

# Raul predicts Real rule

**Football**

REUTERS, Tokyo

Real Madrid striker Raul vowed on Monday that the Spanish champions will sweep all before them this year if they play to their full potential. "If other teams beat us it will be

because we are not at our best," the Real captain told Reuters. "But I believe that if all the Real players do their jobs we can win the Spanish title and the Champions League."

Real, whose signing of England captain David Beckham has boosted their image in Asia, play Japanese club FC Tokyo on Tuesday on the second leg of their

pre-season tour of the Far East. Beckham made his debut in a 4-0 victory over a Chinese select team in Beijing at the weekend.

"You have to remember that this is still the pre-season for us," new manager Carlos Queiroz said after an open training session in Tokyo.

"Having said that we will be taking this match very seriously and we will try to play some fantasy

football that will leave the fans feeling good about the game."

However, Queiroz could be without France midfielder Zinedine Zidane, who was nursing a thigh strain and trained apart from his team mates. Zidane and Spanish international Guti left practice early.

"At this moment, it's still a period for us to tune up and I don't think I need to practice until the end," Zidane said, adding he might not play in Tuesday's game if the soreness continued.

Beckham, who signed from English champions Manchester United for \$40 million last month, caught a knock in the face and looked out of sorts during practice at National Stadium.

However, Queiroz, a former assistant to United manager Alex Ferguson, insisted Beckham was adapting quickly to his new situation.

"David did everything that was asked of him during practice but he has only been with the team for eight days," said Queiroz.

"Obviously there are one or two communication problems with the language but David is an intelligent player and shows a real willingness to fit in with the group. He is adapting quickly."

Queiroz praised Beckham for making the switch to Real and predicted that the move would make him a better player.

"When a player reaches the level of David, or Luis Figo, or Zinedine Zidane...Ronaldo, they need a new challenge in life," he said.

"There is no need to prove anything to the football world but you have something to prove to yourself."

"No doubt the English (premier) league is a great league but from a technical point of view, some English players would benefit if they play abroad."

A number of Real players already feel that the arrival of Beckham will have a positive impact on the Spanish club too.

"Big players are always welcome in this team," said Argentine midfielder Santiago Solari.

"They improve the level of the whole team. Figo, Zidane and Ronaldo improved the level of the team and for sure Becks will do that too."

Star defender and freekick specialist Roberto Carlos emphasized players were gradually improving their condition during the pre-season.

"Because this is still pre-season, we are not at our best. We are gradually becoming more fit right now," he said.



PHOTO: AFP

NOT ON TALKING TERMS! Real Madrid's David Beckham (R) toys with the ball on his finger as he walks past captain Raul during a practice session in Tokyo yesterday. Real are in the Japanese capital to play an exhibition match today with Japan's professional club FC Tokyo.



PHOTO: AFP

Manchester United's Dutch international striker Ruud van Nistelrooy rounding off the Barcelona goalkeeper to score during the Champions World Series against Barcelona on August 3 at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

# Perfect United

**Football**

REUTERS, Philadelphia

Manchester United ended their pre-season tour of the U.S. with a 3-1 victory over Barcelona on Sunday. Barcelona flourished early on as new signing Ronaldinho, who turned down a move to the English champions, stroked the ball around with typical Brazilian flair and imagination despite being booed by the United faithful before the start.

United manager Alex Ferguson rested strikers Ruud van Nistelrooy and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer. Also missing from the line-up was Argentina midfielder Juan Sebastian Veron, a transfer target for Chelsea.

Without those three, United

appeared lacking in ideas for the opening exchanges.

Ronaldinho's running reaped dividends in the ninth minute when he lofted a perfectly weighted cross for Dutch striker Patrick Kluyvert to head past Tim Howard, United's new American goalkeeper.

But, despite further Barcelona pressure, United levelled after 25 minutes. Winger Ryan Giggs found space on the left and crossed for an unmarked Diego Forlan to beat keeper Victor Valdes with a diving header.

United, spurred on by skipper Roy Keane, went ahead 11 minutes later when Nicky Butt's centre from the right took a deflection and man of the match Forlan pounced to score his second goal.

