



Manchester United defender Rio Ferdinand is assisted off the pitch after suffering an injury during the friendly match against Boca Juniors at Old Trafford on August 10.

# Rio woes for MU

Football  
INTERNET, Manchester

Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson was dealt a huge pre-season blow last night with the news that record signing Rio Ferdinand could be set for a lengthy injury lay-off. The England defender went over on his ankle in the first half of yesterday's pre-season friendly against Boca Juniors to leave the Old Trafford manager looking nervously towards the start of his campaign.

Ferdinand was led from the pitch just 28 minutes into his home debut for the club, and his manager last night admitted that he will miss the

club's Champions League qualifier on Wednesday against Hungarian champions Zalaegerszeg and probably the start of the domestic season.

Ferdinand hurdled over the body of goalkeeper Roy Carroll and appeared to make contact with Boca Juniors striker Marcelo Delgado before landing awkwardly on his ankle. He was immediately replaced by John O'Shea and it is expected he will have a scan later today.

Should Ferdinand's injury be no more than a badly sprained ankle, he is likely to be back within a couple of weeks. But if ligament damage is revealed, the England defender could be out for anything up to six weeks.

"It was disappointing for Rio,

particularly on his home debut," said Ferguson. "Unfortunately for us it doesn't look as though he will make the game on Wednesday. We will try everything we can for next Saturday, but nothing is certain at this stage."

United won yesterday's clash with two first-half strikes from Ruud Van Nistelrooy, but the game was soured in the second half as Boca's players got involved in a series of nasty challenges with United midfielders Nicky Butt and Paul Scholes.

Boca striker Carlos Tevez was shown a red card for an elbow on Scholes, although the England midfielder was lucky to stay on the pitch after a number of nasty challenges.

# Scolari's ode to England!

Football  
INTERNET, Manchester

Manchester United's record breaking defender Rio Ferdinand has been praised as the world's best defender by the outgoing Brazil coach, Luiz Felipe Scolari, who believes the England defender still has the capacity to improve by 30 per cent.

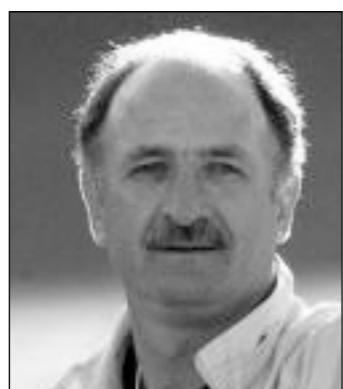
Scolari, who announced on Friday that he is to quit the Brazil job and take a few months out of the game before seeking work in Europe, said he believed that England can become as powerful under Sven-Göran Eriksson as they were between 1966 and 1970.

He said England were closer to knocking Brazil out of the World Cup than they realised. Scolari said: "At first I was shocked that Rio Ferdinand had broken every transfer record for a defender and I asked myself whether money grew on trees in England. But when I had reflected a bit more I realised that he is worth every penny."

"In Brazil we like to say that you can't buy caviar at the corner shop. So if you want quality you need to pay top dollar and if Manchester United buying the very best quality

means spending £30 million then Rio is worth it."

"Sir Alex Ferguson must take credit for realising just how much a defender like Ferdinand can influence a team. He is so elegant on the ball but also outstanding in the air and with brilliant football instincts. His innate sense of position is as good as I've seen since Franco Baresi."



LUIZ FELIPE SCOLARI

"I watched hours of him on tape before we played England and, personally, I rate him as important to them as Beckham or Owen. Yet I still believe that Rio has only reached about 70 per cent of his potential."

Scolari says that he had to make

a drastic adjustment of tactics against Eriksson's side in the World Cup quarter-final, and also called on the depths of his team's resilience in the dressing room at half-time in order to triumph.

"England proved that they now belong in the A-list of football nations," he said. "In fact I just hope with their talent and with Sven at the helm it will not mean that England are developing into another juggernaut like the great sides of 1966 and 1970."

"I understand that some in Europe like to pick flaws in their game but we don't view it that way. We look at pure talent and we appreciate that; we don't try to find flaws at all costs in players like David Beckham and Michael Owen."

"The England of old, which is all about hoofing the ball in the air, overpowering your opponents physically and showing no style whatsoever, is finally dead."

"I liked the way Eriksson has taught his players to defend - it was a zonal system but, at the right time, it would switch to a man-marking scheme. And when they won the ball back they played it out from defence very effectively, absorbing the pressure and giving the midfielders and strikers time to make runs."

# Keane was that close

AFP, London

Controversial midfielder Roy Keane revealed on Sunday that he almost quit playing for Manchester United after the 4-3 English Premiership defeat at Newcastle last season.

Keane was sent off after a tussle with former England striker Alan Shearer in the St James' Park clash in September and later that night he said he decided to take action.

