

Perez, Real flying

Football
REUTERS/INTERNET, Madrid
Real Madrid fans recognised the club's president Florentino Perez to be Real's man of the year.



FLORENTINO PEREZ

Real Madrid president Florentino Perez is also a wonderful husband. His wife Piñina, his three sons, a grandchild, three dogs and, of course, Real make the sense of his life.
However, Perez is impartial towards his players, be it Figo, Zidane or somebody else.

Hitzfeld Europe's best

Football
AFP, Montevideo
Journalists from 30 European countries have elected Bayern Munich's Ottmar Hitzfeld as the continent's coach of the year.



OTTMAR HITZFELD

The vote, carried out for the past 16 years on behalf of Uruguayan paper El Pais, saw Hitzfeld walk away with the top placing after Bayern's Intercontinental Cup, Champions League and German title wins.



MICHAEL OWEN

100-wen

Football
INTERNET, London
At last, Michael Owen scored his 100th goal in 184th game for Liverpool FC.

All England wait for it. He had gone three whole games without scoring. If it had gone on much longer some people would have been talking about a jinx and a crisis.
But that is the level of fame and expectation Owen has now reached following a year that has confirmed him as one of the most outstanding strikers the English game has ever produced.



JUAN ROMAN RIQUELME

Riquelme South America's player of 2001

Football
INTERNET, Montevideo
As reported previously, the Uruguayan newspaper El Pais conducted a poll to reveal South America's best player of the year 2001.

As a result, Boca Juniors midfielder Juan Roman Riquelme was named the best player of South America of 2001, overtaking Columbian national keeper Oscar Cordoba by 29 votes.

Wenger's 'joker' formula!

Football
INTERNET, London
Arsene Wenger last night amazingly called for 'It's A Knockout-style' cards to cut out refereeing blunders.

Wenger believes each manager should be given three jokers which they can use during matches to stop play and ask for an instant video replay of controversial decisions.
The bizarre suggestion is a throwback to the 1970s hit TV game show when teams used to hold up joker cards to gain extra points.

chance to get them to go back and change their mind on a decision.
"You need to know the players who go down have genuinely been fouled. You need some common sense as well in these decisions.
For example, Giovanni van Bronckhorst went down against Liverpool but he wasn't diving for a penalty. He just couldn't stay on his feet. You should have access to video cameras to show referees that it wasn't a dive."



ARSENE WENGER

Van Basten to return to football

INTERNET, Amsterdam

Dutch soccer icon Marco van Basten announced plans to take up coaching, saying he is ready for a new challenge a decade after playing his last match as AC Milan's top striker.
Dutch newspapers reported Monday that Van Basten will start a coaching course in September. He could earn a professional coaching license by May 2003.

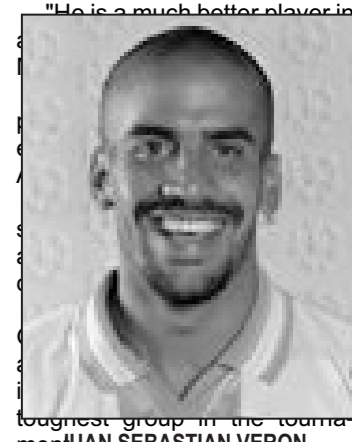
Veron's heart crying for Argentina

Football
INTERNET, London

Manchester United superstar Juan Sebastian Veron has revealed his heartbreak after watching his beloved Argentina being ripped apart by the country's escalating troubles.
Buenos Aires-born Veron has watched helpless from afar as dozens of people have been killed during weeks of protests after the Government was overthrown because of an economic crisis.

my country and my thoughts are with the people there. This is a terrible time and everyone is frightened for their friends and family.

"I am very proud of my country and I believe the great people will come through this difficult and disastrous time."
Veron may be a multi-millionaire, but he has never forgotten his roots after a tough childhood and is determined to help Argentina win next summer's World Cup.
Former Argentina and Tottenham star Ossie Ardiles insists Veron will be one of the stars of the tournament, but claims United boss Ferguson has failed to get the best out of him.



The Fergie dilemma

Football
REUTERS, London

The New Year is supposed to signal the official start of Manchester United's search for a successor to Alex Ferguson but the Scot's hint that he now might not retire in May has added a new twist.
"At the moment my mind is made up about retiring at the end of the season... but when the thing comes nearer the time who knows?" he said on Sunday.
Ferguson's 60th birthday celebrations on Monday were given extra fizz by the 3-2 weekend win at Fulham, United's fifth straight win, and after his early-season disappointments he appears a rejuvenated man.

man, this year or next, and have him at 11-8 favourite ahead of AS Roma boss Fabio Capello at 6-4.

Hills have Inter Milan's Hector Cuper and Steve McClaren at 7-2, Louis van Gaal 9-2, Sven Goran Eriksson 5-1 and Ottmar Hitzfeld and David O'Leary 16-1.
Capello's image is hardly in the Ferguson role -- it is unlikely that a range of cosmetics carrying the Scot's features would sell as well as Capello's has in Italy -- but his success on the field certainly is.
The 55-year-old former Italian international led AC Milan to the European Cup and four Serie A titles and also won the Spanish league with Real Madrid before winning another Italian title with AS Roma last season.
A good English speaker, he said a year ago that he had been approached by a United representative and has failed to sign a promised contract extension at Roma.
Cuper has taken Inter to the top of Serie A in his first season after joining from Valencia last summer



SIR ALEX FERGUSON

and seems an unlikely front runner.
Van Gaal's record is impressive and he is free to move having resigned as Dutch coach after his team's failure to make the 2002 World Cup.
Eriksson is contracted with England until after the 2006 World Cup but he remains on the bookmakers' list despite insisting that he wants to see the job through.
Should he pull off a miracle and lead England to victory in Korea and Japan next summer there is always a possibility that he may consider a return to club management but he seems a very long shot.
Hitzfeld has a phenomenal record of achievement but is also tied to a long contract at Bayern Munich (2005) and has a loyalty outlook similar to O'Neill's.
O'Leary said last week that he would not be scared of the job but also seems committed to continuing his building work at Leeds United.
Ferguson has spoken about how the workload at a club the size of United has become too big for one man and suggested that they might soon follow the European two-tier model with a coach working with a general manager.
Such a move could open the door for Middlesbrough boss McClaren, who might not yet have a big enough reputation for the board to risk taking him back as a stand-alone boss.
Ferguson has never hidden his admiration for the man he took to Old Trafford to replace his right hand man Brian Kidd in 1999 and reluctantly saw leave last summer.
"I think he has done a lot of great things already," he said. "He did well for me and he has a great work ethic about him, which is important everywhere and especially at Manchester United."