

Lizarazu disciplined

AFP, Munich

French international defender Bixente Lizarazu was fined 10,000 euros by Bayern Munich after a punchup during training with his teammate Niko Kovac on Thursday.

Lizarazu and the Croatian international came to blows over a series of mistakes in a training match and had to be pulled apart by assistant coach Michael Henke.

After discussing the issue with each player, Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld decided Lizarazu was to blame.

"It was clearly him who started the argument," said Hitzfeld. "He will have an appropriate fine for someone on his salary."

Bayern have had a terrible season after being knocked out of the European Champions League in the first stage but they began the road to recovery with a 2-1 win over Hannover 96 to reach the third round of the German Cup on Wednesday.



Bayern Munich's Brazilian striker Giovane Elber (C) and Ghanaian Sammy Kuffour (2nd R) trying to restrain their French teammate Bixente Lizarazu (R) away from Croatian Niko Kovac (L) during an altercation in training at Munich on November 7. In background is Pablo Thiam (2nd L).

Premiership preview

Maine Road get emotional

Football

AFP, Manchester

One of the legends of English football will be among the crowd as Manchester City take on arch rivals United for the last time at Maine Road on Saturday.

Bert Trautmann, a German prisoner who decided to stay on in England at the end of the Second World War, earned his place in City's pantheon of heroes and the country's football folklore in the 1956 FA Cup final.

As he walked from the pitch, the City goalkeeper was famously photographed rubbing his "sore" neck - it was only after he had collected his winner's medal that it transpired his neck had been broken during the match.

Now 79 and retired in his native Germany, Trautmann has returned to Manchester to attend what will be the final Manchester derby to be played at City's home in the heart of the city's Moss Side district.

At the end of the season, City will leave Maine Road and take up residence at a state-of-the-art municipal stadium that was built for this summer's Commonwealth Games in the east of Manchester.

While Saturday's clash is sure to be an emotional affair, both managers will be keen to ensure their players remain focused on the battle for three points which carry considerable significance for both clubs.

United cannot afford to lose any

further ground on the league leaders Liverpool and City will be desperate to move further away from the relegation zone, as well as eradicating the memory of their midweek exit from the League Cup at the hands of Second Division Wigan.

Form, if that counts for anything on such occasions, points to a United victory, even if a combination

FIXTURES

(1500 GMT kick off unless stated)
Saturday: Arsenal v Newcastle, Aston Villa v Fulham, Bolton v West Brom, Chelsea v Birmingham, Everton v Charlton, Manchester City v Manchester United (1215 GMT), Middlesbrough v Liverpool, Southampton v Blackburn
Sunday: Sunderland v Tottenham (1605 GMT), West Ham v Leeds (1400 GMT)

of suspension and injury means that Alex Ferguson will be without David Beckham, Nicky Butt and Roy Keane.

United have not lost to City in the league since the Premiership was launched a decade ago and they have won on their last four visits to Maine Road.

It's not a record that United and England fullback Gary Neville wants to see ended.

"I've never been through the agony of a derby defeat and I never want to," the 27-year-old said this week. "I've spoken to some of the lads who were involved in that infamous 5-1 defeat in 1989 and

that's not something I want to suffer. "I may never have been put through something like that but I know the consequences of losing and it doesn't bear thinking about."

Neville freely admits however that Kevin Keegan's City team, with Nicholas Anelka beginning to show signs of realising his enormous potential, have the creative ability to give any side problems.

"The City forwards Kevin has assembled are the most dangerous I've known in my time facing them," he said. "In Anelka they have genuine quality and Eyal Berkovic and Ali Benarbia are clever players."

Leaders Liverpool face a tough trip to Middlesbrough, although Steve McClaren's side have begun to falter after an impressive start to the season. His side have slipped from third in the table to ninth over the last month and were eliminated from the League Cup by First Division Ipswich in midweek.

Arsenal entertain Newcastle with a distinct, and totally unexpected, air of crisis swirling around Highbury.

The Gunners, so awesome at the start of the season, squandered a two-goal lead over Sunderland in midweek to slump to their fifth defeat in six matches - hardly championship stuff.

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger insists the double winners' season has not been derailed - but he could barely conceal his irritation with all the talk of a crisis.

