

Capello, Kaka set for Real

INTERNET, undated

Fabio Capello and Kaka are on their way to Real Madrid after Ramon Calderon declared himself as the new President of the Spanish giants.

Calderon had promised to deliver Juventus boss Capello and Milan starlet Kaka before Sunday's election and he maintains he'll deliver.

"Our Coach will be Capello," said the 55-year-old. "And despite the resistance of Milan, Kaka will be playing at Real next season along with Cesc Fabregas (Arsenal) and Arjen Robben (Chelsea)."

Calderon is also ready to hand former Roma director general Franco Baldini, who recently rejected a move to Juventus, a job as a club official.

However, Calderon's appointment as new Real chief has yet to be confirmed as there is controversy regarding the postal votes.

"This candidate has won the elections," Calderon said on Sunday. "The board is delaying the announcement because a member is trying to persuade candidates to challenge the result."

Calderon pipped Juan Palacios by just 246 votes, but votes sent through the post were not included after a judge suspended them on Friday amidst fears over their legitimacy.

It is unclear at this stage whether they would now be taken into consideration.

Juventus do have a number of options already should Capello leave the Stadio Delle Alpi in the shape of Didier Deschamps, Alberto Zaccheroni and Roberto Donadoni.

Milan have insisted that Kaka, who only last month signed a new contract until June 2011, would not be sold.

The Rossoneri have also allegedly reported the new Real chief to FIFA over his conduct in trying to tempt the Brazilian away from the San Siro.

Rooney must explain 'stamping'

AFP, Berlin

England striker Wayne Rooney has until Thursday to explain his actions in stepping on the groin of Portuguese player Ricardo Carvalho in the World Cup quarterfinal, FIFA said on Monday.

All players who receive a direct red card in World Cup matches must give a detailed explanation to the FIFA disciplinary committee which has the power to hand down suspensions for international matches.

The Manchester United forward was dismissed by referee Horacio Elizondo in the 62nd minute of Saturday's match after appearing to stamp on Carvalho.

England's 10 men hung on without their star striker but went on to lose in a penalty shootout.

England start their qualification campaign for Euro 2008 against Andorra on September 2.

Car crash injury toll climbs

AFP, Berlin

German police has said that the number of people injured when a car ploughed through the Fan Mile area for football World Cup supporters at the weekend had risen to 25 after more victims came forward.

A spokeswoman for the Berlin police said Monday that four more people had reported slight injuries after a man drove his Volkswagen Polo Sunday afternoon through security barriers near the Brandenburg Gate and into the crowd.

Twenty other adults had minor wounds while an 11-year-old boy suffered a concussion.

The driver, a 33-year-old German of Indian origin, was arrested at gunpoint after his car crashed into a fence in front of a stage set up for a classical music concert that evening at the central Berlin landmark.

He is facing charges of attempted homicide.

A 55-year-old woman in the passenger seat was also detained but later released.

Witnesses said he was driving about 50 kilometres/hour (30 miles/hour) and appeared to have intentionally careered into the crowd.

The Fan Mile stretching down the long boulevard behind the Brandenburg Gate has attracted hundreds of thousands of football fans for each of the World Cup matches broadcast on giant screens. But the crowd was thinner Sunday because no game was on.

After the incident, police evacuated a part of the Fan Mile as well as surrounding buildings while they searched the car for explosives. None were found.

The Fan Mile was expanded due to its enormous popularity and some 900,000 people are expected for the Germany v Italy semifinal Tuesday.



Italy custodian Gianluigi Buffon shouting at teammates during the match against Ukraine in Hamburg on Friday.

The ultimate barrier



INTERNET, undated

After Italy beat Ukraine to reach the semifinals, Andriy Shevchenko singled out one opponent for special praise. Uppermost in his mind was not Luca Toni after the striker's two goals but Gigi Buffon, whose decisive saves at 1-0 had smoothed Italy's path. "Gigi proved once again he's the best goalkeeper in the world," Shevchenko said. "When you play against someone like Buffon, and as a striker I can say this, it's like having a handicap in golf, like starting a goal down."

