SPÖRT

Fowler pulls for Beckham

AFP. London

England striker Robbie Fowler has urged Liverpool fans not to barrack David Beckham in this weekend's World Cup qualifier against Finland at Anfield

Fears have been raised that the bitter rivalry between Liverpool and Manchester United could result in Beckham being singled out for abuse by sections of the crowd.

But a concerned Fowler has called on the Liverpool crowd to put club allegiances to one side and get behind Beckham and the other Manchester United players in the England team.

"Beckham is the England captain and I hope they don't start giving him and the other United lads any stick. I am sure it won't happen.

"As much as we are rivals in club football we all have to stick together in this," Fowler told the Mirror news-

England coach Sven-Goran Eriksson has also voiced concerns the Anfield crowd could target the Old Trafford contingent.

"I hope everybody will be there to support England," he was as quoted as saying by The Guardian. "It's England that's going to play

at Anfield come three o'clock on Saturday, not Manchester United. "I don't see how anvone can come to this game and not support England if they are English," he

England are playing a rare international at Anfield on Saturday following the closure of Wembley Stadium for redevelopment.

Ferguson waits on Barthez scan

AFP,London

Manchester United's French international 'keeper Fabien Barthez had a scan on his injured thigh on Tuesday and manager Sir Alex Ferguson will wait for the results before deciding whether to bring in another keeper.

The 29-year-old, who has translated his commanding international form onto the English domestic front since he joined from French champions Monaco last summer, was replaced by 19-year-old rookie Paul Rachubka or Saturday for the English champions 2-0 Premiership defeat of Leicester.

Ferguson is short of experienced cover as Raimond van der Gouw is expected to be out for another three weeks following knee surgery while Nick Culkin is currently on loan at Second Division Bristol Rovers.

But the Old Trafford boss, whose side need only another nine points to seal their 14th league title and third in a row, remains confident Barthez will be fit to face Bayern Munich in the Champions League next month.

"Fabien is having another scan today (Tuesday) and then I'll talk to him we've got the results," said

But we are not doing anything at hopeful Fabien will be okay for the

Real really busy

REUTERS. Madrid

Real Madrid want FIFA to suspend matches around the world for one day next year in order to celebrate the club's centenary. Real, who were founded on

March 6 1902 and received the FIFA award for Team of the Century last year, want to organise a gala match to celebrate the occasion, possibly in September 2002. Club president Florentino

Perez, accompanied by Spanish Football Federation chief Angel Maria Villar, met FIFA president Sepp Blatter in Zurich on Tuesday to discuss the proposals.

Real said Blatter's response at the meeting had been "entirely positive".

PSG to seek **UEFA** help

AFP, Paris

French side Paris Saint-Germain go before European football's governing body UEFA on Wednesday to explain the violence that interrupted their Champions League match against

Galatasaray on March 13. Up to 500 PSG fans termed as category C hooligans, which are classed as very violent, launched an attack on their Turkish counterparts during the match in Paris leaving 56 injured and the match being interrupted for 20 minutes while police tried

The security forces arrested nine people all of whom were later

released.
"From the television it is clear that there were some serious incidents that will have to be looked at but it would be wrong to comment in detail until we have received the full report," said a UEFA spokesman.

Italian side Inter Milan were hit with a two-match stadium ban and a fine of 45,700 euros (43,000 dollars)

PSG won the match 2-0 but failed to qualify for the quarter-finals. Galatasaray were already assured of their place in the next round before the



England coach Sven Goran Eriksson (C)with a couple of his charges during a training session at Wrexham on March

Eriksson relishing it

Football

Sven-Goran Eriksson admitted on Tuesday he was lucky with the timing of his appointment as England coach - because of the depth of young talent at his disposal.

Eriksson's reign begins in earnest on Saturday with England's vital World Cup qualifier against Finland at Anfield followed by the clash in Albania four days later.

