



Inter Milan's Portuguese winger Luis Figo runs on the pitch during a friendly against Sporting at the Alvalade Stadium in Lisbon on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

Smith elated at return

AFP, Manchester

England striker Alan Smith declared himself happy on Monday with his comeback for the Manchester United reserves six months after suffering a horrific broken leg when playing for the first time.

The 25-year-old former Leeds United star played for just over an hour in United's 7-2 thrashing of Preston, failing to score but he was still more than satisfied.

"I have worked hard for that all through the summer," said Smith, who saw any hopes of making England's World Cup squad disappear when he broke his leg and dislocated his ankle against Liverpool in the FA Cup tie in February.

"That is what my goal has been. Playing for the reserves is a step up from training and hopefully, in a few weeks time I will have had some more reserve games and be able to make the step up to the first team."

"The first half I felt okay but I started to get a bit tired 15 minutes into the second half, which is why I came off."

"I just need a few matches under my belt, although I think I could have played all night and not scored."

"But my movement was okay and I just need to build up my strength a little bit."

With United manager Sir Alex Ferguson unable to find a replacement buy for the departed Ruud van Nistelrooy, the Scot has signalled that he will play Smith up front rather than in midfield like he did last term.

Grygera cools Spurs link

INTERNET, undated

Ajax defender Zdenek Grygera has distanced himself from speculation linking him with a move to Tottenham.

Spurs, who face Sheffield United at White Hart Lane tonight, were reportedly interested in Grygera but the player insists he does not see his future in the Premiership.

The Czech star is refusing to sign an extension to his contract which has 12 months left to run.

Grygera said: "I know nothing specific. Tottenham are a high-quality team but England would not be my first choice, although I am not saying no."

"If you are choosing a club, you always consider if you know someone already there."

"Tottenham have a Dutch coach and also Edgar Davids - they would be able to understand me."

"If there is an interesting and specific offer from a club that has a good reputation in Europe, I would not be against it."

"I have one year left on my contract and I am not willing to extend it so my future will be resolved next summer at the latest."

Meanwhile Spurs are sweating on the fitness of England striker Jermain Defoe ahead of tonight's clash with Neil Warnock's Premiership newcomers.

Defoe bruised his foot in the 2-0 defeat by Bolton on Saturday and will undergo a late fitness test.

Jol said: "Jermain is a worry. He bruised his foot but he's a tough lad and maybe he'll be in the squad, we'll have to see."

Sporting draw for Inter

Football

INTERNET, undated

Ten-man Inter hit the woodwork twice in a 0-0 friendly draw with Sporting Lisbon on Monday evening.

The Alvalade Stadium clash was scheduled to celebrate the Portuguese side's centenary in which Coach Roberto Mancini fielded a 4-4-2, with Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Hernan Crespo starting upfront.

Inter, although they clearly need fine-tuning, impressed at times during the first period and struck the post on 35 minutes through Crespo.

The Italian champions did struggle after the break though after Marco Materazzi was dismissed for a second

yellow card. However, Inter still threatened and substitute Alvaro Recoba hit the crossbar five minutes before the end with a curling free-kick.

Mancini was satisfied with the team's performance, but knows he now needs to work on the fitness of individual players.

"The squad has been working together for just four days but is already showing good cohesion," he stated. "We now have to focus on the fitness of each player."

"We play the Italian Super Cup match against Roma on Saturday in a match which is very important and we have to do well."

"We have to recover and rest after these last two matches, then we will finalise our preparation for the first

competitive test of the season."

Luis Figo, who captained Inter before leaving the armband to Ivan Cordoba in the second half, was presented with a gold medal to mark his contribution to Sporting Lisbon's history.

The international began his career in Lisbon in 1990 and wore the club's jersey for six seasons before moving to Barcelona.

"It was an honour to take part in such an important evening for Sporting in what was my stadium for many years," said Figo.

"Now we have to concentrate on Saturday's Final against Roma, when we will try to win the first trophy of the season."

Gallas could be condemned

THE GUARDIAN



William Gallas faces a year in football oblivion after Chelsea's patience finally snapped over the France international's attempts to move out of Stamford Bridge. Having tolerated the defender's refusal to attend pre-season training with his team-mates in Los Angeles due to "fatigue", Chelsea's hierarchy is poised to order the World Cup finalist to spend the final year of his contract in the reserves, a decision that has Jose Mourinho's blessing.

