



PHOTO: AFP

Saudi Arabia goalkeeper Mohammad Khouja dives full-length in an effort to stop the ball during a friendly match against Czech Republic at Innsbruck in Austria on Saturday.

## Some relief for USA



AGENCIES, undated

Clint Dempsey and Brian Ching scored and the United States snapped a three-game winless skid by defeating Venezuela 2-0 in Cleveland, Ohio Friday in a warm-up friendly for next month's World Cup.

Ching scored off a centre from Bobby Convey, going airborne to redirect the ball past Venezuela goalkeeper Javier Toyo in the 36th minute while Dempsey ran onto an Eddie Johnson cross into the heart of the penalty area and nodded the ball past a helpless Toyo, in the 69th minute, helping ease American worries after an ejection left them a

man down in the last minutes.

Carlos Bocanegra, starting a day after his 27th birthday, was sent off for his second yellow card in the 82nd minute but the South Americans could not take advantage and spoil the second of three games in the US send-off tour.

Unlike the opener, the Americans appeared to avoid losing a key player to a major injury.

The US squad lost defender Cory Gibbs for the World Cup with a right knee injury in a 1-0 loss Tuesday to Morocco and saw captain Claudio Reyna sidelined until the start of the football showdown in Germany with a hamstring strain.

The Americans were winless since Dempsey's goal brought a 1-0 victory over Poland on March 1. The US team lost 4-1 to Germany in March, drew 1-1 at home with Jamaica in April before the Morocco defeat.

The US squad will conclude their warm-up tour Sunday against Latvia at East Hartford, Connecticut, wearing a "secret weapon" red jersey with a "Don't Tread on Me" logo.

### CZECH REP 2 SARABIA 0

The Czech Republic opened their World Cup prep series Friday with a 2-0 win over Saudi Arabia in Innsbruck, Austria with goals from Milan Baros and Marek Jankulovski.

Baros finished a solo run with a low shot past goalkeeper Mohammad Khouja in the 15th minute, his 27th goal in 47 international appearances. Jankulovski converted a penalty kick in the 90th after David Jarolim was fouled in the penalty area.

The second-ranked Czechs were without 6-foot-8 forward Jan Koller, who injured his right leg on Thursday. Captain Tomas Galasek

and midfielder Vladimir Smicer also sat out.

The Czechs meet Costa Rica at home in Jablonec on Tuesday, then face Trinidad and Tobago in Prague on June 3.

### GHANA 1 TURKEY 1

Ghana needed a second half equaliser to salvage a 1-1 draw against Turkey at Bochum, Germany as they continued the build-up to their first ever World Cup finals on Friday.

Nihat Kahveci gave the Turks, who haven't qualified for the finals, the lead in the 17th minute before Borussia Dortmund striker Matthew Amoah levelled on the hour for the Blacks Stars.

Ghana have two more warm-up games scheduled against Jamaica on May 29 and South Korea on June 4.

## Mido returns to Roma

REUTERS, London

Egypt striker Mido is returning to Roma after an 18-month loan period at Tottenham Hotspur, the English Premier League club said on Friday.

The 23-year-old made a big impact at Spurs with his 11 league goals in 24 games last season helping the north London club to qualify for the UEFA Cup after finishing fifth.

It was their highest league placing since 1990 and they only just missed out on a Champions League qualifying spot on the final day of the season to arch-rivals Arsenal.

Mido, who has also played for Zamalek, Gent, Ajax Amsterdam, Celta Vigo and Olympique Marseille, hit the headlines when he was banned by Egypt in February from playing for his country for six months after a touchline row with his coach at the African Nations Cup.

## Venables turns down Boro job

AFP, London

Former England manager Terry Venables has turned down the chance to join Middlesbrough when press reports had claimed the UEFA Cup finalists were about to name him as the new boss.

Former Boro manager Steve McClaren is thought keen to use the 63-year-old as a senior advisor when he becomes England head coach after the World Cup, and it is known Boro have kept their options open by talking with more than one prospective manager.

It is understood detailed talks have taken place between the club and Venables, as well as Alan Curbishley and Martin O'Neill, however Sky Sports News have reported that Venables has ruled himself out of contention.

With Venables apparently no longer interested, O'Neill might well replace him as Boro's top target.

## Kalou in talks with Chelsea

REUTERS, Amsterdam

Feyenoord striker Salomon Kalou is holding talks with English Premier League champions Chelsea, the Dutch news agency ANP reported on Saturday.

"Anticipating the possible departure, we have given Salomon an authorisation to talk with Chelsea," Feyenoord marketing director Chris Woerts told ANP.

