

Magpies eye a new world

Football

AFP, Paris

Newcastle United are aiming to go boldly beyond their past European exploits when they line up against Feyenoord in their Champions League showdown in Rotterdam on Wednesday.

The English Premiership side have never made it into the final stages of the Champions League, their best performance of recent years coming in the 1997-1998 season when they were stopped at the first group stage after two defeats by PSV Eindhoven - one of current Newcastle manager Bobby Robson's former clubs.

To progress this time, Newcastle must beat UEFA Cup holders Feyenoord, and hope Juventus either draw or beat Dynamo Kiev in Ukraine to have any chance of making the last 16 for the first time.

On Wednesday the Magpies will be without French winger Laurent Robert who has injured a cheek bone, and will need to be on their best to beat a Feyenoord team who, despite missing prolific striker Pierre van Hooijdonk, sit third in their league.

Newcastle went down 1-0 to back-in-form Arsenal on Saturday without midfielder Craig Bellamy but he could return after a knee injury to give Robson more options, and Newcastle forward Gary Speed feels the weekend's performance could prove a good indicator.

"It was disappointing that we didn't create much up front, but if we can improve that and defend as we did at Arsenal then we'll have a chance of getting something against Feyenoord," Speed told the club's website.

Newcastle are not the only team treading the thin line between qualification and demotion to the less prestigious UEFA Cup.

From the eight group matches

Table with 2 columns: Group and Fixtures. Includes Group E (Dynamo Kiev v Juventus), Group F (Manchester United v Bayer Leverkusen), Group G (Bayern Munich v Lens), and Group H (Barcelona v Galatasaray).

Prime Minister's choice!

Football

AFP, Sintra, Portugal

Portuguese Prime Minister Jose Manuel Durao Barroso has personally endorsed the choice of World Cup-winning coach Luiz Felipe Scolari as the man to take over the country's national team for the 2004 European championships.

Speaking at the end of a meeting with visiting Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Barroso said: "One of the issues we were not able to determine, despite the presence of the ministers of sport from both countries, is whether or not Scolari will come to Portugal."

"There has been no decision on this issue so far. I can't give my personal opinion on this issue but you can guess what it is," he added.

Portugal's football association was authorised last week to hire a foreign coach to revive Portugal's fortunes.



LUIZ FELIPE SCOLARI

ECJ backing for Gunners

Football

AFP, Brussels

The European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled in favour of English Premiership champions Arsenal on Tuesday in a legal suit it brought against a seller of unofficial merchandise.

In a ruling which could have wider legal implications, the EU's highest court said the London club had the right to prevent sellers of non-official merchandise from using its trademark in a way which could mislead buyers about the goods' authenticity. Matthew Reed has sold memorabilia outside the Gunners' home ground since 1970, but Arsenal took him to court after registering the words Arsenal, Arsenal Gunners and its cannon and shield emblems as trademarks in 1989.

The case was initially rejected by Britain's High Court of Justice, but was then taken to the Luxembourg-based court, which issued its ruling Tuesday.

Reed argued supporters could not be misled about his products since he had posted a sign clearly stating their origin on his stall.

But the ECJ said: "As regards the products sold by Mr. Reed, a risk of confusion in the minds of supporters as to the origin of the products cannot be ruled out."

"The guarantee of origin can be ensured only if the trade mark is protected against competitors wishing to take unfair advantage of its status and reputation by selling goods which are not originals," it

Chung asked to quit KFA

AFP, Seoul

Korean Football Association (KFA) head Chung Mong-Joon on Tuesday was urged to step down by senior KFA officials who fear his bid to become president will cause havoc in South Korea's football governing body.

Lawmaker Chung, an independent millionaire, is in negotiations with ruling party candidate Roh Moo-Hyun to unify their candidacies for the December 19 presidential election, with both far behind opposition candidate Lee Hoi-Chang in popularity rating.

Lee Eun-Sung, vice president of the KFA's branch in Gyeonggi province surrounding Seoul, told a news conference that a sports figure should run the body rather than a politician.