Gallas would have two ways of avoiding that scenario. The first would be a repentant apology from Gallas towards his teammates for what

Mourinho has termed the player's "lack of respect". The second is for him to leave the club as the bargaining chip in a swap deal for Ashley Cole. Such is the strength of feeling at Stamford Bridge that Chelsea would prefer to take Cole in a cash deal worth between £15m and £20m and condemn Gallas, who they do not expect to sign the tabled offer of a contract extension, to 12 months out of the first team.

Chelsea suspect Gallas of a dalliance with their rivals before Arsenal's £5m offer for him, which was lodged at the weekend and which Chelsea rejected.

Given the enmity between the two clubs, fuelled by Arsenal's decision to register a formal complaint to the Premier League last year over Chelsea's illegal approach for Cole,

that suspicion is being treated very seriously by Chelsea. If proved, they would consider it an utter betrayal by a player they had valued highly. It is unlikely a swap deal will be agreed, since the champions would not be prepared to yield any money to sweeten the transfer. Even Chelsea privately convinced it is unthinkable that Arsenal could accede to such a transaction.

Since Gallas is more than three years older than Cole and has one year left on his contract to the Englishman's two, a cash-neutral straight swap would be an enormous disappointment for Arsenal, who have refused Chelsea's sub-£20m offer for the player in the expectation that they will be able to procure at least £25m for the England left-back's sale.

Black and blue for Mauro?

INTERNET, undated



Mauro Camoranesi has told Juventus that he wants to follow Patrick Vieira and Zlatan Ibrahimovic to Inter.

Although the club have told him that he will not leave Turin, Camoranesi has long since informed the demoted giants that he has no intention of playing in Serie B.

The Nerazzurri are interested in the world champion and are convinced that they can successfully swoop, despite the Old Lady insisting that the player has to respect his contract.

Juventus are, however, aware that keeping a player against his will may be counterproductive and will consider their options if an adequate bid is received.

The former Verona winger's agent has also added fuel to the fire by confirming the Nerazzurri's interest in his client.

"Inter are a great club, exactly the team where Mauro would want to continue his career," Sergio Fortunato told the Corriere dello Sport.

"He needs new motivation and would very much enjoy playing in the Champions League."

"Massimo Moratti's club is definitely an option that Camoranesi welcomes."

"We now only need to understand what Juve's position will be."

close to finalising a £2.8m move for Jean Alain Boumsong of Newcastle.

The French international defender is scheduled to sign a

four-year contract with the Bianconeri on Tuesday.



OBAFEMI MARTINS

Juventus snub Vieri

INTERNET, undated

Christian Vieri's future is still unclear after Juventus told his agent that they had no desire in signing him.

Vieri surprisingly offered his services to the demoted giants on Monday, but the 33-year-old will not be wearing the Bianconeri jersey this term.

Reports suggest that the Turin club rejected his approach after Coach Didier Deschamps confirmed that he saw no need to sign the former Azzurri striker.

Vieri, currently a free agent after rescinding his contract with Sampdoria, is apparently now set to contact Atalanta another of his former clubs with the same offer.

The player has been paired with Shakhtar Donetsk and is also considering a spell in Qatar's multi-million pound championship to end his career, although money doesn't seem to be Vieri's main concern.

The 33-year-old striker accepted a reduced £575,000 salary in return for a one-year deal with Sampdoria in July, before cancelling the contract in August, and may take into consideration similar offers.

However, Vieri has not ruled out the idea of starting a new television career in an Italian reality show, thus suggesting he may still be pondering retiring from football completely.

Milan face fight for Sobis

INTERNET, undated

AC Milan are facing competition for the signature of Brazilian international Rafael Sobis who plays for Internacional Porto Alegre.

The Rossoneri are still searching for a replacement for the departed Andriy Shevchenko and have been tracking the 21-year-old striker for some time.

Sobis, who has in the past been linked with Milan's city rivals Internazionale, is considering a number of options with Paris Saint Germain and Wolfsburg also reported suitors.

"I haven't got an agreement with Milan yet, so everything will be decided next week," he said.

"I have other offers too and must evaluate them all with due calm."

The Serie A giants, who face Crvena Zvezda in a Champions League third round, second-leg qualifier on Tuesday will be hoping a deal can be thrashed out with the Brazilian outfit in the next week.

Boavista appoint Petrovic

AFP, Lisbon

Feyenoord's former assistant coach Zeljko Petrovic was on Monday named as the new manager of Portuguese side Boavista.

