

# Edilson to replace Ronaldo

## Rivaldo set to join squad



Brazil national coach Luiz Felipe Scolari, announced in a press interview on Tuesday morning at the Caju training center, that superstar striker Ronaldo (Inter Milan) will have to be dropped from the squad due to injury, and he is substituting him with Edilson (Flamengo), who was left out of the last qualifier against Argentina in Buenos Aires. Ronaldo injured his right thigh muscle last Thursday in a game between Inter and Brasov of Rumania in the UEFA Cup. After being examined by the national team's Doctor, Ronaldo was ruled out of Sunday's game against Chile. Ronaldo plans to return to Rio de Janeiro this Tuesday afternoon to continue treatment with the physiologist Nilton Petroni. Ronaldo has still to confirm his date of return to Italy with Inter Milan, but he is expected to travel back this weekend.



Striker Edilson gives a thumbs up while relaxing during a training session of the Brazil national squad at Curitiba on October 2.

Edilson, who had been sitting out a four match suspension one already automatically complied with after having been sent off in the club match against Juventude, will not play for Flamengo in the classic against Vasco next Saturday in the Brazilian championship, and will also miss the games against Botafogo and the Corinthians. Ronaldo gave a collective press interview on Tuesday to explain the reason why he cannot play for Brazil, and said that despite this setback he was certain that the worst phase of his career is already behind him. "I think it's practically impossible for me to play Sunday," he said. "If the game were next weekend, maybe I would be ready," he said.

The good news was that the injury apparently was not related to the knee problems that led to two operations and sidelined Ronaldo for 17 months. "I've been practically two years without playing," he said. "I still have no rhythm. It was possible that this kind of thing would happen." "Despite my injury and exclusion from the national team, I am happy to be here in Brazil. I have left concerns about my old knee injury in the past. I am now getting fully match fit again, and reliving the ups and downs of the game, one of which is this typical muscle strain, which anyone can suffer from. But it is great shame that it happened just before my comeback for Brazil. Ronaldo added that he made the trip to Brazil to comply with the FIFA statute on international call ups and reminded the gathered press that Inter Milan have always made a point of collaborating with the Brazilian team when their club players are called up for international duty. With Brazil going into Sunday's crucial game without its biggest star, Rivaldo, Elber, Ronaldinho, Denilson and Franca are vying for the two slots in the front line. Brazil is tied with Uruguay for

fourth place in the South American group, behind Argentina, Paraguay and Ecuador. With three qualifying games, Brazil is facing the prospect of sitting out a World Cup for the first time in history. Only the top four are assured a spot in next year's World Cup, to be held in Japan and Korea. The fifth-place team plays Australia in a two-game series for the final spot. Meanwhile, Rivaldo was expected at training camp Tuesday. The FC Barcelona star, who was listed as questionable because of a knee injury, underwent treatment in Brazil and flew back to Spain last week for his club's league match with Real Sociedad on Sunday. Still, Barcelona coach Carlos Rexach didn't play the Brazilian, and Rivaldo complained about the long and seemingly pointless trip to Spain and back. "I was surprised that I wasn't in the lineup, especially because I worked hard in Brazil to take part in that game," he said in an interview on Pele's web site, www.pele.net. "Obviously I was not happy that I didn't play." Chile's new head coach Jorge Garces, meanwhile, on Sunday nominated a combination of veterans and rookies to the Chilean national soccer team for the Oct. 7 qualifier against Brazil. Although Chile has already been eliminated, Garces nominated several of Chile's top stars playing for European clubs, including striker Marcelo Salas of Juventus of Italy and Clarence Acuna of Newcastle of the English Premier league. But the list also includes several new faces, including defenders Alex von Schwedler and Victor Cancino and goalkeeper Nicolas Peric. The match will be played in the southern Brazilian city of Curitiba.

## Batistuta never felt left out

INTERNET, Buenos Aires

Gabriel Batistuta said on Monday he never felt left out of the Argentina team by coach Marcelo Bielsa despite last playing for his country a year ago.

"I never felt outside the national team. I'm very happy to be back in it," Batistuta said on arriving in Buenos Aires for Argentina's World Cup qualifier in Paraguay in Asuncion on Sunday.