The former Republic of Ireland captain, now in the international wilderness following his bust-up with national team boss Mick McCarthy at the World Cup, said: "I went to bed but never slept a wink."

"Some time during the night I decided 'give it up Roy'. You've turned 30 - get out, get away, do something else."

"You've got to stop hurting yourself, hurting those you love."

In his autobiography, which is being serialised in the News of the World, he continued: "I talked to my wife."

"She argued I would miss it. I said I wouldn't. Anything would be better than this madness, getting angry and frustrated, lashing out."

"I felt I'd lost the argument that some players were in the comfort zone. Too many people were content with what they had. It wasn't for me. I should go."

"Next morning I was waiting for (manager) Alex Ferguson at the training ground at 8am. I told him I wanted to pack it in. He said it was a knee-jerk reaction."

Keane revealed the duo talked for a long time and he told Ferguson he would not play in the next game - the Champions League clash with Lille - but a walk with his dog changed his mind.

"On the Sunday I walked Triggs a long way, running the options through my head. Another club, somewhere sunny. At least I could be miserable in a warm climate," he said.

"I love my football, really loved it - but could I play for another club? My heart was in Manchester United."

"And if I couldn't play with my heart I couldn't play. My mind was settled. I felt calm - a big weight off my shoulders."

Ferguson visited his house and spoke to Keane and his wife Theresa about the future.

The Irishman added: "He sat down and said 'you've been taking too much onboard regarding results and bad performances - you'd be mad to leave football. If you walk away now while you're young you'll regret it for the rest of your life'."

Theresa backed him up. "I thought about it and talked it through with her. I decided to play against Lille."

"Ferguson had stood by me and quitting would be a slap in the face for him - the last thing he needed when the club was struggling. I carried on for him."

"I've got another four years in me - I'm sure of that now."

# Scottish Premiership Celtic on a roll

REUTERS, Glasgow

Celtic have assumed an early lead of the Scottish Premier League as the defending champions crushed Aberdeen 4-0 at Parkhead.

The result - achieved with goals from Johan Mjallby, Chris Sutton, Mohammed Sylla and Paul Lambert - earned Martin O'Neill's side their second wins in their opening two games.

Rangers were leading Dundee 1-0 after the kickoff had been delayed for 45 minutes because of technical problems with the turnstiles at Ibrox.

Livingston lost 2-1 at Dunfermline Athletic, while Kilmarnock beat Dundee United 2-1 at Tannadice and Motherwell drew 1-1 at home to Patrick Thistle.

# Wenger said no to France!

AFP, London

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger revealed on Saturday that he turned down the opportunity to become France national team boss a month ago because of his desire to chase Premiership and Champions League glory with the London giants.

French Football Federation president Claude Simonet approached the Gunners boss after the disastrous defence of the World Cup by Les Bleus.

Roger Lemerre's side, favourites to repeat their 1998 success, failed to make it past the first round of the tournament in Japan and South Korea and Lemerre was eventually sacked.

Simonet wasted no time in contacting Wenger, but he was met with a curt "no" from Wenger, whose Arsenal side face Liverpool in Sunday's Community Shield in Cardiff.

The national team vacancy was eventually filled by Jacques Santini, a master tactician who took Lyon to their first ever league title last season.

"Yes - the president of the FFF came out and said he was offering me the job, but I refused," said Wenger who was working at the World Cup as a TV commentator. "I was in touch with him when I was in Japan, after what happened (with France). However, I never considered taking the job."

# Ronaldo has to wait

Football  
REUTERS, Madrid

Ronaldo will not resume training with the main Inter Milan squad until his situation at the club is resolved, coach Hector Cuper has said.

The Ronaldo saga, which began when the player's agent Alexandre Martins recently began talks with Real Madrid over a possible transfer, appeared to have reached a conclusion earlier this week.

Martins told reporters that Ronaldo had decided to stay in Italy and see out the remaining four years of his contract and Real Madrid announced they had definitively ruled out making a bid.

That has not stopped Spanish newspapers speculating about the future of the Brazilian, though, and Cuper revealed on Sunday that the outlook is still far from clear.

"I don't know if he's going to stay," Cuper told Spanish radio station Cadena Ser. "I understand he and the club are talking, to see if there's a possibility of him going to another club, to Real Madrid or somewhere else."

"I imagine that if there is a possibility (of him leaving) there will be negotiations."

Cuper insists there is nothing unusual about Ronaldo working separately on his fitness after arriving back late from his holidays but the Argentine coach is clearly anxious for the situation to get back to normal.

"The training is not an issue," Cuper said. "He arrived back later than everyone else and he'll need a few days of preparation."

"I'd like to get this sorted out now

but it's not the sort of thing that's resolved from one day to the next."

"What's clear is that this will have to be resolved before Ronaldo

rejoins the squad."

