Brawl aboard plane

REUTERS, London

A plane carrying 148 passengers made an emergency landing at Cardiff international airport on Friday after a brawl on board thought to have involved Glasgow Celtic soccer fans

The Boeing 737, owned by travel company Astraeus, was travelling from Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain to Glasgow following Thursday night's UEFA Cup soccer match between Celtic and Spain's Celta Vigo.

A fight broke out and the captain decided to land in Cardiff, Wales, and call in the police

There was an incident initially involving a passenger smoking on board," Astraeus spokesman Jonathan Hinkles said

"We understand the captain spoke to the passengers, obviously to say this behaviour was not acceptable," he told Sky Television News. Smoking is banned on all UK

"The captain elected to divert the aircraft to Cardiff. It landed safely and the police have met the aircraft there to deal with the passengers responsible for the incident.'

He said one crew member had been injured after being hit on the arm but gave no further details of

Liverpool ready for anything

AFP, Liverpool

English Premiership side Liverpool's French boss Gerard Houllier believes his side would be well equipped to handle any UEFA plan to restrict the number of foreign

Europe's governing body are considering limiting the number of foreign players a club has on the pitch to six at a time in an attempt to force clubs to improve their youth development systems.

Given the number of English players in his squad Houllier feels Liverpool would have no difficulty adapting to any change.

Five of his starting line-up against Vitesse Arnhem in the UEFA Cup on Thursday were English goalkeeper Chris Kirkland, Danny Murphy, Michael Owen, Jamie Carragher and Steven Gerrard with young striker John Mellor on the bench.

"It's good for the future of England and Liverpool, although I should always put Liverpool first." Houllier said

'I would not totally disagree with what UEFA are proposing, but half the team seems a lot. It's a difficult decision with European law and I'll probably be long gone from the club before they can bring it in.

'It's common sense but vou would need time to adapt, you have players contracts to think about. But I can understand why because I was

Spurs may leave White Hart Lane

REUTERS, London

Tottenham Hotspur could leave White Hart Lane if the run-down area around the north London club is not developed with government money, club chairman Daniel Levy warned.

Spurs would like to have 50,000 supporters in a revamped stadium. surrounded by an area improved by central and local government funding and better transport links.

But asked if such a change was likely, Levy told the club's website on Friday: "As I sit here today, I have very little confidence based on past performance.

"This area has gone downhill. There's been no central government intervention to stop the decline. I'm not confident, which is why we've decided we have to look at other

options. Levy said Spurs fans would be asked about such a sensitive issue, with their views being sought in a website questionnaire and a survey before their English premier league game against Charlton Athletic on

"Without improved transport links. we can't move on. We can't sit here forever and a day hoping it's going to happen," Levy said.

December 26.

'We haven't set a time limit but if we find another suitable site, somewhere financially viable that the fans would be comfortable with, that would be a catalyst upon which we'd have to turn around and say we've

"Either there's going to be significant commitment or we're off. We haven't put a gun to anyone's head yet because we're not in that position -- but we are at the point where

we will explore other avenues." Spurs manager Glenn Hoddle also believes the club needs to look at all the possible options.

"We've got to look at the overall thing and what's right for the club more than just the manager or the chairman or the fans." he told a reporters at the club's Chigwell training ground on Friday.

"It's the overall picture that's got to be right... and we haven't got the answer yet.'

Spotlight on the World Player-of-the-Year

Phenomenon year Born to be Real



Football

REUTERS, Madrid

In fewer games than most professionals manage to cram into a couple of months of the season Brazilian striker Ronaldo has forced his way to the head of the queue for football's end of vear awards

In fact Ronaldo's "year" effectively boils down to a sensational month at the World Cup, a sparkling debut for his new club Real Madrid and the opening goal in their victory in the World Club Cup.

RONALDO It would be unjust to his fellow professionals to bestow the European and World honours on the 26-yearold from Rio de Janeiro if they claimed to be a reward for performances over the course of the year.

But if it comes down to global impact then there can only be one choice -he shaven-headed Brazilian known to millions simply as 'The Phenomenon.

