Milan tempt Torres

INTERNET, undated

Andriy Shevchenko's replacement could well be Spain striker Fernando Torres, as Milan line up a 20m-poundswoop.

The Atletico Madrid youngster has been a Rossoneri target for several years now, but the high price-tag and Shevchenko's presence made the move untenable up

The 30m-pound cash provided by Chelsea for Sheva will prove useful for bringing in the Spaniard, who it's reported could be tempted into a switch for between 20.5m and 24m pounds.

"I feel that my future depends on this World Cup," commented Torres, whose contract expires in 2008 with a 60m-pound buy-out

Chelsea and Arsenal are also interested in the 22-year-old, who was his country's leading scorer in qualifying with seven goals.

Curiously, he'll be facing off against Shevchenko in this evening's clash between Spain and Ukraine in Group H.

Juve hint at Capello exit

INTERNET, undated

Juventus have laid out plans for their 'English style' club, but hinted that Fabio Capello will leave if they are relegated.

"We'll give more space to young players and are aiming for a new model of club, starting from the Juve spirit," explained CEO Carlo Sant'Albano. "Capello has been very clear with us and we'll see what happens. In any case, I appreciate

The future of the tactician has been in doubt ever since the Calciopoli scandal broke, as an investigation into alleged matchfixing and collusion with referees could see the Turin giants docked points or even demoted to Serie B.

Sant'Albano's comments suggest that Capello has warned he'll move on, reportedly to Real Madrid, if the worst case scenario comes to pass.

The former Roma and Milan boss has never been particularly popular with a section of the die-hard Juve fans due to his treatment of captain Alessandro Del Piero. The Bianconeri changed their

entire Board of Directors in the wake of the scandal and are set to make more adjustments to their set-up.

"I want to imitate the English model of football clubs," continued the CEO. "This difficult moment we are going through has enabled us to look back over the 109 years of history, values and responsibilities we have built. I was called by the owners to lay the foundations so that this can all be preserved."

The Stadio Delle Alpi will be restructured this year to reduce the capacity from 70,000 to 43,000 and

"Our history is made of success, team spirit, entertaining sport, but also of elegance and gentlemanly conduct. Our victories were earned with sacrifice and hard work, and these values are at the heart of a brand which is universally recognised throughout 14 million fans spread all over the world. I firmly believe this project will bring football back to the centre of our rebirth. It'll be up to the men involved to use those elements with fair play, intelligence and a firm hand."

States viewership reaches new height

AFP, New York

The United States lost their first 2006 World Cup match to the Czech Republic, but the clash was a ratings winner for ESPN2 television.

The match on Monday earned the highest rating (2.3) and the largest audience ever (2.06 million households) for a football game on ESPN2, according to the Nielsen rating agency.

The previous all-time high for a soccer game on ESPN2 -- sister channel to the more widely available ESPN cable channel, was set during Saturdays Argentina-Ivory Coast match, which received a 1.8 rating (1.6 million households).

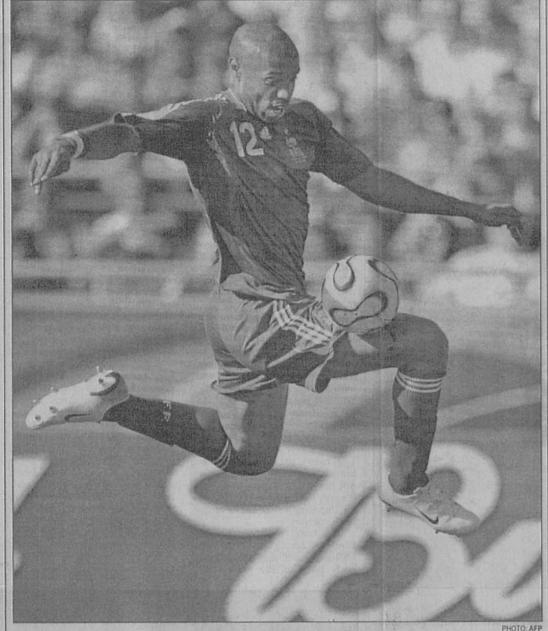
The figures were released Tuesday by Major League Soccer, whose sister company, Soccer United Marketing, holds the English language broadcast rights

in the US to the World Cup. US viewership for the FIFA World Cup on ESPN2 has more than doubled compared to previous editions of the worlds biggest

single sport event. For the first weekend of games on ESPN2, Nielsen reported an

increase in number of households of 252 percent compared to the 1998 tournament and an increase of 191 percent compared to the first weekend of the 2002 tournament. Prior to the first US game, the five

live ESPN2 telecasts during this years opening weekend earned an average rating of 1.4 (1.2 million households) compared to a 0.5 rating (426,531 households) in 2002, when games took place in early morning hours because the tournament was held in Japan and Korea.



