

## United sweep manager, player of month awards

LONDON, Feb 5 (Reuters/Internet): Manchester United swept up both the Manager of the Month and Player of the Month awards for January after their perfect start to the New Year.

Alex Ferguson was named as manager of the month -- a record seventh success since the start of the 1993-94 season.

Dwight Yorke picked up the player award after scoring five league goals in the month.

United won all five league and cup matches they played in January and have pulled four points clear at the top of the premier league, although they have played one match more than any of their immediate rivals.

## Zagreb let Maric go

ZAGREB, Croatia, Feb 5 (AP): Croatia Zagreb on Thursday accepted the transfer of their midfielder Silvija Maric to Newcastle for 10 million German marks (\$6.25 million dollars), Croatian television reported.

Maric, 24, is to play for Newcastle for five years, the report said.

The highly rated midfielder, who is currently in Spain, told the television station he would fly to Newcastle on Friday to do a medical check-up and meet the team.

"It's a great team, it has great players," Maric said. He added that he expected to start playing "as soon as I get used to the climate, the country and when I get to know my teammates."

Although Maric was eager to join Newcastle, Croatia was reluctant to let one of its best players go. The team eventually agreed to the transfer during 90-minute negotiations with Newcastle chairman Freddy Shepherd and its manager Ruud Gullit.

As a bonus to the successful negotiations, Croatia and Newcastle agreed to play a friendly match this year, most likely in Zagreb, the TV report said.

Maric impressed Newcastle during his club's two-leg European Champions League qualifier defeat by Newcastle last season.

He also became a national soccer hero during last year's World Cup in France, where Croatia reached the semifinals.

## Karimi faces trouble

HO CHI MINH CITY, Feb 5: Iran's new star goalcorer Mohammad Ali Karimi faces a lengthy ban for his attack on a referee at the Dunhill Cup here, reports AFP.

Karimi, 21, was one of the heroes of Iran's Asian Games winning side in December and has attracted attention from European clubs.

But the Asian Football Confederation disciplinary committee will meet in Kuala Lumpur next Thursday to consider action after Karimi kicked and pushed Japanese referee Toru Kamikawa in a match against Vietnam on Tuesday.

Such an assault on a match official can lead to a ban of up to two years.

Karimi was sent off and suspended for the rest of the tournament. He has apologised to Kamikawa but can expect no mercy from the AFC.

If the AFC goes for the maximum penalty it will take a convincing appeal by a committee and his apologetic national federation to get it reduced.

Karimi was one of two Iranians sent off in a tense two minutes midway through the match against the hosts.

Ali Asanarian collected his second yellow card in the 69th minute for a tackle from behind. Iranian players immediately surrounded Kamikawa to protest the decision and Karimi pulled Kamikawa's shirt and kicked him in the shins.

## MU look for 7th straight win



LONDON, Feb 5 (Reuters/Internet): Premier league leaders Manchester United visit bottom-of-the-table Nottingham Forest on Saturday in, what appears on paper, a one-sided clash.

But the reality could be different as a revitalised Forest look to build on last week's 1-0 victory over Everton -- their first in the league for 20 matches.

United, who have won all six league and cup matches they have played in 1999, lead Chelsea at the top by four points having played one match more -- but although they keep winning they have looked less than invincible in their last two outings.

Alex Ferguson's men struggled to beat Derby 1-0 at Old Trafford on Wednesday and it took a last minute Dwight Yorke goal -- his seventh in five matches -- to beat second-bottom Charlton last Sunday.

United, who beat Forest 3-0 the day after Christmas, will also be without Ryan Giggs who is expected to be out for at least a month after injuring his hamstring in the Derby match.

Former United manager Ron Atkinson has been brought in to work miracles and keep Forest from the drop, but he will have his work cut out on Saturday -- United have not lost on any of their four premier league visits to the City Ground.

Second-placed Chelsea welcome stragglers Southampton to Stamford Bridge in another apparently one-sided match just five weeks after winning 2-

0 with ease in December.

But again, Chelsea have not looked their best of late -- their 21-match unbeaten league run was broken by Arsenal last Sunday and they needed a replay to get past first division Oxford United in the F.A. Cup.

Southampton will have been boosted by their impressive 3-0 defeat of fifth-placed Leeds last weekend.

