

Turkmenistan deny Saudis



Forward Begenchmammed Kuliyev was the hero for Turkmenistan...

Turkmenis counter attack. Turkmenistan opened the scoring with striker Nazar Bayramov...

The heat is on

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid's Brazilian star striker Ronaldo said Saturday he and his teammates are feeling the heat as new coach Jose Antonio Camacho cracks the whip in pre-season training.



HE'S WATCHING! Real Madrid's Brazilian superstar Ronaldo (R) practicing ball controlling next to coach Jose Antonio Camacho during a training session in Montecastillo, Jerez, southern Spain on July 16.

'Send 'em to Asia'



AFP, Beijing

World football chief Sepp Blatter has called on European clubs to boost the sport in Asia by sending players to bolster the region's professional leagues.



FIFA President Sepp Blatter during his address on the opening ceremony of the Asian Cup at the Workers Stadium in Beijing on July 17.

Blatter, president of soccer's governing body FIFA, said Europe could play a key role in accelerating the development of football across Asia if clubs released professionals left languishing in reserve teams.

In an interview with AFP, Blatter said it was time to reverse the trend of European clubs snapping up the best players in Asia, often with an eye on exploiting lucrative foreign markets.

"Immigration should go the other way," Blatter said. "In these congested leagues in Europe where clubs have so many players, they should bring these players to new horizons where they can play and earn their living honestly."

"At the moment everything is focused on Europe, everybody wants to play in Europe," said Blatter, arguing that Asia possessed the financial muscle to make his idea a reality.

"I can understand the difficulties in Africa where there is less economic power in the different associations. But here in East Asia -- Korea, Japan and China -- there is a lot of money available so there should be exchanges."

"I'm not talking only of players who are finishing their careers but also young and established players. Take a team like AC Milan. They have about 45 players but only use around 30 of them every season."

"I cannot understand a player who is happy to sit on the bench and take the money only to play four or five times a year."

The all-pervasive influence of European football in Asia was reflected in Chinese youngsters spotted in Beijing wearing replica Barcelona shirts emblazoned with the name of Argentine star Javier Saviola.

"But just imagine if Saviola was playing in Asia!" Blatter said. "It would be great for Asians to see these sorts of players in their leagues regularly, not just coming here on tours for millions of dollars."

Blatter said he planned to discuss his idea with FIFA's executive committee but stressed that ultimately the move could only come with cooperation from Europe's clubs and players.



Chinese organisers of the Asian Cup played down a furious tirade by top official Peter Velappan over the behaviour of local fans here Sunday, insisting they had not booed VIPS during the opening ceremony.

Asian Football Confederation (AFC) general secretary Velappan let rip at spectators in Beijing after the tournament kicked off in a half-empty Workers Stadium on Saturday, threatening to bar future events from the Chinese capital.

Velappan was outraged by fans who had whistled and jeered as guests including FIFA president Sepp Blatter addressed the crowd, even questioning whether Beijing was capable of staging a successful Olympics in 2008.

"The Beijing people are not polite," Velappan fumed. "We had the presidents of FIFA and the AFC here. The whole world was here watching yet the booing and the jeering... This is not sportsmanship."

"Chinese people have great culture, education and history but the behaviour here today, well, I'm not so sure that Beijing can host a good Olympics," he said in a remarkable outburst.

Blatter meanwhile said he had been impressed by the development of Asian football in recent years, noting the performances of Japan and South Korea at the 2002 World Cup, where Korea reached the semi-finals and Japan the last 16.

"I will be eager to see how the Asian teams perform at the World Cup in 2006 when they are not in their home countries," Blatter said, adding fierce home support had given both sides an advantage last time around.

"South Korea always had 13 players in 2002 because of their incredible spectators. They were like two extra players. Maybe Japan only had 12 players because their fans weren't quite as loud," he joked.

"It is good to say the future of football is in Asia -- but they still have a long march."

Carvalho won't come cheap

AFP, Lisbon

FC Porto president Jorge Pinto da Costa said Real Madrid will have to stump up no less than 30 million euros for star defender Ricardo Carvalho.

lions euros for Ricardo Carvalho, but I made a counter-offer: he will not leave FC Porto for anything less than 30 million euros," Pinto da Costa said in comments published Sunday.

As you've already certainly read, they (Real Madrid management) said they were going to wait for me to lower the price, but they can carry on waiting because I

will not knock a single euro off," he said.

Carvalho, outstanding during Portugal's Euro 2004 campaign, has said that he wants to leave the Champions League winners.

Porto have lost their coach and two players since beating Monaco 3-0 in the Champions League final on May 26.

Impolite Beijing?

AFP, Beijing

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But a spokeswoman for the Asian Cup local organising committee said local fans had not been booing the opening ceremony guests, explaining that a technical glitch was behind the controversy.