France's crowd-favourite forward Thierry Henry in action against Switzerland on Tuesday.

Henry flatters to deceive



AP, Stuttgart

This time Thierry Henry blamed hot grass and bad refereeing for France's 0-0 draw against

Barely a month ago, Henry argued that a poor linesman and cynical tackling from defenders cost the Champions League final against Barcelona.

But in both matches, a greater truth stood out amid the accusations: that Henry misses chances in

Switzerland defender Patrick Mueller handled Henry's first-half shot, and Russian referee Valentin Ivanov waved away French penalty. "Once again the referee didn't

see it and it came at a moment in the match when we were really on top." Henry said. "I know that the rule is hand-to-ball, but if the ball hits the hand and it stops it going in, that should be a penalty.'

He also lamented that the Stuttgart pitch had not been prepared properly.

Because it had been watered at midday rather than just before the

AFP, Berlin

tism a taboo.

GERMANY 2006

Germans have rediscovered their

flag and are waving it with pride

during the World Cup, freeing

themselves of the historical guilt

that once made gestures of patrio-

are popping up everywhere across

the football extravaganza's host

country -- whipping in the wind on

passing cars, sprayed on dogs' fur,

painted on faces -- and for once in

when Germany beat Costa Rica 4-

2. the scene in front of the giant

screen at Berlin's Brandenburg

Gate was a sea of German flags -- a

sight not seen since the fall of the

Even the fans who wrapped

themselves in the German flag and

perched themselves on the con-

crete blocks of the nearby

Holocaust memorial did not raise

politically correct to wear the

German colours, even in a trendy

area like this," said Jonas, a 30-

something watching a match in the

hip Prenzlauer Berg district of Berlin.

major gaffe just a few years ago;

souvenir vendors are doing a boom-

ing business with jaunty plastic

spiked helmets, a take-off on

Prussian World War I headgear

associated the world over with

historical statement," 23-year-old

fan Marko Sayna explained. "For

"It's ironic -- no one is making a

Germany's militaristic past.

In what would have been a

"For the first time, it is cool and

At Friday's opening match

Germany, no one is shocked.

Berlin Wall in 1989.

eyebrows.

The banner's black, red and gold

early evening kick-off, Henry said it was sticky underfoot in the hot conditions "The ball was getting stuck under the player's feet all the time,"

he said. "Then I saw them watering the pitch after the match. What's the point of that? There's no game there tonight. After both Arsenal's defeat, and Tuesday's draw against the Swiss,

at everything else except the fact he failed to score. Against Switzerland Henry missed with a tame header, twice shot weakly at goalkeeper Pascal

Henry pointed his accusing finger

Zuberbuehler, and mis-hit a simple pass to Sylvain Wiltord. On the bench sat David Trezeguet: a far less skilful player than Henry but a far better finisher. Trezeguet failed to even make a substitute appearance, even

Zinedine Zidane's brilliant passing France coach Raymond Domenech leapt to the defence of Henry by also blaming the hot

though the match was crying out

for a centre-forward to convert

"If they had watered the pitch just before, the ball would have slid properly," Domenech said. "Rather

than keep getting stuck." The bigger issue remains whether Henry, for all his great skill,

Germans rediscover identity

wear it, no one takes it seriously."

the World Cup, you're allowed to

The players have also gotten

swept up in the patriotic spirit,

heartily singing along as the band

struck up the German national

anthem at the opener in the south-

ern city of Munich. In times past,

Germany coach Juergen

Klinsmann told reporters ahead of

the host nation's second match.

against Poland Wednesday, he was

thrilled by the displays of national

driving through the streets with the

flags. That is something that can

unite people," he said, noting that

such sights were commonplace in

the United States, his adopted

"It is wonderful to have a com-

Journalist Matthias Matussek,

who has just published a book

titled "We Germans -- Why The

Others Could Like Us", argues that

the country is finally developing a

more relaxed attitude toward

nationhood, six decades after

Matussek, who edits the culture

pages at the influential weekly Der

Spiegel and whose brother Thomas

was the German ambassador to

Britain until this year, urges

Germans to develop "a positive

embrace what is essentially

German carries the risk "of losing

control of our country in a time of

globalisation and confrontations

dominant order of the day for

decades, at least among intellectu-

als," Matussek said, accusing the

left - of which he once considered

"'Germany, never again' was the

linked to Islamic jihad"

He argues that a failure to

identification with their country"

home since 1998.