He is demanding two good results to get England's campaign to qualify for the 2002 finals in South Korea and Japan back on the right track after only one point from the opening two games against Germany and Finland.

But the Swede recognises his task has been made easier by the depth of fast-emerging young talent

Arsenal goalkeeper David Seaman

was given a Thursday deadline by

coach Tord Grip on Tuesday to prove

his fitness for England's World Cup

qualifier with Finland at Anfield on

The 37-year-old, who was the

indisputed number one up to Euro

2000, is facing a race against time to

be ready after missing out on train-

ing on Tuesday with the inflamma-

tion of the back which stopped him

playing in Sunday's Premiership

Sven-Goran Eriksson's assistant,

confirmed Seaman, capped 62

times, will also miss Wednesday's

session and that all players are

expected to undertake two days' full

training if they are to be considered

"David is much better, but it is

Grip, who is Swedish manager

clash with Aston Villa.

Football

AFP, Birmingham

benefitting from playing regular European football at clubs such as Manchester United, Arsenal, Leeds and Liverpool

"It is good that I have taken over when English clubs are doing so well in Europe and I am lucky coming into the job when there are so many good, young players," Eriksson said.

"I came in at the right moment. There are people like David Beckham, Paul Scholes and Steven Gerrard who I get asked to talk "But you could talk about another

10 players - Michael Owen is just one. There are a lot of very good, young footballers in this country. I feel very lucky that I came in at this moment and I hope I can go on saying that after a year in charge.

The amount of talent was something that crossed my mind when I accepted the job. But when England wanted me as manager I would

Time running out for Seaman

difficult to say how long it will take for

normally we need players to put in

two full days' training before a game.

on Thursday you can work with the

first training session at Wrexham in

Wales were that Leeds United

keeper Nigel Martyn would get the

for Seaman at Euro 2000 when

injury again ruled him out and saved

a penalty in Eriksson's debut as

coach in the 3-0 friendly win over

what appeared to be his first-choice

from the training ground in the form of Steve McManaman, Steven

Three other players were absent

Grip described McManaman as

"He (McManaman) was rested

The 34-year-old, who deputised

others," the Norwegian added.

nod if Seaman is ruled out.

team to face the Finns.

suffering from a niggle.

Gerrard and Gavin McCann.

"He will not train tomorrow, and

That means if players are not fit

The early indications from the

him to be okay," he said.

had not been so many good, young players at my disposal. It will always be a big honour for me.

While Beckham and Gerrard grab many of the headlines, Eriksson recognises that it is the publicity-shy Scholes who remains one of England's most potent weap

He is the leading scorer of the players in the 26-strong squad with 10 goals in 31 internationals, ahead of Teddy Sheringham (nine in 39) and Michael Owen (eight in 25).

"Scholes can do anything. He scores goals, defends, dribbles, shoots. He can use his right foot, his left foot and is very difficult to mark," Eriksson said.

"Scholes is not just famous in England. He is famous throughout the world. He is one of the best midfielders you can find."

on Tuesday because of the long

journey from Spain and the fact that

he played a game on Sunday. He

should be in training tomorrow," Grip

Gerrard, who has played four

matches in the last fortnight, should

be in training on Wednesday despite

having more treatment on his back

"He has been to France for some

special treatment and is joining up

the team tonight, and we are hoping

he will be okay for training on

McCann has a knee problem

the Sunderland midfielder is

expected to be fit for training on

The only other slight worry was

Gary Neville, who appeared to be

limping after the training session -

although Grip bizarrely claimed he

was only suffering from a sore

Wednesday," he said.

Wednesday.

throat.

