



Renault's Fernando Alonso (C) and teammate Giancarlo Fisichella (R) celebrate their pole and second place standings for the Chinese Grand Prix alongside Honda's Rubens Barrichello.

FORMULA 1

Alonso takes Shanghai pole

AFP, Shanghai

Defending world champion Fernando Alonso was brimming with confidence after dominating qualifying session for Sunday's Chinese Grand Prix.

The Spaniard and his Renault teammate Giancarlo Fisichella finished first and second to secure a lockout of the front row of the grid while rivals Ferrari struggled and were outclassed in Saturday's rain-hit session.

The 25-year-old Alonso claimed the 15th pole position of his career while his nearest rival in this year's title race, Ferrari's Michael Schumacher, took sixth position.

"It was great, we were fastest in all three sessions and we are very competitive and we took full advantage in the wet conditions," said Alonso, who has a two-point lead

over Schumacher with three races remaining in the season.

"I am very confident because we are competitive if it is wet or dry," Alonso credited his position to Renault's tyre suppliers Michelin which out-performed rivals Bridgestone comprehensively in the wet.

"Of course, I am confident, but I must thank the team and Michelin for the tyres because they have given us a tyre that is unbeatable in the wet."

Seven-times champion Schumacher, who retires at the end of this season, was the only Bridgestone driver to finish in the top ten.

The 37-year-old German said he was disappointed.

"Definitely, we are too slow and this is very obvious. In those weather conditions, we are simply

not competitive. It's the best we could do," he said.

Schumacher, who has yet to finish higher than 12th in Shanghai, said he remained optimistic he could still come from behind on Sunday, and go on to win the drivers' championship.

"I am sixth, not 20th, so I will try and go as far as possible. There is no question. If we don't win then there are still two races to go," he said.

"I don't think this qualifying session has compromised my chances of winning the world championship."

"Apart from tomorrow's race, there are still two more Grands Prix to go so everything is still possible."

Alonso said he might have a slight psychological advantage over Schumacher because the German wants to retire on a winning note.

"Who knows?" he said. "I am very confident and I am not retiring at the end of the year. I have a lot of races and a lot of championships ahead of me to fight and so I can do the last three races as usual - to try and to win. I don't have any pressures other than that."

Schumacher and Ferrari have a huge disadvantage going into Sunday's race as his Ferrari teammate Felipe Massa was hampered by a ten-places penalty for changing his engine on Friday, and so was relegated to the back of the grid.

Brazilian Rubens Barrichello has claimed third position, ahead of his Honda teammate Jenson Button.

Finn Kimi Raikkonen was fifth for McLaren Mercedes-Honda and his teammate Spaniard Pedro de la Rosa was seventh, behind Schumacher.

No salary caps, says UEFA

REUTERS, Strasbourg

The European Union and soccer authorities have no plans to introduce salary caps on players, the CEO of UEFA said on Friday.

"Salary caps just simply wouldn't work and was never our intention," Lars-Christer Olsson told Reuters on the margins of a meeting between soccer authorities and EU lawmakers.

Speculation that UEFA, European football's governing body, and EU governments were seeking to restrict players' wages had grown since the release of the EU-sponsored European Sports Review in April.

A recommendation in the review, commissioned to look at how sports should be governed throughout the 25-member bloc, was that players' wages should be capped in the top leagues.

According to Olsson, a new draft of the report will be released before the end of the year with a refined recommendation to limit the overall amount a club can spend on salaries.

"This was a misconception. We don't want to say that a player can't be paid X amount of money," Olsson said.

"But what we do say is that there needs to be a limit on a club's wage bill in the context of the overall revenue; cost controls so that they don't go into debt."

UEFA believes making clubs more financially accountable will force them to spend more on development and training rather than just individuals.

The G14, which represents 18 of Europe's richest and most powerful clubs, also advocates this approach.

UEFA hopes to have the European Sports Review adopted by EU governments in December. It covers all aspects of soccer, such as doping, players' agents and commercial rights.

