

Scholes back for England?

INTERNET, undated

Terry Venables has pleaded with Manchester United midfielder Paul Scholes to come out of international retirement to help England qualify for Euro 2008.

Scholes, 31, has looked rejuvenated this campaign as Manchester United remain unbeaten since the start of the season.

And with the likes of Frank Lampard receiving criticism since the World Cup in June and Owen Hargreaves having broken his leg, 'El Tel' thinks it is time Scholes ended his two-year exile.

"People say he has determined to retire from international football for good, but I hope he will change his mind," Venables told the News of the World.

"He is the best one or two-touch passers in the country. He sees the game unlike any other players."

Former England manager Venables has been pushing the player for a return to the international game since he was named as Steve McClaren's assistant in July.

Scholes, who should make his 500th start for Man Utd before Christmas, scored on his England debut against Italy in 1997 and has 14 goals in 65 appearances for the national team.



MOVE AWAY: Lyon midfielder Florent Malouda (R) shrugs off a challenge from Lorient's Christophe Jallet during their Ligue 1 match at the Moustoir Stadium in Lorient on Saturday.

Lyon back on top

AFP, Paris



French champions Lyon continued their merciless march through opposition teams with a convincing 3-1 away win at Lorient on Saturday.

Lyon's fifth win in six games came thanks to goals from Tiago, Fred and Florent Malouda, all of whom had scored before Mickael Ciani grabbed a consolation goal in the 69th minute for the hosts.

Combined with Lille's shock 3-1 defeat at home to Toulouse, it meant Lyon went top of the table at the expense of Marseille, who will have to beat Bordeaux by two clear goals if they want to reclaim first place on Sunday.

Lorient put up a good fight in the second half, and Lyon manager Gerard Houllier, who rested his midfield magician Juninho, said: "We played without Juninho to rest him a bit, but we didn't lack respect for Lorient."

"We came under threat early on, but Greg (Coupet) rose to the challenge."

"Lorient had a bit more bite in the second half but the second goal gave us the edge because

up until then they had looked hopeful of scoring."

After just six league games Marseille and Lyon have become the early pacesetters.

And following their dominant 2-0 Champions League win over nine-times European champions Real Madrid in midweek, Lyon refused to take their foot off the gas against their Breton hosts.

It did not take long for them to threaten.

Lorient midfielder Guillaume Moulicc headed the ball off the line in the opening minutes after a Sylvain Wiltord corner was sent over Ciani by Lyon's Brazilian dangleman Cris.

Moments later, Tiago opened the scoring on a similar action. Wiltord curled in the corner, and Brazilian midfielder Fred deflected the ball at the near post for Tiago to fire home. Lorient threatened an equaliser almost immediately.

Moulicc ran up the left flank and his cross for Steve Marlet was met by a first-timer from the former Lyon man who forced Gregory Coupet to parry for a corner.

Malouda was celebrating his 200th match in the top flight and almost doubled their score in the 19th minute after first-timing a pass from Wiltord over the cross-

bar.

Only a wicked drive from Ulrich Le Pen in the 38th minute, which Coupet was forced to parry, redressed the balance slightly before the interval. Lorient had a much more positive second half.

After seven minutes Rafik Saifi turned provider for substitute Pierre-Andre Gignac, who controlled and shot only to see Coupet's hand turn the ball away.

Coupet then turned away a superb volley from Fabrice Abriel. Lorient were dominating, but their failure to equalise was felt most when Fred doubled the visitors' lead.

Wiltord sent Francois Clerc through on the right and the midfielder's cross found the head of Fred, which found the net.

Three minutes later Malouda scored Lyon's third goal, duping the Lorient defence after running on to a long through ball by midfielder Kim Kallstrom.

Lorient then reduced arrears through Ciani, who was quick to put a rebound from a Le Pen free kick past Coupet from close in.

Ciani's goal was the first ever for the club against Lyon, and the hosts had reason to have faith in the last 10 minutes only for Coupet to catch a header from Christophe Jallet after he rose above the Lyon defence.

Elsewhere Toulouse's win moved them up to third in the table ahead of Sunday, when both Nancy and St Etienne could push the southern club back down.

Le Mans grabbed a valuable 2-1 away win at Sedan to leave the Ardennes side still without a win while Valenciennes held on to a slim lead to stun visiting Nantes 1-0.

Former French giants Nantes moved the season full of hope, but the team known as the 'Canaries' are still winless and starting to look more like penguins second from bottom of the table.

Capdevila punishes wayward Villarreal

REUTERS, Madrid



Two goals from Deportivo La Coruna defender Joan Capdevila condemned misfiring Villarreal to a 2-0 away defeat in the Primera Liga on Saturday.

