DHAKA WEDNESDAY JULY 31, 2002

# Destined for greatness | Serie A start

## Football

## **INTERNET**, Liverpool

Liverpool boss Gerard Houllier is tipping new boy El Hadji Diouf to become an Anfield sensation.

Liverpool fans get their first sighting of the Senegal striker, 21, on home soil tonight when the Merseysiders host Italian side Lazio

But Houllier admitted yesterday that his £10million boy wonder was not originally on his shopping list.

Houllier swooped for the Lens hitman before his sensational World Cup debut last May when he steered Senegal to a shock 1-0 victory over France.

But only a phone call to Houllier's former assistant Patrice Bergues now in charge at Lens - set the wheels in motion for Diouf's move to Anfield

Houllier explained: "It was not in my mind to try and buy him because Patrice had told me he would be staying in France for another two years. "Then I heard Valencia were

interested, then I spoke to Patrice again and said it was unfair not to allow us to compete especially as we did Lens a favour last year by loaning them Djimi Traore.

"That was when we given permission to make a bid and I was immediately impressed by the lad. He said: 'Sign me now and you won't regret it' - and we had not even discussed money.

"He is a player who can operate in four different positions. For Senegal he played on his own up front. But he can also perform as a second striker or play wide on the right and left."

Houllier added: "He has a great attitude and will sacrifice himself in the interest of the team.

"He is already popular with the

other players and it would not be a problem to play him along with Michael Owen and Emile Heskey in the same team.' away from Ewood Park.

Houllier has also been encouraged by a slimmed down Czech striker Milan Baros, 20, who struggled to make an impact after completing his £3.2m move from Banik Ostrava last December.

The Anfield boss added: "He has revived his career and there is no comparison with the player you saw in our reserves. "There has been a dramatic

improvement. He has lost five kilos



## EL HADJI DIOUF

and is looking a different player". Houllier, who signed 21-year-old Monaco keeper Patrice Luzi yesterday, admitted he would like to add two more new players to his squad before the August 31 transfer dead-

But that could also mean several players would be sold. Houll said: here are a couple more I would like to bring in to reinforce the team in terms of quality and if that happens some others may have to

leave "If anyone is not happy I am sure they will be knocking on my door but I can promise them that everybody will be given a chance."

gerial duties in March, believes taking time out during the close season has put him in good shape for the new campaign. He said: "For the first time in 22 years I missed a major tournament with the World Cup in Japan and South Korea and it felt good to have a full break. "I feel refreshed and the batteries

ment.

surgery last October.

are re-charged. Each day I feel better and better.

Thompson. But they deny he is seen

"I realised it was important to rest this summer although in this business you can never afford to switch off completely and we have been signing players since the end of last season." Houllier, 54, is convinced his

decision to attend the Confederations Cup in the Far East last year contributed towards his near-fatal heart problems.

The Frenchman said: "I made a mistake attending that tournament. I thought it would be a working holiday but instead I was jet-lagged and unable to sleep. And 10 days later we were back in training at Liverpool.



SPORT

the coming seasons.

"For the moment the offers from

Telepiu and Stream are absurd,

almost offensive..they are offering

less than half of what we want," said

threatened to play all Serie A

matches at different times unless a

deal is reached but have insisted

that the season will start as planned

sion companies are ready to double

There is no sign that the televi-

"We are working to sort out the

The Italian Football League has

million

Corioni

in September.

their offers.

doubt.

#### as a potential replacement for Duff. **REUTERS**, Milan Heskey and Steven Gerrard both

miss tonight's game against Lazio The start of the Serie A season but should be fit to travel to Real could be postponed by a month Madrid on Thursday to play in the unless a deal can be reached for Spanish club's centenary tournaeight clubs still without television contracts, Brescia president Gino Meanwhile, Houllier says he is Corioni has said. fighting fit after recharging his

"The championship will start on batteries during the summer. The September 1 only if the pay-Liverpool boss insists he has fully recovered following major heart television companies give us a dignified offer, otherwise we are Houllier, who returned to manatalking about October 1," Corioni told the daily Gazzetta dello Sport.

