

Puyol out of Depor clash

REUTERS, Madrid

Barcelona captain Carles Puyol has pulled out of Saturday's Primera Liga clash at Deportivo Coruna following the death of his father, the club said on their Web site on Friday.

Spanish media reported that Josep Puyol, 56, had died in a work-related accident.

League leaders Barcelona will be without defender Puyol, injured striker Samuel Eto'o and Eidur Gudjohnsen and midfielder Xavi against Deportivo.

Hamburg without Kompany

AFP, Hamburg

SV Hamburg's Belgian international defender Vincent Kompany has been sidelined with another injury that will keep him out for at least a month, the Bundesliga side said Friday.

Kompany picked up an Achilles heel injury on his left foot during the 3-1 Champions League defeat to FC Porto.

The 20-year-old, who arrived from Anderlecht in the summer, has already spent three weeks on the sidelines in September because of a groin problem.

As well as clocking four defeats from four Champions League group matches so far, SV Hamburg are also struggling in the German top flight this season.

The northern side are 15th ahead of their trip to Wolfsburg, who are 14th, on Saturday.

Cassano down on his knees

Football

INTERNET, undated

Antonio Cassano has been frozen out at Real Madrid and sensationally begged for a reconciliation with Roma and Francesco Totti on television.

"I would gladly walk all the way if it meant returning to Roma," said the fiery Italian on TeleRoma56.

Cassano was signed for 20 million pounds in 2001 from Bari and was a success story, but Fabio Capello's departure, contract disputes and the souring of his rapport with captain Totti saw him become a pariah in the capital.

"I am playing for the strongest side in the world, but if I could go back and do it again, I don't know if I'd leave Roma, seeing as I was loved there. In fact, I'd gladly return on foot."

He was frozen out for six months before he was finally sold to Real Madrid in January for just over 5 million pounds, but his troublesome nature has caused problems there as well.

This week he was punished for insulting Coach Capello and it's possible he'll never play for the Merengues again.

"If I could go back in time, I'd stay at Roma for life and, considering how much the fans loved me, I should've stayed quiet and accepted the jeers. I care a great deal about the city and the club."

He had been heavily linked with moves to Milan or Inter, but could a shock comeback for the Giallorossi be on the cards?

"I made a mistake with Totti. We were both perhaps a little too proud and let banal issues turn into huge problems. I should've sent him a

message of congratulations for the birth of his son Cristian. We were great friends, but I let my pride get in the way. I would do a lot of things differently if I went back in time."

Not only might this open the door to a Serie A return, but also to playing alongside his former friend Totti for the Azzurri squad.

"I made a lot of errors, with many people, but it wasn't all my fault. My mistakes were always made spontaneously and with honesty. Am I expecting a call from Totti? It depends on him, but you should never say

never. Life is beautiful because we have dreams. Roma will always have a place in my heart."

The Giallorossi are on the look-out for a January signing to boost their attack and Cassano could fit into Luciano Spalletti's system.

"I can see myself in Spalletti's team. You need the players to put in the effort and I have lost weight and am more open to new ideas. This is the club where I found fame and I keep them in my heart."



ANTONIO CASSANO

Bochum win battle of strugglers

REUTERS, Berlin

Bochum climbed off the bottom of the Bundesliga thanks to a 2-0 win at fellow strugglers Hanover 96 on Friday.

Czech defender Pavel Drsek put Bochum ahead in the fourth minute, arriving late at the far post to tap in a free kick from the left.

Theofanis Gekas missed two easy chances to increase the lead when he was put clean through on goal but the Greece striker made amends in the 76th minute when he ran on to a header to poke the ball past the keeper.

Bochum, with eight points from 10 matches, move up to 16th. Hanover, on seven points, slip two places to the bottom of the table, behind Mainz on goal difference.

Werder Bremen will try to extend their three-point lead when they host Energie Cottbus in one of six games on Saturday.

Second-placed Bayern Munich are not in action until Sunday when they visit third-placed Schalke 04.

Makiadi extends Wolfsburg deal

AFP, Wolfsburg

Wolfsburg midfielder Cedrick Makiadi has extended his contract until 2010, the German first division club said on Friday.

