

Cuper leaves Ronaldo out



AFP/INTERNET, Milan

Inter Milan coach Hector Cuper omitted unsettled Brazilian superstar Ronaldo from the 19-man squad to face Portuguese side Sporting Lisbon in their Champions League qualifying second leg match at Milan's San Siro Stadium on Tuesday.

Cuper opted for Christian Vieri and Uruguayan international Alvaro Recoba as his main forwardmen with new addition 26-year-old former Chievo striker Bernardo Corradi as cover.

Cuper decided not to give any straight answers regarding Ronaldo although he suggested that the decision was taken in view of the striker's present mental state during

a press conference on the eve of the match conference at the team's Appiano Gentile training ground.

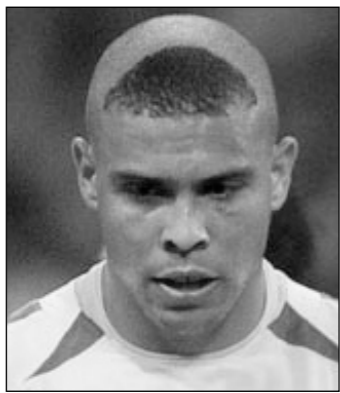
When asked whether the difficulties regarding Ronaldo were psy-

chological Cuper replied: "If a player has any doubts, the squad should help him. Certainty if someone is not feeling well, he will not play. But a coach can never have certainty how a player is psychologically. If you ask anyone how are you, they will always reply, great thanks."

Cuper was tight-lipped on the future of Ronaldo.

"We're not talking about Ronaldo, we're not going to answer any question concerning him, that doesn't interest us at the moment," the Argentine said curtly when questioned about the breakdown of transfer talks with European champions Real Madrid.

"Champions League qualification is the most important thing for us and tomorrow (Tuesday), it will be a very tricky match," said Cuper. Inter drew 0-0 in the first leg.



RONALDO

Barca not too confident



REUTERS, Barcelona

Barcelona's hopes of signing Chelsea striker Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink are looking increasingly slim, club president Joan Gaspart said.

"I can't deny that we have been talking with Hasselbaink, but the chances of him coming to Barcelona are now remote," Gaspart told Radio Barcelona.

But the Barca president admitted that the Catalan club was still interested in signing a striker with similar characteristics.

"We haven't hidden the fact that for the last two months we have been looking for a centre-forward," he said.

"We aren't obsessed about it, but (coach Louis) van Gaal has said he would like to sign a new attacker if one is available at the right price."

Hasselbaink admitted last week that a move to Barcelona would be the chance of a lifetime.

"Of course, if a club like that comes to me you're going to be flattered and you're always going to listen to the offer," he told Sky TV.

But Chelsea manager Claudio

Ranieri told Chelsea TV on Monday that the Dutchman would be remaining at Stamford Bridge.

"There are many rumours but he is staying at Chelsea," Ranieri said.

Ranieri played down the speculation, which also suggested defender Michael Reiziger was to head in the opposite direction as part-exchange.

"The truth is that I am interested in Hasselbaink and I don't know anything about Reiziger. Hasselbaink is staying."

The 30-year-old international, formerly with Leeds United, moved to Chelsea for a then British record equalling fee of dollars22 million from Atletico Madrid in June 2000.

He was top scorer in the Premier League in his first season at the London club, becoming the first player at Chelsea to bag over 20 goals since Kerry Dixon a decade earlier.

Hasselbaink led the scoring charts at Chelsea again last season, netting 23 league goals.



JIMMY FLOYD HASSELBAINK

Truth or bare?



AFP, Sydney

An official of the Australian women's Olympic soccer team disputed Tuesday a claim in parliament that players had been duped or pressured into baring their breasts for a television commercial.

Eleven of the 22-strong squad, known as the Matildas, were paid about 10,000 dollars (5,400 US) between them for appearing in the commercial clad only in flesh-coloured G-strings in the lead-up to the 2000 Olympics.

Opposition Labor sports spokeswoman Kate Lundy called in Federal Parliament late Monday for a police investigation into possible criminal activity surrounding women's football.

She claimed the Matildas were pressured into appearing topless in the ad and told the Senate that hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Australian Women's Soccer Association (AWSA) had disappeared.

Her claim followed an announcement by the government earlier this month of an inquiry into all aspects of Australian soccer.