Corioni heads a consortium of smaller Serie A clubs who have been unable to reach agreement with TelePiu and Stream, Italy's two digital pay-per-view television platforms.

Football

the league next season.

Italian football authorities will decide

this week on the fate of 23 clubs

whose financial difficulties leave

them facing possible exclusion from

to meet the necessary criteria, it is

Fiorentina whose future is most in

While Lazio and Roma have yet

The clubs have until Monday

INTERNET

doubt.

contracts but we cannot reach the Atalanta, Brescia, Chievo, fee they are asking," said Mario Como, Empoli, Modena, Perugia Rasini, vice-president of TelePiu. and Piacenza are still without any

**Fiorentina's** 

last hours?

# Welcome League One

## Football

### **REUTERS**, Paris

guaranteed television income for The French First Division may have changed its name in a quest for a Media reports say the clubs are new lease of life but League One will demanding 10 million euro each for start in subdued mood on Saturday the rights to their home games next after France's humiliating World season. while Telepiu have offered Cup failure. around four million and Stream 4.5

In another change, the number of clubs in the top flight has been increased from 18 to 20 but most are under the shadow of financial strain and the transfer market has been as



### EDMILSON depressed as the Paris stock

exchange on a bank holiday. Olympique Lyon are the only buoyant club after winning their first league title last season. They are now aiming to become the first "Our registration for the champi-French club to make it two in a row onship has never been in any since Olympique Marseille in 1992.

Chairman Jean-Michel Aulas A spokesman for Roma said that reported a record number of season the club's debt to the Football ticket sales -- 23,000 -- two weeks before the start of the season. "Our League had been resolved and budget will increase by 23 percent to therefore there was no reason why the team should not take part in the reach 101 million euros [ dolars 99.31 million]," he proudly upcoming season. announced.

I hope the shareholders will provide the money the team needs Serie B teams Fiorentina, Genoa, Messina, Napoli, Palermo and Verona also saw their initial applications rejected but only Fiorentina appear to still be in dan-

night to provide the Italian Football ger of missing out. Federation (FIGC) with documents The Florence club, relegated from Serie A last season, have Covisoc, Italian football's finance serious financial troubles and were authority, rejected their applications put into administration in June.

> So far they have failed to find a new buyer to take over from current **INTERNET**, Milan owner Vittorio Cecchi Gori.

"Up until this moment we have not received any extra income to our budget, but I hope that the shareholders, starting with Cecchi Gori, will provide the money the team needs this afternoon," Fiorentina administrator Enrico Frazzini said on Monday.

All the other Serie B clubs told Reuters that they would be in a position to satisfy Covisoc's demands

It all put the SPL back to square

one in its attempts to broker an

agreement and at the same time

sealed the resolve of the 10 to act

together in an attempt to bring the

clubs sounded diplomatic. "There

was nothing really earth-shattering

at the meeting. The 10 clubs have

Publicly, a spokesman for the 10

Rangers and Celtic refused to

comment after the meeting but it is

understood that they have so many

problems with the proposal that a

minor miracle would be needed for

Failure to reach agreement could

the issue to be resolved tomorrow.

its current quise. It would certainly

before they could set up on their

running so high that if the Old Firm

try to do their own television deal in

the meantime, it is being suggested

At best, this is remarkable brink-

clubs will refuse to play them.

Furthermore feelings are now

big two Glasgow clubs to heel

responded to the SPL

#### For their return to the top level Lemerre as national coach -- Lyon used their money to retain their after 29 years in the wilderness, Ajaccio will have to survive on the

high-standard squad. Brazil's Sonny Anderson, the leading scorer in the First Division last season, and Gregory Coupe, France's World Cup third-choice goalkeeper, were among the players who agreed to new contracts.

