

Real to move for Ancelotti, Henry

AFP, Berlin
Ailing Spanish giants Real Madrid will next week unveil AC Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti as their new manager - and Thierry Henry will head his list of transfer targets, Cadena Ser radio said Thursday.

According to the radio station - considered one of the most reliable information sources in Spain - Ancelotti has agreed to come on board for the coming season.

It added that Arsenal star Henry, who according to reports elsewhere is also a target for Barcelona, would likely follow, particularly if he can first complete his dream of leading the Gunners to the Champions League title.

Both Ancelotti and the French striker have unfinished business in Europe's premier club competition.

Arsenal are on the brink of qualifying for the final following their 1-0 semi-final first leg win at home against Villarreal on Tuesday. Milan have to overturn a 1-0 deficit and beat Barcelona in the Nou Camp.

AC Milan's visit to Barcelona is on Wednesday and according to Cadena Ser Real would seek to reveal Ancelotti as their man if Milan fail to overcome their hosts.

The nine-times European champions have been coached by former reserve coach Juan Ramon Lopez Caro since Brazilian Vanderlei Luxemburgo was fired mid-season but that move was intended only as a stop-gap solution.

Pakistan to postpone Zim ODIs

REUTERS, Karachi

Pakistani cricket authorities are unwilling to host a depleted Zimbabwe side for a series of one-day internationals later this year, an official told this news agency on Thursday.

The African nation was due to arrive in Pakistan for a Test and one-day series in September, but a players' strike forced the Zimbabwe Cricket (ZC) to postpone all Test cricket until next February.

The ZCU interim committee added it would continue to play one-day internationals but not Tests, due to the depleted strength of the squad.

Unhappy with the situation, a Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) official told Reuters that a letter had been sent to the ZCU asking them to arrange a full Test and one-day international tour next year.

"It is not feasible for us to host them only for one-dayers this year. We have told them it would be better if they come next year for a full series," said the PCB official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"They were due to play Tests in Pakistan in 2004. But toured only for the one-day games after the ICC suspended their Test status. We want this backlog of Tests cleared because of the new future tours programme," he said.

He said that the ZCU had asked the PCB to reconsider its decision not to host their team this year.

"We are in the process of having discussions with them and one possibility is that we might end up having a triangular one-day series with Zimbabwe and the West Indies."

Kaif selected

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to the top of the one-day batting rankings, displacing Australian captain Ricky Ponting by one point.

The 24-year-old has averaged 52.76 in 42 matches so far with two hundreds and eight half-centuries and an awesome strike rate of 103 runs per 100 balls.

Dhoni is one of three India batsmen in the top 10 places with captain Rahul Dravid ninth (up two places) and Yuvraj Singh (10th) also featuring.

"It was not very difficult for us to pick the team because it has been doing so well in recent times," More, who heads a five-member selection committee, said.

"Our plans have worked very well and although there is room for improvement, we are on the right track for the World Cup. This tour should give us a good idea of the conditions we will get at the World Cup."

The first two one-dayers will be held at Sabina Park in Jamaica on May 18 and 20.

SQUAD

Rahul Dravid (captain), Robin Uthappa, Virender Sehwag, Yuvraj Singh, Mohammad Kaif, Suresh Raina, Mahendra Dhoni, Irfan Pathan, Harbhajan Singh, Ramesh Powar, Ajit Agarkar, Munaf Patel, Venugopal Rao, Sri Sreesanth, Rudra Pratap Singh.



BITS AND BOBS

England fans urged to chant in German!

REUTERS, London

England soccer fans are being encouraged to learn the German versions of well-known football chants before the World Cup.

In its package of travel tips for fans at the month-long tournament, the Foreign Office is to provide handy singalong translations on its website www.britishembassyworldcup.com.

"Those football fans who wish to learn the English songs in German to sing at the World Cup can do so and the Foreign Office will help them do that," a spokesman said.

"We are not sure when they will go up on the site and which chants will be chosen," he added.

The Sun, Britain's leading tabloid, stepped eagerly into the breach with a two-page World Cup song sheet.

Inevitably that included a translation of "5-1 5-1" -- England's winning margin against Germany in a World Cup qualifying match in 2001.

USA up for it: Arena

AP, Tennessee

Bruce Arena thinks the United States is on equal footing with some of the world's top teams as the Americans prepare for the World Cup.

"Are we ready yet to win a World Cup? I don't think so, but I think we're ready to compete with the best countries in the world. We've demonstrated that," the U.S. coach said Wednesday. "My expectations are very similar to 2002. Our goals are to advance. If we can do that, and get to the round of 16, anything can happen."

