

Pessotto won't watch final

AFP, Rome

Juventus team manager Gianluca Pessotto's condition has improved slightly 12 days after jumping from his office window in a suicide attempt, said a spokesman at Turin's Le Molinette hospital.

"In these kinds of situations things can change very quickly one way or another but there are still signs of optimism today," said head of intensive care Pier Paolo Donadio on Sunday.

The 35-year-old former Italy utility player, who complained of stress after retiring as a player to take on the manager's role with the Serie A champions in May, was visited during the day by former Juve teammate Nicola Lombardo and Turin archbishop Cardinal Severino Poletto.

However, doctors retracted earlier suggestions that Pessotto would be allowed to watch television coverage of the World Cup final in Berlin between Italy and France late Sunday.

"We don't want to expose him to more fatigue," Donadio said.

Germany await

FROM PAGE 20 trying to find a fourth coach in six turbulent years.

Erich Ribbeck and Volker Hellmann failed at Euro 2000 and Euro 2004 respectively and Germany will want to put that record straight at Euro 2008 with Klinsmann in charge.

Replacing him would be a major headache as not many wanted the job after Euro 2004 with former Bayern Munich coach Ottmar Hitzfeld and Greece manager Otto Rehhagel turning down the post before Klinsmann came to the rescue.

There were highs and lows for the former Tottenham, Bayern Munich, Inter Milan and Monaco striker with two defeats against Italy - a 4-1 thrashing in March and the semifinal loss - the lows, with the five World Cup wins over Costa Rica, Poland, Ecuador, Argentina and Portugal at the highs.

Germany fans will hope there are many more to come under the Klinsmann era.

Scolari's men

FROM PAGE 17 Their greatest triumph was making the semifinals in 1966, where they lost to England 2-1 and went on to finish in third place.

Portugal's loss to Germany, with two goals from Bastian Schweinsteiger and an own goal by Petit, was also Luis Figo's last with the Portuguese national team and many newspapers expressed sadness at his international retirement.

"We already miss Figo," said sports daily A Bola on its front page while rival paper O Jogo ran the headline "Thanks and so long" beside a photo of the Portugal captain waving to supporters at the end of the third-place playoff.

Some newspapers lamented the fact that Figo's last match did not end with a win for the team he made 127 appearances for.

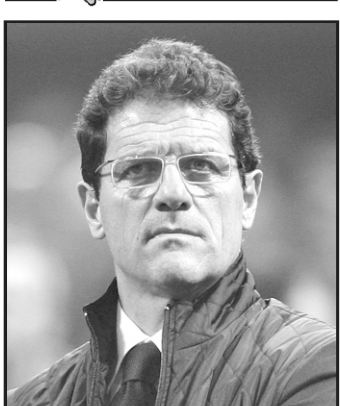
"Figo didn't deserve to say goodbye this way," said daily newspaper Publico in an opinion piece.

"Bitter goodbye," said top-selling daily Correio da Manha on its front cover beside a photo of Figo walking off the pitch in Germany.



Did U Know?

Dock workers of the Chittagong Port called unsuccessfully for a half-day strike on behalf of infuriated football fans unable to watch the 1998 World Cup because of continuous power cuts.



Fabio Capello

(Real Madrid coach)

"I'm really looking forward to working with this club. I'm convinced this is the most important club in the world."

After signing a three-year contract with Real Madrid.



PHOTO: AFP

FEDERER ABOUT TO FLY: World number one Roger Federer of Switzerland returns the ball against Rafael Nadal of Spain during the men's singles final of the Wimbledon Tennis Championships on Sunday.

Federer's 4th on the trot

WIMBLEDON

AFP, London

Magical Roger Federer won his fourth successive Wimbledon title on Sunday as he finally broke free of Rafael Nadal's iron stranglehold.

The top seed wrapped up his eighth career Grand Slam crown with a 6-0, 7-6 (7/5), 6-7 (2/7), 6-3 triumph in a pulsating Wimbledon final to register only his second win in eight meetings with the Spanish world number two.

His four defeats in 2006 had all come at the hands of the double French Open champion, but he was always the favourite to win Sunday having not lost here since 2002. The victory was his 48th in a row on grass.

Nadal went into the final not having dropped his serve since the second round, a run of 80 service games, but he cracked straightaway

on Sunday when Federer fired off a running forehand which landed deep in the corner.

That gave the Swiss star a 2-0 lead which he backed up on his own serve to go 3-0.

A nerve-wracked Nadal was then broken again to hand Federer a 4-0 lead which quickly became 5-0 with his fourth ace in a love service game.