"That is newspaper talk and they can say what they like, it doesn't bother me," he said.

Bundesliga preview

Bayern with a weary Ballack

AFP, Berlin

Beleaguered Bayern Munich face German champions Borussia Dortmund on Saturday with midfield playmaker Michael Ballack complaining that he is tired.

After a dreadful 10 days, Bayern might have turned the corner by beating Hannover 96 2-1 in the second round of the German Cup on Wednesday in front of a sparse crowd at the Olympic Stadium.

But Ballack, who created the second goal in that game, said in an interview on Thursday that he blamed the club's humiliating first-phase elimination from the Champions League on the ever shorter off-season.

He said he had returned to the club tired after Germany's World Cup campaign which saw them reach the final against most expectations.

"Physically I'm in a bit of a hole. I'm a bit tired," Ballack told Kicker's website. "It's nothing to do with a lack of desire, it's because I've lost weight. And the winter break is not going to help a lot."

"The cause is this crazy schedule without a break. It's even worse this season. The Bundesliga ends on May 24 and on June 11 we have European Championships qualifying matches.

"I'm getting really fed up with it."

FIXTURES

Saturday: Schalke 04 v Bayer Leverkusen, VfB Stuttgart v VfL Bochum, Kaiserslautern v Hannover 96, VfL Wolfsburg v Werder Bremen, Bayern Munich v Borussia Dortmund, Hamburg SV v 1860 Munich, Arminia Bielefeld v Nuremberg
Sunday: Monchengladbach v Energie Cottbus, Hertha Berlin v Hansa Rostock

Sao Paulo.

"I've always had confidence in my game but I never thought this would happen so quickly," he said.

Robinho was found in Sao Vicente, only a few kilometres from Santo's Vila Belmorio stadium.

There have been a few hiccups on the way. A run of three successive defeats had commentators wondering whether the team had peaked too soon and if the success was going to the heads of the young players.

Santos were also involved in ugly incidents after their 2-1 defeat at Paysandu, when central defender Preto was knocked briefly unconscious by riot police who were protecting a linesman as the team protested about a decision.

Although there was universal condemnation for the police behaviour, Santos were also criticised for their hysterical reaction to a decision television replays clearly showed to have been correct.

Diego has also been in trouble. He caused controversy when he celebrated a goal against Sao Paulo by dancing on the rival club's emblem. Then he was sent off against Paysandu for treading on an opponent and, when he returned from suspension, was promptly substituted in his next game following a below-par performance.

At the same time, Santos supporters are wondering how long it can all last.

Brazilian clubs have to sell their best players to survive and European clubs are already reported to be casting a beady eye on the likes of Diego. Santos insist he is not for sale and Diego has already denied having talks about a possible move.

Experience suggests, however, that keeping the team together could prove a much more difficult task than actually building it.

The only candidate?

Football

INTERNET

Brazilian superstar Ronaldo yesterday was touted as the 2002 World Player of the Year, despite his far from convincing form for new club Real Madrid in recent games. However, it seems that FIFA will have no other choice to give one of its top prizes to a player whose only impact came in the space of four weeks this summer, as the list of potential nominees grows ever shorter by the day.

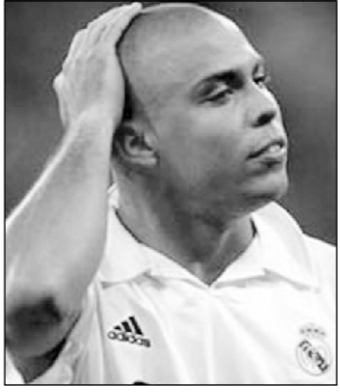
Ronaldo's version of the party political broadcast has astonishingly borne fruit with news that he will be named as the recipient of FIFA's top player prize even though the winner is not revealed until next month.

Spanish TV station 'Telecinco' has claimed that sources close to football's world governing body have disclosed that Ronaldo will top the poll followed closely by Oliver Kahn, whilst Zinedine Zidane is in third place.

Barely 24 hours earlier and Ronaldo had been trumpeting his candidature for the prestigious honour: "I consider myself a very strong candidate for the Player of the Year Award, as I won the World Cup and was top scorer in that tournament with eight goals," he

enthusied.