The United States rose to an all-time high fourth Wednesday in the FIFA world rankings, trailing only Brazil, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands.

Arena coached the Americans to the quarterfinals of the 2002 tournament, where they lost to Germany 1-0. He spoke at a news conference promoting his team's next game, a May 23 exhibition against Morocco.

At the World Cup in Germany, they open against the Czech Republic on June 12, play Italy five days later, then finish the first round against Ghana on June 17.

Bobby tips Rooney to shine

AFP, Manchester

England's 1966 World Cup star Bobby Charlton believes striker Wayne Rooney can have the same shattering impact on this summer's finals as Pele had for Brazil in 1958.

Pele went to the finals in Sweden as an unknown teenager but inspired Brazil to the first of their five World Cup triumphs.

"I'm looking forward to the World Cup because I believe Wayne Rooney could be one of the major finds in world football," said Charlton.

"When Pele burst onto the scene in 1958 he surprised everyone because his type of skill and talent had just not been seen before. Wayne is that type of player too."

Lippi visits Totti

AFP, Rome

Italy coach Marcello Lippi paid a visit to Roma's Triforia training ground on Thursday to check on the recovery of Francesco Totti.

Lippi watched the striker taking part in a morning training session to assess his fitness ahead of the World Cup.

Totti returned to training with his

Roma teammates on Tuesday, 58 days after fracturing his fibula - the smaller of the two bones that run from the knee down to the ankle.

Doctor Pierpaolo Mariani, who operated on Totti, said he was confident the Roma captain would be ready for the World Cup.

"For me, Francesco's injury has fully healed. We are amazed by his speedy recovery. He is about 15 days ahead of schedule."

No place for Scholl

AFP, Berlin

Germany manager Jurgen Klinsmann indicated Thursday there was no place in his World Cup squad for veteran playmaker Mehmet Scholl.

The 35-year-old Bayern Munich player, capped 36 times by his country, has been in fine form of late and several former Germany stars, including Lothar Matthaus and Stefan Effenberg, have called for his inclusion.

Klinsmann admitted he had also been impressed by Scholl's displays as a creative substitute, but is less keen on bringing in a player from outside his current 30-man squad.

"We are delighted by Mehmet's performances at Bayern over the last few weeks," Klinsmann said in Kicker magazine.

"But our main focus is the tight group of 28 to 30 players. These have the priority."

Klinsmann must name his 23-man squad by May 15 ahead of Germany's opening World Cup match against Costa Rica in Munich on June 9.

Mahela backs his players



REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene has backed his young team to shine on their tour of England starting this week.

Jayawardene, leading the side in the absence of the injured Marvan Atapattu, is confident his players will adapt well to unfamiliar conditions. Sri Lanka will also be without experienced opener Sanath Jayasuriya, their highest run scorer in Tests and one-day internationals.

"This is going to be a tough tour but a great opportunity for us to learn, both as a team and also as individuals," Jayawardene told Reuters before the squad left Colombo on Thursday.

"Losing players of the calibre of Marvan and Sanath makes it harder for us, but we have a group of six or seven exciting youngsters and I have the fullest confidence in them," he added.

"They have bags of talent and a great attitude. They want to develop

and they will learn a great deal during a long tour that should be a crucial investment in our future.

"I'll be urging them to play with the natural flair and freedom that has won them a place in the team. Jayawardene said England represented a stiff challenge in Test cricket at home, especially after their Ashes win last year.

"They've got a balanced team with a couple of strong all-rounders, a good pace attack and a solid batting line-up, we expect them to play some good cricket," Jayawardene said.

"But we've got some world-class players and I know we've got the talent to give them a really good fight.

"There are no fears out there -- we'll be working really hard and will take the game to them.

The team will play three warm-up matches before a three match Test series starting at Lord's on May 11.

SQUAD

Mahela Jayawardene (captain), Kumar Sangakkara (vice-captain), Upul Tharanga, Michael Vandort, Jehan Mubarak, Tillakaratne

Dilshan, Thilan Samaraweera, Chamara Kapugedera, Prasanna Jayawardene, Chaminda Vaas, Nuwan Zoysa, Faneez Maharoof, Lasith Malinga, Nuwan Kulasekera, Muttiah Muralitharan, Malinga Bandara.

Enqvist hangs up his racket

AFP, Stockholm

One of Sweden's greatest tennis players, Thomas Enqvist, repeatedly hit by injury, is to retire from the professional game, reported Swedish daily Svenska Dagbladet on Thursday.

