



PHOTO: AFP

THE NEW GENERATION: Portugal players wave to their Finnish fans during a training session at the Olympic Stadium in Helsinki on Tuesday.

New dawn for Portugal

Football

AFP, Lisbon

Coach Luiz Felipe Scolari admits it is time for a footballing revolution as Portugal attempt to improve on their European championships final appearance two years ago, without two of their major lynchpins. Missing striker Pauleta and playmaker Luis Figo, both of whom have retired from the international game, Portugal face Finland in Helsinki on Wednesday hoping their World Cup form can make a timely return.

turned down the England job to continue in his current post, seems confident they can go all the way. "The aim for us is to get to the final, and who knows maybe we can go all the way and be crowned champions this time." As well as finishing fourth at the World Cup Portugal lost the final of Euro 2004, which they hosted, to Greece. Scolari added: "After the Euro 2004 and World Cup finals we said it was impossible to do any better, but in football nothing is impossible when the desire is there. "And there's plenty of desire in this team." Portugal will go into their first qualifier looking to do better than the

2-2 friendly defeat they suffered to Denmark in Copenhagen on Saturday. However midfielder Petit said most of the players are still looking for full match fitness. "None of the players are really match fit," said Petit, admitting that a draw to Finland in Helsinki "wouldn't be so bad". Scolari will be without a number of injured players, including Sabrosa Simao, Ricardo Quaresma, midfielder Carlos Martins and defender Fernando Meira. The latter two have not been replaced in his squad. Scolari could adapt his game to fit around the newly-arrived players like striker Nani and midfielder Joao Moutinho.

"We have to adapt our tactical system," added the Brazilian, indicating that Portugal would likely play with two men up front. "We're going to have to make changes to our game." Taking Figo's influence into account, Scolari added: "The only player whose game resembles Figo's is Deco." However the man known as 'Big Phil' said it was Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo who would be their star man. "He will probably be one of the greatest players Portugal has seen. He just doesn't stop improving, getting more and more experience and maturing."

Serie B start under threat

REUTERS, Rome

The president of Italy's Football League has threatened to postpone the start of the second division Serie B season after the majority of clubs failed to reach agreement on a new television rights deal. Serie B kicks off on Friday with a game between Arezzo and Mantova, with the main round of matches scheduled for Saturday. "If we reach an agreement that pleases both parties, Serie B will start. Otherwise there will be a delay," Antonio Matarrese was quoted as saying in La Gazzetta dello Sport on Wednesday. Of the 22 clubs in Serie B only Juventus and Genoa have reached agreements for the transmission of their home fixtures. The remaining teams have yet to sign deals despite the advances of a number of broadcasters, including state broadcaster RAI, Silvio Berlusconi's Mediaset corporation and satellite broadcaster SKY Italia. "Everything is on the table. We expect to be treated seriously, not taken for a ride. Offers should reflect the true value of Serie B," continued Matarrese. The prospect of a delay to Serie B threatens to add another chapter to Italian football's summer of woe.

Pessotto discharged

AFP, Rome

Former Juventus and Italy international Gianluca Pessotto, who suffered multiple fractures after leaping from his office window in an apparent suicide attempt, was discharged from hospital on Tuesday. Currently employed as Juventus' team manager, Pessotto was taken from Turin's Molinette hospital to the Fornaca clinic, where he will undergo a rehabilitation programme. According to Gazzetta dello Sport's website, Pessotto was smiling and joking as he boarded the vehicle. The 35-year-old, who was said to have been depressed following his retirement as a player after 11 years with Juventus, jumped from his office at the team's headquarters in June and fell 15 metres to the ground. His wife Reana said that he had struggled to adapt to the team manager's role after hanging up his boots. Reana Pessotto said she had argued with her husband just before he plunged from the second story window because he called her to tell her he wanted to cancel a holiday they had arranged. In mid-July he was declared out of danger and told that he would not suffer any long-term mental damage or physical paralysis.

