SPORT



Barcelona's former Bulgarian international Hristo Stoichkov (C) poses with Dutch legend Johan Cruyff (R) during a gala match for Stoichkov, who played at the Nou Camp for seven seasons, on May 29.

Metsu to coach South Korean AFP, Seoul

Former Senegal coach Bruno Metsu was named as the new coach of World Cup semi-finalists South Korea on Sunday, officials said.

The Frenchman, who led the African country to the last eight of the World Cup, will replace Portugal's Humberto Coelho who stepped down last month after a string of poor results.

"Metsu was selected as our national team coach, although we have yet to complete negotiations on his contract," Korea Football Association (KFA) spokesman Song Ki-Ryong told AFP.

"Metsu will be able to come here soon as his contract with a professional team in the United Arab Emirates expires this month." he said.

The departure of Coelho, who took over from popular Dutchman Guus Hiddink, followed South Korea's goalless draw with lowly Maldives on March 31 and defeats to Oman and Vietnam earlier in the year.

Under Coelho, South Korea played 18 matches, winning nine, drawing three and losing six.

Renewed English hopes



AFP, Manchester

England's Euro 2004 preparations enter the final stretch here on Monday against a background of rising optimism that Sven-Goran Eriksson's squad can finally end the country's 38-year wait to win a major international tournament.

A week in the sunshine of Sardinia has left the players rested, relaxed and raring to go with just two final warm-up matches -- against Japan on Tuesday and Iceland on Saturday -- now between them and Portugal

During their week-long training camp on the Mediterranean island. Eriksson made a point of repeatedly underlining how close England had come to winning the World Cup two years ago, when an injury-hit squad lost in the quarter-finals to eventual winners Brazil.

The Swede's emphasis on the construction of confidence and selfbelief appears to have paid off, judging by the bullish tone of the comments emanating from some of

the players. "We have got a lot of experience in the team and I think that is going to stand us in very good stead," said

"All our main players are between their mid-20s and 30 -- the perfect age to go and win a tournament.

European Championship may have come just a little bit too early for England's relatively young squad and that a better chance of glory may await them in the next World

But with Nicky Butt, David Beckham, Paul Scholes and Gary Eriksson's current first team may well be in decline by then and Owen believes England are capable of delivering this summer.

"All the successful teams are at their peak and have played together for a long time and I certainly feel this England squad is the same now. "We are all reaching our peak

for us." England's cause has certainly been helped by the fact that injuries have been concentrated in an area

where Eriksson has the greatest depth of resources -- in the centre of defence.

Rio Ferdinand will miss the tournament through suspension and Gareth Southgate and Jonathan Woodgate are both ruled out by injuries. But provided Sol Campbell and John Terry stay fit, England should not have too much to worry about in that department.

With Aston Villa striker Darius Vassell having shaken off a hamstring strain, Eriksson will have a full until England take on France in their squad to pick from for Tuesday hight's match against Japan at the crucial opening match in Lisbon on City of Manchester stadium.

June 13. The early conclusion of the English Premiership title battle has as Real ended their trophy-less also afforded Eriksson's squad an season with a disastrous run of extra period of recovery time. defeats in the Spanish league.

It is a situation in marked contrast to what the Swede had to contend with in the run-up to the last World Cup, when Steven Gerrard and Gary Neville were both ruled out and Beckham was involved in a frantic race against time to recover from a

broken bone in his right foot. about David on that score," he said. The England captain healed sufficiently to play but his lack of full pitch, that is all that matters to him." fitness restricted his influence.

Two years on it is Beckham's mental state rather than the state of

Nigeria thump Ireland

Two goals from Bartholomew

Ogbeche and another by Obafemi

Martins earned Nigeria a 3-0 victory

over the Republic of Ireland at the

defeat in a friendly since manager

Brian Kerr took charge at the begin-

ning of last year but he will have

The Republic suffered their first

his metatarsal that is pre-occupyin

The only sour note of the week in

Sardinia came when the Real

Madrid midfielder attempted to have

certain newspapers and broadcast-

ers excluded from his press brief-

ings because of their coverage of

reported affair with his former assis-

tant has died down. But the extent of

the psychological scars it must have

left may not become fully apparent

He certainly appeared distracted

But Gary Neville, the player

Beckham is closest to, believes his

former Manchester United team-

mate is capable of shutting every-

thing else out once he pulls on an

"I don't think anybody need worry

"When he goes on to a football

The storm over Beckham's

his alleged marital infidelities.

the nation.

AFP, London

Vallev stadium.

