

The Daily Telegraph

Starsky and Cox

Astrologers who find the sex in your star sign

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Beckham's diamond

England change tactics for crucial game against the Swiss

Henry Winter analysis Sport S1



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Test to show how long women can delay having a baby

By DAVID DENBY

A TEST that shows how fast a woman's biological clock is ticking and how long she has left to start a family has been developed by British researchers.

The technique could revolutionise infertility treatment and identify the one in 10 women who are at risk of an early menopause.

It could also help women in their thirties to decide how long they can safely delay having children while they build a career. The test

uses an ultrasound scan to work out the size of a woman's ovaries and a complex computer programme to predict how many eggs she has left.

Dr Hannah Wallace, a cancer specialist at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Edinburgh, who helped to develop the technique, said: "In essence, it means that we now have the potential to be able to tell a woman how much time she has before her biological clock runs down."

Ovaries are thought to have a finite number of eggs and the

number falls throughout a woman's life. When the number reaches around 25,000 - typically a woman reaches the age of 37 - the decline accelerates and over the next few years women find it more difficult to conceive. When the number reaches around 1,000 the first signs of menopause begin to appear.

Dr Wallace and Dr Thomas Kelly, a computer scientist at St Andrews University, looked at research linking ovary size with declining fertility and applied a complex mathematical and computer model to the results. Their findings are reported in the journal *Human Reproduction*.

Dr Wallace said: "We have shown that ovarian volume in women aged from 25 to 31, as measured by transvaginal ultrasound, may be used to estimate accurately how many follicles [eggs] are left and therefore what is the woman's reproductive age."

The average age for the menopause is 51 in Britain, although it varies enormously from woman to woman. Disruption to the menstrual cycle can start 10 years earlier. About 10 per cent of women go through the menopause far earlier and in rare cases can become infertile in their twenties.

Family history can give a clue but there is no reliable way of predicting the loss of fertility. Infertility campaigners described the findings as "fantastic news". Tracy Sainsbury, of Infertility Network UK, said: "Anything that gives women information about their bodies can only be of benefit because it allows informed choices. Every week I speak to women who are suffering from premature menopause. They are devastated because they had no idea until they tried having children. Many feel guilty because they delayed."

"Some have been on the Pill, which can mask the symptoms of the menopause. When they come off the Pill they suddenly find they are not having periods."

Karen Winterhalter, the executive director of Women's Health Concern, a charity that advises women about the menopause, said: "This will allow women to make life decisions about freezing eggs or embryos. It will also help them prepare for the menopause."

The test is unlikely to be widely available for some time. The researchers are initially using the technique on young women whose chances of having children have been reduced by cancer treatment. They are also monitoring healthy young women to see if the technique gives accurate results. Dr Wallace said: "This opens the door to screening women for early ovarian ageing. Those women may be at increased risk to their general health from an early menopause."

Britain wins fight to keep EU tax veto

Deal on constitution now looks likely

By TONY HELM, GEORGE JONES AND AMANDA ISLAME PITCHFORD IN BRUSSELS

EUROPEAN leaders appeared to have bowed to British demands on the EU constitution last night by agreeing to retain national vetoes on tax and strictly limit the power of the European Court to make judgments on the rights of British citizens.

A new text tabled by the EU's Irish presidency markedly increased the chances of a deal by tomorrow that would give the community a constitution for the first time.

As Tony Blair and leaders of the 25 other EU nations prepared for two days of haggling at a summit in Brussels starting today, it seemed that the Prime Minister had all but secured his "red lines" before the negotiations began.

Insiders said Britain's remaining concerns that the constitution would open the way for tax harmonisation and that the charter of fundamental rights would be enforceable by the European Court of Justice seemed to have been addressed to Mr Blair's satisfaction.

However, there was still a risk that other countries could demand the reinstatement of those clauses.

The move followed a day in which Downing Street and Gordon Brown, the Chancellor,

made clear that Mr Blair would block any deal that failed to honour all of Britain's demands - a move that would have thrown the EU into crisis.

While officials in Brussels said "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed", they conceded that a deal was likely by tomorrow evening.

The new text was issued as Mr Brown prepared to make a speech to businessmen in the city in which he attacked plans for tax harmonisation as "fatally flawed" and said that they would inflict serious damage on the British and European economies.

Mr Brown said that Europe must abandon its trade bloc mentality and develop more up-to-date, flexible policies suited to the challenges of a global economy.

His fear had been that the wording of the constitution opened the way for the use of majority voting on tax issues that could lead to tax harmonisation by the back door. Using unusually strident language, he said: "It is a global Europe not trade bloc Europe that is the way forward. A flexible, reformist Europe that thinks globally must now reject the old, fatally flawed assumptions of tax harmonisation and federalism."

