

## Donadoni feels Naples passion

INTERNET, undated

Italy Coach Roberto Donadoni admits he wishes he could play against Lithuania at the Stadio San Paolo as Naples gave the Azzurri a warm welcome.

"I see enthusiasm of the World Champions, the way Fabio Cannavaro, Andrea Pirlo and Gennaro Gattuso are working hard in training for this match. The atmosphere makes me wish I could be playing too," confessed the 43-year-old former Milan legend.

Giovanni Trapattoni famously used to play in training sessions when Italy were a man short, but Donadoni insists he won't follow in his footsteps.

"I haven't got Trap's physique," he laughed. "In any case, the World Champions are an example to everyone and if you follow them, you won't go wrong."

The members of the side that lifted that trophy in Berlin were absent from Donadoni's debut, a 2-0 friendly defeat to Croatia, but most of them are back for the opening Euro 2008 qualifier against Lithuania this evening.

The supporters in Naples have given the side a passionate welcome, but this stadium holds bitter memories for Donadoni, who missed a penalty here in the 1990 World Cup semi-final defeat to Argentina.

"That was a very different situation back then, as Diego Armando Maradona was playing and he was a hero for the local fans. Now the San Paolo will be awash with the Azzurri colours and the heat from these supporters will be an extra weapon for the team."

## Chelsea angry at rift reports

AFP, London

English Premiership champions Chelsea were reported to have consulted lawyers on Friday after suggestions the club's manager Jose Mourinho had been involved in a row with his chief executive Peter Kenyon.

It was suggested in the English press on Friday that Kenyon had sanctioned the sale of France defender William Gallas to Arsenal without Mourinho's agreement.

Gallas had made it clear he wanted to leave Stamford Bridge because he was unhappy at being played out of position by Mourinho, who had responded by banishing the player to the reserves.

On Thursday Gallas was sent to Arsenal along with five million pounds in exchange for England defender Ashley Cole.

That was believed to have led to an argument between Mourinho and Kenyon but the west London club are furious with those rumours and are said to be considering taking legal action.

Chelsea insist Mourinho's relationship with Kenyon is strong and the pair were in constant contact throughout Thursday as efforts to bring Cole to Chelsea gathered pace.

## Jorgensen inspires Denmark

REUTERS, Brondby

Martin Jorgensen helped Denmark stun World Cup semi-finalists Portugal 4-2 on Friday as the teams warmed up for their opening Euro 2008 qualifiers.

Jorgensen had a hand in two goals and then got on the score-sheet himself to cast doubt on the effectiveness of Portugal coach Luiz Felipe Scolari's defensive tactics.

Jon Dahl Tomasson opened the scoring after 14 minutes when Jorgensen found Dennis Rommedahl to set up the chance.

However, two minutes later Portugal's Ricardo Carvalho equalised when he thrust the ball into the roof of the net.

Thomas Kahlenberg restored Denmark's lead after 21 minutes by firing under goalkeeper Ricardo Pereira after Jorgensen had again shown his magic by conjuring up a precise cross.

With Barcelona midfielder Deco rested and stalwarts Luis Figo and Pauleta having retired from international football, Portugal had to rely on youngsters such as debutant Luis Nani of Sporting and Manchester United winger Cristiano Ronaldo.

Ronaldo wasted a glorious opportunity to bring Portugal level again when his penalty was



Italy striker Antonio Cassano backflips a ball in training at the San Paolo Stadium in Naples on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Wenger relieved at Cole move

Football

INTERNET, undated

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger yesterday expressed his relief that the Ashley Cole transfer saga was finally over and claimed the club could now focus on the future without any more distractions.

Speaking after a two-day meeting of European coaches in Geneva, Wenger refused to criticise Chelsea's role in the drawn-out tug of war over the England left-back but said he was delighted to have got France defender William Gallas in exchange.

"It was a big day (Friday) and obviously it dragged on for a long time," Wenger told PA Sport.

"It's good to have everybody focused on the main target which is to play good football and respond to the ambitions of Arsenal Football Club. The positive thing is that it is finally over."

"It was the wish of Ashley Cole to go to Chelsea and the wish of William

Gallas to come to us so I'm relieved it has happened."

Wenger, who spent most of his time during the meeting locked in conversation with the various protagonists involved in one of football's most tortuous transfers, was joined at the coaches' forum by Manchester United boss Alex Ferguson and former Liverpool manager Gerard Houllier.

