

Serie A preview Coaches cornered



Football

AFP, Rome

The three-way race for the Italian First Division title between AS Roma, Juventus and Inter Milan briefly takes a back seat this weekend as attention switches to the fate of the two most beleaguered coaches in *Serie A*.

On Saturday night AC Milan host Atalanta at the San Siro in a match where anything other than victory will heighten speculation over the future of coach Carlo Ancelotti to fever pitch.

And 24 hours later at the Olympic Stadium it is Lazio coach Alberto Zaccheroni who runs the gauntlet when his side hosts Chievo at the Olympic Stadium.

Both men inherited control of their respective clubs during this season but instead of turning sinking ships around have watched them continue to list alarmingly.

AC Milan vice-president Adriano Galliani, who has day-to-day control of the club owned by Italy's prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, has said no changes will be made until the summer.

However that was before the latest dismal Milan performance, a 1-1 home draw with Perugia who had been reduced to nine men by two harsh sendings off.

And Galliani had given Turkish coach Fatih Terim two votes of confidence in the six weeks preceding his sacking in November and the appointment of Ancelotti, whom they stole from under rivals Parma's noses.

Terim's record compares very favourably to that of Ancelotti.

Zaccheroni, who replaced the sacked Dino Zoff earlier this season, is having an even worse run with Lazio who have only picked up six points in the last nine matches and are 16 points behind leaders Roma.



ALBERTO ZACCHERONI

'Zac', who also received a vote of confidence this week, can barely afford another slip-up against fourth-placed Chievo who have shown signs of slipping in recent weeks.

However they still hold a position that would put them in the preliminary round of next season's Champions League tournament.

Meanwhile, leaders and defending champions AS Roma make the

trip to Brescia who have looked a demoralised outfit in recent weeks with death, doping scandal and injuries all contributing to their decline.

Roma's closest challengers Juventus will be equally confident of victory against a Fiorentina team whose much-documented problems have left them looking almost certain to go down.

The momentum appears to be with Juve who had the better of last Sunday's 0-0 draw with Roma in a match where the side from Turin played with 10 men for most of the match.

A much more tricky assignment faces Inter Milan who - a point behind Juve and two behind Roma - have slipped badly in recent weeks with only two points in their last three matches.

They visit in-form Verona whose bullish coach Alberto Malesani has this week declared his team will overhaul city rivals Chievo by the end of the season.

While Inter coach Hector Cuper's position is not in the same jeopardy as Zaccheroni or Ancelotti's another reverse would further weaken him.

The authoritarian Argentine made no attempt to hide his displeasure at the decision by the club to allow Brazilian striker Ronaldo stay in Rio de Janeiro for the carnival.

Elsewhere Perugia host Lecce while bottom club Venezia make the trip to Piacenza.

Parma meet Torino in a battle between two clubs who have climbed away from the relegation zone in recent weeks while in-form Bologna, who are now fifth, visit Udinese.

Bellamy punished



Football

AFP, London

English Premiership club Newcastle confirmed Thursday that forward Craig Bellamy had been found guilty of a serious breach of club discipline and will be punished.

Bellamy, 22, who scored for Wales in their 1-1 draw with Argentina in Cardiff on Wednesday, will receive an undisclosed penalty after being cautioned by police for an incident of common assault on a 21-year-old woman.

"It has been a terrible week for me," said Bellamy on Thursday. "A lot of people have tried to stick the boot in and have a go over the last few days.

"But the only way to answer them is to play football and do well, and that's exactly what I did against Argentina.

"One moment your life is turned upside down, and the next it's back up there. I have set myself certain



CRAIG BELLAMY

challenges in my football career, and it's up to me to back them up."

Newcastle team-mates Carl Cort and Wayne Quinn, who were present but not involved, have been reprimanded by manager Bobby Robson for being out on the town in the early hours of the morning.

Injured England midfielder Kieron Dyer, who had earlier picked his colleagues up, has been cleared of any wrong-doing.

Mboma to 'seduce' Sunderland manager!



Football

AFP, London

Former African Player of the Year Patrick Mboma said Thursday he wanted to "seduce" Sunderland manager Peter Reid.

The 31-year-old joined the English Premiership side on Wednesday on loan for the rest of the season from Italian club Parma.

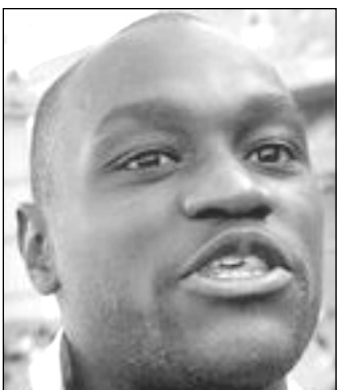
The Cameroon star, a member of the 'Indomitable Lions' squad that retained the African Nations Cup though he missed the final with a foot injury, will aim to give Sunderland another striking option.

