Celebrity birthday for **Ballack**

INTERNET, undated

In vet further proof that the lines between Premiership footballer and celebrity are becoming increasingly blurred, Chelsea midfielder Michael Ballack celebrated his 30th birthday with some help from singer Sarah Harding this weekend.

The Germany captain was apparently invited over to the Girls Aloud member's table as she herself partied with friends to mark turning 24 at a fashionable Soho nightspot, incidentally also called 24.

Ballack has no reason to fear Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho's wrath however, currently being in the middle of a three-game ban after being sent off two weeks ago.

The Mirror reports that Ballack helped Harding with the three bottles of vintage champagne she had ordered

Supported by her friends, including bandmate Nadine Covle and her beau Jesse Metcalfe, Harding also managed to later reach the Movida nightclub, with the total drinks bill for the night apparently coming to 7,000 pounds the Sun claims.

Earlier in the evening Harding had made a quest appearance on cheeky Geordie duo Ant and Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway on ITV1.

Benfica unaware of racist chants

AFP, Lisbon

Benfica coach Fernando Santos said on Monday he has no knowledge that racist abuse and monkey chants were directed at some Manchester United players last week during a Champions League match in Lisbon

Manchester United have written a letter of protest about the incidents to the Lisbon-based side and have called on European football governing body UEFA to take action, Britain's Sun newspaper reported

Saturday citing a club source. Defender Patrice Evra and striker Louis Saha as well as midfielder Kieran Richardson and defender Wes Brown were all targeted by the Portuguese club's supporters in the Group F 1-0 win, the paper reported.

"I didn't notice anything in the place where I was and I don't recall Benfica fans being accused of such acts." said Santos in comments published Monday in daily Portuguese newspaper A Bola.

e proven. We'll see i this is true. It doesn't worry me," he added.



Watford's two-goal hero Ashley Young (C) looks on as Marlon King (L) and Hameur Bouazza celebrate during their Premiership clash against Fulham at Vicarage Road on Monday.

Fulham sting Hornets

had shown in fighting back.

'It's difficult coming here, they

play long balls and we did well to

stand up to it. I thought we were

fantastic and the boys who came

23rd minute as King prodded

home past Antii Niemi from close

range having been set up by

Fulham had little to offer in

Watford took the lead in the

comfortably.

pointed."

the Welshman.

on did really well.

Ashley Young.

only us in it.



season slip away on Monday as having led 2-0 they ended up

had given the Hornets a 2-0 lead only for American international Brian McBride and Heidar Helguson - who used to play for Watford scoring 63 goals in five seasons - bringing the visitors

Fulham actually took the lead five minutes from time through a Damien Francis own goal but Watford salvaged a point as Young scored his second of the match - the draw leaves them second from bottom with four

points after seven matches.

said.

expect us to go and win that game Icelandic striker Heidar Helguson, who had only on Monday recevied "But full credit to Fulham for a vote of confidence from coming back - and full credit to us

Coleman The lively Bouazza, who had a for coming back. But I am disapfierce shot parried by Niemi in the Fulham boss Chris Coleman first-half, then went close with a praised the character his players header which drifted past Niemi's post.

However the visitors did at last "I'm sure both sets of players are disappointed, but our characget themselves on the scoresheet ter after the break was great," said with 20 minutes remaining as McBride shot past Foster having "We clawed our way back into it taken the knockdown by and for long periods there was Helguson from Wayne Routledge's cross.

Helguson completed their fightback as he headed home eight minutes from time from Tomasz Radzinski's cross.

Three minutes later they were ahead as Francis put into his own net - trying to clear a Helguson header - from a corner by French defender Franck Quedrue but Watford had their own reply.

Young was the hero again as

Torres to Theatre of **Dreams?** AFP, London

Atletico Madrid's Fernando Torres is set for a summer move to Manchester United, according to a report here Tuesday.

The Daily Star newspaper said United have virtually captured the talented Spain striker by agreeing to pay Atletico a down payment of five million pounds (9.4 million dollars).

That would then pave the way for a move, worth 26 million pounds (49 million dollars), to the Premiership ahead of next season.

United have long been linked with the highly-rated Torres, although so have their Premiership rivals Chelsea.

Torres has so far resisted the temptation to play in England, but speculation of a move to Old Trafford intensified in the summer after Ruud van Nistelrooy left to join Atletico's city rivals Real. The 22-year-old Spaniard, who

scored four goals in the World Cup, recently signed a one-year contract extension with Atletico.