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho was also invited but declined to attend, thereby avoiding direct confrontation with his Arsenal counterpart as the swap deal involving Cole and Gallas was concluded overnight. The Gunners also received 5 million dollars in the deal.

Wenger insisted Cole's desire to leave the club - and the imminent publication of his book which is understood to be hugely critical of the Arsenal regime - had not been responsible for his team's unconvincing start to the season.

"For me it was not too much of a distraction but you want things to be sorted out and it's more disturbing on the outside because everyone was

asking the same question," Wenger said.

"I would not say it affected our performances which have been more down to a lack of preparation after the World Cup and so many players still recovering."

Commenting on Arsenal's other deal - which saw Julio Baptista join from Real Madrid and Jose Antonio Reyes go in the opposite direction - Wenger claimed the Brazilian would be more than compensate for Reyes' departure.

"Reyes brought a lot but he wanted to go," said Wenger. "Baptista will bring power in the air and score goals. I can use him either up front or as a hanging attacking midfielder."

"We'll see how the swap works but I'm confident it will work well because Baptista is quick, strong and a team player."

Meanwhile, the Premier League have announced the transfer of 18-year-old midfielder Denilson from Sao Paolo to Arsenal, although the club have not confirmed the move.



Portugal midfielders Petit (L) and Cristiano Ronaldo (C) crowd out Denmark's Thomas Kahlenberg during their international friendly in Copenhagen on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Rijkaard denies Ronaldinho rift

INTERNET, undated

Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard has denied falling out with star man Ronaldinho as rumours link the brilliant Brazilian with a big-money move in 2007 to Milan.

The former Paris Saint Germain star missed the game against Celta Vigo and reports claimed he had argued with his coach over concerns at the player's promotional activities.

However, Rijkaard has attempted to dampen the speculation.

"It is an absolute lie that I've got upset with Ronaldinho or punished him," said Rijkaard.

"It is a pure invention of the mass media."

"Nothing has happened between Ronaldinho and I. This is only a story in the mass media."

"I live in another country. I do not know what is being said in Italy. It seems to me that Ronaldinho is happy in Barcelona, but the future will come and nobody knows what is going to happen within the next

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## UEFA clamps down on protests

AFP, Paris

Protesting referees' decisions will be punished more severely during the opening Euro 2008 qualifiers this weekend after UEFA on Friday ordered officials to clamp down this season.

Raising a hand to request a card be shown or even running towards a referee will be more harshly dealt with than before, UEFA said, adding crowding round a referee or even making a gesture in protest would be sanctioned.

"UEFA has asked referees to punish player protests," European football's governing body said in a statement at the time of the annual meeting of the referee's commission.

In the case of a crowd of players making protests, UEFA said at least one of the players would be booked, and usually the instigator.

"UEFA has decided to end players' protests and the harassment of referees," the statement added, saying the directives would take immediate effect and be in force for Saturday's international matches.

## Ronaldo on comeback trail

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid star Ronaldo has resumed light training after a knee operation but it is too early to say when he will start playing again, the Spanish giants have revealed.

The injury-plagued striker has been out of action since undergoing surgery on his left knee six weeks ago in Brazil but is now kicking a ball again as he attempts to resurrect his career at the Bernabeu.

"We are not able to set a date for his return at the moment," a Real spokesman said. Real coach Fabio Capello said last week he expected Ronaldo to be fit in less than a month.

Real had reportedly been ready to sell Ronaldo to former club Inter Milan this summer after the player indicated he wanted to leave Madrid after four years. However the 29-year-old has voiced his determination to relaunch his Real career, vowing to score 30 goals this season.

## Henry makes admission

INTERNET, undated

Thierry Henry has admitted he had decided to leave Arsenal last season before having a change of mind and committing his future to the North Londoners.

In an interview with French publication Fressport, the Gunners captain also admitted life is difficult at The Emirates Stadium without experienced campaigners like Patrick Vieira, Sol Campbell and Dennis Bergkamp.

Speaking about the decision to rebuff Barcelona and remain in the English capital, the France forward has explained what went through his mind after the UEFA Champions League final.

"Many ideas passed through my head and it is true that I had really decided to leave," he said.

"And then, when the decision should have been taken, I could not do it. I simply could not imagine leaving the club."