So far this season Sunderland have scored 21 Premiership goals, with 15 coming from forward duo Kevin Phillips and Niall Quinn and 11 of those from England international Phillips alone.

Mboma has had a tough time in Italy, left out of the starting line-up after a row with Parma coach Gidone Carmignani.

But the 2000 African Footballer of the Year's self-belief remains intact.

"I am confident about myself after the African Nations Cup, but I know it will be different here and harder,"



PATRICK MBOMA

said Mboma.

"First I will have to introduce myself to my team-mates and then seduce Peter Reid," he told the club's official website Thursday.

"After that I hope things will be okay for me. I hope to stay for a number of years."

He added: "It was very difficult in Italy, it is a tactical war every Sunday and it is very difficult to score there.

"But I still had some good moments. I will try to do my best here and score as many goals as possible, I am very very confident."

Blatter boasts majority support



Football

AFP, Damascus

Sepp Blatter boasted here on Thursday of having the support of 112 of the 204 FIFA members for his re-election as head of football's world governing body.

"I've received letters from 112 countries expressing their support for the next elections," Blatter told journalists shortly before leaving for Beirut.

The elections are due to take place on May 29 in Seoul on the eve of the World Cup finals.

The Swiss-born Blatter declared himself confident on Wednesday at being re-elected as FIFA president even if he is challenged by Issa Hayatou, the Cameroonian president of the African Football Confederation (CAF).

Hayatou, the current FIFA vice-president, must declare his candidacy by March 28.

Blatter meanwhile on Thursday denied that FIFA had financial problems.



SEPP BLATTER

"Our situation is very comfortable, we are fulfilling all our commitments," he said.

A member of FIFA's executive committee, Qatar's Mohammad bin Hammam, who is accompanying Blatter on the Middle East trip, accused other members of the committee of spreading malicious rumours on FIFA's finances "as part of the war surrounding the elections."

Primera Liga preview

Real really fit



Football

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid coach Vicente Del Bosque is not known as an especially religious man but he was offering up some quiet prayers during the week that all his players would return unscathed from their midweek international commitments. Whoever received Del Bosque's devotions answered in full because the league leaders will be almost back to full strength for their visit to Athletic Bilbao on Saturday, a chilling prospect for the Basques as Real beat Las Palmas 7-0 on Sunday with several key players missing.

Club captain Fernando Hierro will decide on Friday whether he will return to the centre of the defence after missing the last four league games through injury.

Even though the 33-year-old Spanish international - and a near certainty for the Spanish World Cup squad if fit - has lost a lot of pace over the last two seasons, he still remains an inspirational presence in the dressing room and on the field.

"The last word belongs to the coach," said Hierro on Thursday.

However, the indications are that he will travel to Bilbao. Ironically, the man Hierro will replace if he starts is Aitor Karanka, the only ex-Athletic player in the Real Madrid squad.

Michael Salgado will also return at right back after suspension but the defending champions are still without their injured striker Raul Gonzalez.

Julen Guerrero and Tiko Martinez face late fitness tests for Athletic.

Real Madrid lead with 43 points from 25 games but are only ahead of Valencia on goal difference.

Valencia travel to near-neighbours Villarreal on Saturday for what is expected to be a tense battle.

"We have to win at Villarreal if we are to carry on having a chance of

taking the league title," said Valencia striker Mista Ferrer on Thursday.

Valencia coach Rafa Benitez may make several changes to the side which could only draw 0-0 at home to Celta Vigo last Saturday.

The most likely switch is the recall of Norwegian international striker



FERNANDO HIERRO

Jon Carew, in place of the lacklustre Salva Ballesta.

Villarreal appear to have grown in confidence after taking four points from their last two games, following plenty of erratic performances after the injury to their Argentine international striker Martin Palermo in November.

Palermo is expected to be out until the end of the season after a restraining wall collapsed on him, breaking an ankle, during goal

FIXTURES	
Saturday (kick off 1600GMT, unless stated): Athletic Bilbao v Real	
Madrid (1900), Villarreal v Valencia (2000), Barcelona v Deportivo La Coruna (2030)	
Sunday: Alaves v Real Betis, Osasuna v Espanyol, Rayo Vallecano v Tenerife, Sevilla v Real Sociedad, Real Zaragoza v Real Mallorca, Las Palmas v Valladolid (1700), Celta Vigo v Malaga (1900)	

celebrations in a Cup match.

"Beating Valencia would be a big present for our supporters," admitted Villarreal striker Victor Fernandez on Thursday.

Celta lie third but are only two points adrift of the leading pair, and play host to Malaga on Sunday, when all eyes will be on the Malaga's talented but temperamental Dutch midfielder Kiki Musampa.

