



Sevilla striker Luis Fabiano runs in a training session at Oyster Wijk, near Eindhoven on Monday on the eve of their UEFA Cup final against Middlesbrough. PHOTO: AFP

Schalke snub Bayern's Lincoln bid

AFP, Gelsenkirchen

Schalke 04 confirmed Monday that they had turned down a six-million-euro bid for their Brazilian playmaker Lincoln from German champions Bayern Munich.

Bayern tabled the bid over the weekend but Schalke general manager Andreas Muller said the offer was insulting.

"Bayern Munich must accept that they will not get every player for the price they want," Muller said in Kicker magazine. "We are not interested in selling Lincoln."

Schalke have put a 12-million-euro price tag on the 27-year-old Lincoln, who is contracted at the club until June 2008.

Double winners Bayern are facing up to the prospect of losing German international Michael Ballack to Chelsea on a free transfer at the end of the season and have earmarked Lincoln as a replacement.

Guga's French hopes dashed

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Brazil's three-time French Open champion Gustavo Kuerten announced on Monday he would not be playing in this year's edition which gets underway later this month.

The 29-year-old former world number one however refused to concede defeat in his long running battle with a hip problem and retire.

Kuerten, who has not missed the French Open since 1996, has been undergoing two months of treatment in the United States for his right hip injury and is due to have even more intensive treatment from now on.

"Several people say that I should retire," said Kuerten.

"But that doesn't affect me, it just gives me more motivation to continue."

Kuerten, who has tumbled to 385th in the world rankings, has undergone two operations on his troublesome right hip, once in February 2002 and the last time in September 2004.

Barca stick to tradition

REUTERS, Madrid

Spanish champions Barcelona have decided to stick with tradition and not have a sponsors logo on their team shirts.

"The Barcelona shirt will not carry any commercial brand, the decision has been taken," club president Joan Laporta told radio station RAC-1 on Monday.

The Catalan club were involved in negotiations with Chinese authorities and Austrian online betting firm BetandWin over shirt sponsorship earlier this season but neither deal materialised.

Laporta confirmed the club was trying to negotiate a new television deal with Spanish television channel La Sexta as part of its plans to increase income and reduce debts, which were running at 188 million euros (240 million dollars) at the start of the year.

Barcelona wrapped up their second league title in a row last week and meet Arsenal in the final of the Champions League in Paris on May 17.

Sevilla wary of Boro



REUTERS, Eindhoven

Sevilla coach Juande Ramos says Middlesbrough are serious rivals who have a strike force capable of producing another "miracle" in the UEFA Cup final.

Ramos, who has guided the Spanish side to their first European final in his first season in charge, believes the Premier League side's never-say-die attitude should make for a thrilling encounter at the Philips Stadium on Wednesday.

Boro pulled off astonishing four-goal comebacks in the quarter and semifinals to knock Basel and Steaua Bucharest out of the tournament.

"We are aware of what they can do. If a team can score like they can then they are serious rivals," Ramos told a news conference on Tuesday. "Even when they go behind they always have the self-belief to pull off another miracle."

Sevilla's progress to Eindhoven

has been solid if unspectacular, and they now stand on the verge of winning their first trophy since 1948.

"It's a dream to play in a European final, for the team, for Sevilla and Andalucia. We will make so many people happy if we win," said Ramos.

"We are in a positive state of mind, we have been in good form lately."

"But during the season there have been times when the team has been too confident and we have suffered from that."

"It's a matter of controlling our nerves right now."

Ramos gave a clean bill of health to his squad and striker Frederic Kanoute, familiar with English football after spells with Tottenham Hotspur and West Ham United, has recovered from a thigh injury.

The Mali international will probably start from the bench after a three-week lay off, leaving Brazilian Luis Fabiano to partner Argentine Javier Saviola in attack.

Captain Javi Navarro, a defender with a reputation as a hardman, said getting to the final was reward for

"everything I have been through in football".

The 32-year-old was with Valencia when they reached successive European Cup finals in 2000 and 2001, but he played no part.

