

Rooney slams Moyes

REUTERS, London

Wayne Rooney's soured relationship with Everton manager David Moyes hastened his departure to Manchester United, the England striker has said in his autobiography.

Rooney, who joined United in 2004 for a fee estimated at 25 million pounds (\$46.30 million), made his first-team breakthrough at Goodison Park as a teenager.

"I would have gone almost anywhere just to get away from David Moyes. If no-one had come in I would have joined Newcastle," Rooney wrote in My Story So Far, serialised in the Daily Mail.

"To me he appeared overbearing; just wanting to control people. I suppose being young and confident and playing for England at 17, I wasn't bothered about upsetting him or answering back."

Rooney, a product of Everton's youth academy, made his first-team debut as a 16-year-old in 2002 and two months later, five days shy of his 17th birthday, became the Premier League's youngest scorer (since surpassed by James Milner) when he netted a superb match-winner against Arsenal.

His England debut followed in February 2003, a rapid rise to fame that Rooney said irked the Everton manager.

"There was only one person who seemed a bit upset and envious of what was happening to me - and that was Moyes," said Rooney.

Nedved to decide this week

AFP, Prague

Czech international Pavel Nedved will decide whether or not to stay with scandal-plagued Italian giants Juventus by the end of this week, the player's agent said Monday.

Nedved is one of several players who have left or are considering leaving Juve after the Serie A side were relegated and kicked out of the Champions League following a match-fixing scandal.

But according to agent David Nehoda, Nedved is still undecided about his future. "Pavel went back to training at Juve on Monday and will announce his decision by the end of the week," he told Czech broadcaster CT television.

Thuram seals Barca deal

REUTERS, Madrid

French defender Lilian Thuram has passed a medical and signed a two-year contract with Barcelona, the European and Spanish champions said on Monday.

"I am very pleased. To play at this club is the best thing that could happen to a footballer," Thuram told the club's website.

Barca are reported to have paid troubled Serie A club Juventus five million euros for the player.

Thuram has won a record 121 caps with France and announced his international retirement after losing in the World Cup final to Italy earlier this month.

A key member of the French side that won the World Cup in 1998 and the European Championship in 2000, Thuram can play in the centre of defence or at right back.

A former Monaco and Parma player, Thuram won four league titles with Juventus alongside defender Gianluca Zambrotta, who has also agreed a move to Barcelona from Turin.

Juventus have been involved in a match-fixing scandal in Italy and have been ordered to start next season in Serie B on minus 30 points by a tribunal.



Barcelona's Dutch coach Frank Rijkaard (R) converses with star striker Samuel Eto'o during a training session on Monday in Barcelona.

PHOTO: AFP

Bilic named Croatia coach

AFP, Zagreb

Former Croatian international Slaven Bilic was Tuesday named Croatia's new coach replacing Zlatko Kranjcar who was sacked after the national team failed to make the second round of the World Cup, the country's football association said.

The 38-year-old former defender has been coaching Croatia's junior squad since 2004.

He was played for Croatia in 1998 when the former Yugoslav republic took third place at the World Cup.

At this year's tournament finished third in their Group F, after a 1-0 defeat by Brazil, and 0-0 and 2-2 draws against Japan and Australia respectively.

After elimination, Kranjcar came under fire from Croatia's media, football experts and also the public.

However, the 49-year-old continued to refute criticism of his tactics and accusations of nepotism after he picked his son Niko in the squad.

Valencia test United resolve for Ronaldo

INTERNET, undated

Valencia president Juan Soler admits the club have asked Manchester United to name their price for Cristiano Ronaldo.

Soler, who today unveiled close season signings Fernando Morientes and Asier Del Horno from Liverpool and Chelsea respectively, now wants to stage a third raid on the Premiership.

"I have always said it will be difficult," said Soler in remarks reported by Marca. "But nothing is impossible."

"Until they tell us no several times we will not give up. At the moment it's a priority for our technical department and we have until August 31 (when the transfer window closes)."

The Portugal international winger has been linked with Real Madrid and has previously expressed a desire to play in Spain.

"First we will negotiate with the English club and then the player," Soler said.