Of course if a straw poll had been taken at the end of June then Ronaldo would have been the



RONALDO

overwhelming winner. But those events in the Far-East as he held aloft the World Cup are now just a distant memory. In the cold light of day and without the euphoria of the World Cup, Ronaldo's record paints a different picture.

He has been limited to just 15 league appearances in the past twelve months for Internazionale and then for Real Madrid, where he has come under scrutiny following a barren spell after his two-goal debut last month. The goal-drought does not seem to have bothered the Brazilian striker who vowed: "I'll

soon be scoring again. I'm sure the goals will come. I know that I'm not getting goals but we need to be patient. When I get to know my teammates better, everything I do will be better."

Nevertheless, it seems that he maybe the only viable contender despite his poor showing for his domestic clubs over the past year. Oliver Kahn would have been most people's choice following his heroics for Bayern Munich last season and then for Germany in the World Cup, where he became the first goalkeeper to win the Golden Ball - the award for the best player in the tournament.

However, his dismal outings in recent games which has seen Bayern crash out of the Champions League may have scuppered his chances. Likewise, Raul and Zidane have caught the eye on the domestic and continental front, but are unlikely to win as both Spain and France suffered ignominious exits in this summer's big tournament.

That leaves Roberto Carlos, who thinks the award should go to him: "I'm the only player in the world who has won everything within the space of 48 days. What more can I do? I've won the Champions League, the World Cup and the European Super Cup in the same year. Nobody else has," he boasted. He may have a point.

Primera Liga preview

Sociedad's major test

Football

AFP, Madrid

Surprise Spanish league leaders Real Sociedad face the sternest test of their season so far when they host Deportivo La Coruna on Saturday.

The home clash with Deportivo is the start of a series of matches which could expose the real ambitions of a club which last won the First Division title in 1982.

Sociedad face Real Madrid at the Bernabeu next week and then Barcelona on December 1 as they bid to preserve their three-point lead over reigning champions Valencia.

Former Liverpool goalkeeper

Sander Westerveld has the unenviable job of stopping free-scoring Deportivo striker Roy Makaay from ruining the ambitions of the Basque club.

"He's a very hard player to stop," Westerveld said on the Marca website on Friday. "He's so fast and he has great ability with either foot. In the five years he has been in Spain he has shown what a great player he is because he always scores a lot of goals."

Stuttering Real Madrid must win against Rayo Vallecano in a city derby which has always failed to inflame the passions of the cross-city clashes in Milan and Manchester.

It would be a perfect time for Ronaldo to add the paltry two goals he has scored since his 45-million-

euro transfer from Inter Milan.

The Brazilian World Cup winner said this week he was confident the goals would come once he reached full fitness.

His strike partner Raul meanwhile could miss the match after losing three kilograms with a stomach bug.

FIXTURES

Saturday: Malaga v Osasuna, Real Sociedad v Deportivo La Coruna, Rayo Vallecano v Real Madrid, Barcelona v Villareal, Valencia v Real Betis
Sunday: Celta Vigo v Espanyol, Huelva v Valladolid, Real Mallorca v Alaves, Sevilla v Racing Santander, Atletico Madrid v Athletic Bilbao

Serie A preview

Match of the week in Turin

Football

AFP, Rome

Second meet third in Italy as AC Milan travel to Turin to face reigning champions Juventus at the Stadio Delle Alpi on Sunday.

Both teams will be looking to keep pace with unbeaten league leaders Inter Milan who entertain strugglers Udinese at the San Siro the night before.

Juventus, who are also unbeaten but have drawn more games than Inter, have yet to find top gear this season.

But back-to-back 1-0 victories at Modena and Piacenza respectively show they know how to grind out important victories.

It may not be pretty to watch, but coach Marcello Lippi is not losing sleep over his team's gritty performances.

"I've no complaints if we get the three points, it's as simple as that," he said.

"People can analyse the performances as much as they like, but the bottom line is we are unbeaten in the league."

"I admit we didn't start well, but we are now looking solid once again at home and in Europe."

"We are through to the second phase of the Champions League and are third in the league, so there is plenty to be positive about."

Lippi said such a heavy schedule was making it difficult to play attractive football every week.

"We would love to put on a show every time we played, but it's just not possible," he added.

"Players get tired with games coming thick and fast, that's natural. "That's why we have a big squad. We rotate the team to keep legs fresh."

