

Inamoto in a dream

AFP, London Japanese international midfielder Junichi Inamoto believes his wonder goal against Manchester United last week can help little Fulham stay alive amongst the giants of the Premiership.

Inamoto, who has been in and out of the Londoners' side, scored a fine goal as Fulham defeated the champions at Old Trafford but his only regret is that the booking he picked up will rule him out of Sunday's home match against Liverpool.

"I still can't believe it really," said Inamoto.

"It was my first game at Old Trafford, in fact I've never played Man Utd before, so playing there and scoring a goal made me very happy.

"Playing in front of 67,000 people was very special, and Man Utd are very famous all over the world, and they're probably the most popular team in Japan. I think that would have been very big news in Japan.

"All my life I've wanted to play in big games like this one at Old Trafford - it was a great experience and meant a lot to me."

Inamoto struggled for a first team place under former coach Jean Tigana last year, but has played a part in every match for the Cottagers this time round under new manager Chris Coleman.

However, that run will end Sunday due to the yellow card he received for a foul on Eric Djemba-Djemba at Old Trafford.

"I don't understand what's been going on," he told the official Fulham website.

"I think there has been some SEE PAGE 14 COL 8

Ferguson slams Arsenal

Football

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United boss Sir Alex Ferguson on Friday accused the Football Association (FA) of letting Arsenal off the hook over the fracas that broke out after the two clubs' ill-tempered Premiership clash in September.

In remarks that reignited his long-simmering feud with Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger, Ferguson claimed the Gunners would be "delighted" with the sanctions announced by the FA on Thursday and said he understood why many people suspected a deal had been done.

Ferguson's comments came a day after Arsenal were fined a record 175,000 pounds and had four of their players banned for a total of nine matches as a result of the Old Trafford clashes.

The United manager dismissed suggestions that the punishment was fair. "I think Arsenal will be delighted with the decision, that's without question," he said.

Ferguson went on to cite a newspaper report that Arsenal insiders knew what the punishment would be a week before the fines and bans were announced.

"I read this morning they did a deal before they went in there and I think that was the suspicion right throughout the country that a deal was being done," he said.

Wenger responded to Ferguson's comments with the withering tone he generally reserves for his verbal spats with the Scot.

"Some people are happy with the sentences we've been given, some

people are not happy," the Frenchman said. "For some, even if you hang us it will not be enough. Maybe they wanted it at Hyde Park in front of the whole country! We cannot influence that."

Ferguson's comments could land him in hot water with the FA although he did stop short -- though only just -- of overtly accusing the FA of coming to a behind-the-scenes compromise with Arsenal.

Such outbursts have cost Ferguson dear in the past. Last season he was fined by UEFA after suggesting the Champions League quarter-final draw, which pitted his side against Real Madrid, had been fixed.

Arsenal had defenders Lauren and Martin Keown banned for four and three matches respectively while skipper Patrick Vieira and Ray Parlour will each serve one-match bans. The four players and Ashley Cole were also fined heavily on top of the record fine imposed on

their club for failing to control them.

Wenger said he regarded the punishment meted out to his players as harsh and said the club had not ruled out an appeal.

Ferguson's comments reflect the fact that the bans, which come into force on November 17, will not deprive Arsenal of players for any really big games.

If Arsenal do not appeal, the biggest impact will come when all four players will miss the Premiership trip to Birmingham on November 22.

But Vieira might have missed that match through injury anyway and the league leaders should be able to survive without Keown and Lauren

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SIR ALEX FERGUSON

British football hits new low

THE SUN, London

Four current or past England football players are set to be targeted in drugs tests, according to Britain's Sun newspaper Saturday, which claimed the group were cocaine users.

The tabloid said that for legal reasons it could not name the four -- whom it said were either currently involved with England or had been in the past five years -- or a fifth player from a Premiership club who is also to be tested.

The names of all five have been passed to the drugs test agency UK Sport, the Sun said.

A Football Association source told the tabloid: "All of them can expect a knock at the door."

The five targeted for spot checks were identified by former Queen's Park Rangers player Leon Jeanne, 22, whose career was damaged by his use of cocaine, according to the Sun.

Jeanne told the paper that he saw the stars snorting the drug in London nightclubs.

The 22-year-old, once hailed as the "black George Best", lifted the lid on soccer's drug culture after seeing his career wrecked when he got hooked on snorting lines of coke.

