

Fifa secretary wanted a huge pay-off before his suspension

TOM PECK
SPORTS NEWS CORRESPONDENT

Fifa's general secretary, Jérôme Valcke, had requested a pay-off from the organisation worth millions of pounds before he was suspended on Thursday in the wake of yet more corruption allegations at football's world governing body.

The Frenchman announced in July that he would leave Fifa at the emergency congress next February, when the president, Sepp Blatter, will also stand down.

According to the Press Association, Valcke's contract has three years to run and he had been negotiating a pay-off to leave the organisation, but had not been successful. Valcke's predecessor, Urs Linsi, was given a pay-off worth £3.6m. However, that was in different times.

Valcke has been in the No 2 job since 2007, despite being forced to leave the organisation only a year earlier after Mastercard walked out on a sponsorship deal, claiming it and Visa had been lied to in order to secure the highest possible price for a deal.

Until this week, none of the many scandals engulfing the organisation had specifically implicated Fifa's very highest-ranking officials.

But the allegations made by ticketing agent Benny Alon – that he had made an agreement with Valcke to sell Brazil 2014 World Cup tickets for prices way over their listed value, and that Valcke would receive a cut of the profits – have caused Valcke to be suspended by Fifa pending an investigation by its ethics committee.

Valcke, for his part, has denied the "outrageous and fabricated" allegations. Fifa also cancelled the contract in 2013, ostensibly when it became clear that the tickets would be sold at several times their face value, and the deal never took place.

Sources close to Fifa have told Press Association Sport that Valcke has been keen for some time to make an early exit from the governing body.

Valcke had been on his way to Moscow for a Russia 2018 event to mark 1,000 days to go to the next World Cup, but when the allegations broke his private jet was



Fifa's Jérôme Valcke denies corruption allegations

turned around in mid-air and he returned to Zurich.

Blatter, who was also due to fly to Moscow, has cancelled his travel plans. Blatter sent an email to Fifa staff in which he claimed: "Fifa is confident of its ability to recover from the present difficult situation and restore its reputation for the good of the game."

You would have to go back a very long time to find a point at which Fifa had any kind of reputation worth restoring.

Valcke's lawyers said in a statement: "Mr Valcke never received or agreed to accept any money or anything else of value from Mr Alon. As has been reported, Fifa entered into an agreement with Mr Alon's company, JB Sports Marketing. That agreement and Fifa's subsequent business dealings with Alon were vetted and approved by Fifa and its legal counsel."

On Thursday, Gorka Villar – one of the specially appointed eight-person Fifa Reform Group – was accused of attempted extortion by eight South American football clubs. He is the son of Angel Villar Llona, the anti-reform Spanish Fifa executive committee member.

Swiss authorities have also agreed to the extradition to the US of Eugenio Figueredo, one of the seven Fifa executives to be dragged from their beds at the Baur au Lac hotel in Zurich in May.

Until this week, only the Cayman Islands banker and Concacaf president, Jeffrey Webb, had been successfully extradited.

Fifa is confident of its ability to recover from this situation

The brains behind Swansea's resurgence

Garry Monk, the Swans manager, earned a lot of credit by tactically outsmarting Louis van Gaal recently, but his side's flexible style is the product of intensive work with assistant Pep Clotet, who tells

SIMON HART *about a strategic revolution*

The sight of Roberto Martinez at the Liberty Stadium this afternoon will stir happy memories for Swansea City fans. It was Martinez, after all, who as manager laid down the template – a possession game built around a 4-3-3 formation – that Paolo Sousa, Brendan Rodgers and Michael Laudrup all maintained during Swansea's rise up the football ladder.

Yet when Martinez returns to his former club today, he can be less sure of what his Everton team should expect from their hosts – and this is testament to the work of the man who captained his old Swansea team, Garry Monk.

