



Soccer-loving Korean women queue up for World Cup tickets in Seoul recently.

PHOTO: INTERNET

## Ticket sales unaffected



REUTERS, Frankfurt

Global growth may be on the brink of recession but this has not hurt sales for next year's World Cup finals in South Korea and Japan, FIFA's official ticketing bureau said Friday.

Packages aimed at the lucrative corporate market that follow a specific team all the way to the final were launched two weeks ago. But despite a price tag of up to 23,700 dollars-per-person, they have been almost sold out for the most popular nations.

"We were a little concerned by the timing of the launch (of the corporate packages) because everywhere you read about companies cutting back," said Jaime Byrom of FIFA's World Cup Ticketing Bureau.

"But to be perfectly honest,

clients have not been putting on the brakes. I expect to have sold them all by mid-December, which is better than we would have hoped for a year ago," he told Reuters.

Demand for the 3.2 million tickets on sale for the 2002 World Cup provides a useful indicator of the public's willingness to travel and spend on entertainment in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks on the United States.

Such discretionary expenditure is hard to measure, particularly in Europe where sales data comes out with a long lag. So evidence from an event on the scale of the World Cup yields clues as to what is going on in the real economy.

"We've sold tickets to residents of over 120 countries and every time that we have gone into a new sales phase, demand has exceeded our expectations," said Byrom.

Any salesman worth his or her salt will claim the product is in short supply. But a visit to FIFA's website (www.fifa.com) confirms that many fixtures are indeed

already sold out.

That is comforting news for those depressed by the constant barrage of economic woe.

Data this week showed that the U.S. economy had suffered its first contraction in a decade during the third quarter of this year, at a time when Europe and Japan are also weakening fast.

This threatens the first synchronised world recession since the early 1980s and the spending behaviour of households and companies will be crucial in dictating the outcome.

If they postpone or simply cancel spending due to uncertainty on orders or job security, there is a risk of deepening the damage to aggregate demand.

But they could decide that life, and business, must go on. For soccer this appears to be the case.

"At the end of the day, you're talking about the World Cup," said Byrom.

## CHAMPS LEAGUE R-2 GAMES



AFP, Geneva

European Champions League second phase schedule of matches after draw made here on Friday (home team listed first):

**Tuesday, November 20**  
Group A: Bayern Munich (Ger) v Manchester United (Eng)  
Boavista (Por) v Nantes (Fra)  
Group B: Galatasaray (Tur) v AS Roma (Ita)  
Liverpool (Eng) v Barcelona (Spa)

**Wednesday, November 21**  
Group C: Panathinaikos (Gre) v FC Porto (Por)  
Sparta Prague (Cze) v Real Madrid (Spa)

Group D: Deportivo La Coruna (Spa) v Arsenal (Eng)  
Juventus (Ita) v Bayer Leverkusen (Ger)

**Tuesday, December 4**  
Group C: FC Porto (Por) v Sparta Prague (Cze)  
Real Madrid (Spa) v Panathinaikos (Gre)

Group D: Arsenal (Eng) v Juventus Turin (Ita)  
Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) v Deportivo La Coruna (Spa)

**Wednesday, December 5**  
Groupe A: Manchester United (Eng) v Boavista (Por)  
Nantes (Fra) v Bayern Munich (Ger)

Group B: Barcelona (Spa) v Galatasaray (Tur)  
AS Roma (Ita) v Liverpool (Eng)

**Tuesday, February 19**  
Group C: Real Madrid (Spa) v FC Porto (Por)

Sparta Prague (Cze) v Panathinaikos (Gre)  
Group D: Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) v Arsenal (Eng)

Juventus (Ita) v Deportivo La Coruna (Spa)  
**Wednesday, February 20**  
Group A: Boavista (Por) v Bayern Munich (Ger)

Nantes (Fra) v Manchester United (Eng)  
Group B: Barcelona (Spa) v AS Roma (Ita)

Liverpool (Eng) v Galatasaray (Tur)

**Tuesday, February 26**  
Group A: Bayern Munich (Ger) v Boavista (Por)  
Manchester United (Eng) v Nantes (Fra)

Group B: Galatasaray (Tur) v Liverpool (Eng)  
AS Roma (Ita) v Barcelona (Spa)