Inter's in-form striker Hernan Crespo is expected to resume his partnership with Christian Vieri for Saturday's clash at home to Udinese.

Vieri was rested for Wednesday's 4-3 win at Empoli, a victory which maintained Hector Cuper's side 100 per cent away record.

Crespo, who scored the opening goal in Tuscany, said he was not surprised at how well he and Vieri have hit it off this season.

"There was talk we couldn't play together but in all honesty that was just the press looking for a story," he said.

"After only a couple of games Vieri and I struck up a good understanding and I think that shows in our games."

Crespo arrived at Inter this summer as a replacement for Ronaldo, but the Argentine striker is not bothered by the obvious comparisons with the Real Madrid star.

"I don't really take too much notice but it is only normal that I'm

judged against Ronaldo," Crespo said.

"It happened to me when I joined Lazio from Parma. I came in after Giuseppe Signori and Gigi Casiraghi and they were worshipped by the supporters. Today it is Ronaldo."

The Nerazzurri have made a superb start with seven wins and a draw, but Crespo is more wary of the threat posed by title-holders Juventus rather than second-placed Milan.

"They are our two main rivals but Juventus are the biggest danger," he said.

"They never throw a season away. They never give up on the title."

In other matches fourth-placed Lazio will be looking to for their fifth victory of the campaign at home to Parma, who edged a seven goal thriller 4-3 against Brescia in midweek.

Chievo, in fifth, host basement club Atalanta in Verona, while AS Roma travel to Piacenza.

FIXTURES

(1400 GMT kick-off unless stated)
Saturday: Inter Milan v Udinese (1700 GMT), Piacenza v Roma (1930 GMT)
Sunday: Bologna v Como, Brescia v Empoli, Chievo v Atalanta, Juventus v AC Milan (1930 GMT), Lazio v Parma, Perugia v Torino, Reggina v Modena

Santos season's senstion

Football

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

For the past 30 years, Santos have been looking back wistfully to the days when Pele turned them into the world's best club side.

Pele was raised at the club, spent 16 unforgettable years there and left in 1973 to play out the twilight of his career in North America.

Since his departure, Santos have been largely living on past glories.

They have not won a domestic title since 1984 and, last year, made headlines only thanks to the behaviour of their supporters, who invaded training sessions in protest at the team's performances and threatened the players.

This year, however, Santos have come back to life and unearthed a team who now have the club looking hopefully to the future instead of nostalgically into the past.

Seventeen-year-old midfielder Diego and 18-year-old striker Robinho are rated among the most exciting prospects Brazilian football has produced for a long time.

Pele, who still has strong connections with his old club, is reported to have seen Robinho playing three years ago and commented: "This lad takes me back to the start of my career."

The pair are backed up by more players barely out of their teens -- including goalkeeper Julio Sergio and midfielders Elano and Renato. Even captain and midfield hardman Paulo Almeida is a mere 21 and only three members of the regular first-team squad are over 25.

"Brazilian football hasn't had a group of young players like this for a long time," said Fernando Calazans, a columnist in the Rio de

Janeiro daily O Globo.

Last weekend's 2-0 win at Guarani virtually guaranteed Santos a place in the quarter-finals of the Brazilian championship, leaving them third with two games to play in the qualifying stage. They have 39 points from 23 matches.

But, more than the results, it is the Santos style which has been most impressive.

In the last 20 years, Brazilian football's traditional artistry has



Diego

been tempered by European influences, with most coaches preferring to talk of tactics and discipline rather than skill and talent.

Santos's game, based on what critics sometimes dub "futbol-moleque" -- literally cheeky schoolboy football -- and all-attack, has allowed Brazilians a brief flirt with the past.

In just three games, the side beat three of Brazil's most popular teams and scored 11 goals in the process - 4-2 against Corinthians, 3-2 against Atletico Mineiro followed by a stunning 4-1 win away to Cruzeiro.

Commanding the whole performance is coach Emerson Leao, who

has resurrected his own career after an unhappy nine months in charge of the Brazilian national team.

Leao's reign ended with him being unceremoniously fired following the Confederations' Cup in 2001.