"My driving force has always been the desire to win tournaments and my body no longer has what it takes," said Enqvist.

The 32-year-old won 19 ATP singles titles and was a member of Sweden's victorious Davis Cup team in 1997, although he never claimed a Grand Slam title.

Gunners' slim advantage

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fortunate that the Uruguayan's outback failed to find any of teammates after evading Lehmann's dive.

Arsenal's chances were of a better quality however and if Pires's customary accuracy from around the edge of the area had not deserted him, they would have been ahead well in advance of Toure's 41st minute strike.

The goal followed a corner from Henry to the right of the Villarreal goal. Marcos Senna's clearance returned the ball to him and the Arsenal captain's cleverly disguised pass sent Hleb on a run to the byline, from where is low cross presented Toure with an easy finish.

The lead was deserved but the visitors should have been afforded

the opportunity to cancel it out from the penalty spot in the final moments of the first half, when Gilberto clumsily challenged Jose Mari from behind just inside the area.

Arsenal should have doubled their lead 12 minutes after the restart when the lively Hleb, whose dribbling on the right flank had looked like the home side's most promising route to goal, got clear once more and found Emmanuel Eboue in dangerous territory deep inside the Villarreal box.

But with Freddie Ljungberg screaming for a delivery across the goalmouth, the Ivory Coast rightback pulled his cross slightly behind Henry, who was unable to hook his shot on target.

With ten minutes left, Wenger

introduced Dutch duo Dennis Bergkamp and Robin van Persie into the mix, in place of an exhausted Hleb and the largely ineffective Ljungberg.

The final throw of the dice failed to deliver the additional security that a second goal would have offered and Villarreal might have claimed a late equaliser when Riquelme's whipped cross found the head of Guillermo Franco, although the substitute's effort comfortably cleared Lehmann's crossbar.

But on the evidence presented here, Wenger's men will be confident they can book their ticket to next month's final in Paris by scoring in Spain.

Honours shared in UAE

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skipper then added 90 for the second with Dhoni.

Sehwag, who failed to score a half-century in the recent seven-match series against England at home, returned to form with a brisk 83-ball knock, which contained one six and 10 fours.

India's batting continued to flourish after Sehwag's dismissal as David and Dhoni kept finding gaps. Dhoni fell after completing his eighth half-century, bowled by a slower delivery from Navedul Hassan.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the second and final one-day international between India and Pakistan at the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday: INDIA: 269 for 5 (Dravid 92, Sehwag 73, Dhoni 59, Yuvraj 24; Naved 2-45)

PAKISTAN

Malik c Yuvraj b Powar 45
Farhat lbw b Pathan 8
Afridi b Pathan 0

Table with columns: Player Name, Runs, Wickets. Includes entries for Younis c Dhoni b Agarkar 5, Inzamam run out 79, etc.

A series

FROM PAGE 13

Table with columns: Player Name, Runs, Wickets. Includes entries for Saleh c Ponting b Warne 5, Ashraf lbw b MacGill 29, etc.

Result: Australia won by an innings and 80 runs and take the 2-Test 2-0.

Man-of-the-match: Jason Gillespie. Man-of-the-series: Jason Gillespie. Toss: Bangladesh. Umpires: Aleem Dar and Ian Howell.

Chelsea agree Ballack deal

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich's German international midfielder Michael Ballack will sign a four-year contract with English champions Chelsea, the ZDF television channel reported on Wednesday.

The channel cited sources close to the Londoners but there was no official confirmation from Stamford Bridge.

The 29-year-old Ballack, whose contract with the German giants ends in June, revealed on April 13 that he was in talks with Chelsea.

"Nothing has been signed or decided yet but I know what I want," said Ballack.

Chelsea coach Jose Mourinho has already described Ballack as "one of the best players in the world".

Ballack refused a new contract offer with Bayern for whom he has played since 2002.

The former Kaiserslautern and Bayer Leverkusen player has always insisted he wants to play outside Germany.

"It is my last chance to do that," he said recently.

Juve to lose their stripes?

INTERNET, undated

Juventus are reportedly considering a radical shirt re-design which may see their trademark black and white stripes disappear.

Stories in the peninsula on Thursday suggest that sportswear giants Nike, who have a 12-year contract in place with the Turin giants, want the outfit to rejuvenate their skin.

Although Juventus have been playing in black and white striped shirts since they were brought over from Nottingham in the early 1900s, Nike have offered to give the Old Lady a facelift.

The American firm will obviously look to keep the Bianconeri theme going, but they would like to get rid of the stripes.

