

## WC 2010 South Africa's nose in front

### Football

AFP, Zurich

South Africa's position as front runners to host the 2010 World Cup was confirmed Tuesday after the publication of FIFA's inspection report into the five African nations vying to host the competition.

World football's governing body concluded that South Africa had the potential to organise "an excellent" World Cup.

It praised the country's overall infrastructure, and suggested granting the World Cup to South Africa would help the unification progress that has been in place since the ending of apartheid more than a decade ago.

This boost for South Africa comes just a fortnight before the final vote to determine the 2010 hosts is taken by FIFA's Executive Committee in Zurich on May 15 and at a time when their dream of hosting the first ever World Cup in Africa was in danger of being dashed by rival bidders Morocco.

Over recent months representatives from the Morocco bid have been pushing their case with stunning

success.

FIFA's inspection committee, headed by Belgian Jan Peeters, described the way Morocco had promoted its bid as excellent, and the presentation of their budget as outstanding.

But on the flipside FIFA said it was concerned that work had not begun on three stadiums which Morocco said four years ago were already under construction.

"We do have some concern that three stadiums presented to the 2006 Inspection Group in February 2000 as under construction have not been realised at all," the report said.

FIFA concluded however that Morocco has "the potential to organise a very good World Cup".

The inspection group appeared to position Egypt ahead of Morocco. It pointed to Egypt's wealth of history, culture and tourism, and concluded that despite the lack of appropriate stadia to host an event of this size Egypt was "capable of organising a very good World Cup".

The report appeared to represent the end of the road for the final two contenders, Tunisia and Libya, who were presenting a joint bid.



PHOTO: AFP

LOOKS IN GOOD HEALTH? NOT QUITE: Argentine legend Diego Maradona blows a kiss towards fans while driving a golf cart at a country house in General Rodriguez province of Buenos Aires on May 4.

## Bolton or nothing?

### Football

INTERNET SOURCE

Rivaldo has dropped his biggest hint yet that he will soon sign a contract with Bolton Wanderers.

"The seriousness of the Bolton officials I met -- Sam and Phil Gartside -- won me over" he said.

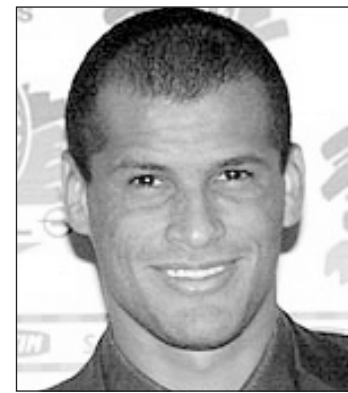
"I can see they have clear plans for Bolton's future and together I think we could get into Europe.

"They were impressive. They also showed something that was important to me -- they trust me and trust my game to succeed in the Premiership.

"I don't think I have ever seen a club that wanted me so much." He also said, "I am not interested in any of those (other) offers, despite them being more lucrative. None of them are as well laid out and as serious as Bolton's and that is what makes me like the idea of playing for them."

"I know very little about the town, only that it is football crazy, but soon I hope to know much more.

"I know I've played for big clubs in the past but it won't be a problem for me to adapt. I will be



RIVALDO

busy playing, getting in shape and learning English, and being in a smaller town will help me do that. I have been learning English and, if I can speak fluently, it will help me to settle.

"I learned Spanish and Italian so there will be no problem learning English.

"I have started private lessons so I'm not totally clueless and I want the challenge of trying to get Bolton into Europe for the first time in their history.

"It is an exciting time.

Nowhere else offers the challenge that England does.

"I hear the whispers that I am only coming to Bolton for the money. That is rubbish."

## Maldini could go to Euro 2004

AFP, Rome

AC Milan's legendary defender Paolo Maldini could change his mind and return to the international scene for Euro 2004 he admitted on Tuesday.

The 35-year-old Italian record capholder with 126 announced his international retirement after Italy were knocked out in the second round of the 2002 World Cup by co-hosts South Korea.

However indifferent form by Italy and his outstanding performances for the newly-crowned Italian champions has prompted a call for him to come out of retirement not only from fans but also from national coach Giovanni Trapattoni.

"I first have to talk with Trapattoni (Giovanni Trapattoni, the Italian coach) and then I'll decide. We've agreed to talk after the end of the season," Maldini said Tuesday.

Maldini may not be the only golden oldie to be named in the squad as Trapattoni has also hinted he may try and persuade 37-year-old Roberto Baggio to postpone his retirement - the 'divine ponytail' was one of Italy's more impressive performers in their 1-1 draw in the friendly with Spain last Wednesday.