Gilardino Milan's till 2011

INTERNET, undated

Alberto Gilardino has signed a contract extension that will keep him at Milan until June 30, 2011.

The striker arrived from Parma in the summer of 2005 for 17 million pounds and netted 17 goals in 34 Serie A appearances, but he is yet to score in an official match this season.

The contract extension can therefore be seen as a confidence-boosting sign from the club, as Andriy Shevchenko's move to Chelsea has put more of the responsibility on his shoulders.

World Cup winner Gilardino began his career at Piacenza in 1999-2000 before moving on to Hellas Verona, Parma and Milan.

Rooney toiling to find form

THE GUARDIAN

Wayne Rooney was the last player off Manchester United's training ground on Friday as he seeks a remedy for his first slump in form in his two years at the club. Rooney asked for an extra 30-minute session to practise his finishing and improve his fitness and Carlos Queiroz, Sir Alex Ferguson's assistant, acknowledged the player's confidence may have been affected by his recent performances.

"Wayne finished training then stayed a while to work alone because he knows he needs to do something," said Queiroz. "Game by game, it will start to come right for him. The confidence will build up and I am sure he will be better against Newcastle (at Old Trafford tomorrow)."

Rooney has been disappointing by his usual standards since returning from a three-match suspension and Queiroz suggested the 20-year-old might have been trying too hard to impress. "Sometimes with young talents like Wayne, they want to prove everything in every minute of every game," he said.

Sugiyama in final

AFP, Seoul

Fourth seed Ai Sugiyama of Japan and Greece's Eleni Daniilidou routed their semifinal opponents to book a showdown in Sunday's final of the 145,000-dollar Korea Open.

Sugiyama thrashed Spain's Virginia Ruano Pascual 6-0, 6-3 while Daniilidou dominated French third-seed Marion Bartoli 6-1, 6-0 at Seoul Olympic Park on Saturday.

"Mentally and physically I am feeling good. Daniilidou is playing really well and I am really looking forward to (Sunday's) final," Sugiyama said.

Ruano Pascual was slow on her feet and had none of the backhand accuracy that had worn down India's Sania Mirza in a three-hour epic the previous night.

Valencia oozing confidence

INTERNET, undated



Valencia will be eyeing top spot in the Primera Liga this weekend when they welcome Gimnastic Tarragona to the Mestalla.

Valencia are in red-hot form this season with six wins from eight matches in Spain and Europe.

And of the other two results, one was the 1-1 away draw with Barcelona last weekend while the solitary defeat came in a Champions League qualifying round game at Salzburg almost two months ago.

That form has led Valencia to the top of their Champions League group and to third in the Primera Liga -- level on 10 points with leading duo Barcelona and Real Madrid.

But with Barca travelling to Athletic Bilbao without injured top scorer Samuel Eto'o, and Real facing local rivals Atletico in the Madrid derby, Valencia could find themselves top of the pack by the end of the weekend.

However, midfielder David

Silva has warned his teammates against taking Gimnastic, a team who has played against before, lightly.

"We are the favourites and we must win, but it will be a difficult game because Nastic will fight," he said.

"I have already played against this team in the second division and they are a compact, tough and solid unit."

"We must, as always, be 100 per cent committed. These types of games are very important because they are the ones that put you at the top at the end of the season."

Joaquin and Curro Torres are both back in the Valencia squad after sitting out the Champions League win over Roma in mid-week, but coach Quique Sanchez Flores still has a host of absences.

Francesco Tavano, who returned to group training this week after 15 days out with a leg injury, is again missing as are Carlos Marchena, Juan Luis Mora, Ruben Baraja, Asier del Horno, Hugo Viana and Mario Regueiro for a variety of reasons.

Nastic bounced back from successive defeats to Celta Vigo

and Osasuna by picking up a point from their home match with Racing Santander last time out.