Plenty of others would agree because Buffon has been a huge presence for Italy during their advance to a meeting with

Germany in Dortmund on Tuesday. Questions were asked about what mental state the 28-year-old might be in after he broke off preparations in late May to speak to investigators as part of a probe in Italy into football gambling and found his club Juventus threatened with relegation from Serie A for alleged match-fixing, but he has clearly pushed all that to one side.

Just as Oliver Kahn was vital to Germany's run to the World Cup final four years ago, Buffon has stood out at this tournament. The only time he has been beaten in five matches came via an unstoppable own-goal, Cristian Zaccardo slicing past him to give the United States an equaliser. Well as Italy have defended, their record owes a good deal to Buffon's reflexes at key moments. Though he has not been overworked, his reliability when called upon has made a difference.

The two big saves he pulled off at a crucial point against Ukraine,

one of which was followed up by a Gianluca Zambrotta goal-line clearance, were by no means unique. In the final group game against the Czech Republic, Buffon came to Italy's rescue several times early on when the game was goalless, and a defeat would have put them out. He also twice denied Scott Chipperfield in a tight second-round match against Australia.

Fabio Cannavaro must have had Buffon prominent in his thinking when he reflected on his own calmness at this tournament. "I've got a lot of help from my teammates," the centre-back and captain said. "I'm comforted by the fact that I can make mistakes and they're there, it gives me tranquility." Buffon, who saved Juventus from a heavier defeat by Arsenal at Highbury in the Champions League, has spoken colourfully of this azzurri team's stubbornness. "You need to sweat through seven shirts to beat Italy," he said.

Zambrotta's inspiration



AFP, Duisburg

Italy defender Gianluca Zambrotta said the plight of his former Juventus teammate Gianluca Pessotto inspired him to score his first international goal for two years.

Zambrotta, who earlier this week flew out of Germany to visit Pessotto in hospital after his apparent suicide attempt, netted Italy's first goal with a superb left-footed drive in their 3-0 quarterfinal win over Ukraine.

The victory set up a last four clash against Germany, who Italy met in Dortmund on Tuesday.

"That goal was in my destiny," Zambrotta, who has made 68 international appearances, told a press conference here on Sunday.

"It's been ages since I last scored a goal like that. I did it on the day that we had Gianluca in our minds."

Zambrotta's only other international goal came in a 4-0 friendly win against Tunisia on May 30, 2004.

Zambrotta, 29, said he hoped his side could emulate the feat of 1982 Azzurri team, who won the World Cup after beating Germany 3-1 in the final.

"I have that memory in my mind and it would be a dream to repeat it," said Zambrotta, who has been at Juventus since 1999.

Pessotto, who retired as a

Juventus player at the end of May and became team manager, jumped out of his Turin office window on Tuesday, falling 15 metres to the ground.

On Saturday doctors said the former Italy international opened his eyes and recognised his family and friends when they came to visit him in hospital.

Italian media have quoted Pessotto's wife, Reana, as saying he tried to commit suicide because he was "stressed and depressed for some time."

He had struggled to adapt to the team manager's role after retiring as a player, she said.

Juventus are at the centre of Italy's match-fixing scandal, although the 22-times capped Pessotto, who helped the Turin Club win the 1996 Champions' League, has not been implicated.

FIFA suspends Greece

AFP, Berlin

Football's world governing body FIFA on Monday announced that they had suspended the Greek Football Federation for allowing political involvement in their running of the sport.

The suspension means that Greece, the reigning European champions, will be suspended from all international football until further notice.

A FIFA press release said that the decision had been taken by its Emergency Committee composed of five presidents and one representative of each of the six world confederations.

The Greece Football Federation had been suspended are they were "not in line with the principles of the FIFA Statutes regarding the independence of member associations and the independence of the decision-making process of the football-governing body in each country."

FIFA said that it issued several warnings to the Greeks to guarantee by a July 15 deadline that the running of football in the country would be free from political involvement, but that this had not been forthcoming.

In particular FIFA cited a proposed new Greek law on professional football leagues in the country that "constitutes another example of interference from the government in football affairs."

"The decision means that the HFF and all of its members (clubs, players, officials) are suspended with immediate effect and until further notice from all international competitions at all levels," the communique stipulated.