It's understood that they have come up with a two-band colour jersey, one half in black and the other in white.

They are said to have contacted Barcelona and Atletico Madrid with the same proposal, with the capital outfit accepting the switch.

However, it's unclear at this time whether Juventus will agree to the controversial move which will undoubtedly annoy traditionalists.

Dhoni No. 1 batsman

BBC ONLINE, undated

India's Mahendra Dhoni has shot to the top of the ICC rankings for one-day batsmen after less than 18 months in the international arena.

Dhoni's 59 in Wednesday's victory over Pakistan in Abu Dhabi took him past Aussie captain Ricky Ponting.

The 24 year-old only made his ODI debut in December 2004 but averages 52.76 with two hundreds and eight fifties.

Dhoni is one of three India batsmen in the top 10, while England's top-ranked batsman is Kevin Pietersen in seventh.

India's Irfan Pathan moved up one spot to third in the bowler rankings with only Shaun Pollock of South Africa and Australia's Glenn McGrath ahead of him.

But Pathan remains in third position in the all-rounders' list behind Pollock and England's Andrew Flintoff.

Dalmiya case questioned

CRICINFO, undated

The Mumbai High Court has questioned the motives and timing of the complaint against Jagmohan Dalmiya, in the case relating to misappropriation of funds during the 1996 World Cup, and cast doubts over the role of the Maharashtra state government in the matter.

Dalmiya, who was accused of misappropriating funds from the organising committee of the 1996 World Cup, was granted anticipatory bail last month. But in an order passed on April 10, but made public only on April 17, Justice VM Kanade pointed out that the case of irregularities in the withdrawal of 2.174 million rupees (49,000 dollars) from the organising committee of the 1996 World Cup was thoroughly investigated by the Directorate of Enforcement and Reserve Bank of India and Dalmiya was "exonerated" from all charges.

"If the chronology of events and the facts and material which is placed on record is taken into consideration, prima facie, in my view, it is established that the allegations made in the complaint and the material which is placed on record does not establish the allegation of misappropriation of amounts," Kanade wrote in his report. "It also does not establish that the account was opened without the knowledge of the complainant. Further, it does not indicate that the amounts have been used for the personal benefit of the petitioner Dalmiya.

Mysterious Highbury squirrel



AFP, London

The fate of the bright-eyed and bushy-tailed pitch invader which stunned fans at a London stadium by bringing the Champions League semifinal to a standstill was shrouded in mystery Thursday.

The grey squirrel stormed onto the Highbury pitch and treated fans to a 15-minute cameo during Wednesday's first leg match between Arsenal and Spanish side Villarreal, finishing its start-up by leaping into the crowd.

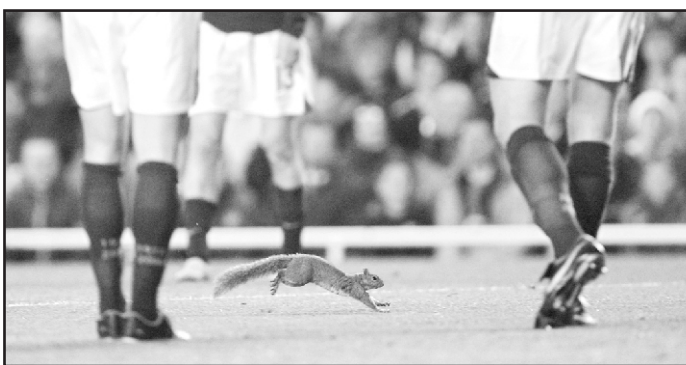
But Arsenal apparently have no idea what happened next to the plucky rodent.

Internet chatrooms were buzzing with post-match debate on where the mystery squirrel came from, what to call it and what became of the pitch invader, which caused referee Konrad Platitz to halt the game.

An Arsenal spokesman declined to

comment on the squirrel's whereabouts, but it is understood that officials have no idea about what happened to it after it sprang over the hoardings and into the North Bank stand.

Fans chanted songs to cheer on the squirrel, which jumped out from the West Stand and dashed around



A squirrel found a way onto the Highbury pitch during the Champions League match on Wednesday night.

PHOTO: AFP

Wenger frustrated by lack of goals



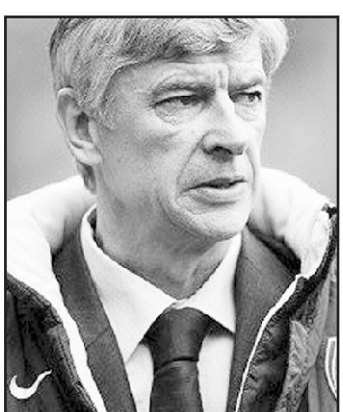
AFP, London

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger admitted he had been left frustrated by his side's failure to secure more than a one goal lead to take to Spain for next week's Champions League semifinal second leg against Villarreal.

