

Cassano row resurfaces

INTERNET, undated
Coach Fabio Capello has again dropped Antonio Cassano from the Real Madrid squad...

The Italian international had been frozen out of the side for a couple of weeks following a bitter row with his tactician.

Cassano refused to apologise to Capello or his teammates, saying: "The word sorry is not part of my vocabulary."

He was left back in last week, partly due to Ronaldo's injury, although he did not actually play in the game against Osasuna.

Yesterday it was confirmed that the ex-Roma starlet has not been included in the side to take on Racing Santander on Saturday.

There are no injury concerns, so it is purely a technical decision on behalf of Capello, who preferred to pick youth team player Nieto.

With the situation again deteriorating in Madrid, it's very likely that Cassano will be sold back to an Italian club in the January transfer window.

Although he has publicly expressed his desire for a return to Roma, other options include Milan, Inter and Napoli.

Mintal out till new year

AFP, Nuremberg
Slovakian international forward Marek Mintal will miss the rest of 2006 as he needs a foot operation...

Mintal is due to have a metal plate removed from his foot during the operation scheduled for next week.

He was supposed to go under the knife at the end of the current season but has had recurring problems with his foot, meaning the surgery had to be brought forward.

The 29-year-old was the Bundesliga's top scorer last season. Nuremberg are 12th in the league, 10 points behind leaders Stuttgart.

Gunners extend Bendtner loan

AFP, London
Arsenal agreed Friday to extend Danish striker Nicklas Bendtner's loan to Birmingham until the end of the season.

Bendtner, a lanky 18-year-old, had initially been due to stay with the Championship side until January.

But Blues manager Steve Bruce was desperate to hang on to a player who has been his leading scorer with six goals this season and he received a green light from Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger earlier this week.

"Mr Wenger contacted me earlier this week to say, barring anything untoward, that Nicklas could stay at Birmingham for the remainder of the season."

"By anything untoward he means if Arsenal pick up four or five injuries at the same time in the striking department, but if that doesn't happen Nicklas will be our player for the remainder of the season."

"It is good news for us because already we have seen that Nicklas is an exciting talent who could go on to have a very good future in the game."

"We have always had a good relationship with Arsenal and Mr Wenger and we are pleased Nicklas is staying with us."

"Playing regular first-team football for the first time in his career will provide him with great experience which can only stand him in good stead."



Swedish goalkeeper Magnus Hedman (L) poses with his new shirt alongside coach Jose Mourinho at Chelsea's training ground in Cobham on Friday.

Keane can be top coach: Ronnie

Football

INTERNET, undated
Ronaldinho believes Sunderland boss Roy Keane has all the makings of becoming a great coach.

The Brazilian star made the comments after seeing the former Manchester United captain take charge of The Black Cats back in late August.

"He knows what you're going through, especially when you're going through tough moments -- that really helps."

"I have played for some coaches who haven't been players and they have been good coaches. But I think it's a big help."

That current World Player of the Year player has been inspired by Keane's decision to go into management, stating he aims to move into coaching when he hangs up his boots.

Federer in Masters final

Tennis

AFP, Shanghai
World number one Roger Federer brushed aside arch-rival Rafael Nadal with surprising ease to reach the Masters Cup final on Saturday.

Playing with controlled aggression, the Swiss broke twice in the first set and converted his third match point to reach his fourth consecutive year-ending final 6-4, 7-5 in one hour and 53 minutes.

It was Federer's second victory over the second-ranked Nadal this year after the Wimbledon final, and third overall. The Spaniard dominated the Swiss in the early part of the season, beating him in four finals.

Federer will face either James Blake or defending champion David Nalbandian, who were playing later, in Sunday's final. Nalbandian downed the Swiss in last year's epic final.

Federer opened his first indoor match with Nadal in ominous style, firing three aces in the first game and breaking immediately afterwards with a couple of booming forehands.

Nadal faced five break points before he could hold serve and was only given a chance when Federer, serving for the set, gifted him a break with a double fault, a howling missed volley and a netted forehand.

Federer describes 2006 as his best season yet, winning three out of four Grand Slam finals and another eight events on tour.

His record for the season now stands at 91-5 and he has become the first player to amass more than seven million dollars in prize money in one year.

Bayern break 200m barrier

AFP, Munich
Bayern Munich made history on Friday when they became the first German side to report an annual turnover exceeding 200 million euros, the club announced.

Financial director Karl Hopfner said that turnover for the 2005/2006 season was 204.7 million euros, although profits fell to 4.8m euros from 6.6m the previous year.

In 2004/2005, the club's turnover was 189.5m euros. "Thanks to a new league-cup double, Bayern Munich finished their season crowned not just by success in the playing area but also in the financial plan," said Hopfner.

In Europe, however, Bayern are still a long way behind on the continent's rich-list. Real Madrid reported a turnover of 275.7 million euros followed by Manchester United (246.4m) and AC Milan (234.0).

Bayern to offload Santos

AFP, Munich
German champions Bayern Munich are set to loan out Paraguayan misfit Julio Dos Santos during the winter break, chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge said Saturday.