Barcelona came out for the second half without Ronaldinho and Kluyvert. United made two changes

after 52 minutes, bringing on David Bellion for Darren Fletcher and van Nistelrooy for Uruguayan Forlan.

Van Nistelrooy produced a goal of individual brilliance after 85 minutes. Battling with Barcelona defenders after losing a tussle in midfield, the striker won the ball back and beat two men before rounding the keeper to score.

United made it four wins out of four on the tour. They had also beaten Celtic 4-1, Mexico's Club America 3-1 and Juventus 4-1.

Ferguson told reporters he was delighted with the trip. "Everything has been great and we're looking forward to the start of the season," he said.

"It took us some time to get going really," he said of Sunday's game. "But by the end of the (first) half I thought we were in control and I thought we should have scored

more goals."

The Scotsman said he chose not to play Veron so that all of his midfielders could play two full games on the tour.

Ferguson singled out Howard, recently signed from the New York/New Jersey MetroStars, as the player who benefited most from the tour.

He said his second-half stop from Xavi was "one of the best saves you'll see".

"Tonight he was confident, relaxed and he enjoyed it," Ferguson said of Howard, adding that he "will definitely compete for the No. 1 jersey".

Sunday's game was the first to be played at Philadelphia's new Lincoln Financial Field, home of the National Football League's Philadelphia Eagles, and drew a sell-out crowd of 68,396.

# Juve's Super Cup solace

**Football**

AFP, East Rutherford

Juventus avenged its loss in the Champions League final by defeating AC Milan on penalties to capture the Italian Super Cup at Giants Stadium on Sunday.

Juventus won the penalty shootout 5-3, after playing to a 1-1 draw after 120 minutes before a crowd of 54,128.

Defender Ciro Ferrara converted the winning penalty, firing a shot to the lower left corner past Milan goalkeeper Christian Abbiati on Juventus's fifth attempt after goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon blocked midfielder Christian Brocchi's attempt on Milan's third try.

Marco Di Vaio, David Trezeguet, Alessandro Birindelli and Mauro Camoranesi also converted their penalties for Juventus, while Andrea Pirlo, Serginho and Alessandro Nesta theirs for Milan.

All of the scoring in this tightly played physical match occurred in the space of one minute of extra time before 54,128 spectators, who obviously favored Juventus.

Before the game, fans unfurled a 50m banner that said "New York loves Juventus."

Italian referee Pierluigi Collina, who worked last year's World Cup final, awarded Milan a penalty after Nicola Legretalio fouled Massimo Ambrosini in the penalty area. Pirlo took the ensuing penalty, waited for Buffon to commit himself, faked and then lobbed over the keeper into the upper right corner.

It was the first goal scored in a Milan-Juventus game in 290 minutes or since Filippo Inzaghi found the back of the net in the 25th minute in Milan's 2-1 win on March 22.

"When you have 20 seconds to go, you think you have lost," Juventus coach Marcello Lippi said. "You never know what's going to happen."

Buffon said he had remained optimistic.

"The mentality you have to have is to win," he said. "I still thought we were going to win, even though there was little time left."

Only 23 seconds later Juventus incredibly equalized. Legretalio, off a Pavel Nedved cross, placed an eight-yard header that Abbiati knocked away. French international David Trezeguet then slotted home

the rebound from four yards for a 1-1 tie.

"We didn't have the attention," Milan midfielder Clarence Seedorf said. "We weren't smart. We thought it was finished. We had the game in our hands and we didn't do the best job of protecting the lead."

"We made mistakes," he added. "It cost us."

It appeared Milan had taken a 2-1 lead in the 115th minute when Inzaghi scored from two yards, but the goal was disallowed because the Italian international was called offside.

Before extra time, the game was punctuated with tight defensive play, fabulous goalkeeping and near misses.

The closest call for both teams came five minutes into the first extra time period when Juventus midfielder Gianluca Zambrotta fired

a 19-yard shot that ricocheted off the crossbar and onto the goal line. Goalkeeper Christian Abbiati gathered in the ball before a Juve player could knock home the rebound.