Batistuta, who has scored an Argentine record 54 goals in 74 internationals, last played in their 2-



GABRIEL BATISTUTA

1 home win over Uruguay in October 2000, scoring the winner. "I've been coming out of an injury, that's all. Now I'm pretty good physically and I wanted to be in the team again," the AS Roma striker said. Bielsa caused a stir at home and in Europe by leaving Batistuta out of Argentina's recent qualifiers in favour of Lazio's Hernan Crespo, who has top-scored as his side clinched their place at the 2002 finals in Japan and South Korea. Paraguay are nine points behind South American qualifying group leaders Argentina, and if they win they will also secure a berth in the finals for the second World Cup in a row. The two teams drew 1-1 in Buenos Aires last year. Batistuta arrived in Argentina with several other European-based members of Bielsa's squad, including Inter Milan midfielder Javier Zanetti, Valencia defender Fabian Ayala and Monaco's Marcelo Gallardo. Manchester United's Juan Veron arrived on Sunday, the day after helping his team to a remarkable comeback against Tottenham Hotspur when he scored the fourth goal as the English champions came from 3-0 down at halftime to win 5-3.

# Eriksson not too worried



REUTERS, Manchester

Coach Sven Goran Eriksson played down England's injury problems on Tuesday before Saturday's decisive World Cup qualifier against Greece.

With striker Michael Owen and defender Sol Campbell already ruled out, goalkeeper David Seaman and midfielders Steven Gerrard, Steve McManaman and Nicky Butt all missed Tuesday's training session in Manchester.

"It would have been better to have them (Owen and Campbell) but England have a lot of very good footballers so we cannot stand or fall by these injuries," Eriksson said.

"We are England, so we can't start crying because of one or two injuries. I don't have another Michael Owen but life goes on."

The coach is still optimistic about his side's chances to win.

"We have to play the game, we have to win the game and I refuse to say that we have problems," Eriksson said.

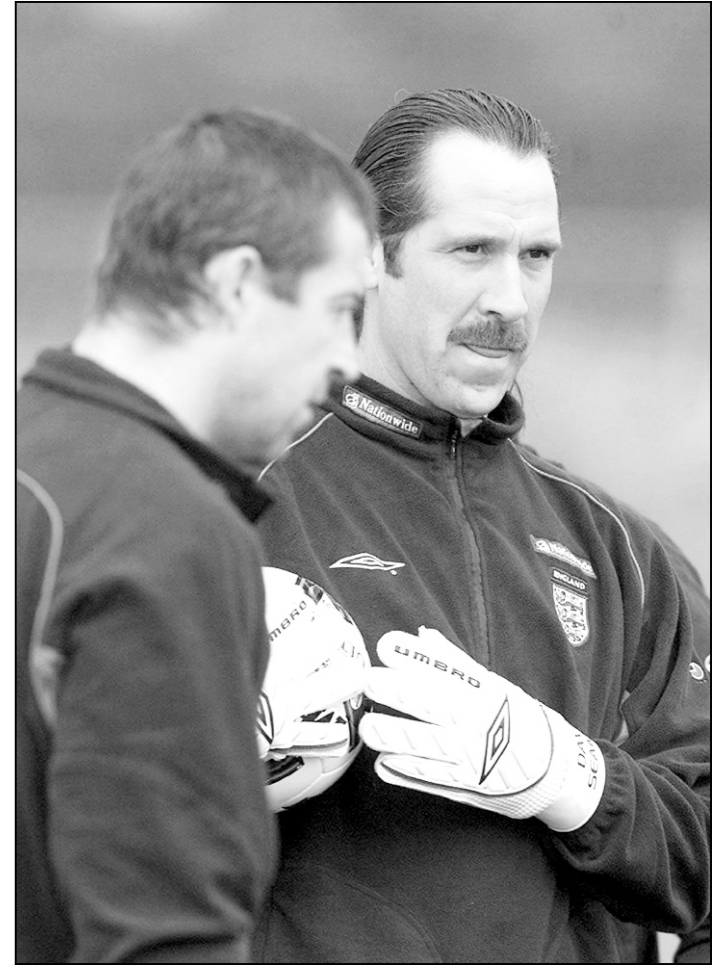
Gerrard has some health problems, but nothing serious. He sat out the training session following routine treatment on Monday, and Eriksson said he was confident the Liverpool player would be available for a starting lineup he has already decided on.

"We know the team but you can always see things that can change your mind," he said.

Also the manager isn't worried about Seaman, who has a shoulder injury.

"We have three very good goalkeepers so we are well covered in that position," Eriksson said. "I don't know about Seaman yet, we will see tomorrow."