"We are considering loaning Dos Santos as it does not make any sense for him to be with us," Rummenigge said in the Munich newspaper TZ. "There were enquiries in the summer from two German clubs and two Spanish teams."

Paraguayan international midfielder Dos Santos, 23, joined 11 months ago from Cerro Porteno in a two million euro deal but has been restricted to brief substitute appearances.

Ribery out for the year

INTERNET, undated
Marseille winger Franck Ribery will be out of action until the new year after suffering a groin injury.

Ribery, 23, felt a pain during his side's 4-1 defeat by runaway Ligue 1 leaders Lyon three weeks ago, and has now been told to rest up by doctors.

"It is very important to treat the injury well," said Ribery. I am very disappointed and do not know exactly how long I will be sidelined."

"Apparently, it will be until after the winter break (Dec. 23-Jan. 6)."

Ribery was one of the stars of Raymond Domenech's French side that made the semifinals of the World Cup in June.

But he believes the tournament took too much out of him and that he should have been given more of a rest before being brought back into the Marseille team at the start of the season.

"I should have taken a longer break after the World Cup," he added.

Henry Europe's best: Wenger

AFP, London
Arsene Wenger believes Thierry Henry should have walked away with this year's European footballer of the year award as easily as he trolls past defenders.

The 2006 'Ballon d'Or' is due to be announced next week and Italy's World Cup-winning captain Fabio Cannavaro is widely expected to succeed Barcelona's Brazilian Ronaldinho as the 51st winner of the prestigious prize.

But for Wenger, Gunners skipper Henry has had a better year. "Congratulations to Cannavaro if that's the case," Wenger said Friday. "But for me there's only one candidate this year, it's Thierry Henry. He just deserves it."

"He was the best goal scorer in England, best player in England, best goal scorer in Europe behind Luca Toni, he played the Champions League final and he played the World Cup final."

Wenger believes Henry's only serious rival should have been Barcelona's Cameroon striker Samuel Eto'o, but insists his compatriot's record of consistent achievement over the last five years meant he should have received the award at least once.

"What does he have to do? Just to keep going. Sometimes you get rewarded at the moment where you expect it the least. That's as well the sign of a superchamp."

Love delivers CSKA title

Football

AFP, Moscow
Brazilian striker Vagner Love scored a hat-trick as reigning champions CSKA Moscow successfully defended the Russian Premier League title with a 4-0 win at Vladivostok on Saturday.

CSKA hold a three-point lead with one game to play but cannot now be caught by their closest pursuers Spartak Moscow because their city rivals cannot match CSKA's number of victories, a deciding factor in the case of a tie on points.

Despite a 4-3 win at Rostov, Spartak have won only 14 games to CSKA's 17, while losing three fewer but drawing six more.

Spartak Another Moscow side Lokomotiv, who won 3-1 at Perm, sit third on 50 points, eight behind CSKA.

The Red Army side got off to a lively start in Vladivostok, clinching a 1-0 lead in 15th minute through Brazilian playmaker Daniel Carvalho, who scored with a close-range header from teammate Milos Krasic's cross.

Vagner Love made it 2-0 10 minutes later, lobbing the hosts' goalie Roman Gerus.

And he scored twice more after the interval to complete his treble.

Nine-time champions Spartak needed to win to have any chance of keeping the title race alive and twice battled back from a goal down to deny Rostov.

The hosts' Latvian midfielder Yuris Laizans put Rostov 1-0 up just eight minutes into the match, beating Spartak keeper Alexei Khomich with a well-struck free-kick from just outside the penalty box.

Spartak skipper Yegor Titov pulled the scores level in the 21st minute but Rostov's Serbian full-back Milos Krusic restored the hosts' lead just three minutes later.

Spartak levelled again six minutes before the break through Titov's 20-metre freekick.

The league's leading scorer Roman Pavlyuchenko gave Spartak the lead 16 minutes after the restart with a close-range header from Titov's precise cross, scoring his 16th goal of the season.

But Rostov captain Mikhail Osinov levelled again with a spotkick in the 65th minute after Spartak defender Geder played

volleyball in his box.

However, Pavlyuchenko netted his second of the match with seven minutes remaining to secure the three points.