The 40-year-old Serb, who has also had a spell in charge of the Dutch Under-21 side, takes over from Jesualdo Ferreira, who was put in charge of city rivals and domestic champions FC Porto on Friday.

Petrovic, who stood down from his post at Dutch side Feyenoord last year on the same day as the resignation of their manager Ruud Gullit, is the only foreign-born manager working in the Portuguese first division this season.

Magpies agree Martins fee

REUTERS, London

Newcastle United have agreed a fee with Inter Milan to sign Nigeria striker Obafemi Martins, the Premier League club said on Tuesday.

"I can confirm we have agreed a fee with Inter Milan for Obafemi Martins," Newcastle chairman Freddy Shepherd told the club's Web site.

"It is now up to the player and the agent to agree terms on the offer." Newcastle did not disclose details of the fee but Sky Sports News reported the deal to be worth 10 million pounds.

The north-east club are desperate for a top-drawer striker. Alan Shearer has retired while England forward Michael Owen is not expected back until 2007 after his World Cup knee injury.

The 21-year-old Martins, who joined Inter in 2002, is a powerfully built forward who can run at defences.

In December last year he extended his Inter contract until 2010 but the close-season acquisitions of Argentina striker Hernan Crespo from English champions Chelsea and Sweden frontman Zlatan Ibrahimovic from Juventus, in the wake of Italy's match-fixing scandal, have pushed him down the pecking order.

Martins comes from Lagos and made his way as a teenager to Reggina in Italy without any time in formal football structures in Nigeria. x

Reggina lodge appeal

AFP, Rome



Serie A outfit Reggina appealed against the 15 point penalty inflicted on them because of their role in the Italian match-fixing scandal.

They have also appealed against the punishment imposed on their president Lillo Foti, who was suspended from footballing activity for two years and six months, as well as being fined 30,000 euros.

Their appeal will be heard by the Federal Court of the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) on August 25 according to the club's lawyer Giuseppe Panuccio.

Panuccio said he was confident that the club would have its penalty reduced to zero points.

56-year-old Foti, three referees, two assistant referees and another official had been targeted by prosecu-

tors who accused them of trying to predetermine the result of six matches last season.

Italian Football Federation prosecutor Stefano Palazzi had asked the sporting tribunal to hand the club a points penalty for the season ahead, but also wanted them relegated to the Second Division.

However, Reggina, who were also fined 100,000 euros, have survived the fate which befell mighty Juventus who were dumped into the second tier of Italian football for their role in the scandal which rocked the sport in the country.

"The fact that the tribunal has kept Reggina in Serie A is recognition of the sacrifices made by the team," Foti told the ANSA news agency last Thursday.

"I reaffirm my innocence."

As part of the investigation, which centred on intercepted phone calls, Serie B side Arezzo were also facing demotion to the third tier.

They have maintained their Serie B status, but with a nine-point deduction.

They were punished after suspensions were raised over their 1-0 win over Salernitana in the 2004-05 season.

Assistant referee Stefano Titomanlio and Gennaro Mazzei, a former FIGC official in charge of assigning linesmen, were suspended for three years.

Leonardo Meani, a former AC Milan official, was handed a three month ban and his former club fined 10,000 euros.

In the first phase of punishments earlier this summer, AC Milan were docked eight points for the season ahead and 30 points from last season's finish relegating them from second to third place.

They retained their Serie A place while Juventus faced a season at least in Serie B, and will start the campaign with a 17-point penalty.

Lazio and Fiorentina both face double-figure point penalties in Serie A.

'Beast' looks to roar

AFP, Madrid



Brazilian midfielder Julio Baptista said he had no intention of leaving Spanish giants Real Madrid despite suggestions that coach Fabio Capello wants to get rid of him.

Spanish media reports had suggested that Capello wanted to use the under-performing Baptista - known as the 'beast' - as a make-weight in a deal to bring AC Milan's Brazilian playmaker Kaka to the 'meringues' as he tries to put an end to bitter rivals Barcelona's recent

dominance in the league and Europe.

However the message from Baptista, scorer of just eight goals in 32 matches last term after his 24million euros transfer from a hugely successful stint at Sevilla where he'd scored 38 goals in two seasons, was he was not going anywhere.

"I don't know how many times I have to say it but I want to stay at Madrid," said 24-year-old Baptista, who still has four years to run on his contract.

"The club said nothing to me and I am very happy, here at Real."