No sleep for Dunga

Football

AFP, London

Brazil coach Dunga has made a flawless start to his reign but management is still giving him sleepless nights. Dunga has the tricky task of putting Brazil back on track after he replaced Carlos Alberto Parreira in the aftermath of the teams premature World Cup exit. The five-times world champions have been at a low ebb since losing their crown when they were beaten by France in the quarterfinals in Germany. But Dunga knows exactly what it takes to succeed at international level after captaining Brazil to World Cup success in 1994 and he is already making his presence felt as coach. His team are unbeaten in his three matches in charge, with Sundays scintillating friendly win against bitter rivals Argentina followed by a comfortable victory against Wales in London on Tuesday. So everything is going well on the pitch but Dunga, in his first coaching job, is still finding it hard to come to terms with the pressures of being responsible for a group of world-renowned stars. He has to constantly be on call to deal with any problems and admitted it keeps him up well into the early hours. He said: "When I played I just had

to think about myself. Now I have to think about everyone. "I have to talk to the players and discuss their concerns. Before I would go to bed at 9pm, now I don't get to bed until 3am. "I've learnt you have to be sensible and think before you say something. It's an experience I am discovering more about with each day." Dunga was without some of his more illustrious players, including strikers Ronaldo and Adriano, for his country's week-long stay in London. But, with Brazil not in competitive action again until the Copa America next year, this was the ideal chance for a new generation to stake their claim. Several youngsters have seized the opportunity to show they are more than capable of stepping into the boots of Ronaldo, Roberto Carlos and company. Shakhtar Donetsk midfielder Elano scored twice against Argentina and Real Madrid's Robinho also dazzled in that match. Against Wales it was Fluminense left-back Marcelo's turn to shine as he marked his first start with a buccaneering display that conjured up memories of Roberto Carlos at his finest. Marcelo put the seal on a fine performance with the first goal in his side's 2-0 win and Dunga is confident he can become a key member of the squad. "He is a player of great quality and has very good technique. When we

called him up some people thought it was strange," he said. "But we knew his qualities and we were impressed with his attitude in training and during the match. "He still looks like a boy and is always smiling. I asked him if he was ready to play and he just said 'sure, no problem.'" Wales boss John Toshack was also happy with the displays of his youngsters despite the defeat, his side's second in four days after their Euro 2008 qualifying loss against the Czech Republic. Teenagers Gareth Bale, Joe Ledley and Lewin Nyatanga all held their own against superior opponents. "I'm sure the youngsters will learn from it," said Toshack. "They weren't overawed and we did create chances. The only problem was, once again, we didn't take those opportunities. "I'm glad we decided to accept this match because there were some interesting things that came out of it. "You have to enjoy it. There is no point being intimidated by the opposition. "These are the games everyone wants to play in. It's harder to get yourself up to play in an English League Two game on a cold night in February."

Tevez can be the new Rooney

Football

AFP, London

New striker Carlos Tevez can be to West Ham what Wayne Rooney is to Manchester United, according to the Argentine's boss Alan Pardew. Christmas came early for Pardew on transfer deadline day when his small unfashionable east London club pulled off the transfer coup of the close season, in fact the

transfer coup of this century. West Ham landed Argentina World Cup stars Tevez and Javier Mascherano from Brazilians Corinthians in a mysterious deal that has captured the imagination of the football world. But while Pardew admits the shock capture has left many questions unanswered, he prefers to concentrate on what the players can bring to the team having marvelled at their talents during the World Cup in June and July.

"I was at the Argentina-Serbia game when Tevez came on as a substitute and he took my breath away," said Pardew. "Of the two, he is the one who is a special talent and, hopefully, he will take us to another level - like Rooney does when he plays for Manchester United. "He is that type of talent and I want that in my team." Having been stunned by what he saw during Argentina's 6-0 win over Serbia and Montenegro, Pardew wrote in The Independent: "I saw in less than 10 minutes that Tevez can be a star for the next 10 years. "He will be a top, top player. Tevez has an assurance about his ability. He's got good agility and looks like a striker who has every tool. "He's a decent size too. He's more explosive than (Barcelona forward) Lionel Messi. He's really a (Diego) Maradona-type player." Tevez is a short, stocky, powerful striker. As Pardew described, he is of a similar build to Maradona and Rooney, and shares another trait of theirs too - a fiery temper. "If you look at players of his type, I think they carry that trait. Because they are so special and have that talent they were picked out more from an early age," added Pardew. "Rooney was probably getting special attention from other players when he was 10 years old. "You are going to build up that anger and frustration in your system. I don't expect his fiery side to disappear under my management but Carlos has to channel it better and the great players do that. "He is a young boy who is impetuous and is going to have to learn lessons quickly, especially in the Premiership because he'll be a target." The arrival of Tevez and Mascherano, who are both 22, has been shrouded in mystery with West Ham keeping all the financial details confidential. This led to speculation that both players are just using West Ham as a staging post for big money moves at the end of the season.