"Last night, the football fans were warm and polite," said spokeswoman Wang Hui. "The audio system for the big screen had some technical problems. The sound was delayed by 10 seconds."

"When Blatter and Velappan and other senior officials entered the stadium, the hissing and booing that they heard were not aimed at them," she said, saying she didn't know who the fans were jeering.

The spokeswoman would not comment directly on Velappan's remarks about Beijing's ability to host the Olympics. "We will try our best to hold a great Olympic Games," she said.

Wang also dismissed Velappan's comments over the size of the crowd. An exact attendance figure was not released after Saturday's game, which took place in front of around 30,000 fans in the 66,000-seater stadium.

"The turn-out was pretty good last night. These days, it's very rare to see a full stadium with all seats occupied," Wang said.

Mourinho in charge

Football

AFP, London

Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho has blamed Hernan Crespo's Stamford Bridge departure on former manager Claudio Ranieri.

Argentina striker Crespo was signed from Italian giants Internazionale for 16.8 million pounds last summer but did not

enjoy life in the English Premiership and on Thursday returned to Serie A with a season-long loan to AC Milan.

He is the second Chelsea player to make a loan switch to Italy with his Argentina team-mate Juan Sebastian Veron joining Inter before Mourinho took over from general Italian Ranieri in May.

"Ask Ranieri why world-class players like Veron and Crespo did not do so well in the Premiership."

That was his problem, not mine," said Mourinho on Friday.

"They left because they were not happy at the club in the past," added Mourinho who last season steered Porto to the Champions League title.

"I couldn't speak to Veron because I wasn't there but I was open with Hernan and told him I don't work with players who have problems, whether they are about football or family."

"I spoke with Adrian Mutu and I felt he was fully committed. Hernan wasn't so well suited to British life, in football terms and socially. It was better for him and his family to leave," the Portuguese coach explained.

"I wish him all the best. He is still our player and it's a good move if things go well because he can return as a great player again or we can sell him for a good price. If things don't work out for him we lose money."

Mourinho has signed Serbia and Montenegro marksman Mateja Kezman and Portugal full-back Paulo Ferreira since taking over.

And he insisted that he, not any advisor to Roman Abramovich, Chelsea's Russian billionaire owner, was responsible for bringing the duo to the Premiership runners-up.

"When I buy players I do not go for names, I go for profiles. I'm not just interested in tactical or technical qualities but also their mentality and psychology," said Mourinho.

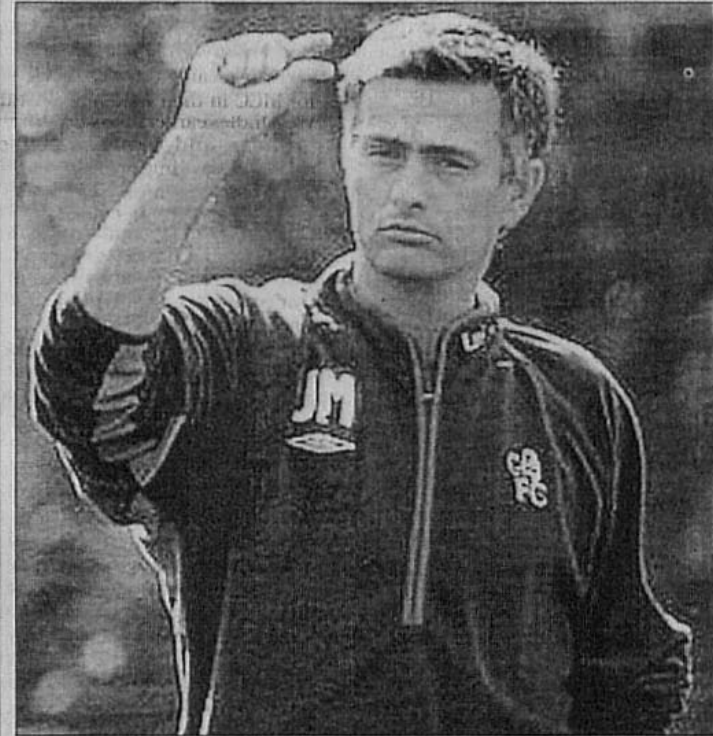
"I know Ferreira well from my time at Porto and understand what he can do and his ability to adapt. I've also experienced working with people from Holland and Kezman was there for many years with PSV."

"His heart belongs to Yugoslavia but his vision is Dutch. There are a lot of technical coaches in Holland so the players over there learn to adapt to different environments."

Mourinho confirmed Didier Drogba and Tiago Mendes remained Chelsea targets but the Chelsea chief said both men had to join the London club before they left for a pre-season tour of the United States on Wednesday or he would call off the hounds.

Chelsea's pre-season campaign begins against Oxford United on Saturday in what will be Mourinho's first match in charge.

"I do not see playing Oxford United as a game - it will be our 21st training session and no more than that," said Mourinho.