Musampa made a formal complaint to the Spanish football federation, after Sunday's 1-0 victory over Alaves, that he had been the target of racist abuse by Alaves' Argentine defender Fabricio Coloccini. He also said that he had suffered similar abuse in recent matches against Villarreal and Real Zaragoza.

However, on Wednesday, he changed his tune saying that he accepted the apologies of the perpetrators and asked the federation not to take any further action.

Barcelona play Deportivo La Coruna in the Nou Camp on Saturday and, with the teams in fifth and fourth place respectively, both teams still have ambitions of lifting the championship.

The Catalans' coach Charly Rexach is expected to name Spanish internationals Luis Enrique Martinez and Gerard Lopez in his squad, with the pair both fit again after long absences through injury.

By contrast, Deportivo coach Javier Irureta will be without his regular right winger Fran Gonzalez, who sprained an ankle in training on Wednesday. Jose Emilio Amavisca is expected to deputise for the Deportivo club captain.

At the foot of the table, bottom-placed Tenerife travel to Rayo Vallecano, who lie one place above the Canary islanders.

However, Rayo would appear to have the greater problems with a host of injuries and Jordi Ferron, Ramon De Quintana and Roberto Peragon all suspended in the wake of Sunday's 1-0 loss at Osasuna.

FA Cup preview

Shearer welcomes Keegan



Football

AFP, London

Former England star Alan Shearer is in no doubt Kevin Keegan will be treated like a returning king when First Division leaders Manchester City visit Newcastle in the fifth round of the FA Cup on Sunday.

But City boss Keegan, who during his five-year tenure at St James's Park (1992-97) restored Newcastle to the top flight before signing Shearer, has reservations about going back to the place he was once worshipped.

The relationship between Keegan and the passionate Geordie fans became frayed after Newcastle squandered a 12 point lead to hand Manchester United the Premiership title in 1996 while he was in charge.

However Keegan, who since he left has returned just once to St James's for his old friend Peter Beardsley's testimonial three years ago, will receive a hero's welcome this weekend according to Shearer.

"Kevin will get the reception he deserves. People still love him up here, and rightly so," said Shearer, Newcastle's leading marksman this season.

"Everybody must be aware of my feelings and respect for Kevin Keegan, and I still speak to him on a regular basis.

"He always said he would only come back for Peter Beardsley's testimonial but now he has no choice."

Keegan was far from surprised when City, 4-1 winners at Ipswich in the fourth round, were drawn against his former club.

"These things happen in the cup," said the man who managed England before Sven Goran Eriksson.

"I'm not sure if it's a good draw or



KEVIN KEEGAN

ary 1997.

A man who has always worn his heart on his sleeve, he said he had taken Newcastle as far as he could and had no further interest in football management.

Keegan's departure angered many Newcastle supporters who felt the former England international had turned his back on their beloved

FIXTURES	
(1500GMT unless stated)	
Saturday: Arsenal v Gillingham, Middlesbrough v Blackburn, Walsall v Fulham (1200 GMT), West Brom v Cheltenham	
Sunday: Chelsea v Preston (1600 GMT), Everton v Crewe (1330 GMT), Newcastle v Manchester City (1900 GMT), Tottenham v Tranmere (1600 GMT)	

Lunar New Year tournament

Martinez magic



Football

AFP, Hong Kong

Honduras striker Saul Martinez scored his fifth goal in two games to sink a battling Hong Kong XI in the final of the Lunar New Year tournament here on Friday.

Martinez's 67th-minute header was enough to earn the Central Americans a 1-0 win and complete a memorable week for the Uruguay-based forward. Martinez struck four on Tuesday as Honduras overran Slovenia 5-1 in their first round match.

Hong Kong, who had secured a shock penalty shootout win over China to secure their place in the final, were more than a match for the visitors for the first hour of the match. But they paid the price for a five-minute lapse in concentration at both ends of the pitch.

First Brazilian striker Filho spurned a golden opportunity to give them the lead, heading straight at the keeper after being presented

with a free header eight yards out after 62 minutes.

Five minutes later midfielder Gary McKeown's miss hit clearance landed at the feet of Julio Cesar Leon who promptly whipped in a quick cross for Martinez to score the crucial goal with a near post header.

Honduras are the second team from Latin America to win the annual tournament, which has been running since 1997. Mexico beat Egypt in the final to triumph in 1999.

Slovenia had earlier claimed third spot in the tournament with a 4-3 win on penalties over fellow World Cup qualifiers China after a dour 0-0 draw.

