

Barcelona's new Yugoslav coach Radomir Antic talks to media after a meeting with the club's president Joan Gaspart in Madrid on January 31.

Antic confirmed

Football

AFP, Madrid

Yugoslav Radomir Antic has been appointed coach of struggling Spanish First Division giants Barcelona...

The 54-year-old former Atletico, Real Madrid and Oviedo coach replaces Dutchman Louis van Gaal...

The Yugoslavian coach was appointed following a meeting with Gaspart and he will stay with Barca until the end of the season...

Antic's appointment was made official following a meeting of the club's administrative council Friday afternoon...

Gaspart told a press conference: "I'm very happy with the appointment."

Barcelona had been linked with the former Argentinian national coach Cesar Luis Menotti...

Carlos Rexach, sacked as Barcelona coach last May after they lost a Champions League semi-final to bitter rivals Real Madrid...

Antic, who left Oviedo in 2001, led Atletico to a league and cup double in 1996. A former Yugoslavian international midfielder, he also coached FK Partizan and Real Zaragoza.

Barcelona's recent slump in form leaves them 12th in the Spanish First Division, without a win in their

last three games and facing the prospect of finishing in the lower half of the table for the first time since 1942.

Conversely, Barcelona have won all 10 of their Champions League

matches this term although that did little to appease Barca's fans who called for van Gaal's head after last Sunday's 2-0 defeat by Celta Vigo...

ANTIC FACTS

REUTERS, Madrid

Factbox on Radomir Antic who was named as Barcelona coach on Friday:

1949: Born November 22, Zitiste, Yugoslavia.

* During a playing career that stretched between 1967 and 1984 he had spells at Sloboda Tuzla, Partizan Belgrade, Fenerbahce, Real Zaragoza and Luton Town.

* At Luton he was part of their promotion team and earned a place in club history when he kept them in the First Division in 1983 with an 84th minute goal at Manchester City after coming on as a substitute.

* Won five international caps for Yugoslavia before retiring in 1984.

1985: Began coaching career, taking charge of the youth team at Partizan. 1988: Returned to Spain to coach Real Zaragoza steering the Aragonese club to fifth and ninth place finishes in the First Division before leaving when financial problems hit the club.

1991: After a brief spell out of work he replaced Alfredo Di Stefano as coach of Real Madrid and steered them to a third place finish in the league. Sacked during the 1991-1992 season while Real were leading the First Division.

1992: Appointed coach of Real Oviedo, enjoying three successful seasons at the Asturian club.

1995: Named coach at Atletico Madrid and guided the side to the league and cup double in his first season in charge.

1998: Replaced by Italian coach Arrigo Sacchi after two lean seasons at Atletico. Turned down offer of Yugoslav national team coach.

1999: March, returned to take charge at Atletico, helping to guide them to the final of the King's Cup. Sacked at the end of the season and replaced by Italian coach Claudio Ranieri, who had led Valencia to a 3-0 win over Atletico in the Cup final.

2000: March, returned for third spell at Atletico after resignation of Ranieri, but failed to prevent his side's relegation to the Second Division and was sacked at the end of the season.

2000: June, began second spell in charge of Real Oviedo, but had a troubled season following signing of controversial English striker Stan Collymore from Bradford City and his public criticisms of the quality of his squad.

2001: July, agreed to end his contract with Oviedo after their relegation to the Second Division. Linked with a number of coaching jobs but none of them materialised, and spent most of the following season as an analyst for a Spanish radio station.

2003: Jan 31, signs a deal to take over from Luis van Gaal as coach of Barcelona until the end of the season.

Bravo Leeds!

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid's Spain international left back Raul Bravo has been loaned to English Premiership side Leeds till the end of the season, the Spanish club said on Friday.

Madrid officials added Leeds will pay the players' salary but will not have an option to buy the 21-year-old who is a product of Real's youth scheme and has already played five times for his country at senior level.

As Roberto Carlos' replacement, Bravo has had little chance to show his talent at club level, particularly as he is also in competition on the left flank with Argentina's Santiago Solari.

Carlsberg Cup Sporting Denmark lose

AFP, Hong Kong

Denmark proved there was nothing rotten with the state of their sportsmanship on Saturday as their captain shunned a penalty during the 1-0 loss to Iran in the Carlsberg Cup here on Saturday.

