



Roberto Donadoni smiles as he talks with the press at a Rome hotel on Tuesday during his official presentation as the new coach of world champions Italy.

Donadoni relishing the challenge

Football

REUTERS, Rome

Newly-appointed Italy coach Roberto Donadoni said on Tuesday that he relished the pressure of taking over the world champions.

The 42-year-old former AC Milan and Italy midfielder was named coach last Thursday following Marcello Lippi's decision to stand down just days after leading the Azzurri to victory over France in the World Cup final in Berlin.

"The responsibility on me will be even greater with the World Cup behind us, but it's better to start with a trophy in the cabinet than nothing at all," Donadoni said.

"Pressure is part of the job. I knew that when I decided to become a coach.

"It's an honour to take over a

winning team and I'll do my best to take the team forward to new successes."

Donadoni has taken charge of the Azzurri in an uncertain period for Italian football, still reeling from the sentences handed out to four top clubs in the Serie A match-fixing scandal.

Last Friday, a sports tribunal ordered Juventus, Fiorentina and Lazio to start next season in the second-tier Serie B with points deducted after finding them guilty of conspiring with match officials to rig matches during the 2004-05 season.

AC Milan avoided relegation, but were thrown out of next season's European competitions and ordered to start the Serie A campaign on minus 15 points.

All four have announced they will appeal against the verdicts.

"I just hope the verdicts (from the appeals process) arrive quickly so

that we can all get on with looking forward," Donadoni said.

The four clubs account for 12 of Italy's 23-man World Cup squad.

Asked whether he was worried by the prospect of Italy's top players leaving the country in the fallout, Donadoni replied: "If players decide to go abroad it could complicate things a little, but they will still be playing for big teams.

"They will still be on show. There's no chance that any of them will disappear from view."

Donadoni's first match in charge will be a friendly against Croatia on Aug 16.

He then has a European championship qualifier against Lithuania on Sept. 2, followed by a rematch with World Cup finalists France in Paris four days later.

Donadoni said he hoped the second qualifier would not stir up bad-feeling created by the incident

in the World Cup final that led to French captain Zinedine Zidane being sent off for head-butting Italy defender Marco Materazzi.

"Those first two matches are very important and very difficult and this will clearly complicate things a little, but we have to put outside factors behind us as soon as we go out on the pitch," Donadoni said.

"It's not an episode that has been edifying for anyone involved, but I think it has been blown out of proportion.

"Only they (Materazzi and Zidane) know what happened on the pitch. If Zidane reacted the way he did then clearly there must have been some provocation.

"But I used to get provoked too when I was a player. It (his reaction) was sad to see, especially from a player of his standing".

PHOTO: AFP

Arena appointed Red Bulls coach

AFP, New Jersey

Four days after the United States men's national team coach learned his contract would not be renewed, Bruce Arena on Tuesday was named the coach and sporting director of the MLS New York Red Bulls.

The move had been anticipated since Arena learned Friday that his tenure as the US coach would end at the end of the year. The last-place Red Bulls fired Mo Johnston last month and replaced him with assistant Richie Williams.

Hired in October 1998, Arena had gone 71-30-29 guiding the US, setting records for wins, games (130) and winning percentage (.658).

The 54-year-old Brooklyn native previously had won five national championships in 18 years at the University of Virginia and led D.C. United to the first three MLS Cup finals, winning two.

Arena guided the US to a surprising quarterfinal run in the 2002 World Cup in South Korea and Japan, but the Americans came in last in Group E of last month's World Cup in Germany.

Nigerian FA dissolved

AFP, Abuja

The board of the Nigeria Football Association (NFA) was Tuesday dissolved by an extraordinary congress of the organisation.

FIFA general-secretary Urs Linsi told reporters that the NFA congress voted 68 to 30 for the board to be dissolved and fresh elections to the highest decision making body of Nigerian football will be conducted between August 28 and 30 in Abuja.

"The congress went well and FIFA is now looking forward to a democratic and focused NFA by next month," said Linsi.

An electoral committee headed by former NFA boss Jogn Obakpolor was also named for next month's polls.

Nigerian football has been in turmoil since a controversial election in December in Kano, which returned Ibrahim Galadima as chairman of the NFA for a four-year term.