Martinez spoke this week of Monk's credentials as a potential England manager, but for a fuller insight into his impact on Swansea's fortunes, it is worth listening to another Spaniard, Pep Clotet. He is the latest Catalan playing a role in the Swansea story as Monk's assistant manager and is therefore the ideal man to explain how the rookie boss, still only 36, has succeeded in adjusting the Swansea model to take the club forward.

After replacing Laudrup in February last year, Monk decided that Swansea had become too predictable. He also felt they needed to go back to basics. Clotet says they spent long days poring over videos of rival Premier League clubs as the pair sought to tweak the Martinez template.

The Swansea manager, Garry Monk (right), alongside his No 2, Pep Clotet. Club chairman Huw Jenkins suggested they work together

GETTY

"We analysed every mistake our team had done and how the opposition were – how teams attack and how they defend, how they establish domination and their percentage of possession," he tells *The Independent*. "We found out that teams 80 per cent [of the time] had the same kind of attacks. Some teams differ a little and when they differ, they have more success."

"We did a very deep analysis so we could prepare for the season and how we should train so we didn't fail at the beginning. It was a lot of hours [watching videos] – you have to see the whole game and click every attack and every defensive action, and you do this for 10 games for every opposition team to see if there is a pattern."

Monk, a former centre-back, concluded they had to put a defensive structure in place first. This initially meant leaving the ball to one side and working on Swansea's shape. "We realised we had to first prepare the team to be defending right because otherwise it would make no sense how we were going to attack," says Clotet.

"Garry last season decided to put this defensive organisation in place – he was being reactive to something that maybe should have been done before or was lacking. We got a lot of points thanks to that better defensive organisation, and especially our better defensive

displays in 'one v ones' and how to support the 'one v one'." The end product was Swansea's best defensive record in a top-flight campaign, along with their highest league placing, eighth, since 1982.

Monk also tinkered with Swansea's possession game. "The vision Garry had for Swansea [included] keeping the philosophy of possession but at the same time he wanted to make the team more aggressive offensively," Clotet explains. "Sometimes he has sacrificed a little bit of that possession and turned it into more final-third entries. We risk a little bit more now. Swansea before had possession in a way of controlling the game and avoiding suffering."

It is telling to note that in their last home fixture Swansea enjoyed a 2-1 victory over Manchester United with only 35 per cent of possession. And nobody could accuse them of lacking a plan B now – not least United manager Louis van Gaal, who admitted he "couldn't cope" with the tactical switch which brought Swansea victory that day when winger Wayne Routledge was replaced by midfielder Ki Sung-yueng and Monk altered their shape from 4-2-3-1 to a midfield diamond. Within eight minutes Swansea had turned the score from 0-1 to 2-1.

Clotet wrote one of his weekly columns for Spanish football daily *Marca* about a change that allowed Swansea

Garry wanted to be more aggressive offensively, to risk a little more

to exploit space left by Luke Shaw's attacks down United's left flank. "We thought if we could turn the team into a diamond with four midfielders by bringing Ki in, this would give us a few minutes where we could try to exploit gaps there," he says.

It is not the first time they have shown the flexibility to upset United. In their opening-day win at Old Trafford last season, Monk surprised Van Gaal by sending out Swansea in a 4-3-3 formation having previously played 4-4-2.

Even before becoming Swansea manager, Monk was working on a software tool allowing young players to measure their ability, and all of his Swansea players have their



Louis van Gaal (left) has twice been caught unawares by Monk's ingenious approach

own personal development programme. Each week they have an individualised briefing about their upcoming opponents sent to their iPads.

"He is very demanding, a perfectionist – on a tactical level, a performance level, and a training level," adds Clotet of Monk. "This makes him a very good boss. At the same time he has good knowledge of the game and good reading. He knows how to approach the players. And he knew Swansea very well."

If Swansea's efforts have put Monk in the spotlight, they are also raising the profile of Clotet, who originally arrived at the club as an academy consultant in late 2013 before chairman Huw Jenkins appointed him as Monk's assistant manager. "The chairman thought we might be a good team together," he says. "The way it works is I have to help him develop his ideas about the game and what kind of tactical approach he wants to have."

