

Inter given tough draw



REUTERS, *Nyon*

Ronaldo's Inter Milan face a battle to qualify for the lucrative group phase of the Champions League after they were drawn against Sporting Lisbon in the third qualifying round.

both sets of fans. Fenerbahce's vice-president Sadettin Saran said: "Feyenoord is a very difficult team. They were UEFA Cup champions last year but Fenerbahce have strengthened the team this year with some good transfers."

"It's going to be a difficult game but Turkish football is rising after the (semi-final) performance in the

Zeljznicar Sarajevo. "It could have been worse, we're quite happy, we expect the Norwegians to win (their second qualifying round tie)," said Newcastle United chairman Freddy Shepherd. "If it's Bosnia, it's Bosnia but we're used to that part of the world. Neither team will faze us."

2002/03 UEFA Champions League third qualifying round			
First leg matches: 13/14 August 2002			
Second leg matches: 27/28 August 2002			
Match	Fixture		
1	Sporting Clube de Portugal (POR)	v	Internazionale FC (ITA)
2	Milan AC (ITA)	v	FC Slovan Liberec (CZE)
3	Rosenborg BK (NOR)	v	Brøndby IF (DEN) v KS Dinamo Tirana (ALB)
4	FC Shakhtar Donetsk (UKR)	v	Club Brugge KV (BEL) v FC Dinamo B'resti (ROM)
5	NK Maribor (SLO) v APOEL Nicosia FC (CYP)	v	AEK Athens FC (GRE)
6	FC Barcelona (ESP)	v	FK Vardar (MKD) v Legia Warszawa (POL)
7	FC Skonto (EST) v PFC Levski Sofia (BUL)	v	FC Dynamo Kyiv (UKR) v FC Pyunik (ARM)
8	Lillestrøm SK (NOR) or FK Zeljeznicar (BHZ)	v	Newcastle United FC (ENG)
9	Hammarby IF (SWE) v FK Partizan (YUG)	v	FC Bayern München (GER)
10	KRC Genk (BEL)	v	AC Sparta Praha (CZE) v FC Torp. Kutaisi (GEO)
11	Maccabi Haifa (ISR) v FC Belshina Bobruisk (BLS)	v	SK Sturm Graz (AUT)
12	Celtic FC (SCO)	v	MŠK Zilina (SVK) v FC Basel (SUI)
13	Feyenoord (HOL)	v	Fenerbahçe SK (TUR)
14	Zalaegerszegi TE (HUN) v NK Zagreb (CRO)	v	Manchester United FC (ENG)
15	Boavista FC (POR) v Hibernians FC (MLT)	v	AJ Auxerre (FRA)
16	FC Lokomotiv Moscow (RUS)	v	FC Sheriff Tiraspol (MOL) v Grazer AK (AUT)

UEFA Cup holders Feyenoord of the Netherlands were also given a tough draw against Turkey's Fenerbahce but Manchester United, Bayern Munich, AC Milan and Barcelona were handed more straightforward ties.

Inter were knocked out by Sweden's Helsingborg in the final qualifying stage for the 2000/01 Champions League and they will need Brazilian World Cup hero Ronaldo to be at his best to overcome Sporting.

"It will be a very difficult game," said Inter vice-president Giacinto Facchetti.

"Sporting Lisbon are one of the best possible opponents. But when we were in the Champions League the last time we drew with the weaker teams and we went out of the competition, so perhaps it's better to play a strong team."

Inter's neighbours, five-times winners AC Milan, have an easier task against Slovan Liberec of the Czech Republic.

Manchester United, the 1999 European champions, will play Zalaegerszegi of Hungary or Croatia Zagreb who play each other in the second qualifying round on July 31 and August 7.

United, whose Old Trafford stadium is hosting this season's Champions League final on May 28, played Croatia Zagreb home and away in the first group stage of the 1999-2000 competition. They drew 0-0 at Old Trafford and won 2-1 away.

The 2000 winners Bayern, who like United are forced to qualify after only finishing third in their domestic league last season, tackle Swedish side Hammarby or Partizan Belgrade of Yugoslavia.