Mr Brown said he rejected the arguments of those advocating withdrawal from the EU, such as the United Kingdom Independence Party, which gained more than 16 per cent of the vote and quadrupled the number of its seats to 12 in last week's European elections.

The Government "must and will make the positive case for Britain in Europe", he said. Before the Irish text was tabled, British officials said they put the chances of an agreement at "a little over fifty per cent".

Downing Street had increased the pressure on the Irish presidency, saying it remained concerned that the charter of fundamental rights could give new rights to the EU over elements of indus-

trial relations law. Changes to the text answered this worry. A summit last December to agree a deal on the constitution ended without agreement after Poland and Spain on one side and Germany and France on the other failed to agree over the proportion of votes allocated to each country in an enlarged EU.

At Prime Minister's Questions yesterday, Michael Howard, the Conservative leader, called on Mr Blair to block a deal in Brussels.

He committed the Tories to embarking on a full-scale review of Britain's relationship with the EU if they win the next election.

If the Irish text does give Mr Blair everything he wants, he will come under greater pressure to cave in tomorrow in a separate argument over the choice of a new president of the European Commission.

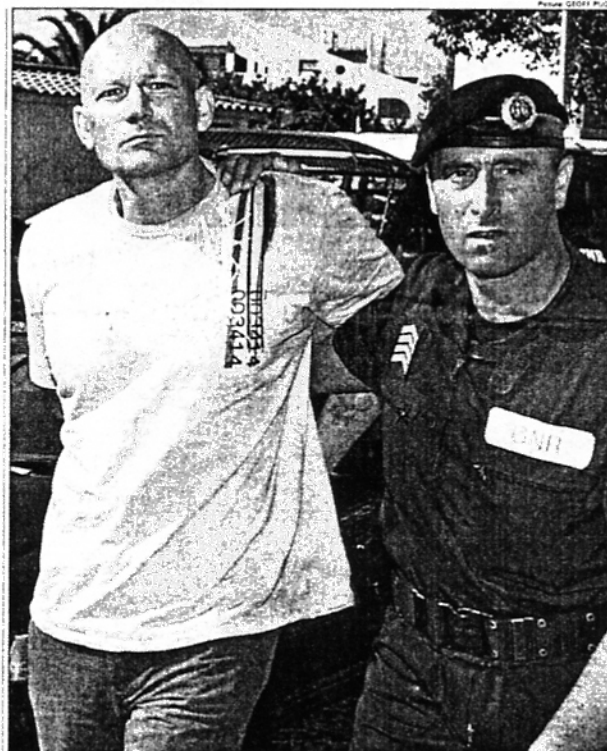
The French and Germans are backing Guy Verhofstadt, the Belgian prime minister. But Mr Blair is strongly against his appointment as he is seen as too much a product of the "integrationist state" of EU leaders.

Mr Blair has not forgiven him for pushing for an autonomous EU military command structure outside Nato at the height of the Iraq war.

Britain would prefer Antonio Vitorino, the Portuguese commissioner, who is in charge of justice and home affairs in Brussels.

But EU sources said that, having won concessions from the French and Germans over his red lines, Mr Blair might have to accept Mr Verhofstadt. France and Germany had been in the vanguard of earlier pushing for harmonisation of corporation tax.

Mr Blair may also give ground over the issue of raising his chances of gaining a leading economic job in Brussels over Britain's new commissioner, who is likely to be Peter Mandelson.



Gary Mason, 47, from Kent, is escorted by a policeman into the court at Albufeira yesterday where he was jailed for rioting

English hooligans are sent packing



By RICHARD ALLEN

IN ALBUFEIRA

AN ENGLISH football hooligan was jailed for two years last night for rioting in Portugal during Euro 2004. Gary Mason, 47, a fireman from Faversham, Kent, was convicted at the end of a 12-hour hearing of taking part in a riot in Albufeira, the Algarve, early on Tuesday morning.

He was also convicted of inciting others to riot having urged them to "fight the police" and will be deported to England to serve his sentence. As Mason was led

away from Albufeira Criminal Court by military police armed with pistols and 28 troops, he shouted: "I wasn't even there. It's a stitch up."

Ten other English fans in the dock with Mason will also be deported. Of those, seven received suspended jail sentences and three were absolved of any criminal wrongdoing.

