

Injury blow for Kewell

INTERNET, undated
Liverpool winger Harry Kewell has been dealt another fitness blow following the confirmation that he requires more surgery on a foot problem.

The former Leeds United star has been dogged by injuries since joining the Merseysiders and was forced out of the thrilling UEFA Champions League final win over Milan.

It has been made clear that the Australian was never suffering from gout during the World Cup finals, as had been reported, but there are complications regarding his foot injury.

"Harry has had a follow-up opinion and unfortunately requires further surgery on the foot problem he suffered during the World Cup," spokesman Ian Cotton confirmed to Liverpool's official website.

"Again, contrary to some media reports, Harry does not have and has never suffered from gout. This suggestion originally came from one of his own Australian team-mates during the tournament in Germany and is totally incorrect."

Asamoah feud resolved

INTERNET, undated

German striker Gerald Asamoah could return to the Schalke 04 side this weekend after his dispute with coach Mirko Slomka appeared to settle down on Tuesday.

It had been reported in the German tabloid Bild early on Tuesday that Asamoah's spat with Schalke 04 coach Mirko Slomka had caused a major rift in the Bundesliga club's dressing room.

The feud between the two broke out on Saturday when Slomka decided to only pick Asamoah as a substitute for their game against Hertha Berlin.

Asamoah said he would cause difficulties for the coach if he started on the bench, according to a statement by the club.

Bild then said the player argued with Slomka, saying: "When I don't play, there are problems."

However, club manager Andreas Muller called a press conference on Tuesday to say that Slomka and Asamoah had resolved their differences after a clear the air meeting earlier in the day.

"Gerald is back in the squad with immediate effect," explained Muller. "We will continue to work together."

Slump frustrates Rooney

AFP, London

Manchester United striker Wayne Rooney admitted on Tuesday that he is frustrated by his recent poor form.

Rooney, 20, was well below his best as United suffered a 1-0 home defeat against Arsenal on Sunday and was substituted during the second half.

The England star, who has only just returned from a three-match suspension, had also struggled in the midweek Champions League win over Celtic.

Rooney knows he is experiencing a rare slump in his form but insisted he is working harder than ever to get back to peak performance.

Rooney told MUTV: "I am disappointed with my own form in the last two games. It has not been up to the standard I normally play."

"I am disappointed with that but I will keep working hard and hope-

fully my game will come back again. "The Celtic game was quite tough. It was a big game and there was a lot of pressure on us to win it. I



WAYNE ROONEY spoke to Paul afterwards and we were both quite tired. "Nevertheless, losing against Arsenal was a big blow. We have made a good start to the season and we wanted it to continue."

"Even a draw would not have been too bad but to lose in the last 10 minutes was devastating."

Rooney is adamant United can mount a serious challenge for the Premiership title this season despite their defeat against Arsenal.

United had won their first four matches of the season before Sunday's loss and Rooney believes his dream of becoming a Premiership champion can still come true this season.

He said: "I suppose if you look at the league table, we have made a decent start and we are still in front of the other title contenders."

"As a young boy it was a dream of mine to win the league and that is my main aim."

"You see on the training pitch likes of (Cristiano) Ronaldo getting better and better with each game, then Darren Fletcher who is maturing a lot with his performances."

"The experienced players are helping the young ones so hopefully we can win the league this year."

Ancelotti wants Sheva back

INTERNET, undated

Mourinho on Shevchenko Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti has admitted he would welcome Andriy Shevchenko back at the club - but not for the £45 million fee that Chelsea splashed out on him.

Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich bankrolled a deal in excess of £30 million such was his determination to bring his favourite player to Stamford Bridge.

The Ukrainian, who was idolised in Milan, has struggled to adapt to life in the Premiership and toiled again in Sunday's win over Liverpool before being substituted for Arjen Robben.

The Rossoneri were sad to lose their leading striker and Ancelotti made the cheeky remark at a press conference.

"We want to do well in the next games in order to make our mark in the league and Champions League," he stated. "But, for the moment, we have done nothing [the club are still on -2 points in the Serie A table]."

"We have only demonstrated that we are competitive and the new players are valid acquisitions for this squad."

"If Shevchenko wanted to return, we would have him back. But not for €uro45 million!"

Jose Mourinho has urged Shevchenko to start displaying his best form and there is little doubt that he has the class to make a massive impact in West London.

