

Parreira is serious

REUTERS, Lisbon

Brazil coach Carlos Alberto Parreira is looking forward to a "well-seasoned" friendly against Euro 2004 hosts Portugal on Saturday.

"All the condiments are on the table to make this a good game. Of course it is a friendly, but a well-seasoned one," Parreira told A Bola on Wednesday.

"Brazil have just been crowned world champions for the fifth time and Portugal will soon stage Euro 2004. So it's a big game between two teams with a lot at stake. Brazil wants to maintain prestige and Portugal wants to get in form for the European championship."

As hosts of Euro 2004, Portugal automatically qualify and will have no competitive fixtures in which to prepare for the tournament.

"There is nothing better for that than starting off with a good result against the five-time champions. We are aware of that. But let's be clear that Brazil always play to win. They have no alternative," added the coach.

Parreira also said Brazilian-born Deco, Portugal's most-talked about player, "did the right thing" in taking out Portuguese nationalist last month amid public protests from Luis Figo and Rui Costa against calling up naturalised players.

"You must take into account that there are four or five exceptional players for each position in Brazil, while a smaller country like Portugal ends up with less," he said.

"Was Deco an option for Brazil? Of course he was - he and millions of Brazilian players."

Following Figo and Costa's complaints, Portugal's Brazilian World Cup-winning trainer Luiz Felipe Scolari bluntly said that any squad member who did not want to play with Deco need not turn up.

Portuguese sports papers on Wednesday all carried front-page pictures of Figo and Deco training shoulder-to-shoulder.

Captain Zidane

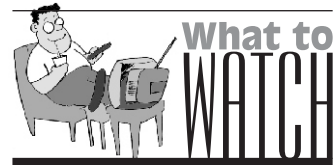
AFP, Clairefontaine

Real Madrid midfielder Zinedine Zidane will captain France in the Euro 2004 qualifiers against Malta and Israel, coach Jacques Santini announced on Thursday.

Zidane will replace Chelsea defender Marcel Desailly who has been left out of the team because of injuries and poor form.

The hero of the 1998 World Cup final will be in charge for Saturday's home match against the Maltese in Lens, northern France, and the away tie against Israel which has been rescheduled for Palermo, Sicily next Wednesday.

The softly-spoken Zidane exuded a natural authority, Santini said which commanded the respect of his teammates and dictated they way they played.