"We have been in talks with this club over Kalou for some time. It's going in the right direction but he still hasn't reached an agreement yet... Chelsea sees in Kalou an exceptional talent."

The Dutch newspaper De Telegraaf said 20-year-old Kalou, who is the younger brother of Ivory Coast captain Bonaventure Kalou, had been in England on Friday to wrap up the deal.

"The player reached a principle agreement with the club," the paper said without quoting a source.

"The expectations are that today or tomorrow the clubs will agree on a four or five-year contract."

Dutch media have previously reported that Valencia and Chelsea have shown a strong interest in the striker.

## Blazevic named Zagreb coach

AFP, Zagreb

Miroslav Blazevic, who coached Croatia to third place in the 1998 World Cup, said Saturday he has been appointed the coach of first division side Zagreb.

"I have a lot of experience, but everything inside me is still young," the 71-year-old coach told journalists. Blazevic was dismissed last year as coach of Hajduk Split due to bad results at the beginning of the season, after which he coached Swiss club Xamax.

Zagreb finished eighth in the Croatian top flight.

## UEFA fines Schalke

AFP, Gelsenkirchen

European football's governing body UEFA have hit German club Schalke 04 with a 12,600 euro fine as punishment for the conduct of their away fans in a UEFA Cup match, the club said Friday.

Schalke fans were found guilty of provoking fighting in the stands in the UEFA Cup second leg match at Spanish side Espanyol back in February with three fans charged with inflicting grievous bodily harm.

Schalke won the knockout match 3-0, progressing 5-1 on aggregate, and ended up reaching the semifinal of the competition before being eliminated by eventual champions FC Sevilla.

# Sheva leaves Milan for London



REUTERS, Rome

Ukraine striker Andriy Shevchenko is leaving AC Milan who will start negotiations with English champions Chelsea over his transfer, according to a statement on AC Milan's website on Friday.

"I'm leaving for family reasons," Shevchenko, a former European footballer of the year, said. "I thank the club for all they've given me. There's no relationship problem and there's no economic problem."

Adriano Galliani, Milan's vice president, said in the same statement that the club would start negotiations with Chelsea, adding: "It will not be easy."

"It's a victory of the English language over the Italian language," Galliani said. "I tried to persuade him to stay up until the last minute. It is certainly the most painful separation during my time at Milan."

Shevchenko's American wife Kristen is reported to have asked her husband to move to London as she would prefer their son Jordan to grow up in an English-speaking country.

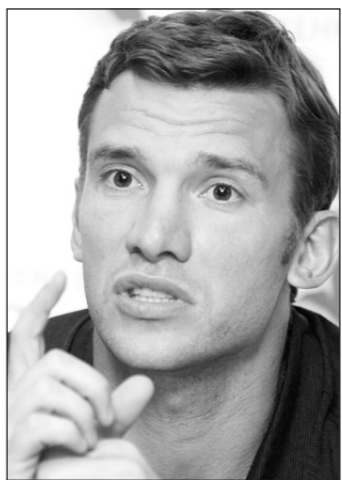
If Chelsea complete the capture of the 29-year-old Ukraine captain he would become their second coup of the close season after the arrival of Germany skipper Michael Ballack on a free transfer from Bayern Munich.

However, Shevchenko's move to Stamford Bridge depends on the clubs

reaching agreement on a fee. Italian media say Milan hope to get about 30 million euros (38.29 million dollars) for the forward.

Chelsea may look to include a player in part exchange and their French defender William Gallas would welcome a move to the Italian side, who are looking for defensive reinforcements.

If the clubs reach an agreement,



ANDRIY SHEVCHENKO

Shevchenko's departure would have a major knock-on effect on the transfer market with Milan certain to try to replace him with a top quality striker.

Coach Carlo Ancelotti has Italy internationals Alberto Gilardino and Filippo Inzaghi as his two remaining

forwards but Milan fans will expect a big name to arrive if they are to accept losing their top scorer.

Manchester United's Ruud van Nistelrooy and Inter Milan's Brazilian forward Adriano have been mentioned as possible replacements for Shevchenko by Italian newspapers.

Italy's investigations into match-fixing allegations could broaden the range of Ancelotti's options, however.

Should Juventus, at the centre of the scandal, be relegated to Serie B their France forward David Trezeguet and Sweden striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic could become targets.

Shevchenko has been at Milan for seven years following his 25-million-dollar move from Dynamo Kiev, where he won five domestic league titles.