"I've been in similar situations but not as important as this. It's the most important match in my career and I am proud we have made it," Navarro said.

In 2001 Navarro sat out four games for punching an opponent. Last year he was banned for five matches for leaving Mallorca's Juan Arango unconscious and with a fractured cheekbone after being felled by an elbow.

Navarro denied he was a dirty player. "I try to go to the limit. If sometimes go beyond the red line then it is up to the referee to decide."

"Sometimes people talk too much but I don't take too much notice of what they say."

'Sevilla are favourites'

INTERNET, undated

Steve McClaren insists that Sevilla are favourites for the UEFA Cup final.

The Middlesbrough boss arrived in Eindhoven with his team on Tuesday as they prepare for the biggest game in the club's history - which will also be McClaren's last in charge before he takes charge of England in August.

McClaren is looking forward to the game, but he admits Boro face a tough task against the Liga outfit.

"I think Sevilla are favourites," McClaren told Sky Sports News.

"They have a good pedigree and are doing well in the Spanish league."

"They were one of the favourites at the beginning of the tournament, but we don't mind being the underdogs - we will relish it."

"We have got a very experienced side sprinkled with youngsters who are experiencing this for the first time, but one of the reasons we have done so well over the last two seasons in Europe is because we have brought five or six experienced players in and that is why I think why we have done so well - they are big game players whose experience will stand us in good stead."

A number of players are set for heartbreak ahead of Wednesday's game, as McClaren's prepares to name his side.

"I know some will be disappointed but that is a big decision I will have to make - but they have all contributed," he said.

"I always say that the hero may be the one who finishes the game and not start it. Maccarone has done that on two occasions."

Howard loaned to Everton

AFP, London

Manchester United goalkeeper Tim Howard is to join Everton on a 12-month loan deal this summer.

The 26-year-old American World Cup man has had to settle for second best at Old Trafford in recent months after the arrival of Dutch star Edwin van der Sar.

He was limited to just six senior appearances, with his only Premiership outing coming against Portsmouth in February.

After arriving from Major League Soccer outfit New York Metrostars in 2003, Howard was groomed to be the answer to United's long-standing goalkeeping problems.

However, high-profile blunders in European games at the end of his first season with the club and the start of his second put his place at risk.

Despite those problems, and his recent omission, Sir Alex Ferguson remains a big admirer of a player who has played 77 times for the Red Devils.

And, with Van der Sar's contract due to expire in 12 months' time, the United boss has sanctioned a loan move to Goodison Park during which he expects the keeper to prove he is worthy of reclaiming United's number one jersey again.

Koeman back at PSV

AFP, Lisbon

Benfica coach Ronald Koeman said Monday he was leaving the Portuguese club to manage newly-crowned Dutch champions PSV Eindhoven, who he helped lead to the European Cup in 1988, on a two year contract.

The 43-year-old will replace Guss Hiddink who will take over as Russia's national coach after this year's World Cup. Koeman still had one year left on his two-year contract with Benfica.

"It is very important for me to return to Holland, my family is there," he told a news conference in Lisbon.

"I am a former PSV Eindhoven player so it is important to return, it is an honour for me to succeed Hiddink," he added.

Under his guidance Benfica reached the quarterfinal stages of the Champions League, where they were eliminated 2-0 on aggregate by Barcelona, but the club finished third in the Portuguese league and therefore failed to secure an automatic place in the top European club competition.

Lisbon-based Benfica, who won their first domestic title in 11 years last year under Giovanni Trapattoni, ended the season with 67 points, 12 points behind champions FC Porto.

Assistant coach Fernando Chalana will become Benfica manager until a replacement is found, Benfica president Luis Filipe Vieira said.

Koeman, a former Netherlands international and Ajax manager, played for PSV Eindhoven between 1986 and 1989, before moving to Barcelona, for whom he scored the winning goal as they beat Sampdoria to win the 1992 European Cup.

