

Daily Mail

50p



www.dailymail.co.uk

Daily Mail

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2009

CHARLES SALE



sports agenda

FA desperate to bring in Cup cash

THE FA, having taken emergency measures to ensure their flagship cup competition receives full broadcasting exposure in the first and second rounds, are seriously concerned about the lack of a permanent FA Cup TV deal to replace Setanta.

Plans were announced yesterday for the remaining rights holders ITV to carry two live first-round games, Paulton v Norwich and Northwich v Charlton, while Oldham v Leeds will be streamed on the FA website in a similar operation to the Ukraine v England World Cup qualifier earlier this month — but at no cost to the viewer.

However, the stop-gap plans to buy more time to agree a deal before the third round in January, do not help the poor FA bank balance as neither ITV nor the internet operation will be providing extra money.

The FA board, aware that any TV deal will not be anywhere near the £70million rights returned after Setanta's demise, have told chief executive Ian Watmore that he must look to make major savings.

The first move will be in the shelving of various planned projects. But the last resort will be the cutting of jobs, especially as the Wembley group workforce now numbers around 550, with the combining of the FA, Wembley and the 2018 World Cup bid operations. However, having 80 people working in IT has been questioned.

● **BOOKMAKERS**, who do not normally attract public sympathy, have spent two-and-a-half years fighting for their racecourse pitch rights for which one bookie, Barry Johnson, spent £1million. This follows obtuse Government legislation that meant they would not be recognised after 2012. But innovative Towcester are allowing bookies to keep their spots for the lifetime of the racecourse and Northern Racing, who run nine tracks, are talking about 40-year tenancies. The Government, having caused the mess, are trying to facilitate more talks between bookmakers and the Racecourse Association.