The AWSA was wound up in the Supreme Court in Canberra earlier this month owing 70,000 dollars to its lawyers.

Parliament was told the association received Sports Commission (ASC) funding of 1.15 million dollars in 1999-2000 and 710,000 dollars for Olympic preparation, plus 100,000 dollars from a toothpaste advertisement and money raised by the Matildas' calendar in which they also appeared topless.

The commercial was shot following widespread publicity over their decision to pose almost naked for the calendar.

Lundy said some members of the team "were duped, were tricked into appearing in the ad."

"I'm certainly no wowser but it's not fair that our female athletes have to participate in this kind of activity for the good of their sport."

However, the former vice presi-

dent of the AWSA Maria Berry said players agreed to the commercial to earn some much-needed money before the Olympics.

"It was put to players that it was an opportunity for them to earn some money and it was an opportunity also for the sport to help supplement the government funds that

were available and to enhance the program," she told ABC radio.

"The advertisement was scripted and it was a little bit of a play on the calendar, but it was something that was very much voluntary for those players that wanted to participate."

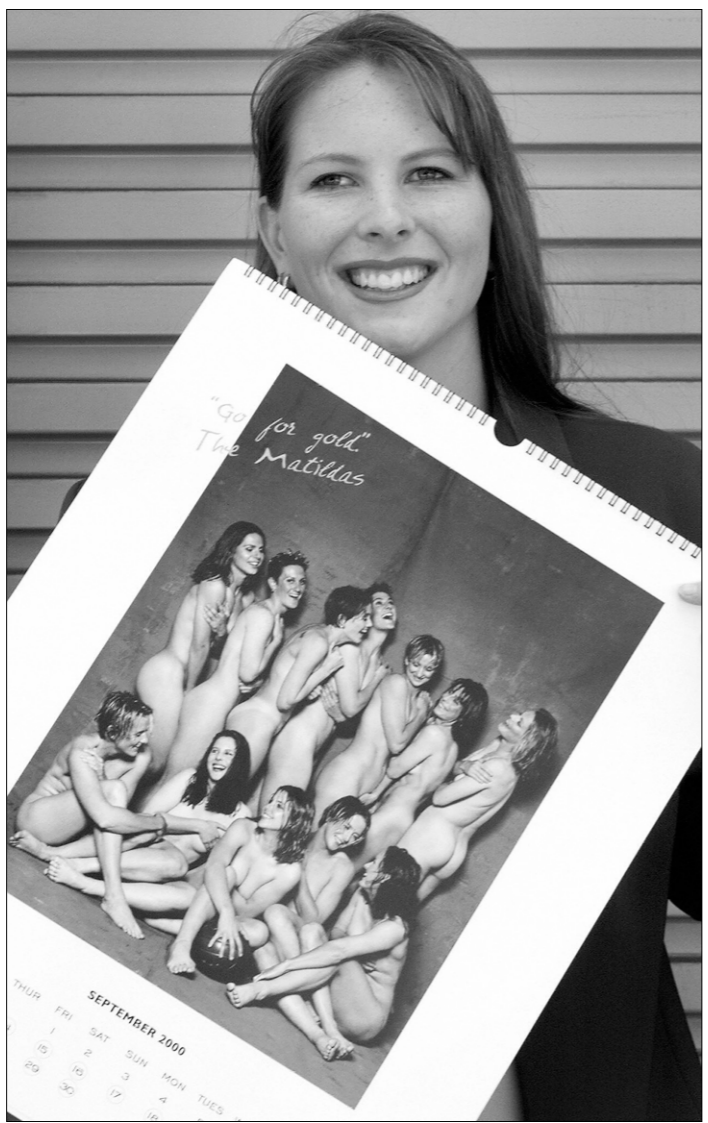


PHOTO: AFP

This photograph taken 30 November 1999 showing Alicia Ferguson of the Australia's women's soccer team, the Matildas with a nude photograph of herself and teammates which is part of a calendar produced to promote women's soccer in Australia.

Bayern's gesture

AFP, Munich

Bayern Munich will donate the ticket receipts from their Champions League match against Partizan Belgrade to victims of the severe floods in Germany, the club's general manager Uli Hoeness said on Monday.

He called on spectators to attend Tuesday's second-leg match at the Olympic Stadium to support the cause, despite the fact Bayern are leading 3-0 from the first leg.