**Wednesday, February 27**  
Group C: Panathinaikos (Gre) v Sparta Prague (Cze)  
FC Porto (Por) v Real Madrid (Spa)

Group D: Arsenal (Eng) v Bayer Leverkusen (Ger)  
Deportivo La Coruna (Spa) v Juventus (Ita)

**Tuesday, March 11**  
Group C: FC Porto (Por) v Panathinaikos (Gre)  
Real Madrid (Spa) v Sparta Prague (Cze)

Group D: Arsenal (Eng) v Deportivo La Coruna (Spa)  
Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) v Juventus (Ita)

**Wednesday, March 12**  
Group A: Manchester United (Eng) v Bayern Munich (Ger)  
Nantes (Fra) v Boavista (Por)

Group B: Barcelona (Spa) v Liverpool (Eng)  
AS Roma (Ita) v Galatasaray (Tur)

**Tuesday, March 19**  
Group A: Bayern Munich (Ger) v Nantes (Fra)  
Boavista (Por) v Manchester United (Eng)

Group B: Galatasaray (Tur) v Barcelona (Spa)  
Liverpool (Eng) v AS Roma (Ita)

**Wednesday, March 20**  
Group C: Panathinaikos (Gre) v Real Madrid (Spa)  
Sparta Prague (Cze) v FC Porto (Por)

Group D: Deportivo La Coruna (Spa) v Bayer Leverkusen (Ger)  
Juventus (Ita) v Arsenal (Eng)

*Top two teams in each group qualify for quarterfinals, which take place on April 23-24, with return leg on April 30-May 1.*

*Semifinals on April 23-24, with return leg on April 30-May 1.*

*The final will be played in Glasgow, Scotland, on May 15.*

## Relief down under



REUTERS, Melbourne

Soccer Australia (SA) chairman Ian Knop has said the decision by the sport's world governing body FIFA to confirm that Australia would host the first leg of their World Cup qualifiers was a moral victory.

The first match against the fifth-placed team in the South American qualifying competition will now be played on November 20 in Melbourne, with the return leg five days later.

Knop had said earlier this week it was embarrassing that FIFA was yet to set the dates, but SA welcomed official confirmation on Saturday.

"While not exactly what Soccer Australia wanted, it was a moral victory after some intense lobbying by the South Americans to get the dates pushed back and possibly even having the fixtures reversed," SA said in a statement released on

Saturday.

Knop said: "It is a win for Oceania and Soccer Australia and I must thank the terrific efforts of Dr Mohammed Sahu Khan (Oceania representative) in securing this fantastic result."

"We (SA) took the battle to FIFA and the more powerful South American lobby group and have won a moral victory, for the good of the game in this region," Knop added.

SA said FIFA had succumbed to pressure from the South Americans on other issues related to the South American bid for a place in next year's World Cup finals in Japan and South Korea.

"FIFA however did cave into the South Americans on several counts, by allowing them to continue with their qualifiers until November 14 and extending the date of our original request (November 18) by two days," SA said.

Knop said: "Soccer Australia scored a victory on two counts, in that we maintained the first leg at home and the dates were not extended beyond November 25."

Knop said he praised the patience of Australia soccer supporters who were frustrated at the way FIFA had kept them waiting to finalise the dates of the matches.

SA said the fifth-ranked South American team, likely to be Uruguay, would play their final South American qualifying match on November 14 and probably arrive in Australia three days later for the World Cup playoff first leg on November 20 at Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Australia host world champions France in a friendly on November 11 in Melbourne in a match that has caused enormous headaches for both teams.

FIFA, under pressure from European clubs, had urged the two nations to select only one player from each club.

Australia and France refused, with France selecting four Arsenal players, Patrick Vieira, Thierry Henry, Sylvain Wittord and Robert Pires and Australia choosing Leeds United pair Harry Kewell and Mark Viduka.

## Will football win?

REUTERS, Manchester

Footballing ability rather than physical power will settle the traditionally emotional clash between Liverpool and champions Manchester United on Sunday, according to United manager Alex Ferguson.

"It's what they can do with the ball and it's always been that way," he told Sky Sports television.

Games between two of the leading sides in the premier league are always heated affairs with plenty of passion both on and off the pitch.

The two cities are just 40 miles (64 kilometres) apart and the rivalry between English soccer's most successful two clubs of the last 30 years is red hot.

