



Fans Do not like that!

By Paul Jiggins

FOOTBALL fans insist they do NOT want Premier League games abroad — even if it means cheaper tickets at home.

That is just one of the significant findings in a new survey on the Premier League's proposals to play fixtures around the world.

Feelings among outraged supporters are running high on the plans for a 39th game. And the Football Fans Census report came up with some important results.

Despite widespread discontent over the spiralling costs of season tickets, fans have snubbed the prospect of cheaper seats if it also means their team playing in Asia or America.

The survey of 4,102 fans conducted by the FFC revealed a massive 69 PER CENT were totally opposed to the idea even if it meant a cut in the price of their season tickets.

That figure came on top of the 85 per cent who said they were against the idea altogether.

Only 10 per cent were in favour of playing a 39th game abroad with five per cent not offering an opinion. The survey was conducted over the last five days and took in the opinions of fans of 141 clubs in England.

And while Premier League chief executive Richard Scudamore continues to try to justify the plans, the fans' message is crystal clear.

Supporters want to keep matches in England and are not interested in travelling thousands of miles to see their team play.

A whopping 87 per cent said they were not excited by the prospect of games in Asia, the Middle East and North America, while 73 per cent said it was negative for the Premier League.

And 91 per cent thought the idea was bad for traditional match-going fans.

Even if money and other commitments were no object, 73 per cent of fans stated they did not like the idea of attending games on another continent.

A massive 84 per cent said it was very important for the Premier League to consult fans. And 80 per cent admitted they were very concerned at the idea of the title being decided by an extra match for the likes of Manchester United against a so-called weaker team.

On the subject of increasing the Premier League's profile abroad, fans were just as dismissive. Just under half did not feel it was important for their club to increase its fan base in other countries.



Becks wearing thin in LA

By Charlie Caroe

Former England captain David Beckham has come under fire from a leading journalist with the Los Angeles Times, for his lack of impact on football in the United States.

TJ Simers, California Sportswriter of the Year in 2000, has criticised Beckham after his planned interview with the LA Galaxy midfielder was cancelled.

In an article headlined "So much for Beckham being a voice for MLS", Simers explains his frustration at being told Beckham "might be tired" for an interview on Monday.

To Simers' disappointment the interview was subsequently cancelled as Beckham was "not doing media Monday" according to a LA Galaxy spokesman. "He's also not doing any one-on-ones."

But news that Beckham

was spotted at a pre-Grammy party at Hollywood's Central Club at 1 am on Sunday night dancing with Janet Jackson, and the fact that he agreed to do a one-on-one with Salma Hayek to raise \$350,000 at a Madonna fundraising event has raised Simers' hackles.

The columnist notes that Beckham has played just eight games since his move to Galaxy from Madrid 215 days ago, scoring just one goal: in his view a small return for a \$250 million pound investment.

Simers writes: "The only thing going on with Beckham these days appears to be his underwear ad, which is just perfect for him because all he has to do is lie there and say nothing."

"Huge billboards will go up soon showing him with his chest bare: and isn't it always? - and his briefs

appearing a size too small. You'd think a guy with as much money as he's got could find underwear that fit."

It's not just Beckham who comes under attack in the article. Simers is also keen to point his finger at club manager Alexi Lalas and president Tim Leiweke who gush about the English's players ability.

Simers says: "Talk to Alexi Lalas and he sounds as if Beckham's work is already done here, proclaiming Beckham 'is at an entirely different level' than Tiger Woods and Michael Jordan. Beckham might be Leiweke's 'favorite athlete', but he dismisses Lalas' remarks by noting Beckham 'isn't even as big as Kobe Bryant.'"

"I thought he was brought to LA to put soccer on the US map and make MLS or MSL or whatever they call

the soccer league that ranks here right up there with the Arena league into something more meaningful."

Beckham's reputation as an interviewee clearly precedes him too as Simers questions more than his footballing skills:

He says: "Some journalists overseas have suggested Beckham is an intellectual lightweight, his wife doing all the talking for him, which might explain why his handlers don't want to leave him alone with a reporter."

Beckham's biggest achievement, in Simers' eyes, is his semi-naked appearance advertising underwear, when instead he could be repaying his club by meeting with the media and raising the sport's profile, the reason he was supposedly brought to Los Angeles in the first place.