



IT'S MINE! Manchester United star Cristiano Ronaldo follows the ball into the net after scoring against Arsenal at Highbury on February 1.

## Half a million tickets sold in a flash

AFP, Frankfurt



public on Tuesday, the organising committee said.

Seventy thousand people from 120 countries placed orders through the Internet after the site, www.FIFAworldcup.com, opened for business at midnight (2300 GMT).

Around 812,000 tickets are available in the first phase.

The website experienced some initial technical difficulties but did not crash despite the heavy demand, organisers said.

"The orders came flying in as soon as the starting whistle went," said Horst R. Schmidt, who is responsible for ticketing in his role as senior vice-president of the organising committee.

"Fortunately, our technical system withstood the initial stampede and proved its reliability."

The organisers stressed that the tickets 'bought' in the first phase of sale until March 31 were effectively only applications because if, as seems certain, demand exceeds supply then tickets will not be distributed on a first come, first served basis but rather via a lottery.

In the second phase which runs from May 1 to November 15 this year, the first come, first served principle will apply.

The 12 stadiums for the competition will have a gross capacity of 3.37 million for the 64 matches, but with 440,000 seats reserved for VIP guests and the media, a total of around 2.93 million tickets will go on sale around the world.

However this figure includes tickets allocated to the national federations for them to distribute.

In the Internet sale, fans are restricted to four tickets per person for any individual match in the lower price categories with a maximum of seven tickets per person for all matches in the same category.

The tickets range in price from 35 euros (45.5 dollars) to 600 euros.

The World Cup finals begin on June 9, 2006 with the final in Berlin on July 9, 2006.

## Dugarry bids bye

Football

AFP, Paris

Former international striker Christophe Dugarry, who had his fans and his detractors, has become France's eighth World Cup winner to retire from football.

The 32-year-old won everything internationally with France's golden generation however many said he should never have been in the team and others charged he was a showy player with no real strengths.

Yet he still went on to win the 1998 World Cup, the 2000 European championships and played for great European clubs such as AC Milan and Barcelona.

Mutu was sacked by English Premiership club Chelsea last October for testing positive for cocaine and agreed a five-year contract with Juve last month.

However, the Romania international will not be able to play for his new employers until May 18 when his worldwide ban ends.

"I am happy because my life has taken on a new meaning after a terrible period," said the 25-year-old striker when unveiled at a press conference in Turin on Tuesday.

"I believe I have matured and will benefit from this experience. Juventus are one of the strongest teams in the world and I can't wait to be involved."

Juventus coach Fabio Capello, whose team have an eight-point lead at the top of Serie A, said Mutu was an excellent addition to the squad.

"He is one of those players who will give us an extra bit of quality. We have been looking for a player like him and the deal is an excellent one as we got him for free."

Mutu arrived at Chelsea from Parma for 15.8 million pounds (29.7 million dollars) in August 2003 and made an instant impact, scoring in his first three games for the Londoners.

But his fortunes quickly deteriorated and a dramatic dip in form that saw him go 19 games without scoring was followed by a sex scandal involving a Romanian porn star.



CHRISTOPHE DUGARRY

## PREMIERSHIP

# Gunners melt in Red heat

Football

AFP, London

Manchester United produced one of the performances of the season to beat Arsenal 4-2 at the champions' Highbury ground here Tuesday after twice coming from a goal behind and so put a massive dent in their rivals' title challenge.

Before kick-off Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger said defeat for either side would effectively end his bid for the Premiership and defeat left the Gunners 10 points behind Chelsea ahead of their London rivals' match away to Blackburn on Wednesday.

United manager Sir Alex Ferguson certainly felt Arsenal were out of the reckoning, telling Sky Sports afterwards "I think so" when asked if the Gunners bid was over.

But the Scot was more cautious about United's chances of catching the leaders, now eight points ahead of second-placed United.

"Chelsea are in a great position. The important thing is we have shown great form and we must have a chance."

Wenger effectively conceded defeat in the title race. Asked if Arsenal were too far back, the Frenchman replied: "It looks like it yes. We will keep fighting but it's too

far now."

He blamed defensive lapses for the scale of Arsenal's defeat. "We had to work hard for our goals, they didn't."