ESPN

English Premier Football League

Liverpool vs Leeds United

Repeat at 10:30 am

Western Union World Football

Taped Version at 4:00 pm

Sportscentre Hindi

Sport News

Live at 8:30 pm

STAR Sports

Sportsline Tonight

Sport News

Live at 8:00 pm

Star WHIZZ KID

COMPETITION 191

Tick the correct answers, post to

The Daily Star

Win attractive prizes

Competition closes at 8 pm

March 28, 2003 and draw

shortly afterwards

1. Who clinched the Shahjalal Bank International Rating Chess title?

Lovlu Rajib Zia

2. New Zealand beat South Africa in a World Cup Group B match by:

102 runs 9 wkts 5 wkts

3. How many runs did Bangladesh score against South Africa in the World Cup Group B match?

120 108 110

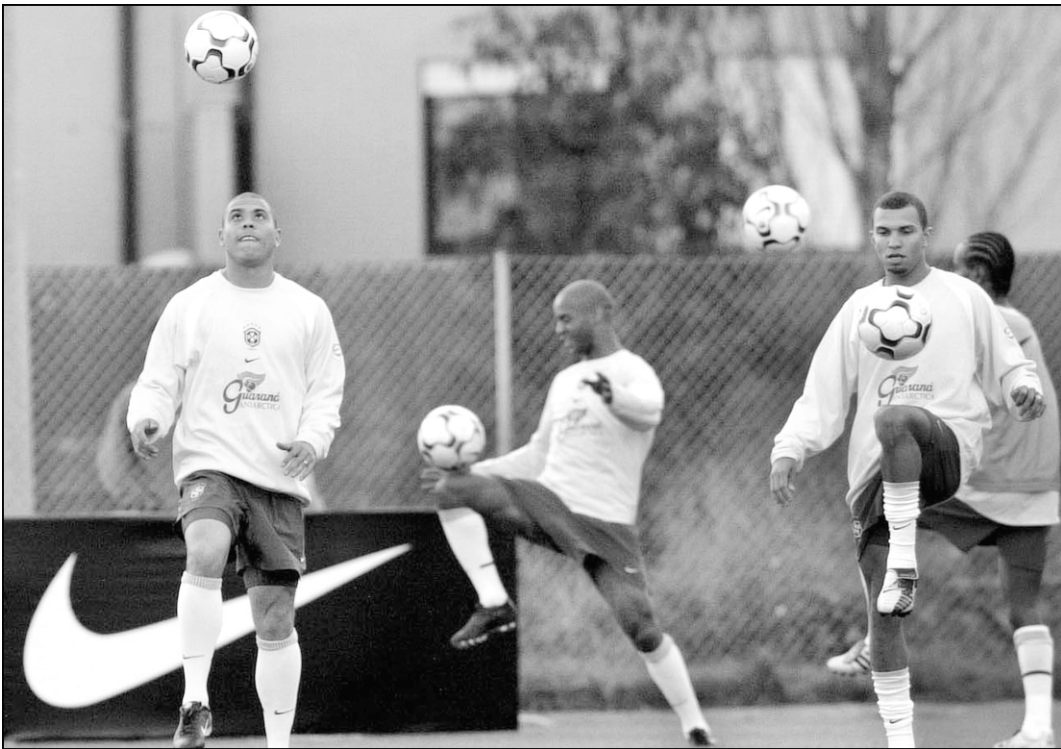
4. Bangladesh lost to Canada in the World Cup Group B match

Name

Class. Roll No.

School Address

Phone: (If any)



Brazilian superstar Ronaldo practises with his teammates in Porto on March 25. The world champions play Portugal in friendly international tomorrow.

FA Cup Chelsea gunned down



Football

AFP, London

Arsenal took another step towards an historic back-to-back domestic double as they beat Chelsea 3-1 at Stamford Bridge in the FA Cup quarterfinal replay on Tuesday.

Quick counter-attacks saw a John Terry own-goal and a Sylvain Wiltord strike give the Gunners a 2-0 lead at the interval.

After Pascal Cygan saw a second yellow card, Terry lifted Chelsea hopes with a header 12 minutes from time before Lauren killed the Blues off with a self-made shot.

The defeat dashes Chelsea's dreams of lifting a trophy and the Gunners go through to face First Division Sheffield United in the semi-final at Manchester United's Old Trafford on April 13.

This was the third time in as many seasons that Arsenal had knocked Chelsea out of the FA Cup and the win put Arsenal level with Everton's record of 23 appearances



Arsenal players celebrate their FA Cup quarterfinal replay victory over Chelsea at Stamford Bridge in London on March 25.

Zico's walking wounded



Football

AFP, Tokyo

Brazilian legend Zico is hoping his Japanese team of walking wounded can deliver his first victory as coach when they take on Uruguay in a friendly international here Friday.

Zico has yet to taste success after two matches in charge since taking over in the wake of Japan's World Cup campaign last year where they reached the last 16.

A 2-0 loss to Argentina and a 1-1 draw with Jamaica left Zico under no illusions about the work he has to do to ensure Japan appear in their third consecutive World Cup in three years time.

Zico has chosen his strongest available squad for Friday's match against the Uruguayans, who were eliminated in the first round of the 2002 World Cup after finishing behind Denmark and Senegal.

Uruguay should pose an awkward challenge, and they will be able to call upon six Europe-based players including Inter Milan's sublimely gifted Alvaro Recoba, who scored twice in a friendly against Japan in 1996.

"I have chosen the best possible team," said Zico. "Uruguay are a traditional South American team, they have won the World Cup

in the last four.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger hailed his team's effort.

"When I think what they've given in the last week, beating Everton and then tonight, it's just fantastic. I've said it before, how great they are. A team that fights for each other."