WorldWar II.

mon dream," he said.

"It is beautiful to see the cars

they barely mustered a mumble.

is truly a big-game player. While he plunders goals galore for Arsenal -- 214 in 342 -- his strike rate for France -- 33 in 79 games -is well below. It does not compare historically with the world's best

Henry's last crucial goal in a major competition was against Portugal in the semifinals of the 2000 European Championship. Although he scored France's winner at Ireland in World Cup qualifying, he failed to score at the last World Cup -- despite finishing Premiership top scorer.

Trezeguet scored France's Golden Goal winner against Italy at Paro 2000 and has a far better international record of 32 in 63. Trezeguet works far better with

In 54 matches together for France, Henry has never scored on an assist from Zidane.

Against the Swiss, Zidane carved open the defence to put Henry in dangerous positions.

As against Barcelona, when he missed a close-range chance and a one-on-one with the goalie, the result was the same -- he missed.

Henry said he has grown a thick skin to suggestions that he goes missing in big games.

"I live with that on a daily basis in England," Henry said. "When I score, I am great. When I don't suddenly there is a problem."

nation's history to the "12 dark

pride began tentatively under

conservative former chancellor

Helmut Kohl and gained momen-

tum when the capital of the reuni-

fied country moved back to Berlin

in 1999 under his Social Democrat

invested a fortune in an image

campaign called "Germany, Land

of Ideas" in which homegrown

supermodel Claudia Schiffer is

gracing giant posters draped solely

Another book released just in

time for the championship, Florian

Langenscheidt's "The Best of

Germany -- 250 Reasons to Love

Our Country Today" attempts to

banish a favourite German pastime

German" products, personalities,

qualities and landmarks in which

our country sinks, groaning under

its mediocrity, or whether it works,

in chorus with other nations, for a

better world, sovereign and fully

agrees that patriotism is indispens-

able in an age of intense competi-

tion between nations in an increas-

identity has become a crucial

economic asset," Mueller, the

editor-in-chief of Manager

Magazin, writes in his new book

"Economic Factor Patriotism -

Love of Fatherland in an Age of

"And we Germans still have a

"Having an intact national

Journalist Henrik Mueller

aware of itself."

Globalisation".

problem with that."

ingly borderless world.

his compatriots can take pride.

Langenscheidt lists "typically

"It is up to us to decide whether

-- talking down the country.

in the German flag.

For the World Cup, the country

successor Gerhard Schroeder.

The revival of a certain national

culpable years" of the Nazi era.

A cheeky bet

AFP, Helsinki

Should hosts Germany win the World Cup then the secretary general of the Finnish socialdemocratic party Maarit Feldt-Ranta will honour a bet and tattoo the German flag onto her bottom.

"Big sports events unleash huge passion. I am a great lover of football and handball after all," said Feldt-Ranta, whose party is a member of the centre left coalition government in power since 2003.

"I'm not the type to generally tattoo myself whatever the occasion, I would much rather have betted on dying my hair, but I will keep my promise. We shall see how the tournament turns out," added Feldt-Rana, who was stunned when she found her bizarre bet had been leaked to the newspapers.

The wager had been apparently a secret one between several employees of her party.

While Finland didn't qualify for the finals, Germany opened their campaign with a 4-2 victory over Costa Rica.

Kempes tips Crouch for glory

AFP, Berlin

Argentina's 1978 World Cup winning star Mario Kempes believes England's title hopes hinge more on Peter Crouch than Wayne

Kempes, who was top scorer at the 1978 finals and inspired the South Americans to their first ever World Cup triumph, insists that the beanpole Liverpool striker is an under-rated threat.

"England might do well, and although they're missing Rooney, they have got Crouch. He can score goals, can't he? He's a typical goalscorer," said Kempes.

"He's more of a penalty-box player than Rooney; he can bring down high balls and put them away. He's got an all-round game."

Dutch want pitches watered

The Dutch team, unhappy with the state of the pitch during their game against Serbia and Montenegro in Leipzig, have demanded that football's governing body, FIFA, water pitches before matches.

"FIFA must do something. The Leipzig pitch was too hard and too dry," Dutch defender Giovanni van Bronckhorst said Tuesday.

Such pitches "are bad for football, especially for the teams that attack," added coach Marco van Basten.

"The field was very dry, it was very hot and there were a lot of technical mistakes that are not normally the case," said van Basten.