Kahn slams Bayern tactics

AFP, Munich

Bayern Munich captain Oliver Kahn has criticised the gung-ho tactics employed by the German champions this season and says it would be wiser for the team to sometimes slow their game down.

Bayern tasted their first league defeat of the season on Sunday with Arminia Bielefeld using a late free-kick to clinch a 2-1 victory and Kahn believes tactical changes are needed.

"We have developed a style of play that we need to reassess," Kahn said on the online version of Kicker magazine.

"Running forward for 90 minutes takes a lot of energy. We just need to calm the game down and change our rhythm and let the ball and the opponents do the running."

"We need to make sure that every player is fulfilling their duties. Everyone here wants to power forward and score a goal but that causes problems at the back."

"It is sometimes difficult to explain to some people that in games such as the one at the weekend (Bielefeld) a 1-1 is sometimes enough."

Favourites Bayern lie third in the Bundesliga table, one point behind leaders Hertha Berlin, and their manager Felix Magath defended his tactics of going for the throat against inferior opposition.

"It is fair enough to go for a victory at the death. It is not as if Bielefeld are Barcelona," Magath declared.

Hargreaves has no regrets

INTERNET, undated

Manchester United target Owen Hargreaves has no regrets about going public on his desire to leave Bayern Munich to head for Old Trafford.

The England international broke his leg at the weekend but is philosophical about his current predicament and has refused to rule out a move to Manchester in 2007.

Although Bayern remain determined to keep Hargreaves until the end of his contract in 2010, the tigerish tackler appears to still have an eye on a switch to the Premiership.

"It's tough to say," he told Sky Sports News, when asked about his future. "I don't know."

"I've said I would have liked it to happen [joining United] but it's important when you have an opinion to stick to it possibly, even though you receive criticism from the club."

"What happens in the future is not really down to me. I'm looking forward to going on the pitch to play well. These things all started with me playing well as a footballer. Hopefully, I can do that and we'll see where my path leads."

Hargreaves is not dejected at his injury nightmare as the initial fears were he would be sidelined for many months.

"The most important thing is not to say why," he opined. "What could have been, as things were going so well."

"You've got to deal with the good and bad the same."

"I'm looking forward to getting healthy, taking a small break at the moment and coming back stronger."

As for David Beckham, Hargreaves has warned against ruling out an international return for the former Manchester United star.

"I think there's always room for David Beckham," he continued. "He rang me up and left a message on my phone. It's great to have the support of people like that."

"You can never really close the door on Becks, he's such a resilient individual."

"He's done it in the past and still has a lot to add to the team."

"But it's not a decision I make or he makes, it's down to the manager."

Brazilians abused in Poland

AFP, Warsaw

Polish first division side Pogon Szczecin said Wednesday it will file a complaint with the national football federation and FIFA after 10 of its Brazilian players were subjected to racist abuse during a Polish cup match against Lechia Gdansk.

The 10 Brazilians had bananas and racist insults thrown at them during the match on Tuesday, but managed to carry Pogon Szczecin to a 2-0 win over Lechia Gdansk.

"There were 300 hooligans in the stands. When the players came out onto the pitch, some of the hooligans threw bananas at them. Twenty minutes later, they did it again, and throughout the match, they were imitating monkeys and shouting fascist slogans," Danuta Wolk-Karczewska, a spokeswoman for the Gdansk police, told AFP.

"We are going to file a complaint with the Polish football federation and FIFA, and hope we will be backed in this by other Polish clubs that employ foreign players. We must all stand together so that these athletes understand that Polish society is firmly against such acts," Pogon Szczecin spokesman Piotr Baranowski told AFP.

Lechia Gdansk boss Blazej Jenek vowed to take steps to prevent a recurrence of the racially motivated incident.

"We will probably be fined by FIFA, but above all, we will now step up security to prevent a recurrence of this incident," Jenek said.

Benitez will play Gerrard wherever

THE GUARDIAN

Rafael Benitez last night issued a vehement defence of his use of Steven Gerrard

this season, insisting he will continue to deploy the England midfielder in positions he feels will best benefit Liverpool even if that denies his captain the opportunity to play in his favoured central role.

Gerrard has been employed principally on the right side of midfield this term, although he was asked to fill in on the left at Chelsea on Sunday. That has prompted fears that the 26-year-old's talents are being marginalised.