Captain Morten Wieghorst deliberately kicked wide a penalty awarded to his team just on half-time after an Iranian defender had picked up the ball on hearing a whistle from the crowd at the Hong Kong Stadium.

The referee immediately pointed to the penalty spot. But in a brave display of sportsmanship, Wieghorst, only leading the team for the second time, kicked the ball wide, much to the appreciation of the Iranian players and the large crowd ushering in the Chinese Year of the Goat.

"It was unfair to try and capitalise on that. The Iranian player had no idea what had happened. It was unfortunate that he picked the ball up and in such circumstances it was difficult for me to kick a penalty," said Wieghorst, who plays for Danish champions Brondby.

"It was fair play by our captain. He didn't want to take that goal and well done to him," applauded Danish coach Morten Olsen afterwards.

Denmark shortly went behind, Javad Nekounam converting three minutes into the second half after winger Hossein Kabei was hacked down with a two-footed lunge by Asbjorn Sennels inside the area.

Nekounam struck a low shot into the left-hand corner of the net to give his side a 1-0 lead. Iran then defended for the rest of the half with only striker Khodadad Azizi up front.

Denmark clearly had the best of the first half and came close to scoring on a number of occasions. Forward Soren Berg was just wide of the mark with a couple of headers while Thomas Larsen also missed in the 13th minute, when he hit a volley wide, and was denied by Iranian goalkeeper Ebrahim Mirzapour in the 30 minute.

"We were under pressure for most of the match. It is satisfying to beat a team like Denmark and be in the final. Our expectations are high," said Iran's caretaker coach Homayoun Shahrokhi.

Denmark came close to levelling the scores in the second half. But Iranian goalie Mirzapour pulled off a number of good saves to give his side a good start to the four-team tournament that also includes Uruguay and a Hong Kong League XI.

"We came here to win the Cup. But it is our fault that we are not in the final. We had our chances and we did not take it," added a disappointed Olsen.

Foreign-powered Parreira

Football

INTERNET, Rio de Janeiro

While bitter rivals Argentina began the year with a squad picked entirely of domestic based players, Brazil are pursuing a decidedly different path. In his first squad since taking over from Luis Felipe Scolari, Carlos Alberto Parreira selected '19 foreigners', as some sections of the Brazilian press corps dubbed the squad, for the reigning world champions' trip to China next month.

Parreira, who led Brazil to their fourth World Cup triumph in 1994,

has not been shy with his first selection since re-acquainting himself with football's most prestige coaching job. Since the pentacampeonato Brazil's enthusiastic press has expanded the 'Three Rs'; now including Real Madrid defender Roberto Carlos it has become four.

The Three Rs - Rivaldo, Ronaldo and Ronaldinho - quickly became the attacking threat in Korea and Japan, and now Parreira is ready to unleash the most dashing quartet since D'Artagnan and co. on a third South East Asian nation.

Rivaldo has shelved any international retirement plans he might have had. After pondering the idea of quitting Brazil after his off-season

transfer from Barcelona to AC Milan, the bow-legged striker has committed himself to playing in Germany 2006.

Twelve of the 'foreigners' played in the World Cup under Scolari, and his successor has seen no reason to fix what clearly isn't broken. His inclusion of Parma's Adriano, a young, athletic striker who made one appearance in a World Cup qualifier against Colombia in 2001, is the only surprise in a squad that has seen it and done it all.

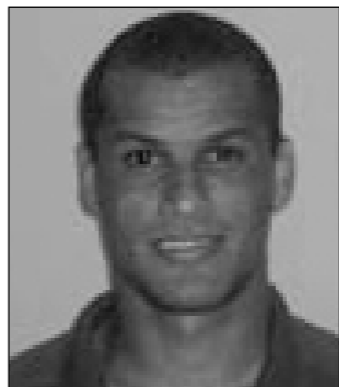
"We have to start the job with enthusiasm, with optimism," Parreira told a news conference. "We know about the difficulties we are going to find along the way. It's

not enough to have the best players, we have to have planning as well. Brazil have already proved on the field that we are the best in the world. Our big challenge with each friendly is to convince the players that each team the Selecao plays, we have to play with an amateur spirit, with happiness and optimism."