The only uncertainty was the future of central defender Edmilson. who won the World Cup with Brazil and is coveted by several European clubs including Real Madrid.

The 2001 champions Nantes have also been absent from the transfer market with a budget reduced from 90 to 65 million euros.

So have Olympique Marseille, who are under strict financial control and are banned from buying new players unless they sell first. "We have to reduce our wage bill by 35 percent," said Olympique Marseille chief Christophe Bouchet. Last season's runners-up Lens

have discovered a good way to reduce their costs -- buy and sell talented African players. "We shall start the season with

seven African players and I hope to sign another one. They are a lot cheaper than French or European players," coach Joel Muller said.

They capitalized on last season and on the World Cup by selling Senegal striker El-Hadji Diouf to Liverpool for 10 million pounds ( dolars 15.63 million).

Senegal's World Cup captain Aliou Cisse also crossed the Channel. He went back to Paris St Germain after a year on loan to Montpellier but was immediately sold to newly-promoted English Premier League side Birmingham

PSG found themselves in financial turmoil as their owners, the pay-TV channel Canal Plus, said they wanted to sell the club as part of a plan to save their debt-laden parent company Vivendi Universal.

Under new coach Paul Le Guen -Other sides such as promoted - the title-winning Jacques Santini Ajaccio and Nice have more downquit to succeed axed Roger to-earth worries.

## Fans not too sure

looks to be dead and sources close to the club suggest that the Rivaldo signing may bring an end to the summer spending.

At the start of July Milan fans One of the best midfielders in the protested outside the Milanello world joined AC Milan on Saturday,

main transfer target. That deal now

regularly voiced his disappointment at the lack of first team opportunities.

The Daily Star

smallest budget (11.43 million

season without a coach as they are

standing by Rolland Courbis who

has been banned from soccer by

magistrates investigating a case of

alleged fraud involving transfers

when he was coaching Olympique

were demoted to the Third Division

on financial grounds before their

right to play in League One was

SONNY ANDERSON

restored on July 19, barely two

weeks before their first champion-

promoted club Le Havre while

Ajaccio will travel to Strasbourg who

are back with the elite after a year in

Guingamp, PSG will host AJ

Auxerre and Marseille will meet

Nantes in Lyon after they were

suspended from using their Stade

Velodrome for the first game of the

season following crowd trouble

during a game against Paris St

Lyon will open their campaign at

They will entertain another

ship game.

the Second Division.

Germain last season.

Nice, who also won promotion.

Marseille between 1997 and 1999.

They will also start the new

euros) of any of the top-flight clubs.

On the popular Milan message boards the fan's views are clear: "I don't want Rivaldo"

"Where on earth was Berlusconi when we needed him to make one of his magical phone calls for Nesta or Cannavaro!!"

"Rivaldo is a diva and we don't need him! He can't adapt to our team"

"If we can offer Rivaldo such a large contract, then why couldn't we match what Parma is paying Cannavaro?

Playing in front of unconvinced ans will not be new to

# Veron's nightmare

## Football

## **INTERNET**, Manchester

Juan Sebastian Veron has broken his silence on his first season with Manchester United and admitted it was nothing short of a disaster.

Veron suffered a double disappointment in the past campaign with United failing to win a trophy and pre-tournament favourites Argentina going out of the World Cup in the first stage.

By his own admission, it amounted to the worst season of the £28million midfielder's illustrious

But Veron has vowed to bounce

things right

you will get the result. "Class and hard work will always tell in the end

your heart with desire and expectancy and hope. "It hurts when you don't win something - and all the more so when you know that Manchester

United are one of the great clubs.

"The start of a new season fills

his years," said Veron.

him. He plays the game so easily

C.