PHOTO: AFP

Barcelona's Argentine forward Javier Saviola (R) surges past the challenge of Espanyol's Moises Hurtado during their Catalunya Cup clash at the Stadium Montilivi in Girona on Tuesday. Espanyol won 1-0.

The weird and wacky

Football

PAUL SAFFER

That old myth that Americans were not interested in 'soccer' has long been quashed; witness Randy Lerner's purchase of Aston Villa FC to join compatriot Malcolm Glazer in controlling a Premiership team. And if the credit card heir wants ideas on how to promote his new outfit, he can do worse than look back to his homeland. **FOOD FOR THOUGHT** The University of San Francisco has recently dropped its well-known basketball programme to concentrate

on soccer, having won the prestigious NCAA title three times. They have built a new stadium for the team, and thanks to floodlights will be able to put on evening games for the first time. So how to get crowds? First of all, they are putting on barbecues to get fans to attend the night kick-offs. And secondly, if the 'Dons' keep a clean sheet, every student at the game will receive a voucher for a free bagel. "They're very popular with the students here, they're the main customers at the local House of Bagels," Peter Simon, the university's sports information director, told the New York Times. **AFINE MESS** Time is money. A cliché, but an apt

one. Especially if your name is Ricardo Oliveira. Newly signed for AC Milan from Real Betis, the attacker was injured for most of last season and loaned by the Seville club to Sao Paulo FC in April to gain match practice, and was due to return in the middle of last month. However, he did not appear until nine days after the deadline, and so as per his contract was fined. A total of 1m Euros. Betis controlling shareholder Manuel Ruiz de Lopera said: "He will have to pay this 1m Euro. In his contract exactly this sum was written down for exactly this case." However, even then his return to training was delayed. "He's asked for a couple of days rest to recover from the shock at

having to pay the fine." Lopera said. It is understood Oliveira took a fine toothcomb with him to his Milan negotiations. **RED CARD FOR REFS** Also in trouble with their bosses are six Peruvian referees, who have been hit with eight-match suspensions after alleged drunkenness at a recent conference. The officials were gathered at a military base in Lima but the sextet's post-course socialising did not impress officials. Indeed, Tulio Nicolini, the chairman of the refereeing committee, declared: "These people won't referee for us anymore." **TURFED OUT** Anyway, enough of the gossip, time for some international political news. Bulgarian defence minister Vesselin Bliznakov was recently in Romania on an official visit when he decided to pay a visit to Constanta's Farul stadium, where the two nations meet in Saturday's EURO 2008 qualifier. However, he was barred from entry by ground officials. According to 24 Hours newspaper, Bliznakov was carrying a sod of turf from the Vassil Levski national stadium in Sofia that he wished to leave at the Farul arena for good luck. Bliznakov said: "I want the team to feel like playing on home soil." He was not offended by the snub, and his Romanian counterpart Teodor Atanasiu even offered a prediction - that the game would end with fans of both sides getting drunk. Not the match officials, though, Mr Nicolini. **PAYING THE WAGERS** It appears the 14,500 Euro windfall received by Chris Kirkland's family when he made his England debut a decade after they had bet on the goalkeeper to win an international cap is the tip of the iceberg. Firstly, there's Reading FC striker Kevin Doyle, called into the Republic of Ireland squad for their EURO 2008 match with Germany on Saturday. If he takes the field, his father will receive around 22,000 Euro after an investment of 150 Euros at 150-1 two years ago that the then Cork City FC forward to go on to play in a competitive international. Then it emerged that West Bromwich Albion FC's signing of 16-year-old Ricky Nicholls leaves his father Garry a step closer to a pay-out of 600,000 Euros, thanks to a series of bets placed more than ten years ago. If Ricky plays for West Brom in the second-level English Championship before he is 18, his dad will be 75,000 Euros richer, and should that appearance be in the Premiership, 150,000 Euros extra will be added to the winnings. Then if Nicholls is capped by England before his 24th birthday, the full sum will be due. Generous Garry declared: "I plan to give him all the money."