"I am (frustrated)" Wenger said. "It was a tense game but I think we should have got one more goal. "It was a little bit difficult because I think we were caught between keeping a clean sheet and not conceding a goal and we didn't really find our flow in the second half."

"I felt as well that their midfield did very well and we found it difficult to dictate the play and impose our normal game."

Wenger however remained confident that his side could finish



ARSENE WENGER

the job in Spain next week and book their place in next month's Paris final against either AC Milan or

Games power plant causes protest

AFP, Beijing



Some 200 angry Chinese citizens have protested the construction of an electricity substation in northern Beijing that is expected to supply power for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.

The protest occurred on Wednesday at the construction site of the Nannigou Substation which is next to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Village, still under construction.

"We are protesting against the power plant because it is too close to our residential area," Sun Jintang, one of the protestors, told AFP.

"We are afraid that the power plant will be harmful to the health of the residents."

The closest residential building to the plant is only 10 meters away, he said.

Several hundred police were mobilized after the protesters gathered, but no clashes occurred, he said. Police refused to comment.

The Beijing News reported that the construction of the plant only began on Wednesday.

More than 3,000 residents, many of them retirees from the prestigious

China Academy of Sciences, signed a petition last year to protest the construction plan, protestors said.

But so far city officials have not responded to their demands, they said.

"We have asked for public hearings, we have written to the president and prime minister, but the government has not responded," Sun said.

The power substation is one of four being built for the Olympic Games. But the other three stations are all being built on the "Olympic Green," a large park that will house several sports venues and the Olympic Village, another protestor said.

The head of the country's environmental agency said Wednesday that environmental problems are threatening residents increasingly resort to protests to make their voices heard.

Pollution prompted at least 510,000 public disputes last year while protests related to environmental problems have been rising at an average rate of 29 per cent a year.

Xinhua news agency quoted Zhou Shengxian as saying.

WI face new contract row

AFP, Antigua

West Indies cricket, dogged by problems on and off the field, is facing another split as another contracts feud returns to haunt the game.

The West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) said Wednesday that they have given players a deadline to sign retainer deals or face being axed from the squad.

"The WICB made a proposal to the West Indies Players Association (WIAPA) on January 12 on the issue of retainer contracts for West Indies players," said a WICB cricket committee statement.

"It was a good offer, fully competitive with other full member countries of the world. After some three months, we have been unable to conclude an agreement in spite of an increase on our original proposal of five per cent."

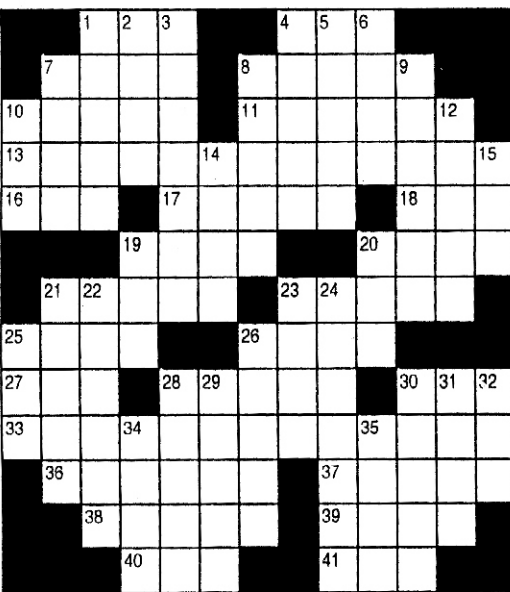
"We shall therefore recommend to the WICB Board of Directors that a firm cut off point be established as Friday April 21 for the retainer contracts to be settled."

"Thereafter the team shall be selected based on those players who make themselves available."

The impasse comes just a year after seven leading players, including former skipper and record-breaking batsman Brian Lara, were dropped from the Test squad in a row over personal contracts.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 30 NAFTA signatory 33 Cheated 36 Hit 37 Series of epic exploits 38 Aegean island 39 "My Three ---" 40 Chaps sub-machine gun 41 Gasoline stat 42 Sweater woos 1 Nursery array 2 Carson device, for ex. predecesor 3 Embarassed 19 More to Manuel 30 "Shake well before --" 31 Geographical septlet 32 Put together 34 "Dracula" author 35 Feed the hogs



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