

# World Cup 2010

## Africa's five probables

Football

**AFP, Johannesburg**

Egypt, Libya, Morocco, South Africa and Tunisia look set to challenge for the right to host the 2010 World Cup.

The contest is confined to African countries under a new rotation system introduced by world football governing body FIFA to give each continent an opportunity to host the biggest global single-sport event.

"Unofficially, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, South Africa and Tunisia are bidding to stage the 2010 World Cup," FIFA spokesman Andreas Herren told AFP from Zurich in Switzerland.

However, FIFA offices closed for the New Year holiday before the midnight Tuesday deadline and will not reopen until Monday, when an official statement listing the candidates is expected.

Countries have until April 30 to confirm their intention to host the 32-team tournament, and those still in the race must present their bid documents by the end of August.

A FIFA inspection team will visit each potential host before reporting in April 2004 to the 24-man executive committee led by president Sepp Blatter. It will elect the winner by ballot one month later.

South Africa came close to securing the 2006 finals, losing 12-11 to Germany in the final round after Oceania representative Charles Dempsey from New Zealand stirred a storm by abstaining from the crucial final vote.

The Dempsey debacle led FIFA to rethink a policy that has seen Europe host every alternate World Cup since 1958 and last July the world body decided that an African country or countries must follow Germany.

South Africa start as favourites after coming so close in the 2006 race despite the refusal of the Confederation of African Football (CAF) to back a single African candidate.

Although unsuccessful twice before, Morocco also entered the bid battle only to be eliminated in the early rounds, having secured little support outside of Africa and the Middle East.

FIFA has sent out mixed signals about joint bids after the successful but expensive co-hosting of the 2002 finals by Japan and South Korea, who became the first Asian nation to reach the World Cup semi-finals.

The biggest threat to South Africa could lie in a joint bid with Tunisia hinting they might team up with Morocco, who face a massive stadium construction programme with just two of international standard.

Egypt face a similar challenge despite boasting the 100,000-seat Cairo Stadium, the biggest in Africa, as do Libya, while Tunisia are better placed but some ground capacities would have to be increased.

The North African nations score over South Africa in passion for the game. About 5,000 spectators turned up for the first leg of the 2001 Champions League final in Pretoria while 100,000 witnessed the return match in Cairo.

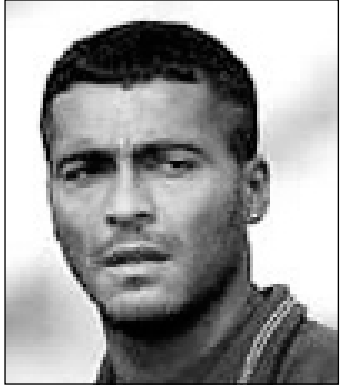
# Romario still hopes

Football

**REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro**

Romario, who turns 37 next month, says he still dreams of playing for Brazil again.

"While I'm still playing, I will always dream of playing for the national team," Brazilian media reported him as saying.



**ROMARIO**

"But after missing out on two World Cups and two Olympic Games, I don't let it get to me any more. Whatever comes along from now will be a bonus."

The striker has had a bitter-sweet international career since leading Brazil to victory at the 1994 World Cup, when he scored five goals.

He missed the 1998 World Cup because of a nagging calf muscle injury and was left out of the squad in 2002 by Luiz Felipe Scolari, even though many fans still considered him to be Brazil's best striker at the time.

Not even a tearful public plea from Romario could soften Scolari's heart.

Romario was also left out of the 1996 and 2000 Olympic squads, depriving him of a chance to improve on the silver medal he won in Seoul in 1988.

Romario, whose 15 goals in the Brazilian championship helped modest Fluminense to the semi-finals, made his comments at Rio de Janeiro airport as he returned from a holiday in Jamaica.

Romario said he had not decided where he would play next as his six-month contract with Fluminense ended this month.

"I hope to sort it out quickly because I miss playing football and I want to keep playing," he said.