A splinter group challenged the fairness of the elections and with the support of the sports ministry forced FIFA to broker an agreement for an extra-ordinary congress Tuesday.

Two members of the board, Taiwo Ogunjobi and Peter Singabele, dramatically quit their positions Sunday, saying the board was "a sinking ship."

The public and local press have blamed Galadima and his board for the country's failure to qualify for the recent World Cup in Germany after the Super Eagles were beaten by Angola in what many considered was a relatively weak qualifying group.

River fans riot over Cup exit

Football

REUTERS, Asuncion

Rioting River Plate fans forced the match to be called off in the 80th minute as the Argentine team were knocked out of the Libertadores Cup by Paraguay's Libertad on Tuesday.

Libertad were leading 3-1 at home in the quarterfinal second leg and 5-3 on aggregate when Chilean referee Ruben Selman abandoned play at the Defensores del Chaco stadium after River supporters clashed with riot police on the terraces.

Although the game did not officially finish, South American policy is to let the result stand when the supporters of the losing team cause the trouble.

River themselves reached the last eight after their second round second leg tie at Sao Paulo's Pacaembu stadium was called off

in the 83rd minute after Corinthians fans broke down a gate and tried to invade the pitch.

River won that game 3-1 for a 6-3 aggregate victory.

Trouble began on Tuesday when a large contingent of River fans began tearing up plastic seats and hurled them at home supporters, whose contingent included a number of fans wearing the shirts of River's arch-rivals Boca Juniors.

The River supporters forced riot police to retreat against a fence and set fire to banners as the situation turned ugly before being brought under control.

By that stage, Selman had decided it was not safe to play to continue, despite angry protests from the River players who had staged a late fightback despite being reduced to 10 men.

Libertad, who held on for a 2-2 draw in Buenos Aires in the first leg played before the World Cup, when ahead in the 17th minute when Uruguayan striker Rodrigo Lopez

scored with a looping far post header over goalkeeper German Lux.

Sergio Aquino added a second for the Paraguayan underdogs in the 41st minute when he connected with the rebound after Maritin Hidalgo's shot crashed off the crossbar.

Paraguay midfielder Cristian Riveros rifled a close-range shot into the roof of the net two minutes after halftime for Libertad's third.

River, champions in 1986 and 1996, were in further trouble in the 62nd minute when captain Marcelo Gallardo received a straight red card for a two-footed lunge on an opponent.

After being repeatedly denied by Paraguay World Cup goalkeeper Aldo Bobadilla, Daniel Passarella's team pulled one back when Ernesto Farias scored at the second attempt in the 77th minute.

But a possible fightback was ended by their own fans.



River Plate fans confront the police during their quarterfinal match against Libertad in the Copa Libertadores at the Defensores del Chaco Stadium in Asuncion on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AP

Anelka reveals Pompey interest

AFP, Paris

French striker Nicolas Anelka on Wednesday revealed he has been offered the chance to join English Premiership club Portsmouth.

Fenerbahce star Anelka, is keen to leave the Turkish side and he claimed Portsmouth had made an offer of around 12 million euros.

The former Real Madrid and Arsenal player also told L'Equipe that Bolton and Blackburn are interested in signing him.

Anelka said: "In Portsmouth I talked with their manager Harry Redknapp, who knows me well. If I had to join a club like Portsmouth, I would go there with the aim of giving my best.

"This is the same for Bolton or Blackburn, whose managers have also contacted me. But Portsmouth are the only club to have made an offer for me.

"Fenerbahce would like to keep me but they understand that I want to rejoin a major European league.

"My ambition would be to join a club that regularly plays in the Champions League, but I cannot force them to recruit me.

"I hope things will be sorted within 10 days, as myself and Fenerbahce need to know as soon as possible."

Ferguson backs China's Dong

Football

AFP, Cape Town

Alex Ferguson has backed Dong Fangzhou to emerge as a Manchester United player within the next nine months after the Chinese striker's late goal sealed a 1-0 friendly win against Kaizer Chiefs in Cape Town on Tuesday.

United manager Ferguson, who suggested that Ruud van Nistelrooy's looming transfer to Real Madrid is still not finalised after claiming that Real's opening offer, reportedly of 10.5 million pounds, has been rebuffed, is currently unable to select Dong in the Premiership due to his inability to secure a British work permit.

