

Saadi was there too!

AP, Bordeaux

The son of Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi joined French soccer players Zinedine Zidane, Christophe Dugarry and Bixente Lizarazu for a charity match Thursday to raise money for children in the Sahara Desert.

Saadi Gadhafi, the captain of Libya's national team, signed last month with the Italian club Perugia for next season. His agent contacted the match's organizers a week ago and asked if he could join the all-star team, which played against Bordeaux.

Bordeaux, playing on home turf, won the match 4-3. Profits went to Enfants du Sahara, an association to help children in the Algerian desert.

Liverpool at full strength for HK

AFP, Hong Kong

English Premiership league giants Liverpool confirmed Friday they would field their strongest team for a match against Hong Kong on July 27, including their recent signing from Leeds, Harry Kewell.

Spearheading the 25-strong squad will be England striker Michael Owen, who sharpened his predatory instincts with two goals in Liverpool's 3-1 win over FC Cologne in a friendly in Germany on Wednesday, the team said in statement.

Also travelling with the Liverpool team for its Far East tour will be striker Emile Heskey, two-time African footballer of the year El Hadji Diouf, and England midfielder Steven Gerrard.

Liverpool will take on the Thai national team in Bangkok on July 24 before flying onto Hong Kong for the pre-season friendly.

It will be the first time a Liverpool team played in the former British colony since 1983.

No Paki business!

THE GUARDIAN, London

A football fan who used the word "Paki" in a terrace chant was yesterday banned from all Premiership and Nationwide League grounds for three years.

Sean Ratcliffe, 21, from Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent, had been acquitted of racist chanting by a magistrate in January.

But the crown prosecution service appealed and two high court judges ordered Ratcliffe to be convicted and sent the case back to Stoke-on-Trent magistrates court. Ratcliffe was also fined £150 and ordered to pay £120 costs.

In October 2002, Ratcliffe, who claims incapacity benefit, was part of a crowd of between 50 and 100 Port Vale supporters who chanted "You're just a town full of Pakis" at Oldham Athletic fans during a league match at Vale Park.

At the high court last month, Edward Coke, representing the director of public prosecutions, said that district judge Graham Richards had been wrong in law to acquit Ratcliffe.

Lord Justice Auld, sitting with Mr Justice Goulding, agreed and said it was clear "Paki" was a "slang expression which is racially offensive".

Yesterday, Ratcliffe's solicitor told the court his client was surprised at all the attention the case had generated. "He is a young man not acquainted with the criminal justice system. As far as he was concerned, the song was a joke and there was no intended malice against any coloured person whatsoever."

Salas returns to River

AFP, Buenos Aires

Juventus' Chilean international Marcelo Salas is returning to his old club, River Plate, on a one-year 550,000 dollar transfer, it was announced on Thursday.

The 28-year-old, who played for the Argentine champions in the 1996-97 season, moved to Italy in 1998, linking up first with Lazio before switching to Juventus in 2001.

Salas had been linked with a move to English Premiership club Chelsea, who are cash-rich since being taken over by Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich.



PHOTO: AFP

French superstar Zinedine Zidane (R) trying out a few tricks against Bordeaux' defender David Jemali during an exhibition match between a selection of friends of Zidane and Bordeaux on July 17. The receipts of the match will be given to humanitarian organisations to help Saharan children.

Howard comes prepared

Football

AFP, Secaucus, New Jersey

Tim Howard has developed mental toughness dealing with Tourette's Syndrome, discipline that will serve him well as he prepares to handle the pressure of joining Manchester United.

The 24-year-old American goalkeeper made his first public comments Thursday since signing a four-year deal with the English Premiership champions to complete a 3.6 million-dollar transfer from Major League Soccer's MetroStars.

"If I'm doing well, I'll be a 'good player'. If not, I'll be a 'bad American'. That's the way it goes," Howard said. "I will work hard and try not to judge my own path. I will stay humble and do well."

"There are two options -- success or failure. They are the only two possibilities."

Howard suffers from Tourette's Syndrome, a neurological disorder featuring uncontrollable ticks and speech. He knows taunting fans will target his condition and is ready for whatever he might face.

"You have just got to be strong mentally with the syndrome. You have just got to play your game and be strong mentally," Howard said.

"I know who I am and I will play as well as I can and be a gentleman on and off the field. I will try to be a great ambassador for the sport, New York and (people with) Tourette's Syndrome."

Howard was named the US

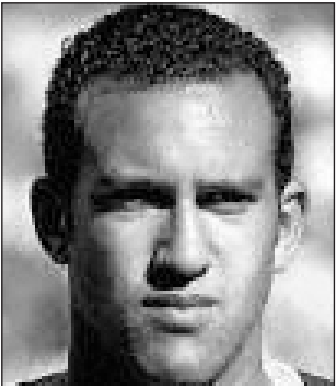
league's top goalkeeper in 2001 after 146 saves and a 1.33 goals-against average.