Greece were the shock winners of the Euro 2004 tournament in Portugal and are top seeded in Group C for the 2008 qualifiers along with Turkey, Norway, Bosnia Herzegovina, Hungary, Moldova and Malta.

Crespo wants Italy return

INTERNET, undated

Chelsea striker Hernan Crespo has admitted that he is on the verge of a return to Italian football this summer.

"Everyone knows that I want to play in Italy again," he told the Corriere dello Sport newspaper. "Even Chelsea, who want to keep hold of me for life, have understood the situation."

"Roman Abramovich has asked me to stay, but it has got nothing to do with money. He knows I want to go and has put me on the market."

Crespo initially joined Chelsea from Inter three years ago, but has since enjoyed a one-year loan spell with Milan.

Both clubs have again been linked with his services once more and the Argentina striker wouldn't object to a San Siro reunion.

"Inter or Milan? It doesn't really matter to me. I think I did well at both clubs and left a good impression," he added.

"I'm just waiting for news now." The Stamford Bridge outfit are prepared to let the much-travelled forward go after netting Andriy Shevchenko from Milan for almost 31 million pounds prior to the World Cup.

Crespo will become even more tempting to Serie A sides seeing as he is also on the verge of gaining an Italian passport.

Crespo, formerly of Lazio and Parma, has also recently been associated with a switch to capital giants Roma.

Aussies hunt Houllier

REUTERS, Sydney

Australia are continuing talks with Gerard Houllier about the possibility of the Frenchman replacing Guus Hiddink as the Socceroos' next head coach.

However a Football Federation of Australia (FFA) spokesman said media reports that Houllier had already signed a contract were incorrect.

"Contrary to media reports, the FFA has not signed an agreement with Gerard Houllier for the position of head coach," a statement released on Monday read.

"Talks regarding the Australian head coach position are continuing with a number of candidates, including Gerard Houllier."

FFA officials have made no secret of the fact Houllier is at the top of their list of candidates to replace Hiddink, who accepted a job to coach Russia after taking Australia to the second round of the World Cup last month.

The FFA have also said assistant coach Graham Arnold is expected to lead the Socceroos for the next 12 months and through the Asian Cup qualifiers before the new head coach takes over.

Former Liverpool manager Houllier is currently in charge of French champions Lyon.

C'Ron smiles amid jeers



INTERNET, undated

Steven Gerrard described him as "bang out of order", Frank Lampard questioned his understanding of sportsmanship and Alan Shearer suggested Wayne Rooney would "stick one on him", but Cristiano Ronaldo was in no mood for making apologies Sunday night. The Manchester United winger seemed untroubled by the complaints about his underhand tactics in Saturday's quarterfinal, smiling broadly and shrugging his shoulders before reiterating that he does not expect to be playing in England next season.

Ronaldo broke off from Portugal's preparations for their semifinal against France to answer the allegations that he had deliberately sought to get Rooney, his United colleague, sent off. "People are saying that the referee showed a red card because I asked him to, but that is not true," he said. "It was not my fault and I don't care who says it was. I didn't get him sent off. It's simply not true. It is just the English press stirring things up."

His denial drew a withering response from several England players, most notably those from Liverpool and Chelsea. "I saw what

Ronaldo did," said Gerrard. "I saw him going over to the referee and giving him the card and I think he was bang out of order. If he were one of my teammates I would be absolutely disgusted with him."

"After Wayne was sent off he (Ronaldo) winked at his bench and his teammates and that just about sums him up as a person. If I were playing against a teammate from Liverpool and they were involved in a situation like that I would never try to get them sent off."

"He's supposed to be a teammate of Wayne's at Manchester United and he does something like that," Lampard said disbelievingly. "It's not nice, is it? A lot has been made of trying to promote fair play in this tournament and that was certainly not fair play. Unfortunately that's the way it is with some players. We were told that anyone who tried to get someone else a yellow or red card would get a yellow but it just hasn't happened."

On a day of recriminations and finger-pointing John Terry extended the criticisms to the entire Portuguese team, including his Chelsea teammate Ricardo Carvalho. "It's really disappointing seeing that - players playing in the Premiership too. Teammates as well. It's disappointing to see them coming over doing that."