"The press can say what they want, I will decide my future."

"If I want to leave, I will do so, but I don't want to go."

Capello, though, is believed to not be happy with either Baptista or compatriot Robinho and is also keen for Danish midfielder Thomas Gravesen to leave.

He has already signed Dutch striker Ruud van Nistelrooy from Manchester United and Emerson and Fabio Cannavaro, both from his old club Juventus.

He is also on the point of signing Mali international midfielder Mahamadou Diarra from French champions Lyon and is rumoured still to be sweet on Arsenal's Jose Antonio Reyes.

The nine-time European champions have failed to win a trophy of any sort in the last three seasons.

Tale of two Diarra's

Football

AFP, Lyon

Lens' France international Alou Diarra is preparing to join Lyon but the move hinges on his namesake Mahamadou Diarra's sale to Real Madrid.

Lyon's Diarra has agreed terms with Real and is all set to sign subject to the Mali international passing a routine medical in Madrid. He should have left for the Spanish capital Monday but his visit was delayed.

The two clubs have reached a deal which sees him joining David

Beckham and company at the Bernabeu on a five year contract reported to be worth up to 26 million euros.

The only sticking point is the five percent of the transfer fee Real would have to pay to Diarra's former clubs under the selling-on clause in his contract.

If for some reason the transfer falls through there is an outside chance that Real could end up with Lens' Diarra, according to the midfielder's agent.

"If Mahamadou Diarra doesn't join Real Madrid there's a big chance that Real will sign Alou but it would astound me if things went that far," Janos Tooth told AFP on

Monday.

"Nothing's been signed with Lyon," Tooth added.

"Discussions are going on between the two clubs. There's a chance that Alou could travel to Lyon in the next few hours. There have been meetings, talks, but as of now nothing's finalised."

If all the bits of the Diarra puzzle fall into place Alou will join Gerard Houllier's six-time title-seeking side on a four-year deal worth seven million euros.

But Tooth added: "There's one chance in a thousand that Alou will be in Lyon's official team photo on Tuesday."



PHOTO: AFP

Mali international midfielder Mahamadou Diarra (C) answers journalists questions at Gerland Stadium in Lyon on Tuesday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Sternward

4 Thick chunk

8 Legal wrong

12 Spell-sit

13 Sit for the photograp

14 — Dei

15 Relief

16 Laugh-a-minute

17 Arp's genre

18 One-lime

21 "A Chorus Line" song

22 Could possibly

23 Confuse

26 Still

27 Prune

30 Uncontrollable

31 Existed

32 Determination

33 "Uh-huh" agent

34 Swab the decks

35 Country-club

36 Listening employee

37 Part of TGIF

38 Mantle or DiMaggio

45 Waikiki wing-ding

46 Tittle

47 Perfume-label

48 Saharan word

49 Egress

50 Chowder-head

51 Double agent

52 Unit of force

53 Ultimate

DOWN

1 "Mamma Mia" quartet

2 Phobia

3 Criterion

4 Leap

5 French river

6 Since

7 Early

8 Rum recipe

9 October stone

10 Discourteous

11 Autocrat

19 Pan toe

20 Cause corrosion

23 Serenade the moon

24 Flightless bird

25 Dandy

26 Shril bark

27 Cover

28 Outmoded

29 Thickness

31 Dis-trait

32 Ban-shee's cry

34 West of Holly-wood

35 Make

36 Chopin piece

37 Belong

38 Silent one

39 Mark's replacement?

40 Apprehend

41 Sly

42 Campus VIP

43 Bridge position

44 Waste no time

Solution time: 27 mins.

RAO WAR DICED
ERR ERE ERATO
LEA PARKEBENCH
LIS TRAIT
CAPS AND WAFT
AFTER WITHCE
WRENCH RICH
LINE AOD DAUB
JUDIDENCH APT
OREAD SOU PIT
NINNY EMS ENB

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51			52				53			

CRYPTOQUIP
R B I T R Z P X Z F Q D F R F S Y Z
G H Q X H N R T G Z A X F Y N U Z Q
M X H P M T B Y N X Z X H D Z
S Z A T G Z H P U H Q R I H U Z Q P ?
Yesterday's Cryptquip: WHEN MADISON AVENUE LAUNCHES A BIG CAMPAIGN, I SUPPOSE IT WILL BE A GREAT AD VENTURE.
Today's Cryptquip Clue: P equals T

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.