

WYETT LINES

INSIDE FOOTBALL WITH CHARLIE WYETT



Gunners in race probe

ARSENAL launched a racism investigation into an allegation against one of their top youth coaches who resigned before it was completed.

Marcel Lucassen, 57, left the club for "family reasons" after nearly 2½ years as head of coach and player development.

The surprise departure followed allegations the Dutchman made a racist comment towards Ryan Garry (right).

Garry, 37, who is assistant to Under-23s boss Steve Bould, made the complaint to Per Mertesacker, Arsenal's academy manager.

During a lengthy process involving the club's HR department, and with the PFA having been made aware of the claims, Lucassen made the decision to quit.

SunSport understands that he has not admitted any wrongdoing.

A club spokesman said: "He resigned."

Mertesacker had played an integral role in Lucassen's arrival at Arsenal in June 2018, having become familiar with his work at the German national team between 2008 and 2015.

Lucassen (left), who joined after the



departure of Arsene Wenger, arrived from Al-Nasr in Dubai.

At Arsenal, he was responsible for all coaches and teams from Under-9s to Under-23s before leaving in November.

Garry, meanwhile, joined the Gunners aged eight and rose up the ranks.

He played in just one Premier League game for the club, a 6-1 win against Southampton in May 2003 – the first game of Arsenal's famous 49-game unbeaten run.

Garry rejoined the club as a coach in 2013 although he initially started in the younger age groups.

It is expected that he will become a first-team coach at Arsenal.

WSL BLUES BOSS' BLAST

You tell Em!

HAYES: DONS COULDN'T AFFORD ME

EMMA HAYES shut down AFC Wimbledon's hopes of making her boss, claiming they could 'absolutely not' afford it.

The Chelsea women's chief, 44, was a shock contender to become the League One strugglers' manager in a move which would have made her the first woman in history to take charge of a pro men's team in England.

When asked if the Dons could afford her for the £100,000-a-year job, Hayes replied: "Absolutely not."

But she has blasted the view that the role would be an improvement on her current gig at the helm of the WSL champs.

By SANDRA BROBBEY

Hayes said: "Women's football is not a step down from anything."

"I manage and represent elite, world-class players and, for me, this is an amazing job I've spent nine years cultivating all of my energy into."

"I'm not looking for another job, I'm blessed with working with wonderful humans day-in, day-out."

"If coaching World Cup champions, winners, players who have represented their countries in the Olympics or Euros is a step down from anything, I think the football world needs to wake up and recognise that while

the game is played by different genders, it is exactly the same sport."

The Blues chief (below) is highly respected by billionaire boss Roman Abramovich and the Stamford Bridge hierarchy, having won 11 major trophies during her nine years with the club.

She continued: "This is not a conversation about Emma Hayes and AFC Wimbledon."

"But we should be having larger conversations about creating opportunities across the diverse spectrum."

"So that opportunities in the men's game are not limited to those in privileged positions."

The former Arsenal No2 questioned why anyone would want to leave elite women's football management to coach a lower-tier men's side bat-

ting relegation. She added: "Fran Kirby, Pernille Harder, Beth England, Magda Eriksson, Millie Bright, Maren Mjelde, do you want me to keep going?"

"These are world-class players. Women's football in its own right is something to celebrate."

"And it's an insult to the quality and achievements of all the females I represent that we talk about women's football being a step down."

"I think that's what I'm disappointed with, not being linked to a football job as a football coach, regardless of gender."

"But, as you can see, I'm happy at Chelsea and I love my job here and I've always been clear about that."

Wimbledon sacked Glyn Hodges on Saturday after a 2-0 defeat to arch-rivals MK Dons left them in the drop zone after earning just two points from a possible 33.



Mount's leg up

MASON MOUNT enjoys a Tuch of relaxation as he gears up for Spurs.

The Chelsea midfielder, 22, might have needed to phone home when new boss Thomas Tuchel rang the changes for his first game.

But after starring in the 2-0 win over Burnley, Mount made sure his muscles were fully recovered.

He will be hoping he isn't putting his feet up at Tottenham tomorrow.

BREN PITCHES IN Maja bonus for Parker

By CHARLIE WYETT

BRENDAN RODGERS says plans are in place for Leicester to sort out their dodgy King Power Stadium pitch this summer.

The Foxes travel to Fulham tonight with the second best away record in the Premier League, thanks to seven wins, two draws and just one loss.

Yet at home, Rodgers' Champions League-chasing team have suffered five losses – which is already more than they had last term.

Before Sunday's 3-1 loss to Leeds, head groundsman John Ledwidge wrote: "Pitch really showing its age."

The overall system is 18 years old and Rodgers (right) said: "John is a fantastic groundsman and the new training facility pitches are brilliant."

"In the summer, there is a plan to get us that sort of fast pitch which helps our game."

"It has been unfortunate as we wanted to do it last summer – but because of Covid we were never able

Fulham v Leicester

6pm, BT Sport 2

to. That has made the pitch a lot heavier and takes the speed out."

Rodgers is hoping for a response this evening after the disappointing loss to Leeds, their first defeat in eight league games.

He said: "The players have been on a fantastic run. You knew it would end at some point. You can define success by how you bounce back from setbacks."

Jamie Vardy (hernia), Wilfred Ndidi (thigh) and Timothy Castagne (hamstring) are all out.

LEICESTER (likely): Schmeichel, Pereira, Fofana, Evans, Justin, Tielemans, Mendy, Albrighton, Maddison, Barnes, Perez.



SCOTT PARKER revealed Josh Maja's history with Fulham was a big factor in bringing him home on deadline day.

Striker Maja, 22, signed on loan late on Monday night from Bordeaux.

The Lewisham lad was with the London club for three years from the age of 11. Parker feels Maja should settle quickly – with Fulham knee deep in a drop fight and having no time left to waste.

The Craven Cottage boss, whose side host Leicester tonight, said: "It's a box ticked when you're signing a player in January, that you will only have three or four months to play."

"The window that Josh has come into, to hit the ground running, you need to eradicate factors which could stall him."

FULHAM (likely): Aroola, Aina, Andersen, Tosin, Decordova-Reid, Anguissa, Lemina, Robinson, Loftus-Cheek, Lookman, Mitrovic.

★ **DETECTIVES** have been used by Premier League clubs for years.

Whether to keep an eye on players on a group night out to a concert or to do some digging on either current or former employees.

But a leading top-flight club regularly uses them to approach potential signings. The manager is big on character profiling and knows his stars regularly get approached by supporters in the street.

So, the detective approaches the player and asks for an autograph. If he reacts positively and politely to the bogus fan, interest in the player increases.



JONATHAN WOODGATE was recommended by Tony Pulis for his new job as first-team coach at Bournemouth.

Pulis, who had Woodgate as his assistant from 2017-19 at Middlesbrough, still lives in Bournemouth, where he was both a player and manager.

★ **SWINDON** chairman Lee Power was back in court yesterday for his ownership battle with Michael Standing, who claims he owns 50 per cent of the club.

Proceedings were interrupted by a member of the public being shown porn via Microsoft Teams.

SKY SPORTS have been running a series called Premier League Icons. According to Virgin Media's channel guide, it features Carol Tevez.

No write time



THE writing was on the wall for Wimbledon chief Glyn Hodges, who was sacked on Saturday after 18 months in charge.

Keen-eyed Dons fans had been on alert for some weeks after their manager's notes had been ditched from the electronic programme.