"If you work hard and try to play the way you know you can, finally

"We all feel frustrated, not just



the fans, but the players as well, and we are setting out to win a big tro-

showing an improved budget. phy. Veron has hailed the arrival of £30m Rio Ferdinand from Leeds but to participate in the league last he will have to wait before linking up with the England centre-back for the

The two Serie A sides, six Serie B first time. clubs and 15 teams from Serie C Ferdinand will be missing when must all provide the documents and, United take on Valarengen in a preapart from troubled Fiorentina, all season friendly in Oslo tonight.

Veron is convinced Ferdinand will bring an end to the defensive failings which undermined United's

title bid last season and saw them lose six times at home. "Rio has class and ability beyond

you would think he is older and more

calm centre-backs for the team in

general, not just the defence.

"It is very important to have two

"We have that in Rio and Laurent

"The calmness and style of play

Rio can bring to the team is impor-

tant, and the fact that he is a ball-

playing centre-back can only benefit

United travel to Amsterdam tomor-

row for a mini-tournament where

After meeting Valarengen,

on 1 September. "We have presented all the Football seems to be a stroll for necessary papers," Lazio official

are confident their new budgets will be accepted when the FIGC meets on Friday. Rome clubs Lazio and Roma are

certain that they will be taking part in Serie A when the new season starts

Giancarlo Guerra told Reuters

round.

"Generally, I try to keep club and international football separate, so how I feel with Manchester United isn't affected in the slightest by what happened in the World Cup," he said

"However, you can't take away the fact that both things happened one after the other and that makes it a catastrophe.

"But the good thing about football is you always have a second chance to put things right and gain some revenue for the season just gone.

"That's what I intend to do." Veron was expected to take the Premiership by storm when he

arrived at Old Trafford last summer but admitted he found it hard to adapt to the different demands of English football.

His joining United served only to destabilise their formidable midfield unit and saw manager Sir Alex Ferguson's side finish outside the Premiership's top two for the first time since the league was created in 1992

Although Veron started last season brightly and seemed to justify United paying what was then a British record fee, he soon lost form and his progress was hampered by a persistent ankle injury.

"I would like a bit more consistency than I had last season," he admitted.

"I want to start the way I played for the first 10 games of last season and then keep it going for the whole season. Personally, I have to concentrate on working hard to put

Football

**REUTERS,** *Rio de Janeiro* 

Cup at the weekend

their semifinal

Brazilian international goalkeeper

Marcos was beaten for the first time

in 353 minutes' play, a run stretching

back to the World Cup guarterfinal

against England, as Palmeiras were

The man known as Saint

Marcos, who saved a penalty on his

return to domestic football last

weekend, let in two further goals

during the second half as Palmeiras

were beaten 3-1 by Paysandu in

last week's Champions Cup quar-

Marcos had gone through the

MARCH 2002: Misses five games with heel injury as Premiership title starts to fall away from United. APRIL 2002: Veron warns Sir Alex Ferguson that he will not put his chances of playing in the World Cup at risk ahead of Manchester United's push for the Premiership

MAY 2002: Rumours circulate of dressing- room bust-up leading to Veron walking out of the club. United move swiftly to quash the stories. Sparks controversy when he admits he prefers Sven Goran Eriksson's coaching methods to those of Ferguson. JUNE 2002: Substituted against England at half-time as Argentina are beaten by a David Beckham penalty. Fails to sparkle as Argentina crash out of the World Cup in

he group stages. JULY 2002: Called to appear in court in Rome to answer allegations of illegally acquiring an Italian passport while at Lazio.



## JUAN SEBASTIAN VERON

## FORGETTABLE 2002

they take on Parma of Italy and the host nation's Aiax. before travelling to Denmark for the final game of the tour against Aarhus. Ferguson has already admitted he is facing a selection dilemma in midfield this season, with Nicky Butt's outstanding display for England at the World Cup boosting his chances of regular first-team action.

Blanc

the entire side."

