

Bates quits Wembley post

REUTERS, London
Chelsea chairman Ken Bates has resigned from the board of Wembley Stadium National Stadium Limited (WNSL). Bates was deposed as chairman of the board in charge of building a new national stadium last December and replaced by Rodney Walker after concerns over costs and delays. In a statement on Thursday, the Football Association praised Bates for his part in the development and expressed their disappointment with his decision. Under Bates's leadership the cost of the new stadium soared from an estimated 240 million pounds to 660 million pounds. The development is nearly two years behind schedule, with an expected completion date of late 2004.

UAE upset Denmark

REUTERS, Dubai
United Arab Emirates achieved a rare victory over a European side when they beat depleted Denmark 1-0 in the Dubai four-nation tournament on Thursday. Saeed al-Kas scored in the 48th minute. Denmark played well only in patches which was not enough to topple the home side. UAE went on the offensive from the start of the second half and were rewarded for their repeated forays when Saeed al-Kas, capitalising on a long through pass from Mohammed Ibrahim, headed home. South Korea struck two minutes from time to hold Morocco to a 1-1 draw. Morocco, clearly the better side, went ahead in the 10th minute through Othmane el-Assad. Sang Chul-yoo levelled in the 88th minute against the run of play.

England to play at St James'

INTERNET, undated
St James' Park in Newcastle will stage England's 2002 World Cup qualifier against Albania, according to newspaper reports. But the Evening Chronicle says the Football Association is not ready to make the news official until "next week" at the earliest. The match against Albania is due to take place on September 5 this year. It will be the first time that the 52,000-seater St James' Park has hosted a full-England international. England have been forced to look for alternative venues following the decision to redevelop Wembley. The national side, now coached by Sven Goran Eriksson, are already down to play games in Birmingham and Liverpool. Villa Park will host the friendly against Spain on 28 February. Eriksson's first game in charge - while Anfield will stage the World Cup qualifier against Finland on 24 March. The Evening Chronicle also suggests Manchester United's Old Trafford is the chosen venue for England's final World Cup qualifier against Greece on 6 October, 2001.

Noble Zidane

INTERNET, undated
Zinedine Zidane FIFA's World Player of the Year in 1998 and 2000, has donated clothes to needy children in Algeria. The French international star who plays for top Italian club Juventus, was born of Algerian parents in the French city of Marseilles. Zidane's container of clothes, which includes trousers, shirts and vests, is being sent to children in the Tlemcen, Alger, Bejaia and Ain Temouchent regions of Algeria. In Ain Temouchent, the presents will have an important impact because the people there are still recovering from last year's earthquake, which left 20 people dead and caused a great deal of damage in the area. Zidane has been instrumental in France's recent victories. Mustapha Mazouz, who represented Zidane, made the gift on Wednesday at Oran, 450km from Alger. The local authorities were also present at the reception. A representative from the Algerian Ministry of Solidarity also commented that the act "reflects the enthusiastic solidarity and shows the support of the Algerian community for the foreigner." 'Zizou', as Zidane is affectionately known to Algerians, is expected to arrive in Algeria in April. He is due to inaugurate a sportswear shop in his family village Taguoumount, situated in the mountains of Bejaia, about 260 km east of Alger.



Parma's Marcio Amoroso (C) tries to bring the ball under control between two Udinese players in the Italian Cup semifinal second-leg match on February 8.

Serie A preview

Champs v hot shots

Football
AFP, Milan

In-form defending champions Lazio host surprise packages Atalanta Saturday as both clubs look to prove they can compete in the race for the Serie A title. This weekend sees the start of the second half of the season and the opening day fixtures will be inverted with the home sides on Day One away to the same opposition on Day 18. Victory for Lazio, who under new coach Dino Zoff are finally looking like worthy champions, would put the heat on Olympic Stadium co-tenants and league leaders AS Roma, who visit Bologna 24 hours later. Defeat, however, would mean the side from Bergamo, fourth in the division against all expectations, would re-establish themselves as contenders after last week's 2-1 win over second-placed Juventus that allowed Roma to extend their lead over Juve to six points. But in Lazio Atalanta are meeting a team that has been given a new direction since Zoff replaced England coach Sven Goran Eriksson. Under Zoff Lazio have won four out of four matches to re-establish their title credentials.