But he knows Manchester United is a huge leap in quality and pressure.

"I'm not over-awed," Howard said. "There will be a learning period. I will have to work hard and let the talent take its course. There will be a settling-in period which will be difficult."

"I just feel blessed. I feel fortunate. Not many people are given this opportunity which has been given to me. I'm just so happy."

Howard will be the third US



netminder among England's elite clubs, joining Tottenham's Kasey Keller and Blackburn's Brad Friedel.

"It was worse for players who went there before me. They paved the way," said Howard. "They had a daunting task of facing Manchester

United where I get to play with them."

But Howard knows he will not be replacing French starter Fabian Barthez in the eyes of coach Sir Alex Ferguson at the start.

"I wouldn't say I'm the number one goalie. My money is that I'm number four," Howard said. "I will go in and shut my mouth and work hard like I have in the past. It's not my decision who is the number one goalie. It's coach Ferguson's."

Howard will join Manchester United for Tuesday's exhibition against Celtic at Seattle, the kickoff of the English side's United States tour. He goes from being a locker-room leader to the role of an apprentice.

"So many emotions are going through me right now," he said. "I'm going into a locker room as a freshman. People who know me usually know I'm anxious and joking. I can't go to England and be like that."

Giving instructions to veteran defenders is something Howard is not yet ready to tackle.

"What can I say to experienced defenders like them, some of them who have played in several World Cups?" Howard wondered. "I won't be as vicious as I can be. I'll be like a lamb."

Howard sees himself as a prospect with potential.

"I feel unworthy and I will let my skills do the talking. I hope to get to an elite level -- higher than high," he said. "They must have seen something about me which they like."

MetroStars coach Bob Bradley was sorry to see his top goalkeeper depart in mid-season, but relished his chance to play on a more global stage.

"We recognise this is a well deserved opportunity," Bradley said. "We will miss his terrific goalkeeping and his presence in our locker room."

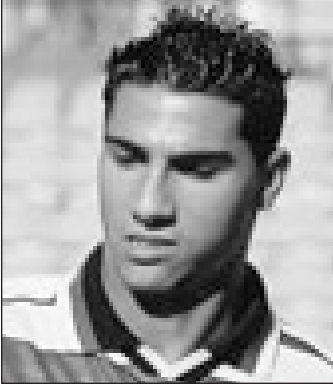
"We've always known he's a very special player and this day would come," said MetroStars general manager Nick Sakiewicz. "To Tim's credit, this day has come sooner than expected."

Lisbon prodigy now Barca's

AFP, Barcelona

Sporting Lisbon's highly rated teenage striker Ricardo Quaresma has moved to Barcelona on a six million euro (6.7 million dollar) transfer.

"I'm a little nervous as it's a real honour to put on a Barcelona



shirt," said the 19-year-old Quaresma after he was officially presented to the media by the Catalan club on Thursday.

The deal only went ahead after Barca agreed to loan Brazilian Fabio Rochemback to Sporting Lisbon, new Barcelona president Joan Laporta disclosed.

Laporta said they had agreed to pay part of Rochemback's salary and include a buy-out clause.

It wasn't all incoming traffic at the Nou Camp as Barcelona are preparing to say goodbye to French international defender Philippe Christanval, who is due to move to Marseille on a free transfer.

Christanval had asked to leave after his first-team place was put in jeopardy by the arrival of Mexican defender Rafael Marquez.

Barcelona are still in the hunt to sign Brazilian World Cup-winning midfielder Ronaldinho from Paris St Germain, but Laporta is believed to have fallen out with the player's brother and agent Roberto Assis.

No breakthrough still!

Football

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson held lengthy talks with Paris St Germain president Francis Graille over the transfer of Brazilian midfielder Ronaldinho here late on Thursday.

The meeting came hours after Graille hit out United, accusing the English champions of failing to comply with FIFA regulations and complaining that their verbal offers for the player had not been backed up by their written offers.

However, Ferguson and the club's chief executive Peter Kenyon met with Graille and Ronaldinho's brother and agent Roberto Assis, a PSG club official told AFP.

The parties were discussing a sum of three million euros, which is believed to be the shortfall between United's offer of 30 million euros (33.5 million dollars) and PSG's demands.

The PSG source said United had made no fresh proposals during the meeting, but Graille had suggested a friendly match between the clubs for which the television rights would go totally to the French club.

The meeting was the latest twist in the two-month long saga over 23-year-old Ronaldinho's future.

Commenting on reports in Britain that Barcelona had emerged as the favourites to sign the Brazilian, Graille accused United of dirty tricks.

"Manchester have not played the game in line with FIFA regulations," he said.

"They have negotiated directly with the player. Even if they have got agreement from the player, they haven't got agreement from his club and it's my intention to defend this club's interests."