With no one ready to challenge David Beckham and Ryan Giggs in the wide roles, the centre of midfield is where Ferguson's major headache will prove to be. Skipper Roy Keane remains immovable in the heart of the United

midfield, but Ferguson must choose his regular partner from Veron, Butt and Paul Scholes, a dilemma which he appears no nearer to solving. "It can cause problems fitting

people in when you have six excellent players in midfield," said Ferguson

"But a full season gives you a feel of what's best for the team.

## **Scottish Premiership** in disarray

## Football

## **INTERNET**, Glasgow

Ten clubs are on the verge of quitting the 12-club Scottish Premier League after Rangers and Celtic rejected a new television deal at a stormy meeting in Edinburgh vesterday.

The dispute over television rights for the new season is now so acrimonious that unless Rangers and Celtic convince the rest of their desire to remain part of the overall group the others will serve notice of their intention to resign from the SPL on Thursday. Clubs must give two years' notice before leaving the league.

This time it seems there is little chance of reconciliation, with Scottish football about to be plunged into possibly its biggest crisis.

It had been hoped that yesterday's meeting of the 12 clubs would end the long row by agreeing to sign up to a two-year, £20m package offered by the BBC and that this would be rubber-stamped at tomorrow's EGM at Hampden Park.

But the Old Firm, who had missed last Friday's deadline to vote on the issue, stunned the rest by putting forward dozens of new objections, principally over money, with the big two looking for a bigger amount than the others are pre-

Liverpool and England midfielder

Steven Gerrard, who missed the

World Cup in South Korea and

Japan because of a groin strain, has

## **Gerrard scare**

own.

him, then we will bring in (Salif) Diao

Diao, 25, who helped Senegal reach the World Cup quarter-finals last month, has signed a five-year contract with Liverpool although his French club Sedan have yet to finalise financial arrangements for the transfer.

Gerrard, 22, whose early career "We will decide what to do after the scan," Liverpool manager has been bedevilled by injuries, is Gerard Houllier told the Daily Mail an automatic choice in England's midfield when he is fit. "I don't think it (the injury) is major

are a side worthy of the Scudetto.

Following the intervention of

Italian Prime Minister and Milan

owner Silvio Berlusconi, Rivaldo

signed a three-year deal with the

Italian side and told the media that

he was looking forward to playing in

Serie A. His new team-mates

extended a warm welcome, lead by

club captain Paolo Maldini, who

Football

on a free transfer.

The Italian press also welcomed the Brazilian, Milan-based sports paper La Gazzetta Dello Sport leading with: "Rivaldo, from the favelas to the top of the World".

However, not everyone is delighted with the deal. On radio phone-ins and internet message boards Milan fans have reacted coolly to the deal, with many sup-

porters registering their disgust with the club. During a summer that has seen further strengthening of the club's

already impressive midfield, most fans expected the club to seal a swoop for an international defender. with Parma's Fabio Cannavaro hotly-tipped by the press as Milan's

voted in favour of the television deal on the table: beyond that there isn't Best to undergo much to say. Hopefully Rangers and Celtic will come forward but they liver transplant have not voted against it as far as I understand. They just haven't AFP, London

> Football legend George Best is set to undergo a liver transplant, according to Sky News on Tuesday.

The former Manchester United and Northern Ireland star, who has a history of alcoholism, has been waiting for a suitable donor for several months

signal the end of Scottish football in Best, 56, won the European Cup with United in 1968 and played 37 result in the 10 others giving in their times for Northern Ireland before notice before the start of the season hanging up his boots prematurely aged 26. on Saturday, which would leave them serving the statutory two years

## **Brescia booters** hurt in car crash

## **INTERNET**, Milan

behind the scenes that the other Brescia's goalkeeper Matteo Sereni and forward Ighli Tare were wounded in a car crash late yesterday morning. manship by Scotland's two biggest In an official press release, the Italian side said that Sereni had been adimitted to hospital due to a hip sprain, while Ighli Tare, who suffered slight cranial trauma and a bruise to his wrist has been discharged by

Brescia's emergency room. According to the reconstruction done by the police, it appears that for unknown reasons, the car Tare was driving suddenly crashed into a wall. Brescia's players were free from engagement with the team because only yesterday evening they had a meeting for the second phase of

summer training. Sereni will surely lose a few weeks and he won't be able to proberly start the Italian championship on September the 1st, due to a 40 dayprognosis.

