

Hungry Bayern

AFP, Munich

Bayern Munich, whose trophy cupboard was bare last season, are aiming to fill it full of silver in the upcoming 2002/03 campaign, manager Ottmar Hitzfeld pledged here on Friday.

The 17 times German champions missed out on title number 18 on the last day of the season to Borussia Dortmund, prompting Hitzfeld to declare: "We're hungry!" "We have a clear aim - to win as many trophies as possible," he added.

Hitzfeld, who promised a "surprise line-up" for the new season which gets under way on August 9, has boosted his squad with the summer purchase of Bayer Leverkusen's Brazilian Ze Roberto for 9.5 million euros (9.25 million dollars) and German World Cup star Michael Ballack, prized from the same club for six million euros.

Hitzfeld also splashed out nine million euros on Hertha Berlin's Sebastian Deisler./p

Kahn sidelined

AFP, Munich

Germany's outstanding goalkeeper Oliver Kahn will need six weeks of treatment on a torn right hand ligament before he returns between the posts it was revealed here Saturday.

The 32-year-old Bayern Munich keeper, who was awarded the Golden Ball for the best player of the 2002 World Cup finals after conceding just one goal on the way to the final which they lost 2-0 to Brazil, is likely to miss the opening game of the Bundesliga season which starts on August 9.

"Kahn is going to have to be patient while his injury heals," said Hans-Wilhelm Muller-Wohlfahrt, the German Football Federation's doctor.

"He will need around six weeks before he can fully use his hand," he added.

Kahn cut a distraught figure at the end of the final after his error had gifted Ronaldo the first of his two goals - but that did not stop FIFA plumping for him being the best player of football's showpiece event.

Ferguson sees better

REUTERS, London

Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson has started his pre-season motivational campaign early by demanding his players prove their hunger for success.

By their own high standards, United had a poor season last time, finishing third in the English Premier League and failing again to reach the Champions League final.

A series of defeats early in the season spoiled their chances of retaining the Premier League title and raised questions about the players' ability to raise themselves on a regular basis after a sustained period of success.

Ferguson, who would have been watching the coming season from his armchair had he not changed his mind about retirement, hopes that the empty trophy cabinet will spur the team into even greater efforts.

"The disappointment of winning nothing will have a positive effect," he was quoted as saying in Saturday's Daily Mirror.

"This has been the first time in 10 years we have finished outside the top two. Maybe it'll be the kick up the backside we needed because I'm certainly not accepting it.

"We are going to have to do something about it."

Ferguson, who is being linked with a move for Leeds United's England centre back Rio Ferdinand, says he has no doubts about the quality of his squad - just their attitude.

"You have to say the only thing to worry about, with the ability we have here, is desire," he said.

Zico accepts?

AFP, Tokyo

Former Brazil international Zico has reached an agreement with the Japan Football Association (JFA) to coach the national team, Kyodo News agency said on Friday.

Zico's attorney Antonio Simoes da Costa ended negotiations on the four-year-long contract with association representatives in Tokyo on Wednesday, the news agency said in a dispatch from Rio de Janeiro, quoting a Zico aide in Brazil.

"He authorised da Costa to close the deal with the Japanese prior to leaving Tokyo," on Thursday, Zico's assistant was quoted by Kyodo as saying.

Zico, 49, who is due in Rio on Friday night Japan time, will be flying back to Japan on July 17 to make his official announcement at the association's headquarters in Tokyo on July 20, according to the assistant.

A JFA spokesman declined to confirm the report, saying: "We cannot say anything until July 20th."

Zico took part in three World Cup finals from 1978. He came out of retirement to play for Japanese club side Kashima, hanging up his boots for good in 1994.

He is now Kashima's general manager and the team has won the league title four times.

Zico, Brazil's technical director at the 1998 finals, emerged as one of the top candidates to guide Japan to a place in the 2006 World Cup in

Germany, replacing outgoing coach Philippe Troussier whose contract expired at the end of the 2002 tournament on June 30.

On Friday, sports and education minister Atsuko Toyama welcomed Zico's reported acceptance of the offer.

"He has brilliant achievements as a player and has his own experience in Japan," Toyama told a news conference. "I am sure that prospects for Japan's football will be brighten" with the association to be headed by Zico, she said.



