



Chelsea's Hernan Crespo celebrates after scoring with his first touch against Wolves yesterday.

## Rooney ready to rock 'n' roll

AFP, Middlesbrough

Everton's teenage striker Wayne Rooney is poised to pile on the misery for struggling Middlesbrough when the teams meet at the Riverside here on Sunday.

The 17-year-old suffered an ankle injury and was taken off after just 30 minutes of last Saturday's 2-2 draw against Newcastle at Goodison Park.

But he has recovered and now seems certain to start on Sunday against a Middlesbrough side who are second from bottom and who are still searching for their first win of the season.

"Wayne should be fit," said Everton boss David Moyes. "He only missed the start of the week and he's trained the rest of the week so I see no problem with him."

Boro have their own injury worries with which to contend.

Spanish international midfielder Gaizka Mendietia is rated as only "50-50" for the game after picking up a calf injury in training.

"We are hoping he will shake it off by Sunday," said Boro manager Steve McClaren.

Mendietia has been an ever-present for the north-east side since his move from Lazio.

## Henry upbeat

AFP, London

Arsenal still have what it takes to win titles at home and abroad star striker Thierry Henry believes despite the 3-0 Champions League thumping at the hands of Inter Milan in midweek.

The shock defeat to the rampant Italians prompted a wave of criticism and suggestions that Arsene Wenger's men are simply not up to the challenge of top European competition.

But Henry is adamant he can help Arsenal put that defeat out of their system, and takes solace from the Gunners' fine start to the domestic season.

Arsenal currently top the Premiership ahead of Sunday's match at Manchester United, and Henry told The Sun: "Losing to Inter Milan was obviously a very bad result but it is not all over."

"There are still five games left in the group and everything to play for."

"The spirit that this team has simply makes us even more determined to qualify."

"This is a record start for Arsenal. It is the most points we have taken from our first five games in the competition."

# Nistelrooy being nice

Football

SPORTINGLIFE, London

Ruud van Nistelrooy paid a glowing tribute to Thierry Henry as the Premiership's deadliest sharpshooters get ready for a shoot-out at Old Trafford.

Discussion of any meeting between Manchester United and Arsenal involves a comparison between the Red Devils' Dutch master and Highbury's flying Frenchman.

Though widely different in style, the pair have come to symbolise the wealth of talent on offer in the English game.

Chelsea may have the star names, but in van Nistelrooy and Henry, United and Arsenal have the true stars, proven performers with the goals and medals to match.

And, while feisty personal duels will litter Sunday's white-hot encounter, who emerges victorious from the striking head-to-head will almost certainly determine the destination of the points.

Which is why van Nistelrooy is warning his United teammates to be on their guard.

"Thierry Henry is one of the best, not just in England, not just in Europe, but in the whole world," claimed the former PSV striker.

"People compare us as strikers

and goalscorers but we are very different in our approach to the game."

"Thierry has speed, vision and technique. Everyone knows about his pace and it's something we have to be aware of."

"We have handled him well over the past few games but he is a great player and we will have to be at our very best to stop him again."

Though van Nistelrooy is largely correct in his assertion that United's defence have managed to subdue Henry in recent meetings, the Frenchman was responsible for both the Gunners' goals in the 2-2 draw at Highbury last April.

The second in particular continues to trouble Sir Alex Ferguson, who is convinced Henry was offside when he back-flicked Ashley Cole's mis-hit shot past Fabien Barthez.

Van Nistelrooy was also on target that night, opening the scoring with a brilliant goal before Campbell was controversially sent off. The England defender's participation tomorrow is in doubt following the death of his father earlier this week.

Though Campbell's absence would be a serious blow to the Gunners' hopes as they look to recover from their midweek Champions League humiliation by Inter Milan, van Nistelrooy refused to discuss the overall significance after Campbell's loss.

"What is the point talking about

football when something like that happens, it's irrelevant," said the 28-year-old.

"All I can say is that we are thinking about him and wish him all the best."

If Campbell decides not to make the trip north, it would leave Ferguson with the dilemma of whether to adopt a more attacking approach or pack his midfield in an

ankle means he is well short of 100 per cent fitness.

With 44 goals last season and four already this, van Nistelrooy has proved he enjoys his role as lone striker, with Ryan Giggs, Paul Scholes, Cristiano Ronaldo and Solskjaer among those who have been asked to provide support from deeper positions.

