Viduka next?

Chelsea yesterday admitted defeat

in their attempts to buy Christian Vieri from Internazionale and will

now try to secure the services of

another striker from a short list that

The Leeds striker, who yesterday

pulled out of his club's tour to Ireland

citing a sore ankle, is under consid-

eration in a group which includes

Auxerre's Djibril Cissé, Real

Mallorca's Samuel Eto'o and

all but accepted that he will not land

Vieri when he said: "I think Christian

Vieri's staying with Inter." The Italian

club issued a statement which

insisted the striker will remain at San

Siro next season.

Chelsea's coach Claudio Ranieri

GUARDIAN, London

includes Mark Viduka.

Fergie's faith in Ranieri excited **Kleberson**



AFP. Manchester

Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson is confident that Brazilian midfielder Kleberson can fill the gap left by Juan Sebastian Veron's departure to English Premiership rival's Chelsea.

The World Cup winner, who plays for Atletico Paranaense in Sao Paulo, is due to link up with the English champions Tuesday provided his work permit is granted 24

"He is young and we certainly think he is one of the most progressive young players in Brazil at the moment. He is athletic, creative and quick," Ferguson told the Manchester Evening News.

Providing there are no problems with his work permit - and United do not expect any - he will be Ferguson's fourth signing of the summer

Bellion and goalkeeper Tim Howard have all been recruited. Ferguson said that he wanted to

Eric Djemba-Djemba, David

rejuvenate the squad. "We don't have that many in their 30s now, only Roy Keane, Fabien Barthez, Ryan Giggs and Ole

"But there is a group below them as well with great experience. When you are thinking about the future it is easier to construct your model with vounger players so we had to look at that 22-23 age group.

Djemba-Djemba and Bellion both played in the 3-1 defeat by



KLEBERSON

Sporting Lisbon on Wednesday

Ferguson said: "Eric Djemba-Djemba has broken into the Cameroon team and played all their games and he is only 22. He has a long future in front of him but he is

Lucio sees long Leverkusen future



AFP, Leverkusen

Bundesliga leaders Bayer Leverkusen are trying to secure Brazilian defender Lucio with an extended contract offer which could one day see him become a coach at the club

The 2002 World Cup winner, 25, looked set for a big-money move abroad after Bayer's slump last season but Lucio admits he is considering an offer by the club's general manager Reiner Calmund.

A five-star seaside hotel in South

Wales is calling in a celebrity feng

shui expert to stop an embarrassing

losing streak among football teams

in Cardiff Bay hopes Paul Darby -

well-known in Britain for his appear-

ances on such TV shows as "Big

Brother" -- can lift a jinx that has

already struck at least four visiting

things, including throwing some salt

and doing a blessing on the build-

ing," said James Turner, a manager

at the futuristic 136-room hotel, part

he said. "But we will have to wait and

house blessings and Chinese

novelist Jackie Collins and soul

songstress Des'ree among his

cleanse an "unlucky" changing

room at Cardiff's Millennium

His web site lists rock star Sting,

Last year he was summoned to

Feng shui is an ancient Chinese

philosophy that seeks to balance

energy forces. Widely practiced in

Hong Kong and elsewhere in East

Asia, it became trendy in Britain in

Rush praises

Liverpool great Ian Rush said Friday

that Sweden striker Henrik Larsson

was right to stay at Celtic and not

Last month Larsson equalled

Former Wales striker Rush said

Rush's record of 30 goals in

European competition for a single

that proved how Larsson was not

just being gifted goals in a league

where Celtic and Rangers have

play in England's Premiership.

Larsson

AFP, Glasgow

British club.

monopolised the title.

installed artificial pitch.

"It will be fascinating to watch,"

of the Rocco Forte group.

astrology.

clients.

"Dr. Darby will be doing different

The Saint David's Hotel and Spa

Feng shui

for luck!

"Calmund has told me I can stay here as long as I want," Lucio was reported to have said in German newspaper Express. "And after my career become a coach at Bayer." Lucio, who is contracted with

Bayer until June 2004, has attracted the attention of Italian clubs Juventus and Roma, and also freespending English Premiership side Chelsea, but maintains he is no rush to leave the BayArena.