But Benitez, who has watched Steve McClaren make similar demands on the player with England, is adamant he can flourish on the flank, just as Zinedine Zidane and Ronaldinho have excelled in similar positions.

Indeed, Benitez believes the central midfield partnership of Xabi Alonso and Mohamed Sissoko will serve to liberate Gerrard. "How many years has Steve played here in the Liverpool first team? Eight? And which was

his best season? Last year, when he scored 23 goals from the right-hand side," said the Spaniard. "He's a central midfielder, and I promise you I'd like to play him in the middle, but I cannot now. You need to find balance and it's better for the team to play him where he is."

"He's not a winger, but he's not playing as a winger. Sometimes you have to say: 'I know that is your position, but if you play here maybe you can be as good as in the middle.' Analyse Zidane. He played on the left and drifted inside. Ronaldinho, the best player in the world and a player who wants to play as a second striker or behind the forwards, is playing on the left."

"Given the understanding and qualities of Momo and Xabi, that partnership gives my other players - and Stevie in particular - more freedom. The key is to give him a role. If I told him to get to the byline and cross with his left foot, it would be a mistake. But if I tell him to run inside and attack the defence, it works. He had three chances against Chelsea doing exactly that."

Gerrard has yet to open his scoring account for his club this

season after his most prolific campaign last year but, having spoken to Benitez, he remains content to play the role his manager feels best

benefits the side. "He said very clearly that, if it is good for the team, there is no problem," added Benitez. "He would like to play in the middle for sure, but he knows he is the captain and must set an example. Is it a risk for me? If the risk is that he might score 23 goals again, then I will accept that risk."

"Steve is a very good player, and has the quality and talent to play in any position. And to play there well. He played in the Champions League final at right-back. Now we have Jermaine Pennant, a winger who had spent two years looking for, and two midfielders - Xabi and Momo - between whom the balance is good. So where do you put Stevie? On the left, or as a second striker. Then people would ask why aren't we playing Peter Crouch, Dirk Kuyt, Robbie Fowler or Craig Bellamy."

The inability of that quartet to conjure enough goals so far has anchored Liverpool in 15th place before tonight's Premiership visit of Newcastle. Liverpool have sent more shots off target - 40 - than any other Premiership team this season, despite playing a game fewer than most, with Crouch likely to earn a recall tonight as they attempt to score after 315 barren minutes. Kuyt and Bellamy, against his former club, will compete for the second berth, though the manager's willingness to chop and change his line-ups has merely added to the sense of imbalance.

Benitez has authorised Harry Kewell to undergo surgery later this week to alleviate long-standing groin and foot injuries.

Exit door ajar for Torres

REUTERS, Madrid

Spain striker Fernando Torres signed his one-year contract extension with Atletico Madrid on Tuesday, though the door was left ajar for a possible move away from the Primera Liga club with a reduced buy-out clause.

The 22-year-old tied himself to Atletico until 2009 but the cost to buy him out of his contract was cut from 90 million euros (\$113.9 million) to 40.

"This clause is nothing more than a symbolic gesture because if a player wants to leave a club, eventually he does," Torres told a news conference on Tuesday.

"The quantities involved are irrelevant because the thing that counts is the commitment of both parties, and their word."

"The fans asked me to stay and

the club know other clubs offered large amounts of money but I have never said I wanted to leave. I hope I'll be here for more than just another three years."

Atletico president Enrique Cerezo said: "I don't think it will be the last contract he signs with Atletico. He has grown up here and his wish is to stay and win titles here."

Torres was a reported target for Manchester United and Inter Milan after the World Cup but rejected any approaches to stay with Atletico.

He joined the club aged 11, scored his first goal with the first team in May 2001, and has been their leading scorer in each of the last four seasons.

After a disappointing 10th-place finish last year Atletico have spent about 50 million euros reinforcing their squad and after three games are seventh in the new league campaign.



FERNANDO TORRES (R)

Pizarro warns of Bayern exit

AFP, Munich

Peruvian international forward Claudio Pizarro has warned German champions Bayern Munich that he could leave for nothing at the end of the season.

The 27-year-old Pizarro is out of contract at the end of the current campaign and admitted he could end his six-year association with the club.

