

# Same old Gazza!

## Football

AFP, London

Former England international Paul Gascoigne, reported to have checked into a rehab clinic in the United States, is suffering from depression, according to one of his closest associates.

Jimmy Gardner, a lifelong friend of Gascoigne's, rejected suggestions that the player, whose career in England was hampered and ultimately curtailed by alcoholism, said he was sure he had not started drinking again.

"It's depression. He's not happy," Gardner told Sky Sports television. "It's definitely not alcohol."

Gascoigne is currently playing with Chinese second division side Gansu Tianma. The club are confident that he will return to China although Gardner said Gascoigne wanted to come home permanently.

"Of course he wants to play again in England. He shouldn't have left England, should he?"

Zhong Bohong, general manager of Gansu Tianma told AFP that Gascoigne had told the club he was going back to England for a holiday.

"Everyone who saw him play can see he's in good condition and has been performing well," he said.

"We know nothing about him drinking too much and going for treatment. If that is true then it is his own business."

"All the players have a week's holiday. Gascoigne has asked the club to go back to England for some family affairs."

He said he spoke by phone to the wayward former star on Wednesday.

"He told me he would return to China, but perhaps a few days late. The club and Gascoigne are both very happy

in their cooperation."

England's tabloid press said a drunken Gascoigne, 35, has checked into a rehab clinic in Arizona admitting he is a disgrace.

According to the reports, Gascoigne was overheard apologising for his behaviour to a member of the clinic's staff who met him after the 11-hour flight from London.

"I've been a disgrace, I've been a disgrace, I'm so sorry," he said.

Gascoigne signed for the Chinese second division side in January, vowing to turn over a new leaf after falling from



PAUL GASCOIGNE

national hero to public disgrace, courtesy of his wife-beating and drunken escapades.

The balding veteran has become the big hope of the Gansu faithful, who were looking to him to turn around last year's dismal record of four wins, seven draws and 11 defeats.

Considered one of the best players in the world at the beginning of the 1990s, the former Newcastle, Tottenham, Lazio and Everton star has been desperate to produce one last hurrah.

# Primera Liga preview

# World stops at Madrid

## Football

AFP, Madrid

Humility isn't something readily associated with league leaders Real Madrid when the subject of their bitter rivals Barcelona comes up and it hasn't been much in evidence prior to their clash at Real's Santiago Bernabeu stadium on Saturday.

"We are going to humiliate Barcelona," bragged Real's Spanish international defender Ivan Helguera on Thursday. "At least 2-0. I think they have got their minds more on the Champions League than on this game."

Barcelona coach Radomir Antic, who may rest several players in anticipation of the visit of Juventus on Tuesday in the Champions League quarter-final second leg, confirmed he believed the Champions League fixture was more important.

If Antic is looking ahead to his last realistic chance of qualifying for European competition next season, some of his players are not prepared to let their guard down despite having lost their last two league games and being down in 12th.

"We are the equal of Real," commented Barca's Dutch striker Patrick Kluivert, who has never tasted victory in the Bernabeu.

The last time Barcelona won was in November 1997, the season before Kluivert arrived at Barca.

The rivalry between Real and Barca is among the bitterest in club football anywhere in the world despite the clubs

being several hundred kilometres apart. In 1920, the playboy monarch Alfonso XIII gave the royal moniker to an already successful Madrid club which had won the Spanish Cup several times.

To the independent and independence-minded Catalans, this was like a red rag to a bull and the enmity was increased further after the accession of the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco



IVAN HELGUERA

in 1939. Franco's Nationalists had committed various atrocities in Catalonia during the three-year civil war that preceded his rise to become the head of state and continued to discriminate against Catalan cultural and political aspirations.

For many years during the Franco era, Barcelona's ground was the only place, apart from occasionally in church, that Catalan could openly be spoken and Franco's men dared not intervene.

Franco also used Real as a propa-

ganda tool to demonstrate that Spain could hold its head up high in Europe during the 1950s and 1960s when Real won the European Cup six times.

