

I bet someone moans about this

By ROGER MORONEY

I am one of those punters who ensures the viability of the TAB by wrongly guessing the outcome of major sporting events and horse races.

My urge to drop a tenner on horses like Dobbin the Cripple in the third from Otaki in the vain hope he will improve on the eighth he posted a fortnight earlier at Avondale is both disturbing and inevitable.

I plunged to an all-time low in August of last year when I laid a \$50 forecast bet on Southampton to win the Premier League.

Had they won I would have received something in the order of \$7500 but... This year they saw me coming and really stuck enormously big odds on...Leicester!

So, \$50 on Leicester to win the league-cup double. If they do then I shall inherit \$173 million from the TAB. As I write this Leicester are at the foot of the table... I am one of those sad bastards who has difficulty picking his nose let alone a winning outfit, be it equine or footballine.

However, I think at last I sense what the terminally optimistic punter calls "a sure thing". The chance to make a few

bob. The opportunity to get one over the bookies. The catalyst for a whole new era of wagering success.

I am prepared to lay a substantial wager on the format of the New Zealand national club championship (okay, the Premier League then) changing at least twice before the end of the year 2005.

At this point in time, the championship is set to revert to summer-league status...kicking off in the heat of January next year (which means Bluewater Napier City should get a flier given the experience of Papua-New Guinea).

This is summer soccer Mark 2. This is national league Mark 71, isn't it? Or is it 72? Gosh oh lawdy...there have been so many formats its hard to keep up. Has NZ Soccer **FINALLY** found the **PERFECT** script for the game's premier competition?

Given the revamped revamps of the revamped original format I would say not, which is why I feel my dosh will be safe in my grubby, lager-stained little fist.

If (unlike The Field of Dreams) NZS build it and they do not come, then expect another think-tank session to find and alternative.

It will not be given a second chance. It will be deemed flawed and therefore must change to get the "crowds" in. The retreats, think-tanks, sessions, conferences (call them what you like) will resume. Ironically, in a format that, unlike the league has not undergone repeated change.

"Why not have a national soccer league through the winter...and have an automatic promotion-relegation set up like the Poms?" some misguided delegate will suggest before being consumed by a wave of laughter and derision.

"I reckon we should go to a sort of State of Origin setup... provincial teams made up entirely of locally-born players only," another delegate will offer.

This will be greeted with interest and a promise to "come back to that one".

Another delegate will also get a thumbs-up for his suggestion that there be one round in the summer... then a three month break... and the second, final, round in the winter... then a three month break and so on and on.

"I think we're on to something," the NZS bloke says with a nodding of the

head. "I think every team should have at least one player of ethnic origin and a homosexual, given the per capita of the population and all that sort of thing," another delegate proffers.

"And going by that criteria at the very least four women," another will add...and the nodding will grow stronger. Devolution and indecision will be under way nicely.

Cynical? Of course this diatribe is soaked in cynicism... when the game's premier competition changes almost as regularly as the seasons (ooh, how about a Spring League?) then it's hard not to get frustrated.

I shall win any wager taken of course, but I'd be just as delighted to return to my losing ways if I'm wrong. I'll even offer NZS some winning advice.

Set the new summer league in contractual, immovable, unchangeable concrete for at least one decade. Give it every chance to live and for the love of Pele allow the fans, the media and the players the opportunity to experience the rare and unusual feeling of year-in, year-out consistency of format.

I bet they'd all like that.

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