Butt is still suffering from a rib injury while McManaman has a strained hamstring, and neither would be expected to be in the starting line-up. Eriksson must choose two strikers from Teddy Sheringham, Andrew Cole, Robbie Fowler and Emile Heskey, who all together have scored 19 goals in 93 international



Veteran England custodian David Seaman (R), and fellow goalie Nigel Martin at the squad's training ground in Manchester on October 2.

appearances. Everything will become clear over the next couple of days in training. Chelsea player Frank Lampard dropped out of squad because of a drinking scandal. "I agree that the players have to be 200 percent professional all the time," Eriksson said. "We are England, one of the biggest football powers in the world, and I think all of us have a big responsibility if we want to be part of the team. There are millions of young people who look at us like heroes." Eriksson was also very keen to play down suggestions that Greece, who cannot qualify for the World Cup, would be easy opponents. "There is no such thing as a formality," he said. "If you do not have the correct approach, you risk playing a bad game." England will qualify for next year's World Cup in Japan and South Korea if they beat Greece, but failure to collect three points would condemn Eriksson's team to a playoff if Germany achieved a better result in their match against Finland on Saturday.

## Zidane proud to be Algerian

INTERNET, Paris

French star Zinedine Zidane announced that his heart is breaking with the thought of his national team's friendly with Algeria at Saint Denis. After all, the great player is of Algerian origin, isn't he?

Algerian and French national teams are meeting for the first time after Algeria gained independence in 1962. Zizou says three Algerian players-- Madjer, Dahler and Zidane--have gained the right to be mentioned in football history forever. This team took part in the World Cup in 1982 successfully enough. His namesake also played in that team of Algeria, which beat the FRG national team 2-1 in Spain.

## Keane cautions defenders

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United's inspirational captain Roy Keane warned his defence Tuesday that they should not hope to recover the 3-0 deficit in the Champions League that they allowed Spurs in the first-half in the Premiership last Saturday.

The 30-year-old Irish international has not been impressed with their faltering start to the Champions League campaign where they conceded two late goals against Deportivo La Coruna last week to lose 2-1 and leave them with three points from their first two matches.

Keane said that based on previous bitter experience in the Champions League there was no way United would be able to overcome such a deficit as they faced last Saturday.

"You shouldn't want to put yourself in a position like that in the Champions League. It may be great to watch but try to against some of the top teams in Europe and you will come unstuck."

"You cannot go 3-0 down in the Champions League and expect to get anything out of it."

"We should know, because we were 2-0 adrift against Bayern Munich last season and could not salvage it, and 3-0 behind to Real Madrid and on our way out the season before."

"The foundation for any good team has to be keeping clean sheets. But you attack as a team and defend in the same way."

"It is a shared responsibility and we gave the ball away far too easily against Deportivo last week," he said.

Keane left his fellow team-mates in no doubt what he was expecting of them for the remainder of the season.

"It is up to the existing players to pick up their performance level and work even harder than before to keep pace with the demands on us," he said.

"Because results have not been brilliant so far, it is easy to single out the new boys for criticism. But that would be wrong. They have come in and been great."

"I am happier than I was but still not completely happy that we are playing as we should be."

"There is no doubt that we still have a lot of work to do before we get up to the standard people expect of us."

# China so near



AFP, Nicosia

The upstarts of the Asian World Cup qualifiers have had their say; now the grown-ups are talking.

As the marathon second round of qualifiers enters the home straight, it's the powerhouses of the region who are in sight of the finals in Japan and South Korea next year.

China, leaders in Group B by four points and with a game in hand, will guarantee a place in their first ever World Cup finals by beating Oman in Shenyang on Sunday.

It shouldn't be much of a problem for coach Bora Milutinovic and his men - Oman are at the foot of the table with just two points to show from five matches which have yielded just one goal.

However, Milutinovic, the only man to have coached four different teams to the finals, is refusing to declare victory.

"I will not say we have already qualified for the World Cup," he said after his team's 1-0 win against the UAE last week.

"All we did in Abu Dhabi was gather three points and that brightened our chances." Behind China in Group B, Qatar are favourites to grab the play-off spot.

They face the United Arab Emirates in Doha on Thursday

before completing their programme in China on October 13.

A victory for Qatar would put the pressure back on third-placed Uzbekistan who are two points behind the Gulf side.

The Uzbeks don't play this week-they travel to Oman on October 13 and finish their schedule with a home clash against China on October 19.

The huge financial sums involved in the race to the World Cup finals were illustrated this week when it was revealed that Qatar, one of five teams in the qualifiers to have changed their coach in the competition, had offered Czech coach Milan Macala 500,000 dollars to take charge after the resignation of Dzemal Hadziabdic last month.

According to reports in Dubai, Macala, the former coach of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, had also been offered a salary package of 40,000 dollars a month.

However, he turned down the approach to honour his contract with the Al Nasr club in the UAE.

"I said no to the Qataris because I have a contract with Al Nasr club and I have to respect my word with them," Macala was quoted in the Gulf News newspaper.

