

Ruud becomes father

REUTERS, Madrid

Dutch striker Ruud van Nistelrooy returned to the Real Madrid squad to face Dynamo Kiev in the Champions League on Tuesday, after becoming a father.

His wife gave birth to a daughter in the early hours of the morning, Real said on their club Web site on Tuesday.

Real coach Fabio Capello had called up Brazilian striker Ronaldo on Monday evening as cover after Van Nistelrooy was given permission to be present at the birth.

Real and Dynamo lost their opening games in Group E to Olympique Lyon and Steaua Bucharest.

Sven planning management return

REUTERS, Bangkok

Former England coach Sven-Goran Eriksson says he has no plans to retire from soccer and will work in any country if the job is right, Thai papers said on Tuesday.

Eriksson, who left the England job in July after the team's disappointing World Cup showing, said he planned to continue working in the game but was undecided about where.

"It has to be a good job," the Bangkok Post quoted him as saying on Tuesday. "Which country it is in doesn't matter."

"One day I will retire from football, but not now."

Eriksson, 58, has been linked with several coaching jobs since leaving England, including the United States, Jamaica and South Africa national teams, Italy's Inter Milan and English Premier League side West Ham United.

The Thai-language Siam Sport daily reported that Eriksson had said a number of teams in Portugal and Spain had approached him, adding that he would make a decision on where to go in the next two-three weeks.

The Swede would not be drawn on whether he thought former captain David Beckham should be part of England's European Championship qualifying campaign under new coach Steve McClaren.

"I'm not here to talk about that," he told Reuters.

Eriksson said he was in Thailand to buy a luxury condominium on the southern island of Koh Samui.

North Korean females awarded

REUTERS, Tokyo

North Korean leader Kim Jong-il lavished luxury cars and apartments on female footballers who won the recent under-20 world championship, according to the country's media.

North Korea's state-run news agency KCNA reported on Tuesday that Kim had rewarded the players for their crushing 5-0 win over China in the tournament final in Moscow earlier this month.

"Kim Jong-il bestowed high honour upon (the) young women footballers and presented them with such gifts which they would hand down through generations as deluxe cars and buses and flats," KCNA said.

North Korea's media gave much of the credit to Kim himself for instilling a sense of "courage" into the players while KCNA described the triumph as an "ideological" victory.

The players demonstrated their "transparent spirit of devotedly defending the leader (Kim)," trumpeted KCNA, as well as the "spirit of defending the country and the spirit of waging dynamic ideological and fighting spirit battles."

The practice of rewarding successful athletes with lavish gifts is common in North Korea despite widespread hunger across the impoverished communist state.

Arsenal duo in doubt

AFP, London

Knee-victim Freddie Ljungberg and Johan Djourou, who has a foot problem, are slight doubts for Arsenal in Tuesday night's home Champions League match against Porto.

Manager Arsene Wenger said on Monday afternoon: "We will see how Freddie is tomorrow (Tuesday) as he has not practised today. Djourou as well, but they should both be available."

Captain Thierry Henry is expected to start again having shrugged off his recent foot problem.

Wenger added: "Thierry is match fit. He has had a game after an injury and so should be sharper tomorrow."

Philippe Senderos (shoulder), Gael Clichy (foot), Lauren (knee) and Abou Diaby (ankle) are all still a few weeks away from a return.



PHOTO: INTERNET

KEEPING THE FAITH: Bolton Wanderers forward Kevin Nolan (L) is ecstatic in celebrating his strike against Portsmouth with teammate El Hadji Diouf during their Premiership clash on Monday.

Nolan ends Pompey run

AFP, Portsmouth

Kevin Nolan's first half winner gave Sam Allardyce the perfect response following the BBC's recent accusations that he accepted irregular payments for transfers, as Bolton edged out Portsmouth 1-0 here on Monday.

Allardyce along with Pompey boss Harry Redknapp were the subject of last week's documentary which broadcast three agents admitting the Bolton manager was open to corruption.