Grip added that the fragile

The win set up the Palestinians, with a mouthwatering top of the table clash with MPg-uourites Qatar on Friday.

golden opportunity to virtually wrap up th !gqoup as they were held to a 0-0 draw by Malaysia. Palestine, who failed to win in her of their previous two a

als, grabbed the winner in the 59th minute through Fadi Abou Latifa. Qatar should hold the ace hand

they beat Palestine 2-1 in their first meeting in Hong Kong on March 8. The winners of the ten preliminary round groups in Asia advance

the winners of which qualify for the A third team could qualify via a

play-off against a European team.

turns to Voodoo!

AFP, Swansea

English Second Division side Swansea have invited a group of Kenyans to their ground to perform a voodoo dance after famous psychic Uri Geller said "black spirits"

Swansea believe there may be a more sinister reason for their position in the Second Division than just a combination of bad luck, injuries and some below-par performances.

Shevchenko isn't bothered

Transfer speculation surrounding AC Milan's Ukrainian striker Andriy Shevchenko has not affected him.

and Wales on March 24 and 28.

Ukrainian media had reported that Milan boss Silvio Berlusconi listened to offers from Real Madrid and Arsenal for the top scorer in Serie A.

want to help my club to finish this season the best we can," said Shevchenko. But he added: "Milan are not the last team I'll be playing Hagi's testimonial

FIFA boss will be there

Football

REUTERS. Bucharest Gheorghe Hagi, Romania's player

nowhere" and that he feels unlucky to have signed for the under-Hasselbaink, who has found the net 20 times since his 15-millionon a World XI.

pound (22 million dollar) move from Atletico Madrid last summer, said he was misquoted in a European football magazine in which it was reported he is disenchanted with life at Chelsea - currently ninth in the

the record straight on Wednesday by denying making those comments and said that he is perfectly happy at the London club.

things like that," Hasselbaink told the Sun.

"It was taken from a very old interview and I was misquoted. We have had problems at Chelsea this season with a change of managers,

Chelsea managing director Colin Hutchinson added: "It is important we discover if he has been quoted out of context before

quoted by Champions League magazine as saying: "Sometimes I think I am in the wrong place at the wrong time. I'm not very lucky with the teams I choose to play for.

relegated, like Atletico, and next year I play for a team that goes nowhere, like Chelsea.

"When we train my team-mates are constantly saying those stupid things. They say 'Hey, Jimmy, do you know where we were last season without you? Now you are here and we are trying not to get rele-

The Palestine dream roll on

qualifying for the second round of Asia's 2002 World Cup qualifiers here on Tuesday with a 1-0 win over Hong Kong to add to their success earlier this month when they beat Malaysia.

Qatar, who currently lead Palestine by three points and have a superior goal difference, missed a

ances in the 1934 and 1938 renew-

though when the two meet up as

to two second round groups of five, finals in Japan and South Korea.

were dogging the club.

The Kenyan Boys, who tour with

REUTERS, Kiev

play and I leave it to club presidents to decide who and when they want to sell," Shevchenko told reporters on Monday on arrival for Ukraine's World Cup qualifiers against Belarus

"I am still a Milan player and I

to work with me, of course."



GHEORGHE HAGI

sent to former team mates from Real Madrid, Barcelona, Brescia, Galatasaray and other top

accepted for the testimonial.

"I can only tell you now the names of coaches," Hagi said, adding that Johan Cruyff, Radomir Antic and Fatih Terim would lead the World XI, while Emerich lenei. Anghel lordanescu and Mircea Lucescu would be on the Romanian bench.

Hagi said he would play for Romania, and not for the World XI. "I retire from the national team, so I'll play the whole match only for it."

Revenues from Hagi's testimonial will be donated to orphanages in the Black Sea port of Constanta, his native city.

Hagi and his wife, who have a boy and a girl, have regularly spent Christmas Days over the past few years with orphans.

"They (orphans) need help and I want to do something for them," Hagi said. "I had myself an unhappy childhood, so I sympathize with their problems.

Duberry was told to lie!

Football

"This is a great honour for me."

record 19-year period.

a coaching career.