and Argentinian striker Hernan Crespo has finally started delivering up front with seven goals in those four games. Whether 'winter champions' Roma - that honorary title is bestowed on the team that leads at the halfway stage - will collapse remains to be seen. But two consecutive victories have shown that they can stand up to the campaign of psychological warfare by Juventus that looked to be paying dividends until last week. Roma will not know until the day of the Bologna game if their golden boy Francesco Totti can play, with Japanese midfielder Hidetoshi Nakata the obvious replacement. Juventus meanwhile do not play until Sunday evening when they host Napoli. Meanwhile French playmaker Zinedine Zidane played down the significance of the Atalanta defeat last weekend. "Six points is very little," he said. "We should not have lost at Bergamo. We will win the Scudetto." The Milan sides have also shown signs of stirring from a long slumber in recent weeks and Inter will be confident of all three points at home to Reggina on Saturday night. Reggina, however, beat Inter on the first day of the season at

Reggio Calabria in a match, which led to the sacking of coach Marcello Lippi. AC Milan will also be confident of victory at Vicenza. Fiorentina this week booked a spot in the Italian Cup final and their Turkish coach Fatih Terim will look to build on that with a home victory over Parma. Brescia look to continue their climb out of the relegation zone at home to Udinese whose 4-2 victory on day one over the same opposition saw them briefly top Serie A. Lecce host Perugia while bottom club Bari make the trip to fellow strugglers Verona. The bogus passport scandal currently rocking Italian football could yet change the title race if points are deducted from any club deemed guilty of wrongdoing. But - barring an Atalanta victory on Saturday - Roma, Juventus and Lazio would appear to be in a three-horse race for the 'Scudetto.' **FIXTURES** (14:00 GMT unless stated) **Saturday** Lazio v Atalanta, Inter Milan v Reggina (19:30 GMT) **Sunday:** Bologna v AS Roma, Brescia v Udinese, Fiorentina v Parma, Lecce v Perugia, Verona v Bari, Vicenza v AC Milan, Juventus v Napoli (19:30 GMT)

Primera Liga preview

Real ready for Bilbao

Football
AFP, Madrid

European champions Real Madrid minus Luis Figo will warm up on Saturday for their Champions League clash with Lazio with a trip to Athletic Bilbao. Madrid are starting to pull away at the top of the Primera Liga, despite a scare last weekend when they needed a 76th-minute goal from Ivan Helguera to edge out Malaga for a 4-3 victory. Figo, the world's most expensive player, is suspended for the league match but is expected to return as his club continue their bid to defend their European crown at home to the Italian champions on Tuesday. Real of course have a sumptuous list of possible replacements for Figo, with Pedro Munitis and Argentina's Santiago Solari among those waiting to stand in. Athletic Bilbao could not have faced Real at a worse time after slumping to a club record 7-0 defeat against Barcelona last week. The Catalan kings will be hoping to repeat that feat against bottom club Racing Santander on Sunday. Barcelona are eight points adrift of Real but extended their 17-match unbeaten streak on Wednesday, holding city rivals Espanyol to a 1-1 draw to reach the Spanish Cup semi-finals. A goal from Dutch international Frank De Boer after six minutes secured a safe passage for Barca, who went through 3-2 on aggregate after victory in the first leg last month. Reigning champions Deportivo La Coruna, who resume their Champions League campaign with a tough trip to Galatasaray of Istanbul on Wednesday, face John Toshack's Real Sociedad on Saturday. Deportivo are in second spot in the league and are bidding to close the seven-point gap on Real Madrid, but have lost the services of Dutch goal-scoring midfielder Roy

Makaay, who is out for two weeks with a knee injury. Toshack's problems are rather more serious, with the side he took over last year lying third from bottom of the league. Spain's third representative in the second stage of the Champions League, Valencia, take on lowly Numancia before welcoming English giants Manchester United to Spain on Wednesday. Valencia - last season's beaten Champions League finalists - are 12 points adrift of Real, who beat them in that final. Former France captain Didier Deschamps has dismissed talk of retiring as he continues his comeback for Valencia following a three-month injury lay-off. Deschamps - who skipped France to World Cup and Euro 2000 glory - said he was ignoring suggestions he should bring his glittering career to an end. "I don't care what they say about me retiring. I'm not listening to them," Deschamps said. "I have got a contract with Valencia (until June 2003) and I intend to honour it. I'm here because I want to win titles and trophies with them," he said. **FIXTURES** **Saturday** Rayo Vallecano v Osasuna (16:00 GMT) Athletic Bilbao v Real Madrid (18:15 GMT) Deportivo La Coruna v Real Sociedad (18:45 GMT) Valencia v Numancia (19:00 GMT) Espanyol v Celta Vigo (19:00 GMT) **Sunday** (15:00 GMT unless stated) Alaves v Real Zaragoza Oviedo v Villarreal Real Valladolid v Las Palmas Malaga v Real Mallorca Racing Santander v Barcelona (18:00 GMT)



Denmark's Thomas Roll (R) battles a United Arab Emirates defender during their Emirates Cup match on February 8.

