



THERE SHE GOES! Liverpool superstar Michael Owen watches his attempt entering goal past the diving Sheffield United custodian Paddy Kenny at Liverpool on January 21

English League Cup Owen does his stuff

Football AFP, London

England striker Michael Owen shrugged off the headlines over his betting habits here on Tuesday scoring the second goal in the 2-0 defeat of Sheffield United in the League Cup semi-final second leg clash to seal their place in the final 3-2 on aggregate.

horses over the last year. "Obviously I would have preferred for the headlines not to have been written but that's what happens in this country. "I just do my talking on the pitch," he said.

Diouf struck early in the first-half rattling home a fierce drive for his fifth goal of the season - but first in 11 matches - after Owen's shot had been beaten out by United keeper Patrick Kenny and Emile Heskey had laid it back to him.

Vladimir Smicer to completely bluff his shot. Liverpool went closer 10 minutes later as Jon-Arne Riise's low cross picked out Gerrard but his shot was diverted for a corner by the heel of Wayne Quinn.

Italian Cup Lazio in semis

Lazio played out a goalless draw at Bari to win their Italian Cup quarter-final tie against the Second Division side 2-1 on aggregate on Tuesday.

Marcos for Gunners?

Football AFP, London

Brazilian World Cup goalkeeper Marcos was expected in London Wednesday to open talks with Arsenal over a reported 2.5 million pounds (3.8 million dollars) move, press reports said Wednesday.

Marcos' club Palmeiras confirmed he was on his way England to discuss personal terms at Highbury after the two clubs agreed a transfer point was when he joined the Premier League champions.



MARCOS Palmeiras said the main sticking fee.

Kleberon, Woodgate targetted

Football AFP, Newcastle

Newcastle United are poised to spend 15 million pounds (22 million dollars) to buy Jonathan Woodgate and Brazilian Kleberon before the closure of the FIFA transfer window.

Bayer Leverkusen are also in the hunt for Kleberon who was reported to have brought forward plans to marry Dayane Da Silva when she turns 16 next month so she can eventually join him in Europe.

understood to be meeting Wednesday to discuss a 10 million pound offer for Woodgate. "Woodgate and Kleberon are both 23 (Woodgate turns 23 Wednesday) and they're in the right age bracket for the squad that we're putting together," Robson added.



KLEBERON



JONATHAN WOODGATE

Tottenham supporters won't mind

AFP, London

Tottenham fans have told the English Premiership club they are ready to leave their 104-year north London home at White Hart Lane.

"The aim of the survey was to understand the views of fans if we have to look at other options," a Spurs spokesman said. "There seemed to be a split in views regarding the consideration of a possible groundshare."

Meanwhile, Turkish club Fenerbahce have told Spurs they will take unhappy striker Sergei Rebrov if Tottenham reduce their asking price. "There's not a great deal between the numbers the clubs want," Fenerbahce spokesman Atilla Kiyat said.

Real academies in China, Mexico

AFP, Madrid

European champions Real Madrid are looking to open football academies in China and Mexico, the club's sporting director Jorge Valdano said Tuesday. "We hope to open the first international football schools in Mexico and China in the next six months," Valdano told reporters.

Mission to end Asian slumber

Football AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Asian football is a "sleeping giant" that has fulfilled just 20 percent of its potential, Asian Football Confederation (AFC) chief Mohamed bin Hammam said Wednesday as he revealed details of a plan to boost standards.

Hammam identified administrative problems among Asia's 45 national associations and a lack of strong grassroots development as key reasons for the region's slow progress. Asian footballers tended to treat the game as a hobby and were not taking it seriously, he told reporters after presenting his "Vision Asia" masterplan at an AFC conference here.

"We are only working with 20 percent of our capacity. Asia is a sleeping giant and the time has come for all of us to awake and reach full potential. We have more to give to the world of football," he said. "Most of the Asian countries are working on a one-man show system. When this man disappears, the system disappears, which is not correct for development. So mainly Asia is suffering from administration problems."

ously as we should. We still take it as a hobby. When they go to Europe, it will change their mentality," he said.

The Vision Asia plan, which was first announced in August and is designed to raise regional standards, aimed to produce more skilled teams like Japan and South Korea by 2014, he said. Under the plan, the continent would be divided into six geographical zones - West Asia, South, Central and East Asia, China and



MOHAMED BIN HAMMAM

India - with national teams to be ranked according to performance. The AFC will send experts this year to study the needs of national associations, with technical help from UEFA, England and Germany. The Qatar, who took over the AFC presidency in August, told reporters that specific programme would be implemented from 2004 but said success was up to the national associations. "National associations must have the drive and the courage to help us implement these projects. The AFC is the captain of the boat

and they are the sailors. If they don't want to leave with us, we cannot wait for them," he warned.