"Now is the time for those engaged in football to lead the KFA just like in Japan," Lee said. He then produced a petition signed by 150 KFA members, including football team coaches, who want Chung to resign.

KFA vice president Kim Sang-Jin immediately dismissed the bid to oust his boss. "The KFA has nothing to do with politics and will remain neutral during the presidential election period."

Chung's supporters said a KFA disciplinary panel meeting would open to punish those who organised the petition, adding they would also consider filing a separate libel suit against Lee and his backers.

Al-Fayed's no to sharing

AFP, London

Fulham owner Mohamed Al-Fayed has rejected Chelsea chairman Ken Bates's offer to share their Stamford Bridge ground it was reported on Tuesday.

The Egyptian - who is currently searching for a long term ground for his Premiership side - had discussed the matter with Bates but was taken aback when Chelsea's lawyers sent a letter setting out the terms of agreement.

"When Ken came to see the chairman last month he floated the idea of a partial buy-in to Chelsea Village."

Fayed saw the conversation as a speculative exchange of ideas and was surprised to receive a formal proposal from the Chelsea lawyer the following day.

"He is publicly committed to redeveloping Craven Cottage or at least building a modern stadium somewhere nearby."

Bates proposed the

The battle already on

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, Zurich

An English football supporter was injured and a McDonald's restaurant smashed-up in an overnight brawl in Zurich ahead of Tuesday's Champions League match between Liverpool and Swiss side FC Basel.

Police said the clash took place at the station, while the restaurant trouble began when someone threw a Molotov cocktail into the

Fan signs for Cardiff

Football

AFP, Cardiff

Fan Zhiyi, the China defender who was Asia's 2001 player of the year, has agreed to play for Cardiff City until the end of the season, the Welsh club announced on Tuesday.

Cardiff, who play in the Second Division of the English league, have agreed personal terms with the 33-year-old defender and envisage a permanent deal, club owner Sam Hammam said.

"We are very lucky to have signed someone like Fan," Hammam said. "This is a major step forward for us and it shows how far we have come as a club."

Cardiff, known as the Bluebirds, want Fan to start training with them immediately with a view to regaining full match fitness while a work permit is finalised.

This is not expected to pose a problem as Fan has 107 caps for China, although it will be a couple of weeks before he is ready for first team action as he has not played since his World Cup campaign was curtailed by injury in the opening defeat by Costa Rica.

Fan has been without a club since

Zidane vows to be back Sunday

Football

AFP, Madrid

Zinedine Zidane, who had to pull out of Real Madrid's midweek Champions League game with back trouble, is confident of being fit for Sunday's Spanish league fixture against Real Sociedad.

The French international suffered from lumbago and came off after half an hour's play in

Refs given legal scope

Football

REUTERS, Milan

Heavily criticised Italian referees have been told they can take legal action against club officials, coaches and players who defame them.

The Italian Football Federation (FIGC) announced on Monday a series of measures aimed at curbing the regular slanging matches between club and match officials and growing claims of biased refereeing in Serie A, warning it was ready to use the courts.

"The message is that there will be no more tolerance of all this," a Federation spokesman said. Italy has an elaborate system of disciplinary committees and 'sporting courts' which are meant to keep disputes between those in the game in house.

But the FIGC said it would now authorise legal action to be taken in regular courts in cases of defamation of character.

"If an individual, for example a referee, approaches the Federation and says that he intends to take legal action he can be given that authorisation without it affecting the work of the sporting justice system," said the spokesman.

The FIGC has instructed its disciplinary bodies to take swift action against Federation members, who include all players, coaches and club officials, in cases of "gratuitous defamation" said the spokesman.

The Federation says its own lawyers could sue non-members who it believes are defaming the sport or individuals within the sport, which could pave the way for legal action to be taken against television pundits or journalists.

McDonald's. They said 15 people aged 18-25 had been arrested, most of them Swiss and the others British and German.