Dong, a three million-pound buy

from Dalian Shide three years ago, has been loaned out to Belgian club Royal Antwerp over the past two years in order to build up his experience.

But with the 21-year-old set to be eligible for a European passport later this year, Ferguson is hopeful that Dong will emerge as a possible long-term addition to United's attacking options.

He said: "The goal Dong scored to win the game was a great example of a young player showing composure and taking his time with a chance when he could have taken it first time. He waited and picked his shot.

"Dong has improved a lot in the three years he has been with us and on loan at Antwerp. He has speed, a great physique and desire and he is improving all the time.

"He will be eligible for a European

passport in December and that's good news for us. Although he may not get a permit straightaway, we can appeal and he could be a United player in nine months.

"He has now played four times for China, so that may give us grounds for appeal and he could become a good option for us."

United and England midfielder Kieran Richardson was forced to limp out of the Chiefs clash at Newlands with a shin injury sustained following a hefty challenge by Cyril Nzama, but Ferguson insists that the injury is not serious.

He said: "Kieran took a knock, but it's not a problem and he should be fit for the final game of the tour in Pretoria on Saturday."

Tommasi, Cesar moving to Levante

REUTERS, Madrid

Primera Liga side Levante have agreed a deal to sign Italian midfielder Damiano Tommasi from AS Roma.

"Tommasi is a Levante player," club president Pedro Villarreal told a news conference on Tuesday. "We hope he will arrive in Valencia tomorrow to complete the signing."

Villarreal said that the 32-year-old former Italy international, who has played for Roma since 1996, had reached an agreement to leave the Serie A club on Monday.

The Levante president also said that the club had reached an agreement to sign former Spanish international centre-back Cesar from Deportivo La Coruna.

Levante, who were promoted to the Primera Liga after finishing in third place in the second division last season, have also signed French midfielder Laurent Robert and French defender Frederic Dehu.

Football

INTERNET, undated

Gigi Buffon's proposed move to Milan is now in doubt after the Rossoneri sold Christian Abbiati to Torino on Tuesday.

The Juventus 'keeper has been heavily linked with the San Siro giants yet yesterday's developments have seemingly complicated matters.

"With the sale of Abbiati to Torino, the chances of seeing Buffon move to Milan have decreased," said Old Lady sporting director Alessio Secco.

"We spoke to Milan a few days ago about Buffon where they offered us money and Abbiati in exchange."

The Bianconeri are keen on keeping Abbiati as a replacement for the Italy no 1 after his efforts in Turin last season.

Having arrived on loan for the campaign after injury to Buffon, Abbiati impressed most neutrals at the Stadio Delle Alpi.

It's now unclear what Juve will do

with Buffon as reports on Wednesday suggest that Inter are keen even if he may remain with La Vecchia Signora if their 30-point Serie B deduction is reduced.

Meanwhile, Secco confirmed that Real Madrid had been in touch regarding a triple swoop for Emerson, Fabio Cannavaro and Gianluca Zambrotta.

But the Juventus official has hinted that the difference between what Real are offering and what his club want is still significant.

"We'll meet them again in a few days to talk more," stated Secco. "We are ready to sell players, but only at the right price."

It's understood that the Spanish giants have offered around 21 million pounds for the threesome, Juve are looking for around 30 million pounds.

Secco also intimated that at least two big name players would definitely be remaining at the club. "I've spoken to Alex Del Piero, who told me he's staying along with Pavel Nedved."

Inter to receive Scudetto

INTERNET, undated

Reports from Italy suggest that within the next 10 days Inter will be officially awarded last season's Scudetto.

With Juventus relegated and Milan deducted 44 points, the Nerazzurri top the revised table for the 2005-06 campaign.

However, it was initially suggested that the Scudetto would be declared void rather than awarded to the Serpenti.

Inter owner Massimo Moratti has been insistent from the beginning that his club deserve to be awarded their 14th championship.

"I insist that we are given the title so that we are separated from the guilty clubs," the oil tycoon stated. "Otherwise we're saying that the whole of Serie A was involved in the scandal."

A meeting is scheduled for July 28 between members of the Italian Football Federation and the Football League. It is widely believed that the two governing bodies are set to hand the title to Inter.