The Catalan outfit twice took the lead in the match, through David Cuellar and Javier Portillo, but bottom club Racing salvaged a point thanks to a brace from Nikola Zigic.

Nastic now embark on a torrid run of fixtures which sees them play Valencia this weekend followed by matches against Athletic Bilbao, Sevilla and Real Madrid.

Coach Luis Cesar admits he will be shuffling his pack for the trip to Valencia.

"I would have made changes even if we had won at Racing. If they had not scored a last-minute goal, I would still alter the XI at the Mestalla. I am not blinded by the result (against Racing) nor the situation we are faced with," he said.

"We have analysed the situation and now we are going to try and fix it."

Saha filling Ruud void

AFP, Manchester



Louis Saha has spent almost three years attempting to prove himself at Manchester United but the French striker believes he is now finally living up to his 12.6-million-pound transfer fee.

The 28-year-old, who is set to line up against former club Newcastle United at Old Trafford on Sunday, has filled the void left by departed striker Ruud van Nistelrooy by hitting six goals in nine games so far this season.

Injuries have disrupted the majority of Saha's United career, but he insists that he has emerged from his dark days at the club.

Saha said: "Ruud's departure has allowed me to play a lot more and I take Sir Alex Ferguson's trust as a compliment, but I think the Manchester United fans are seeing the real Louis Saha now."

"I've been playing consistently and for a long time now without injury and that is all I ever wanted because every time you get hit by an injury, your confidence also goes down and that was the case with me."

"But now I'm back I'm really confident and happy to be scoring on a regular basis. I'm taking a huge percentage of the chances I get now, but I want to be the sort of striker who gets three opportunities and scores three goals."

United are attempting to return to winning ways in the Premiership after picking up just one point from their last two games against Arsenal and Reading and goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar admits that Ferguson's team cannot afford to drop more points against Newcastle.

He said: "Reading was the kind of game we needed to win because it was matches like that which cost us last year. We believe we have matured, so the focus is now on Newcastle and ensuring the same thing does not happen again."

Meanwhile Obafemi Martins is confident he can help put a spring in

Newcastle's step by ending their 34-year Old Trafford jinx.

The North-East club are without a league win at United since 1972, but the Nigerian international is hopeful of being able to unfurl his trademark somersault celebration on Sunday in the wake of his two goals in the 2-1 midweek UEFA Cup victory over Levadia Tallinn.

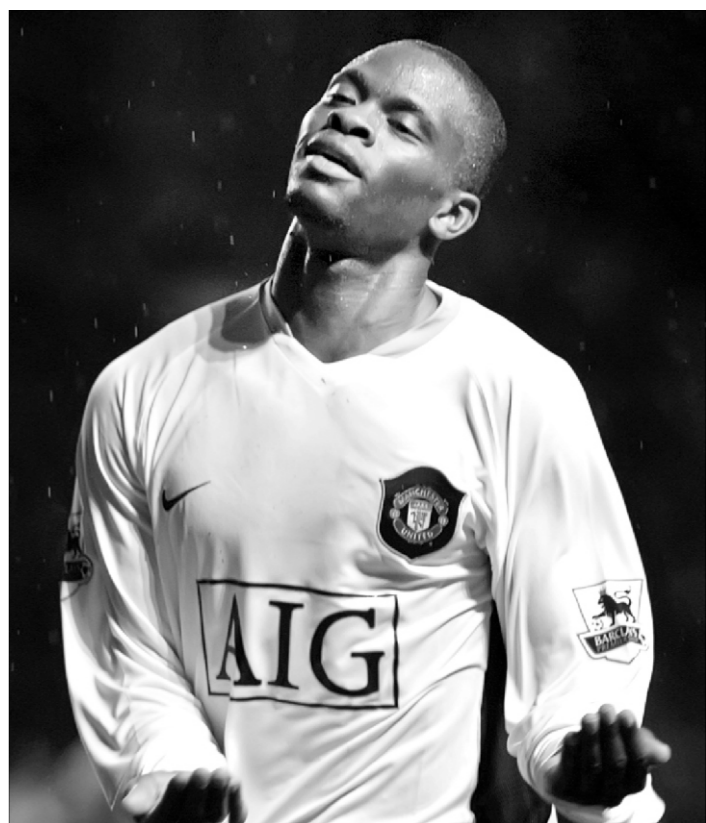
Martins, who has scored three times in seven appearances since his 10-million-pound move from Inter Milan in August, said: "I did about two or three somersaults after scoring the other night and the manager's not said anything yet to me about how I celebrate."