This accident has brought back memories of the one that occurred involving Brescia player Vittorio Mero, who died last January due in a car crash



**RIVALDO** 

training ground, angry at the man-

agement's failure to sign a big name

defender. The decision to take two

players from city rivals

Internazionale also upset many

lifelong fans. Signing Rivaldo has

done little to appease the support-

ers, with many asking what the

future holds for Italian under-21

captain Andrea Pirlo, who has

though. The 30-year-old attacker has endured a stormy relationship with the Barcelona fans and before the World Cup he was routinely jeered when playing for Brazil. After some particularly vehement abuse during an international in 2000, he said: 'I'm going to rethink my future in the national team. I've always been a guy who tries hard, who gives his best and this is not being recognised."

After victory at the World Cup finals, Brazilian fans are learning to love Rivaldo. Whether he can win over the passionate tifosi of Milan remains to be seen.

# Gazza uncertain?

## Football

AFP, Washington

Paul Gascoigne conducted his final workout with D.C. United and plans to return home to England on Thursday with no firm decision on whether or not the English football legend will join Major League Soccer

United coach Ray Hudson told the Washington Post that he hoped to have a final decision by next Monday on Gascoigne's future with the United States club.

Hudson hoped to have the 35year-old former English international join the team for Wednesday's match at Chicago.

Gascoigne, known for his skills and off-field controversy, said he plans to return to England Thursday because of pressing personal business and to talk with his agent about the US offer and several others he has received worldwide.

"I'm enjoying my time but there's no rush decision to be made by either the club or myself and my agent," Gascoigne said.

> "I've got time to sort a couple of things out, and if everything goes well with my agent and obviously the club, and they're happy, then I reckon coming here until the end of the season and we'll see what

happens until then." Hudson told the Post the decision had become far more difficult that he had anticipated.

"We want to make this a thor-



### PAUL GASCOIGNE

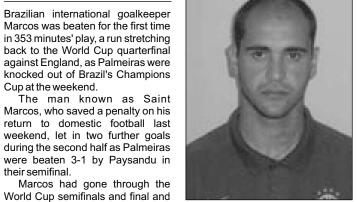
oughly investigated situation." Hudson said. "He has proven a lot to us. ... Are there a few remaining question marks, however big? Yeah, there are, and this is why we would like him to perhaps stay around a little longer so we can

thoroughly get past them." Were Gascoigne going to stay here through the weekend, he would have a chance to meet with

league officials here for Saturday's Major League Soccer All-Star Game The match pits a US World Cup

team lacking European-based players against a largely noninternational US squad of MLS stars

Players sign contracts with the US league and are assigned to clubs under a unique corporate format aimed at containing league costs in a nation that has never taken the sport to its heart despite decades of efforts.



MARCOS

ter-final against Fluminense without conceding a goal His resistance was finally broken

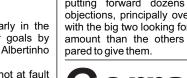
The goalkeeper was not at fault for the first or third goal but was slow coming off his line for the second. Palmeiras, led by former Brazil coach Vanderlei Luxemburgo, had taken an early lead through midfielder Nene in a bright start.

The Champions Cup, the latest in the plethora of Brazilian club competitions, is a 16-team tournament featuring the top teams from the regional championships held in the first half of the year.

been sent for a scan on a thigh Paysandu face Cruzeiro in the injury two-leg final and the winners claim a place in next year's South American Libertadores Cup.

Marcos beaten at last by a Vandick header early in the second half and further goals by substitutes Trinidade and Albertinho sealed Palmeiras' fate.

pared to give them.



Football

**REUTERS.** London

newspaper.



but we will wait and see. If it

becomes a recurring problem with

earlier.