

# Ronaldo replies

Football

AFP/INTERNET, Rio de Janeiro

Brazilian star Ronaldo on Sunday hit back at criticism from coach Luiz Felipe Scolari, who branded him "spoilt" while claiming the player would never return to the form he showed prior to a catalogue of knee injuries.

Ronaldo's two goals in the World Cup final a month ago secured his country a fifth World Cup and he finished tournament top scorer with eight goals.

So the 25-year-old Inter Milan striker felt justified in firing off a riposte to Scolari via a statement on his website.

"I feel much better - I feel I am at 200 percent," insisted Ronaldo in response to Scolari's claim that he would "never again be 100 percent."

The striker explained that "I go on and come off the pitch without feeling any pain. That's how I was able to turn in great performances at the World Cup."

"Ronaldo is conscious that he has completely recovered (from his injuries) to play football," the statement continued.

"So it is incomprehensible that Felipe (Scolari) can say he will never again play at 100 percent of his physical capabilities."

Ronaldo said that his confidence in his own ability stems from the reassurance of many professionals that have shared with him joy and pain during the two years in which he fought hard to make his comeback; more precisely Dr. Jose Runcio Luis, Franco Combi and Gerard Saillant; the physiotherapists Filé, Rosam, Inter and Selecao medical staffs. "It's thanks to them that I was able to play the World Cup."

Ronaldo also had an indirect swipe at Scolari.

"I have learned one thing about football. Most of the time, people behave worse after a victory than after a bad loss."

"I thank Felipe for giving me the chance of playing my third World Cup. I am satisfied with my performance, and at the end we have won



PHOTO: STAR

LOVE LOST? Ronaldo (L) rushing to Luiz Felipe Scolari's waiting arms after scoring his second goal in the 2002 World Cup final on June 30 in Yokohama.

the fifth world cup for Brazil, the one that the Brazilian fans were dreaming about", declared Ronaldo

Ronaldo however acknowledged the fact that he had some disagreements with Scolari during several World Cup practices, something that is absolutely "normal" according to the forward.

Ronaldo remembered that he had different opinions from Scolari when the coach asked him to help in the zonal marking. Ronaldo

believed that he needed to be in the penalty area more, waiting for the keeper possible mistakes.

"Thank god that I was in the area when Oliver Khan was not able to stop completely Rivaldo's shot. I took advantage of the mistake and scored a very important goal" declared Ronaldo.

Ronaldo dismissed Scolari's suggestion that he was spoilt.

"It's strange that in two months together at the World Cup he never

told me this. At least I have always been sincere with him," Ronaldo complained.

But with Scolari set to remain in the post Ronaldo added that "I sincerely hope that Felipe will return to Selecao. I hope to work with him again."

Ronaldo, who is still on vacation back home in Brazil concluded by saying "I am very happy, and I have the same strength, power, and talent than before".

# Wenger was worried

INTERNET, Eisenstadt, Austria

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger has said he feared for the safety of his players after a riot forced the abandonment of Saturday's pre-season friendly against Rapid Vienna.

The match between the English champions and Rapid was called off midway through the second half after violence broke out among the Austrian fans.

The players made their way to the safety of the other end of the pitch before heading to the dressing rooms as police battled fans throwing a variety of missiles including flares.

Frenchman Wenger said: "Even before the game you could sense a hostile atmosphere that I was very concerned about. It was extremely hostile. The lack of security was extremely worrying."

"There appeared to be no protection, with people wandering around unrestricted. I was warned before the game that Rapid fans have a bad reputation, but this was a pre-season friendly and I didn't expect anything like this."

"The referee told me to get the players on the bench to move to the far side of the pitch [by the dressing rooms] and run to safety, though he feared that an immediate abandonment would lead to further fans spilling on to the pitch."

Arsenal vice-chairman David Dein said no Arsenal fans were involved in the violence.

"My players and staff are going to be OK," he said. "The exit was stage-managed. Now I want to find out exactly what happened, but the fighting was between Austrians and I could see no Arsenal fans involved."

Rapid Vienna president Rudolf Edlinger apologised to Arsenal and said he would root out the trouble-makers.

"Of course it is a shame for our club and for Austria," said Edlinger. "Every football identified by the closed circuit TV and the police will be banned."

Arsenal are scheduled to play in a triangular tournament involving Roma and Panathinaikos in Kapfenberg on Thursday before completing the Austrian leg of their tour with a match against German outfit 1860 Munich in Innsbruck.

Saturday's match was goalless when the referee called it off.

