

Detroit-based consortium confirmed as new owners of Derby County

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By ROB HARRIS



updated 9:02 a.m. ET Jan. 28, 2008

DERBY, England - Detroit-based General Sports and Entertainment was confirmed Monday as the new owners of Derby County, the fourth Premier League club to fall into American hands.

GSE takes over a club that is in last place in the 20-team division and facing almost certain relegation to the League Championship next season.

The GSE takeover was announced on the club's Web site, with a news conference scheduled for later Monday.

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Derby is the latest top division English club to fall under American ownership, joining Manchester United, Liverpool and Aston Villa. Also, New York Yankees owner Hank Steinbrenner told The Associated Press that he is interested in buying into English soccer.

GSE chairman Andy Appleby wants to enhance Derby's global appeal.

"We are excited about the opportunity to make a significant impact at Derby County with our collective sports industry knowledge of best practices in management, sales and marketing," said Appleby, a former senior vice president of the NBA's Detroit Pistons.

"We have visited Derby County over the last six months and experienced a match day at Pride Park Stadium, where we were impressed with the incredible potential of the club and the loyalty of the fan base."

Derby, which was promoted to the Premier League this season, has only one victory and seven points from 23 games.

Derby was knocked out of the FA Cup on Saturday, losing to struggling League Championship side Preston 4-1 at Pride Park in a fourth-round match.

Derby chairman Adam Pearson, who will remain in the position, said GSE is underpinning the club's financial future by investing cash and not taking on debt.

Tom Glick, a former marketing officer with the New Jersey Nets, another GSE affiliate, will be president and chief executive. He will relocate from Philadelphia with his wife Maria and three children.

The executive vice president will be Tim Hinchey, a former vice president of the Charlotte Bobcats.

Steinbrenner has said he would be interested in purchasing Tottenham _ or even League One side Nottingham Forest _ for the right price.

Steinbrenner regrets not buying a 33 percent interest in Spurs in the 1990s, when his storied baseball team was approached to invest US\$32 million.

He discussed the renewed interest in English soccer while ruling out adding further American sports franchises to the Steinbrenner family holdings.

"The only thing would be a soccer team, a major soccer team in Europe, probably at this point preferably in the Premier League," he told the AP. "That's always a possibility for me. We'll just have to see what happens."

AP Sports Writer Ronald Blum contributed to this report from Florida.

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