

Goal Difference

A Sports Shorts Radio Play

By

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GRAMS: MATCH OF THE DAY THEME (END).

F/X: FOOTBALL CROWD PRE-MATCH NOISE (UNDER).

MOTTY: (A JOHN MOTSON IMPERSONATOR) Good evening. And you join us here for what promises to be a most intriguing match. England just need a draw against Turkey to win their qualifying group and go to the European Championships next summer. The teams are already out – this match being played at home of course, so England's familiar white and blue strip is being worn, and tonight's opposition is wearing... Would you call that a halter-top, Alan?

ALAN: (A SCOTTISH ALAN HANSEN-TYPE PUNDIT) That's right, it looks like it's from Top Shop or maybe Hennes. She's wearing it with a nice skirt, and she's had her hair done specially.

MOTTY: Tonight's opponents, it should be said, are very familiar to each other, having been up against each other in similar circumstances no fewer than seven times since the World Cup. Now, to recap – David wants to stay in and watch the game, Laura wants to go out, and I've got to say that the atmosphere here is already somewhat volatile. We're already underway with Laura on the attack – apparently David promised weeks ago to take her out tonight.

ALAN: That's a typical approach to this kind of event from Laura – the build-up to this match has been full of such mind games from both sides. I fully expect David to... well, there he goes, he says that he promised to take her out sometime this weekend, not specifically tonight.

MOTTY: Now, it looks like David's going for a set piece. Yes, he's offering to take Laura out to the pub, but she's deflected that one away harmlessly – she knows they've got Sky there and they're showing the game on the big screen.

ALAN: At this level, David needs to show some more imagination at set pieces to try and nick any kind of advantage against that defensive wall.

MOTTY: Do you think that sometimes Laura can be a little over-defensive?

ALAN: Well, she's up against someone who during the last World Cup took a radio ear-piece into her nephew's christening, so you perhaps can't blame her.

MOTTY: But the action has resumed here with Laura saying that her sister's husband always takes her sister out, but she and David never go anywhere. The agreement seems to have been that David will take her out once a week, but David is saying that this rule isn't being applied consistently, and I've got to say that I agree with him.

- ALAN: There is a lot of confusion in this area, with David claiming that seeing Howard Wilkinson do an after dinner speech constituted a date.
- MOTTY: A quick word about formations, Alan?
- ALAN: Well, David's on the sofa as we've come to expect from him – very solid, and Laura is pacing up and down – fantastic use of the space around the coffee table – she's making David turn one way then the other, hoping to tire him out.
- MOTTY: And now Laura is asking David if he could perhaps video the match and watch it when they get back – this is interesting stuff. She's hoping to turn it into some kind of win-win situation, but David's just pointing out the impossibility of getting home without finding out the result, referring back to the last time this was tried – England-Bulgaria in 1973 with James Bolam and, I believe, Rodney Bewes.
- ALAN: That's just naivety on Laura's part. There was no way that that kind of shot was ever going to come off.
- MOTTY: Remember, a draw will do for David tonight – so long as he stays in, that's a result for him.
- ALAN: I think at the end of the day it's all going to come down to goal difference – Laura's objective is to go out, David, quite clearly isn't going to accept that decision and wants the full 90 minutes.

MOTTY: And Laura's making a booking. She's booking a table for two at a local pizzeria. More and more Italians plying their trade in England these days of course. Now, this puts David under pressure. How's he going to react to this?

ALAN: I think that David's just going to stick to what he does best – sitting back and soaking up the pressure, the same way that digestive biscuit's soaking up his tea.

MOTTY: Incidentally, the record books show that the balance of victories is slightly in David's favour, so history is on his side. Alan, what would you do in Laura's situation?

ALAN: Laura's just got to keep plugging away – the break will come.

MOTTY: Well, that break may have come, because Laura's blocked him – she's blocked David's view of the television. But David has just used the remote control to switch to wide-screen mode – he's got a clear view on goal. Lovely play.

ALAN: Magnificent. He's switched from the traditional 4:3 configuration to make full use of the available width, and I expect to see...

MOTTY: Sorry to interrupt you there, Alan, but Laura's bringing out a red card – it's the card that David sent her on Valentine's Day where he said that she was his ickle lickle bunny rabbit and he'd do anything for her.

ALAN: Now that's very sloppy.

MOTTY: But David is refusing point blank to leave. He's been shown the red card, but it doesn't look like he's going anywhere. Surely it can't carry on like this for much longer. I think there's going to be an upset. Yes, Laura's turned on the waterworks – I haven't seen tears like that since Gazza. And was that a stamp? She definitely appeared to stamp her foot.

ALAN: If she did, she was lucky to get away with it.

MOTTY: And it looks like something's been thrown. Yes, a plate has been thrown. Dear oh dear. We thought we'd seen the last of scenes like this. But what's this? There's someone at the door. This puts the cat amongst the pigeons. Who's coming on? And it's David's best friend Steve. This may prove to be a stroke of tactical genius. Surely it's all over for Laura now, Alan?

ALAN: That's right, with David having the advantage of the extra man, I can't see Laura making any progress now. Steve's got everything you need in an argument – persistence, logic, the ability to appear deaf. David's just going to put the shutters down till the whistle.

MOTTY: But what's happening now? Oh my word, well I've never seen anything like it! Laura and Steve are leaving the house

together – they're linking arms and away they go. Let's have a look at that again.

ALAN: Yes, the lad's rung the doorbell, he's snuck in, it looks like it's all over. What happens? Laura's playing away tonight.

MOTTY: Quite an extraordinary turn of events. David left on the bench so to speak, and just look at the expression on his face. He looks – well, I can't tell if he's sick as a parrot that his girlfriend's going out with his best mate, or over the moon that he can watch the footie in peace.

ALAN: He's probably trying to work out if there's time to buy some flowers from the garage at half-time.

MOTTY: And David is lifting the cup – he's putting his feet on the coffee table and he's lifting the cup of tea to his lips. It's almost time for kick-off, so let's go over to Istanbul, and sit back and watch the football. We'll keep you updated of course on the situation here throughout the match.

F/X: REFEREE'S WHISTLE.

F/X: CROWD NOISE CRESCENDO.

MOTTY: And England kick off against Turkey. It's Beckham, Beckham to Rooney, good run there up the right from Wayne Rooney...
(FADE OUT)

GRAMS: MY GIRL – MADNESS (FIRST VERSE).