

Veron-Crespo swap?

AFP, London

Manchester United's Argentine midfielder Juan Sebastian Veron could be heading back to Lazio with compatriot Hernan Crespo heading in the opposite direction to Old Trafford, according to British media reports on Saturday.

Lazio are believed to be interested in a swap deal that would also involve United writing off the debt of 10.5 million pounds (16.6 million dollars) owed to them by the Italian club for the 16.5-million-pound (26-million-dollar) sale of Dutch defender Jaap Stam last season.

Lazio spokesman Guido Paglia was quoted in The Guardian as saying the Rome club were keen to bring Veron back to Italy and offload striker Crespo, a 35.7-million-pound (56.4-million-dollar) signing from Serie A rivals Parma in the summer of 2000.

"It is very possible a swap deal will be done with Manchester," he said.

"(Lazio President Sergio) Gragnotti likes Veron very much and he will always be popular with our supporters. We would like him back but we must wait until August before initiating moves.

"If Manchester contact us before then with a proposition to sell Crespo, we will start discussions. But we are waiting for news from Veron's agent Gustavo Mascardi."

Ardiles at Racing Club

REUTERS, Buenos Aires

Former Argentina international Oswaldo Ardiles has been appointed coach of Racing Club to replace Reinaldo Merlo who walked out on Wednesday.

Fernando Marin, a director of the Blanquiceleste S.A company, which manages the club, told reporters that Ardiles, who played in the Argentina team, which won the 1978 World Cup, was due to take over within a week.

Last year Merlo ended the popular Buenos Aires club's 35-year wait for a domestic title.

He quit only days before the start of the Argentine championship, apparently unhappy about a lack of reinforcements for his team.

The man nicknamed "Mustard" because of the colour of his tinted hair has seen 15 members of last year's title-winning squad leave in the last six months.

Racing open their campaign on Sunday away to Huracan.

Heskey extends Liverpool contract

AFP, London

England striker Emile Heskey on Friday signed an extension to his existing contract which will keep him at Liverpool until 2005.

Czech Republic duo Vladimir Smicer and Patrik Berger have agreed in principal to new deals, leaving Liverpool manager Gerard Houllier delighted with his summer's work.

He told the club's official website: "Both Vladimir Smicer and Patrik Berger have agreed to stay and Emile Heskey has already signed."

"These players have been loyal servants to us and I am delighted these matters have been sorted out."

Former Leicester man Heskey was signed by Houllier for 11 million pounds (17.3 million dollars) in March 2000.

Wanchope faces surgery

REUTERS, Manchester

Manchester City striker Paulo Wanchope will have an operation on his knee this week which could keep him out of action until the New Year.

The Costa Rica international has been unable to join in any training since his return from the World Cup finals and will now travel to the United States for surgery.

But manager Kevin Keegan insists he will not be looking for a replacement for the 25-year-old as he has already spent heavily in preparation for the club's return to the English premier league.

"There is no doubt it is a blow for us to lose Paulo but it is not totally unexpected," Keegan told City's website.

"He wanted to go to the World Cup and we wanted him to go if he was fit and he seemed to get through it."

"But he hasn't been able to join in any of the training so he will go later this week and probably have an operation."

Keegan has brought forwards Nicolas Anelka for 13 million pounds and Mattias Vuoso for 3.5 million pounds to Maine Road in the close-season, while he already had Jon Macken, Darren Huckerby, Shaun Goater and Wanchope at his disposal.

Only on Roy's terms

Football

REUTERS, London

Roy Keane has said that he would like to play for the Republic of Ireland again but only if present coach Mick McCarthy vacates his post.

The Manchester United captain was axed from the Irish World Cup squad in May after a blazing row with McCarthy at the team's Korean training camp and it appeared that his international career was over.

However, the 30-year-old midfielder was quoted in the media on Saturday as saying a return was possible.

"Hopefully, I might get back to playing for the Irish team again. But I will only go back if there is a new manager -- and that is out of my hands," he said in the Daily Express.

Keane's refusal to apologise for what happened in Korea angered many Irish fans and the player was expecting a cool reception when Manchester United played a pre-season friendly against Dublin side Shelbourne last weekend.

But the rousing welcome he received from the 11,000-strong crowd has convinced Keane to reconsider the possibility of adding to the 58 appearances he made before his bust-up with McCarthy.

"When I went back home in the summer a lot of the mail was positive," he said. "And the reception I got when I went back to Ireland with United was fantastic, quite moving."