# Silva sure to shine

Football

INTERNET, London

Arsenal's Brazilian import Gilberto Silva has been backed to become a Highbury superstar - by the man most threatened by his arrival.

Midfielder Silva played a key role in Brazil's World Cup triumph in the Far East and his solid performances in the famous yellow shirt earned him a £4.5m ticket to the Premiership.

If he is to win a regular starting place in the Arsenal line-up, the man

he said. "We've never played against each other as we competed in different state championships when I was at Corinthians but I do know he's a very strong marker who's intelligent and good on the ball. He has plenty of assets."

Edu, who figured prominently in Arsenal's triumphant march on the Double last term, said Silva's impressive World Cup form came as no surprise to him.

"He took his chance brilliantly at the World Cup, but in a way I expected that. He ensured he was in good shape beforehand and played very well."

Silva, 28, has already joined up with his new Gunners team-mates at their pre-season training camp in Austria, where Arsenal's friendly with Rapid Vienna on Saturday was abandoned because of crowd trouble.

His stratospheric rise from little-known Brazilian outfit Atletico Mineiro to World Cup winner and Premiership glamour boy caps a real rags-to-riches story for the former furniture manufacturer.

He has worked in a sweet factory and a quarry but carved his name in Gunners boss Arsene Wenger's consciousness with a series of consistent performances in Japan and South Korea in early summer.

Silva was called up from the Brazilian chorus line when skipper Emerson suffered a freak accident in training - and he didn't let his side down once.

Wenger was one European coach to sit up and take notice and, following PSV Eindhoven's decision to price Mark van Bommel out of a move to Highbury, the Frenchman believes Silva is ample consolation.

"I did not know Gilberto Silva before the World Cup but he is a very good signing for us," said Wenger.

"We were a little bit short in midfield for the start of the season, but Silva is a player we have been able to buy at the right price and he has the right quality."

"He is a proven ball-winner with

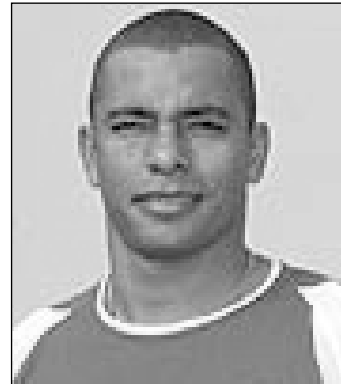
power and he can play right across the midfield. I think he will adapt well to the team."

Silva becomes the third Brazilian to move to Highbury following Edu and, before him, the highly impressive full-back Silvinho.

A work permit is unlikely to be a problem as the midfielder has a Portuguese passport.

Arsenal's fine-tuning now looks primed to keep them purring while United boss Sir Alex Ferguson splashes the cash in a desperate bid to grab the Premiership title back.

Wenger almost gloated at the weekend when pointing out that he's got the players he wanted at a



GILBERTO SILVA

most likely to miss out is fellow Brazilian Edu.

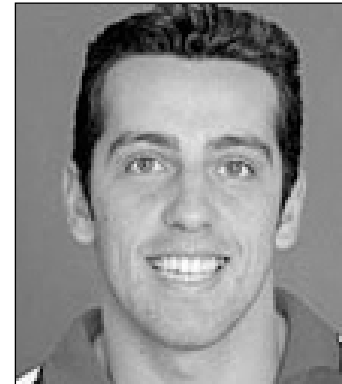
Yet it is Edu who desperately wants his compatriot to succeed.

The ex-Corinthians said: "I welcome Gilberto with open arms. Brazilians are a very united people and I will do everything I can to help him settle in quickly."

"He's a cool guy and a great player. It's a good deal for everybody - for me, for Gilberto and for Arsenal. I'm very happy about it."

Edu insists that there is room for both him and Silva in the starting XI as Gunners head into the new season as defending champions.

"I'm not worried about Gilberto as a threat. As we say in Brazil, the sun shines on everybody. Everyone has their chance and his transfer will only make Arsenal a better team."



EDU

fraction of the £30m Manchester United spent on Rio Ferdinand, England's star at the World Cup.

Wenger firmly believes he has had the better summer in a climate of financial uncertainty, with Lille centre-back Pascal Cygan already looking a find at £2.6million and Uruguayan keeper Fabian Carini an able deputy to David Seaman after arriving in north London on a free transfer from Italian giants Juventus.

If Silva adapts at Highbury to life at the top - a position he has become used to with his country - then Wenger could have bought himself a bona fide Premiership star ... cut price.