The result proved to be a less than fitting end for departing Pompey chairman Milan Mandaric who was given a heroes send-off by the Fratton Park crowd but couldn't match his farewell with three points and a return to the top of the Premiership.

Redknapp was given the luxury of fielding an unchanged starting line-up from the team that beat Charlton last weekend.

Lomana Lua lua was forced to resume his place on the bench despite netting the winner at The Valley.

Allardyce swapped Greek international Stelios for Kevin Davies from their last league game against Middlesbrough and Nicky Hunt came into the back four with Tal Ben

Haim pushing out to an unfamiliar role at left-back.

Unlikely Premiership pacesetters Pompey began the strongest as first Sol Campbell went close with a header from a Matt Taylor corner then Kanu and Benjani combined to put Sean Davis through but his attempt rebounded back off the far post.

Jussi Jaaskelainen was called into service again on 14 minutes when Kanu's stabbed effort from the edge of the area was beaten away by the Finnish international and he was then at full stretch to keep out Taylor's side footed volley following Gary O'Neil's run and cross.

Just as soon as they looked to be edging ahead Pompey fell behind.

Ben Haim's lofted free kick was headed away by Linvoy Primus but only as far as Nolan, unmarked on the edge of the penalty area.

The Bolton skipped looked up and despatched a sweeping volley into the far corner which was too good for David James and signalled the first goal Harry Redknapp's men have conceded in the Premiership for 472 minutes.

Further chances fell to Dejan Stefanovic and Davis again but Jaaskelainen denied them on both occasions as frustration around Fratton Park grew.

Bolton nearly stole a second when Nicolas Anelka beat Campbell to the ball and from an innocuous

looking angle had James stretching to deflect his effort skyward.

The Pompey keeper then had to scramble across his goal to stop the ball spinning in at the far post.

Benjani, despite his recent good form, should have hauled the home side back in to the game when he out muscled Abdoulaye Meite and had a clear run on goal.

The Zimbabwean was given the time to pick his spot but instead opted for power and blasted his effort into the stand behind Jaaskelainen.

Lualua was introduced on 57 minutes in the hope of injecting some wizardry into the Pompey frontline but Bolton could, and should put the result beyond their grasp when Kevin Nolan was again unwittingly set up by Primus.

Ivan Campo's long throw was headed across the six yard box by the defender and Nolan stole a march on the ball-watching defence only to blast well over from close range.

Pompey piled forward looking for the elusive equaliser but despite Glen Johnson's long range effort struggled to break down a typically resolute Bolton as the away side held firm for the win.

Podolski reveals Bayern nightmare

AFP, Munich

German international forward Lukas Podolski admits things are not going as planned with German champions Bayern Munich after being dropped for Saturday's 2-1 win over Alemannia Aachen.

Podolski, 21, was invisible in the 2-1 league defeat by Arminia Bielefeld last weekend and manager Felix Magath dropped him for Dutch striker Roy Makaay.

"Things are not going how I thought they would," said Podolski. "Of course I am disappointed not to be playing. It irritates me - otherwise I would not be a real footballer."

"But my time will come and I will score my goals here. I am not gripped by fear of failing at Bayern."

Podolski, the pin-up boy of German football, has yet to score a league goal for Bayern since joining from FC Cologne last summer in a ten-million-euro deal.

At international level Podolski has been prolific, bagging 20 goals in 35 internationals and was voted best young player at the World Cup.

Ban on Mexes's agent upheld

AFP, Paris

FIFA on Monday upheld the six-month ban dished out to football agent Olivier Jouanneau for his part in AS Roma defender Philippe Mexes' controversial transfer from Auxerre.

Jouanneau was suspended back in February and was also fined 50,000 Swiss francs (41,000 dollars) for his role in the centre-back's move to the Serie A outfit in 2004.

The deal ran into trouble as Auxerre had wanted to sell Mexes to the highest bidder but the player went ahead and joined Roma for seven million euros (8.9 million dollars).

Explaining its decision to reject Jouanneau's appeal, football's governing body FIFA said the agent was linked to "the unilateral termination of Philippe Mexes' contract without good reason and in opposition to his club Auxerre."