The striker, nicknamed 'El Nino', had a buy-out clause worth 41 million pounds (77.4 million dollars) in his contract however Atletico have reportedly dropped the price because of United's 'show of faith and his apparent desire to move to Old Trafford

WC snub still hurts Coupet

REUTERS, Paris

PHOTO AFP

France goalkeeper Gregory Coupet has said he still feels bitter about being a reserve at the World Cup and would not spend an evening out with coach Raymond Domenech.

(goalkeeping coach Bruno) Martini, always said 'hello' to them, even during the World Cup, that's a question of education. But don't ask me to spend an evening out with them,' Coupet told French daily Le

The Olympique Lyon keeper had said before the World Cup in ferred Fabien Barthez, with whom France went all the way to the final.

'All I can say is that last year I was the number one,' said Coupet, who deputised for Barthez during qualifying, while the 1998 World Cup winner was suspended for spitting at a referee

'After that, there was a terrible

Coupet stirred controversy

Racism will hurt Germany: Asamoah

good public relations work from this summer's World Cup.

DHAKA WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 4, 2006

"A lot of people abroad associate Germany with xenophobia. But at this summer's World Cup everyone was astonished that Germans could be so different.' Asamoah said in an interview with Kicker magazine.

him in a recent cup match and "In Ghana the people were warned that Germany's image thrilled and maybe a bit relieved. abroad could be harmed if there But what happened to me in Rostock was broadcast throughout Ghana on the radio. It also reached other countries and the became the first black to reprepeople were horrified. sent Germany, was subjected to

"The ape noises have changed how people look at Germany in some parts of Africa. Those idiots are responsible for that.'

The 27-year-old Asamoah, who will miss most of the season after suffering a horrific double leg fracture, also said he

had experienced racism off the field. "I have had problems in

Gelsenkirchen too. I wanted to go to a disco with my brother and another African. Three Africans? We did not get in," Asamoah explained.

Asamoah revealed that the people responsible were then willing to let him in when they recognised that he was a famous footballer.

Asamoah has not encountered any racism while playing for his adopted homeland Germany but admits he would consider retiring if that changed.

"I would have to ask myself whether it makes sense to play for Germany," he said.

Sheva shrugs off form

Football

INTERNET, undated

Football

are any more incidents.

September 9.

Germany international striker

Gerald Asamoah, born in Ghana,

admits he was deeply hurt by the

racist monkey chants directed at

Asamoah, who in 2001

racist taunts by fans of Hansa

Rostock's second team in

Schalke's first round cup win on

Hansa were fined 20,000

euros for the conduct of their fans

but Asamoah said the abusive

supporters faced ruining all the

AFP, Berlin

Andriy Shevchenko has shrugged off his slow start to life at Chelsea and insisted he is happy with his decision to swap AC Milan for the Premiership champions.

The striker has scored just one league goal in seven games since his £30million summer transfer from Milan.

He will lead out Ukraine against Italy at the Stadio Olimpico for their Euro 2008 qualifier on Saturday hoping to rediscover his goal touch in the country where he was a prolific scorer

'Players go through difficult times and it happens to everyone,' said Shevchenko, who turned 30 last week. 'But I feel young and full of energy.

The frontman is determined to

Shevchenko is still idolised by the make a success of his move to England. red-and-black half of Milan after He said: 'I chose Chelsea and I scoring 173 goals in seven seasons. He helped Milan to the Serie A

show that finishes once the game is 'I understand the foreigners who

speak English and then (Frank) Lampard and (John) Terry help me Much has been said about

Shevchenko and Roman Abramovich's relationship, but the striker says he receives no special treatment from Chelsea's Russian have been a drama. owner.

'I am not Abramovich's golden boy,' Shevchenko told Gazzetta dello Sport. 'I am just a player and he is my president, he takes care of all his players.



'Mr. Domenech and Mr.

Parisien in an interview on Tuesday. Germany that he felt he should be the number one. Domenech pre-

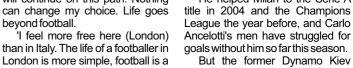
which they lost on penalties to Italy.

disappointment', added Coupet, who has become France's number one since the World Cup. 'It was like being kicked in the face.'

will continue on this path. Nothing

over

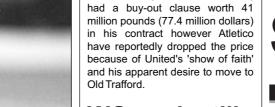
out.



goals without him so far this season. But the former Dynamo Kiev man was happy to have avoided his old Milan team-mates in the

Champions League group stages. 'Chelsea is a very strong team, who fight to win everything just like Milan,'he added.

The only thing that I wanted in the Champions League is to avoid meeting Milan. To have played against my former team-mates immediately after my move would





their hopes of BARCLAYS 😋 taking their first win of the

drawing 3-3 with Fulham. Marlon King and Ashley Young

level.

"Will we be punished? These

Premiership newbovs Watford saw

UEFA were waiting for reports from the match delegate and the referee before deciding whether to follow up the complaint, the British newspaper report said.

