

Chelsea target Chilean

INTERNET, undated

Chilean wonder-kid Nicolas Millan has confirmed he has been invited for a trial by Chelsea...

Millan has only just turned 15, but such is his talent he has already made his full debut for Colo Colo.

The youngster's rise has not gone unnoticed, as he has been linked with a move to Italian giants Internazionale.

The forward's father said recently that his son would remain in Chile until he is 18, but he could well have his head turned as he has been invited for a trial by Chelsea.

Plans are not yet set in stone, but Millan is enchanted by the prospect of seeing Didier Drogba at close quarters.

"No date has been set for a trial but an invitation exists," Millan told La Tercera. "It would be a dream to be with players like Drogba (pictured)."

"Chelsea is like Colo Colo, but there is more money there."

Millan does not have a professional contract with Colo Colo and he could be snatched from their grasp, but Borghi claims they will fight hard for the youngster.

"If the player travels it is not the decision of the club," said Borghi. "There has been no official approach (from Chelsea). We will have a meeting to assess the situation."

Nike stops Pakistan orders

AP, Beaverton

Nike is ending orders of hand-stitched soccer balls from a Pakistani company, citing labour violations.

Nike said Monday it acted after a six-month investigation of Saga Sports, which makes hand-stitched soccer balls in private homes. Nike said that violates company policy because of the potential for underaged workers and the inability to ensure safe working conditions.

"This contract factory has persistently broken its commitments and irrevocably breached its trust with us; most importantly, the factory has failed its employees," Nike chief executive and president Mark Parker said.

Nike said its investigation uncovered "serious allegations by trade union representatives and other Saga employees of worker harassment, wrongful termination and inaccurate payment of wages."

The company said the Fair Labor Association, in an unannounced audit of Saga unrelated to Nike's investigation, found similar violations. Nike said it held repeated meetings with Saga executives to correct the problems, but "Saga did not make needed changes."

The balls were made inside private homes in Sialkot, Pakistan, where Saga is based.

Al Ahli player banned

REUTERS, Cairo

Al Ahli midfielder Amro Samaka has been banned for six months for failing a drug test, the Confederation of African Football (CAF) said on Tuesday.

The 23-year-old tested positive after an African Champions League match in July but CAF did not specify the prohibited substance involved.

Samaka played a bit part in Al Ahli's Champions League win this year and his positive test will not affect the Egyptian club's title triumph.



FIFA President Joseph Blatter (L) smiles as he shakes hands with Real Madrid president Ramon Calderon at the Santiago Bernabeu in Madrid on Tuesday. Real Madrid held a tribute in the FIFA Presidents honour.

Hamman confident of joint hosting

Football

AFP, Singapore

Hosting a major football tournament in four different countries was never going to be easy but AFC president Mohammed bin Hammam is confident the 2007 Asian Cup finals will prove a big success.

Although Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam are neighbours, coordinating such an event across borders inevitably creates problems -- four organising committees, four media centres, as well as the extra costs.

Add into the fray a coup in Thailand, and raising awareness of the tournament in countries where English Premier League football reigns supreme, and the Asian Football Confederation has its work cut out.

But bin Hammam is quick to dispel any doubts, happy with what he has seen eight months away from the showpiece event.

"Of course a single host is always easier to manage but we feel that we are making good progress with the logistics for the coming event," he told AFP, singling out Indonesia and Vietnam for particular praise.

"As far as Indonesia and Vietnam are concerned, we are very satisfied. The two organizing committees have, to date, fulfilled their commitments towards the AFC," he said.

"As far as Malaysia is concerned, we are happy about the preparation, but the awareness of the competition is not yet here at the street level.

"But in the last week we have had very positive meetings with the Ministry of Tourism and other government authorities to promote Asian Cup as part of 'Visit Malaysia 2007'."

"We hope that our competition will be top of their agenda and we will continue to work with them here in Malaysia."

