

Africa salutes Eto'o again

Football

AFP, Durban

Cameroon striker Samuel Eto'o was named African Footballer of the Year for the second consecutive time here Tuesday.

The announcement came as no surprise because Eto'o told teammates of his impending triumph after a friendly against Senegal in France last week and journalists overheard the conversation.

But the result will be a bitter blow to Nigerian football followers who believed veteran midfielder Austin 'Jay-Jay' Okocha would win after being voted top player of the 2004 African Nations Cup in Tunisia.

Eto'o could not receive the award personally at a lavish ceremony in the Indian Ocean city as he was scheduled to play in a charity match in Barcelona later Tuesday for victims of the Asian tsunami disaster last December.

In a repeat of last year, the other finalists were Ivory Coast striker Didier Drogba and Okocha, who play for English Premiership clubs Chelsea and Bolton Wanderers respectively.

While Eto'o failed to sparkle in a disappointing Cameroon team at a Nations Cup, he has been outstanding for Spanish league leaders Barcelona, scoring 17 goals in 23 appearances this season.

Brazilian superstar and reigning World Footballer of the Year Ronaldinho was glowing in his praise of Barca team-mate Eto'o this week.

"Samuel is undoubtedly the most dangerous attacking player in the Spanish championship and often makes the difference when Barcelona face other leading clubs," boasted Ronaldinho.

Eto'o is only the fourth African star after Ghana midfielder Abedi 'Pele' Ayew, Liberia striker George Weah and Senegal striker El Hadji Diouf to win the Footballer of the Year title in successive years.

Born in the Cameroon town of Nkon 23 years ago, Eto'o played for Union Douala before heading to Spain and spells with Real Madrid, Leganes and Real Mallorca ahead of a mid-2004 transfer to Barcelona.

He helped Cameroon win the African Nations Cup in 2000 and 2002 and the 2000 Sydney Olympics football tournament, and was a member of the Mallorca team that lifted the Spanish Cup two years ago.

His passion for goals is matched only by his hatred of racism in football and he told Spanish newspaper Mundo Deportivo Tuesday that the struggle to eradicate a growing scourge.

"I thought racist chanting at Spanish football grounds was just a passing fad, but it seems to be coming more widespread and more vitriolic. Journalists and white footballers can send strong messages against the abuse," said Eto'o.

"A white player like (Barcelona team-mate) Deco coming and hugging me and celebrating with me when I score a goal is a powerful message, and journalists have to write and talk about it."

Nigeria received some consolation for the failure of Okocha by winning five awards with three going to Enyimba, who last December became only the second club to successfully defend the African Champions League title.

Goalkeeper Victor Enyeama was named Champions League Goalkeeper of the Year, Okey Emordi won the African Coach of the Year category and the African Club of the Year award went to the side from the south-east town of Aba.

Other Nigerians to be honoured were Obafemi Martins from Italian club Inter Milan, who won the African Young Footballer of the Year award for the

second consecutive year, and African Woman Footballer of the Year Perpetua Nkwocha.

African Nations Cup winners Tunisia were honoured twice with the Carthage Eagles taking the Team of the Year title while veteran Ali Boumijiel was selected African Goalkeeper of the Year.

South African Benni McCarthy won the African Goal of the Year award for his looping header that earned Porto of Portugal a home win over Manchester United of England in a 2004 European Champions League tie.

A minute's silence was observed during the ceremony in honour of Thabet al-Batel, manager of famous Egyptian club Al-Ahly and a former national star who died Monday aged 52 after a long struggle against liver cancer.