Although Qatar, now coached by Brazilian Paolo Campos, are in pole position for the play-off spot in Group B, the UAE's Dutch coach Tini Ruijs is confident his side can still take second spot.

"If China can defeat Qatar and we can win against Qatar in Doha, we still have a chance," he said.

In Group A, it's a battle between leaders Saudi Arabia, who have 11 points from six matches, and Iran, two points behind but with a game in hand.

The two sides drew 2-2 in Riyadh last week, a result which prompted Iran coach Miroslav Blazevic to confidently predict that it will be his men who will grab the automatic qualifying place for the finals.

Friday will be crucial - Iran face bottom side Thailand in Tehran while the Saudis clash with Iraq on neutral territory in Amman.

"I promise that no other team, not even Saudi Arabia, will come first in our group," said Blazevic.

"We will go to the World Cup and no-one will stop us, but I think the Saudis will reach the finals by the play-offs," added the Croat.

Third-placed Iraq, two points behind Iran and having played a game more, will need to beat the Saudis to keep alive their outside chances of snatching the play-off spot.

However, Bahrain, who stood at the top of the table a month ago, have now slipped to fourth with six points from six games.

Only the two group winners in Asia are guaranteed places in the finals with the two runners-up going into a play-off.

The winner of that match will have to face either the Republic of Ireland or Portugal from European Group Two if they are to reach the finals.

## Elber flying

INTERNET, Munich

Champions League winner and Brazilian international Giovanni Elber scored three out of Bayern Munich's four goals in their fixture last weekend with VfB Stuttgart. Meanwhile, it wasn't a mere hat-trick.

His third goal allowed him to become the 40th Bundesliga player who has scored 100 goals.



GIOVANNI ELBER

However, Swiss international Stefan Chapuisat, with 106 goals, holds the record as the top scorer among all of the Bundesliga's foreign players.

The forward was full of joy. "It was a fabulous week. The fact that I netted five times, twice in a Champions League tie with Spartak Moscow and three times in the national competition will be in all the Brazilian newspapers. I hope to score in the forthcoming World Cup qualifier with Chile which will boost our team's chances for World Cup 2002 spot," he said.

Bayern legend Gerd Muller tops the Bundesliga's best scorers' list with 365 goals in 427 games, a record considered almost unbeatable.

## Diego invites Castro

INTERNET, Buenos Aires

The World Cup 1986 winner Diego Maradona has invited the president of Cuba Fidel Castro to his farewell match between Argentina and World stars team, which will be held on 10 November at the La Bombonera stadium.

"I know Fidel has more important things to do, but I invite him from the bottom of my heart," said the former Argentine national team captain, who was invited by the president to undergo treatment for drug addiction in Cuba.

Pele, FIFA president Zepp Blatter, his predecessor Joao Avelange and famous football stars are among the invited.

# Trap eying Baggio



AFP, Rome

Italy coach Giovanni Trapattoni has admitted he is considering recalling Brescia striker Roberto Baggio to the national team as he plans ahead to the 2002 World Cup, the Italian sports press reported Monday.

Trapattoni has not called on the 34-year-old veteran since replacing Dino Zoff after Euro 2000 and again omitted him from the party for the weekend match with Hungary in Parma where a draw would be enough for Italy to ensure automatic qualification.

But after Baggio scored twice and created the third in Brescia's 3-3 draw with Atalanta in the Lombardy derby Trapattoni admitted the player known as 'the divine ponytail' because of his hairstyle and Buddhist beliefs was in his mind when planning for the squad of 22 for the finals.

"We have been monitoring Baggio since the start of the year and we will continue to do so," said Trapattoni, speaking Sunday evening on RAI TV.

"Then we will decide. That he is playing well is not in doubt. He deserves our compliments."

"As for the World Cup we will decide when the time comes but not in advance. I can only say that Baggio is in the group of 30-35

players in my mind. We will see."

Ironically, Baggio's position could be strengthened by the injury to Enrico Chiesa which leaves the Fiorentina forward struggling to be fit for the tournament in Japan and South Korea.

Club doctors said Chiesa was out for at least six months with damaged knee ligaments--an injury that is notoriously hard to treat. The player was due to have surgery on

Monday in the Belgian city of Antwerp.

Baggio, if selected and assuming Italy qualify, would be competing in his fourth World Cup, earning another chance to atone for his 1994 shoot-out miss in the final that handed the Cup to Brazil.

Last week, the former Fiorentina, Juventus, AC Milan, Bologna and Inter Milan player indicated this season might be his last.



ROBERTO BAGGIO