

Wenger warns fans

THE GUARDIAN

Arsene Wenger attempted to draw a line under the Ashley Cole affair last night when he asked Arsenal's fans not to sing homophobic songs about their former player.

Cole, who forced the News of the World and the Sun into an out-of-court settlement earlier this year after the newspapers printed stories he felt wrongly identified him as being homosexual, has become public enemy No1 to Arsenal's supporters after his acrimonious departure to Chelsea and the criticism of his former employers in his autobiography.

Wenger, who has personal experience of being targeted by opposition supporters, said Arsenal's fans should "be positive and look forward rather than back".

Jens Lehmann, Arsenal's goalkeeper, could be in trouble for allegedly kicking a water bottle into the crowd in the 1-0 win over Manchester United. The incident is supposed to have occurred after Lehmann received treatment following a fierce shot from Cristiano Ronaldo that he took full in the face.

Brazilian footballer dies

AFP, Almaty

A Brazilian footballer playing for first division Kazakh club Shakhtyor Karaganda has died of a heart attack after a training session.

Nilton Pereira Mendes, a 30-year-old striker, felt pains in his chest after training on Monday and doctors were unable to resuscitate him, club spokeswoman Anastasia Poutchkova told AFP.

The Brazilian had played in Kazakhstan since 1998, for Pavlodar and Astana as well as Shakhtyor Karaganda, for whom he had played in the Intertoto Cup this year.

Reyes wants starting spot

THE GUARDIAN



Jose Antonio Reyes said scoring on his home debut for Real Madrid in the 2-0 win over Real Sociedad was "one of the greatest moments of my career".

"I couldn't have asked for any more, I started and scored a goal," said the Spain forward on a one-year loan from Arsenal. "I'm delighted with my performance and with scoring in my first game for Real at the Bernabeu."

"The coach told me he wanted me to play on the right. I think I did enough to keep my place and I won't give it up without a fight but Fabio Capello picks the team. I enjoyed it on the right and I'll gladly play there again, or anywhere else Capello asks me to play."

"It doesn't matter to me who I'm up against. I've come here and I'm determined to be an important player for Real. I want to stay here for as long as I can because this is my dream."

This may mean big problems for David Beckham, who gave way to Reyes for the first 73 minutes but replaced the Spaniard and scored a superb goal after a run from his own half to clinch Sunday's win.

Reyes, 23, is eight years younger than the former England captain and added: "Beckham is a great player, and everyone knows that. But I'm not afraid to fight anyone for my place. I can offer a lot to the team with my pace and my job is to get balls in to the strikers and get forward as fast as I can to support them."

Reyes, who moved on deadline day last month, was one of the few Real players to impress in a poor first-half display. He was replaced by Beckham shortly after his goal.

Jonathan Woodgate yesterday dismissed suggestions that he should go straight into Steve



JOSE ANTONIO REYES

McClaren's national side. The centre-half, just two games into a year-long loan at Middlesbrough from Real Madrid, said: "It would be nice to play for England but I'm not really thinking about it at the moment."

"I need to play at least 10 games before getting anywhere near the England squad. Everyone has been raving about my performances - [at Arsenal and Bolton] - but I don't

know why. It's nothing special. My performances are consistent; I don't play unbelievable and I don't play bad."

Boro are confident Robert Huth is fit enough after ankle trouble to make his debut tomorrow. The £6m signing is set to replace the rested Woodgate in the Carling Cup tie at home to Notts County.

Lerner takes control of Villa

AFP, Birmingham

American tycoon Randy Lerner effectively took full control of Aston Villa, it was revealed on Tuesday, after increasing his club shareholding from 85.50 percent to 89.69.

If Lerner acquires 90 percent of the listed stock, he can compel remaining shareholders to sell to him and take the club private.

Although he is just under that figure, reaching it is considered a formality and he has effectively taken complete control of the Premiership club.

Tuesday's statement to the Stock Exchange from Lerner's company, Reform Acquisitions Limited, read: "Accordingly the offer has been declared unconditional in all respects."

Lerner is the owner of American Football outfit the Cleveland Browns. His bid for Villa, which values the club at 62.6 million pounds (118 million dollars), came shortly after the appointment of Martin O'Neill as manager of the Birmingham club.

Isaksson out of qualifiers

REUTERS, Stockholm

Sweden goalkeeper Andreas Isaksson is likely to miss next month's Euro 2008 qualifiers after picking up a knee injury training with Manchester City.

"There was a collision between him and another player in the training session before the Blackburn game (on Sunday), and his knee ligaments have been extended a little bit," the Premier League club said on its Web site on Tuesday. The damaged medial ligaments in Isaksson's right knee means Sweden's first choice keeper is set to miss the qualifying matches at home to Spain on Oct. 7 and in Iceland on Oct. 11.

Isaksson is likely to be replaced by Viborg's John Alvborge or Fredrikstad's Rami Shaaban, who played in this month's Group F wins over Latvia and Liechtenstein while Isaksson recovered from surgery to remove a chip of bone in his foot.