"It made me realise how impor-

tant going back there and playing for Ireland is. In general, the Irish fans have been very supportive."

Keane went on to add: "No one was more disappointed than me about what happened at the World Cup, but life moves on and I hope

the Irish team moves on."

But with McCarthy signing an extended deal with Ireland after guiding them to the second round in Korea and Japan, Keane's desire to return may never reach fruition.



ROY KEANE

Dynamic duo together

Football

REUTERS, London

In May 1999 Manchester United completed an historic Treble and Blackburn Rovers were relegated from the Premier League.

Cole's quicksilver dummy was read instantly by Yorke, who laid the ball off perfectly for his partner to slip it clinically past the Barcelona goalkeeper.

It was a far cry from the clumsy finishing that characterised Cole's early years with United, but Yorke's presence seemed to inspire him as the pair terrorised Europe's top defences.

Yorke headed two goals to seal a 2-0 win over Inter Milan in a quarter-final match at Old Trafford, and both players were on target when United came from 2-0 down to seal the 3-2 semi-final win over Juventus in Turin that booked their place in the final.

Although they were overshadowed by substitutes Teddy Sheringham and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer in the dramatic last-gasp final win over Bayern Munich, Yorke and Cole were the undisputed top dogs in United's quartet of international strikers.

But that balmy night in Barcelona marked the highlight of their Old Trafford careers.

Although they continued to convert a good number of chances as United cantered to the premier league title in the next two seasons, Cole and Yorke never again pro-

vided a consistent cutting edge in the Champions League.

At the end of 1999-2000 Alex Ferguson would have signed Ruud Nistelrooy but for the big Dutchman's cruciate knee ligament injury and the following season Sheringham's form restricted the Yorke/Cole partnership to only a few outings.

Ferguson did recruit Van Nistelrooy for 19 million pounds in May 2001, and with Solskjaer continuing to find the target on a regular basis Cole and Yorke were frequently relegated to the substitutes' bench.

Cole lost patience first, agreeing to join Blackburn in December, but Yorke angered Ferguson by refusing to join Middlesbrough in January, a decision that scuppered United's hopes of signing Italian Paolo Di Canio.

Ferguson reportedly wanted 6 million pounds for Yorke, but Blackburn refused to pay up, recruiting the Tobagan for a bargain three weeks before the new season.

Rovers manager Graeme Souness is looking to build on his team's 10th-place finish in their first season back in the premier league and a League Cup triumph that secured a UEFA Cup spot.

To achieve those ambitions he will need Yorke and Cole to get back into their old routine.

Time to face reality

Football

AFP, Paris

French soccer star Zinedine Zidane admitted Friday that the national soccer side would have to wake up if they wanted to return to the elite of world football.

The 30-year-old Real Madrid playmaker said that their first round failure in the World Cup had been a team effort and sacked coach Roger Lemerre should not have become

the scapegoat for their elimination. "Lemerre had his share of responsibility. It's normal because he's the coach, but he should not take the blame for the first round elimination. Because sincerely I believe it's us the players who were at fault."

"There is ONE reason," he said of their failure.

"We were not ready on D-Day. We were less well prepared than usual and we couldn't be in top form," Zidane told the sports daily L'Equipe.

He admitted that in hindsight it

had been a mistake to play the friendly against South Korea five days before the World Cup resulting in a thigh injury which forced him to miss the first two games.

"But it was me who said to the coach that I wanted to play," he stressed.

Of newly appointed coach Jacques Santini the midfielder said that he did not know him personally but again that the responsibility for the team results would lie not solely with him.

"He can say what he wants done but it will be up to us the players to play, to take responsibility and bounce back."

"Basically it will be up to us to get into action," added Zidane.

Despite the heartfelt Zidane said that for him Brazilian star Ronaldo was the best memory of the championship.

"I hold the image of Ronaldo's smile. He's my favourite player," said Zidane. "I think that Ronaldo is favourite of the Ballon d'Or (European Footballer of the Year) and he deserves it."

Korean WC star Turkey-bound

AP, Seoul

Lee Eul-yong has signed a deal worth 2.1 million dollars with Turkey's Trabzonspor for the 2002-2003 season, his South Korean club said Saturday.

The 26-year-old Lee successfully negotiated the deal during a visit to Turkey this week, said Bucheon SK Football club, based in Bucheon, west of Seoul.

Lee plans to join his new Turkish club next week. Bucheon SK said Lee's contract should be renewed annually.

His first game for Trabzonspor is scheduled for August 10.