Meanwhile, Morientes, who missed out on a place in Spain's World Cup squad after a disappointing campaign with Liverpool, told club website: "I don't want to dwell on the past but instead to work with my new team."

"Now I am at a different club and must change my tune."

Del Horno, who won the Premiership with Chelsea last year, missed the World Cup through injury.

He said: "It's been a great year. Playing in England has developed me as a player and now I can look forward to playing in the Champions League and the Primera Liga."

Under-strength Australia for qualifiers

AFP, Sydney

Australia coach Graham Arnold said Tuesday he will be forced to field an under-strength Socceros side in Asian Cup qualifiers next month because his overseas stars cannot escape club commitments.

Australia takes on Kuwait in Sydney on August 16 and Lebanon in Adelaide on August 31 in its bid to qualify for the finals of the Asian Cup in July next year.

But Arnold said the European-based players who took Australia to the second round of the World Cup finals will likely be unavailable, as the games coincide with the early rounds of competitions such as the English Premier League.

As a result, Arnold said the bulk of his team for the qualifying matches in Adelaide on August 16 and 31 would come from Australia's domestic A-League competition.

"As far as the next two Asian Cup qualifiers go against Kuwait and Lebanon, it looks like the players will have to come from the A-League," Arnold told Sydney's Daily Telegraph newspaper.

"Really this will be a great opportunity for the A-League players to step up and put their case forward for the 2010 World Cup campaign."

"Qualifying for the Asian Cup is imperative."

Australia only joined the Asian Football Confederation this year but has moved to the top of the continental rankings after its World Cup success and is keen to maintain momentum in the Asian Cup.

Arnold, who coached the Socceros to their 3-1 win over Bahrain in their first Asian Cup qualifier in Manama last February, has been reappointed caretaker coach after Dutchman Guus Hiddink left after the World Cup.

Gerrard wants the Premiership

Football

AFP, Liverpool

England midfielder Steven Gerrard wants to banish his World Cup blues by leading Liverpool to Premiership glory.

Gerrard returned to training for the first time since his World Cup headache when he and club-mate Jamie Carragher both missed penalties in England's quarter-final shoot-out defeat to Portugal last month.

Now, the Reds' skipper has set his sights firmly on lifting the one domestic honour he has yet to capture - the league title.

"I am desperate to hold the league trophy above my head," said Gerrard. "I have still got painful memories from Germany, but the idea now is to look forward and have a good season for Liverpool."

"I don't know whether I played at my peak in Germany. I got the chance to play in a couple of positions out there but I did get the chance to burst forward occasionally and score a couple of goals."

"And to be honest, although it ended on a bad note I really enjoyed my first experience of a World Cup, even though that may sound strange."

"I scored goals and just being involved was really good after missing the previous one through injury."

The pain of failing to fulfil England's potential in Germany has already started to subside.

"I feel it is already out of my system, as you get more experienced as a player you learn to get bad experiences out of your head quickly," added Gerrard.

"Now we have a new season and it would be nice to end the coming campaign on a good note like we did last season with a trophy."

Liverpool lifted the FA Cup last season with a dramatic victory over West Ham, courtesy of two stunning Gerrard strikes, but the midfielder feels cup wins are not enough for England's most successful club.

"Having improved in the league so much last season it is important that we get involved in the title race."

"To get to Chelsea we must improve on last season and for the new players who have arrived - and there may be one more - to bring something to the squad and strengthen on what we already have."

"We must make sure we are confident and we must believe we can do it or it won't happen."

He added: "I would like to think this club is on the brink of something special, there are a lot of players in the dressing room who are missing the Premier League title from their CV having won virtually everything else."

Gerrard is more than aware that he is also now being linked with taking over from David Beckham as the new England captain.

"Of course every England player would like to be the captain, but I am not one of those players who will be talking about and trying to get it."

"That's Steve McClaren's deci-

sion and if it comes my way, then great, but if not then I will wish whoever the new captain is every success."

