

Nancy couldn't take it

INTERNET SOURCE

Nancy Dell'Olio collapsed after hearing how Sven Goran Eriksson described her with contempt in conversations with his lover.

FA secretary Faria Alam gave intimate details yesterday of her affair with the England coach.

She claimed that he was making love to her at his Swedish retreat when he answered the phone to Nancy.

And he apparently said of the fiery Italian: 'We have nothing, we do nothing, we are nothing'. He insisted he had not made love to her for a year. 'The physical aspect of her died for me a long time ago. She is mad, absolutely mad.'

His words, revealed in Sunday newspaper interviews by Miss Alam, were relayed before publication to Nancy, 42, who is holidaying with friends on a yacht around the Greek islands. She fell to the deck in a faint.

Deckhands splashed water over her face to bring her round but she immediately started hyperventilating and crying.



NANCY DELL'OLIO

Yesterday her PR man Simon Astaire hinted that she might be ready to tell her side of the story in the next few weeks - a threat that could seriously damage Eriksson if she reveals details of their tempestuous six-year relationship.

'Nancy has no comment to make - for now,' he said. And 38-year-old Miss Alam said she believed Nancy could ruin Eriksson.

'It's not just a gold mine, it's a bloody big gun, and there's no guarantee she won't come out blazing one day.'

In her interviews with the News of the World and the Mail on Sunday, Miss Alam gave graphic accounts of sex with Eriksson and FA chief executive Mark Palios, who resigned a week ago over the affair. In fact, she slept with Palios just twice and spent only one weekend with the England coach.

Domenech not giving up on oldies

AFP, Paris

French coach Raymond Domenech said he had not given up hope of persuading inspirational playmaker and captain Zinedine Zidane to continue his international career.

Asked by the Nice-Matin newspaper about his job, Domenech said Monday he would have preferred to have been 'able to count on (Bixente) Lizarazu, (Lilian) Thuram or Zidane, who are really great champions.'

'I'm not giving up hope of convincing at least the latter two to think out the situation well: they still have an important role to play with the 'Bleus', Domenech said.

'The ball is their court, but they must decide quickly.'

Thuram, Lizarazu and fellow defender Marcel Desailly have all recently announced their retirement from international football.

France play a friendly against Bosnia on August 18 and their first 2006 World Cup qualifier against Israel in Paris on September 4.

Supporters arrested

AFP, Cardiff

Two supporters were arrested here Sunday at the Community Shield match between Arsenal and Manchester United after a bottle and cigarette lighter were thrown at Gunners forward Thierry Henry.

The Arsenal and France star was preparing to take a corner midway through the first half at the Millennium Stadium when the objects were hurled from a section of the stands occupied by United supporters.

Stewards moved in and those responsible could now be given a three-year ban from attending any professional football match in England and Wales.

English champions Arsenal beat FA Cup holders United 3-1 and afterwards Henry appeared unaffected by the incident, telling Sky Sports TV: 'The most important thing for me was to get through the first half without feeling my Achilles tendon.'

Vieira has seven days

Football

AFP, Cardiff

Arsenal have given unsettled skipper Patrick Vieira a week to decide whether he wants to stay with the English champions for another three years, would opt to stay in London.

Speaking after Arsenal beat Manchester United 3-1 in the pre-season Community Shield match between the Premiership and FA Cup winners, Wenger said the rest of his squad had proved their determination not to get side-tracked by the uncertainty over their captain's future.

'Of course we have been disrupted in our preparation but you can see as well it is not a big influence on the morale of the team,' Wenger said.

'Everybody wants him to stay at the club but I think we can make a difference between what we would like and what is the real world and you could see that on the pitch.'

Wenger confirmed that Arsenal would not force Vieira to see out his contract if he decides to leave but Highbury sources indicated that they expect the Frenchman to make a decision before the club's Premiership opener at Everton on Sunday.

'We want Patrick to stay but we want as well him to be committed and to make his mind up. We respect what he has done for us but if he stays we want him to be completely focused on the club and not be half in and half out and that is what we are waiting (for) from him,' Wenger said.

'If he is really focused to leave there will be an open door if we can find an agreement with Real Madrid. But we would be happy for him to stay.'

Vieira, who missed Sunday's match with a thigh injury, is reportedly tempted by the prospect of a new challenge in Madrid after eight seasons at Arsenal, as well as the greater chance of claiming the Champions League winners' medal he craves.

