



Real Madrid superstar Zinedine Zidane (C) congratulates goalscorer Raul (L) during the match against Real Betis in Seville on October 8.

PHOTO: AFP

Primera Liga

Real thank Raul

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

A fine first-time strike from Raul earned Real Madrid a valuable 1-1 draw away to Real Betis in a reconvened Spanish First Division match on Tuesday.

Floodlight failure had caused the original game on September 14 to be suspended after 43 minutes when Betis were leading 1-0 thanks to a 35th-minute goal from midfielder Capi.

But Real grabbed a valuable draw which lifted them to third in the table after Raul clipped home six minutes into the second half of the renewed game after a Roberto Carlos cross had bobbed free into the area.

Raul's new team mate Ronaldo, who scored a spectacular double in

his debut for Real on Sunday, was in the starting line-up but missed his one clear scoring chance in a match played at a breathless pace.

In a somewhat bizarre start the reconvened match began with a drop ball in a corner of the pitch as the two sides prepared to play the remaining two minutes of the first half.

Against expectations there was

no truce between the two sides. Betis's Brazilian midfielder Marcos Assuncao fired a 25-metre shot just wide of the post and Zinedine Zidane crashed a dipping drive against the bar before the two minutes were up.

The frenetic pace continued when the two teams turned around for the second half and Betis surged forward in attack through their

speedy wingers Joaquin and Denilson.

But Real responded in kind and within six minutes of the restart Raul had put the European champions back on level terms.

Ronaldo combined well with his Brazilian international team mate Roberto Carlos on the left before the Real Madrid defender's cross bounced through to Raul, who cracked home with a fine first-time shot.

Real then came within a hair's breadth of snatching the lead when Ronaldo found himself in the clear after he beat the offside trap. However, the Brazilian's delicate lob skimmed the wrong side of the post.

Betis put Real under almost unrelenting pressure after the Raul equaliser but could not work their way past a determined defence marshalled by the impressive Fernando Hierro.

Primera Liga's top six

Spanish league table after Monday's match (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Celta Vigo	5	4	1	0	10	3	13
Real Sociedad	5	4	1	0	15	9	13
Real Madrid	5	3	2	0	13	5	11
Malaga	5	3	2	0	12	8	11
Valencia	5	3	1	1	10	3	10
Real Betis	5	2	3	0	12	7	9

Wenger on road to permanency

AFP, London

Arsenal coach Arsene Wenger is in line for a job for life at Highbury, with the club ready to offer him a place on the board when he calls it a day as a coach.

Club vice-chairman David Dein said Tuesday that Frenchman Wenger could move 'upstairs' to become technical director with a voice in the boardroom.

"I think the board will seriously consider, when he's finally ready, inviting him on to the board or becoming technical director because he's a very special guy," said Dein.

"He has transformed the club from start to finish: his training ground methods, his dietary controls and the way he's extended players' careers.

"He's made average players good, good players very good and very good players world class. And his knowledge of players is exemplary."

Disappointed Totti

AFP, Rome

AS Roma captain Francesco Totti expressed his disappointment Wednesday after a knee injury ruled him out of Italy's crucial European championship Group Nine qualifiers.

Giovanni Trapattoni's men take on Yugoslavia in Naples on Saturday before travelling to Cardiff to face Wales the following Wednesday.

Totti returned home on Tuesday after the national team's doctors examined his left knee and declared him unfit to play.

"I'm really sad to miss out for the next two matches. Lately it seems as if destiny wants to keep me well away from the 'Azzurri' shirt," said the 26-year-old striker on his internet site, www.francescototti.it.

Totti also poured scorn on press reports that he was not totally committed to playing for Italy and was more concerned about Roma's fortunes.

"Everyone knows how I feel about the national team and my desire to play for my country," he added.

"I have always given my very best whenever I am called up but now I am just concentrating on getting back to full fitness. Hopefully I will be back in time to play Empoli a week on Saturday.

Brave Trap



AFP, Rome

Coach Giovanni Trapattoni said Tuesday he was confident Italy could cope without injured strike duo Francesco Totti and Christian Vieri for their forthcoming 2004 European championship qualifiers.

The Italians take on Yugoslavia in Naples on Saturday before travelling to Cardiff to face Wales the following Wednesday.