As he poured out his heart yesterday, he said: "Footballers think they can get away with taking cocaine as it only stays in the body for 48 hours.

"If they are unlucky enough to be

called in for a drugs test, it is likely to have disappeared out of them."

The five footballers he named as fellow coke users were passed by The Sun to the country's drug inspection agency UK Sport.

The names were handed over to the Football Association's chief medical officer.

Bosses at the FA's Soho Square HQ in London refused to speculate publicly about future actions against the players.

But the source said: "The FA can target-test players after receiving information.

It is the medical officer's decision. The information about these five comes from a fellow footballer so it is high-grade intelligence."

The Sun is barred for legal reasons from publishing the identities of the five players.

But disgraced Leon told us how he saw them snorting the drug in West End nightclubs.

The former Queens Park Rangers and Cardiff winger claimed it was an England international who introduced him to coke.

An FA spokesman said: "We have an extensive drug-testing programme in which we invest heavily. There's no place for drugs in the game."

Dad-of-two Leon, who now claims to be drug-free, said: "I've never seen any footballers take any other drug apart from cocaine.

"Ecstasy stays inside you longer and

marijuana can be traced six weeks later. That's why cocaine was our drug of choice."

He told how he was still high when ambushed by drug testers 12 hours after snorting four lines of "Charlie".

He tried to hoodwink them by filling his sample bottle with water from the toilet.

Leon then slipped home, turned off his mobile and ignored club pleas to return and retake the test.

The talented footballer playing for Cardiff at the time said: "I laid back on my bed knowing I had been caught. The UK Sport guys were outside my door. I did not answer.

"I did not leave the flat for two days. When I switched my mobile phone off there must have been 50 messages, the majority of them from the club.

"The inevitable happened -- I was given a ban from football by the Welsh FA and Cardiff washed their hands of me."

Leon -- cleared in court this week of being part of a £500,000 drugs supply ring in the Welsh capital -- said: "I've not touched a drug since my arrest. I have been a fool with my career. But I fully support UK Sport looking more closely at what footballers get up to.

"Drug taking has spread throughout football -- not just the type of people I've been hanging around with.

"My story is a wake-up call to footballers. They think they can get away with taking cocaine."

Last night Sky TV soccer pundit Jimmy Hill welcomed the decision to carry out random tests on the five stars.

He said: "There is no place for drugs in football. Like stars from the world of entertainment, footballers have a duty to set an example."

Ex-England hero Chris Waddle, who won 62 caps, confessed: "It does not shock me to know that four of those five names have England connections. I was offered a lot of substances -- cocaine and ecstasy -- but I always said I was not interested."

Steve Powell, head of development of the Football Supporters Federation, said: "Every fan wants to know the football players are drug free.

"It is not unreasonable for a footballer to take random, on-the-spot drug tests."

Sun Sport columnist Jimmy Greaves said: "Anybody found to have any connection with drugs should be banned from the game. There's no grey area."

Leon's bombshell revelations come as the nation waits on tenterhooks over the future of England defender Rio Ferdinand.

The Manchester United ace, 24, faces a maximum two-year ban for failing to take a test at the team's training ground on September 23.

He claims he merely forgot about the request for a sample from UK Sport though he did pass a test two days later.

FA denies drugs claim

BBC ONLINE, London

The Football Association has denied newspaper claims that four England internationals are being targeted for cocaine abuse.

The Sun newspaper claims five Premiership players - four of them recent or current England internationals - face random testing this season.

The five names have allegedly been handed to UK Sport and the FA by the newspaper after information received from former professional footballer Leon Jeanne, himself a confessed cocaine user.

But FA head of media relations Adrian Bevington insisted: "We refute claims that we have received information claiming England players are involved in drug-taking." Bevington insisted the FA would act immediately on any such information, but stressed that no current England stars have failed a drugs test.

He said: "The FA would like to make it clear that no current England players have tested positive for any recreational drug or performance-enhancing drug."

Bevington added: "We have an extensive drug-testing programme and additionally invest very heavily in drug education and awareness.

"We work very closely with UK Sport on this matter and take our responsibilities extremely seriously.

"Clearly, if anyone made the FA aware of any such evidence we would look very closely at it."

Chile draft Salas in

AFP, Santiago

Marcelo Salas and David Pizarro were on Friday included in Chile's squad for two South American World Cup qualifiers next month though both have been struggling with injury.