Eating Celtic colours

AFP, London

Football-mad Scott Campbell is taking sporting loyalty to a new extreme by pledging only to eat food in the colours of his team, Scottish Premier League champions Celtic, for the entire season. The 20-year-old Edinburgh University student was challenged by friends on a drunken night out to allow only green and white food to pass his lips and took up the bet with relish - or rather with salad cream. Campbell has enlisted the help of salad cream manufacturer Heinz to help him stay the course, as he admits the "blandness of vegetables" was getting him down. They obliged with a six-month supply. "In the morning I'll have just apples and I'm also allowed bananas, because the inside of them is white, and a glass of milk," he told the Scottish Press Association news agency. "For lunch, I just have a salad and at night I'll have fish or a chicken dish. It's been a struggle but it is a healthy option and I've lost a bit of weight."

Ticket frenzy in Rimini

AFP, Rome

The visit of fallen giants Juventus to humble Serie B side Rimini is creating a mad rush for tickets in the east coast seaside town. The compact Romeo Neri stadium has a capacity of just under 10,000 and Rimini supporters have been queuing for hours to ensure they do not miss Saturday's match. Some Rimini fans have even bought season tickets so as not to miss the opening game against the scandal-hit Turin club. "Better to buy a ticket for the whole season than miss Juventus," one Rimini fan told Italian news agency ANSA. Juventus were relegated from Serie A and given a 17-point penalty for the start of the new season for match-fixing.

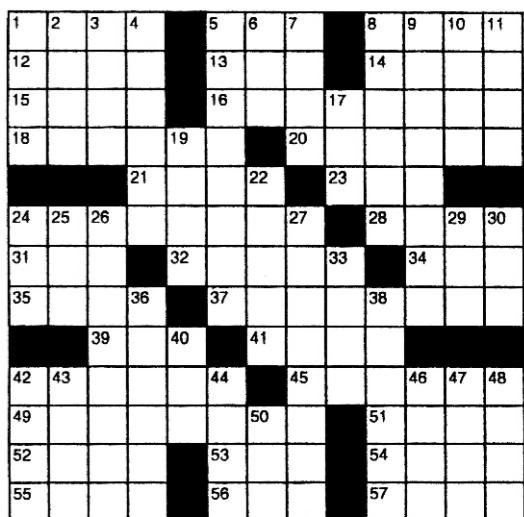
CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 37 Fore-shadows 39 Before 41 Easy targets 5 Meadow 8 Jason's ship 12 Reverberate 13 Branch 14 Walkiki wingding 15 Herr's mate 16 Takes for granted 18 Ruta-baga's cousin 20 Spry 21 Carey or Barrymore 23 Genetic abbr. 24 Runs the meeting 28 Staffer 31 Performance 32 Hotel accommodation 34 Phone bk. info 35 Track event

DOWN 1 Took off

Solution time: 24 mins.

REAPS RUBBLE
FOURTH INURED
BUREAU SPRANG
TRINITY RESTIVE
ASTO GAS
ARE KISS SHOO
BIRD IN THE HAND
CORE GROUND TEE
MEL LAU PLON TRIS
OXITAIL ESCUDO
SILICA REHEEL
STYLES SEEDS



CRYPTOQUIP
I H N T D U H U G Z H T Q E K B
I H H U T V T N P H X Y J Z , V Y H
E D B Y T X V G V T P H O T K V
J Q T U V J J Q G O H K T V J G Q
Saturday's Cryptoquip: ARE WORDS LIKE "WEASEL," "STOAT" AND "MINK" CONSIDERED ERMINE-ODOLOGY TERMINOLOGY?
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: H equals E
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.