

Juve target Spanish ace

INTERNET, undated

Juventus are eyeing a move for Valencia's David Villa and have offered the Spanish side 5.7-million-pounds plus Marcelo Zalayeta for the player's services...

Bianconeri sporting director Alessio Secco was reportedly in Spain in the past few days and met Amedeo Carboni, who confirmed that the Primera Liga side values the player at 17.8 million pounds.

The Old Lady allegedly offered Valencia a swap deal including striker Zalayeta plus cash as their return to Serie A becomes more and more certain as the weeks go by.

Villa, who is also a target for Inter, landed in Valencia in 2005 and scored an impressive 25 League goals last season, finishing one goal behind top scorer Samuel Eto'o of Barcelona.

The Spanish international had a row with Coach Quique Flores last week and has seemingly asked the club to leave, despite being contracted until 2013.

Meanwhile, Juventus are set to extend the contracts of Alessandro Del Piero and Pavel Nedved, which will include roles for after their playing career.

Rumours have suggested Del Piero may be given the Presidency of the Turin outfit, although this has not ended speculation that he may receive an offer to end his career in Japan.

Wenger regrets Pardew spat

REUTERS, London

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger said on Sunday he regretted his spat with West Ham United coach Alan Pardew but he had been provoked by a lack of respect.

Both men have been charged with improper conduct by the Football Association after the touchline flare-up at the end of West Ham's 1-0 victory at Upton Park last weekend.

Pardew has apologised for his exuberant celebrations while Wenger, who will not seek a personal hearing from the FA, finally broke his silence after Sunday's 3-0 win over Liverpool.

"I think Alan Pardew apologised because he was conscious that I felt provoked in a disrespectful way in my area," Wenger told a news conference.

"I reacted -- and I regret it, because you should never react."

"For the rest, I accept his apologies and life goes on. It was still a small incident. Two managers had a disagreement."

Wenger, who has until Nov. 23 to respond to the charge, said: "I will not specially demand a hearing because for me the incident is over, I will not specially want to travel to the FA for that."

"I've been on a bench for 22 years and I know when I'm right and when I'm wrong and that's it."

"I feel I'm adult enough to know that when I do not do right I have to accept it."

Wenger was also quizzed about his refusal to talk to the media since the game.

"The fact that I didn't speak was not linked at all with the incident...it was purely for sporting reasons," he said without elaborating.

Writing about the spat in his programme notes before the victory over Liverpool, Wenger said: "I will give my explanations for what happened when the time comes but I will say that there is always a reason for a reaction."

"I chose not to speak to the media after the game and during the week because I believe there was no need to make any more out of it than what happened."

"Also I thought it was important for me to take the chance to reflect on the overall performance of the team."

It's Arsenal or nothing: Henry

Football

AFP, Paris

French striker Thierry Henry has pledged to stay with Arsenal to the end of his career.

The 29-year-old recently signed a new deal with the London club taking him through to 2010 and despite the Gunners stuttering start to the season he says he has no regrets.

"My intention is to stay with Arsenal to the rest of my career," he told L'Equipe sports daily.

"I am happy here and could never play for another English side."

"If by chance Barcelona wanted to sign me, with all the respect I have for this club, the answer would be no."



Stuttgart players are ecstatic at the end of their Bundesliga match against Hannover on Sunday. Stuttgart won the match 2-1.

Stuttgart topple Bremen

AFP, Berlin

VfB Stuttgart replaced Werder Bremen at the top of the Bundesliga with a 2-1 comeback win over Hannover on Sunday.

Bremen lost 3-1 to Borussia Dortmund on Friday to give their rivals a chance and Stuttgart took full advantage to reach the summit for the first time since October 2004.

"It is great to go top but we have to keep our feet on the ground as it is a long season," said Stuttgart goalkeeper Timo Hildebrand. "We have to build on this now and make sure we have a good season."

Hannover, who beat Bayern Munich 1-0 in midweek, took the lead after 13 minutes through Israeli midfielder Jan Rosenthal but Stuttgart showed great spirit and were ahead ten minutes into the second half.

German international Thomas Hitzlsperger equalised in the 49th minute and Brazilian forward Cacau added another five minutes later.