The ousting of Thai premier Thaksin Shinawatra in a military-led coup in September, and concern over the readiness of Bangkok's stadium, led to jitters

Coach quits after invasion

AFP, The Hague

Dutchman Frans Adelaar has resigned as coach of Dutch league strugglers Den Haag less than 24 hours after a pitch invasion halted their match against Vitesse Arnhem.

Den Haag said through their general manager Piet van der Pol on Monday that Adelaar's position had become "untenable" following Sunday's incidents.

Adelaar, 45, had been coach since July 2004 however the team have struggled all season. They currently prop up the 18-team top flight with only five points from 12 matches.

Sunday's pitch invasion was sparked when Vitesse made the score 3-0 in the 67th minute.

Fans swarmed towards the end of the ground housing Vitesse fans but were dispersed by police.

Referee Ruud Bossen, who had already taken the players to the dressing rooms, then decided to abandon the match.

Adelaar will be replaced in the meantime by his assistants Lex Schoenmaker and Marco Gentile.

Surgery scare for Neville

Football

AFP, London

Manchester United skipper Gary Neville may require surgery to cure his troublesome calf problem, United manager Sir Alex Ferguson revealed.

Neville is expected to play for United when they face Celtic in a crucial Champions League match at Parkhead on Tuesday, and again at the weekend when they face Chelsea in a Premiership showdown.

However Ferguson is openly concerned about the long-term prospects for a player he considers crucial to his side.

The 31-year-old first reported the injury when he returned from World Cup duty with England, since when he has struggled to play a consistent run of games for the Old Trafford side.

Fluid which had been developing in his right leg has now started to appear in his left, prompting Neville's half-time substitution at Blackburn a fortnight ago.

He then missed England's

friendly draw in Holland last week before returning to the United starting line-up for Saturday's win at Sheffield United.

However, while Ferguson claimed his captain suffered no reaction to his outing at Bramall Lane, on the eve of the match against Celtic, he admitted concern over Neville's long-term health remains.

"And, if the injury returns, the United boss has confirmed action will have to be taken."

"Gary came through Saturday's game okay and he trained this morning but obviously, the injury has been a concern," said Ferguson.

"We are holding our breath hoping it doesn't happen again because if it does we will have to take a long-term view and do something about it."

Although Neville could carry on playing, Ferguson is not prepared to take the risk of the full-back breaking down completely, which could lead to a lengthy spell on the sidelines at a time when United are chasing glory on what the Scot hopes will be many fronts.

Adu begins United trail

Football

INTERNET, undated

American Freddy Adu began a two-week trial with English Premiership club Manchester United on Monday morning.

The 17-year-old has been released for the trip across the Atlantic by his Major League Soccer outfit DC United, which fell a game short of the MLS championship game with a 1-0 loss to New England in the Eastern Conference finals.

The Ghana-born midfielder has long been touted for soccer stardom and became the youngest player to represent the United States earlier this year when he came on as a late

substitute in a friendly with Canada. At the time he was just 16.

However, despite the impressive credentials, Chelsea are reported to have already rejected a chance to sign Adu.

There was no sign of special treatment for Adu at the Red Devils' Carrington training ground as, with Sir Alex Ferguson's senior squad being put through their paces ahead of tomorrow's Champions League encounter with Celtic, Adu trained with the club's academy players.

Adu does not have a British work permit so he is not able to play in a competitive match, although it is thought United will arrange a closed-doors friendly at some point during his visit.

Sao Paulo claim Brazil title

Football

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Four years ago, Sao Paulo finished top of the Brazilian championship five points ahead of their nearest rivals.

In those days, however, the competition went into a knockout phase and Sao Paulo merely won the right to play a quarter-final against a Santos side who had finished 13 points below them.

The teams started from scratch and Santos won 5-2 on aggregate and went on to win the title.

On Sunday, Sao Paulo drew 1-1 at home to Atletico Paranaense to go eight points clear of second-placed Internacional with two games to spare.