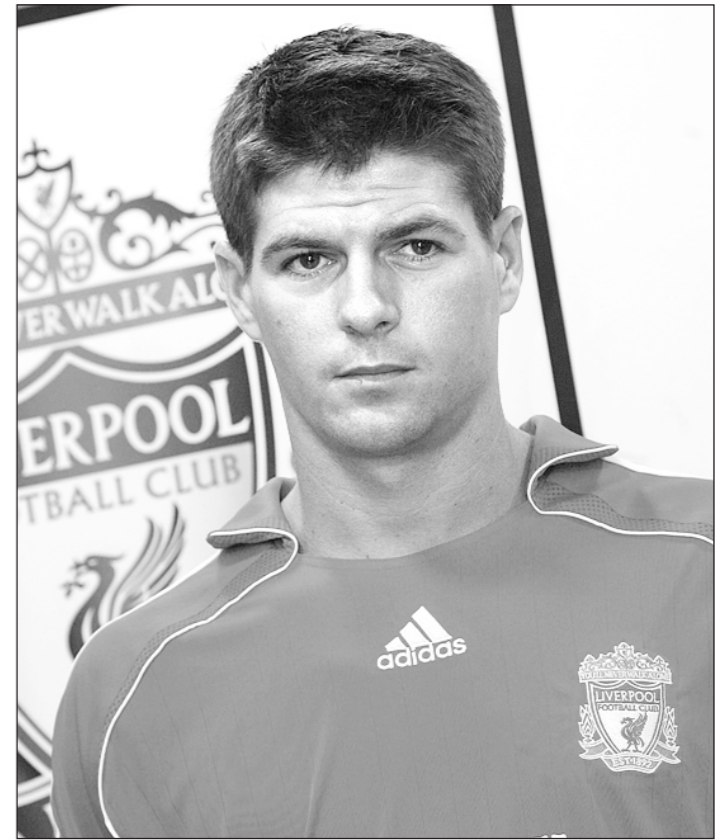
But it is Liverpool's future that is at the front of Gerrard's mind, and he is determined to return his boyhood club to its glorious past, having already led the team to a European Cup triumph in 2005.

"There is a big, big confidence in our dressing room and we would like to go on and win the Champions League again after experiencing it once," he said.

"It's easier said than done but we need to go further than the quarter-finals like last season, we are better than that."

"We have won two trophies in two seasons, in Europe and the FA Cup. But glory days for Liverpool is about titles and more and more trophies."

"We won't be talking about glory days here because we know we have a lot of hard work still to do."



STEVEN GERRARD

Girls can play with boys

Football

AFP, London

A British parliamentary committee has concluded that English football's governing body should abolish rules that prevent girls playing in mixed teams with boys after the age of 11, The Guardian said Tuesday.

The House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee concluded the current restrictions -- imposed in 1921 because the Football Association (FA) deemed the game "unsuitable for females" -- are an artificial barrier to the devel-

opment of the women's game in Britain, it reported.

The committee is due to officially publish its findings later Tuesday.

According to extracts published by the newspaper, the committee concludes: "We recommend that the absolute prohibition on mixed football over the age of 11 be removed and that an informed assessment of individuals' capacity to play in mixed teams should govern selection policy."

The FA -- which has no women on its board and only one on the 90-member FA Council -- should also become more representative, it reportedly adds.

Women's football in Britain has undergone a transformation in recent years: last year's European championships attracted three million viewers for England matches; sponsorship and professional teams are also on the increase.

Popularity soared after the box office success of the 2002 film "Bend It Like Beckham" to the point where there are now more than 130,000 registered players and more than 8,000 teams.

No bargain for Crespo

Football

AFP, London

Chelsea insisted Monday they will not sell wantaway Argentina striker Hernan Crespo on the cheap, despite the player's desperation to return to Italy.

Crespo spent last season at Stamford Bridge having returned to London following a season-long loan stint at AC Milan.

And with Chelsea buying the Argentine's former Milan teammate Andrei Shevchenko, Crespo was hoping that would be his cue to return to the country where he hopes to see out his days.

But so far no club has come in with a firm offer for Crespo -- and Chelsea have made it clear they will not allow him to walk away.

A club statement released by Chelsea on Monday read: "There are no new contract talks or discussions about offers of any nature with Hernan Crespo."

"He is contracted to Chelsea for the next two years and will remain so unless Chelsea receive a suitable offer for him."