During his time with the Italian club he won the Champions League in 2003 and the Italian title in 2004. He has scored 127 goals in 208 Serie A matches for Milan.

He is also the highest scorer in the history of the European Cup with 52 goals after grabbing 33 in the Champions League for Milan and 19 while playing for Kiev.

Chelsea, who have just won their second successive English title, are financed by Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich.

# Lippi assures Italy faithfuls



REUTERS, Florence

Italy coach Marcello Lippi knew his son was likely to be drawn into the scandal that has engulfed Italian football and insists his team are managing to concentrate on their preparations for the World Cup.

Lippi's son Davide, who is a players' agent, was formally put under investigation on Friday by prosecutors looking into the GEA World agency run by Alessandro Moggi, the son of former Juventus general manager Luciano Moggi.

"Lippi is fine, both Lippis are fine," the Italy coach told reporters at the team's training camp on Saturday.

"About 20 days ago, I told my son that with all the stuff that was coming out, given who he had collaborated with, he shouldn't expect to stay out of it," Lippi said.

The Italy coach himself is not under investigation. Along with several of the country's top coaches, he has spoken to magistrates simply as a "person informed of the facts".

"We live in a country where if you speak to the authorities as a 'person informed of the facts' then you are treated as though you are under investigation."

"If you are put under investigation then you are treated as though you have been condemned," said Lippi.

"We will see who has something to repent for and who doesn't. Some people might be found to have rushed to judgment and to then have been proved wrong - they might apologise for that but it never happens, never happens."

GEA has more than 200 players and coaches on its books. Luciano Moggi is at the centre of the match-fixing storm after telephone tran-

scripts were published of his conversations with top soccer officials. Lippi said the work of his players had not been affected by the rumbling scandal that continues to dominate Italian media.

"There has been no difference in the approach of the lads, they are showing the same desire as they have always done."

"Away from the field they might give some attention to other things, but on the field their mental approach to work has been exceptional, fantastic," said Lippi.

"Everyone is calm, some have some problems that need to be cleared up and we hope they are cleared up quickly, but everyone is calm."

Italy face Switzerland in Geneva on Wednesday in their first pre-World Cup friendly and then travel to Lausanne to play Ukraine on Friday.

Italy's opening game of Group E is against Ghana on June 12. Lippi's side also face the Czech Republic and the United States.



MARCELLO LIPPI

## Prince Philip vilifies Olympic gala

AFP, London

Olympic opening and closing ceremonies are "absolute bloody nuisances" and should be banned, the husband of Queen Elizabeth II said Saturday.

Prince Philip expressed his annoyance at the staple of the quadrennial sports jamboree in an interview with the Daily Telegraph during which he also chipped in with a view on an England footballer's World Cup-threatening injury.

The Olympic Games came up as the 84-year-old -- a world champion carriage driver -- recalled having to attend as a president of the International Federation for Equestrian Sports (FEI).

"Opening and closing ceremonies ought to be banned. Absolute bloody nuisances. I have been to one that was absolutely, appallingly awful -- aaagh," he was quoted as saying, without mentioning the host city.

The prince, who said he would like to do "as little as possible" when London hosts the 2012 Games, confessed he was horrified when told at one competition that showjumping was no longer to be held in the main arena as the last event.

"So I said, 'What is the Olympics about? The competition or the closing ceremony?' So I'm truly fed up with opening and closing ceremonies. They're a pain in the neck," he added.

Philip, a lifelong sportsman who still competes in horse driving, said he had been lucky with injuries throughout his career, bringing him onto the subject of England player Wayne Rooney's fifth metatarsal, which continues to dominate British sports pages.

"I've had very few things go wrong. It's terrible for people who break things. Take Rooney. That must be really hideous for him at the high point of his career," he said.

## Rangers sign up Svensson

AFP, Glasgow

Glasgow Rangers completed the signing of Sweden defender Karl Svensson from IFK Gothenburg on a three-year contract on Friday.

Svensson, who becomes Le Guen's second major signing of the close season, after Austria Vienna midfielder Libor Sionko also joined, is part of the Sweden squad which will take part in the World Cup finals in Germany.

# Veterans carry Saudi hopes



AFP, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia are banking on the experience of two golden oldies as they seek to stop the rot at the World Cup.

With six World Cup finals appearances and over 320 caps between them, veteran striker Sami Al-Jaber and world record-holding goalkeeper Mohamed Al-Deayea have both been recalled to international duty in the past year.

And Brazilian coach Marcos Paqueta believes both players will have a crucial role to play in Germany, where the Saudis will be attempting to reach the second round for the first time in 12 years.