The fervour of the games even led close friends Jamie Redknapp and David Beckham, midfielders

with Liverpool and United respectively, to square up in the heat of the action during one meeting three years ago.

Liverpool have changed their once famed pass and move possession-based game to playing on the break under French manager

Gerard Houllier, who is currently recovering from heart surgery.

The system helped Liverpool to lift three trophies last season and Houllier's transformation of the Anfield club has won praise from Ferguson.

"Under Gerard they have done

fantastically, winning three trophies and he's done a great job recovering the club from a bad spell," Ferguson said.

"He made decisions that were important for Liverpool and improved the whole situation there."

Ferguson has a defensive crisis on his hands as he prepares for the game with several key players facing late fitness tests.

Gary Neville, Wes Brown and Laurent Blanc are all doubtful for the game leaving Ferguson thin on cover.

That could mean a call-up for youngster John O'Shea and David May, whom United agreed to sell to Southampton last month only for the deal to fall through following the departure of their manager Stuart Gray.

Ferguson also has Argentina midfielder Juan Sebastian Veron available after world governing body FIFA backtracked on their demand that he should fly out for international duty before the game.

HEAD-TO-HEAD						
Total Meetings: 159 matches (for all competitions)						
Wins: Liverpool 52; Manchester United 58						
Draws: 49						
STANDINGS						
	P	W	D	L	F	A
Liverpool	9	6	1	2	17	9
Man Utd	10	5	3	2	27	17

## UEFA won't stand racism



REUTERS, Geneva

UEFA handed out a strong warning to clubs to stamp out racism and to players to start behaving themselves on Friday.

Making unusually strong opening remarks before the draw for the second phase of the Champions League, UEFA's chief executive Gerhard Aigner said: "Once again there has been evidence of behaviour that smears the name of football."

"In particular, the racist behaviour of some spectators. This cannot be tolerated. We urge all clubs to take steps to stamp this out and I

remind you that we have now changed UEFA statutes to enable us to punish persistent behaviour of this nature by playing matches behind closed doors."

Last week UEFA said they would decide what action to take against Boavista after some of their fans aimed racial abuse at Liverpool's England striker Emile Heskey when the premier league team visited Portugal for a Champions League game on October 24.

Aigner also appealed to players and coaches to behave themselves on the pitch and to set a better example to youngsters. He also warned them against doping abuse after a number of high level cases in Europe this year.

"As top class professionals you have the role in supporting fair-

play by showing honest behaviour and showing the right examples for future generations," he said.

"Players are also in the end responsible for their own bodies and for what they put into them and this a reference to certain cases we have had earlier this year."

He also thanked those clubs who had shown support for UEFA following the attacks on the U.S. on September 11.

"The events of September 11 have overshadowed everything else," he said.

"Of course the international security situation remains a concern to us all and we must remain vigilant. But we must also make sure that the life of this great game goes on even in the changed environment after September 11."



German football legend Franz Beckenbauer displays an Al-Wehde shirt during his visit to the Syrian club on November 2. The Bayern Munich chairman went to Damascus at the invitation of Al-Wehde which is celebrating its 75th anniversary.

PHOTO: AFP

More importantly, most of the 20 venues are impressively ready or near completion, and now the move is on to finish what Chung calls "software" -- accommodation, transport and security.

"It sounds a little crazy, a little too much," said Chung in an interview. "But we are sure with all the new infrastructure it will be a very successful World Cup."

Yet Chung -- president of the Korea Football Association and a FIFA vice president -- is all too aware how much the world has changed, and with it the World Cup's focus. A recently renegotiated insurance deal with FIFA underscores that fact.

"After the terrorist attacks in the United States, security, safety, became the most important concern," said Chung, who is also co-chairman of South Korea's World Cup organising committee.

"So far we paid attention to the hoiligan problem," he said, referring to violent fans who have marred soccer events down the years. "This (terrorism) is a very new problem."

## Korea begins countdown



REUTERS, Seoul

There is one photograph in Chung Mong-joo's office that sums up the age-old attraction of soccer and the harsh reality for next year's World Cup.

"You know who that is?" says South Korea's politically astute soccer chief, singling out a framed picture of himself with a Middle Eastern officer in combat fatigues.

The military man in the snapshot is King Abdullah of Jordan, taken before he became monarch and when he was still commander of his country's Special Forces commando unit -- and head of the Jordan Football Association.

It may seem longer, but it is just weeks since the September 11 attacks in the United States.