The Saints will be hoping they have turned the corner after a 7-1 drubbing by Liverpool and crashing out of the F.A. Cup to White Hart Lane where they beat Wimbledon 3-0 in a second division Fulham.

Coventry have recently been able to convert good form into points in the league, culminating in their 2-1 victory over Liverpool last Saturday which saw them inch further away from the danger zone.

Liverpool and Middlesbrough clash at Anfield with Liverpool looking to complete a league double over Boro after winning 3-1 at the Riverside.

Liverpool's new 2.7 million pounds (4.42 million dollars) signing Rigobert Song looked strong in his debut and the Cameroon captain should keep his place on Saturday.

Blackburn though have lost combative midfielder Tim Sherwood, who signed for Tottenham for 4.0 million pounds (6.54 million dollars) on Thursday, and also scored the winning goal when Blackburn beat Villa 2-1 on December 26, but they will have the equally hard-working Jason McAteer in the centre of the park.

The Republic of Ireland international made his debut in last week's 1-1 draw against Tottenham after his 4.0 million pounds move from Liverpool -- as did Matt Jansen.

The former Crystal Palace

striker scored a spectacular goal on his debut against Spurs and Blackburn will be looking to maintain the improvement that has seen them lose just one of their 10 matches since Kidd took over in December.

Fourth-placed champions Arsenal, who have won seven of their last eight matches, visit West Ham while Wimbledon visit Charlton. Tottenham, who expect to have Sherwood in the starting 11, welcome Coventry to White Hart Lane where they beat Wimbledon 3-0 in a second division Fulham.

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Meanwhile, Leicester host Sheffield Wednesday, Leeds entertain Newcastle while Derby and Everton play on Sunday.

## Kafelnikov, Moya ousted

PARIS, Feb 5: Russia's Australian Open champion Yevgeny Kafelnikov stumbled out of the Marseille Open on Thursday when he was beaten in three sets in the second round by Dominik Hrbatý of Slovakia, reports AFP.

Kafelnikov, a finalist twelve months ago and playing his first tournament since his Australian Open triumph, was clearly suffering from fatigue and needed treatment to a knee injury in the final set as he crashed 6-7, 6-4, 6-2.

The Russian later announced that he would not be fit to play in Dubai next week.

Kafelnikov's exit and the elimination of top-seeded Spaniard Carlos Moya in the first-round, make third seeded Pioline the new title favourite.

Pioline saw off Andrei Medvedev of the Ukraine 7-5, 7-5 in another second round match while Fabrice Santoro won an all-French confrontation with Arnaud di Pasquale 6-1, 6-3.

The other home players Guillaume Raoux and Jerome Goldmark were both beaten.

Raoux went out to Italian Gianluca Pozzi 4-6, 6-4, 6-4 and Goldmark crashed in three tie-breaks to Roger Federer of Switzerland.

Swiss number-one and fourth-seeded Marc Rosset also swept into the third round when he beat Kenneth Carlsen of Denmark 6-3, 6-2.

### Euro 2000 qualifier

#### Yugoslav squad named

BELGRADE, Feb 5 (AFP): Yugoslavia squad for Group 8 Euro 2000 qualifier with Malta to be played next Wednesday in Valletta.

**Goalkeepers:** Ivica Kralj (PSV Eindhoven), Nikola Damjanac (Partizan Belgrade).

**Defenders:** Zoran Mirkovic (Juventus), Goran Djorovic (Celta Vigo), Simona Mihajlovic (Lazio), Miroslav Djukic (Valencia), Nisa Saveljevic (Bordeaux), Alabodan Konlevic (Duisburg) and Nenad Sasic (Samordija).

**Midfielders:** Slavisa Jokanovic (Tenerife), Dejan Stankovic (Real Malo), Jovan Stankovic (Real Zaragoza), Nenad Grozic (Obilic), Djordi Tomic (Partizan Belgrade), Albert Nadj (Real Oviedo) and Zoran Njegus (Atletico Madrid).

**Forwards:** Predra, Mijatovic (Real Madrid), Savo Milosevic (Real Zaragoza), Darko Kovacevic (Real Sociedad).

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## Davenport, Graf gone



TOKYO, Feb 5 (Reuters/Internet): Australian Open champion Martina Hingis was on target to reach Lindsay Davenport as world number one after reaching the one million dollar Pan Pacific Open semifinals on Friday.