England shirt.

ager is concerned," Parry told the News of the World. "I don't think a particular player will be asked to pick a name but I feel it is perfectly realistic to allow them some input.

with them as far as the new man-

"If whoever comes in has the senior players' respect they'll have a good start. If they don't it will be tough." Parry said he feared that both

players could leave Liverpool if the Reds continue to fall short of competing for top honours in the Premiership and the Champions League.

"It has to be a concern Stevie would be tempted to move away. You have to be concerned about losing players when you're not successful - and finishing fourth, for Liverpool, is not successful.

"While we're not successful you'd be mad to think we don't have issues with our top players.

"We can't stop Stevie joining Manchester United or whomever if he really wants to go

"That's not to say we wouldn't fight tooth and nail to keep him. We would, and I've no doubt his greatest desire is to win trophies here. But ultimately winning trophies -- wherever -- is what players want.

learnt a lot from it. Two Irish fringe players hoping to make an impression were Leeds United's Stephen McPhail, winning his 10th cap, and veteran midfielder Mark Kinsella, who won his 47th, but neither one covered himself in glory in this opening Unity Cup

fixture. McPhail made an unforced error which should have resulted in a goal, while Kinsella was less fortunate as his mistake did help hand the slick Nigerians the opener after 36 minutes.

Kinsella, who for so long played at this ground for Charlton, lost possession and Ogbeche of Paris Saint Germain unleashed a fierce low drive from 20 yards which hit the inside base of the left post before bouncing into the opposite corner.

Ogbeche's goal made amends for his poor miss after 18 minutes. McPhail gave the ball away in the centre circle and the Nigerians quickly worked it to Ogbeche who was unmarked on the left angle of game and playing with the likes of his season with Liverpool and predicted the six yard line. However with only goalkeeper Nicky Colgan to beat, he slid his shot against the far post. Ireland's midfield went missing to allow Nigeria to score a second. killer goal, four minutes into the second half, and that was the end of Kerr's proud run in friendly fixtures and only the second defeat - but the heaviest - in his 16 matches in charge.

Werder add Cup joy Football Aachen, conquerors of holders

AFP, Berlin

Werder Bremen became only the fourth German team to win a league and cup double after defeating second division Alemannia Aachen 3-2 to lift the German Cup here on

Saturday. After lifting the German title, Bremen joined Bayern Munich, Cologne and Schalke 04 in the hall

of fame and crowned the most successful season in their history. It was a perfect send-off for

Brazilian Ailton, presented with the Bundesliga Golden Boot before the match for his 28-goal haul, as he leaves for Schalke 04 at the end of the season "It is fantastic to leave Bremen

with two titles," enthused Ailton.

"I just want to say 'thank you Bremen but now I have to go to Schalke 04'.'

Bayern in the quarter-finals, had the consolation of joining VfB Stuttgart and VfL Bochum in next season's

UEFACup With less than 60 seconds on the clock, Brazilian Ailton was dragged down on the edge of the area when bearing down on goal at pace.

guarter hour with Aachen stretched all over the pitch by the pace of Bremen

The 1965 finalists could have been three goals down but for some danger in the air.

But on the half hour mark, Bremen broke through with German international Fabian Ernst cutting the ball back for Tim Borowski, 24, to slot home

On the stroke of half-time,

It set the tone for the opening

poor finishing, but then fought their way back into the game with former Liverpool man Erik Meijer causing

Croatian international Ivan Klasnic struck a second with a clinical leftfooted shot that arrowed into the

Pauleta PSG's hero

A

"I think we can go home now."

said commentator Franz Beckenbauer on Aachen's chances of a second half comeback. Former Bremen man Stefan

Blank must have heard Beckenbauer's words and reduced the arrears on 51 minutes with a bullet header

Bremen goalkeeper Andreas Reinke then almost fumbled the ball into his own net on 60 minutes as Bremen wobbled.

But on 75 minutes. Zimbabwe international George Mbwando was shown a straight red card for a foul on Borowski who rubbed salt into Aachen's wounds by netting six minutes from time.

"We are overjoyed to create Bremen history," said goal hero Borowski

Meijer scored late on for Aachen but it was nothing more than a consolation for the underdogs.

Santini feels satisfied

REUTERS, La Grande Motte (France)

France's preparations for the defence of their European title were going according to plan, coach Jacques Santini said on Saturday.

France, without playmaker Zinedine Zidane and striker Thierry Henry crushed Andorra 4-0 in a warm-up match on Friday, extending their unbeaten run to 17 games.

"Everything went according to plan," Santini told a news conference on Saturday in La Grance Motte sea resort, two weeks before the opening of Euro 2004. "But we are still a (long) way from our best.

