

Hicham Mahdoufi (R) of Morocco under pressure from Pablo Mastgoreni of the USA during their friendly match in Nashville, Tennessee on Tuesday.

Capello new Juve general manager

Italian giants Juventus, embroiled in ugly match-fixing allegations, have named coach Fabio Capello as their new general manager with responsibility for transfer policy

Juventus said in a statement that Capello would continue coaching as well as being in charge of the "technical area" and transfer market.

It added that Alessio Secco had been appointed as head of sporting

"From now on, Alessio Secco will be working with Fabio Capello to prepare the next sporting season 2006-2007," Juve chief executive officer Carlo Sant'Albano said.

Secco, 36, former manager and press attache at the club, replaces Luciano Moggi, sacked last week amid the scandal embroiling the

Italian champions. The revamp comes as Juventus are suspected of fixing matches and collusion with referees last season. If found quilty, they could have this season's title taken away from them, or worse still be relegated to the second division.

Vieira gassed in robbery

INTERNET, undated

Juventus star Patrick Vieira and his family were gassed by thieves during a carefully planned robbery on their luxury villa at the weekend.

It's understood that the intruders contaminated the air conditioning system at their Cannes home on the French Riviera.

As a result, the midfielder, his wife Cheryl and daughter Cheries were knocked unconscious until they awoke the next morning.

Reports suggest that the raiders stole personal belongings before

fleeing with the Frenchman's 40,000pound Mercedes ML500.

The vehicle was later found abandoned in Nice on Tuesday.

The 29-year-old has reported the incident to police who are investigating the matter. Vieira, who has just won the

Scudetto in his first season at Juve, has now joined up with the French squad ahead of the World Cup Finals.

Lovenkrands joins Schalke

AFP, Gelsenkirchen

German side Schalke 04 have completed the signing of Danish international midfielder Peter Lovenkrands from Scottish side Rangers.

The 26-year-old Lovenkrands joins Schalke on a free transfer and signed a three-year deal to keep him at the club until June 2009.

"Peter is left-footed, lightning quick and has an eye for goal. His signing will increase our options going forward," explained team manager Andreas

Lovenkrands, capped 14 times by his country, admitted he had been persuaded to make the move after consulting with Schalke's Danish international players Soren Larsen

and Christian Poulsen "Schalke is a big club where I want to win titles." said Lovenkrands. "I spoke with Soren Larsen and Christian Poulsen about Schalke and what they told me helped me make the decision."

Dutch look to relive heydays

Those performances have

made the Dutch one of the favour-



REUTERS, Amsterdam

The Netherlands qualified for the World Cup finals in superb fashion with a bright new team under dynamic, young manager Marco van Basten, who took the helm after the Dutch crashed out of the semi-finals of Euro 2004 in Portugal.

Whereas Van Basten's predecessor Dick Advocaat was criticised for failing to make choices, the former World Player of the Year displayed inspired leadership from the start and promptly dropped players who he believed thought they were more important than the squad.

Only seven players from the 2004 side have survived under Van Basten, who wants his men to dominate with attacking, attractive football, in the spirit of past Dutch teams.

Goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar, midfielder Philip Cocu and central striker Ruud van Nistelrooy form the backbone of the new squad. who won 10 and drew two of their

12 qualifiers to top European Group One which included Romania and the Czech Republic.

ites to win the title. The most remarkable aspect of the qualifying campaign proved to be the Dutch defence, which

conceded only three goals in 12 matches, with Barcelona's Giovanni van Bronckhorst the only experienced international among them at the start. Van Basten has built a completely new defence -- also capable of moving forward swiftly as a unit -- and opted for defenders

used to playing that style together

at AZ Alkmaar: Joris Mathiisen.

Kew Jaliens and Tim de Cler, although Jaliens and de Cler are likely to start on the bench. However "The Cannibal" from SV Hamburg, Khalid Boulahrouz, should add some steel to the back ine which could be a formidable

barrier to cross in Germany. The Dutch will no doubt continue their trademark 4-3-3 line up as they meet Serbia and Montenegro, Ivory Coast and Argentina in the group phase -- a logical move given that they have claim the sole Dutch international wingers available who could also trophy so far. provide the key to success.