"I think the most somersaults I've ever done after scoring was 11. But the next time I score, who knows?"

"I've never played at Old Trafford but we'll go there and make it hard for them. I've played okay up to now, but I'm more relaxed now and I'm getting better all the time."

Australian international defender Craig Moore replaces Titus Bramble, who like Celestine Babayaro is serving a suspension.

Skipper Scott Parker returns alongside Nicky Butt in a five-man midfield after being rested in mid-week, but on-loan Manchester United striker Giuseppe Rossi is ineligible.



LOUIS SAHA

Harry slams 'arrogant' Mido

INTERNET, undated

Tottenham striker Mido has ensured there will be some added spice to Portsmouth's trip to White Hart Lane on Sunday by claiming Sol Campbell is "the easiest defender I have played against".

The Egyptian striker admitted his comments might be thought mischievous -- but stood by his statement.

Pompey manager Harry Redknapp, who snapped up former Arsenal star Campbell on a free transfer this summer, was far from impressed, branding Mido "arrogant".

"Honestly, Campbell is the easiest defender I have played against," said Mido, who has yet to score this season.

"I'm not scared of him. If that fires him up, then let him prove me wrong."

"What an arrogant thing to say," Redknapp responded in Saturday's Sun newspaper.

"It's an insult coming from somebody who has not achieved as much as Sol has in his career."

"It shows a total lack of respect and those comments will embarrass every footballer in the game as we don't talk like that about fellow pros."

"One thing is for certain, I won't have to say too much to my lads in the dressing room at Tottenham."

"I'll just stick a newspaper cutting up on the wall and that will do for me."

English FA waging war on corruption

AFP, London



The English Football Association stepped up their battle against corruption on Friday by recruiting more 'bust-busters' for their compliance unit.

The section, which is currently made up of just six staff, has been overwhelmed by the number of referrals in the wake of recent claims about bungs and illegal approaches for players.

The announcement comes three days before former Metropolitan Police commissioner Lord Stevens delivers his interim report to Premier League chairman on his investigation into 362 transfers that took place between January 2004 and January 2006.

The FA have been investigating bung allegations since Luton manager Mike Newell went public with this claims earlier this year, and he

was followed by BBC's Panorama programme, with England manager Steve McClaren's agent Colin Gordon also making damning allegations about the state of the game.

FA chief executive Brian Barwick said: "We have made it our priority to strengthen the compliance department so we can tackle the issue of corruption head on."

"We are committed to thoroughly investigating any wrongdoing in the game. The department is doing an excellent job and by bringing in additional resources we will be able to build on that work."

Lord Stevens will make a number of recommendations to the 20 Premiership chairmen about how to tighten up the regulations to ensure that irregular transfer payments do not happen.

Stevens will also reveal that more than 10 per cent of the 362 transfers need further investigation, most because they involved foreign clubs and often-intricate payments.

He is expected to tell chairmen that his security firm Quest will need several more months to complete their investigations. One thing Stevens will not do is 'name and shame' those clubs or transfers that require further investigation.

Barwick also revealed that some of those making claims about rule-breaking had refused to co-operate with investigations while others could not back up their allegations.

He added: "There have been a large number of people in football making allegations of corruption through the media. We want to reiterate that any participants in the game with evidence of wrongdoing have a duty to bring this evidence to our attention."

"The FA has already contacted a substantial number of people and media organisations in the last year to ask them to provide evidence following media reports."