The Food Chronicles



INTERNET, undated

Spurs eat the world's most expensive lasagne as a stomach bug undoes their Champions League bid; Bayern's title triumph sends Felix Magath just a little tipsy; while Manchester United goal-muncher Ruud van Nistelrooy has feasted at the Old Trafford table for the last time.

'WHAT'S YOUR POISON?'

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger has often been credited with revolutionising English football, and in particular forcing players to swap pies for pasta as their pre-match meal.

But Tottenham Hotspur - the Gunners' bitterest rivals - will today be wishing they had opted for a good old English breakfast instead of lasagne on Saturday after ten players were struck down by food poisoning before their crucial Premiership game against West Ham.

League officials rushed to the squad's London hotel to assess the state of the squad, but declared - with voices barely audible amid the hectic flushing of toilets - the game should go ahead.

Feeling sicker than a side pipped at the death to a Champions League qualifying spot by their most fierce rivals, Martin Jol's queasy squad were greener than the lush Upton Park pitch as they slipped to a 2-1 defeat to let Arsenal snatch fourth.

"We asked to postpone the

game for 24 hours but we didn't want to risk sanctions. We took a gamble but I think you saw we weren't strong enough," said Jol, who is not reportedly negotiating a sponsorship deal with a renowned toilet roll manufacturer.

Police have taken samples of food from the London Marriott West India Quay Hotel for analysis, but have stressed no investigation is ongoing.

Rumours officers are holding an Italian theme day at the Scotland Yard canteen on Monday are almost certainly totally fabricated by Inside Europe.

'ONE FOR THE ROAD, FELIX?'

Health experts are always harping on about the dangers of alcohol, but if you are a top football manager, ensure you 'keep in shape' by regularly plying yourself with a daily tippie or face public humiliation should your side win the title.

In the land of bier, bratwurst and Bayern, Felix Magath was sicker than a Spurs squad member as he overdid his post-match festivities after the Munich giants claimed the Bundesliga title on Saturday.

Magath missed a planned pleasure boat cruise on the Rhine to celebrate the title as he lay down in a dark room after already having had his fill of fun.

"I celebrated before we got there and wasn't able to make it onto the ship," said Magath, reportedly an avid green tea drinker. "I had more than one too many."

But should Magath be made to look like a lederhosen-clad light-

weight, Bayern commercial chief Uli Hoeness lumbered to his defence.

"Because Felix has not had a drop of alcohol for more than half a year, he did not feel capable of celebrating any more," Hoeness said. "The three glasses of champagne and the beer had a devastating effect."

BAD MANNERS

There was one setting less at the Old Trafford pre-match meal table as Ruud van Nistelrooy lived up to his name by impolitely and prima donna-ishy storming out after learning he was to again be warming the bench as Manchester United went for the win against Charlton to assure second spot on Sunday.

"There were a couple of things in the week that made me concerned about the spirit in the club," said head chef Sir Alex Ferguson only slightly cryptically. "It was such an important day for the club and I just felt Ruud should be left out."

While Ruud was contacting Netherlands team-mate Jaap Stam to find out what happens next, United were cruising to a 4-0 win so comfortable that central defender Rio Ferdinand decided a spot of afternoon tea was in order.

Jose Mourinho once accused Spurs of parking a bus in front of their goal to stop Chelsea, but Rio almost hauled on a sofa, put his feet up and risked injury watching TV as he munched on Jaffa Cakes and sipped energy-packed Lucozade (are you listening Herr Magath?) during the game.



TWIN FUTURE: Identical Brazilian twins Rafael (R) and Fabio pose after a training session for the U-15 side of their club Fulminense. The starlets are touted as potential successors to national team stars Cafu and Roberto Carlos and both will join Manchester United when they turn 18. PHOTO: AFP

Italian football in turmoil

AFP, Rome

Italian football was plunged into turmoil on Monday as Franco Carraro, the president of the Italian football federation, resigned because of the ongoing scandal surrounding Juventus and their general director Luciano Moggi.

Carraro said he was stepping down because of the loaded programme the Federation had ahead, including their bid to win the right to host the 2012 European championships.