If found guilty Benfica could be hit with a heavy fine or ordered to play one or more games behind Agents under microscope closed doors.

Abraham and **Pospech get Czech call**

AFP, Prague

Czech manager Karel Bruckner on Tuesday called up midfielder Martin Abraham and defender Zdenek Pospech to his squad to fill injury gaps for upcoming Euro-2008 qualification matches against San Marino and the Republic of Ireland.

Abraham, 28, one of the architects of Czech first division club Mlada Boleslav's surprise success in reaching the group stages of the UEFA cup, is called up to the national squad for the first time. Pospech, the 27-year-old Sparta Prague player, has been selected twice before

Bruckner has been forced to fill gaps left by injuries to recent star player, Glasgow Rangers' Libor Sionko, and Tomas Galasek

The Czechs play San Marino at home on October 7 and travel to Ireland on October 11 with maximum points so far after victories against Wales and Slovakia.

"The versatile style of Pospech will help us to cancel out on the right side the Irish game, which is quite strong on the left flank. Abraham, has been in my sights for six months already," Bruckner explained.

Nuremburg's Galasek has a knee injury and Sionko a thigh strain.

Bruckner will also be unable to call on Sparta Prague midfielder Tomas Sivok, who hobbled off the pitch Monday in the derby game against Slavia Prague and now faces a stomach operation.

It left Watford manager Watford boss Adrian Boothroyd rather deflated

"We're that keen to get it (a win) close range after fine work by that that we get on the back foot Hameur Bouazza. rather than on the front foot," he

"At 2-0 up, we had a great start Ben Foster had to make a save to the second half and I would fully was on the hour mark from

his smart volley two minutes from attack and it was no surprise when the hosts doubled their lead time gave Niemi no chance and through Young, who scored from allowed the hosts at least to save their honour if not nthe three points they looked to have earned

be monitored in a lot closer way."

Harry Redknapp, the Portsmouth

manager who was featured in BBC

Panorama's recent probe into trans-

fers, said of the Lord Stevens-led

Almost the first time that earlier in the match. Watford's highly-rated 'keeper

shortly before the finals when he left France's training camp with family and luggage before deciding to return. 'I was being myself when

cracked,' he said. 'At that moment it was like I couldn't breathe. I had to do it

'If it had been possible, I would have gone all the way and I wouldn't have come back, but that would have meant offering them my career and I didn't want that.'

Court between **Bellamy and** captaincy

AFP, Cardiff

Craig Bellamy has been named as stand-in Wales captain for their upcoming Euro 2008 qualifiers, despite having to appear in court on assault charges between the matches against Slovakia and Cyprus.

Wales boss John Toshack announced his surprise decision to appoint the Liverpool striker as a temporary replacement for the injured Ryan Giggs on Tuesday, even though he has admitted Bellamy could have difficulty concentrating on football. Wales play Slovakia on Saturday and Cyprus the following

Cardiff Magistrates court on the Monday to face a charge of assaulting two women in a nightclub in the city in February. he were to be found quilty.

Toshack said last month: "It will be no problem in the week leading up to Slovakia on the Saturday although I know he must be concerned about what is going to hap-

22 "Ă

pen "But in the days before we play Cyprus on the Wednesday, we know he will be in court. "That must be playing on his mind. I would hope and expect him to play in both matches, knowing him as I do. But it is something we will have to think about. I am not

sure how we will handle the training situation with Craig. He will be in court while we are working, I will look into how we manage that.'

Belgian defender Daniel van Buyten (R) stretches during a training session of the Belgium national team in Kraainem on Monday.

By Eugene Sheffer CROSSWORD ACROSS 42 Shock 4 "--- the 23 Small 1 Gold mold partne ramparts salamar 44 Decides 6 Blue der 12 Enco-46 Olympian 5 Alterna 24 "Birds mium tive to feather aueen 50 Shep writer buses 25 "Casa-13 Stimulate herd's 6 Geiger blanca' 14 Ravel aide counter pianist master 52 Brunch 26 Poppins measures work order 7 Angry prop.. 15 Vintage 54 Sign up 28 ... and 8 Trinity 55 Obliged Elton membe similar John song by law 9 Hastily shaders 56 Hans 16 Lotion consumed 30 "No seats" additive Brinker's alcoholic 31 Recipe 17 For fear equip drinks meas. that ment 10 Second-33 Midafter 19 LPs' 57 Wander hand noon on a 11 Congers SUCCES sundial DOWN sors 12 Mideast-34 Light 20 Action 1 Pedestal ern touch figure occupant robe 39 Equilib 2 Conten-18 Periodic rium mouse! dere Table 41 Remove 24 Columbus preceder entry fleece 42 Dogfight sch. 3 Avarice 21 Hooter 27 Sob battlers Solution time: 27 mins. 29 Clenched 43 Nerd hand 45 House 32 Jalee hold White members sitcom 47 Exile isle 35 Both 48 Hinge (Pref.) (on) 36 Antitoxins 49 Broke a 37 Bribe fast 38 Wardrobe 51 Torched 53 Cammalfunction bridge 40 Siestas sch.