"We have spent a relaxing week here. But things are going to shift into a higher gear with the preparation for the match against Ukraine.

"We will need to be in a better physical shape because the opposition is going to be much stronger."

France meet Ukraine in their last warm-up match in Paris on June 6 before flying to Portugal where they begin the defence of their title against England on June 13.

"There is a fortnight ahead of us to complete the work we began a long time ago. But the players proved they were mentally ready to go," Santini said of Friday's match.

Deschamps for Liverpool? Football THE SUN, London

Liverpool will move for Monaco manager Didier Deschamps if firstchoice Rafael Benitez decides to stay at Valencia.

Deschamps, 35, was favourite to take charge of Juventus after Monaco's Champions League final defeat by Porto.

Liverpool have made a continental coach their first priority -- which puts Deschamps in the frame given the uncertainty surrounding Benitez's future.

A marathon meeting between Benitez and Valencia officials on Thursday was inconclusive.

Benitez wants funds to strengthen the squad but Valencia are heavily in debt and would prefer to sell -- despite winning La Liga and

Liverpool chief executive Rick Parry thought a deal with Benitez was imminent after a whirlwind trip to Spain last week -- but Valencia have indicated they are prepared to dig in and fight for their man.

Deschamps, who has trans-

Liverpool striker Michael Owen.

There is a theory that the

Cup in Germany in two years time. Neville all approaching their 30th birthdays, a sizeable section of

and this is going to be the acid test

formed Monaco on a shoestring budget, has the added advantage of knowledge of the Premiership after his spell as a midfielder at Chelsea.

AFP adds: Star players Steven Gerrard and Michael Owen will have a big say in who should take over as coach at Liverpool from Gerard Houllier, the club's chief executive

the UEFA Cup.

victory over second division Chateauroux in the French Cup final on Saturday

Portugal's Pauleta struck in the 65th

minute to end Paris St Germain's

six-year title drought with a 1-0

Football

REUTERS, Paris

PSG, who took their French Cup tally to six, had secured a direct Champions League spot by finishing second in Ligue 1 so Chateauroux went into the final knowing they would get a UEFA Cup berth next season.

However, the Parisians were desperate to lift their first trophy since winning both the French Cup and League Cup in 1998.

They struggled throughout the game to make the breakthrough against a bold Chateauroux side but were rewarded for their persistence 20 minutes into the second half courtesy of a fine header by Pauleta.

The prolific Portuguese striker, who missed his national team's Euro 2004 warm-up against Luxemburg to play in the Stade de France final, proved decisive once again.

"It's been a long time since PSG won anything. We have been rewarded for our efforts," captain Frederic Dehu told French television.

Dehu, strongly tipped to join arch-rivals Olympique Marseille during the close season, was booed by the PSG fans.

"This is a shame, we thought our fans were behind us. Booing like this is a shame. Fred is a gentle-

Paris Saint-Germain's Portuguese international Pauleta celebrates after scoring the winner in the French Cup final against Chateauroux at the Stade de France in Paris on May 29.

man," said team mate Fabrice Fiorese, who refused to celebrate with the crowd.

'We had qualified for the Champions League but this was not the (Ligue 1) title," added Dehu.

We are all a bit tired but the boys did everything to win this Cup," said coach Vahid Halilhodzic

Ligue 2 side Chateauroux, who had been briefed by France rugby coach Bernard Laporte, started

Vandenbossche to miss the target after three minutes.

Pauleta a permanent threat to the Chateauroux rearguard

gallantly only for forward David

PSG then took control with

Palace back in Premiership

Football

REUTERS, London

Crystal Palace were promoted to the English Premier League on Saturday after a 1-0 victory over London rivals West Ham United in the First Division playoff final at Cardiff's Millennium Stadium.

Six years after being relegated, Palace completed a remarkable turnaround in their season to join Norwich City and West Bromwich Albion, who were promoted automatically.

Neil Shipperley, who returned for a second spell at Palace this season from Wimbledon, pounced after 62 minutes of a tense match when Andy Johnson's shot was parried by

goalkeeper Stephen Bywater. Fourth from bottom in December, Palace have been

transformed since lain Dowie, a former West Ham player, took charge

However, they were only assured a spot in the playoffs because of a last-minute West Ham equaliser at Wigan Athletic on the final day of the regular season -- a goal that came back to haunt the debt-laden Hammers.

'This is quite incredible," Dowie told Sky Sports as the packed ranks of Palace fans began a promotion party. 'West Ham are the best team

in this division but we came up trumps. "Today we showed heart and

soul and desire. We had a game plan and we stuck to it. Now we

have to worry about the superpowers in the Premier League."