"All of the ticket receipts, which should be at least 200,000 euros (190,000 dollars), will go to help victims of the flooding," said Hoeness.

Seol soaring high



AFP, Brussels

South Korean striker Seol Ki-Hyeon had an unforgettable World Cup and has transferred his form to Belgium where he is the top scorer in the league so far this season.

"I'm finally getting respect in Belgium after a difficult season adapting with Anderlecht," said the 23-year-old, who scored ten times in 25 matches in Belgium last season.

"I think my performances at the World Cup have given me credit among my team-mates."



SEOL KI-HYEON

Echoing the formidable team ethic that took Guus Hiddink's Korean team to the semi-finals of the World Cup, Seol said his individual achievements were secondary to Anderlecht's success - the team top the Belgian league.

"It's my job to score goals because I'm a striker, but the important thing is that the team wins," he said.

"During the World Cup, Guus Hiddink always used to say that everything was possible if we worked hard and played as a team rather than as individuals."

"I'm going to apply the same principle to Anderlecht this season."

The euphoria generated at home by the unexpected success of the World Cup co-hosts meant life has changed fast for the player who began his career in Europe with

Antwerp. "It has become madness in Korea," he said. "When I went home after the World Cup a huge crowd was waiting for me."

"At night some fans even camped outside my house. And everything is free for me now in my country. Everywhere I go, no-one will let me pay," he said.

"A stranger even paid a large sum of money into my mother's bank account in thanks for my performances in the World Cup. That scared me, I'm not a hero."

Yet Seol is a hero to millions of Koreans and to the marketing men at Anderlecht, a club with a proud history whose renown is now crossing borders thanks to Seol's performances.

The club's website www.rscb.be attracts 20,000 hits a day, half of them from South Korea.

"After every match in Belgium I get dozens of phone calls from Korea, often from journalists," he said.

Seol's volley set South Korea on the road to the famous golden goal victory which sent Italy crashing out of the tournament.

"My teammate Walter Basaggio (an Belgian international of Italian parentage) is constantly asking me why I scored against Italy," said Seol, grinning.

Despite offers from Turkish giants Galatasaray, Seol has pledged his immediate future to Anderlecht.

"I don't want to get rich from the World Cup. I want to succeed at Anderlecht," said Seol.

"It makes no sense from me to quit Anderlecht and start from zero somewhere else."

"Even if I didn't play much last year, I learned a lot and I want to make the most of that now."

Seol's international teammate Song Chong-Gug this month finalised a transfer to Dutch side Feyenoord, becoming the third South Korean World Cup star to move to Europe since the finals.

Cha Du-Ri, 22, is playing in Germany after signing a five-year deal with Bayer Leverkusen and Lee Eul-Yong moved from his South Korean team Bucheon to the Turkish side Trabzonspor last month.

The pin-up of Korean football, Ahn Jung-Hwan, is still negotiating a move from Italian Serie A club Perugia.

Galatasaray eyeing Litmanen



AFP, London

Liverpool have given Turkish side Galatasaray permission to talk to unhappy Finnish striker Jari Litmanen, the Press Association reported on Tuesday.

The former Barcelona player has admitted he is "miserable" at Anfield after almost disappearing from view in the last 12 months, despite the departure of Robbie Fowler to Leeds.

He moved from Spain two years ago and after some impressive performances in his debut season, which installed him as a Kop favourite, Litmanen has fallen out of favour with Liverpool manager Gerard Houllier.

"Every player wants to be in the team and I am no different. It makes you miserable when you don't get picked," Litmanen said in the build-up to Finland's friendly international against Ireland.

Gerard Houllier has never told me I am not part of his plans so I will just continue to train hard and make sure I am ready to take my chance if it comes."

Following seven successful years with Ajax, during which time he scored 91 goals in 159 appearances, Litmanen failed to make his mark at Barcelona.

Litmanen made just 21 appearances for the Catalans before completing a switch to Anfield.

But he again found his first-team chances limited as Houllier stuck by his preferred pairing of Emile Heskey and Michael Owen up front.

Savio loaned to Bordeaux



REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid forward Savio Bortolini has signed a season-long loan deal with French First Division club Girondins Bordeaux, the Spanish club said on Tuesday.

Real said Bordeaux had an option to buy the Brazilian when the deal expires at the end of June next year.

The versatile 28-year-old, who joined Real from Flamengo in 1997, can play on the left wing or up front.

