

**FOOTBALL FANS WON'T BE CHEERING FRENCH CHEATS**

# BLATTER!



## MASSIVE LOSS FOR THE FAI

By JOHN BRENNAN

SEEING the little piece of paper with the word FRANCE on it at Friday's World Cup draw was bad enough for the FAI, but their hearts must have sunk a day earlier when FIFA confirmed that all 32 countries at the 2010 World Cup would each pocket €6 million. And that's only a start, get into the knock-out phase and you get even more money.

The FAI has to find €90 million in the next five months to pay their share for the new Aviva Stadium, alongside the Government and the IRFU. They had planned to do it by selling the Premium Seats at the new stadium for somewhere close to that sum.

But pitching even the cheapest seats at around €450 per competitive match was a disastrous move in the middle of a recession and few tickets have been sold.

You may be sure that their money needs were mentioned in Zurich last Friday week. Extra money that would have come from sponsors for World Cup qualifying is lost.

But there is the chance of a friendly against Brazil, which may take place at Croke Park on March 3.

Blatter is very friendly with the President of the Brazilian FA, Ricardo Texeira, and he may use that friendship to help Ireland.

Argentina are already booked for the opening game of the new stadium in August.

England would be a huge draw too. But I believe there is a 'gentleman's agreement' with GAA that Ireland would not play England in a friendly while they were tenants at Croke Park.



## tries to get in Africa!

she hosted the draw live on TV. As Beckham was handing her a ball he had drawn out of the drum, she quipped: "I thought you were going to throw that!" As a local dignitary handed her another ball, the actress joked again: "Please don't throw that!"

And there were ironic laughs all round when South Africa was drawn to play in the same group as...France!

The South Africans, fresh from a bruising encounter with Irish rugby players, have shown themselves to be gracious in defeat.

Meanwhile, Blatter was still hiding from us on Friday night as he had dinner in a posh restaurant with South African president Jacob Zuma.

And it was the same story the next day when he visited a township.

A cage and hundreds of police, along with private security guards, surrounded a huge section of Khayelitsha.

Ironically, it's a township where the Irish are most welcome, thanks to Niall Mellon who has been building free houses there for the locals.

Blatterpuss hid behind his security when the we showed up at the township with our poster. But some cheeky cops and security guards were more than happy to pose.

"He's not as handsome as Thierry Henry", a lady cop laughed.

Another cop gave Blatter the finger. "I wish I could do that to the real man, Blatter, who insulted the Irish", he said with a wink at yours truly.

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WE'RE WITH YOU: Geraldine, our poster and a new Irish supporter outside Blatter's hotel in Capetown