The match is a do-or-die date for Liverpool with FC Basel needing only a draw to make it into the lucrative second-round of the competition, and end the English club's European dream this year.

More than 1,000 English supporters without tickets are expected, and British authorities have sent a team of hooligan specialists to help Swiss police maintain order.



FAN ZHIYI

leaving Scottish side Dundee in the summer. He has previously played in England for Crystal Palace.

He said he had been impressed by Cardiff's ambitious outlook under manager Lennie Lawrence and Hammam, the Lebanese-born entrepreneur who was formerly in charge of Wimbledon.

Cardiff are currently third in the Second Division and are planning to move to a new stadium.

"I wanted to join Cardiff because I think they can reach the Premier League," Fan told Cardiff's club website.

"That is my aim - to help Cardiff reach the top division."

Real's 3-2 win over Rayo Vallecano at the weekend.

"It's still not quite right but I hope in two or three days it'll all be cleared up," Zidane said outside his club's medical centre.

"I'm a lot better and I'm hardly feeling any pain. All the tests were very good."

Champions League holders Real Madrid face Genk in Belgium on Tuesday knowing they have already qualified from Group C into the second round.

Eriksson going nowhere

Football

AFP, London

England football coach Sven-Goran Eriksson said Monday he was staying in his post despite backroom upheavals at the Football Association (FA).

"I am happy (to stay)," the Swede told a press conference at the FA's London headquarters to announce his 26-man squad for next week's 'get-together' practice session.

Adam Crozier resigned as the FA's chief executive last month in protest at what he saw as attempts by Premier League clubs to curb his and the governing body's authority.

David Davies, the FA's director of international strategy and Nic Coward, its company secretary, were appointed earlier Monday as the organisation's joint acting chief executives while head-hunters were employed to find a permanent replacement.

It was Crozier, himself a Scotsman, who had been instrumental in appointing Eriksson as the first foreigner to coach the England side.

Crozier's departure had led to speculation that Eriksson would also be quitting his job.

But the former Lazio coach said: "No, I have not said anything in those days (since Crozier's departure). I read a lot about my going to Spain, Italy, Portugal."

"I said nothing because I wanted to know what was happening. It is important to have a boss. Who should I ask when I need anything?"



SVEN-GORAN ERIKSSON

Today I got that decision and I am happy with that.

"I regret that Crozier went away. He was a good man who did an excellent job for the FA."

"I worked very well with him, and he created a good atmosphere at the FA for me personally. He was a good professional. Now we have a new situation, and David is going to be my boss."

"I wanted to go on as before. I talked to David today; I talked to Premier League chairmen and some club chairmen. Everything is going on as before with my job."

Middlesbrough midfielder Jonathan Greening was the one surprise inclusion in next week's squad.

His call-up comes after he impressed Eriksson while playing on the left-hand side of midfield for Middlesbrough under former England assistant coach Steve McClaren.

Formerly of Manchester United, Greening has won 17 England

Under-21 caps. However, there was no place in Eriksson's line-up for 17-year-old Everton striker Wayne Rooney who has been making headlines with some stunning displays for the Merseysiders this season.

The players will assemble at in Hertfordshire, southern England, on November 18, train on Tuesday and go back to their clubs on Wednesday.

SQUAD table listing Goalkeepers, Defenders, Midfielders, and Forwards with their current clubs.

Heading behind Astle's death

Football

AFP, London

Former England striker Jeff Astle died as a result of repeatedly heading a football during his 20-year professional career, a coroner's court ruled Monday.

West Bromwich Albion hero Astle was famed for his heading ability. He made his name during the 1960s when heavy leather footballs, which soaked up water when wet, were in use.

South Staffordshire coroner Andrew Haigh, who returned a verdict of death by industrial disease, said: "Jeff Astle was a top footballer who was known for heading the ball."

"Sadly in 1997 he showed signs of brain deterioration. The trauma caused to the front of his brain is likely to have had a considerable effect on the cause of death."

Astle, 59, who won five England caps and represented his country at the Mexico World Cup finals in

1970, died from a degenerative brain disease aged 59 at a hospital in central England in January after collapsing at his daughter's home.