Ironically, since Franco's death in 1975, the rivalry has intensified further thanks to Barca's rise to a team of almost equal stature.

Real's main aim on Saturday will be to preserve their three point lead at the



PATRICK KLUIVERT

top of the Spanish first division.

The European champions have 60 points from their 29 games. Deportivo La Coruna and Real Sociedad both have 57 points with Deportivo lying in second thanks to a superior goal difference.

The Galicians will try to keep up the pressure on Real with a victory over Sevilla on Sunday but will be without their injured striker Diego Tristán.

The Spanish international torn a hamstring on Tuesday playing in a benefit match and will be out for at least a month.

The Galicians will also be without

their suspended defender Enrique Romero while Sevilla striker Jose Antonio Reyes is also banned.

Sociedad have been buoyed by their emphatic 4-2 victory over Real Madrid last weekend and on Sunday play host to another visitor from the Spanish capital, bottom club Rayo Vallecano.

The Basques have been sounding confident this week that three points are in the bags.

"If we beat Rayo and Barca can take points off Real Madrid then the race for the title is wide open again," said Sociedad winger Francisco De Pedro.

Espanyol match against Athletic Bilbao has little bearing on the championship but it is the first time that they have played his old team since he embarked on his third stint as the coach of the Barcelona-based club in December.

Clemente's name is synonymous with the Basque visitors as it is the club who he guided to the 1983 league and Cup double, as well having been born close to the city and played for Athletic as well.

### FIXTURES

**Saturday (kick off in GMT):** Valladolid v Valencia (1630), Villarreal v Real Mallorca (1700), Real Madrid v Barcelona (1930)  
**Sunday:** Alaves v Malaga (1600), Real Betis v Atletico Madrid (1600), Deportivo La Coruna v Sevilla (1600), Espanyol v Athletic Bilbao (1600), Osasuna v Celta Vigo (1600), Racing Santander v Recreativo Huelva (1600), Real Sociedad v Rayo Vallecano (1830)

# Fulham let Tigana go

## Football

AFP, London

Fulham boss Jean Tigana, already told his contract would not be renewed at the end of the season, will be leaving the club immediately after poor form by the London club.

Coach Chris Coleman has been appointed manager for the remaining five games of the season in their attempt to keep relegation from the Premiership at bay.

Frenchman Tigana, told by chairman Mohammed Al Fayed last month that his three-year contract would not be renewed beyond June 30, was axed after three successive defeats.

Former Welsh international Coleman, forced to retire from playing last year due to a serious leg injury, has surprisingly taken over just a fortnight after ruling himself out of the running for the imminent vacancy.

Fulham admitted the early announcement of Tigana's departure had an unsettling impact on the squad and a change was clearly needed to ensure the club did not slip back into the First Division.

An official club statement read: "Since the announcement that Jean's contract would not be renewed next season, the club has suffered a number of significant defeats and it has been decided that a change in management is necessary to enable the players to focus their attentions on the task ahead and to secure the club's safety in the Premiership, by achieving the maximum number of points possible from the remaining games." "Although Jean and his team were

firmly committed to keeping the club at the highest level, it became clear that the announcement of his departure had caused a feeling of unrest within the squad.

"It was important that the team spirit was restored as quickly as possible and the club believed that Chris Coleman is the man best equipped to do this in the short term."

Al Fayed has bankrolled Fulham's



JEAN TIGANA

dramatic rise to the top flight, but became frustrated as the Cottagers failed to compete with the elite of English football.

The Cottagers currently lie 15th in the top flight - just six points clear of West Ham, who occupy the third and final relegation place.

Al Fayed said: "It has been a difficult time for us over recent months and the season has not ended the way that I would have liked. However, the most important thing is that we ensure a successful conclusion and look forward to next season in the Premiership."

# Premiership preview

# United plot a goal feast

## Football

AFP, London

Manchester United's hunt for the goals they need to win the Premiership title away from Arsenal kicks off against Blackburn at Old Trafford on Saturday.