Before the match, a moment's of silence was observed before the match in memory of Juventus chairman Vittorio Caisotti di Chiusano, who died from heart failure on Friday. Chiusano, who was 74, was chairman of the team since 1990. Juventus and Milan players stood center circle in silence.

"The most important thing is that this cup is dedicated to (Chiusano)," Lippi said. "We didn't get a chance to say goodbye."

On May 28, it was Milan who prevailed in the Champions League final in Manchester England via penalties, 3-2, after playing to a scoreless draw in regulation and extra time.

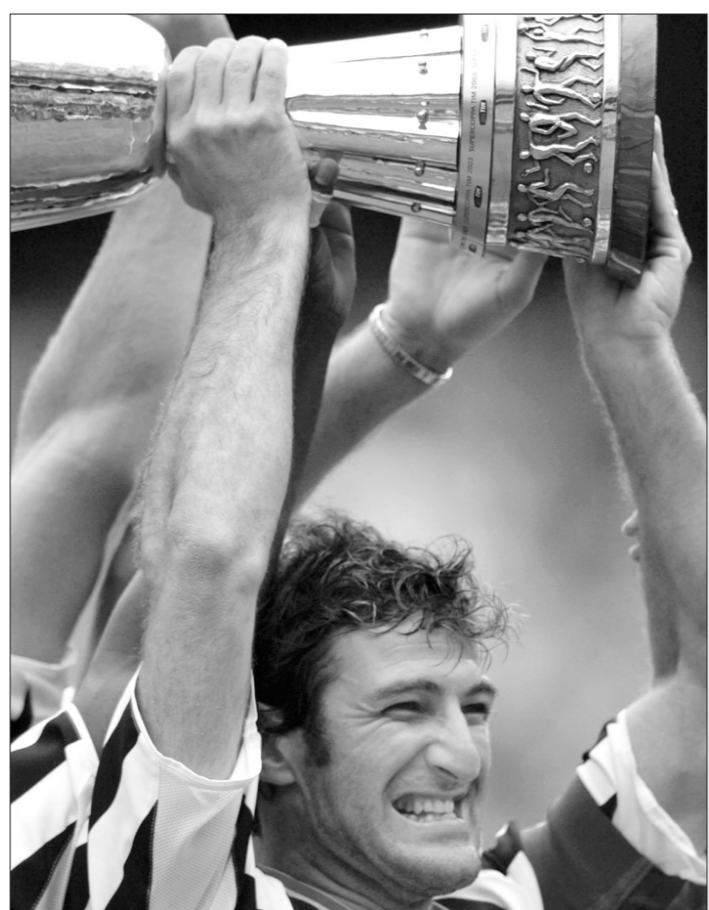


PHOTO: AFP

Juventus' Ciro Ferrara holds aloft the Italian Super Cup trophy after the match against AC Milan at the Giants Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey on August 3.

# Anything of Beckham!

AFP, Beijing

David Beckham may have left China but his diehard fans still want to get up close and personal, turning out in force for an auction of items he used while in Beijing, including his pyjamas and bed sheets.

One "ecstatic" fan paid 2,800 yuan (341 dollars) for the Chinese pyjamas, bed sheets, towel and pillow cases the British celebrity superstar used during his three-day stay at the sumptuous Beijing Hotel, a hotel staff member told AFP.

Another who just couldn't get enough of the married father-of-two shelled out 340 dollars to stay in the room Beckham used, which usually goes for 240 dollars.

The hotel, which hosted the auction Sunday afternoon just hours after the team checked out, wouldn't say if the room had been cleaned or was as he left it.

Among other items that raised 150,000 yuan (18,300 dollars) for children of nurses and doctors who died battling Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome was a football signed by the Real Madrid team that fetched 21,000 yuan (2,560 dollars).

# Owen wants it this year

AFP, Liverpool

Liverpool striker Michael Owen admitted the pressure is on the Reds to win the Premiership this season.

The 23-year-old England international fears that at the half-way point in his career, time is beginning to run out on his dream of winning English football's biggest trophy.

"There is an extra significance to this season," he told the club's official website. "We want to reach the top and win the league."

"You don't get a million-and-one chances as a manager or a player to do that and we need to do it quite soon. Everyone wants this season to be the season."

