

## Jeffers calls Everton

AFP, London

Arsenal striker Francis Jeffers has made a bid to rejoin Everton, the club he supported as a boy and where he hopes to hook up with close mate Wayne Rooney.

Jeffers has made only 13 starts for Arsene Wenger's side in the past two seasons and says living the high life in the capital is no match for playing regular first team football.

"I love living in London and playing for Arsenal, but I haven't been getting much first team action," said 22-year-old Jeffers, who said he would be prepared to slash his weekly wage of 30,000 pounds (50,000 dollars) to head back to Merseyside.

"I was injured a couple of times and that puts you at the back of the queue.

"There are some fantastic strikers at Arsenal and I would have to wait for my chance, which is exactly how it should be.

"Arsene Wenger is a great manager and I haven't got any problems, but I'd love a move back to Everton.

"It's no secret that I'm a massive Everton fan and always will be. I love the club. They have come on in leaps and bounds since I left and David Moyes seems to be doing an amazing job."

# FIFA rejects WC expansion

Football

REUTERS, Paris

FIFA's Executive Committee has rejected a proposal to expand the 2006 World Cup finals to 36 teams, but to do so backtracked on its promise to give Oceania an automatic place in the tournament.

The South American confederation CONMEBOL had proposed the increase from the current 32 teams after its allocation was reduced by "half a slot" - a place in a playoff - to give Oceania an automatic finals place.

However, to placate the South Americans FIFA agreed on Saturday to return their half-place at the expense of Oceania, a decision that led to the furious Oceania delegation storming out of the meeting.

FIFA initially gave the CONMEBOL proposal a guarded welcome but, after a detailed investigation of the logistical problems of increasing the numbers, it was

voted out by a majority of 23-1 - Oceania being the only dissenting voice.

However, with South America having lost a further qualifying place for the 2006 tournament in Germany after FIFA ruled last year that the defending champions, Brazil, would not get automatic qualification, FIFA officials were anxious to please them.

"We have to find a solution to make them (CONMEBOL) happy again but in this case everybody was unanimous," UEFA President Lennart Johansson said.

Johansson said the reason for the U-turn on Oceania's qualifying position was playing standards.

"CONMEBOL also have a standard on the pitch," he said. "They lost the winner (Brazil) and then another half-place.

"If you make a mistake you must correct it," he said. "It was too early to give them (Oceania) direct entry to the World Cup but it doesn't mean we stay with this for the future."

Australia have been the dominant force in Oceania recently, but

have failed to reach the finals after losing playoffs to Argentina, Uruguay, Scotland and Iran.

Julio Gronzona, head of the Argentine federation and a FIFA vice president, thanked the UEFA representatives for their backing.

"I have to thank Lennart Johansson because he was a fundamental factor in this decision," he said.

"He and (UEFA chief executive) Gerhard Aigner understood us and backed us. Without that it would not have been possible to once again have the four and half places," Nicolas Leoz, the Paraguayan president of CONMEBOL, welcomed the decision.

"It was virtually a full majority," he said. "There were 24 votes and only one was against."

Colombian member Oscar Astudillo said: "South America has recovered what belonged to it and was taken away in December.

"We now have 4.5 places and that is as it should be. I am very happy we have got back what was ours."



A fan looks at the floral tributes and shirts hanging outside Manchester City's Maine Road Ground to commemorate Marc-Vivien Foe who tragically died from a heart attack while playing for Cameroon in the Confederations Cup semifinal against Colombia.

PHOTO: AFP

## Kluivert free to leave Barca

Football

REUTERS/SOCCERNET, Madrid

Barcelona striker Patrick Kluivert is free to buy himself out of his contract for a cut-price fee after the Catalan club announced they had decided not to give him a bonus payment.

"Barcelona have told the player and his representatives of the decision not to pay the bonus for next season," the club said on their website on Saturday.

"Barcelona and the player's agent will meet in Barcelona next Wednesday to discuss the player's contract."

The Dutch international's contract is reported to include an arrangement whereby the buy-out clause will be reduced from 36 million euros (41.08 million dollars) to 1.8 million (2.05 million dollars) if the club refuse to pay him a special bonus of 4.6 million euros (5.25 million dollars) next season.

Barcelona vice-president Sandro Rosell told radio station Ona Catalana on Friday that the club had been put in a difficult position as a result of the deal the player had negotiated under former president Joan Gaspart.

"Our hands are tied by the contract and we have no choice but to abide by its terms," he said.