PAST WINNERS

AFP, Durban

Winners of the African Footballer of the Year title:

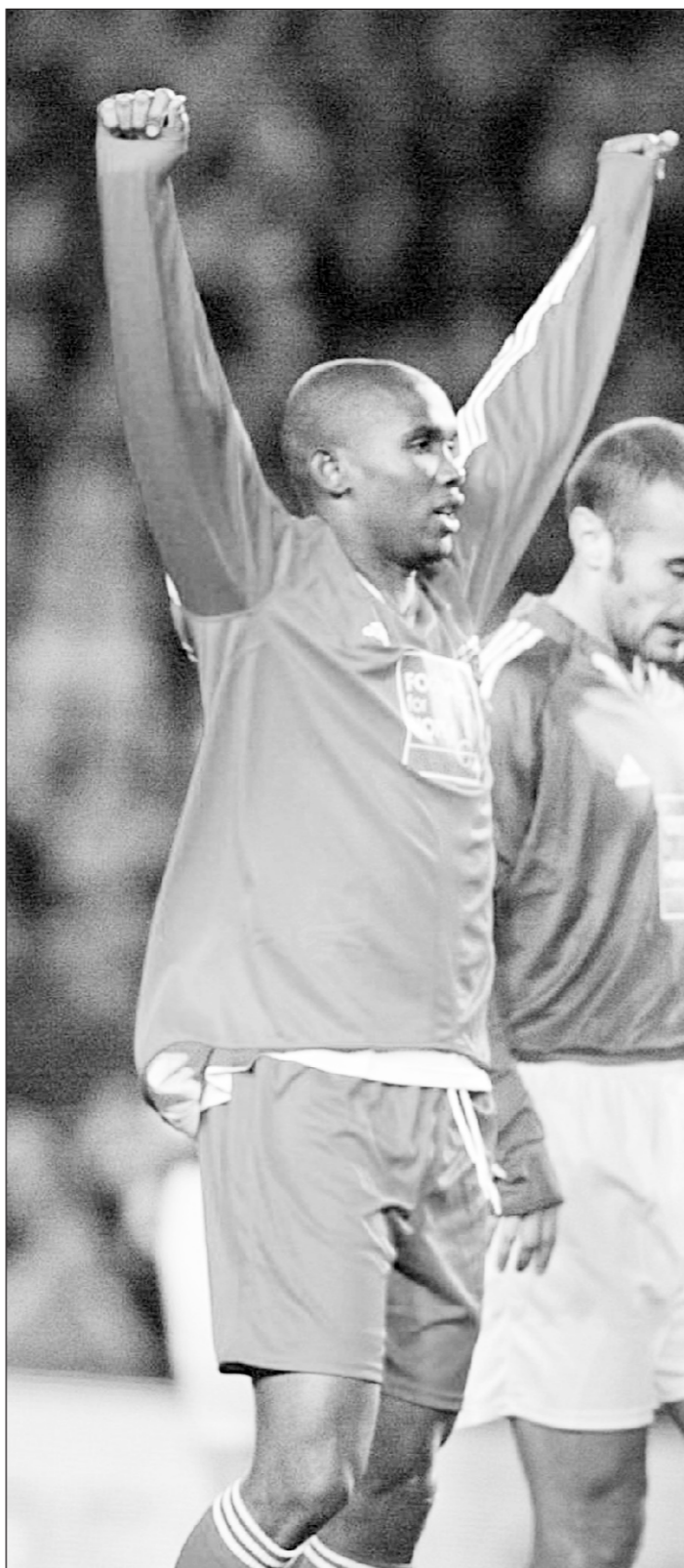
- 1970 - Salif Keita (MLI)
- 1971 - Ibrahim Sunday (GHA)
- 1972 - Cherif Souleymane (GUI)
- 1973 - Tshimen Bwanga (DRC)
- 1974 - Paul Moukila (CGO)
- 1975 - Ahmed Faras (MAR)
- 1976 - Roger Milla (CMR)
- 1977 - Tarak Dhiab (TUN)
- 1978 - Abdul Razak (GHA)
- 1979 - Thomas Nkono (CMR)
- 1980 - Jean-Manga Onguene (CMR)
- 1981 - Lakhdar Belloumi (ALG)
- 1982 - Thomas Nkono (CMR)
- 1983 - Mahmoud al-Khatib (EGY)
- 1984 - Theophile Abega (CMR)
- 1985 - Mohamed Timoumi (MAR)
- 1986 - Badou Zaki (MAR)
- 1987 - Rabah Madjer (ALG)
- 1988 - Kalusha Bwalya (ZAM)
- 1989 - George Weah (LBR)
- 1990 - Roger Milla (CMR)
- 1991 - Abedi 'Pele' Ayew (GHA)
- 1992 - Abedi 'Pele' Ayew (GHA)
- 1993 - Abedi 'Pele' Ayew (GHA)
- 1994 - George Weah (LBR) and Emmanuel Amunike (NGR)
- 1995 - George Weah (LBR)
- 1996 - Nwankwo Kanu (NGR)
- 1997 - Victor Ikpeba (NGR)
- 1998 - Mustapha Hadji (MAR)
- 1999 - Nwankwo Kanu (NGR)
- 2000 - Patrick Mboma (CMR)
- 2001 - El Hadji Diouf (SEN)
- 2002 - El Hadji Diouf (SEN)
- 2003 - Samuel Eto'o (CMR)
- 2004 - Samuel Eto'o (CMR)