Totti, who was injured in AS Roma's 4-1 win over Udinese on Saturday in which he scored twice, pulled out of the 22-man squad on Tuesday after failing to overcome an injury to his left knee.

Inter Milan marksman Vieri was ruled out last week after sustaining an injury to his left ankle in the 2-1

win at home to Chievo on September 29.

But despite the loss of two of Italy's best forwards, Trapattoni believes his team are more than a match for their Group Nine opponents.

"Even without Totti and Vieri we are still strong," said the 63-year-old whose disappointment has been tempered by the brilliant form of Milan striker Filippo Inzaghi and Alessandro Del Piero.

"There are so many good players to choose so we don't have a handicap."

Trapattoni, whose Italy team won their opening qualifier in Azerbaijan 2-0, said he was encouraged by the early season form of Italian First Division leaders Inter and closest challengers Milan.

"Out of all three squads it would be true to say that my biggest surprise has been the success of

Milan," he added.

"They have rediscovered their form and are playing brilliant football without using long balls.

"Juventus lack a little bit of width and Roma have recovered after a bad start while Inter, who have had their critics in the past, look like a really solid unit."

Trapattoni defended his decision to continue playing with two forwards rather than opt for three, a system that has been very effective for last season's Champions League winners Real Madrid.

"It's not question of courage to go with three forwards for the national team, it's all about what roles are best for my players," he said.

"I have always chosen an attacking team with two main strikers and one playing in the hole behind them."

Turkish heroes showered with gold

REUTERS, Ankara

Turkey showered its soccer players in gold on Wednesday, handing out more than half a million dollars in gold coins to the squad and coaching staff who came third in the 2002 World Cup.

Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit awarded 600 Turkish Republican gold coins to coach Senol Gunes, an award worth around \$42,000. His two assistant coaches each received 150 coins.

The 23 squad players, already some of the highest paid and wealthiest men in crisis-hit Turkey, each received 300 gold coins, according to the Anatolian news agency. The average annual income per head in Turkey is just over \$2,000.

Turkey finished third in the Korea/Japan World Cup in only their second appearance in the finals after beating co-hosts South Korea 3-2 in the third-place playoff.

The success came as the country was in the depths of its worst recession since 1945, with hundreds of thousands out of work and the government in crisis as the 77-year-old Ecevit was bedridden with illness.

"I watched the matches in South Korea and Japan from my sickbed," Ecevit said at the award ceremony. "It was a magic potion for me."

Turkey are now campaigning for a place in the 2004 European championship finals. They play their next qualifiers against Macedonia on October 12 and Liechtenstein on October 16 in group seven which also includes England and Slovakia.

The players and coaches were also awarded Turkey's Supreme Service Medals, one of the country's highest honours.

Higueta tests positive

AFP, Bogota

Colombian veteran keeper Rene Higuita has tested positive for cocaine following a September 1 post-match test, Colombian radio reported on Tuesday.

Higuita, who once showed off his trademark "scorpion kick" save in a match against England, is known as "El Loco" for his often bizarre goalkeeping and various indiscretions have seen former clubs Real Cartagena, Independent Medellin and Junior de Baranquilla all fire him.

Caracol radio said doping experts had found traces of cocaine although the player has previously denied taking banned substances.

His club did not confirm the report, which alleged Higuita had taken the drug to celebrate his 36th birthday on August 26 before six days later facing Deportivo Cali with his club Deportivo Pereira.

Higuita won the Copa Libertadores in 1989 with Atletico Nacional and is one of the most eccentric players that South America has produced.

But he has often been mired in controversy off the pitch and was accused in the past of having links to Medellin drug cartel dealers after he once mediated to obtain the release of a youth kidnapped by bandits in the city.

Collina not amused

Football

REUTERS, Milan

Italian referee Pierluigi Collina has strongly criticised the presenters of a televised award ceremony which made fun of his bald head.

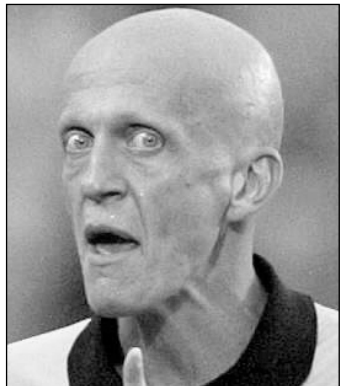
Collina, who took charge of July's World Cup final and has been voted the best referee in the world in several polls, won another award as Referee of the Year in Italy this week.