Milan being cautious

REUTERS, Rome

AC Milan say that they are cautiously optimistic of signing Brazil forward Rivaldo.

"The dialogue between Milan and Rivaldo continues," the Italian club said in a statement on its official website.

"Contacts between the club and the Brazilian star are constructive," it added. "There is cautious optimism on the negotiations."

AC Milan said earlier this week they hoped that the former Barcelona player's demands would fit in with their salary scale.

The 30-year-old has become a free agent since his contract with Spanish club Barcelona was rescinded last week and so the Serie A side would not have to pay a transfer fee for him.

But the Brazilian's representatives are likely to seek a large signing-on fee and a considerable salary package at a time when Italian clubs are attempting to tighten their belts.

Should he complete the move, Rivaldo would face his World Cup team mate Ronaldo, who plays for Inter Milan, in next season's Milan derby.

Atletico Madrid have said they still hope that Rivaldo will reject a lucrative offer from AC Milan and opt to stay in Spain to play for them on their return to the first division.

Jardel fed up with Portugal

REUTERS, Lisbon

Mario Jardel, the Portuguese Premiership's top scorer last season, has asked his club Sporting to allow him to leave Portugal as he was upset over a recent separation from his wife.

"I am not in a psychological condition to remain in Portugal," Brazilian-born Jardel told a press conference, adding that he had received no firm proposals from other clubs.

Jardel scored 42 league goals last season when Sporting won the League-Cup double.

The 28-year-old is under contract to play two more seasons with Sporting, but did not turn up for a club training session earlier on Friday.

Jardel had mixed fortunes last season. Being top league scorer in Portugal failed to impress Brazil



MARIO JARDEL

coach Luiz Felipe Scolari, who left him out of the squad which won the World Cup in Japan last month.

Campo almost Bolton's

AFP, Madrid

Spanish giants Real Madrid have hammered out an agreement with English Premiership side Bolton for defender Ivan Campo, the Spanish press reported Friday.

Real Madrid director Jorge Valdano and Bolton president Phil Gartside agreed the deal Thursday for the player who has one year to run on his contract and is reported to have wanted to stay with the Spanish outfit.

If he did not comply the club threatened the 28-year-old Basque, saying that he would not be registered with the Spanish football federation, which would prevent him playing all official matches this season with the club.

Real meted out the same treatment last season on Colombian Edwin Congo who did not play throughout the year despite having a full salary.

Campo, capped three times for the national side, previously played at Valencia, Valladolid, Alaves and Mallorca before transferring to Real in 1998.

A much-feared defender in the Spanish league Campo lost his first-team place at the beginning of the 2001-2002 season.

He has been the brunt of criticism and suffered depression after committing a major blunder against Las Palmas last October, and has not played since November.

The club's central defence has been weakened since the departure of Aitor Karanka for Athletic Bilbao and they have for the past three seasons been on the look out for a talented international defender to back up veteran captain Fernando Hierro, aged 34.

Gazza's way of life

Football

REUTERS, Washington

Former England midfielder Paul Gascoigne, once the biggest name in British soccer, said on Friday he was happy to be anonymous as he begins a trial for D.C. United.

The 35-year-old has been headline news in England for more than a decade, whether it be for his dizzying skills, his schoolboy pranks, his drinking or his confessed wife-beating.

But since his arrival in the American capital on Wednesday, the former Newcastle, Tottenham Hotspur, Lazio and Glasgow Rangers player said he was happy to report that nobody had recognised him.

Asked why he was considering reviving his career playing for probably his lowest salary for at least a decade in two-thirds empty stadiums, Gazza -- as he is widely known across Europe -- said, "to get away from the press."

"I just want to be myself, have a life," he said. "I am not here to cause any trouble, I don't want to cause any bother."

A recovering alcoholic who has periodically battled excess weight and lengthy injuries, Gascoigne appeared in Washington slim, fit and tanned after two weeks working out in Cyprus.

He said he would decide next Wednesday whether to sign a \$260,000 a year contract for the Major League Soccer team in the nation where the world's most popular sport is eclipsed by baseball, basketball and NFL football.