TEAMS
HONG KONG (3-5-2): Fan Chun Yip, Carlo Hartwig, Cristiano Cordeiro, Gerard Ambassa, Yau Kin Wai (cap.), (Luo Koon Pong 83), Lo Kai Wah (Cornelius Udebuluzor 45), Gary McKeown, Aberdall Filho, Poon Yiu Cheuk, Au Wai Lun (Cheng Sin Siu), Keith Gumbs

HONDURAS (3-5-2): Victor Coello, Samuel Caballero, Jaime Rosales, David Carcamo, Limber

Perez (Edgar Alvarez 80), Jose Luis Pineda, Sergio Mendoza, Amado Guevara, Ronny Morales, Julio Cesar Leon, Saul Martinez (Cristian Martinez 88)

Kabul taste football trouble

AFP, Kabul

Violence erupted outside Kabul football stadium Friday afternoon as angry mobs fought international troops and Afghan police ahead of a match between Kabul United and a team of foreign soldiers.

Witnesses said some 15,000 fans were trying to get into the stadium, which was already full, for the historic match between the de facto national side and a team from the International Security Assistance Force.

Vogts targets Euro 2004



Football

AFP, Glasgow

Berti Vogts said he was aiming for qualification for the 2004 European Championships as he was officially presented as Scotland's first ever foreign coach here Friday.

Former Germany coach Vogts, who led his home nation to victory in the 1996 European Championships at Wembley, will take charge of the Scotland team with effect from March 1 after securing an early release from his contract with the Kuwait national team.

"Qualification for the 2004 European Championship is my immediate aim," Vogts told a press conference at Hampden Park.

"For the Tartan Army, this will be my primary task. The group favourites are Germany, but for sure they will not relish meeting us in Hampden Park with the crowd cheering us on to a victory.

"I am looking forward to the great

challenge of working with the Scottish national team for the next four years, maybe longer. It is a mission for me that I will hopefully meet with success," added Vogts, a World Cup winner as a player with Germany in 1974.

"Kuwait was for me a completely new challenge and shows one is never too old to learn.

"It was a great revelation to see how different cultures and nationalities can respect each other, day-by-day.

"In the Gulf Cup we achieved third place and this is more than we expected, taking into consideration that the Kuwait team have only amateurs and the national team are the only nation not to play in the second World Cup qualifying round."

But he added that he was pleased to be back in Europe.

"Scotland means to me a return to the European melting pot of football. Everyone who knows me knows that I love the kind of football that is full of emotion and passion as displayed by the Scots.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS		DOWN	
1 Chaps	Leoni	1 Pulverize	23 Snitch
4 Dietician's tally	37 1960s jacket style	2 Falco of "The Sopranos"	24 Swelled head
8 Crooned	38 Gymnast's skill	25 Lad	26 Do
12 Rowdydow	43 Chester — Arthur	3 Mrs. Nick Charles	brickwork
13 Touch	46 Up to	4 Renowned	27 Dickens pseudo-nym
14 Entreaty	47 Konk out	5 In	28 Pres. nickname
15 Private address?	48 Disarray	6 Melody	29 Dress in
16 Midler film, "Drowning —"	49 Notion	7 Ingenue portrayer	31 Credit cards
17 Sandwich shop option	50 "A Chorus Line"	8 Binge	32 Expression of disapproval
18 Intensely	51 Pig con-tainer?	9 Lotion additive	34 Apiece
21 Wish other-wise	52 "— Timber-lane"	10 Jodie Foster movie	35 The Ewing saga
22 Perjure yourself	53 Albanian money	11 Guys' mates	36 On edge
23 Pictorial poser		19 Pharmacy purchase	37 Slippers
26 Started 27 Lousy		20 Stashed	38 Coarse-ground corn
30 Enthusiastic			39 Bread spread
31 Vanna's cohort			40 Halloween item
32 Vagrant			41 Verdi opera
33 Buzz			42 Golden calf
Lightyear, e.g.			43 One less than 10
34 Thickness			44 Showhow performer
35 Donut buyer's buy			

Solution time: 23 mins.

GAS	DAM	HADA	T
ALE	UNA	OPERA	
LIV	CAN	OPENER	
ABY	CLIFF	PIER	
SING	COAT	MAMA	
SEIDAN	LOG	OREGON	
AMAZED	GOT		
TUBIE	FACE	ZEL	
EYE	OPENER	PIER	
MANNA	ERA	CIS	
SWEAT	SAW	TEE	

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45						46				47			
48						49				50			
51						52				53			

CRYPTOQUIP

U T V B W - B Q Z W F N A L Q B S V T O
M X C L V U F A S K B F Z
K N G Q W A C Q W S F K S V T S
S F W V O : " S G Q Z G X S Q K S A M M ."
Yesterday's Cryptquip: WHEN YOU WANT TO GET SOMETHING CHANGED, ASK A DIVER. HE CAN REALLY MAKE WAVES.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: M equals F

The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.