Three domestic based players will be selected for the squad on February 5, a week before the match against China, who Brazil beat 4-0 in the first round of the World Cup. China can expect little more facing a crack Brazilian side that will be out to impress the new man in charge.



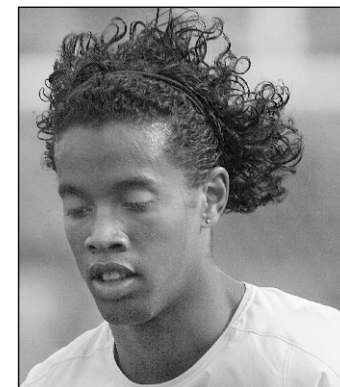
RONALDO



RIVALDO



ROBERTO CARLOS



RONALDINHO

Woodgate, Ricketts before deadline

Football

REUTERS, London

Newcastle United, still in the Champions League and second in the English premier league, topped the transfer deadline day signings by splashing out nine million pounds (\$14.88 million) on defender Jonathan Woodgate from cash-strapped Leeds United.

But January's transfer window, which closed at 1700 GMT on Friday, finished as it had begun - with loans making up the lion's share of the deals as club chairmen, one or two exceptions apart, kept a tight hold on the pursestrings.

Southampton, chasing a European place next season, spent 2.5 million pounds (\$4.12 million) in taking England under-21 midfielder David Prutton from Nottingham Forest.

There was confusion though over a move for Bolton striker Michael Ricketts. Middlesbrough's website said on Friday the club had agreed a fee with Bolton, but the premier league strugglers later said no official bid had been made.

Champions Arsenal, who like Manchester United and Liverpool have not bought a single player this month, did add to their squad on Friday, bringing in former RC Lens goalkeeper Guillaume Warmuz as cover for David Seaman.

Leeds United chairman Peter Ridsdale said there had been no option but to sell the 23-year-old Woodgate because of the state of the club's finances after failure to make the Champions League two seasons in succession.

Leeds, whose debts reached 70 million pounds (\$115.2 million) by the middle of last year, also parted with striker Robbie Fowler to Manchester City in a six million pounds (\$9.88 million) deal on Thursday.

"It's acknowledged that the transfer system has imploded, with few if any football clubs having money to spend on the scale we had become used to. Ridsdale warned in a news conference on Friday at which manager Terry Venables refused to commit himself to the club following the sale of Woodgate and Fowler.

"It is against this backdrop we have listened to offers where we believed it was right for the long-term financial stability of the football club.

"We have lost 30 million pounds (\$49.38 million) over the last two seasons through not being in the Champions League."

Woodgate's transfer pales into insignificance when compared to the \$47 million Manchester United spent on Rio Ferdinand just six months ago.

Worries over lopsided balance sheets and hyperinflationary wage

bills have now put paid to the kind of multi-million dollar signings that were once the norm.

Newcastle manager Bobby Robson, who unsuccessfully tried to sign Brazil's World Cup midfielder Kleberson last week, criticised the introduction of the transfer window in the premier league this season, which allow signings and loan deals to be made for only two periods during the year.



JONATHAN WOODGATE

"It is unnecessary," Robson said. "This is a vibrant industry and we need to buy and sell. Why reduce that? The market place needs to be open every day."

Middlesbrough, in addition to trying to secure Ricketts, are involved in a loan deal to take Derby

striker Malcolm Christie and defender Chris Riggott to the Riverside Stadium.

Arsenal, five points clear at the top of the table, have signed French goalkeeper Warmuz until the end of the season.

Last week, Wenger had discussions in London with Brazil's World Cup-winning keeper Marcos but a deal fell through because of personal reasons.

As understudy to Seaman, the former Lens skipper will be cover for Rami Shaaban, who is out for the rest of the season with a leg fracture.

The only disadvantage with the signing is that having already played for Lens in the first phase of this season's Champions League, he cannot take part in the competition for Arsenal, who are in the second phase.

Southampton, enjoying a fine season, added to their squad by bringing in Prutton on a 4-1/2 year contract.

Premier league strugglers West Ham United were also active on deadline day, signing defender Rufus Brevet from Fulham for an undisclosed fee.