Feyenoord's tie with Fenerbahce, with the first leg in the Netherlands, will raise security concerns given the reputations of

World Cup. Saran said he did not expect security problems. "We've played matches in other countries like England where the fans are boisterous. It comes with the territory."

The 1992 winners, Barcelona, will be relatively happy with a draw against either Vardar Skopje of Macedonia or Legia Warsaw. Newcastle United were likewise content after being drawn against either Lillestrøm or Norway or

Swiss team Basel, while France's Auxerre play Boavista of Portugal or Maltese team Hibernians.

The first leg matches of the third qualifying round will be played on August 13-14 and the return legs on August 27-28.

The 16 winners will take their place alongside the 16 automatic qualifiers in the draw for the opening group phase.

Rivaldo Milan's?



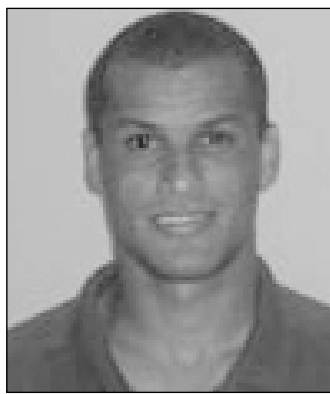
AFP, *Rome*

Brazilian World Cup winner Rivaldo has accepted an offer to join Italian giants AC Milan and will sign a contract later Friday at Sao Paulo, the Italian press reported.

The club, owned by Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, are reported to be interested in signing the 30-year-old striker for a period of three years at 4.5 million euro (dollars) a season.

Rivaldo, the 1999 World Footballer of the Year, parted company with Spanish giants Barcelona last weekend in a surprise move with a year still to run on his contract.

AC Milan director general Ariedo Braidia travelled to Sao Paulo accompanied by two team officials Thursday and the deal was struck with the player's agents after seven hours of negotiations, *Corriere della Sera* said.



RIVALDO
The Italian club had moved into action following the announcement that the Brazilian was leaving Barca with Berlusconi reported to have personally telephoned Real Madrid president Florentino Perez requesting that the Spanish rivals not try to up the bidding for the Brazilian. Rivaldo is currently holidaying at his villa at Mogi Mirim and will travel to Sao Paulo to sign on the dotted line.

Zidane won't mind



REUTERS, *Madrid*

Zinedine Zidane, the world's most expensive player, says he would be prepared to accept a pay cut at Real Madrid if the club thought it was necessary.

"For the moment we have not talked about the issue at Real Madrid, but I would be prepared to accept a lower salary if it was thought necessary," Zidane was quoted as saying on the club's website on Friday.

"In recent years there has been a great deal of money in football, but it is clear that things have changed and it is now being affected by an economic crisis."

"It might be better if we all talked less about money," added the 30-year-old who signed for Real, the European champions, for a world record dollars 66 million last year.

The French international's comments come two weeks after Inter Milan trio Ronaldo, Christian Vieri and Alvaro Recoba said they would be prepared to accept a salary reduction to help their club through the financial crisis hitting



ZINEDINE ZIDANE

Italian soccer. Zidane and his Real Madrid team mates Luis Figo and Raul are reported to be the three highest paid players in the Spanish football, each earning in excess of dollars 6 million a year.

Brazilian forward Rivaldo was released this month by Barcelona in an apparent bid to cut costs.

AC Milan, who are favourites to sign Rivaldo, said earlier this week they hoped the Brazilian World Cup winner would make realistic wage demands at a time when Italian clubs are tightening their belts.

PSG on sale



REUTERS, *Paris*

The owners of Paris St Germain have put France's most glamorous soccer club up for sale, casting a further shadow over the new season as European football grapples with a growing financial crisis.

French pay-TV group Canal Plus wants to sell the club, whose players include Brazil's Ronaldo, as part of a break-up imposed by parent company Vivendi Universal, a source close to the debt-laden media group has said.

The French-American media giant announced the break-up of Canal Plus on Tuesday as part of plans to dig its way out of crushing debts left by rapid over-expansion.