Wenger said the game had turned on United's third goal in the 58th minute when goalkeeper Manuel Almunia recklessly charged off his line and Cristiano Ronaldo tapped into the unguarded net from a yard out after scoring his first four minute earlier.

"The third goal was the killer mentally. We never recovered from that," added Wenger who refused to single out Almunia for public criticism.

United's win, which saw Ronaldo's double strike bookended by strikes from Ryan Giggs and John O'Shea, was all the more impressive as defender Mikael Silvestre was sent-off in the 69th minute.

There was an almost as dramatic match at The Hawthorns where West Bromwich Albion appeared to have snatched a priceless win against relegation rivals Crystal Palace with two goals in the last three minutes only for the visitors, down to 10 men for most of the match, to gain an extra-time equaliser of their own in a 2-2 draw.

Liverpool kept alive their hopes of a Champions League spot by coming from behind to beat

Charlton 2-1 but Middlesbrough's quest for European football next season suffered a blow when, after taking the lead at Fratton Park, they lost by the same scoreline to hosts Portsmouth.

In Tuesday's other match Bolton scored two late goals to beat Tottenham 3-1.

But Highbury was the centre of attention for one of the most eagerly-awaited fixtures of the season. When the teams last met, at Old Trafford in October, United won 2-0 to end Arsenal's English top-flight record run of 49 unbeaten league games.

A fiery encounter on the field led to bizarre scenes in the tunnel afterwards with Ferguson pelting with soup and pizza, allegedly thrown from the Arsenal dressing room.

And before kick-off Tuesday there was another tunnel clash, referee Graham Poll having to restrain rival captains Patrick Vieira and Roy Keane.

Vieira made a more positive contribution when his eighth minute header from Thierry Henry's corner gave the Gunners the lead. But 10 minutes later United were level when Giggs's shot took a deflection past Manuel Almunia.

However, Arsenal regained the lead nine minutes before half-time thanks to the impressive Dennis

Bergkamp's slick finish.

United though hit back in the 54th minute when a quickly taken free-kick led to a move that saw Ronaldo score on the overlap.

And four minutes later the Portugal winger put United ahead after Almunia's lapse.

Then a see-saw match turned again when Silvestre was sent-off for what appeared to be a push in the face of Arsenal midfielder Freddie Ljungberg.

However O'Shea put the result beyond doubt with an exquisite 89th minute lob.

At the Reebok goals from Tal ben Haim and Kevin Davies in the 86th and 87th minutes respectively helped Bolton, who saw El Haddji Diouf's second-half penalty cancelled out by Jermain Defoe's 66th minute equaliser, beat Tottenham 3-1.

At The Valley, Charlton took the lead through South Africa striker Shaun Bartlett's 20th minute header. But Liverpool hit back when Fernando Morientes equalised after the hour mark.

John Arne Riise's 79th minute strike completed the comeback and left Liverpool fifth but now just four points behind local rivals Everton.

In-form striker Andy Johnson gave Palace the lead in the 47th minute before veteran striker Kevin Campbell levelled three minutes from time.

Robert Earnshaw then put Albion ahead in the last minute before Fitz Hall rescued a point for Palace, down to 10 men as early as the 12th minute, when Gonzalo Sorondo was sent-off.

West Brom remained bottom and five points adrift of safety.

On the south coast, Malcolm Christie gave Boro the lead before Pompey levelled before half-time through Matthew Taylor, the man who conceded the vital stoppage-time penalty in last weekend's FA Cup derby defeat against Southampton.

Nigeria striker Aiyegbeni Yakubu then scored the winner in the 58th minute, Pompey winning in the league for the first time since Boxing Day to go 12th in the table.

TOP SIX							
English Premiership table after Tuesday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):							
Chelsea	24	19	4	1	48	8	61
Man Utd	25	15	8	2	41	16	53
Arsenal	25	15	6	4	55	29	51
Everton	24	13	5	6	28	25	44
Liverpool	25	12	4	9	38	26	40
Boro	25	10	7	8	40	35	37

## FA goes soft

AFP, London

English football chiefs have decided against taking any action over Arsenal skipper Patrick Vieira's bust-up with Manchester United captain Roy Keane before Tuesday's Highbury thriller.