With Arien Robben and Robin van Persie, Van Basten has enough choice up front as to which two players will support central striker Van Nistelrooy.

However the Manchester United target man must be feeling Dirk Kuijt closing in. So far Van Basten has used Kuijt on the right wing but during the friendly international match against Ecuador in March, Kuijt replaced Van Nistelrooy in the centre.

Considering their qualifying results, the resilience of their defenders and individual skills of the midfielders and strikers, the Dutch will be looking to at least emulate their performances of the

They have reached the final of the two major competitions held on German soil, losing to West Germany in the 1974 World Cup final and winning the European Championship in 1988 when Van Basten scored one of the greatest goals ever seen in their 2-0 defeat

England aim to beat history and injuries



REUTERS, London

England's World Cup hopes will owe as much to the work of the medical team as Sven-Goran Eriksson's tactical genius next

A terrible run of injuries, climaxing with Wayne Rooney fracturing a bone in his foot at the end of April, has threatened to undermine all the coach's plans just when England appeared to have their best chance of reaching a major final for the first time in 40 years.

Still, Swedish coach Eriksson is optimistic. Last week he said England would win the World Cup, and no England coach has made such a bold prediction since Alf Ramsey in 1963. He was proved right three years later; Eriksson might not be quite so fortunate.

Rooney appears to have made good progress recovering from the injury and could well play a part in the finals -- but that is by no means certain.

The fact that Eriksson called the untried and untested 17-yearold Arsenal reserve Theo Walcott into the squad emphasises the problems England face.

Walcott is widely tipped to have every facet of the game needed to make him a worldclass player within two or three years: pace, invention, dazzling ball control and an astonishing

eye for goal. However, he played only a

handful of second division matches for Southampton before his multi-million-pound move to Arsenal in January and has yet to play for his new club apart from a few matches with the reserves.

Eriksson has admitted that it is a risk but one he is willing to take because injuries to Rooney and defender John Terry and lingering doubts about the match fitness of players with huge international experience such as Michael Owen and Ashley Cole could severely wreck England's

hopes of doing well. Decades of disappointment have followed England's only World Cup triumph of 1966 at Wembley by Bobby Moore and his men, with England lacking either the players, the luck or a combination of the two to reach a World Cup or European Championship final.

It seems that luck, the very worst kind, is again about to to hamper their chances.

When everyone is fit, England have a potent mixture of youth and experience, plus a born match-winner in Rooney, two vears after his thrilling four-goal blast at Euro 2004.

He remains a doubt for England's opening two matches against Paraguay on June 10 and Trinidad & Tobago on June 15 but could maybe be ready to face Sweden on June 20 or, if England advance, take part in the later

During the 1998 World Cup, a 12-year-old Rooney played street football with his friends after England's game against Argentina, pretending to be

Owen In June, the two men would ideally lead England's attack. But Owen has only just returned from a foot injury and England now have limited options up front.

Owen returned to play for Newcastle United against Birmingham on April 29 but complained afterwards of soreness around the injured area.

Dogged by injuries for over a year, Sol Campbell is another worry. Although he scored with a fine header in Arsenal's Champions League final defeat to Barcelona on May 17, he has been in and out of the Arsenal side all season, while Arsenal teammate Cole returned to the side only just before the end of

the league season. Similar damage was suffered in the ranks of Eriksson's understudies with right back Luke Young, central defender Jonathan Woodgate and most importantly Ledley King all sidelined during the latter stages of the season and failing to make the World Cup squad.

It is all a far cry from the euphoria of a few months ago.

After a wretched start to the season, which included a 4-1 friendly drubbing in Denmark and a humiliating 1-0 qualifying loss in Northern Ireland, England finished 2005 in style.

They won European Group Six after beating Poland at Old Trafford and optimism over England's chances increased when they came from behind to beat Argentina 3-2 in a friendly in Geneva on Nov. 12.

If the injuries do not blight England's World Cup, as they did in 2002, Eriksson has few doubts about his best side but his hopes are in the hands of the doctors.

Morocco dampen US preparation

AFP, Nashville, USA

Reserve Mohamed Madihi scored on a counter-attack in the 90th minute to give Morocco a 1-0 victory over a World Cup-bound US squad here Tuesday in a disappointing warm-up for the Americans.