## Double hungry Valencia

### UEFA CUP

AFP, Valencia

Spanish league leaders Valencia continue their quest for a domestic and continental double when they play host to local rivals Villarreal in the second leg of their UEFA Cup semi-final on Thursday.

The two teams, based only 60 kilometres apart, fought out an entertaining 0-0 draw in the first leg, in which goals were the only missing ingredient.

"We are almost there. We are doing well in the league and are only one game away from the UEFA Cup final, and we'll have our own fans behind us and motivating us all the way," enthused Valencia's left winger Vicente Rodriguez on Tuesday.

Recent history suggests Vicente has every reason to be optimistic.

Valencia beat Villarreal 4-2 in the Mestalla stadium earlier this season.

They have also beaten Villarreal on four of the last five occasions they have been the derby hosts.

However, Valencia will go into the match with a number of injury worries.

Amadeo Carboni and Francisco Rufete are definitely out of Thursday's match and coach Rafa Benitez will probably turn to Javier Garrido and Argentine ace Pablo Aimar to replace them.

Benitez will also be following closely the progress of Miguel Angel Angulo and Ruben Baraja, who picked up knocks in Valencia's 2-0 league win over Real Betis on Sunday.

## Magpies after a dream

### UEFA CUP

AFP, Marseille

Newcastle will be seeking to keep alive their quest to end a 35-year wait for a major trophy when they enter Marseille's Velodrome stadium for the second leg of the UEFA Cup semi-final here on Thursday.

With the tie finely poised after a goalless draw at St James' Park, injury-hit Newcastle have a tough task against a Marseille side who are playing to save their season.

While Marseille were European champions in 1993, Newcastle's last trophy of any description was the 1969 Fairs Cup, the predecessor to the UEFA Cup.

The English side's hopes of ending their drought could rest on veteran centre-forward Alan Shearer going one better than his opposite number Didier Drogba, who was voted the French player of the season by his fellow professionals at the weekend.

Both sides crashed to defeats in their domestic leagues at the weekend, and Marseille's defeat to modest Metz ruled them out of contention for a UEFA Cup place next season.

Their only hope is to qualify by winning the competition, as coach Jose Anigo stressed.

"The players are playing to save our season on Thursday," Anigo said. "You can feel it in the dressing room. There is the same atmosphere that I remember from each of

our matches in the European Cup."

Newcastle slipped to a 1-0 defeat at Manchester City which damaged their chances of finishing fourth in the Premiership and securing the final Champions League spot.

Club chairman Freddy Shepherd was rallying the troops on Tuesday.

"If you think like a winner you will be a winner. And if you think like a loser you will be a loser. And Geordies are winners," Shepherd told the Newcastle Chronicle newspaper.

"We still have everything to play for this season and now is the time for everyone to get behind Sir Bobby Robson and his squad.

"Everything is not only in our own hands but also within our grasp - and we can still do it.

"As far as UEFA Cup is concerned, we could be the only British team left in Europe by Thursday morning."

If Chelsea do win through to the Champions League final by overcoming Monaco on Wednesday, Newcastle could give England the chance for a European trophy sweep by qualifying for the final in Gothenburg on May 19.

The Magpies will sorely miss injured quartet Craig Bellamy, Kieron Dyer, Jonathan Woodgate and Jermaine Jenas, but Woodgate's absence is perhaps the most damaging as he would have been given the role of shackling the lightning quick Drogba.

## The world has shattered

AFP, La Coruna

A reminder that football is more than a game to many people came on Thursday when Spanish newspapers were full of pictures of sobbing Deportivo La Coruna fans after their Champions League exit.

Deportivo lost 1-0 to Portuguese champions Porto on Wednesday, and by the same aggregate score as Derlei's penalty on the hour was the only goal in 180 minutes of play.

"Maximum penalty," punned the headline of the Spanish sports daily As before devoting the first 11 pages of its Thursday issue to Deportivo's demise.

"Everyone was dreaming of a magic night but it all ended in tears," wrote another sports paper Marca, above images of disconsolate Deportivo fans wiping their eyes on their blue-and-white scarves.

"A penalty truncates Depor's European dream," said the local daily La Voz de Galicia.

Rather than assembling at the traditional celebration point of the Cuatro Caminos fountains in the centre of the Atlantic port city, most of the local fans went home quietly to bed.

