



PHOTO: AFP

A file photo dated November 21, 1953 shows Hungarian football legend Ferenc Puskas (C) about to shoot a ball during a training session with the workers of French carmaker Renault in the Paris suburb of Bulogne-Billancourt ahead of their famous victory over England in Wembley.

## Tributes pour in for Puskas

### Football

AFP, Madrid

Spanish giants Real Madrid led the tributes on Friday to their former star Ferenc Puskas following the Hungarian's death in Budapest at the age of 79.

"The name of Puskas is linked forever with the great triumphs at home and abroad of Real Madrid and especially the European Cup," the club said in a statement posted on its website.

"While expressing our deep sadness over his death, Real wants to thank a player who did so much for the club with his unmatched footballing talent and his great character."

Club chairman Ramon

Calderon said it had been the most painful day for him since he took over the presidency.

"He had many friends and was a man liked by everyone, admired as a professional and a person," Calderon said.

"I will remember his goals with much affection, he was the pichichi (top scorer in Spain) on four occasions."

"The Madrid fans in general, and those of my age in particular, will feel a great emptiness for the loss of one of our childhood heroes. I want to send a big hug to his all of his family and friends in these very painful moments."

The Hungarian-born legend spent his greatest years at Real Madrid where alongside Alfredo di Stefano he formed one of the deadliest duos in the history of

football.

In all Puskas scored 512 goals for Real in 528 games between 1958 and 1967 and in 1962 he took out Spanish citizenship in order to play for his adopted country in the World Cup finals of that year.

The German Football Federation (DFB) called Puskas "the best left-footer in football."

"The genial captain of the golden Hungarian national side of the 1950s was one of the all-time great characters of international football," DFB chairman Theo Zwanziger said.

"Our memories of him are of course closely linked in with the legendary World Cup final of 1954," he added referring to West Germany's upset 3-2 win over the Hungarians in the final of that year.

In Italy, former midfield supremo Gianni Rivera praised the power and skill of Puskas.

"I only played one match against him, but he was very at ease in all aspects of the attacking game and he colluded so well with Di Stefano because they saw the game the same way," he said.

Former England international Jimmy Hill told Sky Sports that at times Puskas could take your breath away with his skill and imagination.

"It was just quite staggering," he said. "He wasn't six foot and the most athletic footballer you've ever seen. He didn't stand out as a figure on the field except when the ball came to him. In England we didn't have players of that calibre."

## Ljungberg out of Newcastle clash

REUTERS, London

Arsenal's Sweden midfielder Freddie Ljungberg has joined Brazilian Gilberto as an absentee for Saturday's Premier League game with Newcastle United.

Ljungberg had been expected to end a six-week injury absence due to a calf problem when Arsene Wenger's side take on Newcastle, three days before their Champions League clash with Hamburg SV at the Emirates Stadium.

Wenger told reporters on Friday: "Freddie's out. He practised today and I nearly wanted to pick him, but he'll practise to be available for the squad on Tuesday."

Gilberto has returned to Brazil for family reasons and will fly back on Sunday. Wenger was non-committal over whether the midfielder would be fit for Tuesday's game.

"It depends how he will be physically and mentally," Wenger said. "He had to pull out of the Brazil squad in Switzerland and he has not trained all week."

Fellow Brazilian midfielder Julio Baptista is fit again after injury and goes into the squad.

## Federer not No 1

AFP, Shanghai

He's been top of the tennis world for almost three years, but Roger Federer has again missed out on being named the world's sexiest man.

Federer is featured in People magazine's "Sexiest Man Alive" issue but has missed out on the top ranking to Hollywood hunk George Clooney.

"It's a fun thing. We did the photo shoot in Basel during the Swiss indoors," he said.

"I asked who was on the cover, they wouldn't tell me. Now I know. Wasn't me, but I'm happy to be once again in that elite group of sexy people."

Federer appears in the section titled "Sexy Surroundings" in the magazine's "International Men of Sexiness".

