection and analysis of the newspaper reporting of Harry Redknapp allude to some obvious parallels in the extracts listed below:

You can say what you like about Redknapp, he's got a fair old handle on the game of football as played in England. He has none of Capello's credentials as a renaissance man, a lover of fine painting and serious collector and cosmopolitan – but in the backlash from Capello's four years of calamity, the London vowels of Redknapp sound like sweet sanity. If England want to go back to good old insular roots. Redknapp is made for the job (Barnes, 2012: 76).

Capello goes home to his collection of Kandinsky's leaving a mess. Redknapp wouldn't know a Kandinsky if it was served up on a silver salver with watercress round it (Barnes, 2012: 75).

Harry Houdini (3) does it again...Narrow squeaks, controversial deals and the Cockney 'bloke' who says he's [Harry's] never understood finance (Levy, 2012: 7).

the happy go-lucky nature of 'Arry Redknapp who, to millions of football fans, represents the dreams and triumphs of the common man (Levy, 2012: 6).

As found in English press reporting of previous tournaments (cf. Crolley and Hand, 2002; 2006), here stereotypes of 'English' virtues of hard work were privileged above 'continental' stereotypes of style and flair. A common feature of much of the reporting concerns Redknapp's accent, referred to as either sounding 'Cockney', playing on his East End roots, or using 'London vowels'. An example was how his first name was often referred to as 'Arry' instead of Harry, where the initial 'H' is omitted to caricature his accent (Honey, 1997). Typically within English culture such varieties of speech have been portrayed as incorrect and typical of the less well-educated working classes (Trudgill, 1983). Redknapp's lack of education is reinforced in the reporting of his trial transcripts where he is reported to have said:

I am completely and utterly disorganised. I write like a two year old and I can't spell. I can't work a computer. I don't know what an email is, I have never sent a fax and I've never even sent a text message (Kelso, 2012: 56).

Linked to ideas of education are those of taste as it can be argued that one's upbringing and education impact upon cultural practices. In short, "taste classifies and it classifies the classifier" (Bourdieu, 1986: 6). Despite the fact that as a manager of a successful

EPL team Redknapp is undoubtedly extremely well paid and lives in an expensive house reportedly worth £10 million (Collins, 2012: 7), he was depicted by the press as betraying his wealth and knowing nothing about fine art, unlike Capello (Barnes, 2012: 75). Though having a large personal wealth might fail to locate Redknapp as a reference point for the working classes, this appears to have been forgiven in the press coverage analysed as he is seen to have done well for himself, as some kind of aspirational 'hero' figure who has worked his way up to achieve the meritocratic ideal (Crepeau, 1981; Parry, 2009). Redknapp's 'rags to riches' story was illustrated in large features documenting how he rose from an "impoverished East End upbringing" (Collins, 2012: 7).

Redknapp's hero status was further confirmed across the media in two major ways. First, by the flamboyant and paradoxically almost 'continental' type performances given by the Tottenham Hotspur team he manages: "There is a refreshing happy-go-lucky attitude about them... They entertain..." (Woolnough, 2012: 55). Importantly, this has been achieved against the odds with a less successful team with a smaller fan base than the likes of Manchester United, Arsenal, Liverpool, Manchester City or Chelsea. This style is also seen to be embodied by Redknapp as an individual who was portrayed as unpretentious and having a care free nature. This nature is intertwined with the second way he was portrayed as having heroic status, in that as the "likeable rogue" he escaped the clutches of institutional justice by being acquitted in court (Dunn, 2012: 62). Like his name sake Harry Houdini, and the aforementioned TV character Del Boy, he has defied expectations and come out on top. In this way, he was depicted as embodying the working class hero as he 'represents the dreams and triumphs of the common man' by overcoming adversity (Fairlie, 1978).

Conclusion

This paper indicates that in keeping with findings over the last two decades, the ‘Little Englander’ narrative remains entrenched within the reporting of the English print media. When it comes to their coverage of men’s soccer even the manager of the national team can be portrayed as an outsider, primarily because he is not English. The persistent insular attitudes highlight both language and cultural difficulties despite the success Capello enjoyed prior to his role as England manager and somewhat paradoxically during his tenure.

Though not reported previously in research papers concerning English soccer, the reporting of Redknapp’s acquittal was identifiable with the most common representations of the working classes in broader mediated popular culture. In this role Redknapp has been portrayed as an imagined “uber patriot” who not only embodies the English working classes but has rubbed shoulders with the likes of venerated players such as Bobby Moore who comprise the very fabric of English soccer history and nostalgia for the so called ‘golden age’.

The two themes identified from the media representations of the Capello and Redknapp saga are also symptomatic of a broader recurring pattern which has seen England managers appointed over the last decade fit into one of these two character types. In 1999 another no nonsense character with little managerial success, not unlike Redknapp, in the guise of Kevin Keegan – another English working class hero - took on the role, only to be replaced a year later by the highly experienced and successful

Swede, Sven Goran Eriksson. As indicated earlier, when Sven was sent on his way in 2006 amid a barrage of Little Englander press, he was replaced by another down to earth, straight-talking English manager, this time Steve McClaren. In 2007 McClaren's brief unsuccessful spell led to the subsequent appointment of Fabio Capello (BBC, 2012a). Is it perhaps little wonder the press were clamouring for another Keegan – McClaren – Redknapp figure. This perhaps serves to confirm how entrenched these narratives may well be in contemporary English football culture. The FA seems to be aware of the need to appoint a successful person to do an important job, particularly when they have a strong track record of success, as with Eriksson and Capello. Yet there always seems to be pressure on the FA, particularly from the national media, to appoint a specifically 'English' manager and thus fulfil the Little Englander mentality. This despite the fact that Eriksson and Capello have statistically been the most successful England team managers of all time.

What will be of interest in this respect is to see how the newest appointment Roy Hodgson – himself and Englishman - fares in the role. Against all media clamour for Redknapp, Hodgson was appointed by the FA on May 1st 2012 and was under immediately put under immense pressure to put a satisfactory team together for The European Championships ('Euro 2012'). Under Hodgson England managed to reach the quarter-finals (last eight) of the tournament (consisting of 32 teams in total), losing in a penalty shoot-out to Italy following a goalless draw and extra-time. Despite this, the treatment of Hodgson in the English press remains positive at the time of writing. Of particular interest here is that although Hodgson is English and therefore fulfils the pattern of recent appointments, he also boasts the same kind of success as Eriksson and Capello and therefore presents an altogether new prospect - the first midpoint between

these two poles in over a decade. It will be interesting to see whether the press continue to reinforce the little Englander mentality in reports about Hodgson.

Notes

1. 'Association football' is abbreviated to the more widely used term 'soccer' in the current paper.
2. 'Arry is a variant of Harry where the initial 'H' is omitted to caricature Harry Redknapp's accent. This is discussed later in the paper.
3. Del Boy was the fictional lead character in the popular BBC situation comedy 'Only Fools and Horses' which was screened on British television for twenty two years (1981 – 2003).
4. Harry Houdini (1874 – 1926) was an internationally renowned magician and escapologist who was best known for his elaborate and well publicised escape acts.

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