"I will only leave Bayer if my family also wants that," added

"I can imagine staying here

AFP, London

Chelsea boss Claudio Ranieri has hailed his 15-million-pound (24-million-dollar) signing Juan Sebastian Veron as the best midfielder in the world and predicted that the Argentinian will thrive at Stamford

Speaking as Chelsea unveiled their latest acquisitions, Veron and England midfielder Joe Cole, the Italian manager also squashed speculation that Inter Milan striker Christian Vieri could be next on the shopping list.

"I think Christian will stay at Inter." he said while refusing to comment on whether Chelsea had made a bid for the Italian international.

Inter Milan too, have denied newspaper reports that they have agreed a deal to sell its Vieri to Chelsea.

British newspapers reported on Thursday that Chelsea had agreed a 20 million pounds (US\$32.31 million) transfer fee with Inter for the former

Lazio and Juventus forward. But a spokesman for Inter said: There is no agreement with any club, there are not even any negotiations. Christian Vieri is an Interplayer and he will wear Inter's shirt next season as well. There is no doubt at all about that."

Vieri, 30, joined Inter from Lazio in 1999 for a then world record fee of US\$50 million having previously played for Spanish club Atletico Madrid.

The burly striker, who spent his youth in Australia, has played for nine clubs in his career

The arrival of Veron and Cole has taken Chelsea's spending since Roman Abramovich bought the club last month to nearly 60 million pounds. But Ranieri admitted he would have his work cut out to blend the new

players into a winning outfit. "Rome wasn't built in a day. I think Alex Ferguson had seven years to win his first title and for me now it is important to build a team and secondly a

"I want to build a spirit for the group because you can have all the best players in the world but if you do not have a group you cannot win.

Ranieri, the bookmakers favourite to be the first Premiership manager sacked this season, also claimed that Abramovich understood that it would take time for the new Chelsea players to settle in and insisted that all the players brought in had been identified as targets by him.

Celebrating the arrival of Veron and Cole, Ranieri enthused: "I think Veron is the best midfielder in the world and 'm very happy to have him at the club.

"Cole is a fantastic young player. I spoke to Gianfranco Zola and Paolo di Canio about him and they told me that Joe was ready for Chelsea.

Veron, Cole promise fireworks

Football

REUTERS, London

Chelsea's new midfield signing Juan Sebastian Veron insists he will regain the form that helped his Lazio side win the Italian double in 2000.

Veron, who has left premier league champions Manchester United in a 15 million pound (\$24.12 million) deal, believes he can return to the consistent level of form that often deserted him during his two mixed years at Old Trafford.

"What I didn't have was the continuity that perhaps I had at Lazio in the vears I was there." he told Reuters after being unveiled by Chelsea at a news conference on Thursday.

"Clearly, the change of scene had something to do with it, but I am convinced that I can get back that continuity that I missed at Manchester United.

"Having a coach like [Italian Claudio] Ranieri, who knows me, and who I've played against [as a coach] in Italy, will certainly be

The Argentine international also feels he owes a debt to the former Fiorentina boss, who has spent nearly 60 million pounds since Chelsea agreed a takeover by Russian oil tycoon Roman

"I feel proud, first of all, because they could have gone for anyone and they chose me," Veron said. "For me, it's a question of pride

and also of repaying all the faith that they have placed in me." Veron played for Sampdoria and

Parma, with whom he won the UEFA Cup and Italian Cup in 1999, before helping Lazio win their domestic league and cup double in 2000 under current England coach Sven-Goran Eriksson. Veron was presented alongside fellow midfielder Joe Cole, whose

England prospects have clearly been enhanced since leaving relegated West Ham United. "It was probably the hardest decision of my life to leave...it was very emotional, because I'd been

there since I was a baby really," the 21-year-old told reporters. "But on the other hand, there are great things going on at Chelsea...I'm going to come here and learn my trade with some of the best players in the world. But I want to play -- no player wants to sit on

Playing down what is expected of



the gifted ball-player, Cole said: "I've been dealing with expectations since I was 17, maybe younger. People expect me to do amazing things every time I get the ball. I don't think there'll be much differ-Echoing coach Claudio Ranieri's

pre-requisite for winning trophies, he said: "The main thing is that we season really come together as a team and produce a good team spirit, and the

Real romp past HK

Cole, whose skills are seen as helping to replace Gianfranco Zola after the Italian's return to his native Sardinia, was wary of the compari-

Two goals from Ronaldo helped

Real Madrid record a comfortable 4

2 victory over a Hong Kong XI on the

latest leg of the Spanish giants'