Around La Coruna on Thursday morning there was an air of gloom, with people soberly taking down the masses of bunting in the team colours, which had festooned the city in anticipation of Deportivo securing their passage to the final in Gelsenkirchen on May 26.

Nevertheless, the backing that the Deportivo fans, and the city in general, gave their team also drew huge praise.

"These were the European champions of fans," added La Voz de Galicia, noting that Deportivo has been in the top flight of Spanish football for barely a decade.

Several thousand stayed behind in Deportivo's Riazor stadium to chant their support long after the final whistle had been blown.

There were no reported clashes between fans of Deportivo and Porto, of whom there were more than 3,000 in La Coruna after having made the short trip of 275 kilometres from their home across the border.

The loss took on aspects of a minor sporting tragedy in the national media as there will not now be a Spanish side in the Champions League final for the second consecutive year.

"No more Champions League," said the national daily ABC, echoing the words of many other papers.

The absence of any Spanish teams in this year's Champions League final will inevitably provoke a bout of self-examination about what is going wrong with Spanish club football.

The current drought comes on the heels of Real Madrid's three victories in five years between 1998 and 2002, which included an all-Spanish final with Valencia in 2000.

## Fridays off in Bundesliga

AFP, Frankfurt

The German league has ruled out playing matches on Fridays, claiming a change in the programme would lead to problems with the international fixture list.

The idea of a return to playing Bundesliga matches over three days - Friday, Saturday and Sundays - in a format last used in the 2000/01 season was dismissed by Werner Hackmann, president of the German league (DFL).

But Hackmann said Tuesday the DFL was prepared to take another look at the suggestion for the 2005/06 season.

# Porto make their mark

### UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, La Coruna

UEFA Cup holders Porto became the first Portuguese side for 14 years to make the final of Europe's top club competition after beating Deportivo La Coruna 1-0 in their Champions League semi-final second leg here Tuesday.

The Portuguese champions - winner of the 1987 European Cup - go through to the final, which will be held in the German city of Gelsenkirchen on May 26, by the same aggregate score after a 0-0 draw in the first leg two weeks ago.

to the squad only a week ago from a four month absence because of injury.

"With a return like this, I believe this is the best moment of my career," said Derlei, who was man of the match in the UEFA Cup final victory over Celtic last year.

"This is the best way to thank my teammates for all their support while I was injured."

Porto coach Jose Mourinho paid tribute to Derlei.

"Derlei is a special player. He's a player who can bring to our team what was missing a little bit when he was injured," said Mourinho.

"I thought he might last 70 or 75 minutes but it shows the character of the player that he was there for

more like a bad loser.

"It wasn't fair. Fate was against us. We had Mauro Silva and Jorge Andrade suspended, Victor was injured and then (Nourredine) Naybet was sent off," moaned Irueta.

"Porto also had much more time to prepare for this game than we did as they won the Portuguese championship two weeks ago.

"In addition, I wasn't very happy with the referee. I wasn't happy with the referee in the first leg either," added a disconsolate Irueta, blaming everyone and everything apart from his own players.

Mourinho will jet off to see Chelsea try and claw back the 3-1 deficit from the first leg against

interested in talking about my future at the moment. I am concentrating completely on my work with Porto," added Mourinho.

The Spanish side launched everything into attack after the Porto goal and Uruguayan striker Walter Pandiani went close shortly afterwards with a header.

However, Deportivo's chances of finding the two goals they needed to rescue the tie declined even further in the 69th minute when veteran Moroccan international Nourredine Naybet was sent off for a second bookable offence.

He later revealed that he had probably played his last Champions League match as he wanted to leave and play out his career in the

Pandiani sent a volley high and wide from Juan Carlos Valeron cross, with only Porto keeper Vitor Baia in front of him.

Valeron then did the same 13 minutes later after service provided by fellow Spanish international Albert Luque.

The Portuguese visitors were the tidier side in their passing but rarely looked like breaking down the well-organised Deportivo defence until Derlei broke the deadlock.

Fortune was definitely smiling on Mourinho on Tuesday night as the seven players in danger of being suspended if they picked up a yellow card all came through without a caution.

Only Carlos Alberto and Pedro



PHOTOS: AFP

BOTH SIDES OF THE STORY: (R) FC Porto's Derlei is delirious with joy after scoring from the spot against Deportivo La Coruna in La Coruna on May 4. (L) A Deportivo supporter wipes off her tears after the Spaniards have been knocked out of the Champions League.