Three-game ban for Mahdavia

AFP, Frankfurt

SV Hamburg's Iranian international Mehdi Mahdavia has been handed a three-match ban for violent conduct, the German Football Federation (DFB) disciplinary panel said Monday.

Midfielder Mahdavia was sent off in the 73rd minute of Hamburg's 1-1 draw with Bremen on Saturday after a crude tackle on Bremen's Brazilian playmaker Diego.

Diego left the pitch with a knee injury and after watching television replays the DFB panel have decided on a three-match ban and a 5,000 euro fine for the Iranian midfielder.

Bond first bung casualty

AFP, London

Newcastle assistant manager Kevin Bond became the first casualty from last week's BBC documentary alleging corruption in English football when he was sacked on Tuesday.

The 49-year-old has hinted he intends to sue the BBC but that did not save him from being axed by Newcastle chairman Freddy Shepherd.

Bond - a former central defender and son of colourful ex Manchester City manager John - was placed on gardening leave after he was secretly recorded saying he would consider receiving payments from an agent.

Bond, who was working alongside Harry Redknapp at Portsmouth at the time of when he was recorded, says he has never been interested in receiving bungs and is expected to sue the BBC for libel.

"Newcastle has terminated Kevin Bond's contract," read a statement on the Premiership club's official website.

Bond joined the club in July at the invitation of Magpies manager Glenn Roeder and had in the long term hoped to become a manager in his own right.

Bond's camp stated his intention to sue when his solicitor, David Price, said: "The short extract from my client's conversation with the reporter was taken out of context and presented in a completely misleading manner."

Points will do for Chelsea

AFP, Sofia

Chelsea are in Bulgaria on Wednesday to take on local champions Levski Sofia in the latest stage of a journey they hope will lead them to a first ever Champions League trophy.

Jose Mourinho's Premiership titleholders tackle this second Group A tie buoyed by the possible return of skipper John Terry who was forced to miss Saturday's 2-0 win over Fulham due to a back problem.

Khalid Boulahrouz, who missed out on the Craven Cottage game with an eye infection, is expected to be fit and is favourite to step in to partner Ricardo Carvalho in the event that Terry's troubles return.

Terry has insisted now is the time for Chelsea to finally come good in Europe's top club competition.

"It's getting to the state where we have to win the Champions League. We can't keep saying: 'Next year will be our time'. We've got the experience and we've got the players."

'Focus the key to glory'

Football

AFP, Lisbon

Sir Alex Ferguson believes Manchester United, who face Benfica on Tuesday in a Champions League Group F match, can achieve European glory this season if they remain focused.

"I think we have the ability, we've got the desire to do it and we just have to make sure the concentration in big games is good because concentration is important to young players," he told a Lisbon news conference.

The club lost 2-1 to Benfica last December, after having managed to get an early lead, were knocked out of the competition, finishing at the

Mourinho won't settle for anything less than a win in the Bulgarian capital ahead of next month's double-header against Barcelona.

"I need three points against Levski," was the Chelsea boss' succinct appraisal of the task ahead.

Chelsea, who failed to make it the quarterfinal stage of the competition last season, opened their campaign with a 2-0 win over Werder Bremen marked by Michael Ballack's first goal, a penalty, for the London giants since moving from Bayern Munich. Ballack had replaced Frank Lampard on spot kick duty after the England international's penalty miss against Charlton earlier this season.

But the midfielder stepped up to the plate in the suspended Ballack's absence at Craven Cottage and promptly underlined his return to form by firing in a second.

Lampard is one of only two surviving members of the Chelsea side that saw off Levski 2-0 in their last meeting in the 2001/02 UEFA Cup.

Terry, author of the opening goal that day, is the other.

Mourinho will presumably have his calculator handy to keep tabs on how many bookings his players pick up

after his outburst at Bremen where he pointed to the four yellow cards handed out to his team as evidence of rough justice his band of millionaire players were receiving from referees.