The 25-year-old will also feature in next month's Vogue, where he reveals how girlfriend Mirka Vavrinec sparked his interest in clothes.

"When I started to date Mirka I had a couple of pairs of sneakers and one pair of jeans. Tennis players walk around in tracksuits non-stop, but I realized I'm a different person off the court and I didn't have to wear tennis gear all the time," the snappy dresser told the magazine.

"I thought I couldn't move in a suit. But it's just a matter of getting used to these things. So it's been an interesting last few years, finding the style I prefer most."

## Indonesia to appeal Fed Cup ban

AFP, Jakarta

Indonesian tennis officials said Friday they would appeal a \$1,600 dollar fine and one-year Fed Cup ban imposed by the International Tennis Federation (ITF) for cancelling playoff games against Israel in July.

The Indonesian Tennis Association (PELTI) was informed about the ban and fine last week, said August Ferry Raturandang, the association's deputy secretary general.

"We hope that the fine can be reduced and we can be allowed to participate in Fed Cup games next year," Raturandang told AFP.

"We will write an appeal as we have until December 20 to do so. If the ban stays, our ranking will further fall and it will take us at least three years to be back on the world group" zone of the Fed Cup, Raturandang said.

He said the July withdrawal against Israel was advised by Indonesia's foreign ministry based on "concerns for the safety and security of Indonesian athletes" had they travelled to Israel for the July 15-16 matches.

"We would have not withdrawn from playoff games solely based on political decisions because tennis is a sporting event," Raturandang added.

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, had wanted the world group II playoff match moved to a neutral third country, citing bitter ideological differences between the two sides.

Jakarta is a staunch supporter of the Palestinian struggle for nationhood and has no diplomatic ties with Israel.

## Cristiano's lofty ambitions

### Football

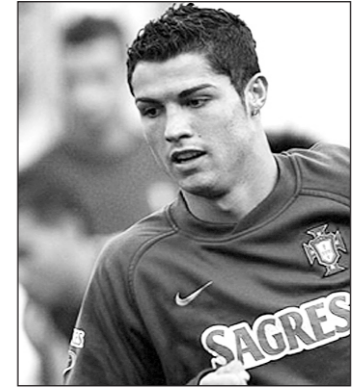
AFP, Lisbon

Manchester United's Portuguese striker Cristiano Ronaldo is working towards becoming the world's best footballer, he said in an interview published Friday in Portuguese sports daily Abola.

"It's one of my goals. I want to be up there. I would like to be the best player in the world. I have to work hard for that. Nothing is impossible," he told the newspaper.

The 21-year-old said taking part in the 2006 World Cup, during which Portugal lost to hosts Germany in the third-place playoff, had given him maturity and he hoped to surpass veteran Portuguese playmaker Luis Figo's football career.

"I am more mature, more confi-



CRISTIANO RONALDO

dent. The World Cup gave me experience. I have some things to fine tune, I'm not 100 percent complete," he said.

"Figo had a spectacular career. He's a big reference in Portuguese football. If he's not the greatest he is

among the greatest, beside Eusebio, Rui Costa, Fernando Couto, examples all of us young players must follow," he said.

"I hope to go as far as possible, win many titles, create my own image, which is built over the years. If my career is the same as that of Figo it already would be gratifying. But I want to do better than Figo. I have that ambition."

Figo announced in August that he would stop playing for Portugal after a 12-year career in which he was the country's standout player having scored 31 goals in 110 caps, a national record for appearances which he shares with Fernando Couto.

Figo's retirement from international football has placed more pressure on Ronaldo, who has come to be seen as the Inter Milan player's successor in the Portuguese national team.

## Nadal reaches last four

### Tennis

AFP, Shanghai

Rafael Nadal came from a set down against Nikolay Davydenko on Friday to set up an eye-catching Masters Cup semifinal with top-ranked Roger Federer.