Like United with Henry, Arsenal's defence will have targeted the Red Devils' top scorer as the man they have to stop. However, as he has proved so often in the past, knowing how to stop van Nistelrooy and doing so are different.

"It doesn't matter if I score in 10 games on the trot or miss out for a few, I will not change my approach," he said.

"I will keep fighting for my chances and focussing on what I am doing, rather than who we are playing."

"Everyone knows what a big game this is and Arsenal will be hard to beat despite their loss on Wednesday."

"People talk about what effect that may have on them, or whether they will want revenge because we won the league last season but I don't think it matters once you get onto the pitch."

"All you are concentrating on is winning that one game, what has happened in the past is of no meaning then."



RUUD VAN NISTELROOY

effort to swarm Arsenal's other world-class talent, captain Patrick Vieira.

Much may depend on the fitness of Nicky Butt, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and Roy Keane, although it is hard to imagine Ferguson leaving his captain out of such an important match, even if the Irishman's sore

## Premiership

# Crespo doubles Wolves' pain

Football

AFP, Wolverhampton

Hernan Crespo scored his first goals for Chelsea as Claudio Ranieri's multi-million-pound squad stormed to the top of the Premiership with a five-goal demolition of newcomers Wolves on Saturday.

Crespo delivered the first return on the 16.5 million pounds he cost by scoring with his first touch after coming on as a substitute midway through the second half then rounded off the rout with a clinically taken second in stoppage time.

Goals from Frank Lampard, Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink and Damien Duff had put Chelsea in control by the time Crespo came off the bench.

But it was the Argentine's goals which ensured Chelsea went above Arsenal at the top of the table, albeit only on goal difference.

The thrashing leaves Wolves in dire straits. With just one point from

six games and without a goal since the opening day of the season, Dave Jones's side already appears doomed to an instant return to the first division.

Ranieri's decision to rest skipper Marcel Desailly means goalkeeper Carlo Cudicini is now the only player to have played in every Chelsea match this season.

But Ranieri will have taken heart from the spirited performances delivered by the players who have been most vocal about their frustration with the constant chopping and changing of the side, Duff, Lampard and Floyd Hasselbaink.

The Dutch striker made the opener with a deft lay-off on the edge of the area which Lampard struck sweetly beyond Michael Oakes's despairing dive.

Hasselbaink then got on the scoresheet himself. Duff was the architect, playing a 1-2 with Eidur Gudjohnsen before slipping a pass into the path of Hasselbaink, who finished with a left foot shot across Oakes.

By this stage Chelsea were on cruise control and the visitors might

comfortably have been four or five goals up by the interval.

It would have been at least three had John Terry's early effort not been ruled out because his header from a Duff corner struck the hand of Gudjohnsen.

The contact was involuntary but the referee blew up for handball as Terry bundled the rebound into the net.

Chelsea's third came seven minutes after the restart with Duff sidefooting Gudjohnsen's cross home from close range.

Crespo had been on the field for barely two minutes when Duff once more unlocked the Wolves defence with a run to the byline.

A left foot cross rifled low across the goalmouth eluded Oakes and the Argentinian was left with the simplest of finishes at the back post.

Crespo had to work harder for his second, getting in front of his marker to meet Lampard's short pass to the near post with an unstoppable first time shot across Oakes and into the far corner.

# China paid compensation

AFP, Los Angeles

Football's world governing body FIFA has paid China one million dollars as compensation for losing the 2003 women's football

World Cup, a top FIFA official said on Friday.

Urs Linsi, the general secretary of FIFA, said the money was for salaries and organizing costs that China incurred as the original host of the World Cup.

"We rewarded them for their costs," said Linsi during a news conference here to kick off the 16-team, 32-match tournament that begins Saturday.

"China had hired staff and had expenses so we paid them."

China also was awarded the

2007 Women's World Cup.

The tournament was relocated from China to the United States because of the deadly outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS).

SARS emerged in south China's Guangdong province in 2002 and quickly spread to become a global menace. SARS infected more than 8,000 people and left more than 900 dead in 32 countries, with 349 deaths and 5,327 of the infections being recorded in China.

Markus Sieglar, FIFA's director of communications, said Friday they have no regrets about relocating the World Cup despite the diminished danger of SARS in China at the moment.

"No one knew at the time how SARS was going to develop," Sieglar said.

Because of the relocation, orga-

nizers had only 128 days to get ready. Linsi said they were helped along by the fact the United States hosted the 1994 men's World Cup and 1999 Women's World Cup.