With 25 million pounds (45.9 million dollars) the estimated windfall for reaching the English top flight, the match was fraught with nerves, both on and off the pitch

Palace seemed less affected by the tension and carved out the better chances. Johnson wasted a free header in the 13th minute while Michael Hughes had a shot cleared off the line by Czech defender Tomas Repka.

Bobby Zamora had West Ham's best effort in the first half, latching on to a fine pass by Michael Carrick to force a sharp save from Nico Vaesen.

Ronaldo in stitches

AFP, Lisbon

Manchester United's teen winger Cristiano Ronaldo received three stitches to his nose and eyebrow after he ran into a pole during a Euro 2004 training camp in his native Portugal, local media reported.

Ronaldo was injured as he chased the ball during an exercise on Friday at the camp in the central town of Obidos, located 80 kilometres north of Lisbon.

After being given stitches Ronaldo, who helped Manchester secure their record 11th FA Cup triumph last weekend, returned to the training camp pitch.

Portugal coach Luiz Felipe Scolari is expected to call on Ronaldo when the Portugal squad faces Luxembourg in a friendly later on Saturday.

Dutch go down

The Netherlands made a false start in the run-in to Euro 2004 when they went down 1-0 to neighbours Belgium in a warm-up on Saturday. With 12 minutes remaining captain Bart Goor sealed the Belgian win from the penalty spot after Johnny Heitinga fouled Mbo Mpenza.

Without the injured Mark van Bommel and Rafael van der Vaart the Dutch started with two centreforwards in Patrick Kluivert and Pierre van Hooijdonk and controlled the match without convincing.

Dick Advocaat's team created some chances and came close to opening the score when Wesley Sneijder hit the crossbar five minutes into the second half.

The Dutch, who play Ireland in another warm-up in Amsterdam on June 5, meet Germany, the Czech Republic and Latvia in Group D in the tournament in Portugal starting on June 12



REUTERS, London

Captain David Beckham says his England team will walk out with no fear when they meet holders France in their Euro 2004 opener next month in Lisbon.

The two sides square up on June 13 in one of the showcase games of the group stage, with France set to unleash the premier league's top scorer in

Thierry Henry, winger Robert Pires and Beckham's Real Madrid teammate Zinedine Zidane. Patrick Vieira, who won the English league with Arsenal team mates Henry

and Pires, should anchor France's midfield alongside Claude Makelele of Champions League semifinalists Chelsea "People will always look at that team

and say they're unbeatable, but they're definitely beatable," Beckham told reporters at England's training camp in Sardinia

"This will be one of the hardest games in the competition, but it's up to our players. We're looking forward to the game. We're not scared of any team or any players. That's good.

"We've got a team of young players and they're not worried about going into any game or how good the French team, or Henry or Vieira, are on the day. They're just concentrating on winning." Beckham was wary of setting too much store by France's dismal attempt

to defend their title at the 2002 World Cup, exiting after the group stage without scoring a goal

"We can take something from that. But I'm sure they will be playing a lot differently to how they did at the World Cup," Beckham said.

"Both teams know how big this game is.

Having played in midfield with Zidane all season, Beckham said: "He realises we've got a great squad of players, as they do. They've got players who have been unbelievable for their clubs this season, such as Vieira, Henry

and Makelele "It is going to be a hard game, but...you've got to put yourself up against the best -- and they're the best." As for himself, Beckham believes

his move last year to Spain from Manchester United has given him an edge, despite some criticism of his performances from a sceptical Spanish

"I've definitely had to improve my

Zidane and Ronaldo has helped my that teenage striker Wayne Rooney confidence," he said. would be a threat to the best defences.

As for England, Beckham heaped

praise on midfielder Steven Gerrard for

DIDIER DESCHAMPS

Both England internationals

"There may be some discussion

'France are beatable'

have said that their future at Anfield

could depend on who is chosen.

Rick Parry said Sunday.

that I've failed in Spain."

"It has helped my touch and the He also delivered a vote of confiquickness of my feet has become a lot dence to former United team mate Paul better, especially playing in the middle. Scholes, an attacking midfielder who "People have only gone on at the has not scored for his country in almost end of this season about the 'failure' that three years. I've been and another English player "He always creates space and gets who has failed in Spain. But I don't feel

into the right places at the right time. He hasn't scored for England for a while...but I'm sure he will put that right," Beckham said.



Brazilian superstars Ronaldo (L) and Ronaldinho enjoy a light moment in a training session on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro on May 29. The world champions meet Argentina in a crucial South American qualifier on June 2.