In a fairy-tale ending to three years of injury-plagued misery Ronaldo confirmed his rehirth as a player with a stellar performance on the world's greatest footballing stage in South Korea and Japan.

His eight goals in seven games, including a magical double in the 2-0 victory against Germany in the final, marked the difference between Brazil and their rivals in what was one of the most evenly-balanced World Cups in

His match-winning performance finally allowed him to lay to rest the ghosts of France 98 when he played just hours after suffering a mystery

Looking dazed and lethargic he made a negligible contribution as Brazil lost 3-0 to a French side inspired by Zinedine Zidane. Brazil's record-breaking fifth title will be remembered as Ronaldo's World

Cup in the same way as their 1970 triumph was associated with his predecessor Pele, whose total of 12 World Cup goals the Phenomenon has now equalled. The twice winner of FIFA's World Player of the Year award may not quite

have recovered the explosive pace of his year at Barcelona, but it is a testament to his skill and natural brilliance that even while not totally fit he was head and shoulders above any other striker in the tournament. It may also be an indication of the rigours of the footballing calendar that a

semi-fit player emerging from three years of career-threatening injury was able to outshine a host of exhausted professionals who arrived at the tournament with up to 60 games under their belts in 12 months. Ronaldo, however, remains perfectly adapted to lead football's highly-

He still has a burst of speed that few can match, a dizzying shimmy that pemuses even the best defenders and a rocket-powered shot that fired him to fame in the mid 1990s

As if his performance in South Korea and Japan was not enough Ronaldo then became the leading protagonist in the transfer saga of the summer, a tale with more twists than the best of Brazilian soap operas.

Whether he was anxious to banish the memories of five injury-plaqued years at Inter, or was keen to escape the confines of Italian football, or just simply could not hack the egalitarian regime of coach Hector Cuper,

Ronaldo instructed his agents to get him away from the Serie A club. He was, of course, welcomed with open arms by European champions Real Madrid, eager to complete their glittering centenary team with the brightest jewel in world football.

Ronaldo's move to Real certainly smacked of ingratitude given that the Italian club had supported him throughout his odyssey of injuries and continued to pay him his reported salary of 4.5 million euros (4.60 million dollars) without so much as a whisper of complaint. Even after the convoluted transfer negotiations were completed -- min-

utes before the European transfer deadline expired at midnight on August 31 Ronaldo continued to hog the headlines as he battled against a series of niggling injuries that delayed his debut for his new club. It was more than a month before he made his first appearance for his new team, although true to form he scored with almost his first touch after coming

on as a second-half substitute against Alaves at the Bernabeu and even grabbed another before the 5-2 rout was complete. Two months later and after just a handful of appearances he made a triumphant return to the Yokohama stadium -- the venue for the World Cup final -- and scored the opening goal in Real's 2-0 win over South American

hampions Olimpia of Paraguay in the World Club Ronaldo was named man-of-the-match even though many commentators believed it was his team mate Luis Figo who had turned in the better

But the Brazilian is a marketing man's dream.

He scores his goals in the right places and in front of the right television audiences, his face is recognised in every continent, he collects footballing awards like small change and he hails from the world's most productive

Ronaldo appears to have it all and vet question marks still remain. Is he capable of surviving the rigours of a full season at a club with both European and domestic commitments or will he spend as much time on the treatment table as on the field?

undisputed comeback king of 2002



ZINEDINE ZIDANE

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

If it had not been for a dismal World Cup, French midfielder Zinedine Zidane may well be giving Ronaldo a closer run as the two Real Madrid team mates fight it out for football's end of year awards.

The pre-tournament injury to the inspirational playmaker effectively torpedoed his country's chances of a successful defence of the crown they won so convincingly on home territory four years ago.

their talisman, while in purely footballing terms they missed his presence so much that by the time he returned to face Denmark in the final group match there was little he could do to stop an ignominious first round exit.

In terms of morale the team never recovered from the blow of missing

But World Cup failure aside, 2002 was still an exceptional year for the world's most expensive player.