The 22-year-old Democratic of Congo-born German had joined Wolfsburg in 2004 and his professional contract had been set to expire next year.

Makiadi scored his only goal for the club on the final day of last season which saved Wolfsburg from relegation.

This season they are in 14th spot in the Bundesliga and host SV Hamburg on Saturday.

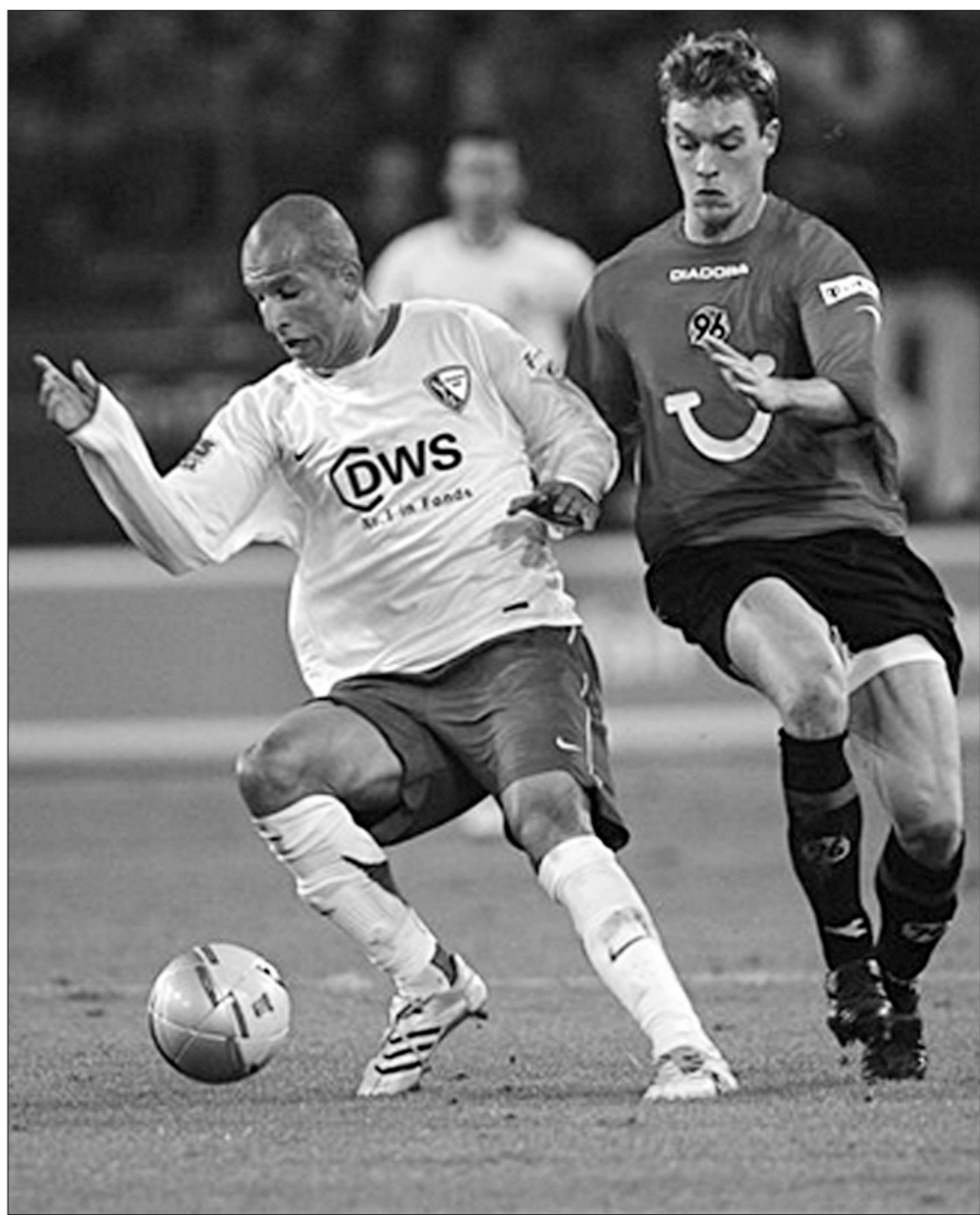


PHOTO: INTERNET

Bochum's Fabio Junior (L) controls the ball as Hanover's Hanno Balitsch tries to challenge from behind during their Bundesliga match at the AWD Arena in Hanover on Friday.