The gutsy Spaniard saved two set points in the sixth game, but Federer wrapped up the opener after 25 minutes with a sweet backhand pass.

Nadal then called on the tenacity which has brought him two successive French Open titles to clinch his first break of the final at the start of the second set.

His confidence was further boosted by holding his own for the first time with a love game to lead 2-0.

But he squandered his opportunity to serve for the set in the 10th game as Federer broke back to go

5-5 and send the set into a tiebreak.

Despite saving two set points in the breaker, Nadal netted a forehand on the third as Federer opened up a two-set lead after 82 minutes on court.

A gripping third set, punctuated by lengthy rallies and vicious passing shots, also went to a tiebreak which Nadal dominated and won when Federer dumped a return into the net.

It was the first set Federer had dropped here since the third round in 2005.

But with a difficult wind swirling around Centre Court, Nadal undid all the good work when a wild, flying volley handed Federer a break for a 3-1 fourth set lead.

Federer's 13th ace gave helped him to 4-1 and he broke a dispirited Nadal again to lead 5-1.

However, Nadal pulled one break back straightaway to go 2-5, held for 3-5 but Federer took the title when Nadal hit long after 2hr and 50min.

Bryan brothers' career Slam

AFP, London

American brothers Bob and Mike Bryan clinched a career Grand Slam of men's doubles titles here when they won the Wimbledon final with a 6-3, 4-6, 6-4, 6-2 win over Fabrice Santoro and Nenad Zimonjic.

The brothers, the top seeds, were playing in their seventh successive Grand Slam final and they have become only the third pairing in history, after Jacco Eltingh and Paul Haarhuis and Mark Woodforde and Todd Woodbridge, to achieve the feat.

The Bryans had already won the 2003 French Open, 2005 US Open and the Australian Open this year.

Pauleta hangs

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for this team was what I most loved doing but my time has come," the 33-year-old Paris St Germain striker told Portuguese reporters in Stuttgart.

"It's a very difficult moment because I expected to end by scoring once again but that wasn't possible," he added in comments broadcast on SIC television.

Pauleta played 88 times for Portugal, scoring 47 goals, making him the nation's all-time leading scorer, shattering Eusebio's record of 41 goals in 64 matches.

After he failed to score at Euro 2004, which Portugal hosted, critics called for coach Luiz Felipe Scolari to drop him from the national team.

The Brazilian kept him on and he went on to become the most prolific scorer in European World Cup qualifying with 11 goals.

But during the World Cup finals Pauleta was able to score only once - during Portugal's 1-0 win over tournament newcomer Angola in the group stage.

Figo quits

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deserved their victory," Figo said. Portuguese Prime Minister Jose Socrates, who attended the match, said Figo had been "a great captain."

"This squad had in Luis Figo a great leader on the pitch," he told Portugal's SIC television.

Figo was part of his country's 'golden generation' that won the under-16 European championship in 1989 and the under-20 world championship in 1991.

As a promising wideman Figo made his international debut against Luxembourg in October 1991 but was unable to get the silverware he craved.

After a semifinal exit at Euro 2000, Figo channelled his efforts into the Euro 2004 finals in his homeland, but Portugal lost 1-0 to surprise package Greece in the final and Figo announced his retirement from international football shortly afterwards.

Portugal's Brazilian coach Luiz Felipe Scolari persuaded him to reverse his decision and have one last crack at landing a major title at this World Cup.

But a 1-0 semifinal defeat to France ended that dream and Figo leaves the international stage without winning a major trophy in Portugal's colours.

With the curtain coming down on his glittering international career Figo will now concentrate on his club career with Inter Milan.

He has been arguably Portugal's finest player since the great Eusebio who top-scored at the 1966 World Cup with nine goals.

Germans feel

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understudy to Jens Lehmann at the finals.

Ballack's WC dream over



AFP, Berlin

Germany captain Michael Ballack admits his dream of lifting the World Cup is all but over as he will be almost 34 when the 2010 World Cup in South Africa comes along.

Ballack, capped 70 times by his country, missed the 2002 World Cup final through suspension and wanted to cure that heartache by lifting the trophy in Berlin in Sunday's final.

He led the hosts to the World Cup semifinals but lost 2-0 to Italy in extra-time and must now come to terms with the fact that he is unlikely to ever win football's ultimate prize.

"I am 29 now and a World Cup only comes along every four years. I will be almost 34 and at that age there is no guarantee that I will be

there," Ballack said in an interview with Welt am Sonntag.

"I realised this could be my last chance to be a world champion."

Despite the disappointment of missing out on World Cup glory Ballack can look forward to a new challenge after agreeing to join English champions Chelsea on a free transfer from Bayern Munich.