Capdevila put Depor ahead after only four minutes with a spectacular long-range strike and sealed the win from close range midway through the second half.

Villarreal, last year's Champions League semifinalists, have yet to score in the league this season and rarely looked like breaking their duck.

Depor have moved top of the table with seven points from three starts, while Villarreal are 16th with just one.

The rest of the weekend matches are on Sunday with champions Barcelona visiting Racing Santander looking to make it three wins from three.

Sevilla host city rivals Real Betis in the Seville derby, Getafe visit Valencia, and Real Madrid host Real Sociedad.

Saturday's game had barely started when Depor fullback Capdevila advanced towards the edge of the area and let fly with a dipping left-foot shot that flew over goalkeeper Sebastian Viera into the top corner.

That set the tone for the rest of the half as Depor's hustling aggression and shoot-on-sight policy unsettled the visitors at every turn.

Depor coach Joaquin Caparros completely rebuilt his side during the close season and they showed greater hunger throughout the game.

Before the break, Villarreal only threatened from set-pieces and the boot of Argentine forward Juan Roman Riquelme, who retired from international football during the week.

Villarreal showed greater purpose in the second half, putting Depor's youthful side under pressure and forcing their keeper Dudu Aouate into some sharp saves.

Guillermo Franco, Riquelme and substitute Jose Mari were all denied by Aouate but poor defending in the 67th-minute allowed Capdevila to double Depor's lead as Villarreal failed to clear Riki's free-kick.



Deportivo La Coruna's Cristian Hidalgo rides on Joan Capdevila to celebrate the latter's strike against Villarreal during their Primera Liga match at the Riazor Stadium in Coruna on Saturday.

Pagliuca breaks Zoff's record

AFP, Rome

Gianluca Pagliuca set a new record for Serie A appearances for a goalkeeper when he started for Ascoli against Messina on Sunday.

Making his 570th appearance, the 39-year-old former Italy international overtook the previous record of 569 held by the legendary Dino Zoff.

AC Milan captain Paolo Maldini holds the overall record (any position) with 583 appearances and is still playing in Serie A.

Pagliuca has also played for Bologna, Sampdoria and Inter Milan. He was first-choice keeper for Italy at the 1994 World Cup when the Azzurri lost to Brazil in the final on penalties.

Cahill lashes out at Rooney

INTERNET, undated

Everton's Tim Cahill has condemned Wayne Rooney's criticism of manager David Moyes.

Rooney, who began his career with The Toffees, lashed out at Moyes in his autobiography claiming he was overbearing, controlling and played a part in his Manchester United switch.

Australia international Cahill has laughed off those suggestions and believes Rooney should be more respectful of the man who gave him his chance in football.

Cahill believes the former Preston boss is great with the club's youngsters and that his management is one of his greatest assets.

"Wayne is a very gifted footballer and the gaffer gave him his chance," said Cahill to the Sunday Mirror. "He was as such a tender age."

"This is a manager who has given a lot of boys opportunities. It was very hurtful for him to hear something like that."

Tension sky high at Inter

INTERNET, undated



This week's results sent the tension levels to boiling point at Inter, as Adriano and Roberto Mancini snapped at journalists.

The Brazilian striker was again benched for the 1-1 draw against Sampdoria on Saturday night, but his teammates failed to impress at San Siro, only scoring the equaliser through an own goal.

He refused to talk to waiting journalists outside the dressing room, but did pause for an ironic comment. "My fault again, eh?"

If Adriano was irritated with the Press for using him as a scapegoat, then Coach Mancini was furious in the conference.

"You always say I change tactics and line-ups. Yes, we

played with the rhombus midfield in Lisbon so Luis Figo could give us quality rather than tire himself out running up and down the flank. He's 34 and that is a factor," noted the former Fiorentina and Lazio boss.

"Other times I used four midfielders in a line, but essentially this is all rubbish, it doesn't make much difference from the 4-4-2. If Esteban Cambiasso is injured I can't do anything about that."

With the usual reports of locker room tensions emerging from the Nerazzurri, Mancini warned that the top stars would have to get used to sitting on the bench.

"Hernan Crespo and Zlatan Ibrahimovic are in the best shape at the moment, but haven't been together very long and therefore can improve. So can Adriano and I'd dearly love to field three strikers, but it's very difficult, if not

impossible, because they occupy the same space. It's an improbable solution."

Francesco Toldo was also dropped after the 1-0 Champions League defeat at Sporting Lisbon, as Julio Cesar recovered from his back problem and was immediately restored to his position.

"For now that is a definitive decision," admitted Mancini. "It's a technical choice Julio Cesar has always been my first choice goalkeeper. He got injured and I had to change."

Last season Toldo made just 18 official appearances, eight of which in Serie A, but Inter have been leaking goals this term with six conceded in just three matches with the Italian between the sticks.