Kuwait had to wait

AP, Singapore
Kuwait defeated underdogs Kyrgystan 3-0 in a World Cup qualifier Friday, moving atop Asia's preliminary Group 4. Kyrgystan defended well during the scoreless first half, only to concede their first goal in the 61st minutes when an unmarked Ali Asel headed home. Asel later limped off the field after falling on his knee. A move that started from the right flank ended with an 85th minute goal from Jasem Albuwadi from the edge of the penalty area. Khalaf Almutairi added the third for Kuwait in the dying moments of the match, collecting a pass from Naser Alsaubi and tapping it to an open goal.

No way out for Romario

AFP, Rio de Janeiro
Brazilian international striker Romario was ordered Thursday to pay damages to former coaches Mario Zagallo and Zico for placing crude caricatures of them on the toilet doors of his Rio bar. The amount of the damages was not revealed. "It's only fair because my image was blackened," said Zagallo, who is currently in charge of Brazilian side Flamengo. The bad feeling between them stemmed from the 1998 World Cup, with Romario blaming Zagallo and Zico for his exclusion from the Brazilian squad even though he had been injured. Zagallo and former star player Zico were in charge of Brazil for those finals in France.

Pele, Teixeira feud over

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro
Pele has ended a long-running feud with beleaguered Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) president Ricardo Teixeira which wrecked the country's chances of hosting the 2006 World Cup. Pele told the Brasilia-based daily Correio Brasiliense that he was prepared to join forces with Teixeira, whose organisation has been blamed for plunging Brazilian soccer into chaos, and back a new campaign to host the 2010 tournament. "I intend to unite with the CBF president and the Brazilian people in this project, which should be clear and transparent," Pele said on Thursday. His offer came days after an astounding admission of guilt by Teixeira, who said he had been wrong to ostracise the greatest player in the game's history. The rift between Pele and Teixeira first became public in 1993 when Pele was snubbed by FIFA, who refused to invite him to take part in the 1994 World Cup draw, held in Las Vegas. This followed a bitter attack by Pele on Teixeira, whose father-in-law Joao Havelange was FIFA president at the time. It surfaced again when Pele stubbornly refused to back the CBF's bid for the 2006 World Cup, dealing the candidacy, which was withdrawn days before the final vote in Zurich.

Markarian reverses decision

REUTERS, Assisium
Paraguay coach Sergio Markarian was reinstated on Thursday, one week after he walked out after a row with a leading official. "I'm not staying on for the World Cup or the money, but for the honour and friendship with the directors of the association have expressed," said Markarian, whose resignation was greeted by public dismay. "It was very encouraging to feel that the people, the media and the directors had so much interest in carrying on our work and I hope we don't let them down." "Now everything is calm, like it was before, better than it was before," said Juan Angel Napout, national team co-ordinator of the Paraguayan Football Association (AFP). Markarian, who has led Paraguay to the brink of a second successive World Cup appearance, resigned following a bitter verbal attack by AFP vice-president Antonio Colman Rodriguez. "Markarian talks too much," said Rodriguez. "According to his concepts, if we draw it is thanks to God and if we win it is thanks to him." Paraguay are third in the qualifying competition, which is just past the halfway stage, and have hit a rich vein of form. They have a 100 per cent home record, with Brazil among the victims, while recent away results have included a victory in Colombia and a deserved draw in Argentina.