In the first match since coach Bruce Arena announced the US roster for next month's global football showdown in Germany, the hosts pressed for a goal in the closing moments only to suffer a costly backline breakdown.

US star Landon Donovan was denied on a free-kick in the final seconds of regulation time and the ball was cleared downfield on a long

Morocco's Bouchaib El Moubarki, who entered in the 72nd minute, won the ball from US defender Steve Cherundolo and passed the ball to the left side of the field for onrushing attacker Madihi, who had entered in the 61st minute. Madihi was 1-on-1 with helpless

US goalkeeper Kasey Keller, who went low only to see Madihi rightfoot the ball over him and into the yawning empty goal beyond. Bobby Convey took a threatening free-kick in the final seconds for

wide of the right post in vain. The Americans outshot Morocco 11-5 but managed to put only four on goal, twice as many as the visitors, who claimed their first triumph over the Americans after losses in 1992

the US squad, bending the ball just

Even more costly than the defeat could be a right hamstring injury suffered by US veteran Claudio Reyna. The US captain exited in the 13th minute in favour of Pablo

The US team is now winless in its past three matches, having lost 4-1 at Germany in March and drawn 1-1 last month with Jamaica at Cary, North Carolina, where the Americans gathered and trained the past two weeks.

Pires joins Villarreal

Champions League semifinalists Villarreal signed former France international attacking midfielder Robert Pires on a two year contract on Tuesday from Champions League finalists Arsenal Spanish radio station Cadena Ser announced.

While Cadena Ser quoted Villarreal president Fernando Roig, whose club are known as the 'yellow submarrines', as saying the deal was done, a club spokeswoman refused to confirm that to AFP.

Pires, 32, has been consistently linked to Villarreal, who were knocked out by Arsenal in the Champions League semifinals, but British press reports at the weekend suggested that his close friend Thierry Henry had persuaded him to stav at Arsenal for another two

Rooney's doctor leaves Man Utd

AFP, Manchester

English Premiership giants Manchester United said Wednesday that club doctor Mike Stone, who was treating injured striker Wayne Rooney, has left "because of a difference of

But the club insisted that Stone's departure was not related to Rooney's recovery from a metatarsal

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injury or the treatment of any plaver. It had been suggested that Stone has been forced out because his view of Rooney's recovery has been much more positive than manager Alex

However, United said in a statement: "We can confirm that Dr Stone has left the club. "There was a difference of opinion

on a non-football and non-clinical issue, as a result of which Dr Stone felt it to be in his and the club's best interests for him to leave. "The difference was over a non-

clinical issue and had nothing whatsoever to do with any medical treatment to any Manchester United player." Stone has been at Old Trafford for 10 years. It was he who has been in

close touch with England doctor Leif

Sward about Rooney. Sward appeared positive about Rooney's World Cup chances while Ferguson has been playing down the striker's hopes of being ready to make an impact in Germany.

Rooney, who has been spending time in an oxygen tent to try and accelerate the repair of the bone, has not kicked a ball since he suffered the injury playing against Chelsea on Even if Sward's optimism proves

well-founded, it remains unlikely that Rooney will be fit enough to play in England's World Cup opener against Paraguay. That match is on June 10, only six

weeks after Rooney suffered the

The World Cup songs

Football

INTERNET, undated

For a group of young Australians, the long weeks of hard work and painstaking preparation will come to fruition shortly when they step out to play on the greatest stage of their lives.

With the backing of tens of thousands of passionate Socceroos, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity awaits to showcase their talents. After the desperate tension of the qualifying rounds, now comes the ultimate reward and Freedom of Thought, winners of the Song for the Socceroos competition, simply cannot wait to perform their triumphant track, Green and Gold', before Australia's friendly against Greece at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Thursday

A five-man band from Sydney, Freedom of Thought were the winners of a contest organised by Australian broadcaster SBS to find Australia's official Germany 2006 song, and speaking ahead of their big night before a 95,000 capacity crowd, they declared: "Both music and sport are art forms. They compliment each other because of the passion in both.

Music and football certainly have a long (and occasionally harmonious) history together and the Australian anthem is continuing a tradition of FIFA World Cup songs official or otherwise - that dates back four decades to the 1966 finals in England. That year's tournament song was named after its mascot, a friendly lion called 'World Cup Willie'.