# Eto's way of saying sorry

Football

**INTERNET, Palma de Mallorca**

Real Mallorca striker Samuel Eto'o has promised to buy 30,000 euros (\$31,000) of tickets for the club's fans to apologize for a sending-off that resulted in him being banned for four matches.

"I regret what happened and fully deserved the ban," Eto'o told reporters Tuesday.

"As a way of making it up to the fans I will buy 30,000 euros of tickets so that they can watch Mallorca play at Son Moix."

The Cameroon international was sent off after 30 minutes of a league match against Barcelona at Son Moix for kicking at midfielder Thiago Motta.

Mallorca had already lost defender Alvaro Novo when he was sent off for an off-the-ball incident involving Motta. They played with nine men for more than an hour and lost the match 4-0.

Eto'o has a poor disciplinary record. He also got a four-match ban at the start of this season after television pictures showed him head-butting Valencia forward Miguel Angel Angulo at the end of a league match.



PHOTO: AFP  
**WHAT DID YOU DO ON NEW YEAR'S EVE?** Real Madrid's Brazilian superstars Ronaldo (L) and Roberto Carlos share a light-hearted moment during a training session on December 31 in Madrid ahead of their Spanish First Division match against Sevilla on January 2.

# The million dollar question

Football

**REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro**

Brazil ended 2002, the year they won an unprecedented fifth World Cup, without a national team coach.

The South Americans have yet to find a replacement for Luiz Felipe Scolari, who stepped down in early August, five weeks after leading his team to seven straight wins at the Japan and South Korea tournament.

But the world champions are running out of time.

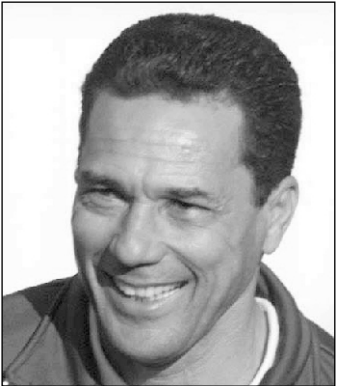
The road to Germany 2006 is expected to start next August to allow time for South America to fit in its marathon qualifying tournament in which the 10 teams play each other twice.

And with FIFA having reduced South America's World Cup slots to four, the contest will prove tougher than ever for Brazil, who have often found the qualifying competition harder work than the World Cup runners-up to Santos in the Brazilian championship.

But Parreira has already tasted life in the Brazil hot seat, having led the victorious 1994 World Cup team, and has made it clear he would be reluctant to go through the experience again.

That has left Sao Paulo coach Oswaldo Oliveira as many people's favourite, although his club had a frustrating season this year.

Brazilian media have not ruled out a comeback opportunity for



**VANDERLEI LUXEMBURGO**

ment.

Brazil have played two friendlies since, losing 1-0 at home to Paraguay in Scolari's farewell match and then winning 3-2 away to South Korea.

Veteran Mario Zagallo, who led Brazil at the 1970, 1974 and 1998 World Cups, was brought back for that game as a tribute.

Although the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) has a reputation for making important announcements out of the blue, nobody was expecting Scolari's long-term replacement to be named by the last day of 2002.



**EMERSON LEAO**

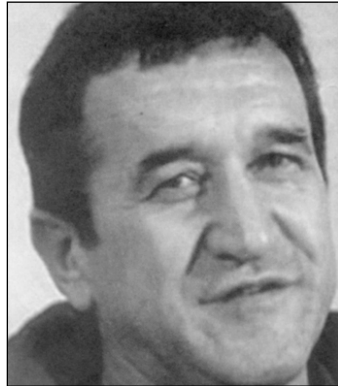
itself.

CBF president Ricardo Teixeira had been hoping last year's Brazilian championship would point him in the right direction but its outcome has not helped him in the least.