"If we do not reach an agreement then I will switch to another team," Pizarro told weekly magazine SportBild.

"There is interest from the top teams but up until now I have not

listened to any of it. I am only speaking with Bayern at the moment."

Pizarro joined from Werder Bremen in 2001 and has scored 63 goals in 141 Bundesliga matches for Bayern, winning league and cup doubles in 2003, 2005 and 2006.

Dutch international Roy Makaay, German international Lukas Podolski and Paraguayan forward Roque Santa Cruz provide stiff competition for Pizarro in attack but the Peruvian is confident of securing a first team spot this season.

"It has never been easy for strikers at Bayern but I have always played," Pizarro said.

"It will be like that this season because my way of playing is unique."

'Aragones not the problem'

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

Spain midfielder David Albelda has said simply replacing Luis Aragones as coach will not improve his country's chances of success on the international stage.

Aragones was singled out for criticism in the Spanish media when the side slumped to a 3-2 defeat away to Northern Ireland in a Euro 2008 qualifier on Sept 6, two months after another disappointing World Cup finals showing.

The 68-year-old offered his

resignation last week but quickly changed his mind when the Spanish Football Federation refused to accept it.

"Whether Luis Aragones is there or not, it will be very difficult to achieve anything because there is no unity. In fact it more like disunity," Albelda, who has 38 caps, told Radio Valencia.

"Now people are asking for a change in the players: Carlos Marchena, Juanito, Michel Salgado, Raul and me. It seems we are the ones to blame for the failure at the World Cup even though we rarely played."

Spain needed to get through a play-off to qualify for the World Cup finals in Germany, and went

out to France in the second round. They lie fifth in the early Group F standings in the Euro qualifying competition 0with three points from their opening two games.

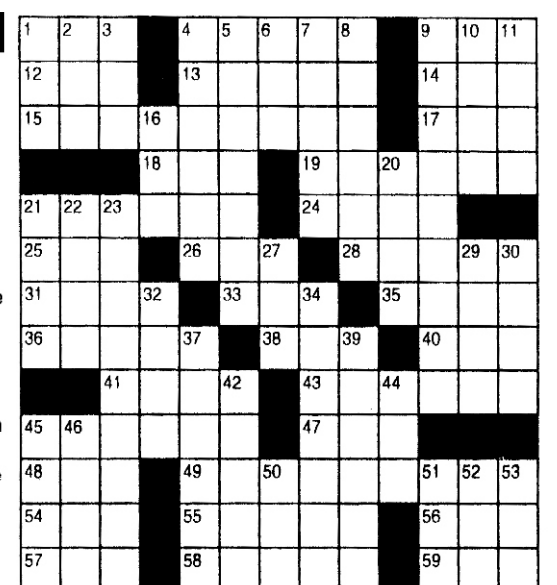
"Spain could have a great team because it has great players. But whoever is chosen it will be very tough because there is so much pressure on the team," Albelda added.

"The players and the fans are disillusioned. The fans identify more with their clubs, as do the players."

Spain travel to face Group F leaders Sweden on Oct 7.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 38 Pouch 59 Legume 16 "Be quiet!" 1 Heavy 40 Sailors' weight settling 20 Told a whopper 4 Tart in tone 41 Omlet 1 Twitch 2 Bobby of hockey 21 Writer 9 Arles 45 Like a lummock 3 Ultra-modern (Prefix) 22 Cupid's alias 12 Rage 48 Caesar's 7 4 Bad exchange of words 15 You're in 49 College lighting jobs? 27 - and outs 17 Actor Diesel 54 Bungle 55 Reef 7 Countrified rice drink 21 Electronic dance 57 Alternative to white award 24 Non-clerical group 11 Carte ingredient 25 Schedule abbr. 42 Snapshot 26 Enjoy the slopes 28 Earn 31 Cow's vocabulary 33 Conclusion 35 Be overly fond 36 Black tea from India



CRYPTOQUIP

X T P E Z G S B M D O R P O X I D O R

C O D O S B B X B M C T Z Z P O C L D .

X O D L I Z B P G D T C R P D O

T C R P D O E X W W E X B .

Saturday's Cryptquip: IF A COUPLE OF BASEBALL TEAMS ARE VERY EVENLY MATCHED, I SUPPOSE THEY'RE FIT TO BE TIED.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: E equals W

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.