"Hannover played well but we knew we could come back and did just that," said Stuttgart coach Armin Veh. "If anything we should have scored a third goal."

Stuttgart, the surprise package of this season, are now top of the table leading Bremen and Schalke by one point.

Reigning champions Bayern

Munich are four points back in fourth.

Schalke were another title hopeful to take advantage of Bremen's slip crushing strugglers Mainz 05 4-0 on Saturday.

Former German international Kevin Kuranyi and Turkish striker Halil Altintop both scoring a brace to help the Gelsenkirchen club join Bremen on 23 points.

"We exploited the gaps very intelligently and scored some great goals," said Schalke coach Mirko Slomka.

"We are delighted with the result and the performance. It is nice for both our strikers to score too as there is no better tonic for forwards than goals."

Bayern also capitalised on Bremen's defeat against Dortmund with a thrilling 3-2 win at Bayer Leverkusen.

Reigning champions Bayern looked to be heading for their second loss in a week, following their humiliating 1-0 home defeat to Hannover, with Brazilian Athirson putting Leverkusen ahead 2-1 in the 80th minute.

However Martin Demichelis levelled three minutes later and Peruvian striker Claudio Pizarro scored an 86th minute winner in a thrilling finale.

"Of course I am relieved. On Friday it looked like we would be nine points behind Bremen and now we are three points adrift," said Bayern coach Felix Magath.

"We knew it would be a difficult season and it really has been. Now we just need to try and be at the top

going into the winter break."

In contrast Leverkusen coach Michael Skibbe was furious at his team for throwing the game away in the final ten minutes.

"I am so annoyed that we were not able to control the game at 2-1 and could not put it to bed," explained Skibbe.

At the wrong end of the table SV Hamburg manager Thomas Doll was left seething as his team drew 1-1 with Borussia Monchengladbach.

Danielj Ljuboja scored on 66 minutes to put Hamburg ahead but Oliver Neuville equalised six minutes from time.

It was Doll's 100th game in charge and prior to the game there was speculation that defeat against Gladbach, who had lost all their other away matches, would cost him his job.

A draw leaves Hamburg fourth from bottom and Doll's future remains unclear.

"A 1-1 is not enough as we wanted much more," admitted Doll. "It has been a bad week for us and we need to start cutting out the mistakes."

Table with 7 columns: Team, P, W, D, L, GF, GA, Pts. Lists Stuttgart, Bremen, Schalke, Bayern, Bielefeld, Hertha.

Germany plagued by injuries

Football

AFP, Frankfurt

Arsenal goalkeeper Jens Lehmann on Sunday pulled out of the Germany squad to face Cyprus in Wednesday's Euro 2008 qualifier because of flu.

Lehmann missed the English side's 3-0 win over Liverpool on Sunday and the 37-year-old told national coach Joachim Loew that he would not be able to make the trip to Nicosia for the midweek Group D clash.

Robert Enke, the Hannover goalkeeper has been called into the squad, but Stuttgart's Timo Hildebrand is expected to start the tie on Wednesday.

Earlier Sunday, Loew said Cyprus would be their most difficult opponents to date.

Germany have won all three of their qualifiers so far and lie second in group D -- a point behind the

Czech Republic with a game in hand -- but Low expects the game against Cyprus to test his side to the limit.

"There is no reason to underestimate this Cyprus team. Cyprus have shown that already with a 5-2 win over Ireland," explained Loew.

"They are our strongest opponents up until now, stronger than Ireland and Slovakia."

It is the final competitive match of the year for Germany, third at the World Cup, and Loew believes a win would be the perfect platform with some home games to come in 2007.

"After three away games we will have made an important step towards the European Championships and have a super platform for our home matches in the new year," explained Loew.

Germany have doubts over Bayer Leverkusen midfielder Bernd Schneider who picked up a minor knee injury in Saturday's 3-2 defeat to Bayern Munich.

Bayern striker Lukas Podolski is also injured and Low must pick either Mike Hanke or Oliver Neuville to partner Miroslav Klose in attack.



Barcelona star Ronaldinho points to the heavens after his match-winning exploits against Primera Liga rivals Real Zaragoza at the Nou Camp on Sunday.