The competition was won by a young Santos team brilliantly coached by Emerson Leao - who was unceremoniously sacked by Teixeira in June 2001 after only eight months in charge of Brazil.

Asked if he wanted the Brazil job back, Leao -- who learned of his dismissal as he was about to board a flight at Tokyo airport after the Confederations Cup -- replied: "No, not with him (Teixeira) in charge."

The other obvious candidate would have been Carlos Alberto Parreira, whose Corinthians team won the Rio-Sao Paulo tournament and the Copa Brasil and finished as



**CARLOS ALBERTO PARREIRA**

Vanderlei Luxemburgo, who was sacked in disgrace following the Sydney Olympics just over two years ago.

Luxemburgo was later grilled by a Congressional commission of inquiry over his tax returns, who told him that his income was not compatible with his profession and his answers to the origins of his money had not been convincing.

Luxemburgo, famous for wearing expensive jewellery and designer suits on the touchline, would also begin his second term with a new name and different date of birth, making it the ultimate in fresh starts.

After being fired by Brazil, he admitted that for most of his career he used a fake birth certificate which made him three years younger than his real age and misspelt his first name as Wanderley.

# African Footballer of the Year

## Three to fight it out

Football

**AFP, Cairo**

Title holder El Hadji Diouf of Senegal was among the three African Footballer of the Year finalists named here on Tuesday.

The others are Senegal midfielder Pape Diop and Egypt striker Ahmed 'Mido' Hossam and the winner will be announced at a



**EL HADJI DIOUF**

ceremony on March 31 in the South African commercial capital Johannesburg.

Diouf hopes to emulate former Ghana superstar Abedi 'Pele' Ayew and become only the second player to be the sole winner twice in succession. Pele even went on to win the continent's most prestigious individual football award for a third straight time in 1993.

Liberia's George Weah also won the trophy twice in succession in 1994 and 1995 but on the first occasion he shared the honour with

Nigeria's Emmanuel Amunike.

Liverpool's Diouf faces stiff competition from Diop, scorer of the goal that gave Senegal a sensational 2002 World Cup triumph over France, and rising star Hossam.

Diouf is the only Senegalese footballer to win the award while Egypt have also been successful once before with legendary striker Mahmoud al-Khatib topping the 1983 poll.

The World Cup giantkilling run of

African champions Cameroon had three players nominated, but only midfielder Lauren Mayer from English Premiership leaders Arsenal made the top 10 with Samuel Eto'o and Geremi Njitap falling by the wayside.

Southern Africa players rarely feature with only Kalusha Bwalya of Zambia winning the award and the omission of France-based Zimbabwe striker Benjamin 'Benji' Mwaruware from the top 10 was surprising.

Young and physically imposing, Mwaruware has consistently impressed for Auxerre at domestic and European Champions League levels and some African football observers believed he was good enough to make the top three.

Another striker who must be disappointed not to have done better is Paul Kpaka of Sierra Leone. Based in Belgium with Germinal Beerschot, he is considered a potential superstar.

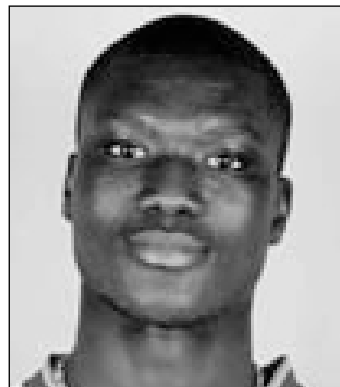


**AHMED 'MIDO' HOSSAM**

Senegal, beaten during extra time by Turkey in the quarter-finals, was reflected in the voting with their five nominations making the top 10.

Khalilou Fadiga was placed fourth, Henri Camara sixth and Salif Diao ninth in a list released by the Confederation of African Football, organisers of the award with its technical and media committee members voting.

Each of the 30 members awarded his first choice five points, his second four, his third three, his fourth two and fifth one.