He made a promising start at the Bernabeu, but has faded out of the reckoning in recent seasons, making just eight league appearances last term, all as a substitute.

"I now have the chance of playing with one of the biggest teams in France," Savio told reporters as he bid farewell to his team mates at Real. "My desire to get regular games is what persuaded me to make the move."

Savio will team up with the prolific Portuguese striker Pedro Pauleta at his new club who lie sixth in the French First Division standings after four games of the season.

Barthez back in training



AFP, London

Goalkeeper Fabien Barthez has resumed light training for Manchester United but manager Alex Ferguson is reluctant to rush back the French international.

Barthez suffered a hip injury in the pre-season friendly defeat by Ajax at the beginning of the month.

"Fabien's injury is in a delicate area for a goalkeeper and we have to make sure he doesn't re-injure himself," Ferguson told the Press Association on Monday.

"The fluid he had has gone now,

which is important, so if that situation continues he can really get into his goalkeeping training, which in turn will give us a better idea of how long he will be out.

"At the moment he is just doing very small amounts of goalkeeping training. He is doing all the physical things and there is no problem with him kicking the ball. It's just when he has to start diving where we have to be careful."

Northern Ireland international Roy Carroll has so far proved an able deputy, but with only untested 19-year-old Ben Williams in reserve, Ferguson said he was considering looking for extra cover. "We are assessing the situation but it's possible we will bring someone in on loan," he added.

Collina delicacy!



AFP, Tokyo

Pierluigi Collina, considered one of the world's best football referees, has sealed a deal to endorse another type of ball on Japanese television two months after blowing the whistle at the World Cup final in Japan.

The 42-year-old Italian, instantly recognisable with his shaven head and bulging eyes, started appearing in a commercial at the weekend to pitch "takoyaki," a popular round-shaped Japanese snack featuring bits of octopus.

"Mr. Collina's searching look during the match is indeed what a company requires in looking after product quality," Hatchando Co., a major takoyaki confectionery, said in a press release.

"His tenderness and warmth after the match is akin to a sense of hotness and security which is inherent in takoyaki," it added.

The commercial, shot in Italy in mid-August, will be aired on the southern main island of Kyushu, where the 25-year-old company is based, until next March when it is spread to Tokyo and its vicinity.

In one scene, Collina, a financial consultant, is seen presenting a plate of takoyaki balls, cooked in wheat-flour batter, with an ear-to-ear smile.

It was not made known how much he has been paid for the endorsement.

Before the World Cup showdown, in which Brazil beat Germany, Collina officiated at England's first-phase win over Argentina and Turkey's second-round victory over co-hosts Japan.



PHOTO: AFP

World famous Italian referee Pierluigi Collina holding a dish of "takoyaki", a popular round-shaped Japanese snack featuring bits of octopus. A television commercial for the takoyaki snack with Collina, produced by Hatchando, a major "takoyaki" confectionery based in Fukuoka in western Japan, is now airing in Japan.

A Libyan dream



REUTERS, Tripoli

Libya's hosting of the Italian Supercup, won by Juventus on Sunday, is the start of a push to transform the previously isolated country into a major player in African and international soccer.

But a Libyan soccer official, who did not want to be named, has said that his country still lacked a real professional championship and domestic clubs needed fresh investment.

Libya, not known for prowess in the sport, has been trying to boost its profile since Al-Saadi Gaddafi, son of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, took over as president of the country's soccer federation.

Al-Saadi, who has played for the Libyan national team and still plays in the First Division, has already headed the Libyan Arab Foreign Investment Company's 7.5 percent investment in Italian champions

Juventus.

There is talk of a Libyan financial involvement in Greek club PAOK and Al-Saadi's Tripoli-based club Al-Ittihad, winners of the Libyan championship last season, have played a series of friendly matches in Italy as they seek to boost their fortunes in the African Champions League.

"Al-Saadi is a player and he follows international football very closely," said the official. "He is young and enthusiastic and he wants to develop the game very quickly but also on the right track and on the right basis."

Libya have said they will bid for the 2006 African Nations Cup and also have an ambitious plan to host the 2010 World Cup finals.

As yet Libya has no stadiums of World Cup standard and the country has little more than 120 hotels but there are plans for state-of-the-art stadia as part of the 2010 bid on display at the June 11 Stadium.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter, who has suggested an African country will be awarded the 2010 World Cup, was in Tripoli on Sunday and

watched Juve's 2-1 win over Parma alongside Al-Saadi.