"The tasks facing the Federation in the next few months are so numerous and serious that it requires the federation's directors to be totally focussed," said 66-year-

old Carraro, who was first elected to the post in 2001 and re-elected in 2005.

"Nothing indicates to me that I did anything wrong in either my personal or institutional behaviour," added Carraro, who was mayor of Rome from 1989-93 and head of the Italian Olympic Committee from 1978-87.

His resignation drew a curt reaction from Italian Olympic Committee president Gianni Petrucci.

"I take note that Franco Carraro has resigned."

Moggi is at the centre of an investigation into alleged sporting fraud after transcripts of telephone conversations between him and

Pierluigi Pairetto, a former member of Italy's referees association, were passed on to the Italian football federation by a Turin prosecutor.

In the telephone conversations, recorded during the 2004/05 season, Moggi tells Pairetto to assign referees of his choice for certain Juventus matches.

Juventus are unlikely to face league-imposed sanctions as the transcripts do not suggest that Moggi actually tried to fix the results of matches.

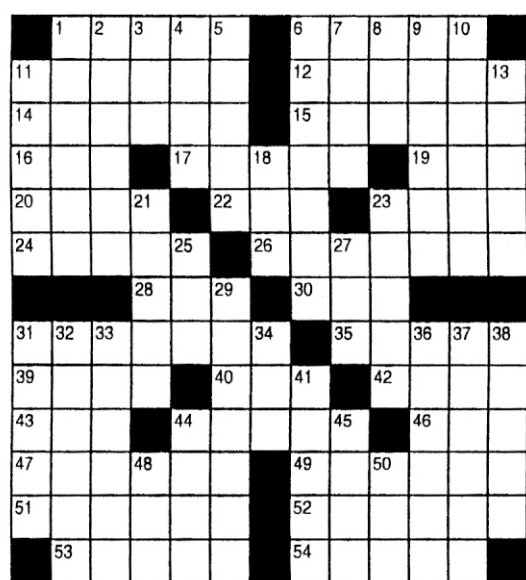
The federation announced the opening of an inquiry into the allegations last week with Carraro expressing his 'sadness' and 'anger' and promising that the matter would be dealt with as quickly as possible.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
 1 Eliot called it
 6 Puts one over on
 11 Swimsuit name
 12 Outstanding
 14 Black-eyed legume
 15 Side of an alley
 16 Last (Abbr.)
 17 Hold-up man?
 19 Zsa Zsa's sis
 20 Language of Belg.
 22 "2001" computer
 23 Quick look
 24 Incursion
 26 Wash
 28 Lapidary's item
 30 Go way off course
 31 High-speed road

DOWN
 1 Moonshot program
 2 Bluish-gray
 3 GOP'er
 4 "What's the big ___?"
 5 Averse
 6 In a contrapuntal manner
 7 Responsibility
 8 Choose
 9 Triangular sail
 10 Colanders
 11 Shoe-polish target
 13 Famed circumnavigator
 Solution time: 27 mins.

18 Varnish ingredient
 21 Sorcerer
 23 Man-handled
 25 Archery-bow wood
 27 Absorb, as in costs
 29 Camp Lejeune group
 31 Valuable collection
 32 Optimistic
 33 Its capital is Kigali
 34 Hither and—
 36 Get snug
 37 Bring out
 38 Church-goer's fraction
 41 "Saturday Night Fever" setting
 44 Toward the prow
 45 Pack away
 48 Historic boy king
 50 Under the weather



CRYPTOQUIP

WP O PRCCNS XRMA OZXJV
 OZK VRCCA OM TWA
 OGMN LNQWCR, SNGCK VNG
BOCC TWL O BOJ-QRJOMRJ?
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN A PERSON GOES FISHING, I SUPPOSE HE COULD BE WIELDING WEAPONS OF BASS DESTRUCTION.
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: C equals L
 The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words with an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.



Argentina and Sevilla striker Javier Saviola playing mini golf on Monday in Oisterwijk near the Dutch city of Eindhoven. PHOTO: AFP