Wenger attacks quota proposal

Football

INTERNET, undated

Arsene Wenger believes any moves to impose quotas of 'home-grown' players on a team's starting XI would be doomed to failure.

FIFA and the international players' union, who yesterday signed a 'memorandum of understanding', have proposed the implementation of a six plus five system, whereby six members of a side must be eligible to play for the club's national association.

But Wenger feels players must always be picked on their ability, and not their passport.

"It is not to protect the national identity, it is to protect the national teams, their competitions, and their incomes," said the Arsenal manager.

"Football bodies have to care about the level of the game -- the level of the game does not mean protect mediocrity."

When Arsenal reached the Champions League final last season, they only had two Englishmen in their starting XI -- Sol Campbell and Ashley Cole. Both have now left the club.

Defender Justin Hoyte is likely to be the solitary Englishman in the side when the Gunners line up to face West Ham on Sunday.

The Arsenal boss was criticised by the Hammers manager Alan Pardew last season following the Champions League victory over Real Madrid for not placing enough emphasis on home-grown talent.

It is a stance Wenger has always vehemently rejected -- and

at the time accused Pardew of hypocrisy and racism.

"I would never like to feel somebody is better than me, but sits on the bench just because he does not have the right passport," Wenger added.

"I am just concerned that when you love football, you have not got to act this way and be big enough, and capable enough to say 'you do not play because you are not good enough'."

"Elite sport is first about quality. That is what I fight for."

Wenger believes such a system would be cheating the fans who part with their hard-earned cash at the gates.

The Arsenal boss added: "What can you say to a guy who pays money to watch your team? This player's first touch is not good, yes, we know but he is English. What can I do?"

"You are telling them 'yes, okay he is not good enough, but we have to play him because he is from the right country.'"

"I would like to say, 'listen, whether he English, South African, French or South American, he is a good football player.'"

"You say to a player, 'you play because you are better'. I have always done that in my life."

Wenger declared: "It is contestable because it is not defensible."

How can you stop somebody from playing? Because just within the European Union, you cannot stop him from playing.

"It is a rule which cost a lot of time and money to produce, that will not resist the first challenge in the European Court."

"It will be destroyed."

Pardew under scrutiny

AFP, London



West Ham manager Alan Pardew may feel he has a point to prove to Arsenal when the two sides meet in the Premiership at Upton Park on Sunday.

Last season he infuriated Arsene Wenger, the Arsenal manager, by questioning his decision to field an entire side of foreigners in the Champions League.

Pardew has always been a man to encourage the development of young British players, but Wenger felt his comments were a form of racism.

Their meeting this weekend will be the first time they have come face-to-face since their row in the media.

Pardew is eager to play their

feelings towards each other down, but is likely to make a mark of his own by leaving Argentinian pair, Carlos Tevez and Javier Mascherano, out of his side.

"I mentioned at the time it was shame there wasn't an Englishman and it got sensationalised into something completely different. I haven't actually seen him since saying that although obviously I have followed them very closely because I am a great admirer of what they do over there."

"I'm certainly a big fan of the way they play as most managers are. I haven't got a problem with Arsenal's way or with anything they do."

West Ham ended a run of eight straight defeats with a victory over Blackburn last weekend, and it was intriguing that the win came from a lineup which did not include either of his South American signings.

Wenger, for one, is not expecting to

see either Tevez or Mascherano on show.

He said: "They didn't play and West Ham won against Blackburn so I don't expect them to play against us."

But Wenger is wary of the threat of veteran forward Teddy Sheringham, who is almost certain to start.

Pardew is confident that it will be his side who come out on top in this eagerly awaited London derby.

He warned: "Obviously, we've still got a tremendous amount of battling to do to climb back up the league. And although one victory won't propel us up into a comfortable place in the Premiership, we've shown tremendous bravery and it's good that we're now out of the bottom three."

Vieri to sue Moratti

INTERNET, Undated



Christian Vieri's fury at Inter spying on him has not abated, as the striker has begun proceedings to sue patron Massimo

Moratti.