The 'yellow card quartet' one booking away from missing Barcelona Act I are Terry, Lampard, Joe Cole and Didier Drogba.

Levski Sofia are enduring a baptism of fire on their Champions League debut with Chelsea's visit coming a fortnight after they were humbled 5-0 by titleholders Barcelona.

Stanimar Stoilov's side limbered up for this with a 3-0 win at Smolian to put them seven points clear in the league and despite the scale of the task ahead of them can take heart from Chelsea's poor away form with only one win from their last eight on the road.

"I'm sure the team will give their best. Everyone works for each other. We don't have big stars but we have a team and that's why we have done so well," said Stoilov.

"There is no pressure on us at all."

bottom of a modest group that included Villarreal and Lille.

It was the first time in a decade that the 1999 champions failed to advance to the knockout stages.

"I think that concentration was the real need of the game against Benfica last year. We made a fantastic start to the game, for the first 15 minutes, and then we lost our concentration," he added.

"You can't do that in Europe, it's too important," he said.

Manchester United won its opening Champions League match 3-2 against Celtic.

The club won five Premier League games in a row this season but have only one point from their last two matches after losing 1-0 at home to Arsenal and drawing 1-1 with pro-

moted Reading.

But Manchester United defender Rio Ferdinand said the squad was determined to defeat Benfica during its rematch against the Portuguese club.

"As a group it makes you stronger coming back to a place like this. You want to prove that you are a better team and individual as well and we are ready to do that," he said.

"Sitting at home while you think to yourself that we could have been in the next round is definitely a disappointment. I wouldn't want to be in that situation again," he added.

"We didn't come out here to draw a game or play defensive football. We want to win the game like Benfica do so it makes for a very entertaining game."

VDV set for return

AFP, Hamburg

Injury-plagued Dutch international midfielder Rafael van der Vaart is set to give a much-needed boost to his struggling Bundesliga side Hamburg by rejoining them in mid-October he revealed on Tuesday.

The 23-year-old club captain has only played 17 out of a possible 39 Bundesliga matches since joining from Dutch giants Ajax in July 2005 but is considered crucial to a revival in their fortunes which has seen them not win since the end of July.

"It is frustrating not to have been with the squad," admitted van der Vaart, who has been treated for a left thigh injury, he suffered on August 27th, in The Netherlands.

"However it is imperative that I am completely rehabilitated if I am to help the club fight back."

"In three weeks time, it will be the case," added van der Vaart, who it was revealed by a Dutch magazine has been injured for 20 months of his six year career.

Van der Vaart, known as the Dutch 'David Beckham' for his angelic looks and is a former model, said that it was vital that Hamburg stop the rot which sees them having drawn four and lost one of their five Bundesliga matches this season.

"We have to out an end to this run," said van der Vaart, who having undergone a second operation on his right ankle shortly before the World Cup finals started just one of the four matches and that was the dead group match between them and the Argentinians.