"I think Martina fully deserves it right now," Davenport conceded after her error-filled 2-6, 6-4, 6-3 quarterfinal defeat by South African Amanda Coetzer.

The Swiss, who eliminated Steffi Graf 3-6, 6-4, 6-4, will knock Davenport from her

place Lindsay Davenport as world number one after reaching the one million dollar Pan Pacific Open semifinals on Friday.

"I'm disappointed in the way things are going right now, I'm not playing like the number one player in the world."

Coetzer, soundly defeated by Davenport in last year's Pan Pacific semifinals, said she had not been intimidated by the tall American this around.

World number two Hingis overcame fifth seed Graf for only the second time. The last occasion was in the 1996 Italian Open quarter-finals.

Graf needed medical attention in the third set for a cramp in her legs.

She had started the match looking like the player who once dominated women's tennis, but in the second set Hingis attacked Graf's backhand and gradually overcame her opponent.

Graf called for assistance after the fifth game of the decider and received treatment on her left thigh. She had her serve broken in the next game.

"It was difficult at the end for me," Graf said, adding that she was still tired from her three-setter against Russian Elena Likhovtseva on Thursday.

Czech Novotna, seeded three, was handed a place in the last four when her opponent, eighth seed Natasha Zvereva of Belarus, retired after losing the first set 7-5.

Seventh seed Coetzer will play number four seed Monica Seles. Seles beat sixth seed Anna Kournikova 7-5, 6-3.

Swiss Martina Hingis plays backhand against Steffi Graf at the Toray Pan Pacific Open yesterday. — AFP photo

## Velappan fears Euro influence in Asia



KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 5: Europe's big clubs owned by business tycoons are a threat to the growth of world football and their power must be checked, Asian soccer chief Peter Velappan warned today.

The general secretary of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) said the clubs domination could hit players and clubs in top Asian countries like

Japan, South Korea, China and Iran.

"In my view, the European clubs threaten the orderly growth, or could even halt the growth of football," Velappan said. "It will also disrupt the traditional governance of football."

Velappan said the clubs are owned by tycoons whose main interest was business not football.

These clubs which buy players for astronomical amounts

and pay huge salaries do not serve the general interest of football," he said.

"I think this is a very dangerous trend which is detrimental to football as a whole," the Asian football chief said.

Velappan said UEFA must monitor the situation to maintain discipline and health of world football.

"Fortunately, we do not have this problem yet in Asia but it is bound to affect the players and clubs in leading professional league countries like Japan, Korea, China and Iran," he said.

Velappan expressed fears that Asian footballers may start demanding high salaries and other perks and clubs begin to impose high transfer fees.

"Asian teams may start buying and selling players and players will start making demands," he said.

Citing an example, Velappan said, "The J-League started with extremely high expectation and support from sponsor companies."

"Right now Japan is in recession and many companies are unable to provide funds to the clubs," he said, adding that "players now take a pay out."

Velappan said if the power of big European clubs was not checked, they would take over the rule of football at the expense of all other clubs.

"These big clubs have a strong hold on players and they dictate to players whether they can play for their national team or international competition," he said.

He highlighted World Cup winners France's refusal to participate in the Confederations Cup in Mexico in July because the league opposed it.

"Striking a balance between club football and national team football will be the greatest challenge that will face FIFA in the next millennium," Velappan said.

American world number one Lindsay Davenport serves in her match against Mary Joe Fernandez at the Toray Pan Pacific Open in Tokyo on Thursday. — AP/UNB photo

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### SONY TV

7:30 Indian Holiday 8:00

Rishiprasad 8:30 Raag Bi-

rangle 9:00 Family Net 1:30

Clip 10:00 Toofan Mai

With Guest 10:50 Just Mohabat

11:30 Rahil Bhanji

11:30 Hermit With

Sukhwinder Singh 12:00 Best of

Movers & Shakers 12:30 Yeh

Sadi Nahi Ho Sakti 1:00

Chamatkar 1:30 Bajaj Ki Lehren

2:00 Hum Sab Ek Hai (Serial)

2:30 Close-UP Antakshari

12:00 Serial 1:30 Hip

Hip Hurray 2:00 Zee News

10:30 The detective Squad 11:30