The 26-year-old striker joined Barcelona from AC Milan in 1998 and has scored 82 league goals in five seasons at the Catalan club.

English Premier League sides Manchester United and Arsenal are reportedly interested in buying Kluivert.

Meanwhile, Mark Viduka's agent has claimed that the Spanish giants

are interested in signing the Leeds striker.

Players' representative Andrea D'Amico says he has been approached by new Barca coach Frank Rijkaard about Australian international Viduka, who was the top scorer at Eiland Road last season with 24 goals.

D'Amico told the Daily Express: "Barcelona want Mark. I've spoken

with Frank Rijkaard and he likes him a lot.

"I'm confident a deal will be done soon. Barcelona are a huge club and it would be fantastic for Mark."

Barcelona vice-president Sandro Rosell claimed the Spanish club have already lined up striking replacements for Patrick Kluivert, with Mark Viduka on their list, although he revealed Barcelona will

adopt a more cautious approach after very public moves for David Beckham and Ronaldinho were scuppered.

He told BBC Sport Online: "We are interested in many players, but we are not being transparent about our interests because we have lost out on players twice.

"We have six or seven players as possible targets for each position, and if you wish to say Viduka is on the list then that would be true."

Leeds manager Peter Reid is currently having to deal with a number of transfer issues as the cash-strapped Premiership club consider selling more big-name players to ease their debts.

Goalkeeper Paul Robinson's proposed move to Aston Villa collapsed yesterday whilst Reid revealed that he was anxious to contact Australian midfielder Harry Kewell, who is on holiday, to discuss his future.

Barcelona will not be taking up their option to buy Argentine international defender Juan Pablo Sorin, the club announced on Friday.

Sorin was signed on loan from Lazio in January this year, although Brazilian club Cruzeiro own the player's contract.

He becomes the third player deemed surplus to requirements since new Barcelona president Joan Laporta took charge earlier this month.

Former Spanish international Gaizka Mendietia, who was also on loan at Barca last season, will return to Lazio, while Dutch centre-back Frank de Boer has been told his contract will not be renewed.



PATRICK KLUIVERT

## Ronaldinho almost MU's

Football

AFP, London

Brazil and Paris St Germain striker Ronaldinho could be a Manchester United player by as early as next week - if the clubs can agree on the finer details of what is believed will be an 11 million pound deal (18 million dollars).

World Cup winner Ronaldinho has a contract with the French club until 2006 and while PSG and their new coach Vahid Halilhodzic are keen to hang on to the flashy forward the club's precarious financial position may force their hand.

Ronaldinho's brother and agent Roberto Assis held talks with United chief executive Peter Kenyon on Friday and emerged confident of a deal being struck.

"There will be a completion one way or another next week," confirmed Roberto Assis.

"Peter Kenyon and the PSG president Frances Graille had a meeting to discuss the transfer and things are looking good. They are going to continue talks over the next few days."

United manager Alex Ferguson seems determined not to retire until he takes United back to the brink of European glory and the wily Scot sees 23-year-old Ronaldinho - whose freak goal sent England crashing out of last year's World Cup - as a key player in that plan.

United are keen to stress no fee has been agreed and delicate contract talks with Ronaldinho will

still have to be held.

However PSG's delicate financial state means they may have no option but to sanction the departure of Ronaldinho - who has also attracted interest from Spanish giants Barcelona and Real Madrid.

PSG coach Halilhodzic admitted Friday that, if Ronaldinho has to go, the club would be looking to cash in.

"If it was economically stable then PSG would never let Ronaldinho go. But if an enormous offer comes in, and I mean something really interesting, not far off (what Real Madrid paid for Zinedine) Zidane, then we'll consider it."

France playmaker Zidane joined Spanish giants Real Madrid in a 65-million dollar deal in 2001.

## Ferdinand frustrated



AFP, London

England defender Rio Ferdinand has called on football's world ruling body FIFA to dump the Confederations Cup following the tragic death of Cameroon player Marc-Vivien Foe.

Ferdinand, a former teammate of Foe's at West Ham, said FIFA must bring the end-of-season competition to an end if players are to be allowed to rest after a tiring league season.

"The Confederations Cup is a big no-go. What is the point of it," Ferdinand, who said the France and Turkey game on the same night should have been cancelled, wrote in the Sun newspaper Saturday.

"It is not a respected tournament - it is not the World Cup or the European Championships. Why dilute those two by having another one?"