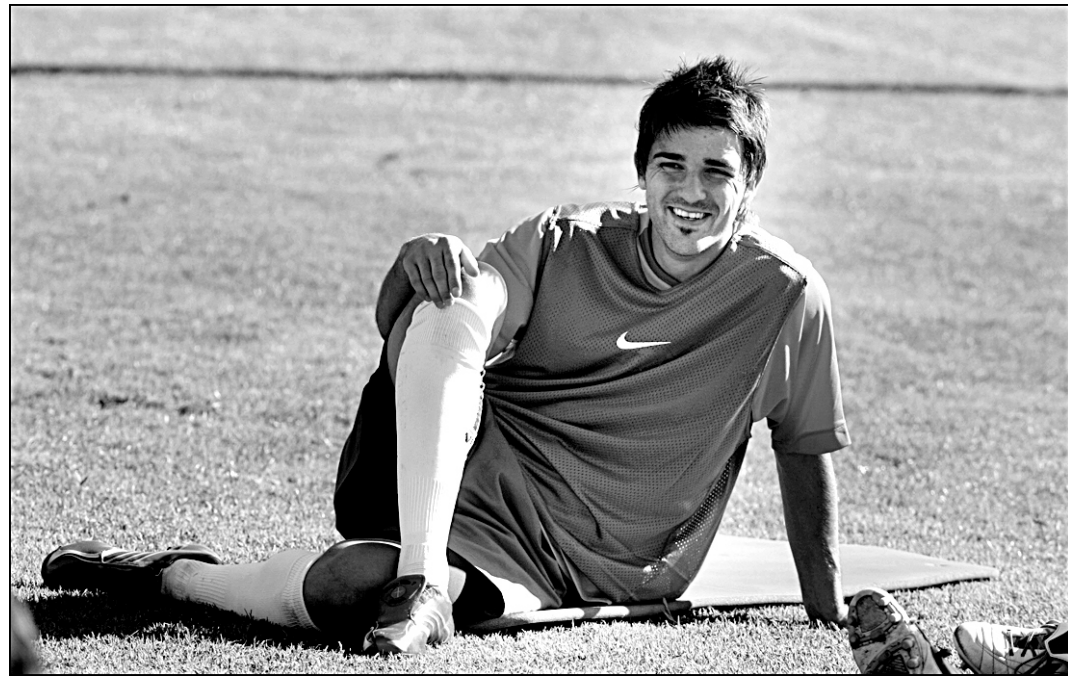


PHOTO: AFP

SMILING ASSASIN: Valencia hitman David Villa smiles while stretching at a training session on the eve of their Champions League match against Roma on Wednesday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
11					12				13	
14					15					
16			17		18			19		
20		21		22			23			
24			25		26		27			
31	32	33			34		35	36	37	38
39				40		41		42		
43				44		45		46		
47		48				49		50		
51						52				
53								54		

CRYPTOQUIP
Y Q S Z O X A E E S H H G Q Q A X E
B A G B U A M X A S O E G U S Z A .
G H A F Y M J O X A Q X A O G O J S O
S E E G O J A X H Z G F Q G X O .
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: THE PERCUSSIONIST'S EQUIPMENT WAS QUITE PRICEY, BUT THOSE WERE MERELY STATUS CYMBALS.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: H 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.

ACROSS

35 Ort
39 Weaponry
40 U.K.
6 Finger-paints
11 Long recliner
12 Lecher's pastime
14 Actress
15 Crick's partner
16 Blood-group letters
17 Oil of roses
19 Airliner
20 Money-making business
22 Succumb to gravity
23 Attracted
24 High-ranking Turk
26 Hockey throe-some
28 "What can — for you?"
30 On pens.
31 Hoffman movie

DOWN

1 Psych
101
1 subject
2 Beauty shops
3 That guy (Abbr.)
4 On the briny
5 Adam and Mae
6 Dignified older woman
7 Emulsifying agent
8 Last
9 Nightclub
10 Made a blank?
11 Victor
13 Nibbles attempt
18 Savion Glover specialty
21 Dilutes
23 Discard
25 Navy bigwig (Abbr.)
27 Dots' neighbors
29 Up the creek without a paddle?
31 Ponderosa, e.g.
32 Biblical peak
33 Adulterated
34 Dundee denial
36 Juice extractor
37 Pataki's city
38 Green-house purchase
41 Despair
44 silent "Hay!"
45 Prong
48 Actor
50 Mckellen Banned bug spray

Solution time: 27 mins.

R	A	J	A	H	E	M	S	A	M	P
A	S	T	A	R	E	S	G	I	T	P
G	A	T	H	E	S	O	F	R	A	N
L	A	T	H	E	R	E	R	O	S	
P	I	E	Z	E	N	T	R	E	N	T
E	D	I	N	A	L	E	A	V	E	
P	O	O	L	E	L	A	W	A	Y	E
V	E	N	A	L	S	O	V	A		
F	A	C	E	T	O	S	K	E	W	
A	S	T	A	R	E	S	G	I	T	P
B	A	M	B	I	N	G	B	I	T	O
L	I	P	A	N	S	A	N	N	L	
E	N	S	M	A	T	P	E	O	N	Y