"Normally we need three years to plan these tournaments," said Linsi. "So to have a setup like this in 128 days is exceptional. But it was not easy."

Linsi said the biggest hurdles were finding venues and getting a match and television schedule that would satisfy football fans around the world.

They also had to arrange for visas for the North Korean team, which is making its first appearance in the Women's World Cup finals.

"It is not so easy for some people to get into the United States of America," Linsi said.

FIFA also had to defend the

decision to move the final from the 90,000-seat Rose Bowl stadium, which hosted the US-China 1999 final, to a much smaller venue.

The October 12 final will take place in a new multi-purpose 30,000 seat Home Depot stadium in the south Los Angeles suburb of Carson.

"It is important for FIFA to have a real football stadium in the US. This is a reward for taking this step," said Linsi.

"If you have a sold out Rose Bowl you have a lot more revenue. But everything can't come down to money."

Dan Flynn, the US Soccer Association secretary general, said, "It didn't come down to money. It came down to how to grow the sport."

## Crooks break into Figo's house

AFP, Madrid

Armed burglars broke into the house of Real Madrid star Luis Figo Friday and made off with valuables and jewelry, El Pais newspaper reported Saturday.

The two thieves forced their way into the Portuguese player's luxury residence and tied up an employee who was alone in the house at the time.

They snatched family jewelry and made off with a safe containing valuables.

Figo, his wife Helen Svedin, and their young daughter were not in the house at the time.

## Royal prices

AFP, Malaga

Fans of Spanish first division outfit Malaga will have to dig deep to see Real Madrid's stars in town for a league match on Sunday, following ticket price hikes of up to 300 per cent.

Even a place in the cheap seats will cost 90 euros (100 dollars) but some will have to fork out 200 euros as the cash-strapped host club tries to maximise revenue.

Malaga's 19,000 season-ticket holders will be unaffected but those turning up to buy one of 7,000 further tickets on sale to see the likes of David Beckham, Ronaldo and Zinedine Zidane will find prices have gone through the roof.

"It's the most expensive show in Spain," said sports daily Marca, who drew a comparison with tickets for a show by world famous tenor Placido Domingo at Madrid's Royal Theatre costing 130 euros and tickets selling at 120 euros for Rolling Stones concerts in Spain.

# Portugal promises security

UEFA Euro 2004 PORTUGAL

AFP, Lisbon

Portugal's security preparations for the Euro 2004 finals, faulted by a number of top officials as being incomplete just nine-months from the big kick-off, will be ready on time, Interior Minister Antonio Figueiredo Lopes has said.

"Acquisitions of new security equipment will be completed by the end of the year because during the first few months of 2004 they need to be used in police training," he told reporters Friday following a conference on the theme of violence in sports.

"Changes to the legal code will also be adopted on time," he added.

The government has set aside 3.5 million euros (four million dollars) to buy water canons, batons, riot gear and other secu-

rity equipment for the police, and has drawn up plans to set up round-the-clock courts that will have the power to quickly extradite potential troublemakers, in order to prepare for the football finals.

The minister was speaking just one day after the chairman of a parliamentary committee overseeing Euro 2004 preparations said the 10 new stadiums being built or renovated for the event still did not have adequate security material.

"What we have seen is that there is a lack of visible security apparatus both inside and outside of the stadiums, there is no control, and entry points are confusing," Laurentino Dias told Radio Renascenca on Thursday.

The head of Portugal's main police association meanwhile has warned the country does not have enough officers to guarantee the safety of the three million people

who are expected to visit the nation during the championship, which will take place from June 12 to July 4.

Alberto Torres, the president of ASPP which represents Portugal's 22,000 police officers, told a news conference on Wednesday Portugal's cash-strapped police force needs 3,000 more officers to comfortably provide security during the tournament.

Portugal, one of Europe's poorest nations, is spending some 800 million euros to build seven new state-of-the-art stadiums and renovate three others for the tournament, the biggest international sports event ever held in the country.

The government is betting that the European football finals, the largest sporting event after the Olympics and the World Cup, will lead to a substantial tourism boost.



PHOTO: AFP

A file photo shows Oleg Blokhin, the legendary forward of Kiev's Dynamo and winner of the Golden Ball in 1975, during a press conference in Kiev 23 September 22. Blokhin was appointed as coach of the Ukraine national team on September 18.