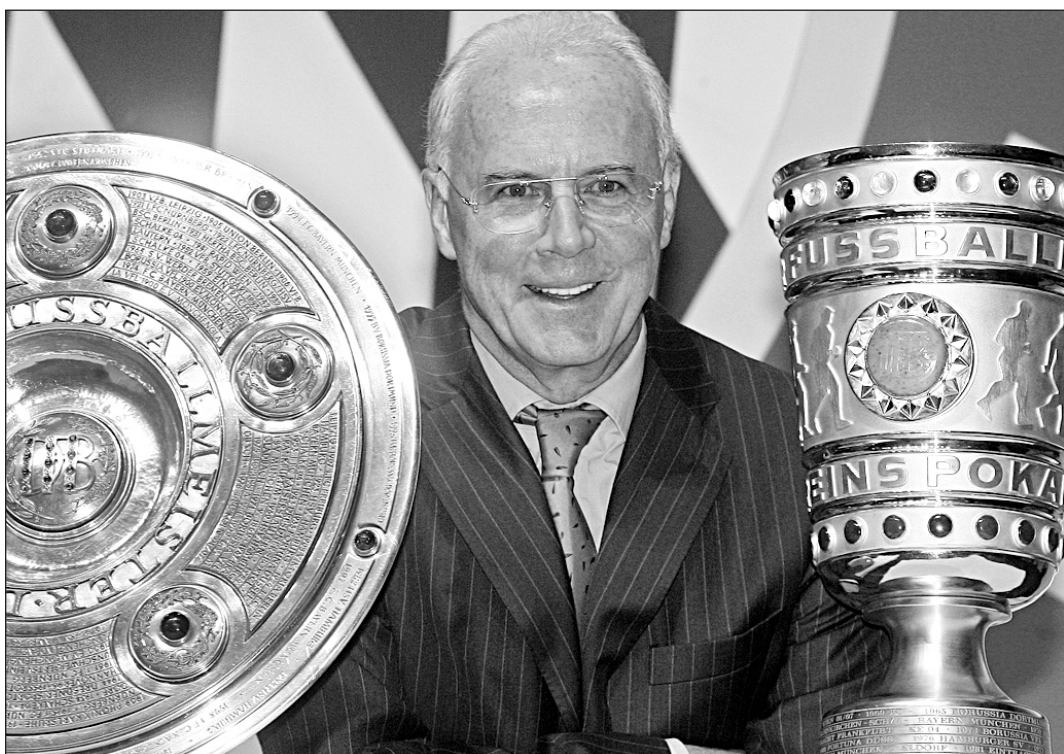
Motta ban overturned

INTERNET, undated
Barcelona midfielder Thiago Motta can play at Real Mallorca on Sunday after the Spanish Committee for Sports Discipline (CEDD) overturned his one-match ban.

The CEDD's decision to suspend the punishment came after Barcelona appealed against a red card shown to Motta in last weekend's 3-1 Primera Liga win over Real Zaragoza, the club said on their website.

The Brazilian was sent off after his hand caught Diego Milioto in the chest as the duo competed for the ball.

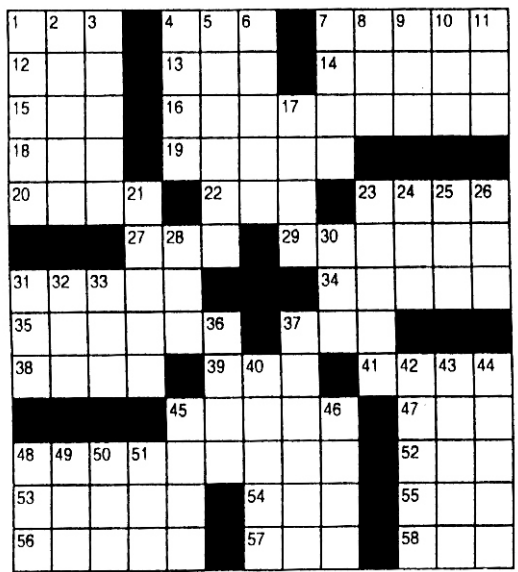
The Zaragoza player fell to the ground clutching his face.



Bayern Munich president Franz Beckenbauer poses with last season's league and cup trophies while attending the club's AGM on Friday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 39 Unclose 2 Garlic 17 Welsh 41 Foun- 4 On the 45 Storefront 3 Accumu- 21 Thorax 23 Campus 7 Much, 47 Story 4 Innocent 24 Make up 12 Lubricant 48 Cannon- 5 One- 25 Allow 13 Whatever 52 "— the 6 Tippe- 26 Take a 14 The little 53 Postulate 7 "The 30 Mound 15 "Annabel 54 Compass 8 Scepter 31 X rating 16 Melville 55 Blackjack 9 Lucy of 32 Indigna- 18 Resem- 56 Board 10 Koppel or 33 Upper 19 Tools for 57 Viewed 11 In need of 34 Satchel 20 Galva- 58 Afternoon 40 Whimpers 49 DOS file 23 Stupid 1 November 42 Wolf pack 49 DOS file 27 Swindled 29 Custodian 31 John 34 Unkempt 35 It'll get the lead out 37 Forefront 38 Barber-shop call



CRYPTOQUIP QMV XZKYEJ BZX BZA EHH IEGJXV. LE AEG XGWEXV MV LKLF'Q SE QMJEGSM QMV WJEWVJ IMZFFVYX? Yesterday's Cryptogram: IF A BEACI-DWELLING CRONE IS TIRED OF HER LIFE IN GENERAL, IS SHE A SAND WITCH BORED? Today's Cryptogram Clue: L equals D



Ex-football stars Uruguayan Enzo Francescoli (L) and Chilean Ivan Zamorano smile during the second day of the 4th World Congress of Football in Pachuca, Mexico on Friday.