In loan deals completed on Friday, Morocco international defender Talal El Karkour has joined Sunderland from Paris St Germain while Bolton have taken on Nantes striker Pierre-Yves Andre.

Italy for a revamp

Football

REUTERS, Milan

The Italian Football League is considering a plan to radically transform the top-flight Serie A championship.

The League's council on Thursday presented to club representatives a series of proposals including one for Serie A to be expanded to two groups of 20 teams.

The top division currently has 18 clubs with Serie B containing another 20 teams.

The shake-up is seen as a possible way of boosting Italian soccer, which is suffering from acute financial problems.

"We are studying two or three hypotheses for reform of the championship that will be put in front of the League assembly and the

Federal Council of the Football Federation [FIGC]," said League president Adriano Galliani.

"We are looking to go to a vote on the new reform in the fastest time possible," added Galliani.

Any new plan will have to be backed by the majority of Serie A and Serie B clubs as well as the FIGC.

Shortly after the league meeting the FIGC said in a statement on Thursday that reform of the professional championships would be on the agenda of their next federal council meeting on February 14.

A spokesman for the League said the radical proposal for a two-group Serie A would see top-placed teams in each group play off for the title with other teams playing a 'play out' to avoid relegation.

Antonio Matarrese vice-president of the League said the radical proposal was being evaluated closely by the clubs.

"Regarding a Serie A of two

groups, it is a line that is being evaluated. We are looking to see if it is a way in which we can reach our primary aims of a new economic policy for the clubs that would bring real new health," he said.

Matarrese also said another reform being discussed was a way to reduce the number of relegated clubs from Serie A.

At the moment four clubs are relegated each season and replaced with the top four teams from Serie B.

"In no other place are there so many relegations with eight clubs changing division each season," said Matarrese.

The moves came as a response to a proposal from the FIGC to reform Serie B by expanding it into two groups.

"There was opposition to that proposal and we affirmed that without the consent of the League there can be no changes," said Matarrese.

Manchester United captain Roy Keane has not been included in the first Ireland squad picked by new manager Brian Kerr for a friendly against Scotland on February 12.

The Irish Football Association (FAI) said on Friday that Kerr -- appointed earlier this week to replace Mick McCarthy -- had stood by established names for his debut match. All 26 were members of McCarthy's squads for games against Finland, Russia and Switzerland last year. Tottenham Hotspur striker Robbie Keane is picked despite limping out of his club's

Football

REUTERS, Dublin

preiership defeat by Newcastle United on Wednesday. Blackburn Rovers' Rory Duff and Southampton's Daryl Delap are also named even though both are recovering from injury.

Earlier this week Kerr refused to be drawn on whether Roy Keane would ever don a green shirt again, although he hinted he would welcome the midfielder back from international exile.

"I want Ireland to have the best team possible out on the pitch. We have a limited pool to pick from," Kerr said.

The 31-year-old "Keano" -- Ireland's only world-class player -- was sent home on the eve of last year's World Cup finals in disgrace after a blazing row with McCarthy. He vowed never to play for his

country again while English-born McCarthy was in charge.

Dubliner Kerr took over as manager following McCarthy's departure in the wake of a disappointing start to the qualifying campaign for the 2004 European championship.

Ireland play Scotland at Glasgow's Hampden Park on February 12.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Shay Given (Newcastle United), Dean Kiely (Charlton Athletic), Nick Colgan (Hibernian). Defenders: Ian Harte (Leeds United), Gary Breen (West Ham United), Gary Kelly (Leeds United), Kenny Cunningham (Birmingham City), John O'Shea (Manchester United), Stephen Carr (Tottenham

Hotspur), Richard Dunne (Manchester City), Steve Finnan (Fulham), Andy O'Brien (Newcastle United).

Midfielders: Matt Holland (Ipswich Town), Colin Healy (Celtic), Mark Kinsella (Aston Villa), Lee Carsley (Everton), Rory Delap (Southampton), Stephen McPhail (Leeds United).

Forwards: Mark Kennedy (Wolverhampton Wanderers), Kevin Kilbane (Sunderland), Robbie Keane (Tottenham Hotspur), Clinton Morrison (Birmingham City), Damien Duff (Blackburn Rovers), Gary Doherty (Tottenham Hotspur), David Connolly (Wimbledon), Steven Reid (Millwall).