"It is good that I have a new challenge after the World Cup," Ballack said. "After this highlight I do not have the routine at Bayern Munich but a new motivation with Chelsea."

"I want to win the Champions League at Chelsea."

Ballack finished runner-up to Real Madrid in the 2002 Champions League when he was at Bayer Leverkusen.

But before heading to Chelsea, Ballack will holiday with his family and has chosen to go to Italy despite the bad memories it may bring.

"As usual I will go to Italy on holiday and on July 30 I start with Chelsea," he said.

Sami adds to injury woes



AFP, Canterbury

Mohammad Sami gave Pakistan fresh cause for concern in the run-up to the first Test against England when he sustained a knee injury while fielding against England A here Sunday.

Pace bowler Sami was hit on the right knee while at mid-wicket and had to have strapping applied.

It was another worry for Pakistan just days before the opening Test of a four-match series gets underway at Lord's on Thursday.

Pakistan took the field Sunday without fast bowler Mohammad Asif, who had an injection in his right elbow on Saturday and is not expected to be fit until the eve of the first Test.

And first-choice gloveman Kamran Akmal again did not keep wicket as a precaution after bruising his left index finger on Thursday morning.

Spearhead quick Shoaib Akhtar (ankle) is not in England at the moment while fellow pacesman Rana Naved, who has played for English county Sussex this season, is currently struggling with a groin injury.

Meanwhile Pakistan's final first-class match before the Test series was heading towards a draw after rain meant there was only 35 min-

utes play before lunch on the fourth and final day here Sunday.

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Alastair Cook was 26 not out and Ian Bell 7 not out after both batsmen had been included in England's first Test squad announced earlier Sunday.

Left-hander Cook had missed out in the A team's first innings with former England wicket-keeper Chris Read scoring 150 not out and skipper Robert Key, himself an ex-England batsman, 136 while Bell chipped in with a stylish 74.

Then off-spinner Jamie Dalrymple, one of England's few successes in their 5-0 one-day series thrashing by Sri Lanka, took four for 61 - including the prize wicket of Pakistan captain Inzamam-ul-Haq for nought.

But before England took the field Saturday they were without Test regular Matthew Hoggard after the swing bowler had had his right-hand trodden on by Yorkshire colleague Tim Bresnan in a warm-up accident.

Hoggard later had to have six stitches inserted into his bowling hand and on Sunday the selectors called seamer Jon Lewis into the Test squad as cover.

Bell back to English fold

CRICINFO, undated

Ian Bell, the Warwickshire batsman, has earned a recall to the England squad for the first Test against Pakistan at Lord's on Thursday.

Steve Harmison has also been named in a 13-man squad announced this morning, which includes five fast bowlers and one spinner, Monty Panesar.

"We have included five pace bowlers in the squad, because we need cover for Matthew Hoggard following the hand injury he sustained while with England A yesterday," David Graveney, England's chairman of selectors, told BBC Radio Five Live.

"Matthew's injury will be reassessed by our medical staff on Tuesday, and we will give him the maximum time he needs to prove his fitness because he is the most experienced member of our attack," he added.

There was no place for Jamie Dalrymple, however. Dalrymple was the sole bright light for England during their calamitous one-day 5-0 whitewash in the one-day series against Sri Lanka and was their second highest run-scorer. He further enhanced his credentials with a slick performance for England A yesterday where he took 4 for 61 to help dismiss Pakistan for 242, but the selectors have instead opted to attack Pakistan with pace.

SQUAD

Andrew Strauss (captain), Marcus Trescothick, Alastair Cook, Kevin Pietersen, Paul Collingwood, Ian Bell, Geraint Jones, Liam Plunkett, Matthew Hoggard, Sajid Mahmood, Steve Harmison, Jon Lewis, Monty Panesar.

WC BRIEFS

FROM PAGE 20 (2800 dollars) hours before kickoff as Italian and French fans gathered to try to snap one up in a final dash for a seat at the Olympic Stadium.

Dozens of fans, including a Japanese clad in a France shirt who said he would pay up to 500 euros 'only', were asking touts at the Olympic Stadium railway station.

According to one French fan some touts carried signs reading "1400 euros minimum."

One report said a member of the Brazilian Federation had sold a ticket for 2200 euros - the top whack so far.

Turf for sale

Fans are queuing up for a piece of history - or rather, a piece of the Olympic Stadium turf, which will be sold off to supporters after the tournament, according to German daily Tagespiegel.

"On Tuesday, the turf will be dug up and the Quelle company will cut it into sections and sell it to supporters," Alan Cairncross, head groundsman, told the paper. He added he had been trimming the grass to ensure it maintains its FIFA-specified length of 2.8 centimetres (1.2 inches.)