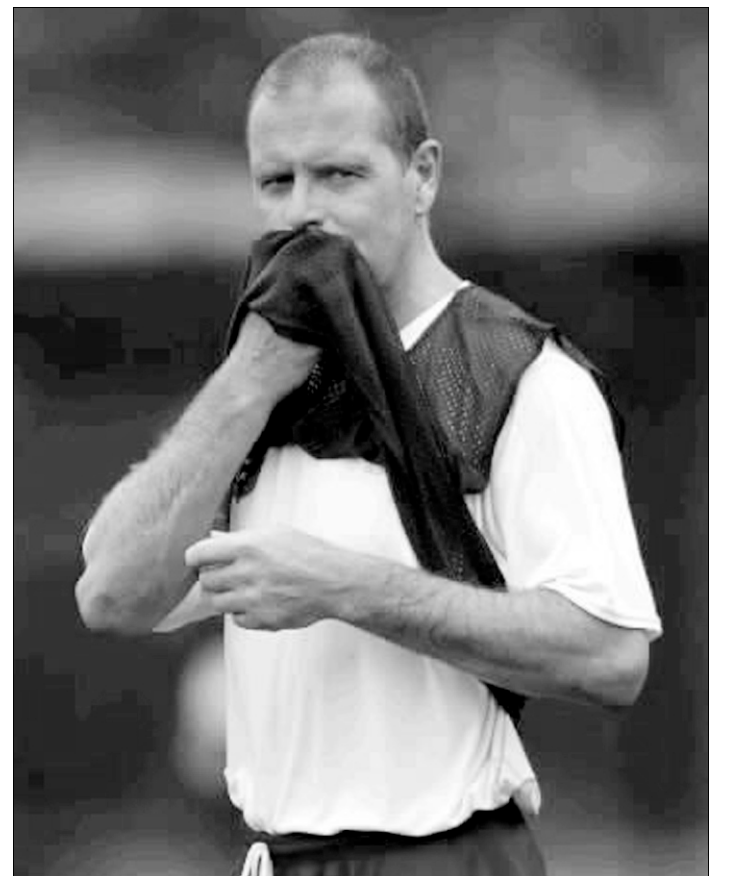
Comparing him to another wayward, heavy-drinking football player, who also played in the U.S. -- Irishman George Best -- English

coach Ray Hudson warned Gascoigne that any contract would be terminated should he generate bad publicity.

"We don't want any embarrassments," Hudson said. "This is the biggest gamble of my career. But

scored a nonchalant goal and displayed flashes of the style that earned him a nation's adulation after the 1990 World Cup finals in Italy.

He also showed his sense of humour was intact, joking he tried out for Washington's popular



PAUL GASCOIGNE

that's the seduction of a player like Gazza. It's the promise of magic." On the training pitch, Gascoigne glided through a 90-minute session,

women's team last year. "They turned me down, so I thought I'd better get the weight off," he said.

Terry tells Nigel off

Football

REUTERS, Melbourne

Nigel Martyn harmed his chances of being first-choice goalkeeper at Elland Road this season by missing a pre-season tour of Asia, new Leeds United coach Terry Venables has said.

Venables said the England international had told him he wanted to miss the three-match tour after a gruelling World Cup campaign.

"I spoke to Nigel and he said 'I'm just exhausted, I really can't face the (tour) situation,'" Venables told a news conference in Melbourne on Friday.

He said England under-21 international Paul Robinson would have his opportunity to prove his worth.

"I'm going to see this lad and maybe I wouldn't have seen him in the three games in the other circumstance," Venables said.

"So he (Martyn) has not helped himself but we have not had any falling out whatsoever."

"We had quite a common sense conversation about it and he knows where I stand and I know where he stands."

"No problems whatsoever. Yet." Martyn said his body would be in better condition for the Premier League season if he missed the tour.

"My commitment to the club has not been questioned, and I expect to be the number one goalkeeper when the season starts," Martyn told the club's official Web site.

Leeds beat Green Town FC 5-1 in Hangzhou, China, on Tuesday.

The English club will play Chile's Colo Colo in Melbourne on Saturday before tackling a Bangkok XI next week.

Venables, who will make his debut as Leeds coach Saturday, said the transfer of England defender Rio Ferdinand to Manchester United this week had been part of a stressful time at Elland Road.

"Everyone comes under that pressure. I've got to try and get an equal hand across both sides, on the pitch and off it," Venables said.

Venables said he had wanted to retain Ferdinand.

"I wasn't very happy about it, to say the least," he said.

"I've got to go looking really quickly at the players that we have, sort the squad out and see where we need to be strengthened, see what I can do about that."

Venables said following the World Cup with a pre-season tour was not helpful for some of his squad.

"In saying that, it's fine because by the time we get back, I will have learnt a little bit more about the group," he said.

Venables said he was a fan of Australia international Brett Emerton, a midfielder from Dutch club Feyenoord.