Isaksson has yet to play for City since joining the Manchester club from Ligue 1 side Stade Rennes in August.

Marseille release Lamouchi

AFP, Marseille

Former French international defensive midfielder Sabri Lamouchi has had a request to end his contract accepted by Marseille, president Pape Diouf said Monday.

Lamouchi - capped 14 times - had recently lost his place in the team following the acquisition of Cameroon international Modeste M'Bami for Paris Saint Germain.

The 34-year-old - who arrived from Italian Serie B side Genoa in 2005 and had originally extended his contract to 2007 - was struggling to accept not being an automatic first choice player and did not even make it off the bench on Sunday in the 2-1 victory over Bordeaux which saw them stay in second on goal difference to Lyon.

Don't pressure Kun: Maxi

REUTERS, Madrid



Argentina forward Maxi Rodriguez says that undue pressure should not be heaped on his compatriot and Atletico Madrid teammate Sergio Agüero.

after the young striker drew widespread praise in Sunday's 4-1 away win at Athletic Bilbao. The 18-year-old put in an impressive performance scoring his first official goal for Atletico, having a hand in a second and winning a penalty near the end of the comprehensive success.

"He's top class and we all hope he continues like this. But we have to be patient with him. We don't want to weigh him down with expectation because he will have off-days as well," Maxi was quoted as saying on the Atletico Web site on Tuesday.

Agüero, known as "El Kun" after

a Japanese comic book hero, signed for Atletico from Independiente for a reported fee of \$25-30 million at the end of May.

He has been touted as one of



SERGIO AGÜERO

Argentina's most exciting prospects and has been described by Diego Maradona as a "phenome-

non". Atletico coach Javier Aguirre had resisted calls to play him from the start before Sunday, restricting him to substitute appearances, but with Spain striker Fernando Torres suspended, Aguirre gave Agüero his starting place.

Maxi, who scored the spectacular volleyed winner for Argentina against Mexico at the World Cup finals, pounced on Agüero's mis-cued shot for the opener in San Mames.

After Martin Petrov had added the second, Agüero cut inside his marker to score the third with a fierce shot, and was then hauled down in the area as he bore in on goal, for a last-minute penalty scored by Luciano Gallatti.

The three points put Atletico seventh in the Primera Liga with two wins and a draw from their opening three matches, while Bilbao are 18th in the 20-team division, with just one point from their opening three games.

Bolic calls it quits

Football

REUTERS, Sarajevo

Bosnia's all-time leading scorer Elvir Bolic said he is almost certain to quit playing after parting company with Croatian club Rijeka.

"Never say never but I've made up my mind 90 percent," the 34-year-old was quoted as saying by Sarajevo's leading daily Dnevni Avaz on Tuesday.

Bolic was released from his contract with Rijeka on Monday together with captain Danijel Saric after they left the stadium immediately after being substituted at half-time by coach Dragan Skocic during Sunday's match with visitors Osijek leading 2-0. Rijeka came back without them in the second half to draw 2-2.

Bolic joined Rijeka from Istanbulspor in Turkey in the close season and made a good start with the club scoring four times this season.

Bolic said Rijeka's decision had helped him make up his mind about the future.

"It's been going on for weeks, I could not stand it psychologically any more. I have no more reasons or motivation to play, financially or otherwise," he said.

"Beside, my wife is about to give birth and I was supposed to stay in Rijeka while she went to Istanbul. I don't know how I would have played in that situation," he said.

Bolic scored 24 goals in 50 matches for Bosnia who have yet to qualify for the finals of a major tournament since they were admitted to FIFA in 1996.

Despite being a huge favourite with Bosnian fans, he admitted he had lost his motivation to play for the national side in the Euro 2008 qualifiers.

"The qualification cycle is too long, it's not one game. And there is also a question of how much I can contribute to the national team."

Bosnia coach Blaz Sliskovic had planned to use him as a sec-

ond-string striker in the series, but Bolic said: "I thought I could do more for the national team but I see now it did not go as I thought it would. That's another reason why I think it's time to quit," he said.

Bolic started with hometown club Celik Zenica and Red Star Belgrade snapped him as one of the most talented players in the former Yugoslavia but he left the then European champions without playing a game after war broke out in Bosnia in 1992.

He went on to play for Galatasaray and Gaziantepspor before joining Fenerbahce in 1995 where he scored 70 goals in five years, winning one Turkish title.

His most memorable goal was the October 1996 strike at Old Trafford that ended Manchester United's 40-year unbeaten run in Europe. He also played for Genclerbirligi and Malatyaspor in Turkey and spent three years with Rayo Vallecano in Spain.

Asamoah saga divides Schalke

REUTERS, Berlin



The consequences of German international striker Gerald Asamoah's spat with Schalke 04 coach Mirko Slomka have caused a major rift in the Bundesliga club's dressing room, Bild newspaper reported on Tuesday.