Terry reflected that it would be "interesting" the next time United and Chelsea faced each other, but Ronaldo already seems to have

made up his mind that his time in England is all but done. The 21-year-old expressed a strong desire last week to join Real Madrid, much to the irritation of Sir Alex Ferguson, and when asked whether a deal had been completed behind the scenes he smiled again and, choosing his words carefully, answered: "I like Real Madrid. We'll see after the World Cup."

He was asked why he was smiling and it was put to him that his body language suggested he knew more than he was letting on. "We have to sign it first, then I will talk to you after the World Cup," he replied. "As I say, I like Real Madrid. Do I want to leave Manchester? I don't know. Maybe."

His confidence about becoming a Madrid player may partly explain why he was not worried about having to explain himself to Rooney and the possible reaction were he to remain in the Premiership next season.

"I spoke after the game to Rio (Ferdinand) and Gary (Neville) and they did not have a problem with me," he said. "Rio said: 'Congratulations.' I didn't get the chance to speak to Wayne but I will telephone him. I don't feel sorry for him, that's certain. Why would I feel sorry for him? This is a time for me to be celebrating Portugal's achievements, not worrying about things that are not even true."

Media at loggerheads



REUTERS, Duisburg

Germany midfielder Torsten Frings was in the middle of a heated debate between German and Italian media on Monday over his role in a quarterfinal punch-up which could lead to a World Cup ban for him.

Frings was among those, including FIFA officials and the referee, who were caught up in chaotic punching and kicking at the end of the quarterfinal tie between Germany and Argentina on Friday which the hosts won on penalties.

Television executives from Italy, who next meet Germany in the semifinal in Dortmund on Tuesday, said they had found evidence that Frings threw a punch at Argentina forward Julio Ricardo Cruz in the fracas.

Their film prompted a FIFA investigation to be held later on Monday and that sparked indignation in some German media which said the Italians were simply trying to get one of the best home players suspended for the match.

"Italians want Frings suspended," read the page one headline in Germany's best-selling Bild daily on Monday. "Are they so afraid of us?"

An Italian FA spokesman said it had played no part in the process and Cruz was quoted as saying in the Italian sports daily, the Gazzetta dello Sport: "No, I didn't receive any punch, or at least I didn't feel one."

FIFA initially said that it was taking no action against any German player but later said that "following new evidence coming to light" it was investigating Frings, who had been considered a certain starter for Tuesday's semifinal.

"The credit goes to our group working in Munich," Giovanni Bruno, director of Sky Sport told the Italian news agency ANSA.

"It is logical that when there is a brawl you try to find who was involved. With hours of broadcasting to fill, it is quite normal that you look to find the details. After watching the images many times, the guys realised there was Frings's punch and they put it on air," said Bruno.

"At the start it passed unobserved, then German television station ZDF found out that we were in possession of these images and they asked for them and broadcast them."

"After that all the television stations took our pictures. At that point FIFA asked for the cassette with those pictures," he added.

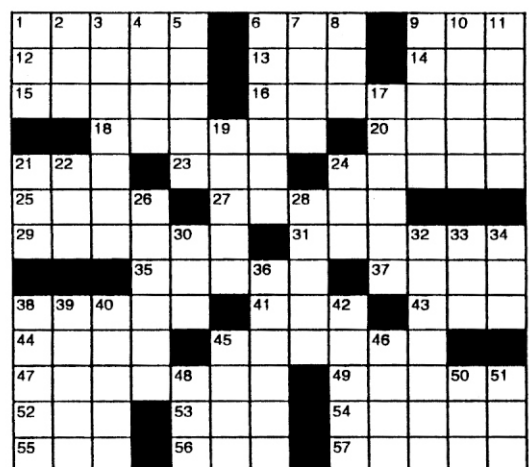
A still image of Frings's outstretched arm was also published in the Italian newspaper La Repubblica and on Monday the paper wrote that



A file photo shows German midfielder Torsten Frings (R) in a tussle with Argentine striker Julio Cruz (2nd from left) after the end of their quarterfinal match in Berlin on June 30.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