Mauresmo has Midas touch

WIMBLEDON

AFP, London

Amelie Mauresmo believes her ability to transform demons into angels inspired her Wimbledon triumph.

The 27-year-old, so often condemned for big occasion meltdowns, became the first Frenchwoman to lift the women's singles title since Suzanne Lenglen 81 years ago with her victory over Justine Henin-Hardenne.

Despite the critics, who doubted the depth of her resolve and the size of her heart, Mauresmo never gave up on her dream that sprang into life in controversial circumstances in January when she won the Australian Open by default.

"It's very sweet," said Mauresmo after her 2-6, 6-3, 6-4 win over Henin-Hardenne, the same opponent who had quit midway through the second set in Melbourne to hand the world number one victory.

"I finally found how to handle the nerves a bit better. I really know much more now how to play tennis than few years ago. I think everything is really coming together. The physical part of my game, as well."

It's not always been the case. Mauresmo first reached a Grand Slam final in Australia in 1999 where she lost to Martina Hingis, and then had to wait seven long years before making another.

The surrender by Henin-Hardenne in Melbourne, followed by another high-profile flop on home soil at the French Open, had the critics sharpening their knives again.

But Mauresmo was unconcerned and remained convinced she could win a Grand Slam through her own ability.

"It didn't hurt because I was realistic and I could see that the nerves got involved. So that's how I am, that's how it is. That's why it took me longer than others and why I've been working on different areas of this aspect," she said.

"I learned about the experiences. I learned that's how it works. You try different things, try to think, try to take things a little bit differently, try to see tennis also differently, not put myself under pressure."

Her end-of-season Tour Championship win in Los Angeles in 2005 was also a significant landmark for the fine wine-loving Mauresmo, who has yet to select the appropriate vintage with which to celebrate her All England Club success.

"I wasn't too optimistic," she

admitted. "If it came the first time that I was in a Grand Slam final seven years ago, maybe winning would have not had the same taste. Things come when they have to come."

Defeat meant that 2001 runner-up Henin-Hardenne failed, for now, to become only the 10th woman in history to win all four Grand Slam titles.

"She just played better than me, she took her opportunities," said Henin-Hardenne who arrived here on the back of a third French Open title as well as victory in Eastbourne, the traditional Wimbledon warm-up event.

"But I'll be back and I'll get another chance."

Henin-Hardenne admitted that playing two Grand Slams with just a two-week break between them was hard on the body and the mind.

She said: "Maybe I wasn't fresh enough to win. I have played for five of the last six weeks with 18 matches. Generally I have played really good tennis."

"But it's difficult to go from the French Open to Wimbledon, it's a lot of pressure with two Grand Slams in a month. Now I need a break."

Pak fan base for English



AFP, London

Cricket fan Zahoor Qurashi, like a growing number of British Pakistanis like himself and their third generation children often felt closer to England than Pakistan.

"For many people this is it, England is their home, there is no going back. They have love for England as much as our parents have for their own respective countries," he said.

"There is a genuine change, my son also wants to go and support England against Pakistan."

Former minister Norman Tebbit, once a close ally of ex-prime minister Margaret Thatcher, invented the "cricket test" or "Tebbit test" in 1990 when he infamously spoke about the supposed split loyalties of immigrants to Britain.

His theory, which caused uproar at the time, stated that a person could only be classed as truly British if he or she supported England at cricket.

Professor Muhammad Anwar, of the Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations at the University of Warwick, strongly disagreed, arguing that it was impossible to judge an immigrant's British ness on the cricket team he or she backed.

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"The main thing is that 99.9 per cent of these people regard themselves as British Pakistanis and British Muslims. That British (factor)

is important for identity and loyalty," he said.

At the same time, Anwar noted that more and more second and third generation British Asians were rooting for England when it came to the crunch.

In the 1970s to 1990s, many Pakistanis living in Britain suffered racist abuse, which discouraged them from wanting to support England at anything.

Some claim they were discouraged from joining cricket clubs because of the colour of their skin, while others tried to support England but were laughed at for doing so.

Bastian revels

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national team.

"Everything is fitting so well together. The players are all happy about the way things are running, the coaches are and everything fits perfectly. Just think about how close we were to making it to the final," he continued.

Schweinsteiger paid tribute to the crowd - both at the stadium and in front of their Stuttgart hotel.

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PHOTO: AFP

India's legendary cricketer Sachin Tendulkar (R) talks with an unidentified spectator during the men's singles final of the Wimbledon Tennis Championships on Sunday.

THIRD EYE