

# SPORT

### The Daily Star

## 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. Neither Zidane's arrival, nor Raul's fantastic goals or Luis Figo's becoming the World Player of the Year could overshadow the chairman's authority. His work was found striking due to the fact that he managed to pay off the debt the Spanish champions had for many years.

But apart from being Real's chairman, Perez is also a wonderful husband. His wife Pitina, 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

Evervone has a soft corner in his heart for something, and Perez is not an exception: his dog, which

follows him everywhere, and his boat have a special place in his life. Florentino Perez in proud of his "empire", but he never stops at the already attained aims.

Besides, Perez takes an interest in politics. As previously reported. he is going to be nominated for

Madrid's mayor election next year. Recognition of Perez's contribution came only hours after the real president declared the best news of the year--- the historic Spanish club, on the verge of financial collapse last year, have undergone a dramatic change of fortunes ahead of their centenary celebrations in

Football

Journalists from 30 European

countries have elected Bayern

Munich's Ottmar Hitzfeld as the

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

for winning the Champions League

Fabio Capello of AS Roma second

on 26 and Liverpool's Gerard

the journalists polled by El Pais

voted for French star Zinedine

with Borussia Dortmund.

Houiller third on 14.

He also took the award in 1997

Hitzfeld collected 35 votes with

In a vote for the best European XI

continent's coach of the year

AFP, Montevideo

title wins.

"The truth is that 2001 has been

very important for Real Madrid He explained that successful because we have found a definitive marketing of the club and its star solution to the serious economic players would help recoup Real problems that have plagued the Madrid's investments. club," Perez told sports daily Marca The club plans to launch is own

in an interview. "We have now established the



FLORENTINO PEREZ

21st century."

or an estimated dollars 392 million.

the envy of other clubs."

on both the sporting and economic

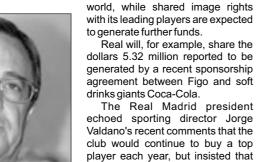


foundations for Real Madrid in the

The dollars 250 million debt with which the club was burdened when Perez took over as president in July 2000 was wiped out earlier this year following his negotiation of the sale of Real's city-centre training ground

"The work has only just started," he said on Monday. "But within three years Real Madrid will once again be a source of pride for its fans and

Perez insisted that the club's policy of signing up world-class players such as Figo and Zidane was vital to the club's future success



young players in the youth set-up would also not be ignored. "Real Madrid will, as far as it is possible, sign up a major player each year at the same time as

incorporating new players from the ranks of the reserve teams." he said. Perez admitted that Real had sounded out premier league club Arsenal about midfielder Patrick Vieira in the close season, but

sportswear brand and open a series

of franchised shops around the

refused to be drawn on the possible future signing of the highly-rated Frenchman. "All I can say about Vieira is that last summer we sent Arsenal a fax

asking to negotiate." he said. Real celebrate the centenary of

their foundation in 2002 and have unveiled a series of plans to commemorate the anniversary, culminating in a gala match against a FIFA world selection in December.

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

Football

100-wen

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 striker the English game has ever produced

memorable hat-trick of all but Owen's three against Germany in Munich was the centre-piece of probably the greatest all-round year any forward has ever had.

Not only did he beat Arsenal on his own in the FA Cup Final but he rescued England's floundering World Cup qualification campaign with priceless goals in the home ties

The goal against West Ham FC

hamstrings had seen him written off in some quarters. Not bad, either for young man who Glenn Hoddle had

## 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.

But Wenger has put it forward as a serious solution to stop the glut of refereeing mistakes which has left English football facing a disciplinary crisis

Wenger is particularly incensed by the recent spate of bookings including for his own players Robert Pires and Giovanni van Bronckhorst - for allegedly diving in the penalty box.

Arsenal boss Wenger said: "Maybe in future it will be possible to have three video interventions during a game

"Three tactical jokers, if you like, for each manager. It's not as farfetched as it sounds. Why not?

"The manager could put up a card during a game when they challenge the decision and say:

'Stop! We want the video panel to have a look at it. "Referees get it wrong, we know that. But it's difficult to accept that

#### 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.

He said a coaching position was his "next challenge," but he didn't specify where he hoped to start a coaching career.

"It is also about time to do something again. I'm 37, much too young to sit still until the end of the trip," he told the Algemeen Dagblad newspaper.

"I will finish the course in 2003. Then we will see what happens," he said.

signing. A month ago, the former Ajax Amsterdam and AC Milan striker end off and missed United's win

you can lose big games without the Middlesbrough on Saturday. 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 of the game. fouled. You need some common ense as well in these decisions. "For example, Giovanni van

ivers out of the game. "I'm ready to pay for it if it really

But Wenger has defended his club's disciplinary record - they have had eight players sent off this season - and insists every team needs to be fully committed to be success-

it wasn't a dive." French star Pires (above) yesterday also vehemently denied taking a dive in the victory over