Brazilian World Cup star

Ronaldo struck in the 13th and

34th minutes as Real turned on

the style with some dazzling

attacking football to delight a sell-

out 40,000 crowd at the Hong

attackers always threatened in

front of goal, the Spaniards'

defensive frailty was exposed by

a makeshift Hong Kong side,

bolstered by the presence of

several mainland Chinese play-

The Hong Kong XI embar-

rassed Real to score twice,

China's Wang Peng heading

home on 26 minutes before Li Yao

rifled a shot home from close

reserve, with new signing David

Beckham, French playmaker

Zinedine Zidane, Portugal's Luis

Figo and skipper Raul showing

Figo opened the scoring with a

some wonderful touches through-

Barca bank on history

Yet Real always had plenty in

range on half-time.

But while Real's superstar

Football

Asian tour here Friday.

Kong Stadium.

son with Chelsea's top scorer last

penalty on seven minutes, coolly

placing his spot-kick into the

bottom left-hand corner after

Hong Kong's Lee Wai-man was

adjudged to have tripped Roberto

minutes later, bamboozling his

marker with three step-overs in

quick succession before thunder-

ing a low shot past Chinese inter-

national goalkeeper An Qi on the

easy early stride midway through

Hong Kong a corner, and Chinese

international Wang rose from Li

Ming's cross to head home as

Normal service resumed within

Raul made it 3-1 to Real on 34

minutes with a delicate chip over

An from a tight angle before

Ronaldo notched his second --

from Beckham -- a minute later.

courtesy of a raking 50-metre ball

their star names in the second half

the game petered out. Raul went

close with an audacious 40-yard

chip that hit a post, while Ronaldo

tour of Asia with a game against

Thailand in Bangkok on Sunday.

Real complete their four-match

squandered a string of chances.

With Real replacing most of

Real keeper Iker Casillas flapped.

But Real were jolted out of their

A rare foray upfield earned

near-post to make it 2-0.

minutes though.

Ronaldo added his first six

"You can't compare me to Franco because he's a legend here and he's done everything in the game," said Cole. "I'm a young lad starting my career. I'm just going to give it my

finalise details of the trip, said. Before the German visit Iraq are due to appear in a three-cornered

Stange's side face Vietnam in their first qualifier for the 2004

The 55-year-old has managed

He returned to resume his fouryear contract after the end of the coalition-led war to topple Saddam

Roma shift

Serie A club AS Roma on Friday pointed the finger at Italian soccer's financial regulator as the row over

Roma, along with three other clubs, are under investigation after they presented what appeared to be forged bank guarantees as part of their registration process for the

All Italian clubs have to present evidence of sound finances to Covisoc, the sport's financial regulator, before their registration for the

season is approved The clubs provided documents from a small company Sbc who

A former employee of the company says her signature was forged on the document.

Roma's director of sport. Franco

application for next season was rejected. "We had little time and Covisoc

penned us into a corner at the moment when we put forward our plan of quarantees," said Baldini.

were unaware of Sbc until Covisoc's suggestion. "They were not in our phone

the controllers," he added.

"Roma are the injured party in this case and we will do everything we can," said Baldini who added

Football Federation asked for them. The public prosecutor of Rome has launched an investigation into the affair which also involves Serie

B club Napoli and Serie C teams

Darby, based in Nottingham in central England, specializes in

SAMBA IN TOWN! Two Brazilian samba dancers wave smoke canisters during the match between Hong Kong and Real Madrid at Hong Kong yesterday.

Can you resist

Free showers, cheaper drinks and more toilets are some of the measures German clubs have come up with to persuade fans to attend Bundesliga matches this weekend despite the heatwave sweeping the country. The bad news came from VfL Bochum, with coach Peter Neururer asking the club's faithful supporters to give up beer for Saturday's home game against

"He hasn't just scored goals in the Scottish league, he's done it in Europe against the top sides and Hamburg SV. that shows just how good a player Water will be cheaper in Bochum, he is." said Rush, in Scotland to a glass costing 1.50 euros instead of promote Dunfermline's soon-to-bethe usual 2.50. There will be three times more of it available and a tent will be built outside the stadium with

"I don't think he will ever regret not playing in England," Rush extra toilets Cologne and Bremen will both . Bundesliga weekend of all time with

1530 local (1330 GMT). In Dortmund, whose renovated stadium holds a massive 79,000, there will be 200 medical staff compared to the usual 100 and the fans will be briefed on what to do to reduce the risk of an accident. There will also be more non-alcoholic beverages than usual on offer, and more plastic

temperatures expected to exceed 30

degrees Celsius at kickoff time --

The best place to go is probably Bremen, where local club Werder will entertain Borussia Moenchengladbach. In addition to the usual stands selling drinks, there will be a giant truck offering ice cream.