Rivaldo rolls back the years

REUTERS, Athens

A hatrick for Rivaldo ensured that Olympiakos Piraeus remained top of the Super League with a 5-0 thrashing of Apollon Kalamaria on Sunday.

They had lost briefly lost their lead when Panathinaikos, playing in an earlier game, beat Ergotelis 1-0, but were quick to reassert themselves.

AEK Athens joined in the Sunday goalfest when they also hammered Larissa 5-0.

After 10 rounds, Olympiakos head the table with 24 points, two ahead of Panathinaikos who are just one point clear of AEK.

Panathinaikos's win in Crete which came courtesy of a stunning long-range drive from Brazilian Ricardo Bovi.

Greece's two Champions League hopefuls, Olympiakos and AEK, however, eclipsed that.

Rivaldo took the individual honours, cashing in on good supply work from his colleagues to be able to stab home from close range for each of his goals. He is the Super League's top scorer with seven in the campaign.

Predrag Djordjevic and Yiannis Okkas scored the other goals.

AEK took the lead in the 10th minute through a Gustavo Manduca header.

Nikos Liberopoulos scored a second in the 57th minute and three goals in the last five minutes added a gloss to the final result.

PAOK moved above Egaleo into fourth after their 2-0 win over them on Saturday while Kerkyra climbed to sixth when they beat OFI Crete 1-0.

Brazil wins Beach Soccer World Cup

AP, Rio de Janeiro

Brazil scored two goals in the final period to beat Uruguay 4-1 Sunday and win FIFA's Beach Soccer World Cup.

Buru, Duda, Benjamin and Sidney scored a goal each for the hosts, who clinched their 10th beach soccer title. Brazil was held to third place in FIFA's inaugural tournament last year on Copacabana beach.

Brazil won all six of its matches en route to this year's title, its first since 2004.

Buru scored first in the first period, while Uruguay equalised in the second with a goal by Ricar. Brazil retook the lead still in the second when Benjamin scored, and Duda and Sidney sealed the victory with third-period goals in front of nearly 7,000 fans.

Defending champion France, upset by Uruguay in the semifinals, finished third by beating Portugal 6-4 in a rematch of last year's final.

This year's tournament had 16 teams, four more than in 2005. More than 40 nations tried to qualify for the competition.

Portugal striker Madjer finished as the tournament's leading scorer with 21 goals.

The championship trophy was presented to Brazil captain Junior Negao by former FIFA president Joao Havelange.

Beach soccer is played on a sand field about 40 meters (120 feet) long and 30 meters (90 feet) wide. Each match is divided into three periods of 12 minutes, and substitutions are unlimited.

C'Ron declares himself fit

INTERNET, undated

Cristiano Ronaldo seems set to defy Sir Alex Ferguson by playing in Portugal's Euro 2008 qualifier with Kazakhstan on Wednesday.

The Manchester United winger suffered an ankle injury in his side's Premiership win at Blackburn on Saturday.

Although Ferguson released Ronaldo for international duty, he also stated his wish for the 21-year-old to be excused the game in Coimbra, which Portugal need to win after making a poor start to their qualifying campaign.

However, the former Sporting Lisbon star is keen to be involved and has reassured his country of his determination to face the Eastern Europeans.

"I am fine," said Ronaldo. "It was just a small knock. I think one day or two will be enough to be back to 100%."

"The only thing I can say is that, on Wednesday, I will be fine for playing."

Meanwhile, Portugal coach Luiz Felipe Scolari has tipped Ronaldo to become a future captain of the national side.

"We are currently working on a leadership that will be important for the future of the national team with Ronaldo," said Scolari.

"I would like him to become one of the captains of the national team. He has charisma, he is young but he is learning very fast how to overcome some problems within a team."

Lille dump Marseille

AFP, Paris

Lille moved up to second in the French first division table after a 1-0 win over free-falling Marseille on Sunday.

The northerners jumped out 24 points, 10 adrift of runaway leaders Lyon, and two clear of a clutch of three teams on 22.

Midfielder Mathieu Bodmer was the match-winner scoring deep into first-half stoppage time with a scorching long-range effort.