It has not said whether the Paris club it bought in 1991 is on the list of assets up for grabs, but the source said Canal Plus would sell PSG as long as it could find a buyer.

"Paris St Germain was not on the list of assets Vivendi plans to keep and will be sold," the source told Reuters.

Emerging days before a new season, Vivendi's plans to dump PSG sparked outrage from the club's associates and supporters.

"It's not good news. The season is starting, the team is training and I'd have preferred it to have happened at another time or not all," said Alain Cayzac, head of the PSG Association, which manages the club's brand.

"You can't play around with PSG," Cayzac, who is also a minority shareholder in the club, told France Info radio.

Bitter about PSG's recent performance, a fan writing on the club's web forum asked "who would buy a team which has been losing for years despite a budget which is always going up?"

Experts agree finding a buyer may not be easy due to the financial malaise sweeping through the European club game.

After a World Cup in which France failed to defend their title -- getting knocked out in the first round -- and most of the other top soccer nations flopped, soccer finances are shaky amid doubts over lavish TV rights and sky-high players' wages.

"The biggest question will be what PSG's debts are, which is a major factor in telling how much a club is worth," said Olivier Butler, editor of London-based Soccer Investor.

"PSG is one of the big two French clubs and is therefore judged to be one of the most valuable."

"But another big concern is uncertainty over the next deal on TV rights for the French league and that may also determine at what price it is sold."

The current 380 million euro contract, shared between Canal Plus and TPS -- a satellite service whose main owner is French commercial broadcaster TF1 -- runs to 2004.

That poses a dilemma for Canal Plus, Butler said.

It could boost the price tag of the team it has bankrolled if TV rights hold their value, but only at the expense of forking out more cash and compounding its own financial losses.

Little is known about finances at PSG, which had 1999/2000 turnover equivalent to some 55 million euros.

Tabloid Le Parisien estimated the club's full value at 230 million euros in February when Canal Plus denied it was up for sale.

But Butler said that on a ballpark estimate PSG could be worth a quarter of Manchester United of the English Premier League, the world's richest club whose shares are worth a total 450 million euros.

Founded in 1973 through a merger of two smaller teams in a bid to give Paris a club to be proud of when the Parc des Princes stadium was rebuilt, PSG only really made an impact in the mid-1990s when they won the 1996 European Cup Winners' Cup.

They have not won the French title since 1994 despite heavy spending on players which touched 68 million euros in 2000.

Ronaldinho, one of several international stars to shine in the World Cup, confirmed this week he would stay.

Acknowledging PSG's financial constraints, trainer Luis Fernandez said new players have agreed to limit wage demands to help rebuild PSG as "a great club on the European scene".

Gilberto a Gunner to be



REUTERS, *London*

Arsenal are reported to be on the brink of agreeing a transfer for Brazilian international midfielder Gilberto Silva from Atletico Mineiro.

The player's spokesman Paul Vilhena was quoted in the British media as saying that the 25-year-old midfielder was scheduled to arrive in London on Friday to discuss the terms of a possible 4.5 million pound move to Arsenal.

"Gilberto is happy with the prospect of playing in England," Vilhena said. "He just needs to tie up a few things with the contract."

Silva, who has played all his club soccer in Brazil, appeared in every game of his country's successful World Cup campaign in South Korea and Japan last month in place of Emerson Ferreira who pulled out at the last moment after dislocating his shoulder.

"We're expecting Gilberto's transfer to be completed swiftly," Athletic spokesman Caio Ziller added.

Silva was quoted in Friday's Daily Mirror as saying that playing alongside French international Patrick Vieira was a huge factor in his desire

to play for the north London club. "Vieira is a tremendous player and maybe I could even play alongside him," he said.

"He has more international

team. There was stiff competition to replace Emerson but I did my job well and we won. Having no guaranteed first-team place is nothing new. I've never received anything for free."

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger has Silva on his list of midfield targets as he looks to sign one more top-class player before the Gunners begin the defence of their Premiership crown.

Silva has emerged as a strong candidate after PSV Eindhoven slapped a £14m price tag on Dutch midfielder Mark van Bommel who was Wenger's first choice.