JOSE MOURINHO

Avoid tax Gunnners' style!

AFP, London

English Premiership champions Arsenal have set up a tax avoidance scheme for their players that uses secretive front companies and offshore accounts to save them huge sums in tax, The Sunday Times reported.

The scheme -- described by one expert as being "at the forefront of tax avoidance" -- is completely legal, but could be considered of dubious moral character, the newspaper said.

On average, the amount of tax paid by the players is about half of the 40 percent usually collected from such high-earning individuals, the report said.

According to the newspaper, Arsenal players generally sign two contracts, one of which provides their basic wage and is taxed at normal levels.

However they also collect millions of pounds (euros, dollars) through performance-related pay -- sometimes up to half their total remuneration -- which is paid via two front companies.

Players are shareholders in a shadowy company called Sevco 1270, which is never mentioned in the club's official accounts, and pays bonuses via a trust in the tax haven Channel Island of Jersey, The Sunday Times said.

According to tax accountants, this allows Arsenal's non-British players to legally avoid virtually all tax on such bonuses, while domestic stars almost halve their tax bill on the payments.

Another method involves giving bonuses in the form of a so-called employee benefit trust, or EBT, which is officially a loan and thus taxed at a very low rate.

"It is at the forefront of tax avoidance -- a very aggressive attempt to stay ahead of the Inland Revenue," one leading accountant told the paper on condition of anonymity.

The newspaper quoted some observers as expressing distaste at the scheme.

"It sticks in the throat that these mega-rich players are able to avoid their responsibilities to the country," said Norman Lamb, finance spokesman for the opposition Liberal Democrat party.

Tevez carries Argentina

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side-footed wide a seemingly unmissable chance.

Avila had been living dangerously after being booked in the first half, escaping even after a bodycheck which prevented Solano from having a clean run on goal, and was finally dismissed for a foul on Jorge Soto.

Peru coach Paulo Autuori again skipped the media conference despite the possibility of adding to the \$2,000 fine he has already received for doing the same after earlier games.

His assistant Victor Zagarra said: "Our only problem was that we didn't score."

COLOMBIA 2; COSTA RICA 0 Colombia's match was evenly balanced until the 41st minute when 19-year-old Aguilar rifled home Elkin Murillo's cross for his second goal in consecutive games.

Tressor Moreno effectively finished the match as a contest when he won and converted a penalty two minutes into first-half injury time after being fouled by goalkeeper Ricardo Gonzalez.



Qatar's French coach Philippe Troussier (C) speaks to a team staff before the start their game against Indonesia at the Workers Stadium in Beijing yesterday.

Troussier goes down with Qatar



AFP, Beijing

Philippe Troussier confirmed his decision to quit as Qatar coach at the end of the Asian Cup here Sunday after seeing his team beaten 2-1 by Indonesia in an upset opening defeat.

Troussier's team was sunk by goals in each half from Indonesia's Budi Sudarsono and Ponaryo Astaman in front of a paltry 1,000 fans in the 66,000-seater Workers Stadium.

The Group A defeat was yet another crushing setback for Troussier, who inspired Japan to

victory in the 2000 Asian Cup before guiding them into the last 16 of the World Cup two years later.

Afterwards the Frenchman -- appointed last July on a lucrative two-year contract -- confirmed he would part company with the Gulf side at the end of the tournament.

"This is not the time or the place to talk about my reasons for leaving, but it was a decision I had taken some time ago," Troussier said.

"It has nothing to do with my work with Qatar. The players have been receptive and have made good progress."

The charismatic guru, who became known as the 'white witchdoctor' during a successful spell coaching in Africa, blamed lack of a killer touch in front of goal for his side's defeat.

"We've known for a long time

that we have a big problem scoring. We play well and create lots of chances but find it very hard to take those chances," said Troussier.

Troussier's side must now pick themselves up in time to face Bahrain and Qatar. Despite the crushing disappointment, Troussier said there was still everything to play for.

"We have two matches left and we can still finish with six points. Mathematically we still have a chance," Troussier said.

"It will be difficult and nobody will expect us to win, but then nobody expected us to lose to Indonesia either."

Earlier Sudarsono gave Indonesia the lead after getting on the end of a toe-poked through ball by Bambang Pamungkas to prod home on 26 minutes.

Until then Qatar had dominated the half, almost taking the lead after 16 minutes when a spectacular diving header from striker Mohammed Gholam crashed off a post.

But the Qataris were unable to break down the Indonesians for the remainder of the half.

And they suffered another hammer-blow five minutes after the break when Astaman unleashed a thunderous 25-yarder that crashed in off the underside of the bar past keeper Abdulaziz Ali.

Qatar launched a furious late rally that produced an 85th minute goal for Magid Mohamed, but it was too little too late.

Indonesia now top Group A after one match following China and Bahrain's 2-2 draw on Saturday.