

## Digger

Matt Scott



### Olympic sports to look for football cast-offs

Britain's elite-sport funding and support bodies are preparing a safety net for the footballers who fail to make the grade at Football League clubs by offering them a potential pathway to the Olympics.

The Progression 08 conference in Manchester last week, set up by the League Football Education body in association with the Football League and the Professional Footballers' Association, was aimed at finding alternative careers for footballers who will not make a living in the game. Delegates from UK

Sport and the English Institute of Sport were invited to look at ways in which failed footballers might benefit instead from other sports.

Darren Campbell, the Athens Olympic relay champion who was himself on the books of several football clubs including Plymouth Argyle, represented the Olympic sports in an attempt to introduce the players to the wider world of sport. For the time being it is only an incipient partnership between UK Sport, the EIS and football but there are hopes

that access to a network of sportsmen who have natural athletic ability and speed will benefit British Olympic sport in the long run.

MPs were grumbling during the public accounts committee meeting on Wednesday that elite sport is the preserve of the public schools. Although that is an increasingly mistaken impression, taking some of those who have made football Britain's biggest working-class game to Olympic disciplines will certainly speed up the evolution.

### Robertson's demand

Hugh Robertson, the shadow sports minister, has tabled a parliamentary question demanding Sport England provides evidence of effective oversight of baseball and softball, sports that benefit from hundreds of thousands of pounds in public funding. Sport England has been channeling its lottery funding into a body called BSUK, which though having traded since 2000 was only incorporated as a limited company last year.

In the 15-month period to March 31 last year the sports received £375,000 from lottery coffers, spending more than £63,000 of that on "office costs" detailed in accounts as "travelling" and "other expenses". Added to that were salary costs of £280,000 for 11 members of staff; John Boyd, the head of development, said the highest-paid annual salary was less than £30,000 and each employee's annual expense claim is capped at £5,000.

"Sport England is satisfied that the level of funding used for offices and salaries is appropriate," said Sport England of the 82% of its grant being spent on

salaries and expenses. "It is directly in line with spending by other similar sized governing bodies."

Sport England measures its sports against five "key performance indicators", four of which baseball and softball were said to have exceeded.

### Red faces at ECB

Embarrassment at the England & Wales Cricket Board yesterday as it announced the domestic-season launch at Lord's on Monday – when Gloucestershire's representative will be Hamish Marshall, the New Zealander who has been denied registration by the ECB because of his involvement in the Indian Cricket League. At least he will not have to travel far when he makes his appeal against the ECB sanction two days later.



### Kaladze's Georgian punt

Kakha Kaladze, below, is going where others fear to tread after setting up an investment group with interests in the oligarch-dominated banking and energy sectors of Georgia. The Milan left-back, alongside Georgia's former prime minister, Zurab Nogatideli, is developing the business in a turbulent region but hopes to benefit from double-digit growth in his homeland.

### Yorkshire get shirty

Yorkshire County Cricket Club's clothing deal with Canterbury, the kit supplier, has presented difficulties for Michael Vaughan, who has made long-sleeved undergarments his hallmark after a deal with the clothing firm Skins but who will be told he must only wear club gear. "He may find he will not wear any garments under his shirt because he would be in breach of our deal," said Yorkshire's chief executive, Stewart Regan.

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