Coach Juvenal Olmos selected 27 players, including River Plate striker Salas and Udinese midfielder Pizarro, for matches against Uruguay in Montevideo on November 15 and against Paraguay in Santiago three days later.

Salas, who returned to River Plate from Juventus in July, was selected despite recently suffering a recurrence of an old hamstring injury.

Pizarro however has still not fully recovered from muscular problems but Olmos is banking on him being match fit in the next few weeks.

Chile fared well in their first two qualifiers, drawing 2-2 with Argentina in Buenos Aires and beating Peru 2-1 in Santiago.

SQUAD: Nelson Tapia (Cobreloa), Alex Varas (Santiago Wanderers), Carlos Ortega (Universidad de Concepcion). DEFENDERS: Rodrigo Perez (Cobreloa), Mark Gonzalez (Universidad Catolica), Rafael Olarra (Independiente/ARG), Pablo Contreras (Celta Vigo/SPA), Miguel Ramirez (Universidad Catolica), Luis Fuentes (Cobreloa), Ricardo SEE PAGE 14 COL 8



IF I COULD BAT LIKE YOU! Australia one-day captain Ricky Ponting looks at a photograph titled 'Bradman: Captain of the Century' at an auction in Bombay on October 31. Ponting opened the sale that will sell the limited edition item autographed by the Australian legend.

Premiership L'pool target bookies

Football

AFP, London

Liverpool travel to Fulham on Sunday aiming to turn the tables on the bookmakers who have written them off as serious Premiership title contenders.

Gerard Houllier's side were this week quoted as 50-1 outsiders to claim the title after a stuttering start to the season which has left them ten points adrift of leaders Arsenal.

For a club with Liverpool's history, such odds with only a quarter of the season gone are little short of insulting and Houllier is determined to turn last weekend's win over Leeds and the midweek victory over Blackburn into the start of a run that hauls his side back into contention.

Fulham are four points ahead of Liverpool in the table and their confidence is sky high after a 3-1 win over Manchester United at Old Trafford.

But Houllier believes his side are good enough to take all three points if

they perform to their potential. "We wanted to be back on the



GERARD HOULLIER

winning track after becoming frustrated about some of our earlier results this season," the French manager said.

"We needed to give a better account of ourselves and we now want to keep that going. Fulham will be a tough game

as they have had a good start and are four points ahead of us in the table. "However I don't want to focus on the opposition and it's what we do that counts."

Houllier has been cheered this week by the sight of influential midfielder Dietmar Hamann returning to action after surgery on his shin in the summer.

The German international, a key player in Houllier's first choice line-up, played for the final quarter hour against Blackburn and then came through 70 minutes of a reserves match on Thursday.

There was also good news with Jamie Carragher and goalkeeper Chris Kirkland both signing contract extensions that will keep them at the club until 2007 and 2009 respectively and Houllier is optimistic that Gerrard and Michael Owen will soon follow suit.

Owen made a scoring return to action against Leeds but he is doubt SEE PAGE 14 COL 8

Salgado for Chelsea?

Football

THE GUARDIAN, Madrid

Real Madrid will make a statement on Monday about Michel Salgado after Spanish radio reported that the Spanish international right-back will join Chelsea next summer.

Salgado, who was also believed to be a target for Manchester United, is out of contract at the season's end and negotiations on an extension have stalled. He will be free to negotiate pre-contract agreements with any club he wishes from the start of January.

Madrid's president, Florentino Perez, is said to have told Salgado: "If I were your father I'd advise you to go."

The report about Salgado, who has just turned 28, joining Chelsea was broadcast by Cadena Ser. It claimed that he had been offered a five-year contract worth £2.6m a year after tax. He would also receive a signing-on fee of £2.6m. Madrid had made Salgado an after-tax offer of around £1.4m a year, less than a quarter of what the team's galacticos earn.

However Salgado's agent Gines SEE PAGE 14 COL 7



MICHEL SALGADO

'Devil's coach' speaks

AFP, Perth

Iraq football coach Bernd Stange Friday defended his decision to take on the job while Saddam Hussein was still in power before the United States-led invasion of the country.

Agreeing that at one stage he had been called "the Devil's coach", the former East German manager said he had accepted the position because it gave him his last chance to take a national side to the World Cup finals.

"At the age of 55, it was my last chance to see a World Cup -- the World Cup of 2006 in my home country, Germany," he said on Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) television.

"It gave me the opportunity to push Iraq to the World Cup. This was the only reason to sign a contract.