The players are divided as to whether Slomka's decision to drop Asamoah from the squad for Saturday's tie against Hertha Berlin was right, Bild said.

Asamoah said he would cause difficulties for the coach if he started on the bench, according to a statement by the club. Bild said the player argued with Slomka, saying: "When I don't play, there are problems." Goalkeeper Frank Rost, part

of Schalke's five-man player council, said three of the council were against the suspension. "For me, he is still a top team mate," he told Bild.

Despite criticism that Asamoah's exclusion contributed to the 2-0 defeat to Berlin, club manager Andreas Mueller supported his coach's decision, calling Asamoah's behaviour 'totally unacceptable and damaging to team spirit.'

Asamoah was resolute: 'I don't know what I have to apologise for. If everything that is said against the coach in the locker room was punished, you'd have to suspend a player each week.'

Following the defeat to Hertha, Schalke are in sixth place in the Bundesliga, just one point behind Hertha who are top on goal difference from Nuremberg.

Marchena out for the year

REUTERS, Madrid

Valencia's Spanish international defender Carlos Marchena will miss his side's remaining Champions League group games after tearing the cruciate ligament in his left knee in a Primera Liga match at the weekend.

Valencia said that tests carried out on Monday revealed that the 27-year-old would be out of action for around three and a half months.

The central defender, who has been playing in midfield to cover for the injured David Albelda and Ruben Baraja in recent games, was forced off the pitch in the 19th minute of his side's 2-0 win over Getafe on Sunday.

Striker David Villa also picked up a minor muscle strain, while left back Asier del Horno has yet to play for the club since moving from Chelsea in the close season.

Valencia, who are one of three remaining teams who have yet to drop a point, are away at Barcelona in their next league match on Sunday.

They beat Olympiakos 4-2 away in their opening Champions League match in Group D where they will also meet Shakhtar Donetsk and AS Roma.

Newell to lift lid on corruption

Football

AFP, London

Luton manager Mike Newell is expected to name agents who offered him bungs in the BBC Panorama programme to be screened on Tuesday evening, which is also expected to name managers suspected of corruption.

The programme comes just a fortnight before former Metropolitan

police commissioner Lord Stevens reveals his findings of an official inquiry into bungs in English football on October 2.

The full allegations set to be published in the programme, to be shown on BBC1 at 2000GMT, are still unknown and BBC lawyers are still looking at the footage.

But Newell, boss of Championship club Luton, gave a damning appraisal of the state of English football where he claimed bungs, or under-the-table payments

to managers as part of transfer deals, were accepted on a regular basis.

Newell said: "I think it's become a culture in football and it's almost accepted and brushed under the carpet."

The programme is based around filmed conversations between agents and undercover journalists posing as representatives of a new agency called Dynamic Soccer. The BBC believe they have uncovered some damning testimony that will "rock football".

The Panorama investigation, called "Undercover: Football's Dirty Secrets", is also set to make damaging allegations about at least one Premiership manager.

The programme will also show football agent Charles Collymore being secretly filmed telling investigators that "six to eight managers" who would be "definitely up for a bung" and he goes on to name managers and clubs - though it is not definite as to whether Panorama will publicise those names.

Collymore says: "There are managers out there who take bungs all day long. I would say to you comfortably there's six to eight managers we could definitely approach and they'd be up for this, no problem."

Rio feared axe

AFP, London



England defender Rio Ferdinand has admitted how scared he was of being sold by Manchester United after photos appeared in the press of him meeting a Chelsea representative last year.

The 27-year-old Ferdinand was pictured with Blues chief executive Peter Kenyon in a restaurant, which gave the impression he was considering a move to the Premiership champions.

"I feared the worst when the picture was in the papers and decided that I would go and see the manager (Alex Ferguson) when I arrived for training and explain," Ferdinand said in his book 'Rio My Story', which is being serialised in The Sun.

"I didn't need to. He called me in first thing and went absolutely bananas. He said 'what the hell's going on?' He hammered me and quite rightly. I got the treatment. I'd never seen him so angry; it was far worse than when I missed the drugs test. Much worse."

"I couldn't say a lot because I was in the wrong. I just said again 'boss, I don't want to sign for nobody. I want to sign for Man United. I told you at the beginning I want to sign for United."

"For a moment I was worried he was going to say, 'I'm going to sell you. The meeting went on for 15 minutes and he was going: 'You know how people will interpret it. It doesn't matter what you said."

"It doesn't matter if you were talking about the price of milk, the time of day or the colour of the table you were sitting at. It's just so stupid of you to go there and meet Kenyon."



RIO FERDINAND

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with numbers 1-51 indicating letter positions.

FC M QNTRJD NC VMEDVMJJ
HDMLE MKD XDKO DXDIJO
LMHQSD B F ETRNED
HSDOKD CFH HNVDFDB.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: HIT SONG ABOUT A GUY WHO IS REALLY EASILY ASTOUNDED BY THINGS: "BORN TO BE WOWED."
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: O equals Y
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.

9x3 grid for a word search puzzle.