Wednesday's 2-2 thriller between the top two has set the stage for a nerve-jangling run-in in which a single slip-up by either side could prove decisive.

United's three-point lead has resulted in them being installed as marginal favourites by both bookmakers and pundits, although Arsenal, who travel to Middlesbrough on Saturday, retain a game in hand.

But United boss Sir Alex Ferguson is keenly aware that his side could win their four remaining matches and still find themselves edged out on goal difference.

"Arsenal are scoring more goals than us and that's an issue we have to accept and do something about," the Scot acknowledged.

Arsenal's goal difference is currently one better than United's and having an extra game to play gives them an extra edge.

But United can take heart from the fact that, in their last three games, they have hit the net 12 times, no mean feat against Liverpool, Newcastle and Arsenal.

After what was a fully charged encounter at Highbury, both sides will have to be alert to the danger of suffering a reaction on Saturday.

Blackburn have already beaten United in the league this season while Middlesbrough's Riverside stadium is a notoriously difficult place to visit.

Arsenal will travel to the northeast without their captain Patrick Vieira, who could be out for the rest of the season after aggravating a knee injury on Wednesday.

In the Frenchman's absence, Brazilian midfielder Edu will be given the task of containing his compatriot Juninho, who has been in stunning form for Boro since returning last month from a serious knee injury.

Ferguson is convinced that one or

both of the challengers are bound to drop points between now and the season's finale on May 11.

"We've four games left, four tough games and Arsenal have five games left, two of which are tough," he said.

"I think points are going to be dropped yet."

Arsenal striker Thierry Henry rejected suggestions that Wednesday's draw had tilted the title race in United's favour.

"The situation has not changed because we drew," he said. "It is going to be pretty exciting."

"Once again, it seems we have to do it the hard way but at the moment it is still

any fear because we're not in a relegation battle," said Campbell.

"We are above Liverpool at the moment and we desperately want to be above them at five o'clock on Saturday evening."

Canada international Tomasz Radzinski, who has been out for three games, has recovered from a groin strain and could return alongside Campbell with Rooney returning to the bench.

Chelsea, who currently have a four-point cushion over Everton in fourth place, travel to Aston Villa, who, in common with Leeds, Fulham and Birmingham still need a few points to be sure of Premiership survival.



SIR ALEX FERGUSON

in our hands."

Everton's bid to catch Chelsea in the race for fourth place and the final Champions League place could effectively be over if they fail to claim their first home victory over local rivals Liverpool for six years.

The Blue half of Merseyside have not won any derby match since 1999 but their renaissance under David Moyes and the emergence of Wayne Rooney makes them favourite ahead of the 168th meeting of the two sides.

Kevin Campbell, one of the unsung heroes of Moyes' side, underlined the extraordinary turnaround in Everton's fortunes by contrasting the pressure of chasing a Champions League place to the stress induced in recent seasons by battling against the drop.

"The derby game is always massive and we can look forward to it without



THIERRY HENRY

At the bottom, Bolton and West Ham face each other at the Reebok Stadium in the biggest game all season for both clubs.

Anything other than a victory would leave West Ham as odds-on favourites to go down with West Brom and Sunderland.

West Brom's return to the first division will be confirmed if they fail to beat already-doomed Sunderland at Roker Park.

### FIXTURES

**Saturday (1400 GMT):** Aston Villa v Chelsea, Bolton v West Ham, Charlton v Birmingham, Everton v Liverpool, Fulham v Newcastle, Man Utd v Blackburn, Middlesbrough v Arsenal, Southampton v Leeds, Sunderland v West Brom



SOL CAMPBELL

# Bad news for Gunners

## Football

AFP, London

Arsenal's bid to prevent Sol Campbell being banned for four matches looks doomed after referee Mark Halsey stood by his decision to show the England centreback a red card in the midweek draw with Manchester United.