The defeat leaves sorry Marseille with just four points and five defeats in their last seven matches.

It is a far cry from their impressive start to the season where they took 16 points from a possible 18 to stand side-by-side with five-in-a-row champions Lyon after six matches.

But it has been downhill ever since and the Mediterraneans have dropped to eighth, a massive 14 points off the leaders.

Monaco stormed out of the relegation zone with a 4-0 win at lowly Troyes in the day's other game.

The 2003 Champions League finalists had been bottom of the league but found their form in impressive style to notch up three second half goals after the hosts were reduced to 10 men.

Serge Gakpe gave Monaco the lead on 20 minutes and 12 minutes later Diego Perez was sent off for a second booking.

It took Monaco a while to break

down their stubborn opponents to make the game safe but when they did, the floodgates opened.

Camel Meriem scored from the spot on 73 minutes and five minutes from time Yaya Toure added the third. Former Italy forward Marco Di Vaio put the gloss on victory in stoppage time.

"It's too early to say that Monaco are cured but this is a big intake of oxygen," said coach Laurent Banide.

"When we apply ourselves right to the end we get the results we deserve. And if we start getting some confidence back as well, then we can start to play a bit more football."

On Saturday, goalkeeper Jeremie Janot played a starring role as St Etienne snatched a last gasp equaliser to share the spoils in a 2-2 draw at Nantes.

The hosts had looked on course for only their third win of the season as substitute Nourdin Boukhari scored with three minutes to play to give the 2001 champions a 2-1 lead.

But deep into stoppage time Janot sprinted up the pitch to take his place in the penalty box for a corner. He flummoxed three defenders with a piece of inadvertent skill and laid the ball on to defender Vincent Hognon to shoot home a dramatic late leveler.

The pressure is intensifying on Paris St Germain coach Guy Lacombe after the big-spending capital giants limped to a 1-1 draw at Le Mans.

Ivory Coast forward Bonaventure Kalou gave the visitors the lead from the spot on 11 minutes but Chiguy Lucau levelled things on 38 minutes.

It leaves PSG in 12th on 16 points, just six points above the relegation zone.

Third-placed Lens were held 0-0 at home by Rennes while climbing Toulouse beat rock-bottom Sedan 3-1.

Surprise-package Nancy dropped to fourth on goal difference after a 2-0 reverse at Lorient while Sochaux were held 0-0 at lowly Nice.

On Friday, Lyon had their centre-backs to thank for salvaging a 2-1 home win against plucky Valenciennes.

Sebastien Squillaci was absent without leave in the 76th minute as Steve Savidan turned Kris inside out and fired past France goalkeeper Gregory Coupet to give the visitors an unlikely lead on the break.

But on 85 minutes, Cris rose at the back post to send a looping header over Valenciennes keeper Nicolas Penneteau, who was caught flat-footed.

Penneteau was at fault again as he flapped at a cross from Jeremy Toulalan just a minute later, allowing Squillaci to flick the ball back over the keeper for a goal.

Table with 7 columns: Team, P, W, D, L, GF, GA, Pts. Lists Lyon, Lille, Lens, Nancy, Sochaux, St Etienne.



Brazil captain Junior Negao (No. 8) is flanked by teammates as he holds aloft the trophy after winning the final of the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup 2006 against Uruguay at the Copacabana beach in Rio de Janeiro on Sunday.

Spanish press full of Ronnie, RvN

REUTERS, Madrid

Barcelona playmaker Ronaldinho and Real Madrid striker Ruud van Nistelrooy shared top billing in the Spanish sports press on Monday after putting in commanding performances in the Primera Liga on the weekend.

The Brazilian scored two and set up a third for the European and Spanish champions to come from behind and beat Real Zaragoza 3-1 in a thrilling encounter in the Nou Camp that put them back to the top of the table.

Dutch striker Van Nistelrooy scored all four in a 4-1 away win over Osasuna to climb to third in the table, three points behind the leaders.

"Ronaldinho roars and wakes up Barcelona," said Spanish daily El Pais while Sport said: "Ronaldinho superstar."

Barca fell behind to a 16th minute

strike from Zaragoza before Ronaldinho started the fightback rising to score with a rare header in the 30th minute.