Premiership preview

Dial MU for murder

Football
AFP, London
Runaway leaders Manchester United go to Chelsea on Saturday with revenge on their minds having been on the receiving end of a humiliating 5-0 defeat in the corresponding Premiership fixture last season. To commemorate the demolition of the 1999 European champions that day, Chelsea's marketing department - not wishing to miss out on a wonderful commercial opportunity - released a video of the match entitled 'Can we play you every week!'. Chelsea's joy was understandable given that United thumped the Londoners 4-0 in the 1994 FA Cup final and two years later denied the Blues a place in the Wembley showpiece with a 2-1 semi-final win. Chances of a Stamford Bridge sequel are slim, however, with United as formidable away from home as they are at Old Trafford, losing just one game on their travels this season. And United will love nothing better than to set the record straight by turning the tables on the Blues. The reigning champions are odds-on favourites to lift their seventh Premiership crown in nine seasons with a 15-point lead at the top of the table and just 12 games to go. United coach Sir Alex Ferguson has even had the luxury of resting his top players over the last few weeks - the wily Scotsman keeping one eye on Europe and the cov-

eted Champions League no doubt. Whatever side United put out, the points keep piling up. United have won all of their last five league games. The club also received a massive financial boost on Wednesday, striking a major marketing deal with baseball's New York Yankees, a partnership which will help boost merchandise sales in the burgeoning US market. Eighth-placed Chelsea, meanwhile, must win if they are to keep alive their remote chances of securing a European place next season. Claudio Ranieri's foreign legion, who have yet to win away from home in the Premiership, dropped valuable points at Leicester last Saturday in a narrow 2-1 defeat. But on their own turf Chelsea are a different proposition altogether with just one defeat all season and seven home wins on the trot. Chelsea and England defender Graeme Le Saux believes United set the standard for the rest of the Premiership. "We know they are the benchmark for so many things regarding the way they play, but as far as shutting games down and nullifying the threat of the opponents, they are way ahead of anyone else," said Le Saux. United are expected to be at full strength while Le Saux, French World Cup winner Marcel Desailly, and youngster John Terry will all be available for Chelsea after injury and illness. Second-placed Arsenal host Ipswich, in fifth, looking to hold onto the runners-up spot which would guarantee a place in next

season's Champions League. The Gunners will be without their combative French midfielder Patrick Vieira who was found guilty of misconduct by the English Football Association (FA) on Thursday and given a one-match suspension. Fourth host third at the Stadium of Light where Sunderland take on Gerard Houllier's Liverpool. Sunderland and Republic of Ireland striker Niall Quinn, who is hoping to recover from a neck injury, is desperate for Sunderland to get back to winning ways. Peter Reid's men have suffered two successive Premiership defeats which have dampened their own Champions' League aspirations. But the big Irishman is confident the Weariders can once again pull their season together. "If we beat Liverpool, all the talk will be of Champions' League again. The sooner we get back to basics, the better," said Quinn. "We need to steady the ship because all these highs and lows can effect people. It's about gathering together and fighting as a unit." **FIXTURES** **Saturday** (all 15:00GMT unless stated) Arsenal v Ipswich, Aston Villa v Middlesbrough, Chelsea v Manchester United, Everton v Leicester, Leeds v Derby, Manchester City v Tottenham, Southampton v Bradford, Sunderland v Liverpool **Sunday** Charlton v Newcastle (16:00GMT) **Monday** West Ham v Coventry (20:00GMT)

Bundesliga preview

Schalke chase Bayern

Football
AFP, Berlin

Schalke 04 renew their bid to regain leadership of the Bundesliga from Bayern Munich on Saturday when they meet the Bavarian capital's less glamorous club, 1860 Munich. Schalke slipped up badly against lowly Energie Cottbus last weekend on a half-frozen pitch in the former East Germany - and watched Bayern cruise past them to top spot with a convincing 3-1 win away at VfL Wolfsburg. Schalke recovered to reach the final of the German Cup with a 3-0 win midweek semi-final win against VfB Stuttgart and will face minnows Union Berlin in the final. Unfashionable Schalke will now be hoping Bayern will be distracted from their domestic campaign by the gruelling demands of the Champions League. Bayern and Brazilian sharpshooter Giovane Elber resume their quest in Europe's top tournament when they face Spartak Moscow in Germany on Tuesday, the first of four matches in a

month. Bayern president Franz Beckenbauer this week proposed radical changes to the current Champions League, with fewer matches and the introduction of a direct elimination system at the first-round phase. "Thirteen matches instead of 17 is largely enough," Beckenbauer said. "After the first round the last 16 round should be held." Beckenbauer also said he was quite prepared to forego all cash from the current second round of the Champions League. "We can't want everything. You have to give something back as well. Big financial rewards and fewer matches is, of course, not possible." Schalke - and the their league-leading scorer Fbhe Sand - would love a share of the rich Champions League pot, but wealthier clubs Bayer Leverkusen and Borussia Dortmund are breathing down their neck. Third-placed Leverkusen actually have the same number of points as Schalke and face Unterhaching, who are fighting relega-