The balding, slightly uneasy-looking figure, who looks a good deal older than his 30 years, scored what was probably the goal of the season with his stunning winner in the 2-1 victory against Bayer Leverkusen in the Champions League final at Hampden Park. Keeping his eyes fixed on a high and hopeful cross from Roberto Carlos the Frenchman drifted away from his markers before unleashing an unstoppable left-foot volley from the edge of the area which sailed into back of the net.

It was a collector's piece of a goal and the perfect way for Real Madrid to secure their ninth European crown. Zidane's goal would have graced the legendary European Cup final

which Real won 7-3 against Eintracht Frankfurt on the same ground some 42 years earlier, and which is generally regarded as the greatest club match With one moment of technical genius the Frenchman, showed just why

Real had been prepared to pay a world record \$66 million to secure his

That goal also enabled the modest Frenchman to add a missing medal to his burgeoning collection and helped him get the vote from UEFA as the most valuable player in last season's competition.

Despite having to serve the remainder of a five-match ban incurred while he was still at Juventus, Zidane proved to be the most influential player in Real's journey to the final, scoring a crucial goal in the first leg of the semifinal against arch-rivals Barcelona.

In one fluid movement he connected with a sweeping pass from Raul and sent a dipping right-foot shot into the far corner to open the scoring at the Nou Camp, in a game Real went on to win 2-0.

But it had not been all plain sailing in his first season at Real.

The mild-mannered Frenchman took time to settle at his new club and later admitted that he was affected by the degree of media pressure he was subjected to following his move from Juventus.

He took time to gel with his new team mates, but eventually began to show touches of the almost balletic control and sublime skill that make him one of the most aesthetically-pleasing players in the world to watch. Of course, he was not capable of producing his best week in and week

out in the league, but he proved once again that he is capable of turning it on in the key games No player in the modern game possesses his vision or his passing ability.

He sees gaps in defences even before they appear and his apparently lazy passes unleash his attackers with unerring effectiveness. His calmness on the ball and the apparent ease with which he floats

behind his strikers hides an aggressive streak and determination to win, while, as he proved at Hampden and the Nou Camp, he can score great When he is not exhibiting his skills on the football pitch Zidane tends to

shy away from the media spotlight, preferring instead to spend time with his wife Veronique and his children. The son of humble Algerian immigrants Zidane has become a goodwill ambassador to the United Nations and is the embodiment of multi-ethnic

He has become a role model for thousands of French children who share similar roots. His status transcends his position as a world-class footballer and he was clearly aware of this when he stood up and called for a massive

vote against the extreme right-wing candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen in this

year's presidential elections. Real Madrid president Florentino Perez claims Zidane was born to play for Real Madrid.

It is an indication of the esteem in which the Frenchman is held at Real but it is also true that the president of any other club in the world would love to be able to echo Perez's boast.

Hazem Emam of Egyptian club Zamalek holds up the trophy after defeating Morocco's Raja 1-0 in the final of the African Champions League in Cairo on December 13.

Big Phil off to Portugal

Football

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro Brazilian World Cup-winning coach Luiz Felipe Scolari left for Lisbon to take charge of Portugal's national team, dismissing allegations that

was not properly qualified. "Felipao (Big Phil) is a qualified physical education instructor and a member of the coaches' association in the state of Rio Grande do Sul.' his spokesman Acaz Felleger said.

"The law which controls the profession in Brazil states that this is sufficient for him to practice the profession."

Scolari proudly displayed his diploma, which he has kept since completing the course in 1974, at an event held in his honour at the city hall in Porto Alegre, southern Brazil, on Thursday.

some people who don't believe in me." he told local politicians

Felleger said the row had been stirred up by the Brazilian Association of Football Coaches (ABTF), who stated that Scolari had to complete their five-day course

LUIZ FELIPE SCOLARI "Unfortunately, there are still

held in Rio de Janeiro before he could officially be considered a Felleger added that Portugal's

joined in the criticism after getting wind of the matter. But Felleger said Portugal

counterpart association had also

Football Federation president Gilberto Madail had personally assured Scolari that the diploma was not an issue and that he could sign his contract as planned in Lisbon on Saturday Scolari began coaching in 1982

Pelotas, Goias, Coritiba, Criciuma Gremio, Palmeiras and Cruzeiro in his own country. He also coached the Kuwait

with CSA in the north-east of Brazil

and has also coached Juventude.

national team and Japanese club Jubilo Iwata He took over with Brazil at one of the lowest ebbs in their history in

June 2001 and, after early qualifier defeats against Honduras and Bolivia, led them to their fifth World Cup triumph in June He resigned as Brazil coach in

August, saying he wanted to be with

Tough talking UEFA

Football

REUTERS, Nyon

UEFA are to increase random dope testing by 30 per cent from next season and will also review behaviour at matches in a bid to improve the global image of soccer.

