



OFF THE POST

GREAT GUY OR GOOD EXCUSE? After shooting wide on his penalty kick against Iran, Denmark captain Morten Wieghorst said he intentionally missed because the call was unwarranted — an Iranian defender grabbed the ball after a fan's whistle. "It was unfair to try and capitalize on that," said Wieghorst. Denmark lost, 1-0, on a penalty kick.

SOUND RELAXING TO YOU? Chelsea's Dutch striker, Floyd Hasselbaink, lashed out at critics of his gambling habits. "To say I lose [\$1.79 million] and don't care and have no respect for the money I earn is a cruel thing to do. ...Yes, I went to the casino and will go again in the future... It helps me relax."

DOUBLE OR NOTHING ? Recent gambling scandals — e.g. Hasselbaink, Michael Owen and Eidur Gudjohnsen — remind us of former English star Stan Bowles, who placed a wager on how long he'd last in Gamblers Anonymous.

A RUN ON GOALPOSTS. Thieves stole 20 sets of goalposts in the Vancouver area to sell as scrap metal. The parks department plans to paint the posts on 80 untouched fields in distinctive colors to tip off dealers.

WHAT'S IN A NICKNAME? Sunderland hadn't scored three goals at home until Feb. 1, when they managed four. Problem was, three were own goals — all within seven minutes! — giving Charlton a 3-1 win. The Black Cats dropped to last place.

JOB SECURITY. Mick Wadsworth wasn't fired by English club Huddersfield because, said Chairman David Taylor, "The [severance] amount agreed could not be funded by the board. So, basically, we could not afford to sack him."

TIME FOR THAT ELECTION. Gambia president Yahya Jammeh has banned soccer in rural areas during the rainy season (June-October) to boost an economy dependent on peanuts and cotton. "The time wasted on football matches could be better spent in the fields," he said. "Those who disobey my orders will be sent to jail." Colonel Jammeh had pledged, when he seized power in a 1994 coup, to restore a democratically elected civilian government "as soon as we have set things right."

— Mike Voitalla