tion, on Saturday. In the closest German first division race for years, 1997 European Cup winners Borussia Dortmund are one point behind in fourth place after their 1-0 upset against 1860 Munich last weekend. Dortmund host mid-table Werder Bremen on Sunday. Two points behind Dortmund are Hertha Berlin, who play VfL Wolfsburg in the capital on Saturday. Bottom club VfL Bochum, who have just 18 points from 20 matches, visit fellow strugglers SV Hamburg. **FIXTURES** **Friday** Eintracht Frankfurt v Energie Cottbus **Saturday** Schalke 04 v 1860 Munich Bayer Leverkusen v Cologne Kaiserslautern v Unterhaching Bayern Munich v VfB Stuttgart Hertha Berlin v VfL Wolfsburg SV Hamburg v Bochum **Sunday** Freiburg v Hansa Rostock Borussia Dortmund v Werder Bremen

French Cup preview

Operation Salvage

Football
AFP, Paris

Paris Saint German and Marseille look to the French Cup this weekend to salvage a season which has seen the big money clubs pushed into mid-table league mediocrity by modest outfits. When PSG invested 31 million dollars in French international striker Nicolas Anelka in the close season, they would have hoped for a better return on their investment than 11th place in the league - and just seven goals from Anelka. They lost their first two matches in the second stage of the Champions League and face the unenviable prospect of travelling to AC Milan when they resume action in that competition on Wednesday. Coach Luis Fernandez has failed to spark the team since replacing Philippe Bergeroo in December, and PSG crashed 3-1 to Guingamp in their midweek league fixture at the Parc des Princes. So their tie in the last 32 of the Cup against First Division Auxerre on Saturday may come as light relief. Auxerre warmed up with a 2-0 league win over Toulouse on Wednesday, continuing a five-match unbeaten run thanks to goals from Andy Faye and Djibrill Cisse. Marseille have also had a disastrous season, leaving the 1993 European Cup winners 14th in the league, just two places above the relegation zone.

A trip to Second Division Chateauroux, who knocked out First Division Toulouse in the last round, stands in Marseille's path. Marseille at least are showing signs of improvement with a midweek 1-1 league draw against Lyon, whose captain Sonny Anderson struck his 12th goal of the season. Lyon, who return to Champions League action against Arsenal on Tuesday, face a tough tie on Friday against St Etienne, the team who have been at the centre of the false passports scandal which has rocked the league this season. St Etienne are second bottom of the league after having six points deducted after the European Union passports of Alex of Brazil and Maxim Levitsky of Ukraine were found to be false. Two teams riding high in the league, Bordeaux and Nantes, face-off on Saturday for what could be the tie of the round. Bordeaux's Portuguese star Pedro Pauleta became joint top scorer in France for the season after bagging his 13th goal in his side's 2-1 win against reigning champions Monaco in midweek. Metz travel to Corsica to take on Bastia in another all First Division clash. Sedan beat Calais in the last round, abruptly ensuring there would be no repeat of last year's fairytale, when the part-timers reached the final and only lost 2-1 to Nantes at the Stade de France final. But Sedan, a small club surprisingly challenging for First Division honours this season, face

another possible giant killer in the shape of Fourth Division Fontenay on Saturday, while Third Division Clermont will fancy their chances against the bottom club in the first division, Strasbourg. **FIXTURES** **Friday** Lyon v St Etienne (19:00 GMT) **Saturday** (19:00 GMT unless stated) Bordeaux v Nantes (16:00 GMT) Levallois v Wasquehal (16:00 GMT) Clermont v Strasbourg (18:00 GMT) Chateauroux v Marseille La Roche-sur-Yon v Le Mans Sens v Troyes Vannes v Saint-Georges-les-Ancizes Carcassonne v Sete Amiens v Rennes Bastia v Metz Saint-Omer v Grenoble Fontenay v Sedan Paris Saint Germain v Auxerre Valence v Boulogne-sur-Mer **Sunday** Angers v Reims (14:00 GMT)

Didier denies it

AFP, Valencia
Former France captain Didier Deschamps has dismissed talk of retiring as he continues his comeback for Valencia following a three-month injury lay-off. Deschamps - who skipped France to World Cup and Euro 2000 glory - said he had not paid any attention to suggestions he should bring his glittering career to an end.