# Parting with Bora wisdom

AFP, Beijing

China's former national soccer coach Bora Milutinovic made his final departure from Beijing Sunday and apparently will be taking his football training methods with him, state press reported.

The Yugoslav coach led China to its first ever World Cup Finals appearance, but Milutinovic's longstanding differences with China's top football officials and China's poor performance in South Korea has led to a rethink over national team training methods, the Sports Review said.

Besides feting "Milu" in his final banquet, Saturday, the CFA has been holding meetings which apparently are aimed at eradicating Milutinovic's "happy football" philosophy from China's soccer training manuals, the report said.

"Soccer must have strict discipline, the moment you start talking about 'enjoyment' will only lead to a breakdown in team discipline and make training chaotic," an unnamed CFA official told the paper.

Other coaches and officials echoed the feelings, saying Chinese football players were not at an appropriate level of development to "enjoy" football.

Hired by China two years ago, Milu led the national side to an undefeated record in the first round of World Cup qualifying and to a five-win, one-loss record in the second round bringing China into the finals after 44 years of trying.

Throughout the qualifying coaches and players regularly complained about Milutinovic's relaxed training sessions and easy attitude, while the Yugoslav coach insisted that heaping unneeded pressure on the players would hamper performance.

To that end, Milutinovic announced that China's goals in South Korea would be in ascending order: to score a goal, draw a game and secure a win.

Unfortunately, the inexperienced side, the vast majority of whom ply their trade in China's relatively basic professional league, lost easily to Costa Rica, Brazil and Turkey, scoring no goals and conceding nine.

The failure even to score disappointed fans and led to criticism of the side from leaders in Beijing.

The team's debut at the World Cup Finals in June was "a breakthrough for Chinese football" in itself, said Yan Shiduo, vice director of the China Football Association (CFA), earlier this month.

However, in failing to even score a goal in three first-round defeats, the team did not achieve any of the targets set before the tournament, he said.

"We shall not forgive ourselves. We did not meet the expectations of the Chinese people and the country," Yan said.

"I should be held responsible, the CFA should be responsible."

# Rivaldo key to glory

Football

REUTERS, Milan

AC Milan's signing of Brazilian World Cup winner Rivaldo has gone some way to restoring the club's status in European football but it will increase the pressure on coach Carlo Ancelotti to deliver trophies.

Rivaldo, who was available on a free transfer after cancelling his contract with Spanish club Barcelona last week, signed a three-year deal with Milan on Saturday. He will join up with his new team mates on Thursday.

Milan President Silvio Berlusconi, also Italy's prime minister, has never been shy of bringing out the cheque book when he believes his club need a top signing but they have not won a major honour since the Italian title won in 1999.

Those three seasons have seen Milan lose the image, built under Berlusconi's reign, as a team of world class performers playing entertaining and attacking football.

Berlusconi spent heavily to help create Arrigo Sacchi's squad which won the European Cup in 1989 and 1990 and the media mogul invested again to assist Fabio Capello build the side which lifted the continent's premier trophy again in 1994.

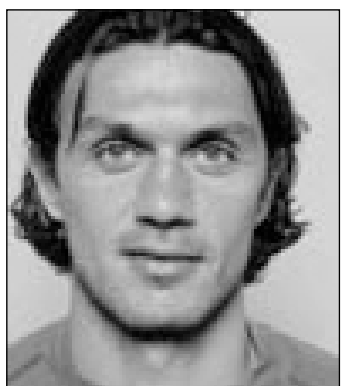
Top foreign players such as Marco Van Basten, Ruud Gullit, Dejan Savicevic and Zvonimir Boban ensured the stylish football Berlusconi has always insisted upon.

But the recent decline has coincided with the president's decision

to focus more on his political career than his interest in his club.

It was, however, Berlusconi, whose Fininvest company owns Milan, who gave the go-ahead for the Rivaldo deal and Milan vice-president Adriano Galliani says the signing has reactivated the premier's passion for the team.

"It is a long time since I have heard from Berlusconi two or three



PAOLO MALDINI

times a day on Milan issues," said Galliani, who effectively runs the club on a day-to-day basis.

"The approach for Rivaldo really got him going and he was involved right from the start."

But having committed to a three-year contract for Rivaldo, reported to be worth an annual 4.5 million euros to the Brazilian, Berlusconi will expect a return on his investment.

Captain Paolo Maldini, the only member of the Sacchi side still at the club, is convinced that Rivaldo can help put Milan back among the frontrunners in Serie A and in

Europe.

"This signing really boosts the whole atmosphere. It is a real coup for us particularly when you consider that a year ago he would have cost dollars50 million and now we have him on a free transfer. I think that is what you call a real deal."