After the 1-0 opening win against the Serbs, the head of the Dutch delegation to the World Cup, Hans Jorritsma, demanded that FIFA ensure pitches are watered before any future matches.

According to the Dutch news agency ANP, Jorritsma got a straight "no" back from FIFA, whose rules stipulate that pitches are not watered for at least five hours before a match.

Pfister dodges queries

AFP, Frankfurt

Togo's veteran German coach Otto Pfister on Tuesday issued an angry rebuke to questions about why he had walked out on the west African World Cup debutants only to return three days later.

After a curt "no comment" Pfister blasted another journalist who repeated the question. "Are you deaf or what? I said I

wouldn't make any comment, said the 68-year-old. With Pfister at the helm, Togo

lost 2-1 to South Korea in their Group G opener in Frankfurt on Tuesday. The veteran coach had quit the

Togolese camp on Friday over a dispute concerning players' bonuses, but just as it appeared that former Cameroon coach Winfried Schafer might be taking over, Pfister suddenly returned to the team on Monday.

Togo were surprise qualifiers for their first appearance at a World Cup finals beating 2002 quarterfinalists Senegal to the prized

Sweden deny FROM PAGE 19

didn't win and we just discussed

how we can do better next time," the Arsenal player said. "There was no fight and I have

great respect for Olof. He is a great captain. Mellberg and Ljungberg fought

during a training session ahead of the 2002 World Cup in South Korea and Japan after a rough tackle on Ljungberg by Mellberg.

Home away from home



REUTERS, Dortmund

Tens of thousands of Poles heading west to Dortmund on Wednesday to watch Poland face World Cup host nation Germany will find a bedrock of support when they arrive.

Poles have lived in the gritty industrial area for generations and a constant stream of immigrants -often swapping work in the coal mines of southern Poland for work in German mines -- has kept links and lovalties alive. Polish surnames swell the local

phone book, corner shops stock Polish sausage and beer and a thriving community guards its cultural heritage while being one of Germany's best integrated immi-

Precisely because they are so well integrated, Poles long settled

in the Dortmund area have reacted droves. to fears of an influx of Polish hooligans for the Germany game with

"I am really hoping we won't see any trouble around the game. I just cannot imagine it," said 24-yearold Katarina Gebalczyk, who

moved to Dortmund from Poland

when she was seven. Fears of a violent showdown between fans have overshadowed Wednesday's Group A match for months, especially after about 100 Germans and Poles brawled near the border in November.

But German police said on the eve of the game they had no evidence pointing to planned clashes between German and Polish hooligans though they would deploy more officers than usual and remain on alert.

Most of the Poles in the area, even those born and raised in buying red and white Polish flags in we are."

"I've been here since the mid 1980s, my kids are all born here. They speak better German than Polish -- but they know who to support," said Waldemar Kazimierczak outside the team's hotel in Essen last week.

However, Gebalczyk is more

"I guess I will be happy whoever wins," she smiled, adding she hoped German-Poles could help keep things calm in Dortmund should they see tensions mount-

Whatever the outcome, national honour is stake and the Poles will look to redeem themselves after losing their World Cup opener to Ecuador 2-0.

Polish team captain Jacek Bak, told a news conference on Tuesday: The Germans can laugh at us in their newspapers and on TV, bur I Germany, say their allegiance believe that we as Poles are capable belongs to Poland and they have of showing them on the pitch who

Beckham blasts tabloid



AFP, Baden-Baden

England captain David Beckham has hit out at a German tabloid's portrayal of his family but is resigned to more of the same abuse if his team progresses to the later stages of the World Cup.

The Bild newspaper targeted several members of Beckham's family on Monday, describing the superstar's sister as a "fat-ham" and his mother as having the 'smile of a peasant"

The Real Madrid footballer's popstar wife Victoria was also savaged by the mass-selling daily while Beckham's three young children were lampooned as Beckham said he did not plan to take legal action over the story but

could not hide his contempt when talking to reporters at England's training camp ahead of their Group B game against Trinidad and Tobago on Thursday While Beckham said he had grown accustomed to life in the media spotlight and criticism of

himself as a footballer, he would

never accept personal attacks upon his family "I don't really want to give these people any more publicity than they've already had," said

"I've come to terms with people criticising me as a footballer, but when it comes to my family that's one thing I won't accept and never

"For some reason, some people, one person maybe, has just found it funny to criticise my mum, my sister, my children.

I find it sad that someone drops to that level. But it's probably just one sad person sitting in a room thinking up something that they can do to maybe try and put me off the next game -- and I'm not going to let them do that.'

Asked if he expected more of the same if England were to meet Germany in the second round, Beckham said: "Without a doubt.