Campbell was ordered off minutes from the end of Wednesday night's match at Highbury after appearing to elbow Ole Gunnar Solskjaer.

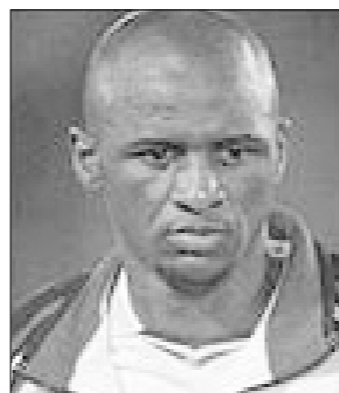
Arsenal have said they will appeal the decision but the chances of success look slim after Halsey, who consulted his linesman before pulling out the red card, indicated he was happy with his decision.

The official told the Daily Mail: "The sending off was for violent conduct. I saw enough of it but just got confirmation from my assistant."

"I said to Sol as he came into the dressing room afterwards that he was entitled to send the video to the FA if he felt he had a case and they would send the video to me."

Halsey added: "I'm satisfied with my decision. I've seen it again and I'm happy with it."

Campbell, who admitted making contact with Solskjaer but insisted it



PATRICK VIEIRA

was unintentional, had been hoping Halsey would review his decision.

But he now seems certain to get the standard three match ban plus an extra one-game suspension as it was his second red card of the season.

The ban will rule Campbell out of Arsenal's three final league matches and the FA Cup final against Southampton.

The Gunners are already set to be without injured skipper Patrick Vieira for at least two weeks and possibly the rest of the season.

The 26-year-old suffered a reaction to a lingering knee injury on Wednesday and will definitely miss the next two Premiership matches against Middlesbrough and Bolton.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger is hoping the rest will enable the key midfielder to come back in time for the games that Campbell will be ruled out of.

"Patrick will definitely be out for two weeks but it is not necessarily the end of his season," Wenger told the club's official website.

"His knee is not as bad as we first thought but the doctors have advised him to take a complete rest for two weeks because his knee is inflamed."

Arsenal are currently three points behind Manchester United in the league but with a game in hand and a one-goal better goal difference.

# Serie A preview

# Milan giants look up to Roma

## Football

AFP, Rome

AS Roma will have the backing of both Milan clubs on Saturday when they take on league leaders Juventus at the Delle Alpi stadium.

Tied for second-place, Inter and AC Milan are looking to keep alive their Scudetto dreams by closing the gap on title holders Juve, who have a six-point lead over their closest rivals.

Crowned champions 26 times in their 106-year history, Juventus have 61 points from 28 matches with six games of the campaign left.

Roma, 22 points adrift of Juve in eighth position, may have only won three times away from home, but recent form suggests they could cause an upset in Turin, where Juventus have lost just once this season.

Unbeaten in their last three matches - including a 3-3 draw at Inter - Roma are also on a high after clinching a place in the final of the Italian Cup on Wednesday.

Juventus striker Marco Di Vaio believes victory over the 2001 champions would almost ensure a 27th title for Italy's most successful club.

"This game is crucial," said the former Parma forward, whose season has been blighted by injuries.

"Basically we are playing for the Scudetto in every game from now on.

We must take advantage of our home games, and if we beat Roma the title will be a little closer.

"This is perhaps a bad time to play them as they have started to play well again."

"They will come here with nothing to lose, but I prefer being in our position - close to the title."

Di Vaio is expected to partner Alessandro Del Piero in attack as France international David Trezeguet is still sidelined with a shoulder injury.

Juve coach Marcello Lippi may decide to rest several players with one eye on Tuesday's Champions League semi-final, second leg away to Barcelona.

Inter face a potential banana skin away to Brescia, unbeaten in 15 matches, and who beat Juventus 2-0 earlier in the season at their intimidating Mario Rigamonti stadium.

Defender Giovanni Pasquale is urging his Inter team-mates not to give an inch as the title race enters the final straight.