A qualified English teacher, the 38-year-old has a long coaching CV, having earned his Uefa Pro-licence at 26. He has worked as director of the Catalan football federation's coaching school, as coach of the Espanyol and Malaga reserve teams and also in Scandinavia. He was assistant to former Sheffield Wednesday defender Ronald Nilsson with a Swedish title-winning Malmo side and also had spells as head coach at Halmstad in Sweden and at Viking Stavanger in Norway.

"I've already managed before but I am enjoying what I am doing now with Garry a lot," adds Clotet. "I have a good relationship with Garry and it's great to be able to work with a manager who trusts you and lets you express yourself and we're building something together." As Martinez might see for himself today,

The policy of the club isn't going to change. We sign young players

Newcastle are like a car crash, says McClaren

MARTIN HARDY

Steve McClaren used the term "car crash" yesterday. It provoked an intake of breath, whiplash almost, given the usually strategic control from those in charge at St James' Park. Newcastle are bottom of the table after spending £50m in the summer.

There was, of course, a context to the unusually evocative description from McClaren, but even that was muddled slightly, between the defeat at West Ham on Monday which sent Newcastle to the foot of the Premier League, and the situation he inherited.

For McClaren to be given time, there has to be a reminder of the relegation scraps that have blighted two of the previous three seasons. There has to be a nod towards the run of one win from 11 games at the end of last season.

There also has to be a tip of the cap towards the club's recruitment policy, which steadfastly revolves around two key factors, age and nationality.

Newcastle, led by their managing director Lee Charnley, under the instruction of owner Mike Ashley, sign players with potential resale value from abroad.

Georginio Wijnaldum is 24, Aleksander Mitrovic 21, Chancel Mbemba 21 and Florian Thauvin 22. All four arrived in the summer without a minute's experience in the Premier League, yet McClaren is now part of that system, if not necessarily 100 per cent behind it.

"In the process of a new team, and new players in the Premier League, and in trying to change things around in a football club, during that process it is a little bit like a car crash," he said. "You know it is going to happen, and you can't do anything. You just wait for it to happen."

"The key to Monday was how we reacted after the second goal. We reacted to the first goal and recovered. The reaction to the second was a disappointment."

"The first eight fixtures looked a bit of a nightmare for us. You try not to think of what comes next. We knew it would be a tough start."

McClaren was asked directly if he wished the club had bought proven Premier League players, given his eagerness to sign Charlie Austin. "In hindsight it is great,

but the policy of the club is not going to change," he added. "We are going to sign young talent whether that is here or abroad."

"I think it is a young team, one of the lowest average ages. It is a young team and I think that showed in the second half on Monday. What we have to do is make it grow up."

Of similar concern is the legacy of what he inherited. He accepted words such as "brittle" applied to a squad that was losing games long before his arrival at St James' Park.

"I think you have to be tough in this league, not just physically but mentally tough too," said McClaren. "And that can be an adaptation for new players, an adaptation for everyone."

There is growing concern, even five games in, on Tyne-side after two draws and three defeats. Seeing their team lose regularly over the past three seasons has become increasingly difficult to stomach. "Is there more pain to come?"



Newcastle manager Steve McClaren admits that he has to make his young team grow up

Absolutely," McClaren said. "Don't think it is going to be rosy all the way."

"We didn't expect that. We don't want to talk about last season coming in but we have to learn about the team."

"The new signings have to come in and learn about the Premier League and it has been sometimes two steps forward, one back, one forward, two back, in the first five games. We expected this. It is painful."

"I was waiting for it. It's kind of saying the 10 things that are going to happen."

"One of them is that you are going to get beat and everyone is going to overreact. The key is the reaction. Do we get one, do we not?"

"We are learning. About the best team, the best players. The best team may not necessarily be the best players. We have not found it yet."

McClaren was also asked if his squad is better than their position at the bottom of the table.

"Yes," he replied. "It needs to show it today against Watford before the car crash turns into something more serious."