Hagi played 125 matches for

Hagi also confirmed he will

Romania, scoring 35 goals in a

retire from playing club football on

June 26, the last day of his contract

with UEFA Cup holders

Galatasaray, before aiming to start

several months of rest," said the

"I'd like to be a coach after

Leeds United defender Michael Duberry was told by the club's solicitor to continue lying to police over his team-mate's alleged involvement in an attack on an Asian student, a court heard Wednesday.

Duberry told Hull Crown Court he had wanted to change a statement he had made to police over events following the attack on Sarfraz Najeib.

But solicitor Peter McCormick, a club director in charge of discipline, had told him to "stick to his story."

Duberry said that he had initially lied to protect fellow Leeds defender Jonathan Woodgate who, he said, had told him he had been involved in a fight with Asians.

He had given Woodgate and friends a lift home after the assault despite telling police they had arrived there in a taxi. "It was a lie," said Duberry. "I did

not want to say anything that would get Woody (Woodgate) into any more trouble. I did not want to get him in trouble so I went along with his story.' A month after the attack

Duberry went to see McCormick and told him he wanted to change his statement.

"I told him I knew what it was

not to," said Duberry.

"He used the word perjury and said 'Say what is in your statement and stick with it'."

England international Woodgate, 21, of Middlesbrough, Leeds United midfielder Lee Bowyer, 24, of Leeds, Neale Caveney and Paul Clifford, both 21, of Middlesbrough, deny causing grievous bodily harm with intent to Najeib. They also deny affray.

Najeib, 20, of Rotherham, South Yorkshire, suffered serious injuries including a broken leg and fractured cheekbone.

Duberry, Woodgate, Clifford and Caveney also deny conspiracy to pervert the course of justice after about and I wanted to change what

Greece face World Cup ban

Victoras Mitropoulos, who had a

case pending from 1993 regarding

the renovation of a football stadium.

time but Floridis dismissed their

reservations.

referees.

October 2000

informed," he said.

Greek football," he said.

justice and refereeing.

in its statement on Tuesday.

FIFA voiced its concern at the

"I believe they have been badly

Floridis also launched a blister-

"The refereeing has a large part

"I firmly believe that refereeing is

The text of the new sports law

ing attack on the quality of Greek

to play in the deplorable state of

under the control of a gang," Floridis

told Greek journal Kathimerini in

addresses the so called five burning

questions, transparency of football

clubs and sporting institutions,

football violence, doping, sports

However, FIFA was unequivocal

"FIFA asks that Greek sports law

be amended to ensure the inde-

pendence of the HFF. This under-

taking has to be made by the Greek

government by March 30," the



AFP, Zurich

Football's world governing body FIFA threatened to suspend Greece from all football on Tuesday unless the Greek government acceded to their ultimatum to change its sports law and stop meddling in Greek

Football Federation (HFF) affairs. The Greek Government was given a deadline of March 30 to give an undertaking ensuring the future independence of the HFF and April 25 to put in place the amended legislation to the Sports Law.

Failure to do so would see the national side barred from the World Cup qualifying group that also includes Germany and England. The warning comes after FIFA

Vice-President David Will visited Athens earlier this month to investigate the situtation. Greek secretary of state for sports George Floridis launched a crusade late last year to clean up

Greek football and bring in a new sports law. He told AFP on November 24 that Greek football was in a rotten

state. involved in criminal justice investigations from the HFF. The move directly affected the

president of the Greek professional

League Club's association (EPAE)

In October Floridis led a parliamentary effort to exclude anyone

statement said. FIFA also requested that the necessary amendments be in place

by April 25, 2001. It is a FIFA membership requirement that national football

The move comes after Guinea

were banned from all international

football activities on March 19 due to

government interference in the

assosiations be independent.

relegation expert **Spalletti**

The West African country

ignored several deadlines to rein-

state the national football associa-

tion executive committee fired in

Udinese appoint

Luciano Spalletti, not known for his ability at keeping sides in the top flight, was appointed coach of Italian First Division strugglers Udinese on

Tuesday.

