

OF THE FRENCH



YOUR HOUSE

WE MAKE HEADLINES AROUND THE WORLD

BY DES EKin

THE SUNDAY WORLD'S crusade to get cheating Thierry Henry to sign an apology to Irish fans caused a sensation around the globe.

From Ireland to India and Spain to France, our girl Gerakline Comiskey was making waves.

TV channels newspapers, sports blogs and internet chatrooms have been awash with images of our girl doorstepping the French captain.

Meanwhile the "thief of St Denis" has achieved what no politician could ever do.

He's managed to unite every nation on the planet... in condemnation of his infamous foul at Stade de France.

It seems the whole world is up in arms over a second leg where someone put a foot in it by using his hand.

As the news of the infamous "hand of Gau!" incident reverberated around the globe, it seemed that every country was as one in sympathising with the Irish.

In France, the compatriots of Les Bleus turned red with embarrassment.

Meanwhile, the wires of the internet were cracking with spoofs, speech bubbles, fake posters, and even online games where you could smack Henry's face or direct his hand to send a ball into the goal.

A quarter-million people signed an online petition calling for a replay.

Here's how the world reacted: **FRANCE:** In an online poll by Le Monde, 88% said France did not deserve to be in the World Cup.

Henry's former team-mate Emanuel Petit said the public mood was "embarrassment".

French teachers slammed the cheat as part of a "downward spiral" in football.



PRESS: Gerakline hit the headlines across the globe as she fronted our campaign for an apology



SWEDEN: Newspaper Aftonbladet said Swedish referee Martin Hansson had "forfeited [his] right to continue to take charge of major international matches. Anything else would be a further insult to the Irish nation."

ITALY: "Trap - what a robbery!" screamed the headline in Gazzetta dello Sport, describing it as "a cowardly goal".

Corriere della Sera said: "Ireland stays at home because often in football there is no justice."

La Repubblica's columnist called for "a round of applause" for Trapattoni.

BRITAIN: The BBC advised Thierry Henry "to go somewhere other than Ireland for his holidays."

The Times of London wrote: "It is a fact of life - soccer players cheat... That is the morality of 21st Century professional soccer."

SOUTH AFRICA: The story in the Mail and Guardian attracted a blog response: "Thierry Henry disgusts me. I feel for the likes of Duff and



Given who will never get a World Cup chance again."

AUSTRALIA: "The Sheer Gau! Of It," read the headline in the Sydney Morning Herald.

USA: Lynne Zinser of the The New York Times described Henry as sport's "new lead villain" and added: "In the tiniest second it took [for the handball] he became globally hated."

The LA Times showed the video and asked readers whether Henry had cheated: 100% replied yes.

"All the Irish can hope for is that the French stay [in South Africa] will be a very short one," said columnist Grahame L Jones.

confronts him outside his home

training session in San Joan Despi in Barcelona.

The World Cup cheat hid until all his team mates had gone - then sped past me (and the Sunday World 'apology' poster).

Many of his team-mates, however, slowed down to look at the poster and grin at me.

The team's masseur, Paco Seirulo, laughed and waved at me as he stopped in his car to have a look.

Over the past two days, Henry only had to open a paper, look at the TV or internet or listen to the radio to hear about the Sunday World's mission to get him to face up to his crimes.

Most of the Spanish national news

and sports papers carried a picture of our poster and we featured in the main news bulletins on several TV channels in Spain and France the night before.

We were the talk of the world's soccer blogs and even made the news in the Times in India.

Campaign

There was no escape for Henry as the Irish media struggled to catch up with our campaign with one dopey daily even mistaking our poster for one belonging to Irish soccer fans.

Would the Irish ever forgive Henry? That was what the punters wanted to know in Barcelona FC's supporters'

bar, the Penya Barcelonista Sant Felio De Llobregat, which is just yards from the club's training ground.

They said he had brought the proud Barcelona FC into disrepute.

Frenchman Karim Isphamani, who works as a hotel waiter in Barcelona, said he was "ashamed" of his countryman.

"For me, as a French guy, it is terrible when this sort of thing happens. He is a very famous player and for



ESCAPE: Henry drives past our poster at the Nou Camp

him to do this thing brings dishonour on the game and on France."

He added: "The Irish were the better players in this game. It is not right that the French player cheated to beat them."

Back at the training ground, the club's clearly embarrassed PR team could only laugh and shrug as they told me they did not know if the star would ever sign our petition - even though we offered to raffle the signed poster in aid of children's charity Unicef, which the club supports.

They suggested we leave the poster with a letter addressed to Mr Henry -

but said they had no way of knowing if he would even acknowledge it.

Meanwhile, football fans from around the world - mostly from Spain and France - swamped my Facebook page to express their support for us Irish.

Cheat

Spanish journalist Ersin wrote to me: "I was so so sad when [France] scored the goal. I really believed that Ireland would go to Africa. Anyway hope to see at Euro 2012."

Max Collu wrote: "Great job at Camp Nou! WE WANT IRELAND IN SOUTH AFRICA!!"

Italian Ivano said: "I followed all the stuff about Henry and the Camp Nou. You were great."

Others just like the pic. The Catalans in particular thanked the Sunday World for giving one of their star players a "kick in the bum"