But at the televised 'soccer Oscars', broadcast by Italian state television RAI, Collina was made fun of in a spoof advertisement for "Collina hair lotion".

Collina lost his hair within 15 days when he suffered from alopecia as a 24-year-old.

"I receive e-mails and letters from mothers whose sons have alopecia and I also receive requests for advice from people who have that illness. I think some respect need to be shown," the referee told Gazzetta dello Sport.

"For me it is no longer a problem as is clear but for others it certainly is. For a young lad, to feel he is having the 'mickey' taken out of him about something that has made him feel different is not very nice," added



PIERLUIGI COLLINA

Collina. "For a kid who is forming his personality and has alopecia, or worse has (hair) loss due to chemotherapy, joking in this manner does

certainly not help him to be well. "That is what annoyed me during the broadcast. To use irony is all right but offend the feelings of people with problems is not on," said the referee.

The awards show was also criticised by the Italian Referees Association (AIA) and by Italian champions Juventus, who walked out of the ceremony after they were made fun of during the broadcast.

Referees traditionally receive a rough ride in the Italian media and the AIA has also complained about RAI's use in a sports show of a league table for the most performing referees in Serie A.

The standings are dubbed the 'Moreno's Cup' in reference to Ecuadorian referee Byron Moreno, who took charge of the controversial World Cup match which Italy lost to South Korea.

Moreno is suspended by the Ecuadorian soccer authorities and FIFA have announced they will investigate allegations surrounding the official.

Big Phil impresses

Football

REUTERS, Miami

Mexican soccer officials, searching for a national team coach to replace Javier Aguirre, have interviewed Brazil's World Cup winner Luiz Felipe Scolari and say he made a good impression.

Scolari had been considered an outsider in the three-horse race with Argentine Carlos Bianchi and Argentine-born Mexican Ricardo Lavolpe. Former Real Madrid and Mexico striker Hugo Sanchez dropped out of the running last month.

"Many people thought this meeting was just a formality but we have always been open to the idea of getting to know him," said Mexican Football Federation president Alberto de la Torre after the interview with Scolari in a Miami hotel.

"We wanted to see if there was a good chemistry. There was and he left a pleasant impression. "Today I can see there are more

points in his favour than there were before we spoke to him."

Scolari, affectionately known in his own country as Big Phil (Felipao), led Brazil to their fifth World Cup title in June, only 14 months after taking over with the team in the doldrums.

"It's very interesting, if not I wouldn't be here," said Scolari.

"I've come here with a project to offer and to listen to what kind of project they have."

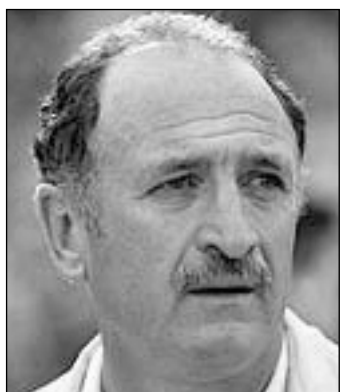
De la Torre said a decision could be announced next week.

Bianchi resurrected Boca Juniors, Argentina's most popular club, after years of mid-table mediocrity, winning three domestic titles and the South American Libertadores Cup two years running. He left at the end of last year and is without a club.

Former Argentine goalkeeper Lavolpe ended his playing career in Mexico and is now coach of Apertura championship leaders Toluca. He is a bitter rival of Sanchez.

Mexico are regarded as perennial under-achievers. Despite a soccer-mad population, they have never gone beyond the quarter-finals of the World Cup.

They were knocked out in the second round of the 2002 World Cup by the United States and Aguirre resigned immediately afterwards.



LUIZ FELIPE SCOLARI

He resigned five weeks after the World Cup final win over Germany, saying he wanted to spend more time with his family.

Moreira in for Trezeguet



AFP, Paris

Juventus striker David Trezeguet, recalled Tuesday to the French squad for the Euro 2004 qualifier against Slovenia on Saturday, has had to pull out due to injury.

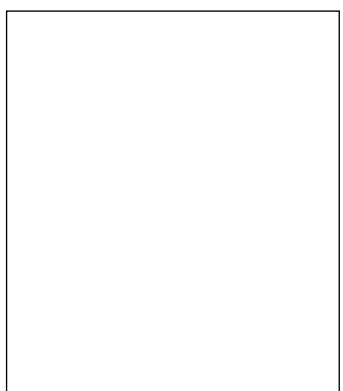
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New French manager Jacques Santini had called Trezeguet up to



DAVID TREZEGUET

replace the injured Olivier Kapo of Auxerre.