Argentina too good

Football

REUTERS, San Pedro Sula, Honduras

An experimental Argentina side, which included 10 uncapped players, came from behind to beat Honduras 3-1 in a friendly international on Friday despite having two men sent off.

The Central Americans, hoping to emulate their shock 2-0 win over Brazil at the Copa America two years ago, took a seventh-minute lead through Saul Martinez.

Racing Club striker Diego Milito equalised eight minutes later and second-half goals from Luis Gonzalez and Mariano Gonzalez gave Argentina a morale-boosting win in only their second match since their first-round exit at last year's World Cup.

But having had a numerical advantage for most of the second

half following the sending off of Honduras substitute Maynor Figueroa in the 46th minute, Argentina had to survive a stormy last few minutes after defenders Gabriel Milito and Ariel Garce were dismissed for violent play.

Argentina coach Marcelo Bielsa, surprisingly kept on after his team's World Cup debacle, fielded only home-based players for the match. Honduras were without Italian-based David Suazo and Julio de Leon.

Argentina had a nightmare start when Martinez outpaced Nicolas Burdisso to fire the opening goal past goalkeeper Sebastian Saja, the only player in the South American team who had been capped before.

But the visitors quickly recovered and Milito equalised from close range, converting a cross from Luis Gonzalez.

Honduras lost Figueroa, who had come on for Hector Gutierrez in

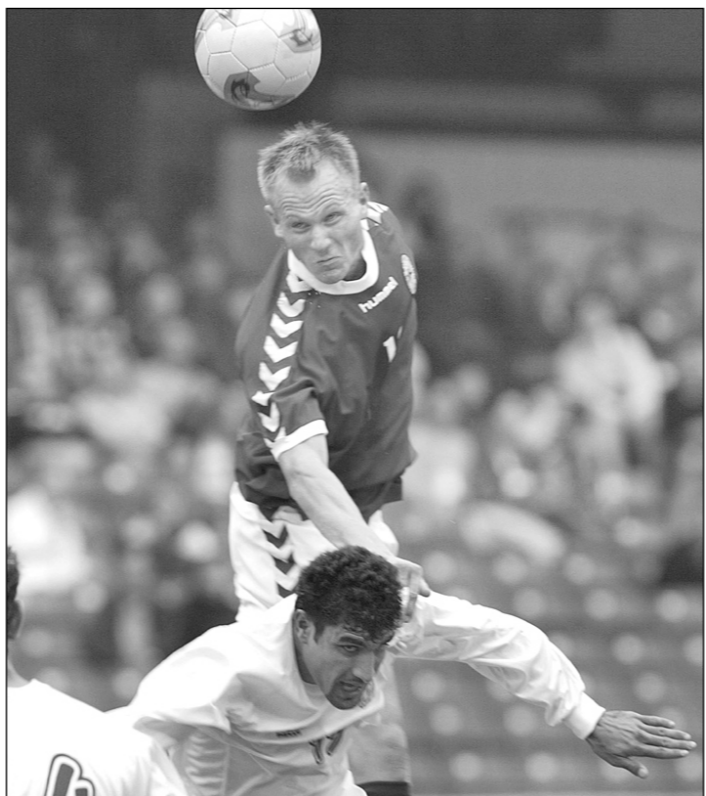
the 30th minute, at the start of the second half for violent play and Argentina took full advantage as they struck twice in devastating six-minute spell.

River Plate midfielder Luis Gonzalez beat a defender and fired home from the edge of the penalty area in the 52nd minute. Then Racing Club's Mariano Gonzalez beat two defenders in the penalty area to strike again in the 58th.

But then the visitors lost Milito, brother of their first goalscorer Diego, in the 73rd minute and Garce eight minutes later.

Argentina continue their tour on Monday, when they take on Mexico in Los Angeles, and face the United States in Miami next Friday.

Honduras were using the match as a warm-up for the CONCACAF Gold Cup qualifying tournament to be played in Panama later this month.



Denmark's Soren Berg Anderson (top) towers over Kamelimofrad Jalal of Iran to head during their opening game of the Carlsberg Cup in Hong Kong yesterday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with clues for letters and words.