"We are ready to welcome him as the great champion that he is, one of the greatest ever to pull on our red and black shirts, and with him we are more than ever favourites," said Maldini.

Coach Ancelotti now has an impressive range of strikers with Filippo Inzaghi, Ukrainian Andriy Shevchenko, Denmark's Jon Dahl Tomasson and Rivaldo to choose from, as well as Portugal's attacking midfielder Rui Costa.

But while it is likely that Ancelotti will opt for a more attacking formation than last season, probably with three strikers, there is bound to be fierce competition for places.

"The signing of Rivaldo expands the level of quality we have and will also increase the internal competition in the side," Ancelotti said. "Rivaldo can play either behind two strikers or he can be up-front as one of the forwards himself."

"It depends on the system we play but we know that he likes to attack teams from deep positions."

Ancelotti also knows, from personal experience, that having the best in your squad adds to the levels of expectation.

He was sacked as Juventus coach after his team, including former World Player of the Year Zinedine Zidane, twice finished runners-up in Serie A.

# Intertoto Cup results

REUTERS, Birmingham

English Premier League club Aston Villa beat FC Zurich 3-0 on Saturday to reach the semi-finals of the Intertoto Cup.

Republic of Ireland defender Steve Staunton headed the crucial third goal with 12 minutes remaining as Villa overturned a two-goal deficit from the first leg in Switzerland last week.

Fellow Premier League club Fulham also reached the semi-finals thanks to a 1-1 draw in Greece against Egaleo Athens to seal a 2-1 aggregate win.

German club VfB Stuttgart reached the semi-finals despite a 2-1 defeat by Perugia in Italy. Stuttgart won last week's home leg 3-1.

Serie A side Bologna held on for a 0-0 draw in Belarus against BATE Borisov to win 2-0 on aggregate.

Spanish club Malaga completed a 4-1 aggregate victory over Ghent, playing out a 1-1 draw in Belgium.

Villareal overcame a two-goal deficit from the first leg to overcome Italy's Torino on penalties.

Javier Calleja put the home side ahead in the 51st minute and Rodolfo Arruabarrena added a second 16 minutes later.

After extra time failed to produce any more goals, the Spanish side won the shootout 4-3 to set up a semi-final against France's Troyes, who beat NAC Breda on away goals.

The Intertoto Cup format produces six semi-finals, with the winners progressing to three finals which will decide which clubs qualify for next season's UEFA Cup.

# Fowler sent home

REUTERS, London

Robbie Fowler is travelling back to England from Leeds United's pre-season tour of the Far East because of a recurring hip injury, a club spokesman said.

The 27-year-old striker has been suffering from the problem since April and faces a race to be fit for Leeds's opening Premier League game of the season at home to Manchester City on August 17.

"Robbie will be coming back today but as yet we don't know the full extent of the injury," a Leeds spokesman said.

"It is a hip injury which he picked up last season and it has flared up again."

"He had a scan and it showed nothing but he will be assessed tomorrow by the club physio and a surgeon to determine the severity, if any at all."

Fowler scored 14 goals after joining Leeds from Liverpool last November and was a member of the England squad that reached the quarter-finals of the World Cup in June.

Football

INTERNET

Rio Ferdinand has admitted he must prove himself all over again following his record-breaking £30m move to Manchester United.

Despite already being acknowledged as one of the finest defenders in the world, Ferdinand knows the pressure is on for him to justify his price tag and new-found status.

The England star made his United debut in a pre-season friendly at Third Division Bournemouth on Saturday and outlined his determination to step up another level.

"I know what I have to do and there is a whole season ahead of me," said Ferdinand.

"The World Cup was a great experience but I don't want to rest on my laurels. I want to keep improving."

"I have to do that and hopefully it will happen over the season. The price tag is nothing to do with me. The money seems to have dried up at a lot of clubs but that doesn't concern me."

"I'm looking forward to the challenge. After all the talk I was just waiting to start playing and I'm happy that my Manchester United career is now under way."

"I want to set my mind on what I have to do. It's not difficult, just a new challenge. I know a lot of United players from the England team so it's been easy to mix in. The ambience is good. I've had three weeks off and trained the last couple of days. Now I'm just looking forward to getting my fitness back and playing again."

Predictably, Ferdinand was the star of the show at Dean Court, where he spent two months on loan while a raw 17-year-old at West Ham.

Although his warm-up lasted longer than his appearance - 17 minutes as a second-half substitute - nothing could diminish the fervour for the world's most expensive defender.