BEST OF 2004

AFP, Durban

The winners of the annual Confederation of African Football awards were named here Tuesday:

- African Footballer of the Year** Samuel Eto'o (CMR)
- African Champions League Footballer of the Year** Vincent Enyeama (Enyimba/NGR)
- African Goalkeeper of the Year** Ali Boumijiel (TUN)
- African Young Footballer of the Year** Obafemi Martins (NGR)
- African Team of the Year** Tunisia
- African Club of the Year** Enyimba (NGR)
- African Coach of the Year** Okey Emordi (Enyimba/NGR)
- African Goal of the Year** Benni McCarthy (RSA)
- African Woman Footballer of the Year** Perpetua Nkwocha (NGR)
- Most important achiever in African football** South Africa 2010 World Cup bid committee
- African legends** Pierre Kalala (DRC), Mahmoud al-Khatib (EGY), George Weah (LBR)



SAMUEL ETO'O...King of Africa

PHOTO: AFP

Foreigners are fine

AFP, London

Arsenal chairman Peter Hill-Wood says critics of French manager Arsene Wenger's decision to field a squad without one Englishman have got to face the facts of modern football.

Arsenal became the first English club to pick a squad made up entirely of foreigners for Monday's 5-1 Premiership win over Crystal Palace.

And Arsenal are now on a collision course with UEFA, the game's European governing body, over their imposition of a new rule that will impose strict quotas of home-grown players.

But Hill-Wood today told the London Evening Standard: "To be honest I don't mind as long as the team plays the right sort of football. We are in times now when people have to adjust their thinking."

"For me, the nationality of any player who plays for the club is not an issue. If you have good enough players then it does not matter from which country they come."

"The world of football is changing and there are some people who don't like things to change."

"You should not forget the huge impact that one player has had in changing the club and helping us to a higher level - and that is Dennis Bergkamp, a Dutchman."

"These days, the world is smaller. We have young players from all over the world in our youth set-up."

"We have the whole world to look at. It is a sign of the times that so many nations are represented at Arsenal. It is an inevitability that we will have players from all over the world."

But Players' Union boss Gordon Taylor warned England could follow the fate of underachieving Scotland whose Premiership clubs have few homegrown players in their teams.

England are eighth in the FIFA rankings while Scotland are 86th.

"You only have to look at Scotland to see what happens when your top teams fill their squads with foreigners," he said.

Former Arsenal defender Liam Chilvers, now at third-tier Colchester after failing to break into a first-team dominated by foreigners, could not blame Wenger.

Football invades silverscreen!

AFP, Berlin

Football mania invaded the Berlin Film Festival on Tuesday as a compilation of 45 short films was presented by 2006 World Cup hosts Germany as part of an international competition entitled "Shoot Goals! Shoot Movies!"

The films from 29 countries were shortlisted from 611 entered by young film makers from 75 nations across the globe since last October on the theme of the passion for football.