And the big digital countdown screen on top of Seoul's city hall shows South Korea is close to 199 days away from the May 31 start of the month-long finals being co-hosted with Japan.

Even before the suicide attacks took the lives of some 4,800 people, next year's World Cup was going to be different.

FIFA has for the first time entrusted its biggest event to Asia and to twin hosts who are building 20 new stadiums -- 10 in each country, and half of them for football only rather than as multi-purpose sports venues.

A huge World Cup water fountain in the middle of Seoul's Han River near the city's new soccer stadium was inaugurated this week and a state-of-the-art training camp opens within days.

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Chung, who studied in the United States and is a potential successor to FIFA president Sepp Blatter next year, said FIFA and the two organising committees had enough time not only to minimise the impact and plan security but also to give the event new meaning.

"Following that terrorist accident, prevention of terrorism is very important. But prevention is a kind of minimum requirement. We hope we can produce a message of reconciliation, of human reconciliation, of human harmony, during the World Cup," said Chung.

"Anybody who tries to disturb football tournaments, they turn friends into their enemies."

Chung said South Korea would invite leaders from across Asia and the Middle East to the opening ceremony as a gesture of peace to a region in sharper focus with U.S. attacks on militant targets in Afghanistan.

"The World Cup and football is a very powerful tool."

Chinese President Jiang Zemin -- whose vast and populous country has qualified for the finals for the first time -- has already accepted in principle South Korean President Kim Dae-jung's invitation to attend the ceremony. There is a good chance of an attention-grabbing friendly between the two sides.

Chung said China's role would be crucial for the 2002 finals and for the future of soccer in the region.

The potential viewing figure for next year's finals is a cumulative 60 billion people, 10 times the world's population. Before China qualified the figure was closer to 40 billion.

That, said Chung, equals a lot of new television sets. It could also mean thousands of Chinese soccer tourists.

Chung advocates China hosting the next World Cup in Asia. He told Chinese fans just that over the stadium loudspeaker system right after their team beat Oman 1-0 in a qualifier in Shenyang on October 7 to win a place in the finals next year.

"You can imagine the atmosphere," he said.

It may take more than a megaphone to grab the attention of South Korea's neighbour and arch-rival -- North Korea.

FIFA has a standing invitation to the North to host one or some of the World Cup games. Blatter may visit Pyongyang in November to try to persuade the North.

But North-South diplomatic discussions are barely on track, and Pyongyang's anti-U.S. rhetoric is as rich as ever. Chung said North Korean officials were saying it was too late to talk about the World Cup.

So, the signs are not good but Chung said the window remained open until the December 1 draw in the southern port city of Pusan when the 32 qualifiers are divided

into eight groups.

"The only thing FIFA can do is not to close the window of opportunity too early," he said, adding the World Cup was a chance to put the divided peninsula on the map, just as the 1988 Seoul Olympics had done.

"We are still divided," he said. "Korea is the most armoured area in the world. Almost two million young soldiers are confronting each other."

The presence of many thousands of U.S. troops in the South and in Japan adds to security concerns. The U.S. State Department issued a warning about possible attacks in both countries even before September 11, and that warning remains in force.

Chung said all possible measures were being taken to thwart terrorism. International co-operation was the key element.

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi may visit South Korea for a second time later this year to help ensure the 2002 finals run smoothly, according to a senior Japanese official.

Implicit is that both countries sense they need to co-ordinate more closely to avoid ending up with parallel parties.

Rivalry, borne of historical enmity, would hardly be surprising. Yet Chung sees opportunity rather than threat.

"This should be a festival of all of the Asian people," he said. "It should be one World Cup, one shared World Cup."

## Arsene bin Laden!

AFP, London

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger said Friday he had become a hate figure in his native France because he objected to the removal of four of his French players in the middle of a busy season here for an international friendly in Australia.

"I'm the French Bin Laden at the moment," he said in a reference to Osama bin Laden, the man suspected by many in the west of being behind the September 11 terror attacks in the United States.

"But I don't care. I am a Frenchman and want to see my country do well, but I'm not working to become manager of some future French team. I'm working for my club, Arsenal."

English Premiership side Arsenal, who led the campaign to get European players released from the fixture conceded defeat Friday when world soccer governing body FIFA reverted to its original policy and said both countries could select whoever they chose.