Most clubs will let fans carry in plastic bottles, providing they do not contain alcohol

Makaay formalities complete AFP, Munich

The protracted transfer of striker Roy Makaay has finally been completed here Friday with the Dutch international joining Bayern Munich from Deportivo La Coruna in an 18.75 million euro deal The 28-



ROY MAKAAY Deportivo for the Dutch marksman, who will forego a million euros from his salary.

Makaay has signed a fouryear contract that has finally brought to an end weeks of negotiations.

Football have enough fans, social clout

AFP, Barcelona

Barcelona vice-president Ferran Soriano admitted Friday the Catalan giants and former European champions have enormous debts - but insisted their history and loyal fan base would see them through.

Soriano told Barcelona-based

daily La Vanguardia the club, who flopped last season to miss out on lucrative Champions League qualification, had turned in a record net loss for last season of 164 million euros (186 million dollars). The same paper on Tuesday

had put the club's overall debt mountain at 220 million euros (250 million dollars) - but Soriano said he was optimistic the debts could be slashed. "The club is not bankrupt ... we

are optimistic as FC Barcelona

and history to overcome this situation.

Soriano added that the club could become profitable within three years.

Despite the debts the club still shelled out 30 million euros (33.6million-dollar) on Brazilian World Cup winner Ronaldinho in a bid to ensure this year they do reach the Champions League and set about catching a dominant Real Madrid. Last season they made a poor

start but just managed to snatch a UEFA Cup spot. Barcelona's losses cover the

year to June 30, when new president Joan Laporta took over. Of the debts an estimated 60

million euros correspond to the club's running costs while the remainder are funds set aside. which count as losses, to cover depreciation in player transfer

A tax bill of 29.5 million euros

end of the season. Media reports Friday said Barca's new board were looking at

did not help Barca's cause at the

taking legal action against their

predecessors amid alleged finan-

cial irregularities. Sports daily AS said 190 million euros were spent on 17 players in the three years that Joan Gaspart was president, while only four remain at the club.

After four trophy-less years

Barcelona have turned to former

Dutch star Frank Rijkaard to turn their fortunes around after replacing the sacked Raddy Antic. Soriana said Laporta would pursue a "very aggressive" cost-

cutting agenda. Salary cuts are part of that agenda with Laporta set to trim this year's bill by 12.6 million euros while it is also hiking season ticket prices by between 20

and 40 percent

Ranieri would have little difficulty in convincing Viduka to move to Stamford Bridge. The 27-year-old is disillusioned at Leeds after seeing high-profile players such as Harry Kewell and Jonathan Woodgate leave the club. Peter Reid would be willing to sell the Australian provided the fee is

for bonuses worth £1m which Viduka is owed for the three years remaining on his contract. Reid is furious that Viduka has not travelled to Ireland and said: "Obviously I'm disappointed but that's all I'm prepared to say at the moment.' Germany

substantial enough to compensate

welcomes Iraq

AFP, Frankfurt

The German football federation (DFB) has invited the Iraqi national team on an all-expenses paid training camp here later this month. Under their German coach

Bernd Stange Irag will set up base in Bad Worishofen, Bavaria, from August 27 to September 13, with all travel and accommodation costs covered by the DFB. They will play a number of friend-

lies during the tour as part of their preparation for the qualifying stages of the 2006 World Cup. "This visit to Germany is an

amazing chance for us to make a fresh start. It's an ideal base to prepare for the 2006 World Cup," Stange, in Frankfurt Thursday to

competition in Tehran against Iran, Cameroon and Uruguay.

Olympic Games early in September.

the Iraqi national team since November 2002 but he left Iraq on February 13 citing fear over war breaking out and his claim that he

Hussein's regime

Blame

REUTERS, Rome

suspected forged financial documents widened.

new season.

have since denied giving a guaran-

Baldini. told a news conference that the club only turned to Sbc on the advice of Covisoc, after their initial

The Roma official said his club

book," said Baldini, "They were indicated to us by the highest organ of control in Italian football and so it never entered our heads to control

that Roma were ready to present fresh guarantees as soon as the

Cosenza and Spal.

the Bundesliga? Football promises to be the hottest