In fact the Nerazzurri are so confident of being awarded the title that the Coppa Italia logo on the new Inter replica shirts has been moved to the sleeve to allow space for the Scudetto to be recognised.

Okocha, Popovic move to Qatar

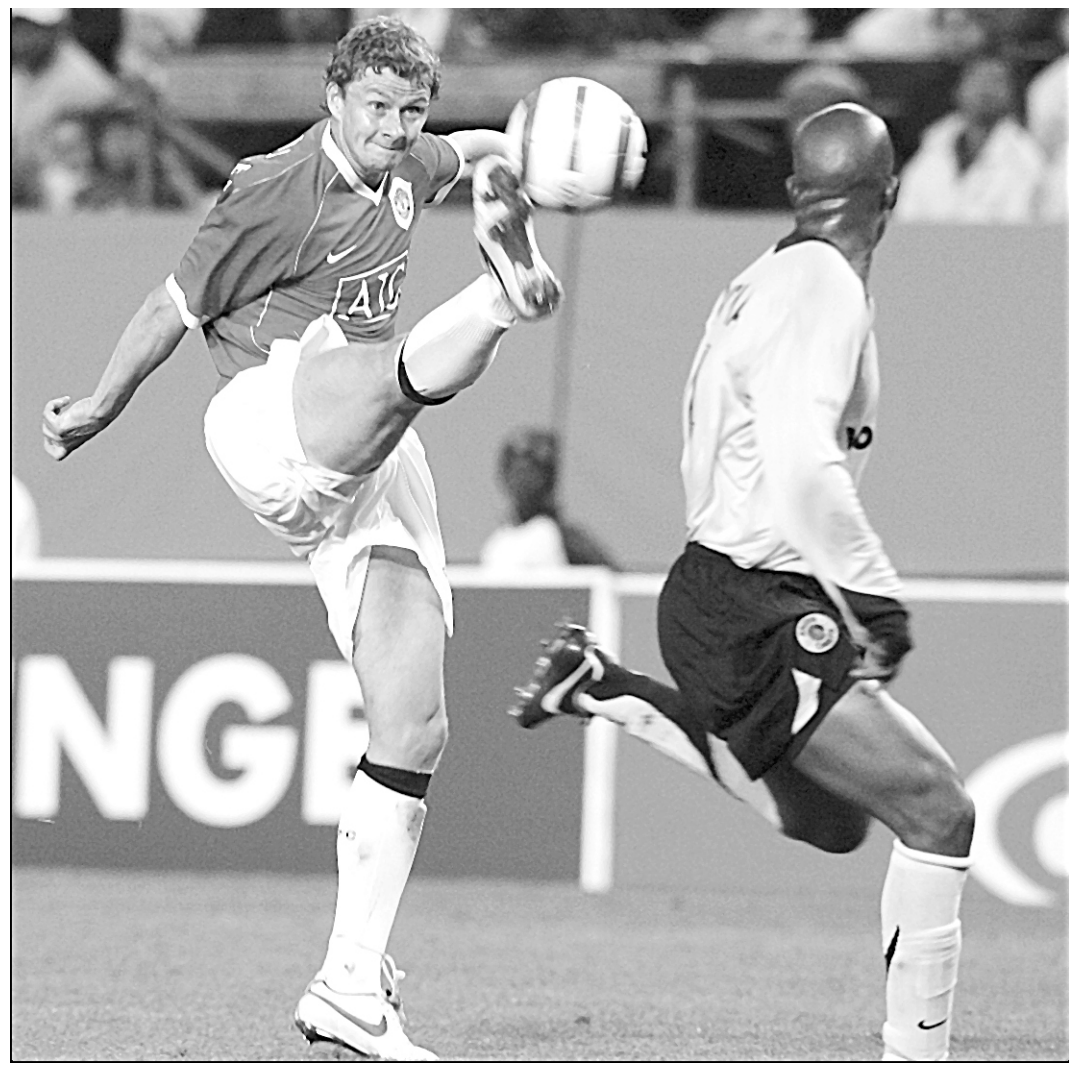
REUTERS, London

Former Nigeria international Jay-Jay Okocha has signed a one-year contract with Qatari first division team Sports Club, while Australia's Tony Popovic is also moving to the Gulf state.