ZICO

Rivaldo not leaving

AFP, Sao Paulo

Fresh from celebrating Brazil's record fifth World Cup victory, Rivaldo has sought to quell speculation of a move from Barcelona, saying he would see out his contract at the top flight Spanish club.

"I will be presenting myself at Barcelona on the 22nd (July) as has been arranged," the Brazilian number 10 told a news conference on Friday.

"I want to stay at the team until the end of my contract (July 2003)."

"About negotiations, only Barcelona can provide information. I don't know anything about that story of Lazio that has been published in the newspapers," he said.

The 30-year-old former World Player of the Year had several run-ins with Barcelona coach Louis van Gaal during the Dutchman's first spell in charge at the club and has been linked in the media with a

move to the Italian Serie A side. Van Gaal had insisted Rivaldo



RIVALDO

play on the left wing. "There was a divergence of opinion," the Brazilian said, "I told him I could not play on the left, cut off in the attack, because I would not feel good. I have other qualities, I play better in the middle of the pitch."

"At that stage I was the most expensive player in the history of Barcelona and I was under pressure to perform. I could not be pinned down to one part of the field where I couldn't bring out my best football," he said.

Rivaldo, who was dogged by injury for much of last season, said he had received an injection of painkillers in the second half of the World Cup final against Germany when he was instrumental in the two goals of the game.

"I made an ankle support with bandage to keep the ankle firm, but it wasn't enough on its own. I had an injection of Voltaren with the consent of the (Brazil team) doctor Jose Luiz Runco to get over the pain."

"It's a normal solution to reduce pain," he said.

Rivaldo said the knee problem which almost ruled him out of the World Cup was fixed.

"I'm totally recovered now. Many people did not believe in me. But I proved at the World Cup that I'm fit to play. I got back in the game and I hope to be remembered for that."

Nesta is Inter's?

INTERNET, Rome

Italy defender Alessandro Nesta claims Lazio have struck a deal with Internazionale over his proposed 30 million pound move to the San Siro. "I'm going to Inter," he declared on Friday night.

"Lazio president Sergio Cragnotti has reached an agreement with Massimo Moratti and something will be announced in the next few days."

The highly-rated stopper admitted the transfer appealed to him. "I am dreaming about playing with champions like Ronaldo and Christian Vieri," he added.

Moratti had hinted earlier in the day that he was struggling to reach any sort of agreement with his Lazio counterpart. "I have read in the newspapers that a deal is on the



ALESSANDRO NESTA

table, but it's simply not true," insisted the Inter chief.

"Just because clubs hold talks, it doesn't mean that an agreement is reached."

It was understood recently that Inter had bid £27 million plus Nicola

Ventola or Mohamed Kallon for the Lazio skipper, but Cragnotti insisted there was no question of Nesta leaving for that price.

"The bids we have received up until now are way too small," he said. "It would be crazy to let such a great defender leave for the sums being talked about."

Nesta, who is currently on holiday in Tuscany, has also been linked with Juventus and Manchester United.

And he cast doubt over his earlier claims by admitting he would jump at the chance to team up with his international defensive partner Fabio Cannavaro at Lazio should the Inter deal collapse. "It would be great to play with Fabio at club level as well," he Nesta.

Meanwhile, Inter and Juventus have held talks in an attempt to head off a potential bidding war for the talented centre-half. The clubs fear Lazio are playing them off against each other.

WIMBLEDON GOSSIPS

AFP, London

Venus against Serena Williams will be the first all-sister final at Wimbledon since Maud Watson beat Lilian 6-8, 6-3, 6-3 in the 1884 final, but when it comes to the spoils, the times have changed. The winner of Saturday's final will take home 486,000 dollars. In 1884, Maud won a silver flower basket worth 21 guineas, while Lilian took home a silver brush and a glass hand mirror worth 11 guineas.

WHERE'S PETE'S PICTURE?

Insiders here report that a photograph of seven-time champion Pete Sampras has gone missing from the confines of the All England Club. "It must have been a contractor, I can't imagine it being a member," sniffed an official.