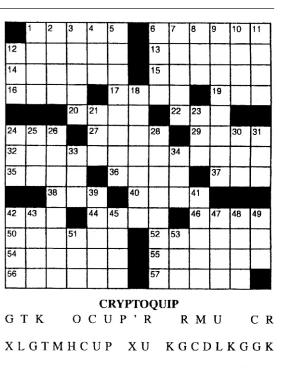


PHOTO: AFF

YMMO GM YK WXZZKA "GTK FHCUWK XUA GTK FHMFKH.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN SOMEONE INSTALLS STEREOS IN AUTOMOBILES, WOULD HE BE CALLED A CAR-TUNE CHARACTER? Today's Cryptoquip Clue: G equals T

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.

AFP. London allegations of corruption in football.

Football

inspection - after only 65 out of 150 cooperated with the investigation.

that 39 of them involving eight clubs

Roughly half of those involve under their "powers of inquiry" - and

duct charge An FA spokesman said: "We have co-operated fully with the Stevens inquiry so far and will continue to do so. If we are asked to try to obtain information from agents under our powers of inquiry we will, of course, do so."

The identities of the eight clubs involved, and the 39 transfers, are being kept secret - but if they are deemed to have involved illegal details to the Premier League, FA and

promise that."

Football agents could be forced to reveal details of their bank accounts by the Premier League's inquiry into

Former Metropolitan Police commissioner Lord Stevens, who is leading the inquiry, said his team may use Football Association rules to force agents to open their accounts for

Lord Stevens looked into all 362 transfers that took place in the Premier League between January 1, 2004 and January 31, 2006 - and said Monday

will be investigated further over the next two months.

foreign transfers, and half are domestic transfers. The FA confirmed they have the right to request information from licensed agents' bank accounts

those who failed to do so risk a miscon-

payments then Lord Stevens will pass if necessary the police.

Lord Stevens told a news conference in London: "We will do everything we possibly can to find out the truth; I Stevens will also be given all the

cover investigation into illegal payments Stevens also revealed that important information had been received from individuals who were prepared to

go on the record, but also by anonymous tip-offs

evidence uncovered by the BBC's

Panorama programme in their under-

Sheffield United, Reading, Watford and Leeds have been cleared of further involvement in the investigation - because none of that quartet traded any players in the Premiership during the specified period of the inquiry.

Meanwhile Professional Footballers' Association chief executive Gordon Taylor believes a permanent independent body to oversee transfers would have a positive influence on the game

PFA chief Taylor said: "On a confidential basis to an independent body. there is no reason why clubs and the people who have been involved in such transactions should not have to open up their books and bank accounts to make sure there is no impropriety. That has to be done better inde-

pendently and with confidentially rather than being looked at by people from within the game.

Stevens' Premier League inquiry into transfer irregularities will prove the "catalyst" which cleans up English football, according to expert observer Graham Bean

Former Football Association compliance officer Bean told Sky Sports News: "Irrespective of what this inquiry discovers in the next couple of months, I think it is a catalyst for the

"It will be the start of the clean-up of the game. From now onwards, the whole transfer system will end up being completely overhauled and will

inquiry: "It has needed to all come out in the open - and that is not a problem. "Whatever happens, we'll wait and see but for me it is not a problem."

Torino stand by Zaccheroni

AFP, Rome

Torino president Urbano Cairo said Tuesday he was not considering sacking Alberto Zaccheroni as coach, despite the club's poor start to the Serie Aseason.

Newly-promoted to Italy's top division, Torino are without a win in their five matches played having drawn twice and been beaten three

Zaccheroni came under fire from he Torino fans following last Saturday's crushing 4-0 home defeat to Lazio, but Cairo insists his coach is staying put.

"Zaccheroni's position is not at risk," Cairo said. "He has all my confidence

"There have been many changes with lots of new players coming in, and they need time to settle. All that is needed is a little patience."

Zaccheroni was hired just three days before the new campaign to replace Gianni De Biasi, who had a falling-out with Cairo over the club's future.

Zaccheroni was coach of AC Milan when they won the league title in the 1998-99 season. He has also been in charge of Udinese, Lazio and Inter

Wednesday. Bellamy is due at

He denies the charge, which could result in a prison sentence if