

# £5m-a-year Capello is clueless

**FABIO CAPELLO** lost the plot, lost an ally and almost lost the game on another wretched night for English football.

While Britain's brave Olympians were pulling in more medals in Beijing, Capello's millionaire footballers were pulling in the jeers.

The Italian boss will also have been rocked by news that FA chief exec Brian Barwick has been axed after a bitter power battle with Soho Square chairman Lord Triesman.

Portsmouth boss Harry Redknapp slammed Capello's tactics last night, saying: "If Steve McClaren had been in charge of that team, there would have been uproar. Wembley would have gone barmy.

"I've not seen a Fabio Capello team play worse than that. The second half was diabolical.

"Some of the players are not recognisable from the ones who play week-in, week-out in the Prem. Steven Gerrard is not a left winger. We are killing him.

"He has to be in the middle of the pitch and be part of the game. I was full of optimism before the game but it's difficult to be optimistic after that."

Capello insisted Gerrard was playing alongside Wayne Rooney and that the Liverpool ace was not on the left wing.

Capello claimed: "Gerrard wasn't playing on the left. We played 4-3-2-1. We played Defoe, Gerrard and Rooney and three midfielders behind them. Mr Redknapp has to express something but Gerrard didn't play on the left.

"Sorry. You'll have to ask the player. He didn't play left. The movement, he went to the left and to the middle. He never played on the left."

Capello added: "I'm happy with the draw because of the reaction from the team in the last minute was good.

"Only one thing I didn't like — when the Czechs had counter-attacks. We suffered. We have to combat that problem."



Capello

## No broolly - but Fabio's a wally

**O**NLY the broolly was missing — though Fabio Capello must have felt every inch the wally on the Wembley touchline last night.

He refused any shelter from the rain but it probably felt like it was pouring down on him from on high nonetheless.

The match with the Czech Republic was, after all, the dress rehearsal for the vital match with Croatia in three weeks time.

No more experimenting he said. No more excuses. This was it.

How true. And how depressing. Watching England is just like the weather: Cold, wet and horribly predictable.

This 'warm-up' against the Czechs poured more cold water on the optimistic notion that under Capello it would all be sunshine and light.

By the Italian's own admission, he wanted to test his team against one 'similar to Croatia.'

Oh dear. As the rain tipped down on a well-below capacity Wembley, the thousands who had opted not to turn up counted their blessings.

Meanwhile, at the centre of the nation's preparations for the World Cup campaign, we were counting the number of players under par for England.

David James. David Beckham. Gareth Barry. Ashley Cole. Wayne Rooney. Steven Gerrard. None of those who started though could claim to have played a stormer.

And all the while Capello looked on in ignominy. Penny for his thoughts? That'll be more like £5million a year actually.

The FA paid Steve McClaren just £2.5m a season for clogging it up as badly as this.

Gerrard on the left side of midfield — are you sure?

Two strikers who barely equal the height of nonsense to convert the dead ball brilliance of Beckham? Not likely.

And what about trying to shoehorn Frank Lampard, Barry

and Gerrard into the same midfield?

Well it didn't work and it never will unless you detail Barry to play a specific role holding in front of the back four.

At the back, it all looked swell under captain John Terry and Co — until there was a whiff of danger.

Some in the squad joked that Rio Ferdinand should have been put on suicide watch after losing out to JT in the race for the captaincy.

More like kamikaze. He raced right when the Czechs pressed in the opening minute and then Terry fell for a Milan Baros dip of the shoulder.

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To compound the misery, Ashley Cole contrived to deflect the weak shot beyond James and into the net.

Could it get any worse ... oh yes.

England continued to look naive and timid in the face of decent competition — albeit friendly fire — and there was more than a hint of the farce which typified the Croatia game last November.

After the initial blunders came the first flukey equaliser — a header by Wes Brown from a Beckham corner.

It was the Manchester United defender's first international goal since his England debut a decade ago. Well there had to be something memorable in an otherwise forgettable match.

So much store has been placed in Capello's tactical ability that changes in a team dying on its knees were inevitable. And what did the £5m -a-season mastermind come up with? Stick on Emile Heskey to win a few headers.

Then there was Joe Cole for Gerrard on the left (though nobody was fooled by that one) followed by Stewart Downing for Rooney.

By that time, Barry had contrived to trip an innocent

bystander and Marek Jankulovski buried a free-kick that Becks would have travelled half the world to score.

It definitely had that Croatia feel about it — made even more so when James went AWOL and Sverkos should have cashed in for the Czechs with a third goal.

Joe Cole's late equaliser after a comedy of errors cannot disguise England's desperate shortcomings.

Before this match Capello was refreshingly certain of England's qualification for the World Cup finals in 2010.

He made it feel like Andorra away on September 6 was just another step on the way to avenging the humiliation meted out by Croatia in Euro 2008.