Britain's Jane Harvey will umpire her fifth women's singles final on Saturday following the 1991, 1995, 1998 and 2001 events. The 45-year-old goes into the match with an impressive repertoire having also been the first female neutral umpire to officiate at a Davis Cup World Group match in 1989 and also called three Olympic Games finals in Seoul in 1988, Barcelona in 1992 and Sydney in 2000.

Wimbledon officials went to extraordinary measures to make sure that Venus and Serena Williams could persevere the tournament shop without being bothered by the great unwashed. When the girls wanted to take a tour of the tournament gift shop, the doors were closed allowing them to shop on their own for a quarter of an hour while the public waited outside in the rain. The sisters were also granted a private viewing of the Wimbledon Museum to which Venus had donated the dress and racket she had used in winning the 2001 final.

Hewitt is also being spurred on by fellow Aussie Pat Rafter who was runner-up here for the last two years

Aussie hope bearer

AFP, London

Lleyton Hewitt hopes to kickstart a new golden age of Australian tennis by winning the Wimbledon title on Sunday on the Centre Court which his countrymen once graced with ten championships in twelve years.

From 1960 to 1971, Australian legends Rod Laver, John Newcombe, Roy Emerson and Neale Fraser dominated the men's singles here with those ten titles but in the last 30 years only Pat Cash, in 1987, has managed to add to the nation's glories.

Now the brash and controversial 21-year-old Hewitt, who became the youngest ever world number one last year and is the reigning US Open champion, hopes to restore Australian pride at the most prestigious of the Grand Slams by adding the Wimbledon title to the 15 championships he has already secured in his young career.

To achieve that dream, he will have to get past either Argentina's David Nalbandian or Xavier Malisse of Belgium who failed to complete their semifinal in the gloom of Court One on Friday when they were locked at two sets all - 7-6, 6-4, 1-6, 2-6.

Hewitt is also being spurred on by fellow Aussie Pat Rafter who was runner-up here for the last two years

losing memorable finals against Pete Sampras in 2000, and Goran Ivanisevic in 2001.

"I spoke to Pat and he wished me all the best and said that the whole of Australia is behind me," said top-seed Hewitt after his impressive 7-5, 6-1, 7-5 defeat of Britain's fourth seed Tim Henman in the semifinal.

"That's a great feeling to have because there's been such a great Australian tradition at Wimbledon and it's fantastic that I've been able to carry that through this year just as Pat has done in the last few years."

"Reaching the final here hasn't yet sunk in, but it is an incredible feeling to see all those champions up on the board who have lifted the trophy here. It's what every Australian kid dreams about from the time they pick up a racket."

"They dream of being in this situation and for me to have done it at 21, it's just incredible."

His destruction of Henman, widely tipped to end Britain's 66 year wait for a men's title here, was breathtaking as he hit 33 winners to the Briton's 14 and just nine unforced errors to his opponent's 30.

Hewitt said he had never thought about reaching the final here having only ever made it to the round of 16 last year, his best performance in four previous attempts.

"I had never got beyond the second week here so I hadn't even thought about winning but that prospect comes into your mind

more when you are only one match away. Before that, I didn't want to get too far ahead of myself."

Although he wouldn't admit it, he knows that he has the upper hand over both Malisse and Nalbandian.

He beat the Argentine in their only meeting on clay at Barcelona this year and has 2-0 record over Malisse with a straight sets win on grass at Queen's Club in 2001, and a three set triumph on clay at Delray Beach in 1999.

"Both Nalbandian and Malisse are pretty much baseline players. I played Nalbandian in Barcelona and he has a good forehand, that's probably his strength but I wouldn't have a clue about whether or not he comes into the net."

"Malisse is very talented. I think we have all known that for a few years and that it was just a matter of time before he broke through in the major events."

The last ten months have been a roller-coaster ride for the controversial Australian who sparks admiration and disdain in equal measure.

"Everything that's happened in the last year has been incredible, winning a Grand Slam at 20, then to go on and become the youngest number one."

"It's beyond all my expectations. To have a shot at another Grand Slam at the age of just 21, it really is a great feeling," said Hewitt.

"I'll go out there on Sunday, play my game, put my head down and see what happens."