Silva, who starred in Brazil's 2-1 quarter-final win over England, caught Wenger's eye during the World Cup and his agents have touted him round the Premiership.

The hard-tackling Silva insists he can cope with the Premiership's congested fixture list and also believes Arsenal's other Brazilian Edu can help him settle in.

He added: "It would be fantastic to play against the likes of David Beckham again. We all want to play in a great league with great players. That is why going to England could be so good."

"It would probably be difficult to settle in during the first year. But that's part of the job."



GILBERTO SILVA

experience than me, but that would just make me dig deeper. I couldn't be more calm. I've just won the World Cup.

"Everybody loves a challenge and this would be a major one. Playing for a club like Arsenal sounds wonderful and I would like to make my name in England."

"I could not join a side with the quality of Arsenal if I was afraid. If I go, I'll fight for my place in the first

Boro get their man



INTERNET, *Middlesbrough*

Brazilian midfielder Juninho is set to return to Teesside after Middlesbrough agreed a four-year deal with the World Cup winner.

The Premiership outfit have been locked in talks with the 29-year-old after agreeing a £6million fee with his Spanish club Atletico Madrid earlier this month.

And following protracted negotiations, Middlesbrough announced they had finally come to an agreement with the midfielder.

A statement on the club's official website read: "Middlesbrough Football Club are delighted to announce that last night they agreed personal terms with Juninho having already agreed a fee with Atletico Madrid."

"The club has agreed a four-year contract, subject to the player passing a medical and obtaining a work permit from the Department of Employment."

"The Brazilian international is due to link up with his new teammates week commencing August 5 and it is hoped that he will make his debut in the pre-season friendly against Alaves on Wednesday, August 7."

Boro boss Steve McClaren spoke of his delight at the capture. He said: "I'm absolutely delighted Juninho has agreed to join us. We have a World Cup winner who is as ambitious as we are."

"I have spoken to him a couple of times and he wants to help make Middlesbrough successful. He is very excited to be coming back to Teesside and we look forward to welcoming here. He feels he has unfinished business."

"Juninho is the sort of player who can unlock tight defences and

create goals, which is something we lacked last season. He will bring us that something extra that we have been missing."

Juninho was a big hit during his previous two spells at the Riverside Stadium. He first arrived in England from Sao Paulo for £4.75million in November 1995 and set the Premier League alight with his electric runs.



JUNINHO

Although Boro reached both the FA Cup and League Cup finals in 1997, the little Brazilian could not prevent the club from being relegated to Division One.

He was subsequently sold to Atletico Madrid for £12million, but returned to Middlesbrough on loan in September 1999 after failing to hold down a regular first-team place in Spain.

Juninho was then farmed out to Brazilian sides Flamengo and Vasco da Gama before catching the eye at this summer's World Cup finals in Japan and Korea.

Middlesbrough chief executive Keith Lamb has been relentless in his negotiations to bring the playmaker back to the club, holding

length talks with Juninho's agent and father, Osvaldo Giroldo.

The Teessiders agreed a £6million pound fee with Atletico early this month, but could not agree personal terms when Giroldo flew to England. However, as he returned suggesting the World Cup winner would resume his career with Madrid next season, the Teessiders upped their offer, making it clear it was their best and final package.

And following more talks, the two parties have now come to an agreement which looks set to see Juninho boost McClaren's squad - although the deal remains subject to a medical and the Brazilian obtaining a work permit.

McClaren and his players are currently in Austria, where they drew 2-2 with Italian side Udinese in a pre-season friendly last night. They flew out having clinched a season-long loan deal with Real Madrid's Cameroon international Geremi, who has had his application for a work permit approved.

Former Middlesbrough defender Gary Pallister believes Juninho can once again have a major impact at the north-east club.

He told Sky Sports News: "When he first was at the Riverside, they had some good times and some of the football they were playing was superb. Now he is back to his best and we saw in the World Cup he is a superb player."

"He played exceptional well for three or four games and he looked like the Juninho of old. He spent two or three years where he has not been the same player because of this really bad injury when he broke his leg."