And then another bad result exposed the stark truth that England are nowhere near as good as Capello or anyone else thinks they are.

On accepting his position as captain for this qualifying campaign, Terry insisted he would not talk about winning the World Cup only about qualifying for it.

On this showing, the England captain may yet have to bite his tongue on that as well.



John Terry & Stanislav Vlcek



Radek Sirl & Wes Brown

Steven Gerrard & Zdenek Grygera

## How the Three Lions rated

### DAVID JAMES

**CONCEDED** two but could not be faulted for either. Had Ashley Cole left the ball, then the Pompey keeper would have saved the opener. And no keeper in the world would have got to Jankulovski's terrific free-kick to make it 2-1. Despite being 38, James showed great agility to get down to a Milan Baros shot. But he later suffered a rush of blood when he came racing out of his area. Olympic Verdict: Did not qualify

### WES BROWN

**FIRST** goal on his 18th cap — he did well to get ahead of Tomas Ujfalusi before nodding in David Beckham's corner. Yet Brown was made to look ordinary by Radek Sirl in the run-up to the Czech's opener. He was comfortably turned and was then unable to close down his opponent before the cross was delivered. Olympic Verdict: Medal

### RIO FERDINAND

**NOT** a great few days for the Manchester United star. He seemed a banker to be handed the captaincy only for Capello to stick with Terry. He was then guilty of a few dodgy moments before Woodgate replaced him. Unusually slack defending saw Rio fail to put in any type of challenge on Baros but, luckily, David James came to the rescue. Olympic Verdict: Did not qualify

### JOHN TERRY

**WILL** have felt 10ft tall when given a hero's reception ahead of his second spell as captain. Yet more than a few fingers were pointing at the Chelsea defender for failing to put in a decent challenge on Baros for the Czech's opener — particularly as he was so close to goal. This was extremely poor. Composed himself after that and won everything in the air. Olympic Verdict: Did not qualify

### ASHLEY COLE

**CARRIED** on where he left off against Portsmouth with an energetic, composed performance. Then Baros delivered his 22nd-minute shot and Cole, attempting to block, stuck out a leg — and Cole's evening took a turn for the worse. For the rest of the match, Cole looked comfortable but he did not make his presence felt going forward as much as he should. Olympic Verdict: Did not qualify

### DAVID BECKHAM

**HEADS** off to Beijing today and will be reflecting on a generally lacklustre performance. True, he delivered a decent set-piece for the equaliser and did ping a few classy crossfield passes to Gerrard in the first half. At times, due to the poor standard of his team-mates, he must have felt he was playing for LA Galaxy. Olympic Verdict: Did not qualify

### STEVEN GERRARD

**ARGUABLY** England's best performer out of a bad bunch. Pushed wide to the left, a position he hardly adores, but still got involved. Always looked to get within range of Cech's goal and sent in a half-decent long-range drive which the keeper pushed to safety. Gerrard switched play well on a few occasions but was subbed. Olympic Verdict: Medal

### FRANK LAMPARD

**LAMPS** was yet again the subject of jeers from some numbskull England fans when the PA man called out his name. But he could not lift himself or the team with a strong midfield display and at times was anonymous as the game passed him by. The Chelsea man was even booed when leaving the field with 11 minutes remaining. Olympic Verdict: Did not qualify

### GARETH BARRY

**LIVERPOOL** fans will not be getting too excited after this display, as the Kop target was nothing special. Took out Jaroslav Kovac with a clumsy challenge in the 11th minute and could have few arguments with the booking. He then conceded the free-kick which led to the Czech Republic's stunning second goal. Booked. Olympic Verdict: Did not qualify

### JERMAIN DEFOE

**FRUSTRATED** at being subbed by Capello at the break. He did not play that badly but, despite working hard, did not make the most of his half chances. But the biggest problem was that for periods in the first half, he found himself isolated up front. His best effort was a first-time shot from an angle but he sent it straight at Cech. Olympic Verdict: Did not qualify

### WAYNE ROONEY

**INCREDIBLY** average. This is a big season for Rooney with both Manchester United and England. He has gone off the boil and last night was poor. Presumably he was under orders from Capello, but Rooney kept dropping far too deep. At times he was picking up the ball yards from the halfway line and did not have a sniff on goal. Olympic Verdict: Did not qualify

### SUBSTITUTES

EMILE HESKEY (for Defoe, 46min) DNQ  
JOE COLE (for Gerrard, 58) MEDAL  
JONATHAN WOODGATE (for Ferdinand, 58) MEDAL  
STEWART DOWNING (for Rooney, 69) DNQ  
DAVID BENTLEY (for Lampard, 79) DNQ  
JERMAINE JENAS (for Beckham, 80) DNQ  
NOT USED: Paul Robinson, Glen Johnson, Wayne Bridge, Matthew Upson, Theo Walcott, Joe Hart.