The occasion was former Bournemouth boss Mel Machin's testimonial, a man Ferdinand has credited with helping transform his career during that loan period.

# Rio for a new beginning

Football

INTERNET

Although Sir Alex Ferguson wanted Ferdinand to wait until this week's tour of Scandinavia to make his United debut, Ferdinand was determined to honour Machin by turning out.

"Whenever I'm asked about the turning point in my career, I say coming to Bournemouth," said Ferdinand. "I'll always be grateful to Mel Machin for giving me first-team football. Going there on loan made a huge difference to my career."

Machin recognised Ferdinand's huge potential when the gangly teenager came into his charge six years ago. "He was losing a bit of confidence when he came here," said Machin.

"He'd been playing reserve team

competitive football he yearned for and put him on his way."

Every effort was made to give Ferdinand a welcome befitting that of a superstar.

A Brazilian samba band played in honour of his first name, as fans outside the ground climbed trees and railings to get a glimpse of the main man in action.

Ferdinand was mobbed and hailed as he jogged and stretched before making his cameo appearance.

Within seconds of coming on Ferdinand, composed on the ball, was barking out instructions.

Aside from Juan Sebastian Veron, Ryan Giggs, Mikael Silvestre and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, United

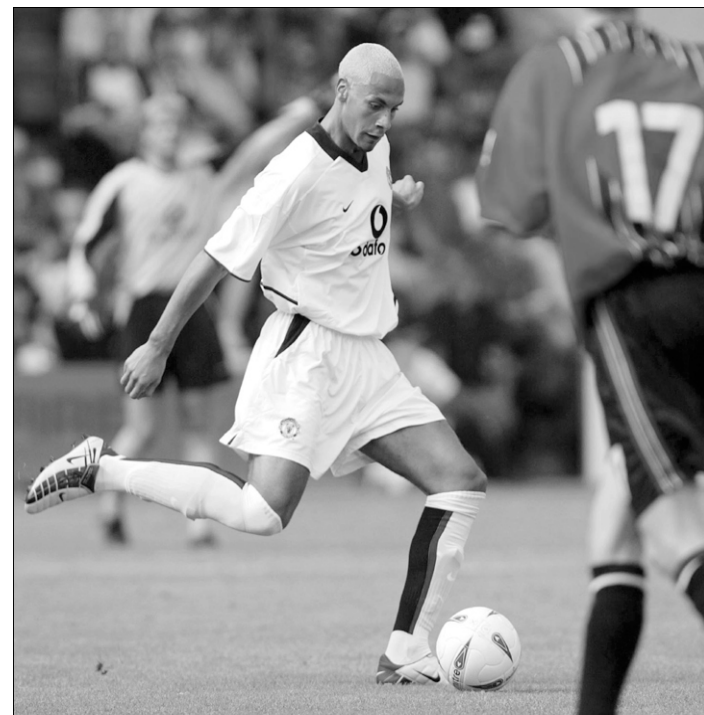


PHOTO: AFP

Rio Ferdinand in action during his debut for Manchester United in a testimonial match against AFC Bournemouth at Dean Court on July 27.

football, he was just 17, and he gave him the full hardship of being a player at our level, which means taking your kit home every night and washing it."

"But even then you could see he had the character. We put him straight in the team, gave him the

fielded a side made up mainly of squad players. United twice equalised through Veron and Ben Muihead, before Michael Stewart scored the winner in the 66th minute.

# Kewell makes the difference

Football

AFP, Melbourne

Australian international Harry Kewell produced a moment of magic to give English Premier League outfit Leeds United a 1-0 win over Chilean champions Colo Colo in a football friendly here on Saturday.

Kewell scored a stunning individual goal late in the first half to clinch victory for Terry Venables' team.

Kewell ghosted in from the right flank between two defenders, accelerated into the penalty box and feinted his way past a third before unleashing a left-foot shot into the net in the 39th minute.

While Kewell produced the most memorable moment of an entertaining match, it was out-of-favour Leeds midfielder Lee Bowyer who was the outstanding player during his time on the pitch.

Bowyer, who Leeds tried to sell to Liverpool for nine million pounds last week, starred in his 45 minutes on the field and sent a clear message

sage to manager Terry Venables that he is well worth keeping at the Yorkshire club.

"It's a good result. They're a very good side in the peak of their season," Venables said.

"It was a good test for us, because I don't think we're quite as far ahead (in our preparation) as they are. I was quite happy."

Leeds flew out of Australia straight after the match and will play the final game of their overseas pre-season tour in Thailand on Tuesday.