

# Injuries, thieves and harassment

 By Nick Said

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Friday brought some high-profile casualties ahead of the World Cup and one near miss for an English journalist who described in horror a shoot-out with thieves at his hotel near Rustenburg.



Didier Drogba, the current African Footballer of the Year and one of the best strikers in the world, looks likely to miss the finals with a fractured arm. You either love or hate the Cote d'Ivoire forward, but there is no denying his ability and the tournament will be infinitely poorer without him, on and off the pitch.

And perhaps now the Ivoirians' chances of getting out of their tough pool that also includes Portugal and Brazil have now evaporated.

They say it is the Chelsea curse ... first it was Germany's Michael Ballack, then Ghana's Michael Essien and now Drogba. The high-profile trio all play for the English Premiership club ... what do they feed them in South West London?

Also out is England skipper Rio Ferdinand, who injured his knee in training. It is disappointing for the Manchester United man, who has missed much of the last 12 months while on the treatment table.

## Milking the Madiba Magic?

The ridiculous harassment of former South African president Nelson Mandela kept going on Friday as FIFA president Sepp Blatter continued to put pressure on the family to get Madiba to the opening game of the World Cup against Mexico at Soccer City on June 11.

"He wants to go to the opening ceremony and the first game of the FIFA World Cup at Soccer City; he wants to live up his legacy. We must pray that he is part of us. It is his wish, it is also our wish that he joins us," Blatter said.

What he didn't say is that FIFA and the ruling ANC are desperate to have the most famous and celebrated South African in history at the opening so they can beam his image across the world as the massive PR drive for the tournament and the country begins.

What they are not taking into account is that this is a very frail old gent, something his family and foundation recognise, and that by putting his people under pressure in the media to get him there is not in the best interests of the man himself. For goodness sake, let him be.

Finally, celebrated English journalist Henry Winter was caught up in a fierce battle at his hotel on Friday morning whilst having his breakfast.

A troop of thieving baboons entered the premises and started stealing food from dinners, while staff hurried to collect their paint-ball guns to keep them at bay.

"The baboons began circling the breakfast area. They were everywhere, grabbing bread off table. Kitchen cats were hissing at them and the staff was seeing them off with pebbles and a paint-ball gun," Winter said.

"Things came to a head when the baboons grabbed the sugar off the table, five sachets at a time and made off to the nearby trees and a roof where they poured the contents down their throats well out of range from where the security force gunman was firing at them."

The first reported crime of the 2010 World Cup. Let's hope it is the last...

## ABOUT NICK SAID

Nick Said is the business director of The Content Company, a leading supplier of South African and African football news, features, analysis and statistics to the local and international market. He is a former online business manager for Kick Off magazine, having previously held posts as sports editor for iafrica.com and operations manager for 365 Digital Publishing, where he led the team that produced the award-winning Football365.co.uk website.  
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