"But if anyone saw the World Cup, playing on that stage as well as he did, you have got to say he is in fantastic nick and is a great asset to any club."

Rovers rope in Yorke



REUTERS, *Blackburn*

Blackburn Rovers have signed striker Dwight Yorke from Premier League rivals Manchester United for two million pounds.

The fee for the 30-year-old from Trinidad and Tobago could rise to 2.6 million pounds, depending on appearances, which would still be 10 million pounds less than what United paid Aston Villa for Yorke in 1998.

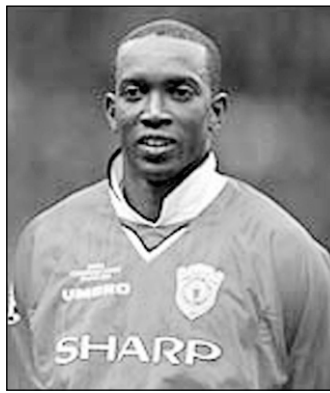
He scored 29 goals in his first season to help the Old Trafford club win the Treble of Champions League, Premier League and FA Cup, but struggled to maintain his form over the next three years and lost manager Alex Ferguson's confidence.

"I can't tell you how delighted I am to sign for Blackburn and get this great opportunity," Yorke told the Blackburn website on Friday.

"There's a passion deep inside me that wants to do well and I'm desperate to re-establish myself in the Premiership."

Yorke slipped down the pecking order behind Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and Andy Cole, and the 19 million-pound signing of Dutchman Ruud van Nistelrooy last year restricted his first team opportunities still further.

Cole joined Blackburn last December and Rovers manager Graeme Souness will hope to rekindle the prolific partnership Cole and Yorke enjoyed with United in the



DWIGHT YORKE

1998-99 season, when they claimed 53 goals between them.

"I had a fantastic few years at United, but it's been frustrating of late and coming to Blackburn just feels right," Yorke said.

"Everyone knows I'm a pal of Andy Cole but he's not the only player I'm familiar with in the squad and I'm looking forward to playing alongside them all."

Bayern fail to shine

REUTERS, *Aue, Germany*

Bayern Munich have failed to survive their opening match in the pre-season German League Cup tournament, losing on penalties to Hertha Berlin.

The game was a 2-2 draw after 90 minutes and went straight to the shoot-out, which Hertha won 4-3 courtesy of three saves from Hungarian goalkeeper Gabor Kiraly.

Brazilian striker Elber opened the scoring on 17 minutes for Bayern, who were missing new signings Michael Ballack, Sebastian Deisler and Ze Roberto through injuries.

Hertha levelled just before the break through Brazilian striker Marcelinho, who then set up striker and captain Michael Preetz for a 2-1 lead for the Berlin club with three minutes remaining.

Elber equalised seconds later for Bayern, who desperately want a title after failing to win any silverware last season for the first time since 1995.

Hertha, who announced shortly before the match that Brazil's World Cup striker Luizao had joined them on a four-year deal, go on to meet Borussia Dortmund on Tuesday in the semifinals of the lucrative tournament featuring the top six teams

Beckenbauers part



REUTERS, *Berlin*

Franz Beckenbauer and his wife Sybille are separating because he wants to spend more time with a son he had with another woman.

"After a long and careful consideration me and my wife have decided not to live together any more," the former World Cup-winning captain and coach said in a statement.

"The separation results from a fair and friendly agreement," he added. "A decisive factor was my

wish to dedicate myself more to my son who was born in August 2000. I feel responsible for him."

Franz and Sybille Beckenbauer have been married for 12 years. The great libero, who lifted the World Cup as captain in 1974 and coach in 1990, had been married once before. He has four children.

The youngest, Noel Maximilian, was born in August 2000 after the "Kaiser" had an affair with a Bayern Munich employee.

Beckenbauer, now 56, is the Bayern Munich president and also chairs the organising committee of the 2006 World Cup in Germany.



File photo of Franz Beckenbauer (R) and wife Sybille.

PHOTO: INTERNET