Of the two, it is Al-Jaber's return that has generated the most excitement amongst Saudi fans as the Gulf state prepares to tackle Spain, Ukraine and Tunisia in Group H.

One of the most respected players in Asian football, the 33-year-old had been in exile since the 2002 finals, where Saudi Arabia fared dreadfully.

But just under three years since his last appearance -- the traumatic 8-0 drubbing by Germany -- Al-Jaber was back to earn his 145th cap after being recalled to face

Uzbekistan by former coach Gabriel Calderon.

Typically, Al-Jaber repaid Calderon's faith with a goal, one of three he netted during 2006 World Cup qualifiers.

Though Calderon has been replaced, Al-Jaber's place in the



AL-DEAYEA

Saudi set-up appears secure with new coach Paqueta one of his biggest admirers.

"In addition to being a top-class player, he is very calm and this helps him advise his teammates and help us at crucial moments," Paqueta said. "That is going to be important at the World Cup."

Al-Jaber, a goalscoring member of the Saudi side which reached the second round of the 1994 World Cup, attributes his longevity to a

carefully tailored fitness regime.

"I've learnt to take better care of myself and follow a special diet," he said. "I train three times a day with a personal trainer and that has helped."

Al-Jaber is also the only Saudi squad player to have tried his luck in English football, enduring an injury-plagued spell with Wolves in 2000.

While Al-Jaber attempts to find the net for the 'Sons of the Desert', Al-Deayea, the world record caps holder with around 180 appearances, could be thwarting opposition attacks at the other end.

Although Mabrouk Zaid was first choice in qualifying, Al-Deayea, 33, was recalled to the national team in January and retained his place until the 3-0 defeat by Portugal in March -- his 179th appearance.

Even if Al-Deayea is unable to earn a place in Paqueta's starting XI, his vast experience of international football -- he first played for Saudi Arabia way back in 1990 -- make him a valued member of the squad.

"We have a good group of players but they lack greater involvement at international level," said Paqueta, explaining his decision to recall the veteran goalkeeper.

Despite facing stiff competition from Zaid, Al-Deayea still harbours dreams of becoming the first player to break the 200-caps barrier.

# Ferguson warning for Rooney



AFP, London

Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson has warned Wayne Rooney not to jeopardise his World Cup dream by pushing himself too hard and not taking care of himself.

Rooney will travel with the England squad to Germany on June 5 even though he will not know whether he will play any part in the tournament until the results of a second scan on his broken foot on June 14 are known.

Ferguson is acutely aware how desperate the 20-year-old is to appear in his first World Cup.

The Scot insists he shares the same desire. But, as well as the best medical care he will continue to receive at United's Carrington training ground next week, and at England's base in Baden-Baden afterwards, Ferguson feels Rooney shares some responsibility too.

"We do not just look at this from the medical point of view," Ferguson told

Mutu. "Wayne has to take care of himself too. He has to look after himself by ensuring he is getting the proper rest and is wearing his orthopaedic boot at the right time, particularly in training."

However, Ferguson does recognise how much benefit can be gained from the former Everton player appearing alongside the world's best this summer.

"The experience and confidence he would get from being at the World Cup is obvious," said Ferguson. "We are praying and hoping but the problem is because Wayne is young, he doesn't feel any pain. This is a dangerous area because the scan quite clearly shows the fracture is not healed."

After four weeks of almost daily speculation on Rooney's fitness, by opting to take the United forward with him to Germany, Eriksson has now condemned the England camp to another three at least.

It is probably not the situation Ferguson envisaged when he declared it would be "folly" to think Rooney could play in Germany, although both the Red Devils and England are attempting to show they are united in their wishes for Rooney

despite speculation to the contrary. "We have had to put up with a lot of damaging nonsense," argued Ferguson. "We are supposed to be using the FA and (sacked doctor) Mike Stone is supposed to have left because of Wayne. It is all absolute rubbish."

"The truth is, Wayne is making exactly the progress we said he would. From the very outset, our medical team said it would be six weeks before Wayne could start training again."

The harmonious point has been reinforced by Eriksson, who has probably emerged slightly in credit over the last 24 hours even if he still does not know whether Rooney will kick a ball during England's World Cup campaign.

"I talked to Alex Ferguson a day or two after Wayne was injured and we agreed what would happen," he said. "Since then, nothing has changed. The relationship is good."

"Now and then I speak to Wayne and our doctor speaks to Manchester United's physios and doctors. There is no problem between Manchester United and England. The only problem is that Wayne Rooney has a bad foot."

## CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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