'Everybody wants him to stay at the club but I think we can make a difference between what we would like and what is the real world and you could see that on the pitch.'

'He has built something with the other players and we want him to finish the job and stay here,' Wenger said.

'You saw again today that we have outstanding players and we can still go much further ... with Patrick of course because he can help us to do that.'

Wenger confirmed last week that Real had made an approach for Vieira but the two clubs remain divided on their valuation of the player and the Spanish club's reported reluctance to

Benitez's first test

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, Paris

Liverpool and Rangers will be among the ten teams hoping to draw first blood in the first leg of the Champions League's third qualifying round this Tuesday.

Former European champions Liverpool go into the first leg away to Austrian side AK Graz knowing they will have the psychological edge of having plenty of European experience over the years.

The new man in charge at Anfield, Rafael Benitez, can boast likewise - although while Liverpool last got close to tasting European glory back in 2002, Benitez's successes are much more recent.

The Spaniard is known for his tried and trusted coaching methods - in his first year at Valencia in the 2001/2002 season he led them to their first Spanish league title for 31 years.

In only his second year at the club he led them to the Champions League quarter-finals, beating Liverpool in both group matches on the way and making a first good impression on the Anfield bosses.

Last year, Benitez's pinnacle with the Spanish side arrived when he led them to victory in the UEFA Cup - only weeks after sealing their second domestic title under his reign.

It is all looking good for Liverpool, whose best Champions League performance under their former manager, Gerard Houllier, was their quarter-final defeat at the hands of Bayer Leverkusen in 2002.

Liverpool have recently cemented

the future of England international Steven Gerrard and Michael Owen is set to sign a new deal, and they should realistically be looking to flex their muscles at AK Graz's Arnold Schwarzenegger Stadium.

Benitez seems to be taking a tranquil approach to his first foray into Europe with his new club.

'I am only thinking about my team, how good the other team is is not very important,' said Benitez, perhaps mindful of the Austrian side's exit at this stage last year when Tomas

FIXTURES

GAK (AUT) v Liverpool (ENG), Benfica (POR) v Anderlecht (BEL), PAOK (GRE) v Maccabi Tel Aviv (ISR), Juventus (ITA) v Djurgarden (SWE), CSKA Moscow (RUS) v Rangers (SCO), Dynamo Kiev (UKR) v Trabzonspor (TUR)

Galasek's 'silver goal' for Ajax in the second leg prevented their entry to the lucrative group stages.

'The important thing is how we play against Graz,' added the Spaniard.

Benitez has plenty of quality material to work with although what kind of team he will line up against the Austrians is anybody's guess.

'Half of their season is already gone there. They have played 19 or 20 games and the reaction in Russia to the draw was that it could have been worse, as we said also,' McLeish said.

'Traditionally they are one of the biggest teams, like Spartak Moscow. In the past, in Soviet times, they were a really strong team.'

Juventus, beaten Champions League finalists in 2003, will expect to overpower Swedish side Djurgarden in Turin.

Wenger also confirmed that Arsenal would not force Vieira to see out the three years left on his contract.

passes,' Benitez said following Liverpool's 2-1 friendly win over Wrexham last week.

'Maybe Djibril needs a few more longer balls to bring out the best in his game. It is a question of getting to understand each other, how he wants the ball and how we play it, but that will develop in time.'

Rangers meanwhile face a trickier test, away to Russian champions CSKA Moscow, on the back of a scoreless draw away to somewhat less glamorous Aberdeen on the opening day of the Scottish Premier League.

Defeat for the Scottish giants would be a further blow to their hopes, especially following relatively heavy investment in players in the pre-season.

Rangers - who signed Croatian striker Dado Prso from Monaco and French defender Jean-Alain Boumsong from Auxerre in the off-season - desperately need the cash injection that will come with progress to the money-spinning group stage of the tournament for a second consecutive season.

And McLeish is under no illusion about the scale of the task facing his new-look side against a Russian club who are in the middle of their campaign.

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United boss Sir Alex Ferguson, who now faces a tricky midweek trip to Dynamo Bucharest for the first leg of a final Champions League qualifier, admitted his injury-hit side had been outplayed.

'Arsenal were the better team, particularly in the second half and we were just happy to get through with no more injuries,' Ferguson said.

'After an entertaining but goalless first half which saw Thierry Henry make an unexpected appearance in the Arsenal starting line-up, the Premiership champions took the lead four minutes after the break.'