Having said that, it would appear to be a wider defensive issue, as Julio Cesar wore the gloves during the 4-3 Italian Super Cup victory over Roma.

Foster frustrates Villa

AFP, London



Watford goalkeeper Ben Foster produced a superb display to earn his side a 0-0 draw against Aston Villa on Saturday.

Villa dominated for large periods of the match at Vicarage Road but Foster, on loan at Watford from Manchester United, refused to be beaten.

Martin O'Neill's side would have built on their impressive early-season form but for Foster, whose excellent stops to deny Stilian Petrov and Gabriel Agbonlahor, ensured struggling Watford held on for a point.

Villa started brightly as they

looked to build on their unbeaten start to the season and should have been ahead when Petrov raced on to Agbonlahor's pass.

But the Bulgaria star lost his composure and was unable to beat Foster as he mistimed his shot from just inside the penalty area.

Villa's young midfielder Steven Davis was just off-target with a low drive before Watford's Gavin Mahon went close with a powerful effort.

O'Neill's team were dominating possession and Agbonlahor brought a fine save from Foster when he collected Olof Mellberg's pass and sprinted away from Jordan Stewart before shooting across goal.

Petrov combined well with Colombian striker Juan Pablo Angel just before half-time but

again Foster was equal to the former Celtic player's effort.

Watford manager Adrian Boothroyd made two changes at half-time and sent on American defender Jay DeMerit and midfielder Hameur Bouazza in a bid to wrestle the initiative from Villa.

There was no respite for newly-promoted Watford though as Agbonlahor struck a fierce shot from the edge of the area and Foster plunged to his left to push it out with Angel blazing the rebound over the bar.

Marlon King almost snatched a shock lead for Watford but his shot was brilliantly saved by Thomas Sorensen, who also denied Bouazza and Malky Mackay as the hosts came to life in the closing stages.

Southgate plays for Woodgate

AFP, Bolton



Middlesbrough boss Gareth Southgate is backing Jonathan Woodgate for an England recall after watching the on-loan Real Madrid defender bring stability to his side's defence.

Woodgate impressed again as Boro managed their first clean sheet of the season in a goalless draw with Bolton, shacking Nicolas Anelka as effectively as he had contained Thierry Henry a week earlier on his debut for Boro.

"We know the class Woody has

got and there is no question that he will be knocking on England's door once he has had a bit more football," said Southgate.

Woodgate appears finally to have got over the injury problems that restricted him to just 14 appearances in two seasons at Real.

Southgate however plans to ration his appearances. "It is important we look after him, in terms of training and the number of matches we play him in."

"But he will have gained a lot of confidence from coming through two tough Premier League games and he's an awesome player."

England's next squad, for Euro 2008 qualifiers against

Macedonia and Croatia, will be announced early next month, although Woodgate's position is one in which competition for places is strong with Rio Ferdinand, John Terry, Wes Brown, Jamie Carragher and Ledley King all available to head coach Steve McClaren.

Southgate believes Woodgate has a calming effect on the players around him.

"He has shown what a class act he is and he's a real influence on the lads around him. We need a solid base to work with and now we just need to instil a bit more belief in what is a very young side and I think we can have a very good season."

Abidal for Arsenal



INTERNET, undated

Arsene Wenger is preparing a 10-million-pound swoop for Eric Abidal as he chases a long-term successor to Ashley Cole, the News of the World reported. The French international has revealed that Arsenal are on his trail and earlier this summer said a move to north London would be too good to turn down.

"Arsenal wanted me this

summer and they're following my progress this season," said Abidal. "I know Arsene Wenger likes me. I know that they will continue to follow me."

The Gunners are short of ready-made options at left-back following Cole's acrimonious sale to Chelsea.

William Gallas, the player acquired in part exchange for the England star, is an accomplished left-back but much of his disillusionment at Stamford Bridge grew from being deployed 'out of position' in that role.

It is likely that the 29-year-old will be used mainly in his preferred central defensive role alongside Kolo Toure, with Gael Clichy, Justin Hoyte and Mathieu Flamini competing for a place on the left.

But having made a lacklustre start to life in the Emirates Stadium and with a tidy war chest to spend following the Cole deal, Wenger will be encouraged to splash out on an experienced campaigner and appears to have found his man in Gallas' international colleague.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words. Includes a solution time of 25 mins.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with a key: X J O V Q Y J V I V I G J J K V N D A S P L T O V G Z D Q G X V K Y K S S N D I W R J J A D T A X I W D Z R G Z Q S P V G Z S G L D.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF AN APE LOOKS SIGNIFICANTLY LIKE HIS DADDY, HE MIGHT BE A CHIMP OFF THE OLD BLOCK. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: G equals N. 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.