Music is such an integral feature of the modern-day FIFA World Cup that one song is no longer enough. Forty years on and

another lion, the Germany 2006 mascot GOLEO VI, has his own album. Before a ball has even been kicked at the tournament, GOLEO has scored a No.1 hit with his first single from the album, 'Love Generation', recorded with Bob Sinclar.

That is just the tip of the iceberg. This year's tournament will bring us both an official song, 'Time of Our Lives' by singing quartet II Divo and Toni Braxton. and an official anthem, 'Celebrate the Day', performed by German artist Herbert Gronemyer and the west African duo Amadou and

A further number, Shakira's Hips don't Lie' will also feature on the official tournament album, Voices, and will be performed by the Colombian singer at the FIFA World Cup final. The presence of such artists maintains the recent pattern of involving high-profile performers, like Anastacia 'Boom', Korea/Japan 2002) and Ricky Martin ('La Copa de la Vida', France 98).

For many fans, it is their own teams' anthems that capture the imagination. This year's offerings include Embrace's England song 'World At Your Feet', and Maximus Dan's 'Fighter' for Trinidad and Tobago. Looking back in time, though, it is songs by the teams themselves that often stick in the

The West Germany team displayed their familiarity with the Spanish phrasebook for three tournaments running when recording songs for Argentina 78 ('Buenos dias, Argentina'), Spain 82 ('Ole Espana') and Mexico 86 ('Mexico, mi amor'). For USA 94, they turned to English for 'Far Away in America', recorded with the Village People.

England fans remember fondly their 1982 squad's song 'This

that pledge to be realised although, musically at least, their team got it right eight years later when recording the hugely popular 'World in Motion' with New Order a song featuring a memorable rap from John Barnes.

Barnes is not the only FIFA World Cup star to try his luck in the recording studio. In his pomp, the legendary Pele recorded several songs with Brazilian artist Elis Regina, while prior to Spain 82, Brazil left-back Junior enjoyed a hit with 'Voa canarinho, voa' (Fly canary, fly).

Today Brazilian fans still sing the song for the 1970 finals, whose chorus runs: "Pra Frente Brasil, Salve a Selecao" (Go on Brazil, Hail the Selecao). Of course, a triumphal tone is acceptable when you are Brazilian but Scottish fans, for instance, cringe with embarrassment when they recall some of their teams' FIFA World Cup tunes.

'Easy, easy' was hardly appropriate for a team eliminated in the first round in 1974 and the Scots suffered the same fate in 1978, despite Rod Stewart's claim in 'Ole, ola' that: "We're gonna bring that World Cup back from over there." The Scots learnt their lesson eventually and by France 98 their anthem simply pleaded: Don't come home too soon."

There are no wild promises from Down Under as Australia prepare for their first FIFA World Cup in 32 years. Instead, Freedom of Thought have set out to capture the excitement of the Australians' return to the world stage: "I wanna jump and scream/ In a stadium full of Australians/ Wearing my green and gold." At the Socceroos' send-off on Thursday night, nobody is going to argue with those sentiments.

Buffon to meet investigators REUTERS, Milan

Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon, preparing for next month's World Cup finals, will speak to investigators on Wednesday as part of a probe into soccer gambling.

Buffon will leave Italy's training camp in Florence to travel to Parma where prosecutors have opened their investigation.

"I will accompany Buffon to Parma where he has been requested to give a testimony. Gigi will say what he has to say and then I will bring him back to the training camp," Italy team manager Gigi Riva told the Italian news agency

ANSA. The Juventus goalkeeper has

denied any wrongdoing. After volunteering to statement to Turin magistrates earlier this month, Buffon said that any bets he made were on foreign games at a time when such bets did not break Italy's strict regulations on

gambling. Buffon is not under investigation and will meet prosecutors as a 'person who may be informed of the

Last week the Italian Football Federation said they saw no reason why Buffon should not be included in Marcello Lippi's 23-man squad for the World Cup which starts on June

The Parma investigation is not connected to the widespread probe by Rome and Naples magistrates into allegations of match-fixing.

GIGI BUFFON CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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ENTERING THE POST-SEASON PERIOD? Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals S

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 using an apostrophe portrave give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

TBFWKF S W M X J