"I told them that today will be considered as a starting point. Today we are going to consider ourselves as being reborn."

"By the World Cup 2014, I want to see more countries from Asia like Japan and South Korea."

FIFA, which has allocated an annual grant of 2.5 million dollars for the masterplan, would work together with AFC to develop the huge potential in Asia, said its new general secretary Urs Linsi.

"Forty-two percent of the World Cup 2002 audience were Asians, more than double the Europeans. Economically for FIFA, Asia is in number one position," he said.

"This is day one to say Asia is going to go ahead. It is a positive trend not to lay back but to say now we are here, where are we tomorrow."

On Asia's failure to secure a fifth automatic berth for the 2006 World Cup in Germany, Hammam said the AFC was satisfied to retain its rights for four teams and an opportunity for a fifth team in a play-off.

He said there were suggestions now with FIFA to change the format to focus on both "quality and quantity" after 2006, with berths to be given based on performance apart from automatic allocations.

The AFC quota is the same as the 2002 tournament when co-hosts Japan and South Korea were joined by China and Saudi Arabia in the final rounds.

Some 150 people are attending the two-day conference focusing on clubs and local competitions, marketing, sports medicine and administration under the masterplan.

Forlan a fans' fan

Football AFP, Manchester

Manchester United's in-form Uruguayan striker Diego Forlan claimed on Tuesday the club's supporters had played a large part in his adapting to life in a different country.

The 23-year-old international has shown he was not a misfit after failing to score in 17 appearances last season following his 7.5million pound move from Independiente last year scoring six times in 21 Premiership appearances this season. He capped his return to scoring form by netting the last second winner in the crucial 2-1 win over Chelsea last Saturday - the second time he had broken Chelsea's hearts in two months having dumped them out of the League Cup.

However he credits the fans with helping him feel at home so quickly. "The fans have been great, especially so given I hadn't played that many matches," he told the club's television station MUTV.

"When my friends and family came over and heard the crowd singing my name, they were surprised.

"I put a bit of pressure on myself last season because I wanted to score before the summer."

However, Forlan, who scored a spectacular goal in the 3-3 draw with Senegal in their World Cup finals first round match, said he had never panicked about his scoring drought with United.

"I kept calm and carried on doing the things I always have," said Forlan, who scored 30 goals in 54 appearances for Independiente.

"Once you start scoring you have more confidence. Hopefully there will be many more to come."



DIEGO FORLAN.....learning to fly

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer. 1 Easy mark, 2 USC rival, 3 Rain cats and dogs, 4 Miff, and more, 5 Summarize, 6 Dr. Seuss' "If - the Zoo", 7 Hockey legend Bobby, 8 Yellow fruit of the tropics, 9 Lend of tennis, 10 Denominational abbr., 11 Vicinity, 12 PC symbol, 13 Blow it, 14 Slate with certainty, 15 Insult, 16 Turtle shell, basically, 18 Wagon train, maybe, 20 Ray variety, 21 Hiatus, 22 Sauce source, 23 Doctrine, 26 Venezuela's capital, 30 Jurist, 31 Lance, 32 Actress, 33 Rye seed, 36 Joyful, 38 Kippur, 39 Chop down, 40 Cautionary shade, 43 Old type of sailboat, 47 Chewy treats, 49 Hardy cabbage, 50 Cafeteria prop, 51 Longing, 52 Ms. Fitzgerald, 53 Terrier type, 54 Small sala-mander, 55 Requisite, 24 Greek vowel, 25 Postal Creed word, 26 Demure, 27 Recipe measurement, 28 Heighten the volume, 29 Opinion, 31 Cable guide abbr., 34 Tar's assent, 35 Apple intruder, 36 That girl, 37 Blow reveille, 39 Ain't got, 40 Deeds, 41 Report card datum, 42 Talk like an ass, 43 Staff leader?, 44 Crooner Jerry, 45 "Vogue" competitor, 46 Pencil stuff, 48 CBS symbol

CRYPTOQUIP. NTN YHIX HTP CXJ YDPLYEXN HW JETY ILD? T WHJTAXN JEXSXYL CSXXAX YDHJHW TJ. Yesterday's Cryptoquip: A SHIP THAT BELONGS TO A BAND OF FLUNDERING PIRATES COULD BE CALLED A "THUGBOAT". Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Y equals S

The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.