His Chelsea counterpart Claudio Ranieri paid tribute to Arsenal's clinical counter-attacking game.

"We had a lot of chances without scoring. They had three shots, three goals," said the Italian.

"Arsenal are the best at compressing then counter-attacking. We spoke about this before the game, but it's another thing to stop it on the pitch."

In the 2-2 draw at Highbury that forced the replay, Arsenal found a productive route to goal straight down the centre.

Chelsea had failed to learn the lesson and were opened up twice in ten minutes when Arsenal burst right through the middle of the Chelsea midfield and clinically finished their only two chances of

the half.

The first came on 23 minutes when Wiltord picked up on a Sol Campbell clearance inside his own half and bypassed the Blues' midfield in a flash.

With four against three defenders, Patrick Vieira broke away to the right and received the ball on the edge of the box.

His dangerous return pass to Wiltord was converted by the unlucky Terry who turned the ball beyond Carlo Cudicini's reach to take the shine off his first England call-up 48 hours earlier.

And an all-too familiar Arsenal move doubled the difference ten minutes later.

This time it was Vieira who stormed through from his own half, outpacing Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink and playing Wiltord in on the right of the box with defender William Gallas nowhere to be seen.

After missing out on the first, the French striker was in no mood to square it and coolly drove the ball past Cudicini.

WC 2007 party

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with the response of the guests to Caribbean culinary delights that he prepared with the South African kitchen staff at the venue.

Popular Caribbean band, Square One, added to "the taste of Caribbean Culture" by thrilling the diverse gathering from Asia, Africa, Europe and the West Indies with music from the length and breadth of the Caribbean, including a Jamaican reggae sweep, featuring most notably, "No Woman No Cry", rendered soulfully by one of the band's lead singers, Alison Hinds.

Square One also paid tribute to the cadence and zouk genres of the French-influenced islands and taught the patrons how to "jump and wave" to the soca hits from Antigua & Barbuda to Trinidad & Tobago, as well as their own high-energy classics. At the end of their performance chants of "We want more!" brought the band back for a well-deserved encore.

MC for the evening, Michael Holding, the former Jamaica and West Indies fast bowling legend, interviewed delegates from seven Caribbean countries who were observing the operations of the CWC 2003.

They gave insights into the uniqueness of each island and their preparations for the CWC 2007, while a video feature gave a pictorial overview of the natural beauty and excitement of the Caribbean and the tremendous passion for cricket in the region.

At the end of the evening several patrons were eagerly expressing their desire to visit the Caribbean even before 2007.

FIFA world rankings Spain move ahead of France

AFP, Paris

Spain leapfrogged European champions France into the second spot in the FIFA world rankings released here on Wednesday.

World champions Brazil remain comfortably on top of the rankings with a 73-point lead on Spain, with France a further two points behind, in third.

In the top ten England drop one spot to ninth with Mexico overtaking them to move up into eighth position.

Pos	Country	Pts
1.	Brazil	853
2.	Spain	780
3.	France	778
4.	Argentina	761
5.	Germany	758
6.	Netherlands	752
7.	Turkey	732
8.	Mexico	729
9.	England	725
10.	United States	723
11.	Denmark	704
12.	Portugal	700
13.	Italy	699
14.	Rep of Ireland	696
15.	Czech Rep	685
16.	Belgium	683
17.	Cameron	678

Denilson's season over

AFP, Seville

Brazilian World Cup winning midfielder Denilson looks set to miss the rest of the season after his Spanish First Division club Real Betis revealed Tuesday he has to undergo a right knee operation.

The 25-year-old had to go off after only half an hour of Sunday's league match with Malaga and the most optimistic prognosis was he would be out for about six weeks.

"There is no other solution but to operate," said the surgeon Santiago Perez Hidalgo.

Gelsenkirchen to host Champs League final

AFP, Rome

The 2004 Champions League football final will take place in the west German city of Gelsenkirchen, while the UEFA Cup final will be played in Gothenburg, Sweden, European football's governing body UEFA's Executive Committee agreed during their two-day meeting here Wednesday.