Woods to give rivals break



AFP, The Grove, England

World number one Tiger Woods has vowed not to pick up a golf club for a fortnight following the current World Golf Championship event here.

That is good news for his rivals as Woods looks set for his sixth consecutive stroke play victory after adding a 64 on Friday to his first round course record 63.

His run of success has included two majors -- the British Open and the USPGA -- plus the WGC event at Akron, Ohio.

He then lost in the first round of the World Matchplay at Wentworth and played five matches in the Ryder Cup at the K Club where he won three points.

The world number one has not looked the worse for wear over the first two days of this tournament but he insists once this event is over he is having a rest.

"I've got a bunch of things to do. I've got to host a party and fundraiser for

my foundation and do things for some sponsors," he said.

"I know I'm not going to touch a club for couple of weeks."

"I can't wait to get home and the play-offs in baseball are starting on Tuesday and I'm really looking forward to that."

Woods also believes that the prospect of some time off from the grind of the golf course is spurring him on to great things in England.

He added: "It's always nice when you have light at the end of the tunnel and you can take a break. I'm looking forward to getting away from the game for a little bit."

England's David Howell will set off in pursuit of Woods on Saturday in joint second place with Jim Furyk and Stewart Cink, a daunting five shots behind the leader.

But Howell admitted he has got one eye on his personal battle with Paul Casey to top the European Order of Merit.

Casey's win at Wentworth took him to the head of the table but he has had rounds of 74 and 75 here

to lie second from last and Howell can take a huge step towards his first money list win with a good finish.

"It's a big weekend for me," said Howell.

"Paul is struggling, he's obviously had some big weeks recently and maybe this was one too many. But it's up to me put a strong week in and try and catch him. Trying to get back to number one on the Order of Merit is certainly my goal."

"Both of us are delighted to be in the position we're in. One of us is obviously going to fall, and hopefully it's Paul."

Casey is 166,607 euros (211,567 dollars) in front of Howell after collecting one million pounds (1.87 million dollars) at the World Matchplay.

If Howell could somehow overtake Woods this weekend he would take home 1.3 million dollars.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Bit for
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5 It holds
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8 What
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12 Took the
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13 "I" trouble

14 Judicial
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15 Theater-
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17 Dumb-
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18 Raid

19 Water-
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22 Bold
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26 Dr. Ruth's
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28 Asian
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31 Leading
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33 Poorly lit

35 Strata-
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DOWN

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2 Foe of
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3 Smell

4 Butcher's
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5 Diamond-
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7 Rolls'
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8 Member
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9 Costner
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10 Son of
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11 Becomes
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16 "Vaya
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20 Billboards

23 Crony

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25 Traveler
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27 Louis --

29 Work with
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32 Wood-
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34 Ring
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46 Cigar
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48 Kessler's
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49 "Loitta"
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50 -- buco

53 Debtor's
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Solution time: 21 mins.

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4 AUTIC 5 OVA 6 MOVIE
7 BLACK 8 SEEA 9 AGES
10 ELL 11 EON 12 SCANT
13 TEX 14 WOK
15 TWR 16 L 17 BAW 18 DIA
19 TLOW 20 A 21 RIX 22 OPEN
23 GOUGHED 24 TWEET
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27 CLAMP 28 EEL 29 AIS
30 LUXE 31 CRACKPOT
32 OXTE 33 ATR 34 SAU
35 TEST 36 DEY 37 NEARD

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| 57 | | | | | 58 | | | 59 | | |

CRYPTOQUIP

N Z S V B Z S K R A A S P A R M A Z

Z S U W M X S S B T V Y N T B Z

Z T K S V B T P S B S M X , Z S

Z M W K R X S Y R M U K T V X T W V

Yesterday's Cryptquip: IF A GROUP OF PHOTOGRAPHER FRIENDS DOESN'T QUITE LIKE OUTSIDERS, IS THAT A CLICK CLIQUE?

Today's Cryptquip Clue: N 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.