"I listened to what my heart said. And sometimes you cannot go

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## BRAZIL V ARGENTINA

# Hammers recruits add spice

Football

REUTERS, London

Carlos Tevez and Javier Mascherano, whose move to West Ham United stunned English soccer on Thursday, will make their first appearance as Hammers players on Sunday - playing for Argentina against Brazil.

To add even more spice to an always-peppery dish when the two great South American rivals clash, they will be playing in the city that will become their new home at Arsenal's Emirates Stadium.

Lining up against them is likely to be Arsenal's Gilberto Silva in only the third official match played at the 60,000 all-seater ground.

Tevez and Mascherano, who helped Argentina reach the World Cup quarterfinals, were involved in the most surprising transfer on deadline day when they moved from Corinthians in Brazil to West Ham, traditionally regarded as London's fourth club after Arsenal, Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur.

The players were already in London with the Argentina squad, preparing for coach Alfio Basile's first match in charge in his second spell at the helm.

"Given that we've had so little time to prepare, we'll have to rely on the well known ability of our players to make up for any tactical shortcomings," Basile told his players during a practice session at the Kent training ground of West Ham's neighbours Charlton Athletic on Friday.

Tevez and Mascherano, having secured their future after difficult times at Corinthians since returning from the World Cup, will be in the mood to turn on the style for Basile, along with Barcelona's Lionel Messi and Javier Saviola.

"I love the shorties because I like those who play well," Basile had told the daily La Nacion in reference to his small forwards before leaving Buenos Aires for London.

"It will be a special match because it's Brazil and it's always a classic," Basile said.

"I want to score four goals and not concede any," he added in light-

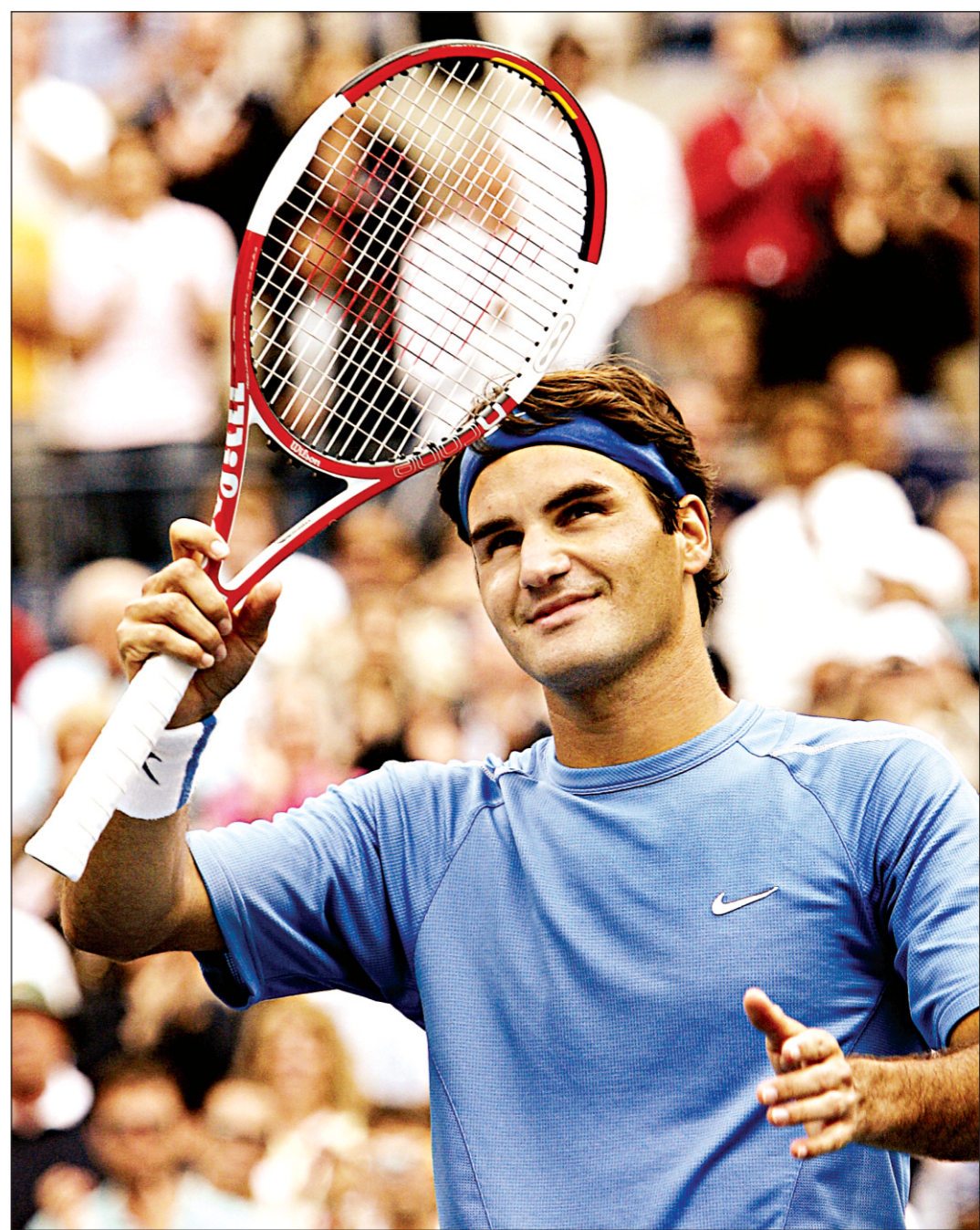
hearted mood, perhaps thinking back to his first meeting with Brazil in 1991 which ended 3-3 in Buenos Aires.