"Players only have a short shelf life. I have been playing for six to seven years now and am probably halfway through my career without winning the league," said the striker who has hit 102 Premiership goals for the club.

"You think it is going to be next year or maybe the one after that and, suddenly, the time has gone."

# Celtic Premiership serious

**Football**

AFP, London

Celtic are considering legal action in a bid to force their way into the English Premier League.

Dermot Desmond, the major shareholder in the Glasgow club, said Monday the 20 Premiership clubs had acted illegally when they voted unanimously to reject an application from Celtic and Rangers to join the English top flight.

In an interview with BBC radio, Desmond said his club's lawyers were exploring all legal avenues in a bid to force the Premiership clubs to change their stance.

Desmond said: "The Premier League clubs -- the smaller ones that is -- have issued a mandate to the executive that they do not want Celtic and Rangers in the Premiership because they might undermine their position in the league."

"I don't think that is competition and I don't think that's in the interests of the football."

"Do you take Real Madrid and Barcelona and Juventus out of the European championship because people don't want to play them because they are too good?"

"I don't think that is the way to go forward, it is illegal, it is wrong and it is not in the interests of the club."

Any legal case brought by Celtic over Premiership entry would probably be based on European European Union competition law, which guarantees that any business can operate anywhere in the 15-nation EU without discrimination.

Desmond also claimed that the way British clubs sell television rights collectively rather than individually amounted to a cartel and called for an independent regulator to oversee football in both England and Scotland.

Celtic and Rangers, both of whom have bigger fan bases than any English club except Manchester United, would bring in more than 100 million pounds (161 million dollars) a year to the Premiership, according to Desmond.

He also claimed that a move by Scotland's big two to England would not raise any objections from FIFA or UEFA and would be welcomed by a majority of fans across Britain.

But both the English and Scottish Football Associations poured cold water on Desmond's comments.

David Davies, the FA's director of football affairs, said there were too many obstacles in the way of Celtic and Rangers being granted admission to the league.

"Premier League clubs overwhelmingly -- not just the smaller clubs don't want it to happen and for good reason," Davies said.

"I mean why not invite Real Madrid, Inter Milan or while you're at it Vasco de Gama from Brazil and teams from all over the world. Perhaps Barcelona could represent England in the Champions League."

Davies said such a precedent would sign the death knell for international football as it currently operates.

He also warned that clubs who could lose their Premiership status to make way for the Glasgow giants would inevitably fiercely resist such a move.

"Are we going to expand the Premier league and play yet more matches or are we going to relegate perhaps five teams in one season?"

David Taylor, a spokesman for the SFA, warned that Rangers and Celtic playing in England could undermine Scotland's case for fielding its own national side in international fixtures.



PHOTO: AFP

Liverpool ace Michael Owen (R) under pressure from Gabriel Tamas (L) of Galatasaray at the Ajax Arena on August 3.

# Galatasaray hurt Liverpool

**Football**

AFP, Amsterdam

Liverpool were beaten 2-1 by Galatasaray in the Amsterdam tournament on Sunday in a bad-tempered match which saw red cards for Steven Gerrard and Neil Mellor.

Youngster Mellor was given a straight red for a dreadful tackle on Gabriel Tamas, while England midfielder Gerrard picked up his second yellow for dissent in the aftermath, having received the first for his part in a mass brawl.

The flare-up was sparked by a poor tackle from Croat Igor Biscan, but it was Turkey striker Hakan Sukur's angry reaction which ignited Gerrard.

Galatasaray took the lead 21 minutes in when Sukur played in Brazilian midfielder Joao Batista who tucked the ball beyond Chris Kirkland into the far corner of the goal.

Liverpool levelled when Vladimir Smicer crossed for Emile Heskey to power in a 36th-minute header.

But Cesar Prates scored the winner for the Istanbul side when he curled home a free-kick from 25 yards out three minutes later.

Gerrard's dismissal means he will miss Liverpool's first Premiership match against Chelsea at home on August 17, following the two yellows he received against them on the final day of last season.

"They lost a bit of their cool. It damaged the atmosphere and we couldn't play well after that," said Liverpool boss Gerard Houllier after the sendings-off.