But Wenger believes referees should carry on booking players to try and weed the diving problem out Wenger said: "Maybe it is the

price you have to pay to get the

Bronckhorst went down against Liverpool but he wasn't diving for a ets rid of the divers. penalty. He just couldn't stay on his feet. You should have access to video cameras to show referees that

ful



ARSENE WENGER

## Veron's heart crying for Argentina

#### Football

**INTERNET**, London

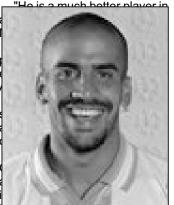
family Manchester United superstar "I am very proud of my country and I believe the great people Juan Sebastian Veron has will come through this difficult revealed his heartbreak after watching his beloved Argentina and disastrous time." Veron may be a multi- millionbeing ripped apart by the counaire, but he has never forgotten

try's escalating troubles. Buenos Aires-born Veron has watched helpless from afar as and is determined to help dozens of people have been killed during weeks of protests after the Government was overthrown because of an economic

Argentina's World Cup star, stars of the tournament, but 26, has family and friends in Buenos Aires and has been left friahtened for their safety.

him. Ardiles said: "In my opinion The worrying situation in his Juan Veron is going to be homeland has left Veron emo-Argentina's key player in the tionally drained and it has taken World Cup. its toll on the £28.1 million record "Hoicom

World Cup.



my country and my thoughts are

with the people there. This is a

terrible time and everyone is

frightened for their friends and

his roots after a tough childhood

Argentina win next summer's

Tottenham star Ossie Ardiles

insists Veron will be one of the

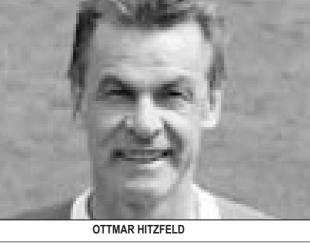
claims United boss Ferguson

has failed to get the best out of

Former Argentina and

Zidane as their top man with 41 Raul third. votes - one ahead of Liverpool and England forward Michael Owen and Portugal and Real star Luis Figo, Zidane's Real Madrid clubmate slipped to fourth

**Hitzfeld Europe's best** Last year's top-ranked star,



Best at 22 years and seven months

MICHAEL OWEN

Geoff Hurst may go down in history as the scorer of the most

against Finland and Albania.

was his 21st in the last 25 games and his 37th in the 57 matches he had played over the last 12 months.

Not bad for a boy whose suspect

natural goalscorer. He had started the year not even making the Liverpool side that launched its record-breaking sea-son by winning the Worthington Cup. By the end of it, he was European Footballer of the Year -

famously described as not being a

only the sixth player from the British Isles to achieve the feat. What was even more outstanding that he was the youngest footaller ever to receive the accolade at 22 years and three days. His nearest rival was George

in 1968 and the Irishman had the bonus of being part of the Manchester United team that won

the European Cup that year. Of the other British players from these shores to be elected Europe's

premier player, Stanley Matthews was 41 (1956), Denis Law 24 (1964), Bobby Charlton 29 (1966) and Kevin Keegan 27 (1978).

After Owen's trademark finish against West Ham - lifting a 12-yard shot effortlessly past David James -Liverpool stand-in boss Phil Thompson paid him a tribute as short and sweet as the backlift that

got the Chester boy to his ton. Thompson said: "Michael is wonderful young man. "There is no reason now why he

had a halo round his head.

cannot go on to become the World Player of the Year at some stage. "Sure, there'll be hiccups along the way but then Michael has never



#### 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.

In 2000 Riquelme was also among the favorites for the title, but Romario, who this time was only the third, became the winner last year. Paraguayan international Francisco Arce took the fourth place, with Cruzeiro's Juan Pablo Sorin coming fifth. River Plate player Mario Yepes is the sixth.

said he would consider a coaching position if it were offered to him, but his registration for the training program is the first concrete sign that he is serious.

The Dutch had lost hope of ever seeing one of their greatest players back on the soccer field.

Van Basten, who was voted FIFA player of the year in 1992, retreated from public life in 1995 when a painful ankle injury at the age of 30 forced him out of the sport

at Fulham after warning Old Trafford boss Sir Alex Ferguson that he is tired. But Argentina's own problems have also taken their toll on the fiercely patriotic Veron.

Veron was given the week-

Veron has sent messages of support to family and friends who have all been left in virtual poverty because of restrictions on the amount of money they can withdraw from the banks. Veron said: "My heart is with

mentUAN SEBASTIAN VERON

## 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.

Ryan Giggs, scorer of two goals against Fulham and a veteran of all seven of Ferguson's premier league titles, wants him to stay.

"The success we have had under him has been fabulous...the players who have played under him would love him to stay on," Giggs said on Sunday

The United board would be delighted if they could persuade him to stay for another season, particularly because a summer 2002 departure would coincide with the end of Martin O'Neill's contract at Celtic.

The Irishman, with a record of loyalty few players can emulate, has repeatedly insisted he does not plan to jump ship.

Should Ferguson stay on, O'Neill would be able to fulfil his contract and be free to move after having completed an incredible turnaround in Celtic's fortunes.

British bookmakers William Hill certainly think O'Neill will be the

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



SIR ALEX FERGUSON

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 ternational 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 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

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'Learv 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 reluc-

tantly 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 every-

United.

where and especially at Manchester