But an executive committee on changes to the UEFA Cup, leaving the format unchanged until at least the start of the 2004-05 season.

European soccer's governing body are falling into line with FIFA and WADA, the world anti-doping agency, in their increased efforts to

keep drugs out of sport. UEFA chief executive Gerhard Aigner said on Friday that random tests would increase from 137 matches this season to 180 next season -- and that random testing would also be introduced far more

"In the past, we have tended to test the same teams as they progress through a competition and so the testing is concentrated on the

high profile matches," he said. "From next season, we intend to spread the testing across the board and include players in the earlier rounds of the competitions

"We will also test in Under-17

example With four players tested at every match -- two from each team -- a

and Under-19 competitions for

total of 548 players were tested last season with only one positive result. So far this season just one player has tested positive -- Sead Seferovic of Zelieznicar, who was

tested after his team played Newcastle United in a Champions fier on August 14. He was suspended for one year after his test showed he had used the banned substance ephedrine UEFA are also keen to improve

the global image of the game and are to set up a working party to look at 12 key areas where discipline breaks down in high-profile televised games These include players or

coaches screaming at the referee, coaches turning to the public to encourage protest, players guilty of blatant cheating and groups of players rounding on the referee after a decision has been made.

Aigner explained: "We can learn from other sports like basketball, rugby and athletics where the players show greater discipline.

"This image of football is having a negative effect on the recruitment of referees -- the pictures shown on the television discourage people

must improve this." The plan is to examine the worst aspects and eventually incorporate the improvements into the laws of the game with the backing of FIFA

ultimate law-making body for the UEFA are still considering changes to the UEFA Cup, including the delicate subject of centrally

and the International Board, the

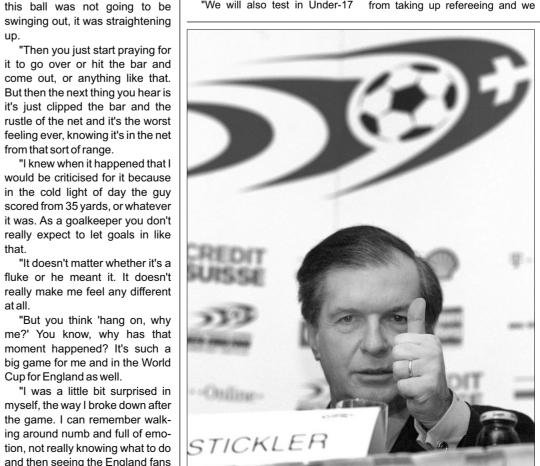
existing European Union laws. At the moment, clubs organise their own TV and sponsorship deals for the UEFA Cup, which UEFA would prefer to market centrally as they do for the Champions League.

Aigner also stressed they were keen to give the UEFA Cup a greater identity of its own.

"Because of the reduction of matches in the Champions League in due course, there is a greater opportunity to alternate between having only Champions League matches in some weeks and UEFA Cup matches in another.

"This will ease up a number of dates for domestic club competitions and ease some of the burden on the clubs.

"The calendar for this is still being sorted out, but no changes will be made to the UEFA Cup until the start of the 2004-05 season at the earliest," Aigner said.



President of the Austrian Football Association Friedrich Stickler gestures during a press conference in Vienna on December 13. UEFA has chosen a joint bid by Austria/Switzerland to host the European Championships in

No Hierro, **Makelele**

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid defender Fernando Hierro and midfielder Claude Makelele will be out of action until the New Year after suffering injuries during Wednesday's Champions League match against Lokomotiv Moscow.