Leao, whose temperament is as fiery as his flame-orange dyed hair, has not often been associated with the finer arts of the game and his apparent transformation from dour, defensive football to flowing attack has amazed many critics.



ROBINHO

Curiously, Santos's success has been born out of economic necessity.

For years, the club attempted to build teams by splashing out on expensive, big-name players known in Brazil as Medalhoes "Big Medals".

At the start of this year, Brazilian football's financial problems forced Santos directors to change direction and turn to home-grown products -- just as they did 40 years ago when they unearthed Pele's generation.

Diego, who made his debut at the start of this year, was discovered by club scouts in Ribeirao Preto, an agricultural centre in the state of

A street named Ronaldo!

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Rio de Janeiro's town council approved a decree Thursday to name a street in the Brazilian city after World Cup hero Ronaldo Nazario.

According to TV Globo the General Cesar Obino street in the Bento Ribeiro area to the north west of the city will change its name to celebrate the World Cup's top scorer.

It was in this street that 26-year-old Ronaldo, who signed for Real Madrid this summer for 45 million euros (44.1m dollars), lived as a child and first began to play with a football.

Ronaldo scored both goals in Brazil's 2-0 World Cup final victory in Yokohama, Japan this summer.

FA charge Bergkamp

AFP, London

Arsenal's current woes increased on Friday when the English Football Association announced that it had charged the club's Dutch striker Dennis Bergkamp with violent conduct.

Bergkamp has 14 days to respond to the FA charges over an incident in the October 26 match against Blackburn in which he appeared to stamp on Nils-Eric Johansson.

If found guilty, Bergkamp could find himself fined and banned for up to three matches -- the last thing Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger would want after the double winners' run of five defeats in their last six games.

Although television pictures clearly showed Bergkamp's studs making contact with Johansson's chest, the match referee, Graham Barber, had a clear view of the incident and did not even book the Arsenal player.

Bergkamp has said there was no violent intent in his gesture and expressed surprise that the FA should have decided to look at it again.

Keane won't appeal ban

AFP, Manchester

Roy Keane insisted Thursday that a five-match ban and hefty fine imposed by the Football Association over the contents of his autobiography were unjustified but confirmed he would not be appealing the sanctions.

The Manchester United captain was found guilty on two counts of bringing the game into disrepute over his foul on Manchester City's Alfie Haaland and subsequent claims in his autobiography that the tackle was intended to injure.

As well as the ban, Keane was fined 150,000 pounds (151,000 dollars).

"I believe that the charges brought against me by the Football Association were not justified and I feel that the evidence and arguments put forward by me and my legal representatives to the disciplinary commission were sufficiently strong," Keane said in a statement.

"Accordingly, I would prefer to have this matter reviewed by way of an appeal."

"However, I consider that I must put the interests of Manchester United Football Club and my family before my own, and for that reason I have decided not to pursue an appeal against the decision of the Football Association Disciplinary Commission."

UEFA Cup

Berlin first to Round Three

AFP Berlin

German outfit Hertha Berlin became the first team to qualify for the third round of the UEFA Cup as they eased past Cypriot side Apoel Nicosia 4-0 here on Thursday.

Brazilian striker Marcelinho was inspired as he scored one and was involved in goals by Michael Preetz, Stefan Beinlich and Luizau which assured Huub Stevens' side a 5-0 aggregate scoreline.

After just eight minutes, Marcelinho's corner picked out team captain Preetz who scored a powerful header from close range past goalie Michael Morphis.

Within five minutes the hosts were 2-0 up when Alex Alves crossed for Preetz, but although the first goalscorer missed the ball, a Marcelinho volley from the corner of the penalty area got past Morphis.

German international Arne Friedrich almost grabbed another after 17 minutes but he headed a Marcelinho centre against the crossbar.

Beinlich extended Hertha's lead after 61 minutes after a corner was pulled back to the edge of the area by Marcelinho.

Substitute Luizau then scored his first ever goal for Hertha after 67 minutes, after Marcelinho broke down the left and cut the ball back to his countryman to score from 13 metres.

But Luizau received a nasty cut on his calf and Hertha played the last 15 minutes with ten men.

TOP SIX

French league table after Thursday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Lyon	14	7	4	3	27	16
Auxerre	14	7	4	18	14	24
Paris SG	13	6	5	2	22	11
Nice						