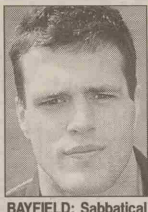


Bayfield cops out to go pro



BAYFIELD: Sabbatical

By COLIN PRICE

ENGLAND'S giant second row forward Martin Bayfield is on the verge of taking a five-year career break from the police force to become a full-time rugby union professional and win the 1999 World Cup in Cardiff.

World Cup team-mate Dean Richards has already started an 18-month break to become a baby minder so that his wife Nicky can pursue her own business venture.

And Gwent policeman Derwyn Jones has also quit to become a full-time pro. Bayfield, at 6ft 10in regarded as one of the world's top middle jumpers, would rely on the £40,000-a-year which is to be paid to all England players through a shirt sponsorship deal.

He said: "It's a great idea rugby-wise. You can take a sabbatical for a maximum of five years and are guaranteed a place at the same level you left.

"I would be able to devote all the time and effort into what is going to be a very demanding sport."

Like Army major Tim Rodder and wing Ian Hunter, Bayfield stayed loyal to Northampton even after relegation to the Courage League Second Division, and all three play at London Irish today.

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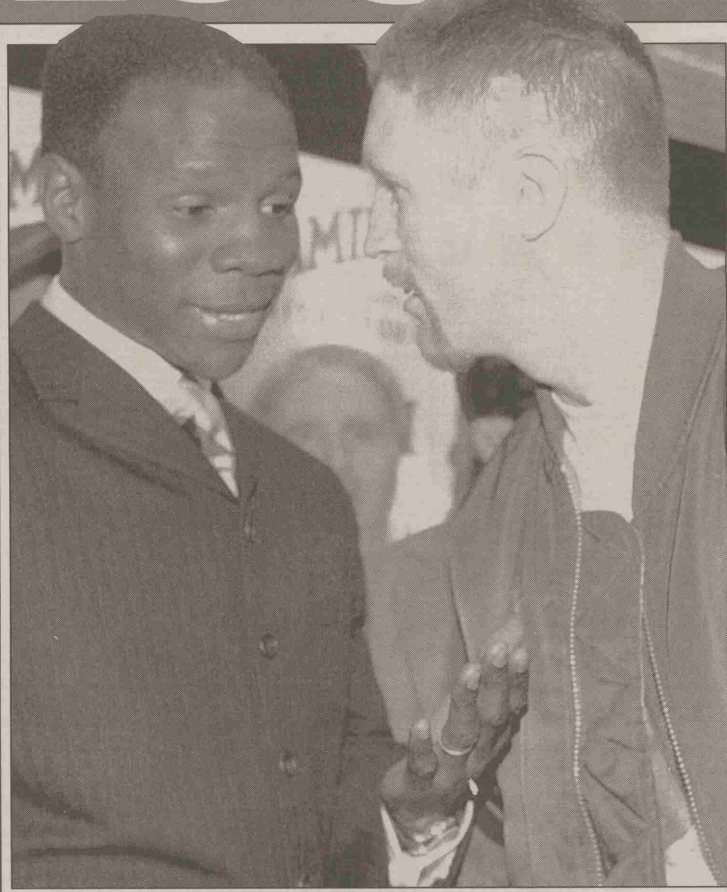
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EU'S HISS



CHRIS EUBANK told WBO World Super-Middleweight Champion Steve Collins last night: "My career is more important than your life!"

Eubank has already been fined \$5,000 for telling Collins he could die when the two meet tonight in Cork.

His new outburst came as the two met head to head. Collins walked out after the comments and Eubank taunted: "He'll be leaving first from the fight as well — when they carry him out of the ring!"

Collins, seething over the death threats, whispered anything but sweet nothings into Eubank's ear.

Eubank simply smiled through it all and then joked: "His breath is so bad he's probably been drying out through weight reduction and I couldn't get near enough to hear what he had to say."

Threat

Boxing Board of Control secretary John Morris dismissed the threat this time, simply saying: "It is getting near the start of the pantomime season."

Eubank did add: "Of course I don't hate him, I'm just going to knock him out."

And when Collins' right-hand man, hypnotherapist Dr Tony Quinn, tried to explain his part in the champion's preparation, Eubank just said: "You can tell us all about it after I knock out Steve tomorrow night."

Eubank will be driven by a force much greater than hypnosis. He has his own magnificent obsession — with money.

And he needs lots more of it if his grandiose lifestyle isn't about to come crashing down around his head.

There's the £2million tax bill he's paying off, the high mortgages on his property business plus the upkeep of his plush house on Hove's poshest street on the South Coast.

Then there are expensive play-things — the Aston Martin supercar and the Harley-Davidson motorbike.

All these items have to

SPARRING: Chris Eubank and Steve Collins come face to face before tonight's title battle in Cork. Pictures: BRENDAN MONKS

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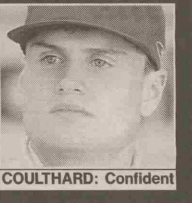
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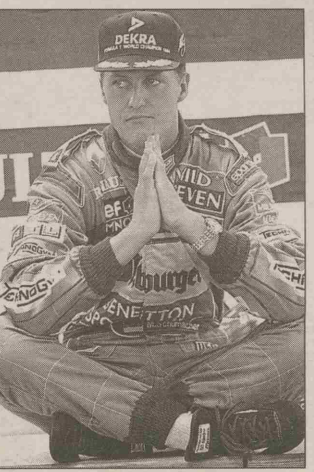
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COOL-THARD



COULTHARD: Confident



SCHUMACHER: Out to impress Italian fans

From TED MACAULEY in Monza

GRAND Prix rookie David Coulthard is the golden prize in a tug-of-war between Formula One legends Ferrari and McLaren.

They both want the flying Scotsman who has yet to win a Grand Prix but who has yet to finish outside the top five when he's got through a race without trouble.

And the race giants are ready to fork out £1million for the likely lad off-loaded by Renault-Williams after problems behind the scenes.

He showed why yesterday by grabbing first qualifying pole position in the opening rehearsals for tomorrow's Italian Grand Prix here.

Afterwards he said: "Make no mistake — I'm going to win here.

"And if I were to go to Ferrari all those fans at Monza would be very pleased indeed if I was the winner."

He shoved team-mate Damon

Great Scot the target for big two

Hill into third place behind second man Gerhard Berger. An overdue first win at Monza would clinch the ballistic kid's value.

And he told me: "I'm very happy — I know what's happening next season but an announcement will be made in weeks rather than days.

"As for this Sunday, I am really fired up for the race. And my confidence is on a real high."

Coulthard, regarded by three-

times world champion Jackie Stewart as a future title holder would only add: "I will be in a front line team next year — but I'm not saying who it will be."

Ferrari have signed world champion Michael Schumacher — fourth quickest yesterday — on a £32million two-year deal.

They were scheduled to reveal his partner's identity this weekend.

But they have delayed it to give Coulthard, just 24, a big chance to win over their fanatical following on their home track.

McLaren hold a first-refusal on mighty David, but if 40-year-old Alain Prost makes a comeback they could dump their option.

Hill, 15 points behind Schumacher in the Championship chase, said yesterday: "David's done a fine job and he is all fired up for Sunday."

Johnny Herbert, with the Formula One drole queue looming large after being sacked as the Benetton No 2, was sixth fastest yesterday and barely one second separating the top six.