

JOHNNY STAYS IN SIERRA LEONE



HEALY . . . forwards

Healy's all good with kids' stuff

By MARK McINTOSH

DAVID HEALY is happy to be passing on his wealth of experience to Northern Ireland's future stars.

The country's record scorer has been working as assistant to Under-16 boss Stephen Robinson.

And he will get his first chance to see if the players are paying attention when the team begins their Victory Shield campaign in Scotland tonight.

Healy, who is also a part-time forwards coach at League One Fleetwood Town, said: "I started my coaching badges early.

"People told me I would go through a bit of a low when I stopped playing, but to be given the chance to give something back to Northern Ireland football is terrific.

"Michael O'Neill, Jim Magilton and Stephen Robinson have been brilliant with me and I am really enjoying working with the Under-16s.

"I am there in a coaching capacity and it is all



O'NEILL . . . manager

about them — my playing career has gone.

"But if they ever want to talk to myself or Stephen, we will be there to answer their questions.

"We have played the game at a good level and the highest level with Northern Ireland, so it would be silly not to be there for any young player wanting advice.

"Hopefully we can help them progress as players and make a good career for themselves in the game, and with their country.

"The Victory Shield is a great tournament.

"One of my first trips away with Northern Ireland at underage level was in Scotland so I know it will be good for them to be away together."

Meanwhile, Uefa are set to make a decision on any sanctions imposed on the Romanian federation ahead of the clash with Northern Ireland in Bucharest on November 14.

Following crowd trouble at Romania's Group F game with Hungary on October 11, the governing body could impose a stadium closure.

The Irish FA are eager for the situation to be clarified quickly as many fans have already made plans to travel to Bucharest and they have been left in limbo for the past week.

McKinstry: I stayed for the boys

COACH ON EBOLA PLIGHT

By MARK McINTOSH

JOHNNY MCKINSTRY has revealed why he stayed in Sierra Leone after the deadly Ebola outbreak.

The Lisburn man was sacked as the national team coach last month but has remained in the country to continue his role with the Craig Bellamy Foundation.

McKinstry could have jumped ship in July when the international staff and volunteers fled, but he says he felt a duty of care to the academy players and local staff.

He explained: "I wanted to ensure that at that moment, when panic was setting in around the world about Ebola, we were able to continue to look after the boys at the academy.

"That seemed a very obvious decision to make at the time and in hindsight it was definitely the correct one.

'Craig will always have the final say'

"The subsequent months have given me the opportunity to work with a group of very talented Sierra Leonean staff selected from our nationwide development league and projects, accelerating our long-time aim of increasing the number of local staff and developing their skills.

"And should a new opportunity come along that I am interested in, I know we will have reached the point where my role will have become somewhat redundant as we will have trained the staff to a level where the academy continues to function effectively."

Despite widespread panic over Ebola setting



RALLYING THE TROOPS . . . McKinstry gives a team talk to some foundation players in Sierra Leone as Craig Bellamy looks on

in around the world, McKinstry is confident he will stay safe.

Last weekend, he spoke to ex-Wales, Liverpool and Cardiff City winger Bellamy to dispel some 'myths' about the living arrangements in the country.

He said: "Craig will always have the final say about what we do with the foundation.

"He is more concerned with the well-being of the boys in the academy, regardless of if they get to play professional football.

"He has seen the pictures of dead bodies in the street and is obviously worried. But I had to dispel a few myths. That was an awful incident but it's not the zombie apocalypse some would have you believe.

"As things stand, we are based in a large facility and only need to leave every 10 days or two weeks to get supplies in the capital, Freetown.

"It is safe. Ebola is a disease of contact so people rarely shake hands now and there is a completely different atmosphere in the country.

"You just have to be alert and use the likes of hand-sanitiser.

People will look at the damage Ebola is doing but you can see the other problems being caused.

"General schools have shut and there is a Sesame Street-type programme on the radio for a few hours a day to teach kids.

"The numbers of women dying during childbirth have risen, too, because they are worried about travelling to a hospital."

'I won't leave Sierra Leone for the first offer'

While McKinstry is happy to continue his role in the West African nation, he admits the time is right to consider options elsewhere.

He added: "I've always wanted to coach at the highest level, be it with a national team or a club.

"I believe we did a good job with the national team until Ebola meant we were prevented playing home games.

"I want to have a chance of succeeding in any future job but I certainly won't leave Sierra Leone for the first offer. It must be the right fit."

THE LEONE RANGER . . . McKinstry gets his point across in the African Cup of Nations qualifier with Ivory Coast before his axe as Sierra Leone boss