Yesterday, Ronaldo along with Inter's Turkish internationals Emre and Okan worked separately with



Inter Milan superstar Ronaldo shields the patch of hair on his forehead from rain during a training session at Pinetina yesterday.

trainer Gaudino at Pinetina. Half an hour of running was followed by a series of aerobic strengthening exercises. Here are the photos.

Cuper said he thought any player who was not happy at the club should leave but he was adamant that was not the case with Ronaldo, who put years of injury problems behind him to lead Brazil to World Cup glory in June.

"I've never seen anything to suggest that Ronaldo is not happy here," Cuper said. "Quite the reverse."

"What I have seen is that people here have achieved the impossible, doing some things right and making some mistakes, obviously, to get Ronaldo back playing after three years of injuries."

"The fact is he has got back playing. That success is down to him but a lot of people here have worked as well."

He added: "I've always thought that a player should stay at a club only if he's happy."

"Whenever a club is without an important player something is lost. I'm not sure if you could recover what you've lost with another player because there are very few players in the world like Ronaldo."

"I want Ronaldo to stay. The team has been built around him and he's a very important player for this club."

Meanwhile, Ronaldo snubbed an Inter Milan photo call, Gazzetta dello Sport newspaper reported on Saturday.

Ronaldo said he did not want to pose for a photo in Inter strip adding he had not been told about it in advance. He also trained apart from the main squad on Friday.

# French League One Samba-powered Nantes

Football  
AFP, Paris

French league newcomers Nice justified their hard-fought entry to the top flight with a 4-0 romp over fellow promoted side Strasbourg on Saturday.

However it was Lyon, winners of their first ever league title last season, who set the standard for the rest of the increased 20-team league with a 6-1 rout of Sedan on the second day of league action.

Free-scoring Lyon now sit second behind league leaders Nantes, who beat Bastia 1-0 to be the only team to have won both of their league games so far.

Ardennes outfit Sedan looked tasty from the outset but by the end were left wincing after Lyon's Samba machine moved into action.

However, it was Sedan forward Henri Camara who struck the opener, in the eighth minute, after a deep pass helped him rush by the hosts' defence.

Lyon looked at times to be all over the place but a minute before half time Brazilian Juninho picked up a rebound from the crossbar, following a shot from the talented Sidney Govou, to fire home and equalise.

Seconds later Govou became a more direct provider when he crossed for another Brazilian Cacapa who headed home to take the advantage.

After the interval Lyon looked more relaxed on the ball, with Juninho coming close to claiming his second on 54 minutes before ex-Barcelona striker Sonny Anderson, their longest-serving Brazilian, scored from close range to make it 3-1.

Nine minutes later Juninho pulled a magic freekick out of the hat to put the result beyond doubt. Anderson was not finished,

however, picking up a low cross from Vikash Dhorasoo to claim his second of the match.

The flashy Brazilian then provided for France under-21 starlet Peggyu Luyindula, who had come on late as a substitute, in the dying seconds to make it 6-1.

Nice, meanwhile, were rejoicing after their convincing home win, following last week's 2-1 defeat at home to Le Havre, that solidified their 'raison d'etre' in the top flight.

Nice, who won promotion last season, were demoted by league officials who said their finances would not stand up to the pressure.

After a much publicised appeal

which involved fans turning up at the ground for days on end, the team were finally allowed to take their place among the French elite.

On Saturday the Riviera outfit played as a team on a mission, although it was one player, Kaba Diawara, who grabbed a memorable hat-trick, to become the league's top scorer with four, before captain Jose Cobos claimed the fourth in injury time.

Nice coach Gernot Rohr reshuffled the team formation after last week's defeat and mastered Strasbourg who had only one forward in attack.

Diawara opened the scoring

from close range in the 12th minute and the on-loan PSG striker added a second after some fine passing seven minutes before the break.

Strasbourg doubled their attacking options in the second half but it took only eight minutes of play before Diawara claimed his hat-trick.

Nice pressed on and after a freekick was awarded near the end, Cobos got on the end of a Dominique Aulanier freekick to header home.

Elsewhere, Lens were held 1-1 at home by Sochaux while Marseille left Monaco with a valuable 1-0 win.

# Bundesliga Bochum rule round one

Football  
AFP, Berlin

Bundesliga new boys VfL Bochum were popping the champagne corks as their 3-1 away win over Nuremberg on the first full league day of the new German season put them on top of table.

Bochum were one of only two teams to take full points, the other being Schalke 04, on a day when some of the supposed giants of German football faltered.

The man of the match for the new league leaders was Thomas Christiansen, a Dane who now holds a Spanish passport.

Christiansen opened his account after only six minutes after pouncing on a fumble by Nuremberg keeper Darius Kampa.

He then doubled the score in the 20th minute for the visitors who went on to miss a spate of chances to increase their lead.

