



by Andrew Mead

For those of you who lie a bit of tittle-tattle there's a website at www.britishepat.com that always gives a good read. Only one problem, nothing seems to be dated so you really don't know whether you're genuinely up to date with the gossip back home. From other trawls around the worst end of the UK columns herewith another few snippets.

Attempts to get to www.empireonline from here in the Kingdom to investigate the Headline '**Martine slips it to Hugh**' resulted in the "Access not allowed" banner, however a few deft clicks of the mouse and we discover that Martine has simply been quoted as saying "When the director asks for tongues, you must give the director tongues" The former Eastenders actress is about to pop up in the the film 'Love Actually' with Hugh Grant and apparently demanded a few retakes of the kissing scenes just to get it right. Martine's book 'A Personal Diary' is being offered by Amazon at a 30% discount.

Rumour of the week in sporting circles is that there won't exactly be an even playing field at the Olympics anymore. Athletes who have undergone sex-change operations will get to compete.

"We will have no discrimination," IOC medical director Patrick Schamasch said. "The IOC will respect human rights."

The IOC convened a meeting of medical experts in Sweden last month and will announce its policy in the next few weeks," the Associated Press reported in November. Details are still being worked out, but Schamasch said transsexual athletes will be eligible for the Olympics once they have passed a certain amount of time after sex-change surgery.

He said: "The trend is to have an ineligibility period. Then after certain conditions have been fulfilled, the athlete will be able to compete in his or her new sex."

I'm not sure how Greece will handle this for next summer's games in Athens. The government just fined a TV station \$116,000 for broadcasting a "vulgar and unacceptable" scene of two men kissing, although nudity is common on Greek TV. Gay and transsexual activists smooched in public in Athens today to protest.

Cheryl Haworth began lifting weights at age 13. Now 20, At 5 feet 9 inches and more than 300 pounds, Haworth stands head and shoulders above all other female weightlifters in the United States. She's broken and re-broken the national record several times during the last few years and picked up Bronze in Sydney. Will she now face unfair competition?



England's footballers issued the following statement following the selection sagas involving Rio Ferdinand (he of the failure to attend dope test) and Alan Smith (he of the plastic bottle throwing):

"On behalf of the entire England team set-up, in the light of the recent controversies surrounding team selection for the games against Turkey and now Denmark, we wish to make the following statement:

"We fully appreciate the need to set the right image for the game but we are extremely disappointed at the way the FA have handled the above, in particular the treatment of team-mates Rio Ferdinand and Alan Smith which has undermined the position of the manager and could have seriously effected the morale and team spirit of the players. We feel this has left us with no option but to ask of the FA that from this day forward, they make clear their criteria of selection for the England team so that there is no room for ambiguity and misunderstanding. We have a concern that the FA are reacting to outside pressures which impacts unfairly on the manager and the players. By the FA's actions in withdrawing Rio and Alan from the squad, in both cases the players have been assumed guilty before the due process has been completed - a right which should be afforded to every individual in not only football but society as a whole.

In other footie rumours Rivaldo has said that he's interested in joining Liverpool when he leaves AC Milan in January, Joaquin, the Betis striker, is to join Arsenal for £10m plus youngsters Stuart Taylor and Jeremie Aliadiere, or at least that's what Rumour Central reckons on the BBC's Rumour Mill message board. Also on the board, Sir Alex Ferguson has apparently been told that he won't have any money to spend in January, despite being desperate to add firepower to his attack.