**PAPE DIOF**

# Keegan's purse heaviest!

Football

**AFP, London**

Kevin Keegan is reportedly set to become the biggest spender in English football's January sales by launching an audacious bid to sign Leeds striker Robbie Fowler.

Tuesday's Guardian said Keegan was prepared to bid seven million pounds (11.3 million dollars) to bring the former Liverpool striker to Maine Road as a partner for Nicolas Anelka.

The paper predicted that Keegan would swoop almost as soon as the transfer window opens on Wednesday and that Fowler could be unveiled as a City player as early as this weekend.

Fowler, 27, has now recovered from a hip injury which kept him out of most of the autumn campaign. But he is behind Alan Smith and Mark Viduka in the Leeds pecking order and the Yorkshire club are a reported 80 million pounds in debt.

Manager Terry Venables could be tempted to sell to finance the purchase of a midfielder, which he has identified as his top priority. Brazilian World Cup winner Kleberson has been touted as a possible target.

Under new FIFA rules, clubs have until the end of the month to sign players for the rest of the campaign.


Speculation about who is going where has inevitably been rife but few major deals are expected to be done anywhere in Europe.

The chill financial wind currently sweeping through football means

most of the richest clubs are currently looking to cut, or at least contain, costs.

There is also a shortage of top quality players who are both available and eligible to play in the latter stages of the Champions League for their new clubs.

Manchester United have made no secret of their desire to sign a new striker but Alex Ferguson will want to be sure he can field him in Europe -- which rules out anyone



**ROBBIE FOWLER**

who has already played for another club in the tournament.

This situation has fuelled rumours that Ferguson will make a move for an English-based forward.

The name of Tottenham's Welsh forward Simon Davies has attracted the most attention but there have also been rumours that Ferguson will attempt to prise Kevin Phillips away from relegation-threatened Sunderland.

Goalscoring reinforcements are

the priority for most of the relegation-threatened clubs with West Ham hoping to sign former England striker Les Ferdinand from Tottenham. Ferdinand wants regular first team football but has been overtaken by Robbie Keane at Spurs.

Birmingham City are hoping to secure the services of French World Cup winner Christophe Dugary on loan from Bordeaux with a view to a permanent deal provided they stay in the Premiership.

But that deal has been complicated with Dugary's lawyer revealing that both Spurs and Manchester City have expressed an interest in the Bordeaux captain.

Birmingham's first choice, former Celtic and Nottingham Forest forward Pierre van Hooijdonk, has been ruled out after he asked for a deal worth more than 50,000 pounds/week.

Newcastle and Liverpool, who face each other on Wednesday, have obvious requirements -- Liverpool badly need a wide player while Newcastle could do with a new centre half.

Jaap Stam, who has done nothing to dampen rumours he wants to return to English football, could fit the bill for Newcastle boss Bobby Robson while his Liverpool counterpart Gerard Houllier would like to sign either Mark Overmars or Harry Kewell.

But Liverpool already have the biggest squad in the Premiership and neither of those targets would come cheap so Houllier may have to accumulate some cash before he can start to speculate.

# Figo heading Premiership way?

Football

**INTERNET**

Luis Figo could be on his way to the Premiership, according to reports.

Real Madrid signed Figo for £38m in August 2000 but are believed to be willing to off-load the Portuguese winger for £10m.

Italy could also be a possible destination for the 30-year-old who is expected to move from the Bernabeu in summer 2003.

But Real would apparently be willing to sell the player when the transfer window re-opens this month if the right offer comes along.

The Spanish giants have an abundance of talent after adding Ronaldo to their squad in August 2002 for £20m.

They already boast Zinedine Zidane, Roberto Carlos and Raul.

And Figo could be a casualty of the club trying to recoup some of its outlay.

Real are already thought to have sounded out certain clubs about Figo's availability with Arsenal, Manchester United and Liverpool the most likely to be able to afford the player.

But a stumbling block could be Figo's wages, with the player reportedly earning £4m per year.