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T.J. SIMERS:

## So much for Beckham being a voice for MLS

When I put in an interview request Friday, I was told he might be tired, and now I understand why England's soccer coach didn't think Beckham was fit enough to join his lads last week for a game against Switzerland.

February 12 2008

It's been 213 days since **David Beckham** arrived in Los Angeles, and knowing how busy he was with those eight games they had him playing last season, I elected not to bother the guy.

Now as you know, folks such as **Kobe Bryant**, **Jeff Kent** and **Garret Anderson** have the ability to play and talk on the same day, which just has to be dumbfounding to Beckham.

When I put in an interview request Friday, I was told he might be tired, and now I understand why England's soccer coach didn't think Beckham was fit enough to join his lads last week for a game against Switzerland.

Several entertainment sites, though, reported Beckham arrived at a pre-Grammy party at Hollywood's Club Central about 1 a.m. Sunday, dancing with **Janet Jackson**. Tired as he was, he must've gotten a nap.

The Galaxy said Beckham would need some warning time before he could talk, 213 days apparently not enough, and so instead of Friday or Saturday, an interview was scheduled for Monday. And later canceled.

"He's not doing media Monday," a Galaxy spokesman said, probably taking the time to do another episode of "**Snoop Dogg's** Father Hood." "He's also not doing any one-on-ones."

Everyone has his price, of course, so the other day at a **Madonna** fundraiser, I wasn't surprised to learn my old gal pal **Salma Hayek** had paid \$350,000 for an hour and a one-on-one with Beckham.

Haven't heard from her yet, but I couldn't possibly accept such a thing, or find something to discuss for an hour with a soccer player who has done so little in this country. We talk about the one goal he scored last year, and then what?

Initially, when I was told I would be talking to Beckham on Monday, I had done some homework. Beyond looking pretty, there isn't much there.

He has tattoos running from wrist to shoulder on his right arm, and I probably would have asked for a look at the new \$5,000 tattoo on his left arm -- the reclining, bare-breasted angel who is supposed to be his wife.

I did a lot of reading on the Internet, and no one seems to refer to **Posh** as an angel, but if she's buying it, good for him. That's what they must mean when they say "bend it like Beckham."

THE ONLY thing going on with Beckham these days appears to be his underwear ad, which is just perfect for him because all he has to do is lie there and say nothing.

Huge billboards will go up soon showing him with his chest bare -- and isn't it always? -- and his briefs appearing a size too small. You'd think a guy with as much money as he's got could find underwear that fit.

I'd ask him, but he's in hiding, which is odd when you realize AEG President **Tim Leiweke** spent \$250 million of **Philip Anschutz's** money to bring the guy to L.A. to hype soccer. As we know from watching the Kings, player acquisitions are not

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Leiweke's strong point.

So far Beckham has done nothing to advance the sport in L.A., his arrival here the most overblown story of last year, in part because the bloke's PR handlers -- and he has several -- carry more weight than the folks signing his checks.

Talk to Galaxy GM **Alexi Lalas** and he sounds as if Beckham's work is already done here, proclaiming Beckham "is at an entirely different level" than **Tiger Woods** and **Michael Jordan**. Beckham might be Leiweke's "favorite athlete," as he says, but he dismisses Lalas' remarks by noting Beckham "isn't even as big as **Kobe Bryant**."

When Leiweke talks about the crowds that Beckham draws overseas or the jerseys he sells around the world, who cares?

I thought he was brought to L.A. to put soccer on the U.S. map and make MLS or MSL or whatever they call the soccer league that ranks here right up there with the Arena league into something more meaningful.

Beckham is not a goal-scorer, and apparently not much of a talker, making him a strange choice to be a pitchman in this country. **Kwame Brown** delivered more than Beckham last year.

Beckham had every chance last year to capitalize on his arrival and sell soccer locally while recovering from an injury. He could've made himself available for fawning radio or TV interviews, and an occasional joust with a columnist.

But some journalists overseas have suggested Beckham is an intellectual lightweight, his wife doing all the talking for him, which might explain why his handlers don't want to leave him alone with a reporter.

OK, so put me with Posh.

COMEDIAN **GEORGE LOPEZ** has spent a lot of time trying to prop up the dying **Bob Hope** golf tournament, even agreeing to make himself available 24/7 to Page 2 a la **Oscar De La Hoya** to draw more attention to a sport in serious trouble -- when **Tiger Woods** isn't playing.

PGA Tour officials, though, told Lopez they wouldn't allow Page 2 such access, afraid one of their golfers might be seen wearing women's clothes at a party. Never stopped De La Hoya.

Last week, **Joel Schuchmann**, senior manager of communications for the PGA Tour, e-mailed:

"I saw you had some issues trying to get access to George Lopez . . . if you have any special requests [at Riviera], we'll do our best to accommodate you . . . hopefully we can do better the next time."

Back when **Phil Mickelson** was still in college, I spent a day with him, went to dinner and learned his parents were neighbors. I interviewed them, and wrote about the rising star from San Diego.

In response to Schuchmann's e-mail, I told him I had no plans to attend the Riviera tournament but would come if given the chance to tag along with the "Choker," as I have referred to Mickelson on Page 2.

I thought it'd be interesting to see what has happened to the likable young guy I knew so many years ago, who supposedly most everyone on the Tour now dislikes.

The young guy I met years ago seemed up to that kind of challenge, but apparently not Schuchmann.

Never heard from the guy again.

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