"Everyone at Chelsea is aware of his domestic situation and we have every sympathy for that."

Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich has made every effort to make Crespo's time in London as bearable as possible but the player, who has a home near Milan, has his heart set on a return to Italy where he has also played for Inter Milan, Lazio and Parma.

"Abramovich has offered me a house, a private jet and more money, but I told him I simply want to return home," Crespo told Italian sports newspaper Tuttosport.

"The fact is I love Italy. The money and success don't come into it. Italy is my natural environment, it is the place where I will live when I retire and it is the best place to play."

"Abramovich is a marvellous person and Chelsea is a fantastic club. They have treated me like a king."

"The fans have been great to me too, telling me 'he wants to move to Italy, but he still gives it his all on the pitch'."

"I am waiting here, hoping my mobile will ring. I can just guarantee that I am a healthy striker with just one wish - to return and play my sort of football."

AC and Inter Milan will have been alerted by Crespo's comments but

they will have to make a substantial offer for the former Lazio marksman, who cost Chelsea 16 million pounds (29.6 million dollars) in 2003.

AC Milan tried to extend his loan contract for a further year last close season but Blues boss Jose Mourinho was only interested in a permanent deal.



HERNAN CRESPO

Chipperfield stays with Basel

AFP, Basel

Australian international Scott Chipperfield has pledged his loyalty to FC Basel by signing a three-year contract extension, the Swiss club announced Monday.

The 31-year-old midfielder had attracted the interest of several clubs around Europe after starring for the Socceros during their impressive World Cup campaign in Germany, where they reached the second round.

But Chipperfield has ended speculation about his immediate future by agreeing a new deal with Basel that will see him stay in Switzerland until June 2009, the club said in a statement.

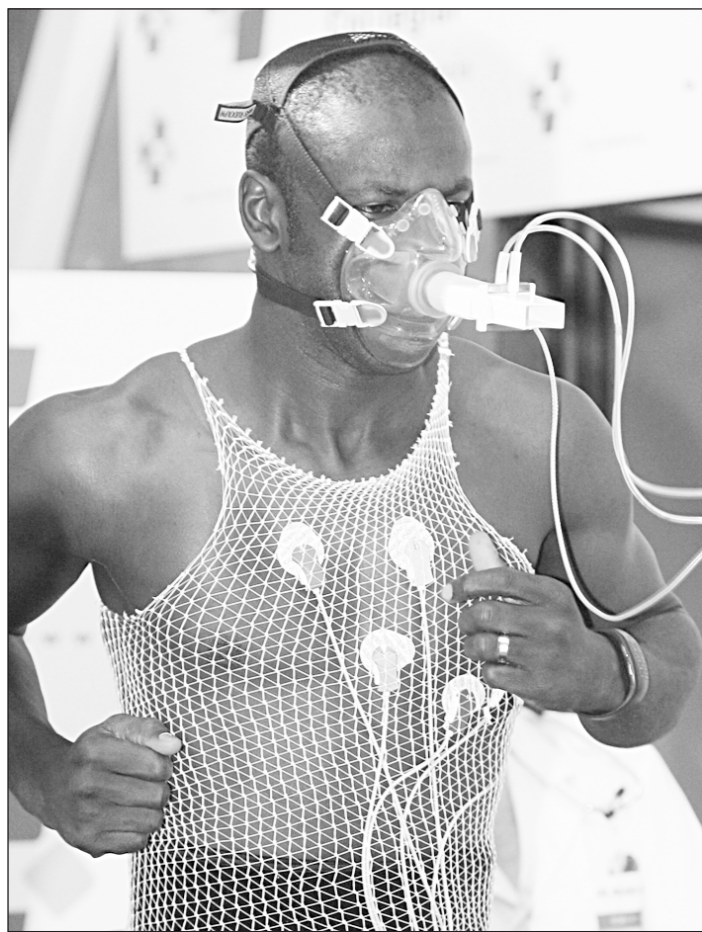


PHOTO: AFP

FROM OUTER SPACE: Barcelona's new signing Lilian Thuram undergoes a medical test at the Camp Nou in Barcelona on Monday.

