

# SP Euro2004

## Fans' survival guide



## P RE-MATCH PREP

A typical football match takes up an average of three hours viewing time, when the half time break and post-match analysis have been taken into account. Sitting still for prolonged periods can lead to backache so adjust your viewing area to suit your needs.

### ● TELEVISION

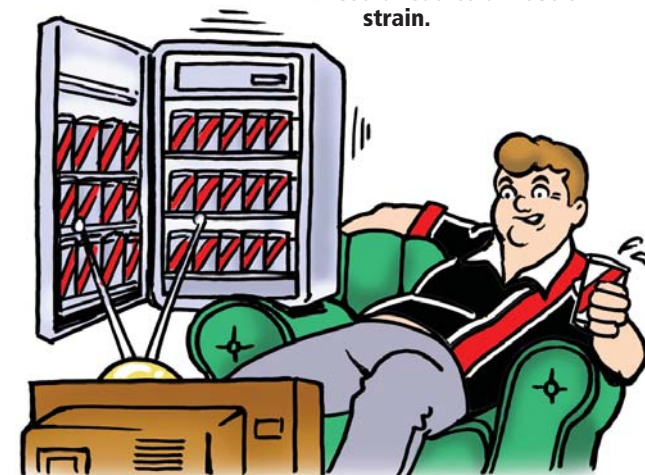
- Adjust the position of your television. It should be straight in front of you at eye level so that you don't have to crane or twist your neck while watching.

### ● SEATING

- Reinforce the support your sofa provides by placing some cushions or a rolled up towel behind the small of your back. This will help support the natural curve in your spine and relieve tension
- Avoid the onset of back pain by changing your viewing posture often. Make sure you rest on both your left and right side. This helps the structures of the back (discs, muscles and ligaments) to relax
- If you have an existing back problem, try sitting on a dining room chair, or sit on the floor with your back against the sofa. You might also want to try lying on the floor.

### ● FOOD AND DRINK

- If you're superstitious about leaving your seat during play and can't risk trips to the kitchen, keep your supply of food and drink within easy reach. Don't lunge forward from a sitting position – this could lead to a muscle strain.



## KICK OFF: BORING NIL-NIL

While we wait for Owen or Beckham to work their magic, it's easy to slump and slouch in our seats. This puts undue stresses and strains on the neck and back which causes muscles, ligaments, discs and tendons to compress. This condition is sometimes called 'creep' and could eventually lead to long term discomfort.

- You can avoid pain creeping up on you by adopting an encouraging posture. Sit up straight as if you're willing England to score
- Aim to keep your head and neck in the midline position (symmetrical) to avoid unnecessary stress on other areas of the body
- If you're feeling stiff, try a few shoulder shrugs to loosen up (see half time exercises).

## PENALTY SHOOT OUT

The penalty shoot out is one of the riskiest situations a football fan will have to face during Euro 2004. Suspense is guaranteed so fans should follow the advice in 'frustration' to manage their nerves.

- As each player walks up to the spot, remind yourself that your suspense will either turn to jubilation or frustration, so be prepared for all eventualities
- The safest posture to adopt during a penalty shoot out is a standing position. Help your body cope with the pressure by using the time between spot kicks to take deep breaths and flex your limbs.

## HALF TIME

Use the half time break wisely – it's an ideal opportunity to put your body through its full range of motion before settling back down for another long period of sitting still. Try the simple stretches below:

### ● QUADRICEPS

In standing position, with your feet together, bend your left knee and reach round with your left hand to your left foot. Gently pull your left foot towards your left buttock; try to keep your knees together. Go as far as is comfortable and you should feel the stretch along your left thigh. Squeeze your buttocks to further stretch the thigh muscle. Hold for 30 seconds then relax. Repeat with right leg.

### ● HAMSTRINGS

In standing position, place your left foot in front of you and keep your heel on the floor. Keep the left knee straight and allow

## GOAL FOR OPPOSITION

See 'frustration' but also bear the following points in mind:

- Try not to let a goal for the opposition dampen your spirits too much. Resist the temptation to curl up. Instead, use this as an opportunity to change your posture
- Plump up your cushions so that you are well supported, able to sit up straight and ready to will England on to victory!

the right knee to bend slightly. With your hands placed on your right thigh, lean forward and look straight ahead. Feel the stretch along the back of your thigh. Hold for 30 seconds then relax. Repeat with right leg.

### ● CALVES

(GASTROCNEMIUS AND SOLEUS)

In standing position, place your left foot about six inches behind your right foot – keeping both feet at 12 o'clock. With feet flat on the floor, lean forward and transfer your weight to your front leg so that you feel the stretch on your left calf muscle. Hold for 30 seconds then relax. Repeat with right leg.

### ● SHOULDERS

Start by raising both shoulders towards your ears and breathe in slowly. Hold this shrug position for 10 seconds, then allow your shoulders to relax and lower. Repeat three times.



## GOAL CELEBRATIONS

Jubilant celebrations are a major cause of injuries among football fans. Excitement causes the body to release natural opiates that can temporarily mask the pain of a minor injury, so it may take a few moments before you notice discomfort.

- The key to avoiding injury here is to be prepared!
- In situations where you can reasonably anticipate a goal (England are awarded a penalty) prepare your body by getting up off the sofa carefully. You are less likely to become injured if you begin your celebrations from a standing position
- If an England goal comes as a total surprise, do your best not to shock your body too much. Sudden explosive movement may cause damage and every part of the body is at risk when you leap off the sofa after a long period spent sitting down.

Football  
mad!

## F RUSTRATION!



England have been drawn in a tough group, so tense and frustrating moments are guaranteed. When we feel stressed, our muscles become more vulnerable to injury so fans need to be especially careful in these situations.

Football  
crazy!

- Try to avoid sudden jerking movements, which could give you a cricked neck
- When protesting about a bad tackle, resist the urge to flail your arms around. This type of movement can cause upper body sprains
- To vent your anger at the referee, it is often safer to take a deep breath, stand up and stomp your foot
- Excessive stress can cause muscles to spasm and makes areas of the body already affected by injury more susceptible to further damage. Counter this by performing a couple of tension busting exercises. Try gently moving your neck from side to side and then slowly rotate your shoulders.

## POST MATCH DEBRIEF

How you choose to unwind is likely to be determined by the final score. The most important thing to do is get your body off the sofa and back in action. Here are a few suggestions:

### ● ENGLAND VICTORY

Carry on in a positive frame of mind by getting together with a few friends and taking a ball down to the park for a kick around.

### ● ENGLAND DRAW

Analyse the game and how the result will affect England's place in the table during a walk with a fellow fan.

### ● ENGLAND LOSE

Don't curl up in despair or vent your anger in a way that might cause an injury. Put your energy or aggression into something physical, such as washing the car or going for a gentle jog.

### ● BUT SERIOUSLY FOLKS...

The content of this leaflet is intended to be lighthearted and fun, but there is a serious side too. You should only perform the stretches provided here if you are medically fit. It is also important that you consult with your GP or a chartered physiotherapist before embarking on any new fitness regime.

If any of the stretches cause you to feel discomfort, stop immediately and seek medical advice. Please also bear in mind that drinking alcohol can diminish your ability to recognise pain.



### How to find a chartered physiotherapist

Speak to your GP about a referral to your local physiotherapy service. Alternatively, visit [www.physio2u.org.uk](http://www.physio2u.org.uk) for a list of private practitioners in your local area.

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