Too good to last

2002 FIFA WORLD CUP KOREA JAPAN

REUTERS, Paris

Roger Lemerre must always have known that his inheritance of the world's best soccer team could turn into the most poisoned of chalice.

When France's defending champions made a shock exit in the first round of the World Cup, the French Soccer Federation courteously stood back to give him time to take a long drink from it.

Lemerre's stubborn refusal to take the blame, however, condemned his reign to a messy conclusion as he was finally dispatched on Friday.

History is unlikely to judge him mercifully either.

His credit column does include the 2000 European championship title and the Confederations Cup.

But for most of France's disappointed fans, who had dreamed of another night of glory on the Champs-Elysees to duplicate the 1998 World Cup celebrations, the 61-year-old strategist will be remembered as the man who failed to get the best out of a world-class, if ageing squad.

France's one point - and no goals - in South Korea may have come as a shock but there had been signs of trouble long before.

Lemerre had taken over from his friend Aime Jacquet after 1998 but, significantly, he had not been considered as the first-choice candidate.

The job was first offered to former Monaco coach Jean Tigana. Then to Auxerre's Guy Roux. And then to former Nantes' manager Jean-Claude Suaudeau. They all turned it down.

Only then did the French Federation call on Jacquet's right-hand man to steer France through the 2000 European championship qualifying rounds.

Lemerre had plus points. He had led France's military squad to their world title and, as a player, he had won six caps as an international defender before joining the federation staff.

Despite having a good inside knowledge of the team, though, he struggled for respect after taking charge.

He conceded himself: "The first year, I mainly looked at this team playing. There is so much gift, so much talent in this side. It was just an enchanting sight."

But when France found themselves on the verge of failing to qualify for the European tournament, Lemerre had to abandon his

watching brief and take up a central role.

Born in the small Normandy town of Bricquebec, Lemerre has always had a love of literature and philosophy.

The high-profile position, though, didn't seem to suit him and he was very soon at odds with the media.

The more under pressure he felt, the more cryptic he became, so much so that the media sometimes struggled to understand what he was talking about.

Asked for his view of the French presidential elections, he bemused his audience with the reply: "If my hat knew for whom I was going to vote, I would burn my hat."

Lemerre, it turned out, had been quoting from Victor Hugo's novel "Notre-Dame-de-Paris".

At least he had ideas, the best being to convert the old but reliable 4-3-3 line-up favoured by Jacquet into a more sophisticated 4-2-3-1 built around the man he admired most, playmaker Zinedine Zidane.

That battle plan worked to perfection during Euro 2000. But whenever Zidane was absent or unfit, the team failed to function and Lemerre failed to provide an alternative.

France, with Zidane struggling for fitness, duly crashed out of the World Cup with defeats to first-timers Senegal and Denmark. The goalless draw came against Uruguay, the last of the 32 teams to qualify for the finals.

The absence of trusted former captain Didier Deschamps and central defender Laurent Blanc, who had retired, also unbalanced the relationship between the coach and his players.

Lemerre, who had had his contract renewed until 2004 before the World Cup, knew things were slipping away from him in Korea. He even began shouting during training sessions, particularly before the final game against Denmark.

By then, though, nobody was listening any more.

A FEW GOOD MEN

List of previous French football coaches since 1964 following the sacking of Roger Lemerre:

Henri Guerin (04/10/1964 - 20/07/1966): 15 matches, 5 victories, 4 draws and 6 defeats (15 goals scored, 18 goals conceded)

Jose Arribas and Jean Snella (28/09/1966 - 26/11/1966): 4 matches, 2 victories, 2 defeats (8 goals scored, 7 goals conceded)

Just Fontaine (22/03/1967 -

03/06/1967): 2 matches, 2 defeats (3 goals scored, 6 goals conceded)

Louis Dugauguey (17/09/1967 - 06/11/1968): 9 matches, 2 victories, 3 draws, 4 defeats (13 goals scored, 19 goals conceded)

Georges Boulogne (12/03/1969 - 26/05/1973): 31 matches, 15 victories, 5 draws, 11 defeats (49 goals scored, 40 goals conceded)

Stefan Kovacs (08/09/1973 - 15/11/1975): 15 matches, 6 victories, 4 draws, 5 defeats (22 goals scored, 15 goals conceded)