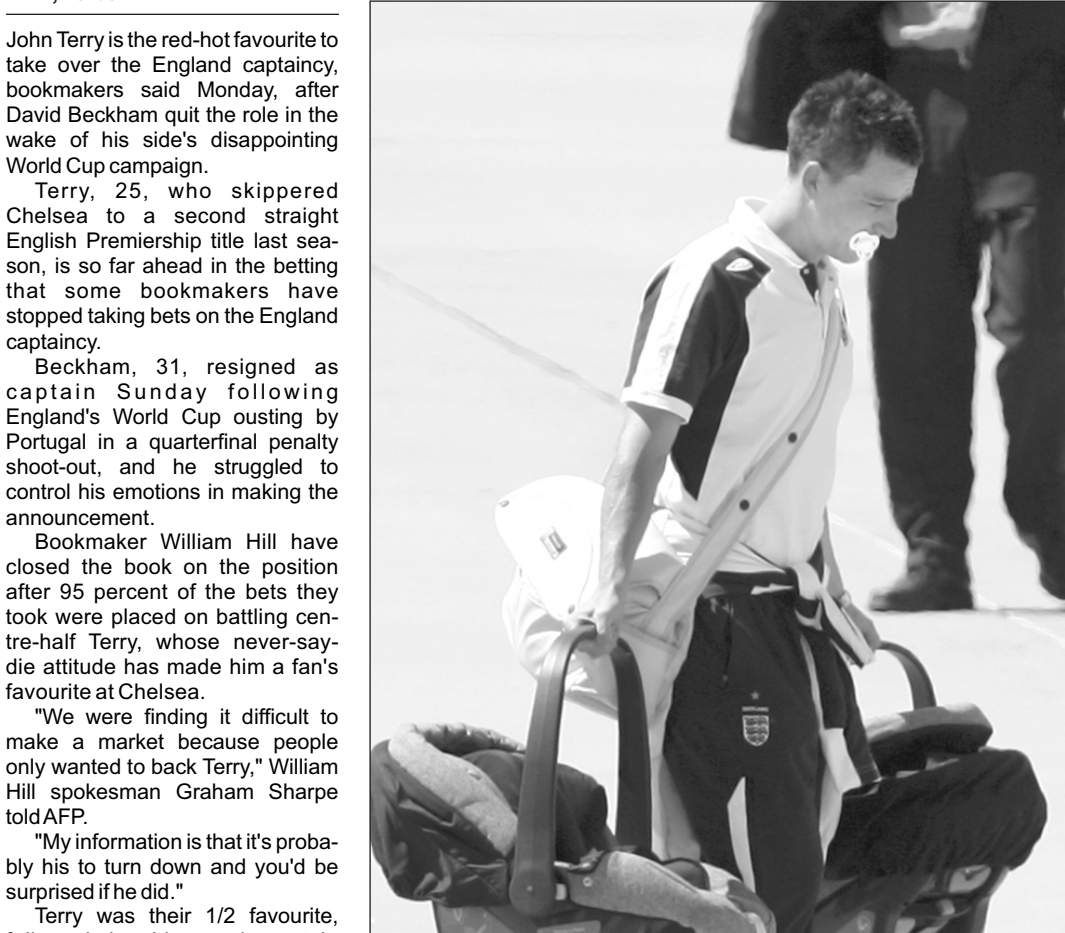
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| 21 Up to figure | 56 Whatever amount | 11 "Star Wars" | 38 Phoenix's origin |
| 23 Govt. figure | 57 Beginning | 17 Snazzy headgear | 39 Hillary's successor |
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| 27 Indy entry | | | 45 Intend |
| 29 Take umbrage at | | | 46 It's covered with grass... |
| 31 Romano's TV wife | | | 48 ... and so is this |
| 35 — del Sol | | | 50 Piece of praise |
| 37 Foolproof | | | 51 Bottom line |



CRYPTOQUIP

X B T S K L N T L S T J W P P K H
Y H P P D K A D R X T H J L S Y T B D S E
A B T N . D K W J L K T D A
R L W P E Y T H N D K K D P T A L X .
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: GET A LOAD OF THOSE SNAKES IN THE DISTANCE MAKING MISCHIEF. OH WELL, BOAS WILL BE BOAS!
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Y equals B

The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals C, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.



England defender and probable next captain John Terry walks across the tarmac at Baden Baden airport to board plane for home on Sunday.