Dr Derek Robson, a consultant neurological pathologist, said there was evidence of brain injury consistent with "repeated minor trauma".

He added: "I found that there was considerable evidence of trauma to the brain similar to that of a boxer."

"It is quite probable that it was heading a heavy football that caused it - I found that most damage to the brain was at the front of the head."

"I actually remember as a small child how heavy it was to head a leather football."

Astle's widow, Lorraine, told the inquest: "He underwent a brain scan last year and it revealed Jeff had suffered an injury to the front part of his brain," she said.

"This would be the same part of the head that he used to head the ball during his playing career."

"It was known throughout the game that he was one of the hardest headers of a football and this

was in the days when a ball was made of leather - it would have been like heading a bag of bricks."

Astle scored 174 goals in 361 games for Albion and achieved the rare feat of scoring in every round of the FA Cup, including the cup final winner against Everton, when the Birmingham club lifted the trophy in 1968.

He retired from football in 1977 and became a window cleaner before finding television fame with cameo singing roles on the BBC's Fantasy Football League programme.

The coroner's verdict in his case is sure to strengthen the resolve of numerous former players who have tried, so far unsuccessfully, to gain compensation for head injuries they claim were sustained as a result of repeatedly heading the old-fashioned football.

England's Professional Footballers Association (PFA) has taken up a number of cases but a spokesman for its chief executive, Gordon Taylor, told AFP he would not comment on the coroner's ruling until he had studied a full text of the judgment.

Fergie's advice for Keane

Football

AFP, London

Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson has told Roy Keane not to say anything about his Ireland future.

The 31-year-old former Irish skipper was sent home before the Republic had played a match at this summer's World Cup finals following a furious row with manager Mick McCarthy.

Keane vowed he would never play for Ireland while McCarthy remained manager. But following McCarthy's resignation last week speculation has grown about the possibility of Keane's international return.

However, Ferguson has said Keane, currently recovering from a hip operation should keep quiet after the publication of his autobiography provoked a stream of newspaper headlines.

"I think for Roy's sake, the least he says about it the better because it is going to be another agenda for everyone in Ireland," Ferguson told manutd.com on Monday.

"They will be agog with stories about who is taking over and Keane coming back."

"At the moment he is not even back for us and that is the first step."

Keane has taken note of Ferguson's warning, claiming that first he must concentrate on a return to action for "the people who pay my wages".

Popular television soccer chat shows in Italy frequently descend into rows with claims of bias and hints of plots.

The announcement came after talks between Federation president Franco Carraro and officials from the Italian Referees Association after the latest bout of heavy criticism of referees.

The first sign of the tough new approach came earlier on Monday when Roma president Franco Sensi and Como president Enrico Preziosi were referred to the FIGC's disciplinary committee after critical comments at the weekend.

Sensi had made a strongly worded attack on unidentified "delinquents" inside the game and repeated his often heard claim of bias in favour of Northern clubs.

He had suggested that the high number of yellow cards against Roma players were "preparation" for the club's upcoming games against direct rivals for the title. It is not the first time Sensi's comments have landed him in hot water.

Preziosi made a furious attack on the refereeing following his side's 1-0 loss to Bologna on Sunday and said he was resigning because he could put up with "scandalous refereeing" no longer, suggesting there was an organised effort against his club.

Preziosi criticised the decision of referee Alfredo Trentalange to award Bologna a penalty which their striker Giuseppe Signori converted to win the game.

"Today we can say Bologna 1 Como 0 - goalscorer Trentalange," Preziosi said after Sunday's game.

Preziosi has made several accusations in recent weeks that bigger clubs enjoy favouritism and suggested his team had paid the price for his words.

"Today we saw more scandalous refereeing, all in the favour of

Bologna. I criticised the referees during the week and this was the reaction.

Carraro has also written a letter to Italian Football League president Adriano Galliani urging the support of the League and the clubs for the moves and for increased backing for referees.