Nuremberg came back into the match through Macedonian Sasa Ciric whose header from a freekick flew home six minutes after the interval.

However, Iranian international Vahid Hashemian then put the result beyond doubt when he fired home with seven minutes left to

play.

Bayer Leverkusen, the runners-up last season, had a rude return to the league as little eastern outfit Energie Cottbus held Klaus Toppmoller's side to a 1-1 draw.

Czech international Jan Simak opened the scoring for Leverkusen on his debut in the 64th minute but his effort was cancelled out by Hungarian international Vilmos Sebok who scored in the 79th minute.

Bayern Munich's domestic ambitions were dealt a similar blow as they were held to a scoreless draw at Borussia Monchengladbach.

Schalke 04, another title contender - although their last league title was in 1958 - were the only other team from the day's six matches to claim three points.

Sven Vermant gave new coach Frank Neubarth a dream start when he came up with a goal a minute from time to snatch a 1-0 win over visitors VfL Wolfsburg. Schalke now sit second behind Bochum who are top on goals difference.

After Friday's 2-2 draw between league champions Borussia Dortmund and Hertha Berlin in front of 67,000 fans, Bochum could realistically still be league leaders come Sunday night after two of the week's remaining three fixtures are played.

On Friday Dortmund went down to a goal after just 52 seconds as Belgian international Bart Goor jumped on a defensive blunder to fire past Dortmund keeper Jens Lehmann.

But the hosts got back on track just three minutes later when Torsten Frings beat Hungary keeper Gabor Kiraly to equalise.

Dortmund then pulled ahead through Brazilian Ewerthon, who picked up a loose ball after it had pinged off Kiraly's posts to fire home in the 36th minute.

However just five minutes from the end Dortmund were dealt a blow when Hertha Berlin - the recent winners of the German League Cup - equalised when Brazilian Marcelinho crossed to Andreas Neundorfer who fired home.

It was the first time, after nine consecutive defeats at the Westfalenstadion, that Berlin had managed to take a point away from Dortmund.

On Sunday Hamburg play host to league newcomers Hanover, and fellow newcomers Bielefeld play host to Werder Bremen.

The week's only remaining fixture - 1860 Munich v Hansa Rostock - will be played on Wednesday as Munich's stadium is currently hosting the European athletics Championships.

# Adams calls it quits

Football  
AFP, London

Arsenal's veteran defender Tony Adams has ended speculation about his future by confirming his retirement from all football.

Adams had been described by Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger earlier this month as 'no longer a player' with the club, but had not yet formally announced his decision to hang up his boots permanently.

But in an extensive interview with The Observer newspaper on Sunday, the 35-year-old former England international said he was ending his playing career in favour of a return to education.

I am the person I am today because of football and I am grateful for that. But it has come as a mental, emotional and physical cost. It's time for a rest," Adams told the paper.

The centre-half said he is begin a three-year course in sports science in September, but did not rule out a return to football in some capacity. "I wasn't ready for school as a

kid. I only wanted to play football. Now I feel ready for education. After all the years of the physical stuff, I wanted something to stimulate me mentally," Adams said.

"It's 18 hours a week with a couple of lectures, a lot of course work and two exams a year. The first year is compulsory, basically shut up and listen."

"In the second and third you specialise more. I'll probably be tapping on David Beckham's shoulder and asking to study how he

bends his free-kicks."

Adams said he may eventually get back into football as a manager but admitted it was unlikely he would work his way up from the bottom. He received offers from five clubs in the lower leagues this summer.

"I'm tired of learning the hard way. I learned football and life through hard knocks. I think a bit of preparation might go a long way this time," he said.

Adams also confirms that he finally accepted his playing career was over due to continued problems with injuries, passing up another year with the Gunners or a stint in America.

"I have degeneration in the bones which needs work," he explains. "Arsenal were talking about a guy in America who drills into the area to stimulate bone growth, which sounds a bit horrific."

"I've a bit of a life left and want to walk in a few years' time. Enough was enough. Even if I had the op and it had worked, I wouldn't have been back before Christmas. The body's packed up on me really."



TONY ADAMS

# Karpin returns to Sociedad

REUTERS, San Sebastian, Spain

Russian international midfielder Valery Karpin has rejoined Real Sociedad on a one-year contract, the Spanish First Division club said on Sunday.

Karpin had his first spell at Real Sociedad from 1994 to 1996 when he first moved to Spain from Spartak Moscow.

He then had one season at Valencia before moving to Celta Vigo where he emerged as one of the most effective attacking midfielders in the country.

His move back to Real Sociedad is on a free transfer after he reached the end of his contract at Celta in June.

"It's like moving back home," said the 33-year-old Karpin. "I've always been treated well by the fans when I've returned here and I'll now be trying to give something back."