But I've had enough things said of his generation, he still struggles about me throughout my football career to not worry about some-

I've always had a great relationship with the German public and German fans. It's never ever been a problem."

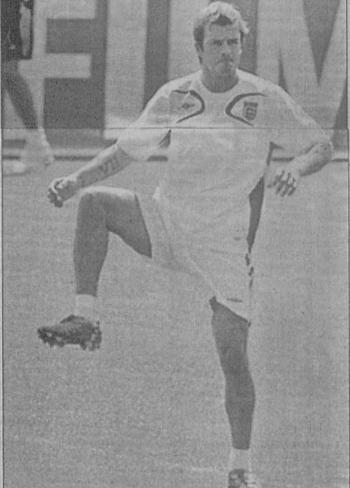
Beckham suffered a season of relentless abuse from fans following his sending-off against Argentina in the 1998 World Cup, which was widely blamed as the reason for England's exit.

Although Beckham transformed his reputation to become one of the most popular footballers and my sister it's hard."

to come to terms with seeing his extended family involved, even though they have grown used to it. "Over the last 10 years when

have been affected at times," Beckham said. "After the '98 World Cup my

"I can put up with it, or try to put up with it, but when it gets to my nan and grandad and my parents





Embattled Japan coach Zico is under pressure following the 1-3 loss to Australia to boost his attack in order to survive the first-round cut at the World Cup and salvage

"I believe Zico will change his system," Japan Football Association president Saburo Kawabuchi said as the Asian champions tried to regroup ahead of their second Group-F match

We have a plenty of time to work things out," he told reporters

champions Brazil on Tuesday, A second straight loss would likely prove fatal for both teams. Zico's cautious three-back

pushed the Asian champions far too deep and allowed the big and physical Socceroos space to charge in on goal resulting in a three-goal onslaught in the last nine minutes of play on Monday. But Zico, a star player in three

line which can free up two side backs to join four midfielders in pressing the opponents, the FA according to the Japanese media. The same gear shift already paid

to beat European champions

Greece and drew with Brazil, only missing out on the second round on goal difference. After the defeat by Mexico, they played great football as if they were completely different team, Kawabuchi said. "I have just talked about it with Zico. And I am con-

He said Japan were determined to beat Croatia and take on Brazil "with belief in our victory." that's not impossible at all.

vinced that his team will definitely

make it next time in a similar man-

At home, Zico was criticised for his dubious substitution tactics, in contrast to Australia coach Guus Hiddink's effective use of players with late substitutes Tim Cahill and

John Aloisi striking all the goals. After replacing an injured defender, Zico substituted striker Atsushi Yanagisawa with former Feyenoord midfielder Shinji Ono late in the second half to boost Japan's attacking midfield. But it only confused the Japanese formation.

Zico sent on super-sub Masashi Oguro after they went down 3-1 in injury time.

fought opening 1-0 win over Many telephone calls were made to the FA head office in Tokyo on Tuesday, mostly protesting at Zico's strategy or his lack of it,

United he would join international teammate Cristiano

DAVID BECKHAM

Pressure mounts on Zico

Kawabuchi recalled that after losing to Mexico in the Confed opener Japan switched from three to four backs. Zico's Japan went on

his reputation.

against Croatia on Sunday.

at Japan's training camp here. Croatia, third at France 1998, lost their opener 1-0 to five-time

defence, joined by two wingers,

Brazil World Cup campaigns, may employ his favourite four-man last

off at the Confederations Cup in

thinglike this. "It's sad but at the end of the day

something has happened to me on a football pitch, it's my family that

parents had vans and 20 photograhers outside the house for three weeks after that competition.

Sports daily reported.

But Zico, who has been involved

in Japanese football for 15 years,

first as a player, has said he will step

down after the World Cup anyway,

hoping to coach a club in Europe.

Japan's national side was the first team he served as head coach. **Petit lured**

by United AFP, Marienfeld

Portuguese international midfielder Petit revealed on Tuesday that he is a target for English Premiership giants Manchester United.

The 29-year-old Benfica star, scorer of four goals in his 37 international appearances, added that he would make a decision after the Portuguese World Cup finals campaign had finished.

from Manchester United," Petit said following a training session "This is not the time to be think-

'I received an offer of a contract

ing about that and I want to concentrate on the World Cup. Afterwards, we can talk about the offer," added Petit, who was substituted during Portugal's hard

Angola on Sunday. Should Petit, who has been at Benfica since 2002, decide to sign

"Come home without playing any further", "Fire the coach," some of the callers said, the Sankei