"I was surprised the game between France and Turkey was played after what happened. I thought might have cancelled it as a mark of respect. I know I wouldn't have been in a fit state to play and some of the French lads would have known Marc from when he was playing over there and they will have been in a bad state."

A host of France players, some of whom knew Foe personally, were seen weeping before the other semi-final match against Turkey.

Manchester United defender Ferdinand added: "I don't like to moan because I am paid a lot of money to do something I enjoy."

"But if you want to see the best players and the best performances, the players have got to be allowed to spend some time resting."

"Ironically this is the longest rest - four weeks - I've had since I started as a professional and that's because I have been injured."



RONALDINHO

## WORLD FOOTBALL BRIEFS

AFP, Paris

Briefs from the world of football on Saturday:

### LEVERKUSEN PAIR JOIN HANOVER

HANOVER: Bundesliga side Hanover 96 have boosted their squad for next season with the arrival of Czech midfielder Jan Simak and German forward Thomas Brdaric, both coming from Bayer Leverkusen.

Both players arrive on a one-year loan deal with no option to buy. Simak, 24, already played for Hanover between 2000 and 2002, when he was transferred to

Leverkusen for six million euros but was rarely used.

### DAVALA BOUND FOR BREMEN

BREMEN: Turkish international Umit Davala, 29, is set to join Werder Bremen next season, according to the Bundesliga side who finished sixth in the league last season.

Davala has a contract with Italian giants Inter Milan until 2005, although he was loaned out to Galatasaray last season.

Werder Bremen have been given the option to buy the German-born player, who enjoyed a magical 2002 World Cup where he scored twice in

Turkey's extraordinary run to the semifinals.

### LAZARONI OFF TO AL-ARABI

KUWAIT: Former Brazil coach Sebastiao Lazaroni is set to take over at Al-Arabi as a replacement for his compatriot Bado Vierra, the Kuwait club said Saturday.

According to press reports negotiations have been on for months with the only sticking point the negotiations over financing.

### DARIO TO QUIT MALAGA TOO

MALAGA: Uruguayan international striker Dario Silva looks set to

become the next player to leave cash-strapped Spanish First Division side Malaga.

He is in negotiations with former Spanish champions Valencia. Silva had revealed in May that he was going to leave the club because of a disagreement over money.

"I play for money and I told everybody that. My career at Malaga is over," the fiery striker said.

Malaga official Manuel Hierro said that his desire to leave was close to being granted. "Agreement between us and Valencia is close to being settled. However one has to be careful as always in football."

## Saachi's advice for Milan

AFP, Rome

Former Italy coach Arrigo Sacchi on Friday urged AC Milan to buy Lazio's unsettled Dutch defender Jaap Stam.

Saachi, who led Milan to European and domestic triumphs in the early 90s and coached Italy to the final of the 1994 World Cup, said Stam would be a perfect acquisition for the Champions League winners.

"He would fit perfectly at Milan and most other teams," said Sacchi, who quit as technical director of Parma last month.

"He is a great player. The important thing is for Milan to sign players they really need. There are some excellent players out there for sale."

Stam is unhappy at his treatment at Lazio who because of their money problems are several months behind in paying his salary. But the Rome club said Thursday they were confident of resolving their cash flow crisis after agreeing a deal with a major Italian bank for a massive cash injection.

## Hagi in charge of Bursaspor

AFP, Ankara

Former Romania and Galatasaray playmaker Georghie Hagi will take over the reins at Bursaspor after signing a coaching contract with the Turkish first division club this weekend, it was reported here Saturday.

Hagi, who is hugely popular in Turkey, arrived in Bursa on Friday evening with his wife to be welcomed by over 2000 people at the airport.

The 38-year-old Romanian, who notched up 125 caps for his country, played at Turkish giants Galatasaray from 1996 to 2001, winning the league title four times.

"Turkey is my second home," Hagi told journalists. "I will try to do my best with the club."

## Effenberg fined

AFP, Brunswick

Former Germany football international Stefan Effenberg was fined 100,000 euros (114,000 dollars) for insulting a police officer by a court here on Friday.

The 34-year-old Effenberg launched his verbal assault on the officer after being stopped for speeding in February, according to the state prosecutor at Brunswick, near Wolfsburg in central Germany.

Former Bayern Munich star Effenberg, who has signed a one-year contract with Qatari club Al Arabi, contested police testimony and is appealing the ruling.

Effenberg parted company with German first division club VfL Wolfsburg in mid-contract last season.