The muscular world number two overcame a slow start and a left knee problem to break the Russian in the second and third sets, winning 5-7, 6-4, 6-4 in two hours and 43 minutes.

Nadal became the last player to qualify for the last four with James Blake already assured of top spot in the Gold Group.

Blake will meet defending champion David Nalbandian in the semifinals. The American was due to face the already eliminated Tommy Robredo in a dead rubber later on Friday.

In his first meeting with Davydenko, Nadal struggled with his serve and found his baseline game neutralised by the Russian in a first set that clocked in at 66 minutes. A nervy double fault at 5-6 cost him the set.

The Spaniard hit back immediately, converting his second break

point of the next game and levelling the match when Davydenko sent a forehand wide on set point.

Nadal appeared in trouble after the second game of the decider when he called for the personal trainer and had his left leg strapped below the knee.

But he rallied to conjure three break points at 3-3, converting the third when he forced Davydenko wide and the Russian netted with a forehand.

He faced his first break point of the set when serving for the match but thundered two service winners before winning his first match point when Davydenko fired wide.

Nadal is making his Masters Cup debut this year after missing the 2005 tournament with a foot injury.

The Spaniard dominated early in the season, beating Federer in four finals on the way to five titles, including his second consecutive French Open crown.

But his form slumped after he lost the Wimbledon final and he has not made it past the quarterfinals in any of his six regular-season tournaments since.

Davydenko has reached a career-high number three ranking after a globe-trotting year in which he played

31 tournaments before the Masters Cup.

The world's top eight players compete in the 4.45-million-dollar tournament, which is in a round-robin format ahead of the semi-finals and final on Saturday and Sunday.

## Tiger, Roger now on phone

AFP, Shanghai

Roger Federer has revealed a blossoming friendship with Tiger Woods after the two met here last week.

Federer watched Woods play at the HSBC Champions tournament and afterwards they went out to dinner.

"The world's top tennis player and golfer respectively, who first met at this summer's US Open, regularly keep in touch by phone, Federer said.

"We had a good time. He's a really relaxed and laid-back guy," he said.

"I spoke to him yesterday. He's in Japan now. I don't know how his round went, but I hope he's doing well."

## Old rivalry with renewed zest

AFP, Paris



Players, officials and fans from Marseille and Valenciennes are denying it but this weekend's clash between the pair is being dominated by unhappy memories of an infamous corruption scandal.

That happened 13 years ago and saw both teams relegated from the French first division.

Valenciennes have only just returned to the top flight for the first time since they paid a heavy price for helping Marseille fix a match during the 1993 season.

Marseille finished top of the table that year but were later stripped of their title and relegated.

Although it took Valenciennes 13 seasons to return to Ligue 1, they were never a big club in the first place and arguably it is Marseille who have been hit the hardest.

At the time they boasted

names such as Didier Deschamps, Fabien Barthez, Marcel Desailly, Alen Boksic and Rudi Voller.

They claimed the Champions League crown that year, the first French club ever to do so, and were regarded as one of European football's heavyweights.

But it was in fixing their final and decisive fixture of the domestic season against Valenciennes, in order to concentrate on the European final against AC Milan, that Marseille's demise began.

Despite heading back to the top flight just two years after their enforced relegation, Marseille have never since won their domestic title and are currently a long way from being able to put up a sustained challenge to Lyon, the dominant force in France.

Marseille currently sit eighth in the table, despite a stunning start in which they took 16 points from the first 18 on offer.

So the visit of Valenciennes will bring back uncomfortable memories for the Mediterranean outfit, despite the universal denials.

Goalkeeper Cedric Carrasso was 11 at the time of the scandal.

"I had just arrived at the club, I was a fan, even in division two," he said.

"But today we're not going to talk about the past which we have already suffered a long time ago."

"This match is remarkable, yes, but only because we have to take three points -- that's all."

However, not everyone was singing from the same songbook.

Striker Toifilou Maoulida said: "We have to win this match for our supporters because it was from this moment (the 1993 match against Valenciennes) that we started to have problems."