"We'll need to show all our character in the final six matches," said the 21-year-old left-back.

"We'll keep going to the end. We're hoping for Juventus to slip up, and for a bit of help from other teams."

Milan, ahead of Inter on goal difference, have perhaps the easiest task of the top three teams this weekend with a home tie against Empoli.

Danish striker Jon Dahl Tomasson

however is warning his team-mates against complacency against the Tuscan strugglers.

"There are no easy games in Serie A," he said. "I remember that Empoli made things difficult for us at their place."

"They will travel to Milan looking for a win, but we must beat them. We are confident."

Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti has a selection headache ahead of Saturday's match at the San Siro, with several key players on the treatment table.

Captain Paolo Maldini is recovering from a broken nose, while Portuguese international Manuel Rui Costa misses out after damaging his left ankle.

Rui Costa's fellow midfielder Clarence Seedorf has been ruled out for the rest of the season with knee ligament damage, and Andrea Pirlo is not due back for 30 days because of a similar injury.

Lazio, looking to cement fourth place which would secure a place in next season's Champions League, welcome relegation-threatened Piacenza to the Olympic stadium.

### FIXTURES

**Saturday (all kick-offs 1300 GMT unless stated):** AC Milan v Empoli, Brescia v Inter Milan, Chievo v Reggina, Juventus v AS Roma (1830 GMT), Lazio v Piacenza, Modena v Bologna, Parma v Torino, Perugia v Atalanta, Udinese v Como

# Hooligans get on Beck's nerves

## Football

AFP, Paris

England skipper David Beckham is so fed-up of hooligans scarring the game that he would be happy to parade his talents inside an empty stadium if it meant ridding the country of the problem.

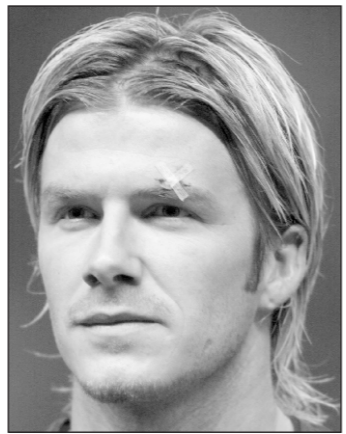
"It's disappointing when you see some of the trouble that goes on around matches," said the Manchester United star.

"Of course players notice it and

worry about it. We've got friends and family in the stands that come to games. There was a period when most of it had stopped but it seems to be creeping back into the game."

UEFA, European football's governing body, last week charged England's Football Association over the misbehavior of hundreds of England fans who invaded the pitch during England's Euro 2004 qualifying victory against Turkey on April 2 at Sunderland's Stadium of Light ground.

The fans also chanted racist



DAVID BECKHAM

songs.

As punishment, UEFA could force England to play its next home qualifying game against Slovakia on June 11 behind closed doors.

"If we had to play a qualifying game behind closed doors, that would be sad for football, sad for England and sad for the proper England fans who have to suffer because of the small minority of fans that are doing this," Beckham told TIME Europe magazine.

"It shouldn't happen, but it might just have to happen to stop

this."

UEFA forced Slovakia to play a home game against Liechtenstein in an empty stadium, after Slovak fans hurled racist abuse at England players in Bratislava in October.

"I can't imagine a game where there's no crowd," added Beckham.

"It would be like a pre-season friendly, a practice match. It's a shame for the fans and young kids who are coming to watch players they admire. But if it's going to put an end to the trouble, then we should consider it."

### FIXTURES

**Saturday:** Hansa Rostock v Hertha Berlin, Werder Bremen v VfL Wolfsburg, Borussia Dortmund v Bayern Munich, 1860 Munich v SV Hamburg, FC Nuremberg v Arminia Bielefeld, Energie Cottbus v Borussia Monchengladbach, Hannover 96 v Kaiserslautern  
**Sunday:** Bayer Leverkusen v Schalke 04, VfL Bochum v VfB Stuttgart