The Italian football world was stunned to discover that the Nerazzurri had been tailing players to keep tabs on their movements and reportedly even illegally wiretapping their phone calls.

Vieri was the chief target, but the Federation does not seem ready to progress further with sanctions after the initial investigation.

This further infuriated the ex-Milan and Juventus star, who said he felt "utterly betrayed" by the revelations.

According to today's 'Gazzetta dello Sport', Vieri has now officially requested permission from the FIGC to take Inter and patron Moratti to court in a civil action.

Italian footballers are held by a clause in their contracts so they cannot go to the civil courts against another member of the

Federation unless they are given special permission.

"We have asked for the paperwork from the official investigation into this case so that we can evaluate our next steps," said Vieri's lawyer, Danilo Buongiorno. "Unfortunately, the sporting justice system's route in this matter is a sterile one."

Although the FIGC's inquiry hasn't yet been completed, it's expected to be shelved, so Vieri has already taken steps to continue his legal battle for compensation in court.

12x3

Tevez rubbishes Barca link

Football

INTERNET, undated

Carlos Tevez's agent Adrian Rouco has rejected claims the West Ham striker has received an offer from European champions Barcelona.

Reports have suggested the Spanish giants had contacted the Hammers to ask about taking the Argentina international as cover for injured striker Eidur Gudjohnsen.

Gudjohnsen picked-up an ankle injury during Tuesday's 2-2 draw with Chelsea in the Champions League and -- with fellow forward Samuel Eto'o a long-term casualty -- it was claimed Barcelona asked for information about former Boca Juniors and Corinthians forward Tevez.

However, Rouco denied there was any approach.

"These kind of things are always managed through formal offers," he said. "If there is anything, the player and I have to be informed. If I have not been told anything, it means that there's nothing official."

"All the rest is speculation, as has been going on for several months."

Tevez joined West Ham in a controversial transfer at the end of August from Brazilian club Corinthians along with compatriot Javier Mascherano, but has so far struggled to impress in English football.

Up to now, there has been no official offer," said Rouco. "It is all speculation. If it wasn't, this information would be more important. Tevez stays at West Ham."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 35 Send quickly into stat 36 Hearing-related 4 Small stream 8 Counterfeit 12 401(k) alternative 13 On the briny 14 Stratagem 15 "Yellow" band 17 Send out 18 No longer 19 Ram's name 21 Bunkhouse 22 Second showing 26 Re Ra 29 Calendar abbr. 30 Rage 31 Helen's home 32 Cover \$50, in "Monopoly" 34 Past 35 Send quickly into stat 36 Hearing-related 37 Side action 39 Pigs' digs 40 Detergent brand 41 Top secret? 45 Exile Isle 48 Puns et al. 50 Chicken band 51 Dumb-struck 52 Earlier then 53 Duel tool 54 Evergreens 55 Plus DOWN 11 Bumped into 1 Cinderella's horses, originally 2 College employee, for short 3 Fair share, often 4 Bird of prey et al. 5 Geographical speck 6 Grazing area 7 In tiers 8 Wield a broom 9 That guy 10 Actress MacGraw 11 Bumped into 16 Rot 20 Surfing spot 23 Story teller? 24 Met melody 25 'Holler 26 Impale 27 Unrestrained goings-on 28 Aerobic maneuver 29 Predicament 32 Payment plan 33 Purchase the entire stock 35 Distant 36 Arguing 38 Furlough 39 Scatter 42 Entirely 43 Deserve 44 Black-- Susan 45 -- out a living 46 Back talk 47 Spell-down 49 Be indebted to

Grid for Cryptiquip puzzle with numbers 1-55.

CRYPTOQUIP Z X U Y G U W W U G G V Y G B P Y W I X Y Y W U N R K Y R U G V B W Z G W Q S Z G Y S G P . X Z Q B B W Z G W U C K P X I N X C C P G C C . Yesterday's Cryptiquip: I LOVE FUZZY FRUIT SO MUCH THAT I'VE CONSIDERED SIGNING MYSELF UP FOR PEACH THERAPY. Today's Cryptiquip Clue: U equals N The Cryptiquip 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.