



Let down: British media were quick to round on Fabio Capello's England team, but backers such as Nationwide and Carlsberg revelled in the exposure the tournament gave them AP

## Sponsors put positive spin on World Cup failure

By Roger Blitz in Johannesburg and Ben Fenton in London

"You Let Your Country Down," roared The Sun yesterday on the morning after England's dismal exit from the World Cup.

England's players last night prepared to leave South Africa, their reputations in tatters and their international future in doubt.

But those were the least of the problems confronting the team's administrators.

The Football Association is financially stretched and

without a permanent chairman. It is on its third chief executive in less than a year, and the bid to host the 2018 World Cup has suffered some high-profile setbacks.

Now, the future of Fabio Capello, England's Italian coach, is in doubt.

So this is hardly an opportune time to be talking to sponsors about backing the England team.

Their current four-year deal with Nationwide, the financial services group that has backed the team for almost a dozen years, expires at the end of the World Cup. All the signs

are that England's humiliating 4-1 defeat to Germany has shifted the market in favour of the buyer.

"The FA has been in a very unstable situation for a long time," says Tim Crow of Synergy, the sponsorship consultancy. "The reality is they will take a price for the England team sponsorship rather than set the price."

World Cup failure has already come at a price for France, which failed to make it past the tournament's group stage. Internal feuding, which resulted in a players' boycott, led to the

team's sponsors demanding explanations and Credit Agricole pulling their World Cup advertisements. At least England's inquest will mainly be confined to what went wrong on the pitch rather than off it.

For sponsors, it is all part of the risk that goes with backing sports teams and individuals. "You have got to be pretty pragmatic about it and realise that there are going to be good times and there are going to be bad times," says Chris Hull, head of sponsorship at Nationwide, which has been in talks with the FA for

some months about renewing their deal.

"Yes, the Germany result was incredibly disappointing for fans and for everybody involved, but we have enjoyed an incredible amount of exposure that has been wall to wall – we have been a part of that.

"Our research tells us that people appreciate the support we give to the national team."

It is not all gloom for the FA on the sponsorship front. Carlsberg has signed up as a sponsor for the next four years, and McDonald's is on board until 2013.

Nigel Currie of Brand Rapport, the sponsorship consultancy, says the bottom line for many national team sponsors is that the team qualifies for major tournaments.

"As long as England qualify, the level of exposure and interest they get in a World Cup period is massive," he says. "Everybody wants a part of it."

It is with good reason that Nationwide's England sponsorship strapline reads: "We're in it together."

Worst team award, Page 8  
Gideon Rachman, Page 11