Nearly all claimed they had been victims of police brutality. The police are investigating the possibility of a riot in the dock, was freed. The Englishmen had been arrested after a night of running battles with police during which bottles and

chairs had been hurled at officers. They were not ill-educated and feckless young football fans from broken homes but studious achievers from comfortable middle-class homes as well as married men in settled jobs.

They included an archaeology student and the son of a consultant psychiatrist who lectures at Oxford University. Nearly all claimed they had been victims of police brutality. The police are investigating the possibility of a riot in the dock, was freed.

The Englishmen had been arrested after a night of running battles with police during which bottles and

Green's £10.5bn M&S bid rejected

By EDMUND CONWAY AND ALISTAIR DUNN

PHILIP Green made a fresh bid for Marks & Spencer yesterday, offering £10.5 billion for the high street giant.

He also pledged to assume the company's debt of about £2 billion, lifting the cost of the offer to £12.5 billion.

But the M&S board took only a matter of hours to dismiss the offer, which followed the retail entrepreneur's £7 billion bid in 2001.

Stuart Rose, the newly-appointed M&S chief executive, said yesterday's approach, which offered shareholders 370p in cash for each share, "simply isn't at a level that we could recommend to our shareholders. The business is not for sale".

He said the company's advisers were certain the group was worth considerably more than was being proposed by Mr Green, who owns Topshop and H&M.

Mr Green's bid was below what many analysts thought necessary to take over Britain's largest clothes retailer.

While offering shareholders cash, he also gave them the option of receiving a share in the new business.

At 4pm, Mr Rose and Paul Myers, the chairman, met Mr Green and later held a full board meeting at which the directors decided not to recommend the offer to shareholders.

The board called Mr Green with the decision before making an announcement to the markets just before 4pm.

Mr Green rounded angrily on M&S for informing journalists last night. "I had an agreement that they wouldn't put anything out until the morning. If you put up £10.5 billion and you meet someone at five o'clock, I think you can at least have a conversation - if you're doing the right thing for shareholders."

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Bishops face axe to cut costs

The Church of England is scrutinising the role of bishops and other senior posts in a review that could result in sweeping cuts.

As many as 35 senior jobs, including suffragan bishops, could be axed, saving the Church millions of pounds each year.

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Arts
Badly Drawn Boy: Damon Gough
talks about his sombre new album

A four-letter guide to sex and stars

A new (and sexually explicit) astrology guide looks set to make celebrities of its New York-based, fashion-savvy authors. **Bryony Gordon** (Cancer) meets the sextrologists



Signs of the times: married couple Quinn Cox and Stella Starsky (their real names are less titillating) are consulted by Manhattan's fashion pack

Mother, cover your eyes. Please read no further. I am, I have discovered, a fan of sex clubs, swinging and sadomasochism. Don't even get me started on smooth torsos, body-builders and father figures. At least, this is what it says of my star sign, Cancer, in *Sextrology: The Astrology of Sex and the Sexes*, a new book that looks likely to prove an indispensable icebreaker at dinner parties.

Written by a couple of New York

astrologers who style themselves Stella Starsky and Quinn Cox, the book is not, as you may have guessed, the usual selection of polite twitterings about star signs. "Oh no," purrs Starsky. "We're not about telling Taurus girls that they should boost their love lives with flowers and candles and bubble baths. It's candid. It's written as we'd talk to our friends about it."

"Put it this way," continues Cox. "We don't use the Latin terms for sex. We use the dirty four-letter ones."

The pair, who are married, are not your average astrologers. They are the very epitome of glamour, dividing their time between a house in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, and an apartment in New York. Starsky (Capricorn) wears Jimmy Choo shoes, while Cox (Libra) reveals how members of Manhattan's fashion pack consult them when in need of a horoscope reading.

Then there's the fact that their names are, quite clearly, as sexed up as their star signs. They don't want me to

disclose their birth names. All I will say is that they're not terribly seductive; while the sun sign under which you were born yields great influence over your life, quite clearly the name your parents give you does not.

Starsky and Cox's aim is to move astrology away from the image of a Mystic Meg; type figure, shrouded in smoke, gazing into a crystal ball and informing every Piscean in the country that "destiny wears a jester's hat". Their interests seem to lie more in astrology as psychology than in speculations about the movements of the planets, which must delight their shrink-addicted New York readers. "The thing is," says Starsky, "astrology has become very popularised, and because of that, it's been vilified. But it used to be seen as very scholarly."

"We do serious astrological study and sometimes it can feel like nuclear physics," continues Cox. "We want to bring back the sense of education to it, but we want to do it with a slight irreverence." Irreverent they are: over 550 sassy, stylishly written pages, we are taught that male Capricorns may have a predilection for schoolgirls and spanking; Sagittarian females are prone to acting out call-girl role plays; Aquarian men tend to look at a lot of pornography online; and that lady Scorpius may find biting and fighting a turn-on.