The North African country, which had United Nations sanctions lifted only three years ago, has been slower to develop in the game than many African countries and Gaddafi senior is not known as a fan.

"He was at the inauguration game of the 1982 African Nations Cup, which we hosted, but I don't recall seeing him at a game since then," said the official.

"But he knows of his son's interest in football and when big stars come to Libya they go to visit him."

While the Supercup was the highest profile soccer that Libya has hosted in 20 years, Al-Saadi has previously brought Italian clubs Lazio, Inter and Bari as well as English side Middlesbrough to Tripoli for friendly games.

LAFCO have also been linked with investments in smaller Italian clubs but the official said the motivation with such deals was not publicity but to open Europe's door.

"This way you can play friendlies abroad, enjoy training and youth exchanges and really develop Libyan football," he said.

The back streets of Tripoli are full of children playing football and the official said increased emphasis will be put on developing facilities for young players.

"He (Al-Saadi) wants to develop soccer schools, this is one of his main ambitions and projects. He wants soccer academies in all the major regions of the country."

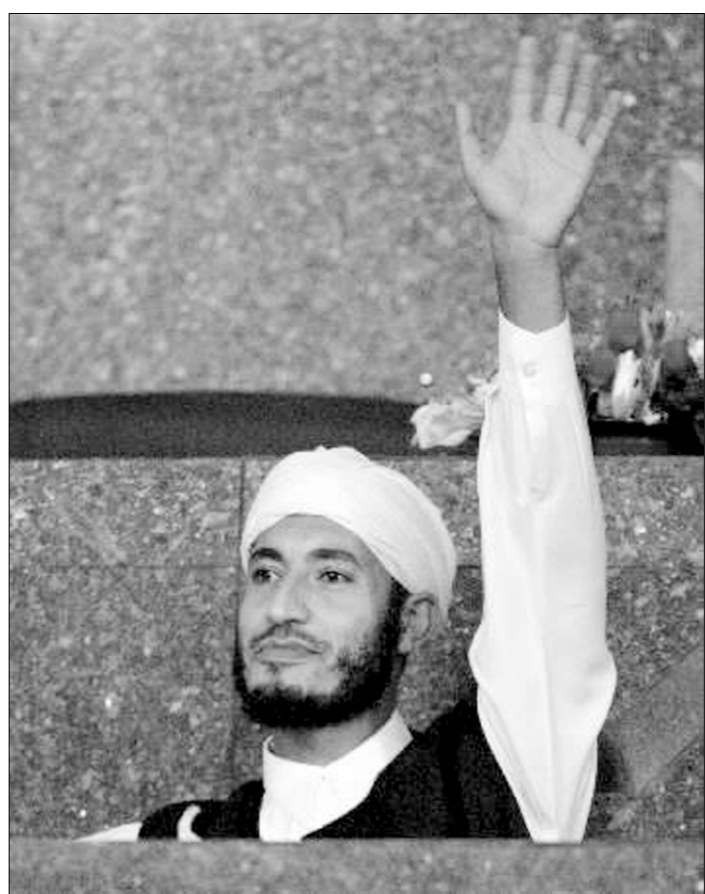
"What we lack though is real professionalism. In the championship the players are all amateur or semi-professional. We lack a good league."

"The clubs are not doing their job and need investment, but unfortunately, apart from two or three clubs, the teams do not enjoy support from big companies," said the official.

Many have interpreted the sudden growth of Libyan interest in soccer as an attempt to transform their image and boost the country's international standing through the world's most high-profile sport.

But the official said that diplomacy was not the primary motivation for Al-Saadi's push to develop Libyan soccer.

"He is also looking for friendship and sport may promote that. But mainly he just likes football."



AL-SAAD I GADDAFI

Fatal football

AFP, Brussels

A Belgian pensioner shot and killed a 25 year-old man trying to retrieve a football from his garden, prosecutors said Monday.

Mustapha Dahmani, 25, died after being shot while climbing back out of the garden of Louis Dardenne, 62, in the town of Gilly on Sunday.

The young man had been playing football with friends on a strip of wasteland.

The pensioner was seized by the other footballers and handed over to police. Prosecutors are pressing murder charges

Bayern's gesture

AFP, Munich

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