Okocha was released by Bolton Wanderers in May after the 32-year-old midfielder had made 123 appearances and scored 18 goals since joining the Premier league club from Paris St Germain in 2002.

"Of course, Jay-Jay is here to help us win silverware," Qatar Sports Club board member Shiekh Jassim bin Hamad bin Nasser Al Thani said in a statement on the Asian Football Confederation website.

"He has passed the medical and will join the team in a training camp in the Czech Republic soon.



Manchester United striker Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (L) traps the ball away from Kaizer Chiefs' David Radebe during a friendly match in Cape Town on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Nowotny to join Dinamo Zagreb

REUTERS, Zagreb

German international defender Jens Nowotny is set to join Croatian champions Dinamo Zagreb, the Croatian club said on its website on Wednesday.

It said Nowotny, 32, and capped 47 times by Germany, would sign a contract on Sunday but gave no other details.

The former Bayer Leverkusen centre-back was recalled to Germany's national side at the World Cup after being sidelined for two years.

Croatian daily Jutarnji List daily the contract was worth "at least three million euros" and is for three years.

"I can only say that my team has been considerably reinforced now," said Dinamo coach Josip Kuze.

Dinamo have won eight league titles since Croatia's independence in 1991, but have had little success in European competitions.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	34 Vacillate	2 Flight overseer	19 Chemist
1 Extra-terrestrial fleet?	35 Steersman's site	org.	Nobelist
5 Jaunty cap	36 Spree	Harold	
8 Some-where out there	37 Primitive urge	3 Bobby of hockey	20 Car buyer's info
12 Revolutionary War battle	40 Witness	4 Henchman	21 Vicinity
14 Hardy cabbage	41 Valhalla	5 One of Taylor's husbands	22 Sandwich shop
15 April commemoration	42 Napoleon's downfall	6 —	23 Ohio college town
16 Pressing need?	43 Bold member	7 "Andy Griffith Show" setting	25 News item with added info
17 Scarlet	44 Bold	8 With hands on hips	26 Bambi, e.g.
18 Disappointed, with "out"	45 Lawyer's income	9 Mac-Donald's place	27 Banner
20 Sir's counter-part	46 Bold	10 Lotion additive	29 Raced
23 KFC additive	47 Choir member	11 Tear with 13 Yon folks	31 Caustic solution
24 Get ready	48 Bold	12 Lotion additive	33 African herd
25 Send an angry letter	49 Lawyer's income	13 Work with 13 Yon folks	34 — Nevada
28 Solidify	50 Remuneration	14 Hardy cabbage	35 News item with added info
29 Repentant	51 Wheel-base	15 April commemoration	26 Bambi, e.g.
30 Every last crumb	52 Disappointed, with "out"	16 Pressing need?	27 Banner
32 Record promoter's concern	53 Steersman's site	17 Scarlet	29 Raced

Solution time: 24 mins.

DOWN

1 Work with 13 Yon folks

2 Flight overseer

3 Bobby of hockey

4 Henchman

5 One of Taylor's husbands

6 —

7 "Andy Griffith Show" setting

8 With hands on hips

9 Mac-Donald's place

10 Lotion additive

11 Tear with 13 Yon folks

12 Lotion additive

13 Work with 13 Yon folks

14 Hardy cabbage

15 April commemoration

16 Pressing need?

17 Scarlet

18 Disappointed, with "out"

19 Chemist

20 Car buyer's info

21 Vicinity

22 Sandwich shop

23 Ohio college town

24 Get ready

25 Send an angry letter

26 Bambi, e.g.

27 Banner

29 Raced

31 Caustic solution

33 African herd

34 — Nevada

35 News item with added info

36 Spree

37 Primitive urge

38 Bold

39 Lawyer's income

40 Witness

41 Valhalla

42 Napoleon's downfall

43 Bold member

44 Bold

45 Lawyer's income

46 Bold

47 Choir member

48 Bold

49 Lawyer's income

50 Remuneration

51 Wheel-base

52 Disappointed, with "out"

53 Steersman's site

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CRYPTOQUIP

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Saturday's Cryptquip: IF SOME PUBLIC BUILDERS ARE CAREFREE, DO YOU THINK YOU MIGHT CALL THEM HOPI-GO-LUCKY?

Today's Cryptquip Clue: O equals M

The Cryptquip 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 give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.