This time, they were able to celebrate the title thanks to Brazil's decision to switch to the conventional league system used in most leading soccer nations.

The team coached by Muricy Ramalho had led the table for 25 rounds of matches.

The irony is that many commentators in Brazil have criticised the league system as boring and want to return to the old system of a

qualifying competition followed by a knockout.

Detractors claim that the final two weekends of the competition will be dead, even though two relegation slots still have to be filled as well as four places in next year's South American Libertadores Cup.

The thousands of Sao Paulo fans were oblivious to the controversy over the competition's format as they filled one of the city's main avenues to celebrate on Sunday.

"Sao Paulo are a club which are light years ahead of the others, principally their great rivals Palmeiras and Corinthians," wrote Benjamin Back in the sports daily Lance.

"Sao Paulo don't get involved in dubious partnerships or keep the same directors in power for ever. Sao Paulo plan ahead.... The best team won."

Sunday's title has crowned a remarkable 18 months for Sao Paulo in which they also won the Libertadores Cup and the World Club championship.

Those titles were won under Paulo Autuori, who was lured to Japan at the end of last year and was replaced by Ramalho, who last year led Internacional to the runners-up spot.

Ramalho, who learned his craft as assistant to the late Tele Santana, discreetly carried on Autuori's work, backed by an infrastructure widely regarded as the best in the Brazil.

The side pales when compared with Santana's team of the early 1990s which won successive Libertadores titles with flowing, attacking football. But times have changed since then.

In a country where the top talents are shipped off to Europe before their 20th birthday, it was hardly surprising that Sao Paulo's top players were a goalkeeper and a defensive midfielder.

Mineiro's work rate in midfield, coupled with his ability to get forward and score goals, made him one of the players of the tournament.

Goalkeeper Rogerio Ceni, a free kick and penalty specialist, became the highest-scoring goalkeeper in football history when he scored his 63rd goal in a game against Cruzeiro in August.

The fact that he has spent 15 years at the club and made more than 700 appearances makes him even more of a rarity in the modern game.

No pressure on Bayern

INTERNET, undated



Having already booked their place in the knockout stages of the Champions League, Bayern Munich can travel to Moscow free of any pressure on Wednesday.

The fixture also gives coach Felix Magath the opportunity to rest several key players and full-back Philipp Lahm will take his first real break since the World Cup.

But with Internazionale still to face in their final group game, only a win will guarantee the Bavarians top spot in Group B and the reward of home advantage in the second leg of their last-16 fixture.

Magath will therefore be taking the rest of his squad, which is now only without Owen Hargreaves and Valerien Ismael.

To prepare his side for the match, Magath switched training onto the artificial surface at the club's Sabener Strasse training ground on Monday to acclimatise them to the conditions they will face at the Luzhniki Stadium.

"It is strange since the ball runs a lot more, everything is faster and you have to play to feet," explained Bosnian midfielder Hasan Salihamidzic.

The artificial pitch in Moscow is necessary to avoid scenes which almost ruined Bayern's last trip to the Russian capital five years ago when, in temperatures below minus 20, the game was almost called off on a frozen pitch.

The weather forecast is not so bad this time around, much to

Salihamidzic's relief.

He said: "It is reassuring when you know that we won't have to play in a thermal jacket."

For Spartak, this fixture with Bayern is the last chance for them to extend their season beyond next weekend, when the Russian Premier League draws to a close.

A 4-3 win at FC Rostov last weekend ensured Vladimir Fedotov's side secured runners-up spot behind champions CSKA Moscow, earning them a place in the Champions League once again next season.

Fedotov is without his first-choice goalkeeper, Poland international Wojciech Kowalewski, with a head injury, while his understudy Dmitri Homich's chances of appearing are rated as "small".

Russia Under-21 international Homich damaged his hip after clattering into the goalpost during the Rostov game, and has not trained since.

That leaves Fedotov with no other option than to throw third-choice Aleksei Zuev in at the deep end, even though the 25-year old has not made a first-team appearance since March.