Then, with both sides down to 10 men, Ronaldinho stepped up to strike a superb free kick into the top corner, with four minutes remaining. In time added on he then blasted another against the crossbar, which Javier Saviola was able to nod in.

"Ronaldinho has been phenomenal. Tonight he has decided the game. What I like most of all is the commitment he has shown fighting to win the game until the very end," said Barca coach Frank Rijkaard.

"Scoring high-quality goals is something we almost expect from him. Today we have also seen him really competing to win."

Ronaldinho became the league's joint top scorer with eight goals and shrugged off doubts that he could be a matchwinner with Samuel Eto'o and now Lionel Messi out with long-term injuries.

Another player having to assume that role is Van Nistelrooy, who took his

tally for the season to eight in the league, with his fellow Real striker Ronaldo out injured for a month.

It also took his overall tally with Real to 13 goals from 15 games in all competitions.

"Van Gol" put on a goalscoring display in Pamplona. He does the work of two number nines," sports daily Marca said.

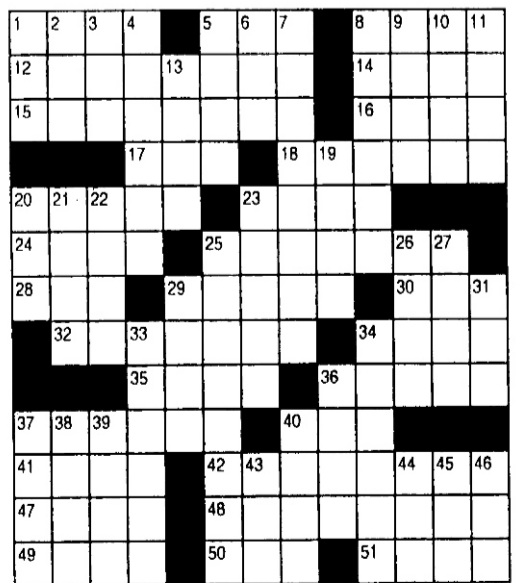
Van Nistelrooy's coach Fabio Capello said: "Van Nistelrooy has already proved he is a top class striker with a scent for goal that very few players in football have." But perhaps the warmest words of praise came from Osasuna's unfortunate goalkeeper Ricardo, who was teammates with Van Nistelrooy at Manchester United.

"After the game he came and apologised and asked to swap shirts, which I did, full of admiration for him because he is a great person," said Ricardo.

"That said, I could have killed him on the pitch."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 1 Herringway nickname 5 Decompose 8 Teensy bit 12 Force 14 Region 15 Doberman 16 Vocal range 17 Corn spike 18 Rose (marsh hibiscus) 20 McCartney cohort 23 Miami 24 Hyperventilate 25 Variety of duck 28 Qly. 29 Earthenware pots 30 Conk out 32 Arcade game 34 Dutch South African 35 Title 36 Worth 37 PBS dinosaur 40 Sermon subject 41 Ontario neighbor 42 Philippine volcano 47 Dryer 48 Wailed 49 Tramp's love 50 Bawl 51 Partner 5 Rhine feeder 6 Raw rock 7 Depot 8 Ornamental 9 Turnpike fee 10 Aware of next mile-stone 11 Cat call 13 Cicatrix 19 Performances 20 Hot tub 21 Quietly, in mus. 22 Oppositely 23 Country estate 24 Pack down 25 Oppositely 26 American 27 Steadfast 29 Reed instrument 31 Before fee 33 Octogenarian's next milestone 34 Small but feisty 36 Test tube 37 Plath's "The Jar" 38 Carreras rendition 39 Orange coat 40 Neglect contemptuously 43 U.N. work agcy. 44 Actress Hagen 45 Wager 46 Lyric poem



CRYPTOQUIP EMGBP UX BZY ZOLZXE OMCPE IAMGI ATY MG Z HALGDATK, HAPE YWZY UZCP WMU Z EWALPK DTEE? Saturday's Cryptoquip: SOMEONE ONCE SAID THAT ANY INEXPERIENCED PHOTOGRAPHER MUST TRY TO GET MORE EXPOSURE. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Y 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.