"I know I have been criticised for my decision -- and maybe some people are right.

"But they mix politics with sport. They have to accept that I did the same job before the war as what I do now -- I coach young players.

"I have to accept that at one stage I was called 'the Devil's coach'. But I was coach of the Iraqi national team, and soccer is played everywhere -- in North Korea, in Africa, not only in the Western democracies like Australia, or Germany or England.

"We are members of the soccer family of the world family, and we are involved in competitions.

"Football is always peace, it is never a fight, it is never war. Our battle is a battle with the ball, and not with bullets and guns."

Stange said that despite ever- SEE PAGE 14 COL 6

Marauding Martyn

Cricket

AFP, Bombay

Damien Martyn hit a solid 100 to help world champions Australia post a challenging 286-8 against India in a TVS Cup triangular one-day series match here on Wednesday.

The middle-order batsman struck one six and 10 fours in his fifth century to spoil India's chances of restricting the tourists to a modest total in the day-night game on a slow turning pitch.

Martyn put on 78 for the fourth wicket with Andrew Symonds (48) and

111 for the next with Michael Bevan (42) before becoming seamer Ajit Agarkar's one of the three victims in the last over of the match.

Martyn paced his innings remarkably well, initially relying more on singles and twos before going for big strokes. He reached his half-century off 84 balls, but took just 34 more deliveries to complete his hundred.

He opened up after completing his fifty, lofting leg-spinner Anil Kumble for a six to set the stage of the closing-overs onslaught.

Australia were indebted to Martyn for finishing strongly after opener

Adam Gilchrist had provided a blistering start with a 30-ball 41.

The tourists plundered 54 in the opening five overs and 76 in the last 10, thanks to Gilchrist and Martyn.

Australia were in for a surprise after electing to bat.

Left-arm fast bowler Zaheer Khan began with a freak over, sending down one no-ball and three wides before unsettling Matthew Hayden (nought) with a rising delivery.

The left-hander was taken aback, spooning it to point where Yuvraj Singh held an easy catch.

India captain Rahul Dravid then

made an unusual move, summoning part-time spinner Virender Sehwa to share the new ball with Zaheer.

Sehwa was punished by Gilchrist, conceding 14 runs in his opening over before being replaced with off-spinner Harbhajan Singh.

Harbhajan soon had free-stroking Gilchrist caught cutting by Mohammad Kaif in the cover, but Australia kept maintaining an impressive run-rate despite losing the hard-hitting openers.

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Hodgson won't quit

AFP, Dubai

United Arab Emirates' English coach Roy Hodgson insisted on Saturday that he has no intention of quitting his post despite his side's poor start to their Asian Cup qualifying campaign.

The UAE, one of the favourites in Group G, lost 1-0 to Turkmenistan in their first game and could only draw 1-1 with the same unheralded opposition in the return leg.

"We have to understand the difference between performance and the result," said Hodgson, the former Inter Milan, Blackburn Rovers and Switzerland national coach.

"I was very happy with the performance, but feel very sad for the result."

PHOTO: COURTESY

GrameenPhone's Additional General Manager of Marketing Intekhab Mahmud (L) hands over the man-of-the-match's cheque to Richard Johnson at the end of the second and final Test between Bangladesh and England at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong yesterday.

Marseille to seek FIFA's help

Football

AFP, Marseille

Marseille have decided to appeal to world football's ruling body FIFA in their bid to seal the loan transfer of France and Manchester United goalkeeper Fabien Barthez, the club said here Friday.

On Thursday FIFA turned down the French club's loan request on the grounds that the transfer window had now closed.

A Marseille statement Friday said the club would "resort to appealing to FIFA's executive committee" in their bid to seal Barthez' move to the club.

"According to article 34 (of FIFA's regulations) Marseille have sent their intention to appeal to the French Football Federation."

Linke looking for P'ship swansong

AFP, Munich

Bayern Munich's veteran defender Thomas Linke has revealed that he would like to end his career in the English Premiership if Bayern feel he is surplus to requirements at the Olympic Stadium.

Former German international Linke, 33, is out of contract in the summer but still believes he can perform at the top level for two more seasons.

"I feel fit and want to carry on playing for another two years," Linke told Sport 1.

"In an ideal world I would like to end my career at Bayern.

"But if I do not figure in their plans then I would like to spend a season in England." Linke, who arrived from Schalke 04 in 1998, is to hold talks with Bayern during the four-week winter break.