While Spartak's hopes of progressing in the Champions League are already over, they could still claim third place and a UEFA Cup spot, but that is an outcome not central to Fedotov's thoughts.

He said: "We are thinking only about the forthcoming match and not too much about the outcome of the group."

"There is no point in sitting and calculating our possible position. Nothing remains, except to win this game," the Spartak coach told Sovetsky Sport.

Fedotov has highlighted the tendency to sit back and then strike suddenly as the main threat posed by Bayern.

This tactic was brutally demonstrated in the previous encounter between the two teams in September, when, after a quiet first period, the German champions unleashed a second-half onslaught to eventually win 4-0.

He added: "Bayern lull their opponents, and then hit them hard. The ability to strike quickly is a distinguishing feature of their play, and in our preparations we are focusing on this above all else."

"In Munich we had a bad time. The game was pretty balanced, but all the same we conceded four goals."

Nou Camp architect dies

AFP, Madrid

Francesc Mitjans, the architect who designed FC Barcelona's famed Nou Camp stadium, has died Monday at the age of 97 years.

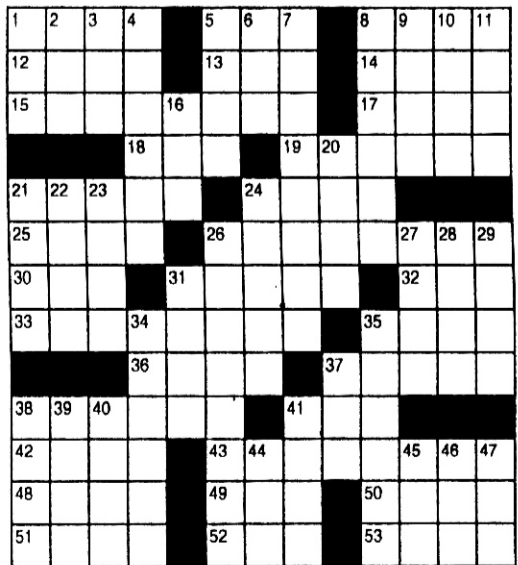
Born in Barcelona in 1909, Mitjans was one of the key figures in the revival of Catalan architecture in the 1950s.

The Nou Camp, Catalan for "New Field", was inaugurated in 1957.

It is one of the largest stadia in the world and biggest in Europe with the capacity to hold 98,772 spectators.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 1 Dieter's target 5 Legume 8 On 12 Building-block name 13 High-arc shot 14 Theater box 15 Theirs is a perfect world 17 Hardy cabbage 18 Use a crowbar 19 Wall Street dealer 21 Crowd quorum 24 Emulate Columbus 25 Estate recipient 26 Found a use for 30 Double-crocker 31 Foolish 32 Water (Fr.) 33 Chopsticks, e.g. 35 Section 36 Russian city 37 98-lb. weak-singer's foe 38 Market prices 41 Proscribe 42 Very eager 43 NBA team 48 Netting device 50 Sheltered 51 Nuisance 52 Press for payment 53 Combo DOWN 1 Winter ailment 2 Permit 3 In olden times 16 Rage 20 Arouse 16-Down 21 From one end to other 37 "Humbug!" 38 Improvise 39 Writer James 40 Deprivation 41 Square-dance site 44 Greek cross 45 Carte lead-in 46 Buddhist sect 47 London-er's letter



CRYPTOQUIP KYMJDQMIA NCDIALI AYDMQLIVDJLCQAVYMM-KDMNMLGARDA,ZGADA QDQI'ARDAAVMZDCC. Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF A GYMNAST TUMBLES A BIT TOO FAR ON THE FLOOR, YOU MIGHT SAY HE BOUNDS OUT OF BOUNDS. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Q equals D



USA player Freddy Adu (R) is pictured with a colleague in Manchester United's training ground of Carrington in Manchester on Monday.