UEFA president Lennart Johansson said: "We approved the Arena AufSchalke in Gelsenkirchen, Germany as the venue for the 2004 UEFA Champions League final and the Ullevi stadium in Gothenburg as the venue for the 2004 UEFA Cup final."

With a capacity of 54,100, the Arena AufSchalke, in the Ruhr industrial area, is one of Europe's most modern venues and the home to German Bundesliga club FC Schalke 04.

Imran sings

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crucial role in the final since the ball had been gripping the surface.

India, however, maintained the trend of going into the match without a fifth specialist bowler, relying on three seamers (Javagal Srinath, Zaheer Khan and Ashish Nehra) and one spinner (Harbhajan Singh).

Kumble figured in just three of his team's 11 World Cup matches.

"Secondly, Ganguly opted to field first because the wicket offered some assistance to bowlers," said Imran.

"Did he take this decision to protect his batsmen from the likes of in-form Glenn McGrath and Brett Lee or to let his bowlers try and make inroads into the Australian batting? We'll never know the answer to that one."

"If Ganguly had taken a look at the statistics of past World Cups, other than in 1996 and 1999, the team batting first has always won. The pressure of chasing has always been too much in a World Cup final."

Ganguly's decision to field first eventually backfired as Australia posted a massive 359-2 before dismissing India for 234.

Schools hockey

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part in six groups in the preliminary round from which top team of each group advanced into the final phase.

The teams that qualified for final round are:

Group A: Khalilur Rahman High School of Dhaka, River View High School of Rajshahi and Arjat Atarjan High School of Kishoreganj.

Group B: Armanitola Government High School of Dhaka, Police Lines High School of Faridpur and Nasirabad Boys' High School of Chittagong.

The final of the competition is on April 3.

Beckham for Real?



Football

REUTERS, Madrid

After signing Luis Figo, Zinedine Zidane and Ronaldo, Real Madrid president Florentino Perez believes one of the pieces missing from his millionaire's jigsaw is an England international of the highest calibre.

That means either David Beckham or Michael Owen, the only English players with the profile necessary to boost the club's global reach for marketing and merchandising purposes.

This week's excited talk of a Real bid for Manchester United's Beckham could therefore be just the start of long months of speculation linking one of the game's most feted players with the world's biggest club.

At the moment, the acres of newspaper being devoted to the Beckham story amount to little more than pre-match sparring ahead of the two sides meeting in the quarterfinals of the Champions League in April.

Real's sporting director Jorge Valdano told Madrid sports daily As that commentating on the Beckham situation would be unhelpful so close to the quarterfinal.

"This is not the time to talk about it," Valdano said. "We're in the middle of the season and with the Manchester United games just around the corner."

"Any comments now could get us into a debate that would affect the build-up to the game."

Unfortunately, Valdano followed up those remarks with just the sort of ambiguous comment beloved of headline writers.

"All you could say is that taking into account the major moves Real Madrid have made in recent years

Beckham looks to be the sort of player that would fit in with our policy."

Those words were translated in England on Wednesday as an unequivocal statement that Real were about to make midfielder Beckham their next big project.

A bid for Beckham would certainly not be out of character for president Perez, who has brought in one world class player every year since being elected to the top job at the Bernabeu.

First he prized Figo away from Barcelona, then Zidane from



DAVID BECKHAM

Juventus and finally Ronaldo, after an interminable transfer saga, from Inter Milan.

That makes a Real bid for Beckham more likely than, say, last week's equally breathless reports that Arsenal's French midfield pair Robert Pires and Patrick Vieira were about to decamp to the Bernabeu for a fee in the region of 45 million dollars (29 million pounds).

Beckham was asked at an England news conference in London on Tuesday if he would like to play for Real.

"Real are a great club with great players and tradition," Beckham said. "Any player would be honoured to be spoken about by Real Madrid. Of course I'm honoured."

That three-line response gave rise to a five-page special on Beckham in Spain's Marca newspaper, as well as front pages in rival publications As and El Mundo Deportivo.

The potential problem for Real and coach Vicente del Bosque would be finding a space for Beckham in the first team.