Basile met Brazil six times during his 1991-94 spell as coach, with a win, a defeat and four draws, one of which ended with a penalty shootout win in their 1993 Copa America quarterfinal.

To offset Messi, Tevez and Javier Saviola, Brazil have the likes of Ronaldinho, Kaka and Cicinho, whose skills helped demolish Argentina 4-1 in the 2005 Confederations Cup final in Germany, the last time they met.

Brazil have also started a new era under coach Dunga, who made his debut in a 1-1 draw with Norway in Oslo two weeks ago in which winger Daniel Carvalho scored with a brilliantly executed equaliser.

Sunday's match at the Emirates stadium is a sell-out but there is another chance to see Brazil in London when they play Wales at Tottenham's White Hart Lane ground on Tuesday.



Roger Federer of Switzerland laps up the crowd's applause after beating Tim Henman of Britain in the 2nd round of the US Open at Flushing Meadows on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Roger coasts before storm

US OPEN

AFP, New York

The remnants of Hurricane Ernesto brought an early end to proceedings at the US Open on Friday but not before Hurrincane Roger had swept into the third round.

Top seed and defending champion Roger Federer has hardly needed to break sweat in coasting past the first two rounds of the year's final Grand Slam tournament.

He dismissed British veteran Tim Henman 6-3, 6-4, 7-5 in early action before the storm clouds moved in to scupper the scheduled evening session.

Next up is American journeyman Vince Spadea whose newly-released book on life on the pro tennis circuit has ruffled a few feathers among his peers.

Federer had little to say about the match itself fielding with his usual aplomb a waft of questions on such as playing in the morning, the

state of Argentine tennis and the pros and cons of big muscles in tennis.

He admitted also to being caught up in the frenzy of following Andre Agassi's last stand before he retires from the sport.

Federer said he had stayed up late to marvel at Agassi's thrilling five sets win over Marcos Baghdatis.

"I get nervous myself watching this stuff, like a fan," he said.

"Get cold feet. I was in bed going under the blanket almost. It's the same for me."

That adulation could change in a week's time as Agassi is in the opposite half of the draw once again and if his crooked back holds up they could once again meet in the final.

Last year, Agassi battled through three consecutive five sets and had Federer troubled in the championship match before losing in four sets.

There was better news for the British camp later in the day as the new kid on the block Andy Murray blasted through to the third round in

three impressive sets against Italy's Alessio di Mauro 6-0, 6-1, 6-1 in an expedient 74 minutes.

Next up for the 19-year-old Scot though is a tough assignment against hard-hitting 10th seed Fernando Gonzalez of Chile.

There were wins also for four other seeds - James Blake (5) and Robby Ginepri (18) both of the United States, Tommy Haas (14) of Germany and Thomas Berdych (12) of the Czech Republic.

In the women's draw, Belgian second seed Justine Henin-Hardenne came through 4-6, 6-1, 6-0 against Ai Sugiyama of Japan in a match that at least bucked the trend of easy straight set victories for the top seeds.

The French Open champion next plays Shahar Peer of Israel who hit back from 5-2 down in the deciding set to oust Italy's Francesca Schiavone 6-3, 6-7 (3/7), 7-6 (7/3) in the best match of an otherwise drab day.

The two finalists of two years ago, Russians Svetlana Kuznetsova

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