Brazilian striker Derlei got the only goal of the game from the penalty spot on the hour mark after Deportivo defender Cesar Martin had brought down Portuguese international Deco.

Derlei's shot just squeezed between the post and the fingers of Deportivo keeper Francisco Molina.

Derlei was understandably ecstatic afterwards having returned

the whole 90 minutes.

"We have now helped Portugal recover the pride which has been lost for sometime," added Mourinho, raising the flag before Portugal hosts Euro 2004 next month.

Derlei's joy was in stark contrast to the despair of Coruna coach Javier Irueta, though his understandable disappointment came out

Monaco in Wednesday's semi-final, though his presence there will no doubt stir the rumourmill that he will replace the London side's Italian manager Claudio Ranieri next season.

I am going there as an enemy and I don't think enemies will be too welcome.

"I have my ticket and a body-guard so I'm going but I am not

lucrative environs of the Gulf State of Qatar, though he has a year remaining on his contract.

Clever play was at a premium on a wet night, with the wind also blowing in off the Atlantic.

Players frequently slipped and skidded on the greasy Riazor surface.

Deportivo had the best of the first 45 minutes.

Mid-way through the first period,

Mendes were booked although Deportivo fans made it vocally known that referee Pierluigi Collina was rather lenient, especially in the final 20 minutes when Porto sat back and defended doggedly.

Nuno Valente was fortunate not to be penalised for a penalty and sent off when he blatantly elbowed a Coruna player - but Collina failed to see it.

## Premiership Reyes saves the streak

### Football

AFP, Portsmouth

Spanish striker Jose-Antonio Reyes scored his first ever Premiership goal to save Arsenal's unbeaten league run this season as they came from behind to draw 1-1 with in-form Portsmouth here on Tuesday.

Pompey, whose unbeaten seven-match run including victory over deposed champions Manchester United has taken them from relegation candidates to safety, took the lead in the 30th minute through Nigerian international striker Aiyegbeni Yakubu's 12th goal of the campaign.

Yakubu, proof of manager Harry Redknapp's shrewd bargain buys, could have won the match and

inflicted Arsenal's first defeat in 36 Premiership matches this term shortly before the final whistle when he was one-on-one with Gunners keeper Jens Lehmann but fluffed it.

Reyes levelled the match just after the hour mark as he volleyed home Thierry Henry's cross from just inside the penalty area to give the champions a deserved reward for all their pressure.

Yakubu struck just before the half-hour mark, shooting home from inside the penalty area after fine work by Matthew Taylor, who was outstanding both in going forward and getting back to defend.

However Portsmouth's goal came against the run of play as 'keeper Shaka Hislop produced two saves out of the top drawer to tip over shots from Ray Parlour and then Henry.

Reyes also went desperately

close to opening the scoring for the Gunners but his shot in the 28th minute came back off the bar.

Arsenal turned on the heat just after the Yakubu goal and forced four corners within a minute as Hislop once again turned away a Henry shot, but again failed to hit the back of the net.

### TOP SIX

English Premiership table after Tuesday's match (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):						
Arsenal (champions)	36	24	12	0	75	25
Chelsea	36	23	6	7	65	29
Man Utd	36	22	5	9	61	34
Liverpool	36	15	11	10	51	36
Villa	36	15	10	11	47	41
Newcastle	35	13	14	8	47	35

## 'Hijab' ref steps aside

### Football

AFP, Sydney

An Australian soccer referee who last month ordered a player to remove her Islamic headscarf, or hijab, has stepped aside, the Victorian Soccer Federation said Wednesday.

The federation's chief executive Damien Bown said referee Michael Hatzikonstantinos voluntarily stepped aside while the April 25 incident was investigated.

"He has made what I believe is a courageous and correct decision to voluntarily offer to stand aside from active refereeing until this issue is resolved," Bown said. "He will do so until this has been resolved."

"Be very clear, we are not apportioning guilt."

Bown said there were "extremely diverse" witness accounts of the

incident. AFP reported two weeks ago that the match between South Melbourne and Keilor Park was abandoned when Affa Saad, one of the state's most promising strikers, refused to remove her scarf.

She was supported by players and club officials from both teams. The soccer federation said at the time that there was nothing in its regulations which specifically addressed head gear.

"It is seen, I believe, by FIFA who are the controlling body that it is an acceptable piece of headwear as long as there are no pins or anything that constitutes a danger to the player herself," federation development manager Chris Bambridge said at the time.

The abandoned match was replayed Tuesday night. Keilor Park won 4-1 and Saad scored her team's only goal.