Club medical staff said Hierro would need three weeks to recover from damaged ankle ligaments sustained late in the 2-2 draw against Lokomotiv at the Bernabeu. while Makelele would be sidelined for about two weeks because of a

The good news for Real was that tests revealed that Brazilian striker Ronaldo, who was taken off at halftime with a suspected calf strain, was not seriously injured and could be available to play this weekend.

Real, who are sixth in the

Spanish league table, eight points behind leaders Real Sociedad, have matches against Recreativo Huelva and Malaga to play before the New Year. They also face Sevilla on

January 2, a match rescheduled because of their involvement in last week's World Club Cup, which they won 2-0 against Paraguay's

Whatever the doubts about the future, one thing is clear -- Ronaldo is the



Football

INTERNET, London Veteran goalkeeper David Seaman is adamant he has no intention of quitting England as he believes he should continue to be

judged on ability rather than age. Seaman insists if he had wanted to hang up his gloves then he would have done so in the summer in the wake of his World Cup gaffe which reduced him to tears and led to England's exit at the hands of eventual winners

Despite now being 39, Seaman feels his experience is crucial if England are to qualify for the finals of the 2004 European Championship in Portugal, even though there is a clamour for the likes of Leeds' Paul Robinson to

be given a chance. Injuries in recent seasons may have reduced Seaman's appearances for both Arsenal and his country, with his latest being a groin problem which makes him a doubt for Sunday's north London derby with Tottenham at White Hart Lane, but he has defiantly

stated: "I want to carry on playing.

"There's no doubt about that

otherwise I would have called it a day after the Brazil game, but I've decided I want to keep playing for Arsenal and if I play well for them then really I expect to be picked for England. "That's what it's about, whether

you play well or not. It's not about, 'we'd better get a young goalnext finals'. We've got to get to the

"All I say to people is judge me on what I'm doing on the pitch. It's not how old you are, it's how good Seaman, who is to be featured in a BBC1 documentary on

Wednesday entitled: 'David

Seaman - The Real Story', has the

backing of his peers, including England coach Sven-Goran

DAVID SEAMAN

Eriksson

"My job is to try to pick the best players in every position," said

"So far since I came to this country always I have thought he is the number one, that's why he is there. It's not like I am a friend or I want to give him a favour."

Importantly, Seaman also has the support of his England teammates who consider the last line

with captain David Beckham revealing: "You see David Seaman in goal and you think, yes, you are confident.

"You look back and you see

David and if a player's going on a

one on one with him, you've got full confidence and that's nice to Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger remains convinced Seaman, who currently has 75 caps to his name,

"When I look at David's training

is still the best in the business

sessions, I look at his reaction times," considered the Frenchman. "To keep sharp, the speed of his movements, his power in jumping, concentrating - I am really convinced he is stronger physically today than he was four of five years ago because he works so hard and he is ready to give everything in a training ses-

he is the best." Seaman, though, will long be remembered for that moment in the World Cup quarter-final in June when he let Ronaldinho's 35-yard winning free-kick sail over his head to send England crash-

sion. That's basically why we think

Seaman was understandably a forlorn, dejected figure at the time, and in particular following the game as he openly concedes during the programme. "I was a little bit off my line,

which I always am, as every

goalkeeper is for a free-kick which

is going to come in," reflected

"I saw it early, expecting it to start swinging out. I took a couple of paces and then realised that this ball was not going to be swinging out, it was straightening

"Then you just start praying for

come out, or anything like that.

it's just clipped the bar and the rustle of the net and it's the worst feeling ever, knowing it's in the net from that sort of range. "I knew when it happened that I would be criticised for it because in the cold light of day the guy scored from 35 yards, or whatever

really expect to let goals in like "It doesn't matter whether it's a fluke or he meant it. It doesn't really make me feel any different

"But you think 'hang on, why

big game for me and in the World Cup for England as well. "I was a little bit surprised in myself, the way I broke down after the game. I can remember walking around numb and full of emotion, not really knowing what to do and then seeing the England fans

"It surprised me, but that's just the way I felt at the time. I just didn't know what to do.'

tears and everything.

it just all started happening, the