It's all quite fascinating. Reading my chapter, "Cancer woman", I discovered all sorts of things about myself that I still can't quite believe. Apparently, we female Cancers are the kindest women of the Zodiac. We like all sorts, because we are sensitive souls and have a tendency to equate sex with emotion. "Oh, there's nothing that's too extreme for you," Starsky draws. "That's the sexiest chapter of the book." Still,

without wanting to give too much away, I am sure that my ex-boyfriends would have some trouble recognising this part of my astro-psyche.

The fact that I don't conform to the kinky Cancerian archetype may explain why it took them three attempts to guess my star sign. Usually, they're quite good at it: I have read reports of them correctly surmising journalists' signs minutes after meeting them. "Sometimes, you just know," says Starsky. "Recently, we met this woman

I have a slight taste for younger men, but that's about it. And delivery boys"

who I sensed had been crying, but she was trying to hide it. I thought, boom, Sagittarius, because they don't ever want anyone to know that anything is wrong." Are the couple themselves, I wonder, typical of their star signs? "Oh, almost exaggeratedly so," laughs Cox. "I'm very Capricorn. I'm naughty and naughty. I like tuxedos but I like a dress," says Starsky. "I like a challenge. Tell me what 'challenge' means," Cox chimes in. "I'm like, do I really have to go to work today?" And are they sexually compatible, astrologically speaking? "Together, there's an artistic effect to it," muses Cox. "We're not incredibly bestial. It's more subtly erotic."

"I'm pretty much in it for myself," adds Starsky. "Yeah. And I'm pretty much in it for her. So everybody's happy." They say that, despite the no-holds-barred attitude to sex displayed in the book, they are both quite normal when it comes to bedroom antics. "We don't do maids' outfits," says Cox. "It involves too much ironing." So it doesn't interest you at all? "No!" asserts Starsky. "I'm perfectly interested in hearing about it, but we're not fetishists. I have a slight taste for younger men, but that's about it." And delivery boys? "Yes, and delivery boys. They look so... so capable."

The couple have been practising their playful form of astrology since they met 20 years ago, while studying in France. "We found that we had it in common, and so we began formulating it," says Cox.

While in France, they had this "amazing" group of friends, who rather inconspicuously included JK Rowling ("a typical Leo woman - they tend to want superstardom," says Starsky) and the designer Laurence Lewelyn Bowen. They had dinner with him the other night. Apparently, he couldn't be any more typical of his star sign, Pisces, whose males they introduce in *Sextrology* as seeing "no irony in adopting a personality, often a hoity-toity one".

They started out writing horoscopes for *Ten* magazine in the US, where they would write separate entries for both sexes in each sign. This has led to the rather revolutionary astrological basis of *Sextrology*. In their book, there are 24 signs of the Zodiac, not 12. Their theory, explained by Cox, is this: "Women and men in the same sign can actually be totally opposite. The earth and water signs are feminine, while the fire and air signs are masculine."

"If you are a woman in a feminine sign, you tend to really embody and personify the energy of that sign. But a man in that sign will enact that dynamic."

They explain in the introduction to the book, while Aries man can at times be like an "explosive fireball", Aries woman is a "cool character, an instigator, inciting others to explosive action while she remains unruffled."

That's all very well, but how do they think they can lump every human into the world into one of 24 categories? "We believe you can," says Cox. "There are certain patterns that you cannot escape. Nine out of 10 Virgo women will talk about how they've met a guy and they feel that it's going to be a really great relationship. And always, you ask the man and they don't even know that they're in a relationship with that Virgo girl. It's classic."

Scientists won't swallow it, but the book contains a rather charming justification for astrology as a whole: "Like the rose that blooms in the summer, as opposed to the chrysanthemum of winter, life-forms that spring up at certain times of year manifest the character of that time. It is the same with us humans."

Tides are caused by the moon, our menstrual cycles are caused by the moon," says Starsky. "Of course it has an effect on us."

After a long read of *Sextrology*, I am inclined to agree. There are pages of analysis of each star sign's personality and attitude to relationships that I found - at times - to be shockingly accurate. It's just the S&M, sex clubs, swinging and submission fantasies that I am not too sure about. "But who knows?" says Starsky, with a smile. "You may find it interests you one day."

Sextrology: The Astrology of Sex and the Sexes by Starsky and Cox (HarperCollins) is available for £11.99 plus £2.25 p&p. To order, please call Telegraph Books Direct on 0870 155 7222