Figo already occupies the right midfield slot and has been back close to his best this season after his struggles to overcome an ankle injury last term.

A place in central midfield looks problematic, too, as a line-up of Figo, Beckham and Zidane playing behind Raul and Ronaldo would leave just one place for a defensive, ball-winning midfielder.

Valdano declined on Wednesday to comment on possible Real interest and there is unlikely to be direct word from the club until the end of the season, when Perez and Valdano finalise their transfer objectives for the new campaign.

Between now and then, expect the comment and analysis to continue unabated, as every last drop of meaning is squeezed out of comments from Valdano, Perez, Del Bosque and Beckham himself.

According to a report in Spanish daily Mundo Deportivo, Figo "could be offered in exchange to Manchester United - or Milan."

And it added that Real president Florentino Perez "has decided to bring Beckham to Madrid for next season."

AS daily said that a team including Zidane, Raul, Ronaldo, Figo - unless he is offered as bait - and Beckham would "stimulate lovers of good football" and leave rivals Barcelona trailing in Real's wake.

Aigner to retire

AFP, Rome

UEFA director general Gerhard Aigner announced here Tuesday that he planned to retire at the end of the year.

The 60-year-old German, a critic of FIFA president Sepp Blatter, said he was leaving European football's governing body in healthy shape and that he wanted to spend more time with his family.

The father of five told UEFA's executive committee: "For 33 years I've worked in the best interests of football and I think that UEFA is on the right path for the future."

Giving his reaction UEFA president Lennart Johansson said: "I respect his decision completely."

Aigner joined UEFA in 1969 where he first worked with youth teams before becoming an executive committee member in 1989. He was appointed secretary general in 1999 and director general two years later.

Tigana leaving Fulham

AFP, London

English Premiership club Fulham said Wednesday French manager Jean Tigana will leave in the summer.

The club said on its official website Tigana's contract will not be extended beyond the end of this season.

Ponting all

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along with them I'm sure.

"We're all looking forward to putting the white clothes back on."

Lara blasted 546 runs at an average of 91 including a highest score of 213 among his three centuries in the series. The 32-year-old left-hander holds the world record for the highest individual score in Tests (375) and first-class (501) cricket.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	36 Be appropriate	DOWN	20 Sphere
1 Uncultured one	37 Data units	1 Cranberry acreage	21 Chicken part
5 Speedy steed	38 Frequently	2 "Eureka!"	22 Sandwich treat
9 Two-timer	40 Benefit	3 Tanker spillage	23 Dangerous whirlpool
12 Part of B&O	42 Needle-fish	4 Cagger Dennis	24 Misdemeanor
13 Soft-drink flavor	43 Runner-up in 1964	5 Scored 100 on	26 Toe inflammation
14 Corrida cheer	48 Carnival city	6 Teased a lot	27 "bodkins!"
15 Quadrernal prize	49 Camelot lady	7 Carte lead-in	28 Actress Russo
17 Shark indicator	50 Venus de Milo	8 Love songs, often	29 One-liners
18 Style	51 Freddy Krueger's	9 Perculator	31 Covers
19 Towing	21 John Lennon song	11 Claim untrue	34 Payable
24 Undeclared	52 Chowder heads	16 Calendar abbr.	35 Energetic worker
25 Dr. Seuss' "If— the Zoo"	53 Sole		37 Acknowledge applause
26 Actress Whoopi			38 Shrek is one
30 Born			39 Be unsuccessful
31 Musical endings			40 Radar screen spot
32 Shell game			41 Probability
33 Klondike event			44 — budget
35 Bell noise			45 Stannum
			46 Right angle
			47 Trigger's passenger

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CRYPTOQUIP

S W H Q Y N I B S Z P H B U Z X
X C G Q X A M Z S I M A S W Z S
W H U Z X X S Z B S F Y R S C
R H S G Q B F H N F Y W F X U C B P
Yesterday's Cryptquip: WHEN TWO SHOES
STORES ARE PLACED A VERY SHORT DISTANCE
APART, ARE THEY ARCH RIVALS?
Today's Cryptquip Clue: B equals R

The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals Q, it will equal Q throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.