

English giants' contrasting moods



AFP, Paris
The English Premiership's leading two clubs Manchester United and Liverpool resume their European Champions League campaigns on Wednesday from vastly different perspectives.

the prospect of playing European football made it an easy decision to leave Coventry, relegated from the Premiership last season. Liverpool welcome back striker Michael Owen who returned to full training after missing last week's England friendly against Holland with a knee ligament problem.

with Juventus and Brescia Capello must be wondering what to do. Although Roma are in joint second in Serie A this season has seen little of the attacking football with which they won last year's title.

on the bench. England captain David Beckham gave Manchester United some good news Monday when he returned to training ahead of the Group A match at Nantes.



MICHAEL OWEN

ended for the visit to Anfield. And they arrive in England fresh from having four men sent off in 16 minutes of Sunday's Istanbul derby defeat at Fenerbahce.

is Francesco Totti who was rested for the match with Brescia. He will play in the hole behind Batistuta and one other striker with Capello having Montella, Marco Delvecchio and Antonio Cassano as options.

February is carnival season in Brazil but Ronaldo has said that training and rest were the only things on his mind.

Mrs. Ronaldo shows the way

ROME, Reuters

Ronaldo's wife is making sure the family is still represented on the pitch while her twice World Player of the Year husband recovers from his latest injury in Rio.



MILENE DOMINGUES

side Fiamma Monza. "She is very good," Monza coach Raffaele Solimeno was quoted as saying.

Giggs' tips to beat Argentina



INTERNET, London

Welsh international and Manchester United striker Ryan Giggs comments on England's World Cup chances to beat Argentina on why he believes England can beat Argentina in the World as well as Red Devils' plans to be back to the Champions League run next week in Nantes on his icons.com personal page.

into their rhythm, they can be vulnerable. "I'm sure it's going to be an epic game between the two sides but I certainly wouldn't label England underdogs from what I saw in Cardiff. I think there were about six of the first-choice Argentine line-up on show on Wednesday and although they are technically amazing, they're not unbeatable.



RYAN GIGGS

he was quite impressed by our performance and the passion of the crowd, who were brilliant throughout. For the record, and contrary to reports in the papers before the game, Juan does know where Wales is and was fully aware who I

play my international football for! "Manchester United are back in European action next week in Nantes and we're all desperate to get back into Champions League action.

"Our aim has to be book our place in the last eight as soon as possible because the Premiership title race looks like it will go down to the wire and the last thing we need is to be going into our last second phase game needing a win."

Violence claims one in Buenos Aires

REUTERS, Buenos Aires

Savage fighting between fans of bitter rivals Racing Club and Independiente at the weekend left one supporter dead and Argentina's reputation for soccer violence under scrutiny once more.

"There is one dead person, namely Gustavo Rivero, aged 22, who was killed by a shot from a firearms weapon...and there are a number of injured people whose lives are at risk," said Enrique Operata, a doctor at the hospital where several fans were treated.

"At this moment we have a total of five patients under treatment, of whom four have undergone surgery," Francisco di Diorio, a doctor at Buenos Aires's Fiorito Hospital, told radio reporters.

The trouble flared in the streets outside the stadium prior to the Buenos Aires derby match on Sunday.

Gunshots were heard as violence escalated, and security staff and police took an hour to bring the situation under control, eyewitnesses said.

The incidents came just a month after a supporter died in violent clashes at a preseason match between River Plate and Boca Juniors.

Football violence is endemic in Argentina, and is frequently orchestrated by highly organized groups of fans known as the "barras bravas."

Wenger backs Vieira



AFP, London

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger believes Patrick Vieira is the victim of a conspiracy after the French international was embroiled in a fresh elbowing controversy.

Vieira, already facing disciplinary action for tangling with Chelsea's Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink, found himself in the spotlight again after a clash with Gillingham's Ify Onuora during the FA Cup on Saturday.

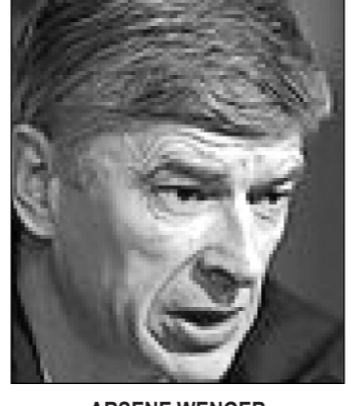
Although television replays appear to indicate the collision between Vieira and Onuora was accidental, the FA may rule that the clash should be referred to the video advisory panel.

But Wenger has already cleared Vieira of any blame - and said he believes there is campaign to get the player charged of misconduct.

"I think there's a campaign to get Patrick charged every time," Wenger said. "If he was an England international going to the World Cup I don't think it would be the same."

The French manager insists it would be a "joke" for Vieira to face a possible six-match ban if he is hit with a second misconduct charge for elbowing an opponent.

Wenger believes his midfielder is being unfairly targeted and joked he "is amazed how big Patrick's elbows are as he can now reach players who are 10 yards away from him".



ARSENE WENGER

Meanwhile Onuora has said he does not want to see Vieira punished. "These are the kind of inci-

dents that happen week-in week-out up and down the country," he told the Press Association.

"As far as I'm concerned there is nothing further to go on."

Vieira is facing one misconduct hearing and a potential three-game ban for allegedly elbowing Hasselbaink in December.

If he was charged with a second offence and found guilty of both, he would be likely to miss up to six games of Arsenal's domestic run-in.

He therefore faces a nervous wait before discovering whether the video advisory panel will be called upon and, if so, what recommendation they will make.