Valenciennes also want to forget the past. "Everyone is making a meal out of this but there are no more players or managers from that time," said Valenciennes president Francis Decourriere.

More important for both sides will be the matter of three points.

Marseille's early season promise has faltered and they need to kick-start their Champions League push, although without star player Franck Ribery who has a groin injury that could sideline him until the new year.

Valenciennes sit only three points and places above the relegation zone.

Five-in-row champions Lyon will expect a smooth ride at rock-bottom Sedan as they look to defend a 10-point lead over Lille, who travel to fifth-placed Sochaux.

Under-fire Paris St Germain boss Guy Lacombe sees his side entertain Bordeaux, who themselves are struggling after last season's second place finish.

Fresh from a morale-boosting 4-0 win at Troyes last week, Monaco will look to continue their rise off the bottom of the table as they host Lorient.

### FIXTURES

**Saturday**  
AS Nancy v Troyes, Lens v Nantes, Monaco v Lorient, PSG v Bordeaux, Rennes v Le Mans, Sedan v Lyon, Sochaux v Lille, St Etienne v Nice

**Sunday**  
Auxerre v Toulouse, Marseille v Valenciennes

## Ancelotti under the spotlight

AFP, Rome



The patience of AC Milan owner Silvio Berlusconi will be tested further if his side suffer another setback in Serie A this weekend.

The six-time European champions have lost four of their last five games, and defeat at Empoli on Saturday will increase the pressure on their under-fire coach Carlo Ancelotti.

Milan's slump has left them fifth from bottom on seven points, 20 adrift of joint leaders Inter Milan and Palermo.

Their demise can be put down to several factors: the psychological impact of their failed bid to overturn an eight-point penalty for match-fixing, an ageing squad, injuries to key players and the fatigue of their Italian World Cup winners, including Andrea Pirlo and Alberto Gilardino.

According to Italian media

reports, Ancelotti's head will roll if they miss out on a Champions League spot for next season but the Milan coach remains calm.

"Things are not going well, but I am convinced we will snap out of it," he said. "It's not to say I'm not worried, because I am. It's a very negative period, but it hasn't happened by chance. There are reasons for these poor results."

"We have spoken a lot about our lack of preparation as a team this summer due to several of our play-

ers returning from the World Cup and needing to rest, and also about the injuries we've had.

"But now we have to put all that behind us and start working in a different way. I don't know if we are doing too little, or trying too hard. Whatever it is, it's not enough. Three consecutive home defeats, plus the loss at Atalanta, is not good and things must change."

Milan may be on the slide, but Empoli defender Antonio Busce is expecting the 17-time Italian champions to be as strong as ever.

"They are a team of winners with players capable of turning a match with one moment of skill," he said.

Roma defender Christian Chivu believes his side's historic victory at AC Milan last week has given them a massive confidence boost in the race for the title.

A first away win at Milan in Serie A for 20 years left Roma four points off the pace in third place.

"It was a massive result and has given us all the belief that we can win the Scudetto," the Romanian international said ahead of Sunday's home match against

Catania.

"But we must be more consistent. We have already lost twice (to Ascoli and Reggina), and we need to eradicate the silly mistakes that have cost us in the past."

Inter host Reggina at the San Siro on Sunday while fellow pace-setters Palermo visit Cagliari the day before.

Nedo Sonetti's first game in charge of Ascoli, still looking for their first win of the season, is against Fiorentina. Sonetti took the reins on Tuesday after Attilio Tesser was sacked.

### FIXTURES

(1400GMT kick-off unless stated)  
**Saturday**  
Empoli v AC Milan (1700GMT), Cagliari v Palermo (1930GMT)

**Sunday**  
Ascoli v Fiorentina, Chievo v Atalanta, Inter Milan v Reggina, Livorno v Parma, Messina v Lazio, Roma v Catania, Torino v Sampdoria (1930GMT), Udinese v Siena



CARLO ANCELOTTI