Michel Hidalgo (27/03/1976 - 27/06/1984): 75 matches, 41 victories, 16 draws, 18 defeats (139 goals scored, 72 goals conceded)

Henri Michel (13/10/1984 - 22/10/1988): 36 matches, 16 victories, 12 draws, 8 defeats (46 goals scored, 27 goals conceded)

Michel Platini (19/11/1988 - 17/06/1992): 29 matches, 16 victories, 8 draws, 5 defeats (53 goals scored, 28 goals conceded)

Gerard Houllier (26/08/1992 - 17/11/1993): 12 matches, 7 victories, 1 draw, 4 defeats (20 goals scored, 13 goals conceded)

Aime Jacquet (16/02/1994 - 29/07/1998): 53 matches, 34 victories, 16 draws, 3 defeats (93 goals scored, 27 goals conceded)

Roger Lemerre (29/07/1998 - 05/07/2002): 53 matches, 34 victories, 11 draws, 8 defeats (106 goals scored, 43 goals conceded)

Brad's new deal

REUTERS, Blackburn

U.S. goalkeeper Brad Friedel, who helped his country reach the quarter-finals of the World Cup in South Korea and Japan, has signed a new four-year contract with Blackburn Rovers.

"I like the way the club is run and I enjoy the relationship with the fans," said Friedel on Blackburn's official website. "I've made no secret of the fact that I am happier here than I've been with any club, and I am delighted with the new deal."

Greene, Jones jive

REUTERS, Paris

American stars were back in top-form at the Paris Golden League meeting as Marion Jones broke her own season's world best in the 100 metres and Maurice Greene sprinted back to victory after two defeats.

In wet and chilly conditions, Jones won in 10.89 seconds cutting her previous best time by a hundredth of a second.

Jamaican Tayna Lawrence was second in 11.04 and Chryste Gaines of the United States third in 11.06.

After suffering two defeats in as many days last week by Britain's Dwain Chambers in Oslo, the first leg of the Golden League, and at an international meeting in Sheffield, Greene was back to his flamboyant self in front of a 35,000 strong crowd at stade de France.

Chambers withdrew from the Paris meeting saying he wanted to rest a shoulder injury. Greene won the race in a time of 9.99 seconds, ahead of compatriot Bernard Williams (10.03) and Britain's Mark Lewis-Francis (10.04).

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across, Down, and Cryptic sections.

Cryptic crossword puzzle grid with clues and solution: Today's Cryptic Clue: U equals S

Cuper staying put

INTERNET, Milan

Hector Cuper put an end to speculation linking him with the Argentina job by claiming that he would be honoured to sign an extension to his contract with Internazionale.

"It makes me proud to hear that there is talk of Inter extending my contract," said the coach. "We will sit down and talk about a new deal as soon as I return to Milan."

Cuper was speaking after watching his side storm to a 13-0 pre-season friendly win over Borussia Dortmund and explained that he was relishing the challenge of trying to win the Scudetto next season after missing out in the spring on the last day of the season.

"This match shows that we are doing some good work," continued Cuper. "We had a lot of young players out there today and it was a very encouraging start to our preparations."

"At the moment I am busy trying to integrate all of the old and new players, but the motivation levels are high so it definitely bodes well."

"There's a great enthusiasm and confidence. I don't want to talk too much about next season, but we're working hard to put a great team together."

Dutch trio in tax trap

REUTERS, Milan

Former Dutch internationals Ruud Gullit, Marco Van Basten and Frank Rijkaard face a fine from an Italian court for tax evasion during their time with AC Milan in the early 1990s.

The lawyer for the three players, Fabio Belloni, told Reuters on Thursday that after a process of plea-bargaining the trio accepted a prison sentence of three months which would be converted into a fine of around 1,500 euros.

The court acquitted Milan vice-president Adriano Galliani and six other officials from the club and its owners, the Fininvest holding company of the family of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, of the charge of false book-keeping.

Other players from the Milan club will face a hearing on September 27.



PHOTO COURTESY

Bangladesh Sports Journalists and Writers Community president Monwar Hah addresses a press conference at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday organised in connection with the Lifebuoy-Community football tournament. The six-a-side meet for journalists starts at the outer stadium today.