Vieira denied threatening Gary Neville before Keane stepped into the stand-off as the teams walked down the tunnel before Arsenal's 4-2 defeat.

Referee Graham Poll, who had to separate the pair, confirmed in his official report he dealt with the matter to his satisfaction.

"He has confirmed that he is satisfied that he dealt with the incident at the time. Therefore no further action is required," the FA said in a statement.

The last time the teams played, at Old Trafford in October, an Arsenal player was accused of throwing a pizza and soup at United boss Alex Ferguson.

United seized command in the second-half on Tuesday and having twice come back from behind, Cristiano Ronaldo put them ahead before John O'Shea lobbed a late fourth in what was eventually a comfortable victory.

Chelsea can now extend their advantage over Arsenal to 13 points by winning at Blackburn on Wednesday, even if Vieira refused to give up just yet.

"It will be difficult, of course. Chelsea need to lose points and we have lost at home to one of our main rivals," insisted the midfielder.

"But we just have to go on and try to win our next game, and not think about Chelsea or United. We just have to improve on how we played," as we can."

## Ronaldo back from Brazil

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid striker Ronaldo was back in the Spanish capital on Tuesday after missing his side's league match against Numancia because of a flying visit to Brazil.

The 28-year-old had rushed back to his home country on Friday because of a family illness but said that the problem was now resolved.

"I have to thank the club for giving me permission to leave because it was a difficult time for me," Ronaldo told the Real Madrid website.

"When I arrived back home luckily it turned out to be little more than a scare and now everything is sorted out. I was sorry to have missed an important game, but my team mates were in good form and we won the match (2-1)."

"Everyone appeared a bit taken aback by the way I had to rush back, but it was a family matter and now there is no reason to worry."

Ronaldo missed team training on Tuesday morning, but later completed a fitness session on his own at the team's training ground in Las Rozas.

At the end of his personal training Ronaldo reaffirmed his total commitment for the club by saying coach Vanderley Luxemburgo could count on him anytime now.

"I have a week to train hard and be ready for the weekend," said the player, who, in referring to Barcelona, assured "we'll reach

them at the top, and what we have to do now is to do our work: play well and win points."

The Brazilian superstar then made reference to Santiago Bernabeu Stadium whose grass was changed, indicating he saw this as a positive thing, and showed his

happiness about the renewal of the contract of his mate, Santiago Solari, from Argentina.

"I hope Cesar, Celades, Figo renew their contracts. I want them all to do so, because we have great players and because we're good friends," he added.



RONALDO

## Adriano out of Hong Kong trip

INTERNET SOURCE, Rio de Janeiro

Inter Milan forward Adriano will miss Brazil's friendly away to Hong Kong next week because of injury, the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) said on Monday.

Brazilian media said Adriano, second highest scorer in Serie A with 14 goals, was recovering from a muscular problem.

Despite his exploits in Europe and finishing as top scorer in last year's Copa America when Brazil fielded a second string team, Adriano has been unable to secure a regular place with the world champions.

Coach Carlos Alberto Parreira has preferred Ronaldo and Ronaldinho as the regular strike force.

The CBF said that uncapped Corinthians defender Anderson had been called in as a replacement.

### SQUAD

**Goalkeepers:** Gomes (PSV Eindhoven), Julio Cesar (Flamengo).

**Defenders:** Cafu (AC Milan), Belletti (Barcelona), Roberto Carlos (Real Madrid), Gilberto (Hertha Berlin), Juan (Bayer Leverkusen), Roque Junior (Bayer Leverkusen), Lucio (Bayern Munich), Luisao (Benfica), Anderson (Corinthians).

**Midfielders:** Alex (Fenerbahce), Diego (Porto), Elano (Santos), Emerson (Juventus), Julio Baptista (Sevilla), Juninho Pernambucano (Olympique Lyon), Renato (Sevilla), Ze Roberto (Bayern Munich).

**Forwards:** Ronaldo (Real Madrid), Robinho (Santos), Ronaldinho (Barcelona), Luis Fabiano (Porto), Ricardo Oliveira (Real Betis).