But the former England and Australia coach would not be drawn on whether Emerton would join Australia internationals Harry Kewell and Mark Viduka at Leeds.

"I would be interested in Brett? I'm interested in all good players," Venables said.

"I have a list of players that I'm interested in."

"Sometimes they (the media) get it right and sometimes they get it wrong. I do like the player."

Venables says Australia should not expect any favours concerning the release of his English Premier League club's Australian players for national duty.

Australian coach Frank Farina has said he will name his best squad for all future internationals after a third-string Australian team was upset by New Zealand in the Oceania Nations Cup in Auckland earlier this month.

Any Australian first-choice team is likely to include Leeds pair Harry Kewell and Mark Viduka.

But Venables, a former Australian national coach, said it would be difficult to release Kewell and Viduka for matches not scheduled around European club international breaks.

He said the best way to stop any collision course involving Australia and Leeds United, which has five Australians, was for world governing body FIFA to ensure that Australian schedules fitted in with the European schedule.

"What's got to happen is every country in the world's got to get in line with each other," Venables said. "I've been both sides of the fence and I sympathise."

"It's wherever you've got your shoes -- that's what matters to you mostly -- whether you're an international manager or a club manager."

"It's a constant fight and the ones that suffer a lot of the time are the players in the middle."

Kewell has played only four matches for Australia in the past 2 1/2 years because of scheduling conflicts.

Arsenal get Carini

Football

BBC, London

Arsenal have signed Uruguayan keeper 5 on a year's loan from Juventus.

The 22-year-old has joined the Gunners after finding his chances at Juventus limited because of the form of 33-million-pound keeper Gianluigi Buffon.

"I am delighted to be joining Arsenal, they are one of Europe's great clubs, with many fantastic players," Carini said.

"Hopefully I will impress the club and their supporters sufficiently, in order that I can extend my stay at Arsenal."

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger

said: "He is a young international goalkeeper with outstanding natural ability and a great temperament."

"He will definitely strengthen our squad as we look forward to next season."

Carini played in all three of Uruguay's matches at the World Cup.

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger felt he needed another keeper after selling Alex Manninger to Espanyol and Richard Wright to Everton.

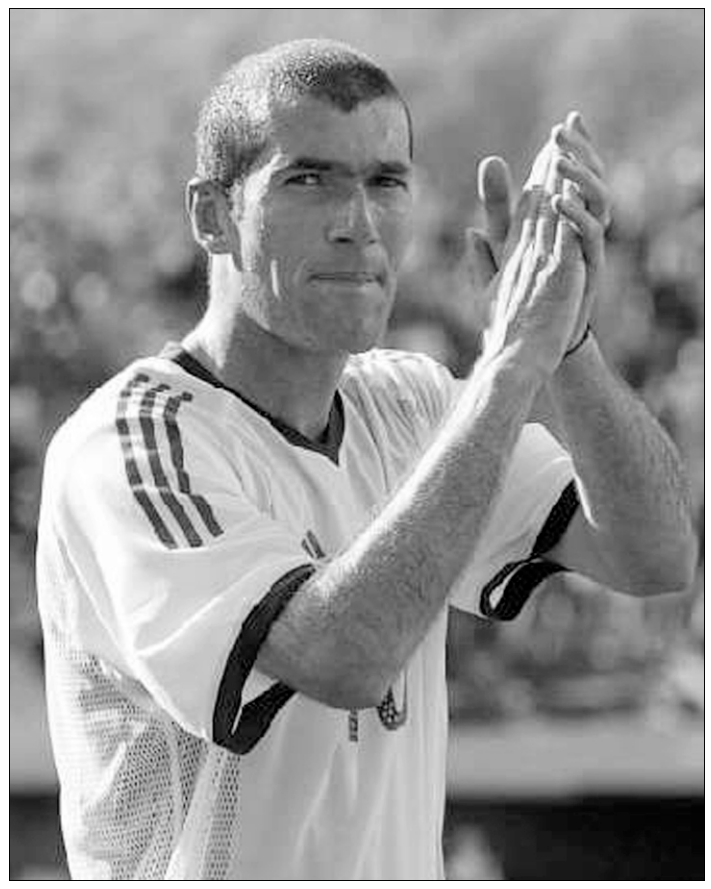
Veteran David Seaman has signed a new one year-deal and is certain to start the season as first choice at Highbury.

Arsenal will have the option to buy Carini at the end of his loan.

He is expected to join up with his new teammates at their pre-season training camp in Austria.



FABIAN CARINI



ZINEDINE ZIDANE