Trezeguet was top striker with 24 goals in Serie A last season.

Kapo is sidelined with a left calf injury which had already ruled him out of Auxerre's match against Monaco at the weekend and Moreira, 25, now comes into the squad for the first time.

Central defender William Gallas meanwhile is eagerly looking forward to playing alongside his Chelsea teammate and French

captain Marcel Desailly, who will be winning his 100th cap.

"It's been an ambition to play for France with Marcel," he said. "We know one other, and we're used to communicating with each other on the pitch. It's a delight to watch him play."

Uncapped Philippe Mexes of Auxerre paid homage to the great French teams that won the 1998 World Cup and the 2000 European title but said that it was tie to turn the page.

"A team cannot go 10 years without making changes," said the defender.

"There comes a time for new faces and the coach has taken a good look. It's now up to us to adapt to the rest of the squad."

Liverpool's young striker Bruno Cheyrou meanwhile said he was not put off by the wealth of talent the French have up front with the likes of Trezeguet and Arsenal pair Thierry Henry and Sylvain Wiltord.

"At Liverpool, you always have to fight to win your place in the side," he said.

"It's even the same for the likes of Michael Owen and Steven Gerrard."

Another Cisse gesture

Football

AFP, Dakar

Senegal's football captain Aliou Cisse, currently playing in the English Midlands, announced Tuesday that he will donate five million CFA francs (more than 7,600 dollars/euros) to the families of nearly 1,000 people who died in a ferry disaster off the coast of west Africa last month.

"Given all that has happened, I offer my modest contribution; a cheque for five million CFA which I will give on Wednesday to the Senegalese President" Abdoulaye Wade, said the 26-year-old defender who plays for premier league outfit Birmingham.

Cisse lost 11 members of his family, including his sister, uncles and cousins when the MS Joola was sunk in a storm off the Gambian coast on September 26.

"It was an international tragedy," Cisse said.

Cisse flew home from England on Monday after being granted indefinite compassionate leave by his newly-promoted English Premiership side.

Cisse and his international teammates will take part in a char-

ity match against Nigeria here on Saturday in aid of the victims' families.

The ill-fated Joola ferry had left Ziguinchor, the main city of the southern Senegalese region of Casamance, on September 26 for Dakar, with around 1,000 people on board.

The vessel, built to take around half that number, capsized on rough seas off the coast of Gambia, the thin strip of a country that straddles the river of the same name and practically cuts Senegal in two.

Only 64 people survived, making the capsizing the worst maritime accident in Senegal's and all of Africa's history. The victims included many children travelling back for the start of the school year, entire families and tourists.

Wade on Tuesday accepted the resignations of the two ministers most closely associated with the catastrophe, Transport Minister Youssouph Sakho and Armed Forces Minister Youba Sambou.

On Sunday gate receipts from an African Champions League match here between Jeanne d'Arc of Senegal and Al-Ahly of Egypt will also go to the victims' families. It will not be a great deal of money.



England captain David Beckham (L) chats with Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair at No. 10 Downing Street during a reception on October 8 to celebrate their achievements in the FIFA World Cup.

PHOTO: AFP

Blair throws his WC party

AFP, London

Almost five months after England's 2-1 defeat by Brazil in the football World Cup, British Prime Minister Tony Blair on Tuesday held a reception for the team.

The conditions in which the team returned from Japan, on June 23, after their defeat caused considerable controversy at the time. The players then avoided meeting both fans and the media.

TV pictures on Tuesday showed Blair enjoying drinks with captain David Beckham, goalkeeper David Seaman, and other members of the team.

England sweat over Beckham

AFP, London

England's injury worries ahead of their opening Euro 2004 qualifier against Slovakia mounted Wednesday as skipper David Beckham was forced to skip training with a calf strain.

Beckham injured the calf in Manchester United's 3-0 win over Everton on Monday and left Old Trafford with an ice-pack strapped to the leg.

Although his participation in Saturday's match in the Slovak capital Bratislava is not in doubt, any suggestion Beckham is less than 100 percent will be cause for concern for head coach Sven-Goran Eriksson.