Football

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Brazil took a leaf out of Germany's book on Monday by putting a man with no previous coaching experience in charge of their national side.

Jurgen Klinsmann's success at leading Germany to third place in the World Cup, two years after a humiliating first-round exit in Euro 2004, has inspired the five-times world champions to put the untested Dunga into the hot seat.

It is Brazil's second such experiment in recent times and Dunga will be hoping to fare better than Paulo Roberto Falcao who lasted one unhappy year in 1990-91.

Dunga, who replaces Carlos Alberto Parreira, takes over with Brazilian football at a crossroads.

They went into the World Cup expected to extend their dominance over the world game by winning a sixth world title, but their quarter-final exit at the hands of France has put a different complexion on their future.

Parreira's reliance on his ageing group effectively turned the national team into a closed shop in the last 18 months, barring the way to the country's up-

and-coming talent.

Many of the players who looked promising one year ago have since departed Brazil, disappearing into relative obscurity with middle-ranking European clubs.

The coaching outlook was similarly bleak with Dunga himself one of a very small number of candidates for the job.

Vanderlei Luxemburgo, the favourite, was seen as too controversial, especially as he fell out with Ronaldinho during an unhappy two-year stint in charge from 1998 to 2000.

Paulo Autuori, the only other serious candidate, may have seen his chances spoiled by an unsuccessful two years in charge of Peru which ended last year.

One of Dunga's first and most difficult decisions will be whether Ronaldo should keep his place in the side following his lumbering performances at the World Cup.

While he rebuilds, however, Dunga will be expected to get Brazil back to winning ways, starting with their friendly away to Norway on Aug. 16.

Dunga experienced both the joy and pain of representing the world's most successful international team during his playing days.

In 1990, he was made the

scapegoat after Brazil crashed out of the World Cup in Italy in the second round.

It became known as the 'Dunga Era' after commentators accused Brazil of replacing their traditional flair with the hard-tackling approach symbolised by Dunga.

"They needed someone to blame. I was chosen," he said.

Dunga, however, bounced back, worked on his passing and long-range shooting and returned as captain in 1994.

He was determined and snarling as ever but his play had a more refined touch which helped him cast off the stereotype as a player who merely used brute force.

Brazil went on to win the World Cup for the first time in 24 years with Dunga lifting the trophy.

"If I remained a prisoner of the past, worried about the criticism, I would have been better off retiring," he said.

"I knew the critics were wrong but there was no point in talking, I had to show this to the field."

With the interests of sponsors, television networks, 180 million ordinary Brazilians and some of the world's top players to juggle, he will have to be even more resourceful over the next few months.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

35 Read
17-Across
36 Favorable vote
37 Send out invitations
38 DVD forerunner
45 Concept
46 Toy with a tail
47 Paul Newman movie
48 Holiday song
49 Jeannie portrayal
50 Black-bird
51 Auto-maker
22 Gluttonous sort
23 Hold-up man?
26 Come together
27 Just out
30 Burden
31 Rose, when young?
32 Tibetan monk
33 Church seat
34 Take wing

DOWN

1 Member-ship tester?
2 Great quintet member
3 Humpty's perch
4 Tropical fruits
5 Toon squasher
6 Staplesick arsenal
7 Like the U.S. flag
8 Time
9 Drones
10 Sheltered
11 Bivouac home
19 "Zounds!"
20 Tin Man's need
23 Jungfrau, e.g.
24 Water tester?
25 Matlock's field
26 Fellow
27 Kvetch
28 Ostrich's kin
29 Kids' card game
31 Congested
32 "Star Wars" hero
34 Back
35 Agreement
36 Flings out
37 Michael's daisy
38 Source of veritas
39 "American -"

Solution time: 27 mins.

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CRYPTOQUIP

ZUCIJSLNGHOCVHWS
NHYUVHEL OGH NJSN
CZHWKE EHJKD KHSJGKD

CII ECL: "CYUZIFCK JEIU."
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: A HANDFUL OF ANTI-HANGING PROTESTERS HELD UP SIGNS THAT READ "NO NOOSE IS GOOD NOOSE!"
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: I equals L

The Cryptoquip 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.