However, Wenger cannot believe Vieira is even under suspicion of deliberately using an elbow again, insisting - just as in the Hasselbaink incident - it was no more than an accident.

"I didn't even see it but Onuora has said he doesn't know whether it was intentional or not.

"It's a joke. It's better to say that we will give Patrick Vieira a 15-match ban so we're all happy even if he didn't do anything."

Nigeria fire coach Amodu

REUTERS, Lagos

Nigeria have sacked coach Shaibu Amodu and his staff after the country's disappointing performance at this year's African Nations Cup in Mali.

Sports Minister Ishaku Mark Aku accused the Super Eagles, a team brimming with talent from European clubs, of lacking commitment and discipline after their 2-1 defeat to fellow World Cup finalists Senegal in the Nations Cup semifinals.

He said Adegboyega Onigbinde, head of the Nigeria Football Association's (NFA) technical department,

would lead a new squad to the World Cup, seeming to rule out the appointment of a foreign coach as demanded by many in the soccer-mad country.

John Fashanu, the country's ambassador for sport, said on Monday that former Chelsea and Newcastle United boss Ruud Gullit should be appointed as Nigeria's new coach.

FIFA's tobacco-free WC mission

AFP, Warsaw

Football's governing body FIFA plans to step up its anti-smoking efforts by holding its first tobacco-free World Cup later this year in South Korea and Japan, a spokesman said in Warsaw.

"Within FIFA we feel the time has come, not just to refuse tobacco sponsorship, which we have been doing since 1986, but to be active and start sending messages and use the popularity and the strength and the image of football to get this message across," said FIFA spokesman Keith Cooper.

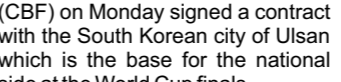
Cooper spoke to journalists late Monday after presiding over an awards ceremony organized by the World Health Organization (WHO) for anti-tobacco efforts.

Health ministers and other top officials from 51 European countries met Monday and Tuesday in Warsaw to mull further measures to reduce smoking, which kills 4.2 million people per year.

This year for the first time the World Cup will officially be a tobacco-free event, with smoking restricted to certain designated areas.

The opening of the World Cup on May 31 in South Korea coincides with the world no-smoking day, and FIFA will broadcast a brief anti-tobacco message as part of the international television coverage.

Brazil strike deal with Ulsan



AFP, Rio de Janeiro

The Brazilian football federation (CBF) on Monday signed a contract with the South Korean city of Ulsan which is the base for the national side at the World Cup finals.

The contract, of which the full details were not revealed, states that Ulsan will provide all accommodation and food costs during their stay at the finals where Brazil meet Turkey on June 3 in their first Group C match.

"We will have to pay for neither accommodation nor food," said CBF president Ricardo Teixeira. "Apart from transport, which will be taken care of by the organizer, everything else will be the responsibility of the local authorities."

Ulsan mayor Wan Go Shim said: "It is an honour for the people of Ulsan to welcome the Brazilian team.

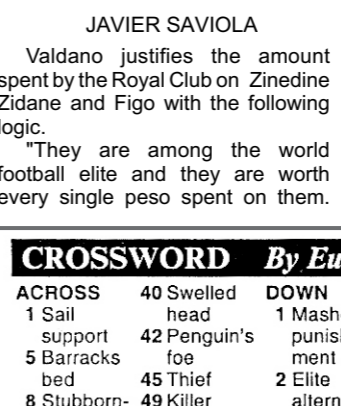
We can't wait for them to arrive and hope they will have an unforgettable memory of our warm welcome."

One Zidane equals to three Saviolas?



INTERNET, Madrid

What is better: to buy a promising player or a star? It's a tough question to answer. Meanwhile Real Madrid sports director has no doubts on the issue. He is keen to sign rather high-profile players than a player who has great potential.



JAVIER SAVIOLA

Valdano justifies the amount spent by the Royal Club on Zinedine Zidane and Figo with the following logic.

"They are among the world football elite and they are worth every single peso spent on them.

Djorkaeff determined

AFP, London

Youri Djorkaeff said Monday he was determined to help ease Bolton's relegation worries following his move from Kaiserslautern to the Reebok Stadium on a three-month contract.

The attacking France midfielder has joined the English Premiership strugglers until the end of the season after being released from his contract with the German club.

Djorkaeff, who has notched 29 goals in 76 international appearances, joined Kaiserslautern from Inter Milan in the 2000/01 pre-season but was considered surplus to requirements by coach Andreas Brehme.

The 33-year-old was unveiled by Bolton at a press conference on Monday after a training session with his new team-mates.

After spending most of his career chasing titles with Paris St Germain and Inter Milan, it is a different kind of challenge for him - but one he is relishing.

"I hope it is a good choice because I think they need a player like me and I need Bolton," he said.

"I believe I can help the club get out of trouble. I know that is easy to say but I will do my best to find a solution.

"All my friends told me that while Bolton were in a bad position (they are fourth from bottom, one place outside the relegation zone) they were a good team.

"I know they have a number of good players and I am looking forward to getting started against Southampton.

"I don't really mind what my position in the team is. Of course there is pressure on me but this kind of pressure is attractive and exciting."

Djorkaeff, who hopes regular first-team football will revive his chances of going to the World Cup, confirmed he will retire from the international stage after the 2002 finals in Japan and South Korea.

"I will stop playing for my country after the summer," he said.

"By then hopefully I will have been to two World Cup finals and two European championships, which is OK.

"It is important for me to have a clear mind now. It is also important for the people who love me to know what I am doing. That is why I have said it."

Djorkaeff was omitted from the national squad which faced Romania last week - but only because of his dispute with Kaiserslautern.

DAVID TREZEGUET
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