The 42-year-old, who was contacted about replacing Luigi Di Canio even before the latter was sacked on Monday, enjoyed his greatest success in taking Empoli from the Third to the First Division between 1993

and 1997. However, he has been less successful in keeping clubs in the top

He was at the helm of both Sampdoria and then Venezia during the 1998-99 season that saw the two relegated to the Second Division.

Not surprisingly Spalletti was not engaged as a coach during the 1999-2000 season. De Canio was sacked by club president Giampaolo Pozzo on Monday after a slump in form saw them slip from being early season pacesetters towards the relegation

one.
Udinese are currently 12th just six points above fourth from bottom Napoli after losing 3-1 at home to Parma on Sunday.



AC Milan's Ukrainian international superstar Andrey Shevchenko answers journalists' questions before a training in

Kiev on March 19.

All-star Liverpool to Asia Football "We're coming to concentrate on

for selection.

AFP, Bangkok

ROBBIE FOWLER

sides, organisers said Wednesday.

Singapore on July 16 and come up

against the Thai side at Bangkok's

Parry said the tour, which almost

coincides with a visit by arch-rival

Manchester United, will be much

more than another marketing exer-

Rajamangala Stadium on July 19.

Liverpool is scheduled to play

The club's chief executive Rick

English Premiership side Liverpool will field an all-star team on their July tour of Asia where they will take on the Thai and Singapore national a football match. We're not putting on a brand-building exercise here, this is very much a footballing visit," he told a press conference.

The glamour club plans to bring its full squad to Asia, including superstar players Michael Owen, Emile Heskey and Robbie Fowler. "Everyone who plays will be here

come July ... and they are not com-

ing to sit on the bench." said assis-

tant team manager Phil Thompson. While many European football clubs have turned their attention to the Asian market and its masses of adoring fans, Liverpool executives say their interest rests squarely on the game and not merchandising. "We thought we'd come to the

country where we thought support would be the strongest. We thought possibly Hong Kong or China, but decided on Thailand and Singapore," Parry said. "Obviously there's huge enthusiasm here, and we're exploring ways

of establishing official linkages and

making people feel like they're part

of the club. The Liverpool way is to

create a family.' Parry said that as well as the diehard British fans who are tipped to travel to Asia to see the match against Thailand -- who Liverpool last played some 20 years ago -- he expects Asian fans to turn out in

Liverpool's stocks are high as

they seek a Cup treble this season.

They have already bagged the League Cup and are in the semifinals of the FA Cup and the UEFA Cup. They also had the satisfaction of beating Manchester United 1-0 in a Premiership fixture. But when it comes to Asia, their fan base lags a long way behind

Manchester United who command a tremendous following in Thailand and throughout the region. "In Asia, we reckon we're second

to 10 million fans worldwide." Parry admitted In a series of matches organisers

to Manchester United. We have up



MICHAEL OWEN

games, Manchester United are scheduled to play in Kuala Lumpur on July 22, Singapore on July 24 and in Bangkok on July 28. As a prelude to the Liverpool's

outing here, Thailand's national team will travel to Britain in April as guests of the club, and visit their training facilities ahead of the World Cup trial games.

"This is a very special opportunity ... Thai players will gain valuable experience and learn some tips and techniques," said Football Association of Thailand president Vijit Ketkaew in a statement.

Hasselbaink denies Chelsea rift

AFP, London

Dutch international striker Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink on Wednesday denied saying Chelsea were "going

achieving Premiership club.

The 28-year-old Dutchman put

"I am not stupid enough to say

but the club has a bright future."

we take action." On Tuesday Hasselbaink was

"One year I play for a team that is

WC 2002 qualifying

AFP, Doha Palestine kept alive their dream o

who are competing in the World Cup for the first time since 1938,

Swansea

"I am a player and my job is to