"The negotiations go on. If Manchester confirm to me in writing the proposals which have been made verbally, we should be able to reach an agreement."

"But over the last few days, Manchester's written offers have always been lower than the proposals made verbally."

Graille said United's verbal offer for Ronaldinho was superior to the

written offer made by Barcelona.

And the president said he had called Barcelona's new president, Joan Laporta, on Wednesday to give him his agreement for Ronaldinho to move to the Spanish club.

But that deal has hit a hitch because Laporta refuses to deal with Assis.

Meanwhile, reports in Le Parisien newspaper said PSG will see only a sixth of the transfer fee for Ronaldinho due to a series of payouts the club will have to make if their number ten moves on.

The report comes on the back of Australian striker Harry Kewell's five million pound (7.9 million dollar) move from Leeds United to Liverpool, of which the player's agent Bernie Mandic pocketed two million pounds, leaving Leeds with little reward for the player they nurtured

since the age of 15.

PSG paid Brazilian club Gremio Porto Alegre 6.5 million euros (seven million dollars) for Ronaldinho's services in July 2001.

But that move saw a company called Sportfive pay 15 million euros for the midfielder's image rights, which PSG have to repay, said the report.

The French club will also have to pay Gremio four percent of any transfer fee received as a sell-on clause was included in the contracts.

Ronaldinho, whose contract at the Parc des Princes runs until 2006, can himself claim 15 percent of the transfer fee.

Should the transfer fee reach 30 million euros, after all the payouts have been made, PSG stand to make hardly five million euros from the deal that will see them lose their star player.



RONALDINHO

Duff talks on

Football

AFP, London

Damien Duff was deep in talks with Chelsea late on Thursday after Blackburn Rovers accepted a reported 17 million (27.2 million dollar) bid for the Republic of Ireland winger.

Even the 24-year-old player himself admitted the fee was a "stupid price", but Chelsea have newfound riches since their takeover by Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich.

Chelsea chief executive Trevor Birch has to persuade Duff that his future is in London rather than holding out for a possible move to Manchester United.

Chelsea hope that Duff will become the third recruit since Abramovich took over, with Cameroon midfielder Geremi being confirmed as an 11 million dollar signing to join former West Ham defender Glen Johnson.

Chelsea are also closing in on Southampton full-back Wayne Bridge, but reports said they had cooled on bringing United's

Milito kept waiting

AFP, Madrid

The unveiling of Real Madrid's new recruit, Argentine international defender Gabriel Alejandro Milito, has been put back indefinitely for medical reasons.

The player, signed from Independiente, will have to go through another medical, the club said, declining to specify the nature or the reason for the extra set of examinations.

New Real manager Carlos Quieroz wants the 22-year-old to fill the boots of former club captain Fernando Hierro.

Milito, who signed for Real for the next four seasons on July 8 pending the examinations, was originally supposed to have a medical early on Friday before his official presentation in his new club colours.

The need for a further medical, which cannot all be carried out on the same day, has forced them to put the unveiling.

Colombia, Mexico complete lineup



AFP, Miami

Colombia and Mexico captured round-robin group titles in the Gold Cup football tournament with draws, finalizing the quarter-final pairings in the 12-nation Americas football showdown.

Guatemala's Carlos Ruiz scored in the 21st minute but Mauricio Molina equalized in the 78th minute and Colombia drew 1-1 with Guatemala here in Group B while Mexico and Honduras played to a goal-less Group A draw in Mexico City.

Colombia will face Brazil in a Saturday quarter-final at Miami while the Mexicans host Jamaica on Sunday to decide another semi-final berth.

The other quarter-finals on Saturday send Costa Rica against El Salvador and Cuba against the defending champion United States at Foxboro, Massachusetts.

The draws were as good as losses for Guatemala and Honduras, who joined Canada and Martinique in being eliminated.

STANDINGS

Standings in the CONCACAF Gold Cup after Thursday's final round-robin matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Group A (at Mexico City)						
Mexico	2	1	1	0	1	0 4
Brazil	2	1	0	1	2	2 3
Honduras	2	0	1	1	1	2 1
Group B (at Miami)						
Colombia	2	1	1	0	2	1 4
Jamaica	2	1	0	1	2	1 3
Guatemala	2	0	1	1	1	2 1
Group C (at Foxboro)						
USA	2	2	0	0	4	0 6
El Salvador	2	1	0	1	1	2 3
Martinique	2	0	0	2	0	3 0
Group D (at Foxboro)						
Costa Rica	2	1	0	1	3	1 3
Cuba	2	1	0	1	2	3 3
Canada	2	1	0	1	1	2 3



PHOTO: AFP

HIS FAVOURITE DRINK! (R) Brazilian superstar Ronaldo waves to fans upon arriving in Guatemala City. (L) Guatemalans welcome the 'phenomenon' at the airport. Ronaldo is in the country to promote the beer product Ambev.