Reyes, who had squandered a superb opportunity barely a minute earlier, was the architect, running on to a long-ball into the United box before squaring the ball for Gilberto Silva to sweep it into the net at the back post.

Robin van Persie, who came on for Henry at the interval, might have opened his Arsenal account shortly afterwards but the 2.75-million-pound signing from

Feyenoord headed Dennis Bergkamp's cross over from close range.

United exploited that miss by equalising with their next attack. A misguided attempt by Pascal Cygan to chest down a ball he should have headed to safety left Kolo Toure under pressure from Alan Smith, who charged down his attempted clearance and then lashed the bouncing ball past Jens Lehmann from 25 yards.

There was a hint of controversy about the goal as David Bellion was in an offside position when Smith made his first contact.

In the end however the referee's decision that Bellion was not interfering with play made no difference as Arsenal quickly re-established their lead.

This time Gilberto acted as provider, flicking a pass towards the penalty spot from where Reyes struck a sweet left foot shot low to Tim Howard's right and into the corner of the net.

Any doubt about the outcome disappeared 11 minutes from time when Ashley Cole, playing in midfield, swept in from the left touchline, past two clumsy challenges from Bellion and Gary Neville and into the box.

The England left-back could have opted to shoot but his attempted cross proved just as effective as Silvestre's

attempted interception deflected the ball past a helpless Howard.

Wenger singled out Reyes for particular praise.

'He looks like he has become very quickly a very important player for us. He has developed his strength and power and he's getting used to the challenges now.'

'Every game in pre-season he has looked much stronger than last season.'

Arsenal had enjoyed the better of the first half, with better finishing or fortune, might have put the contest beyond United's reach before the interval.

Jermaine Pennant, back at Arsenal after spending last season on loan at Leeds, spurned the best chance to put the champions ahead after Howard had done well to keep out Henry's ferocious drive from just inside the area.

The ball rebounded to the young winger's feet but he was unable to get his side-footed shot on target.

Bergkamp had wasted an equally good chance earlier in the match after John O'Shea's poor first touch presented him with a clear run goal.

Uncharacteristically, the Dutchman



Arsenal's Brazilian World Cup winner Gilberto Silva (R) executing a simple tap in to give his side the lead against Manchester United at Cardiff on August 8.

Gunners bomb United

Football

APP, Cardiff

Arsenal made light of the absence of skipper Patrick Vieira and got their 2004/05 campaign off to a positive start by reclaiming the Community Shield from Manchester United with a convincing 3-1 victory on Sunday.

Second half strikes from Brazilian midfielder Gilberto Silva and man-of-the-match Jose Antonio Reyes and a late own goal by Mikael Silvestre allowed the Gunners to run out comfortable winners in the traditional curtain-raiser to the English season, which pits the league winners against the FA Cup holders.

The result, against a seriously depleted United side, may ultimately count for little, but Gunners boss Arsene Wenger was nevertheless delighted to see his side win in the absence of the injured Vieira, who has been strongly linked with a move to Real Madrid in recent weeks.

'Of course we have been disrupted in our preparation but you can see as well it is not a big influence on the morale of the team,' Wenger said of the uncertainty over Vieira's future.

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Beijing still hot

APP, Beijing

Beijing police have apologised to Japan after a car carrying a Japanese embassy official was attacked by angry Chinese football fans, the embassy said Monday.

The car carrying Chikahito Harada, a minister at the embassy, was hit by an unidentified object as it left the Workers' Stadium after the Asian Cup final Saturday night in which Japan beat arch-rivals China 3-1.

The car's back window was smashed when the object was thrown from the crowd, causing severe damage to the car.

'Somebody threw something at the car as it left the stadium. The back window was broken but fortunately no one was hurt in the incident,' an embassy official told AFP.

'The Beijing police called to apologise. This is a fact.'

After the match, spectators burned Japanese flags in the street and others confronted armed riot police.

In post-match incidents rare in a city where authorities maintain strict control, fans threw bottles, shouted anti-Japanese obscenities and demanded a boycott of Japanese goods.

At least two foreign photographers covering the scenes were roughed up by police outside the stadium, with one needing stitches to a head wound.

In Tokyo, China's Ambassador to Japan Wu Dawei met with Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi and said Beijing had done all it could to prevent trouble.

'We did everything we could ... There was some disorder after the match as we could not maintain full control (of the Chinese fans) after the match,' a Japanese government official quoted Wu as saying.