The compilation of the films which were originally between 30 seconds and five minutes will also be presented before the public in a Berlin cinema on Sunday.

The competition was organised as part of the cultural programme for the 2006 World Cup for which the German government have allocated some 30 million euros (39 million dollars).

Franz Beckenbauer, head of the 2006 World Cup organising committee, admitted: "I never expected such a response."

Austrian artist Andre Heller, the World Cup artistic director, added: "It shows the position that football holds in society."

The directors of the selected short films have been invited to attend the Berlinale Talent Campus 2005 and spend a week in Germany for the World Cup.

Kaiser not pleased

AFP, Berlin



Franz Beckenbauer, head of the 2006 World Cup organising committee, claims the German Football Federation's (DFB) decision

to appoint two presidents has backfired leaving Germany's World Cup organisation in chaos.

Gerhard Mayer-Vofelder and Dr. Theo Zwanziger are co-presidents of the DFB but the recent Robert Hoyer referee scandal appears to have started internal disputes that threaten to drag on until the World Cup in 18 months time.

"The concept of two presidents just does not work," explained Beckenbauer.

"It is not suitable and I do not know anyone who is happy with it."

At 71 Mayer-Vofelder is the senior of the duo but West Germany's 1974 World Cup winner Beckenbauer does not expect him

to make way for Zwanziger. "I do not think he (Mayer-Vofelder) will step down," added Beckenbauer.

Zwanziger was reportedly ready to throw in the towel accusing Mayer-Vofelder of incompetence in the Hoyer scandal.

It has been a hectic time for German football over the past few months starting with the managerial hunt to replace Rudi Voller after Euro 2004.

Introducing a dual presidency at the DFB has also proved a mammoth task not to mention coping with the biggest match-fixing scandal in 34 years.

"Looking for a coach after Rudi's resignation, coping with two presidents and now the referee affair - if we did not have such good administration we would be in chaos," confessed Beckenbauer.

There is also the small matter of organising football's biggest showpiece for 2006.

All for a noble cause

Football

AFP, Barcelona

A Ronaldinho XI saw off a side captained by Andrei Shevchenko 6-3 in FIFA's Football For Hope benefit match held here Tuesday which raised up to three million dollars for the tsunami disaster.

Although Barcelona's 100,000-capacity Nou Camp stadium was less than half full - 36,000 tickets priced between 10 and 29 euros had been sold hours before kick-off - FIFA president Sepp Blatter applauded the initiative.

"This is the first time in my 30 years in FIFA that we have seen such an assembly of great players coming together for a humanitarian cause," said Blatter.

"It's a great moment for international football," Blatter added.

The match was preceded by a minute's silence impeccably observed in honour of the 287,000 people who died after a powerful undersea earthquake off the Indonesian island of Sumatra sent huge waves pounding into coast-

lines around the Indian Ocean.

And in an entertaining affair in which the players sported the Football For Hope logo on their shirts Samuel Eto'o, playing on his home turf, opened the scoring in the 13th minute on the day he was named African Footballer of the Year.

His Barca teammate, World Footballer of the Year Ronaldinho fittingly got the second six minutes later.

The ever-smiling Brazilian only had to tap in after his fellow countryman Kaka flicked the ball across the goalmouth after having his own attempt parried by the keeper.

Alessandro Del Piero pulled one back for Shevchenko's side, the Juventus ace set up by a brilliant pass from Zinedine Zidane.

A minute later Shevchenko should have levelled but the Ukrainian's header was tipped over the bar.

Eto'o doubled up on the stroke of half time, dummying the keeper to score into an empty goal.

The second half proved equally productive, with Shevchenko's side levelling after strikes from Gianfranco Zola and David Suazo.

But Ronaldinho's team had the last word with a quick-fire double from Southampton's Senegalese international Henri Camara and a 79th minute effort from Eintracht Frankfurt's Korean midfielder Cha Doo-Ri.

Frank Rijkaard, coach of the winning side and of Barcelona, said: "I think it's right to participate in an event like this - it's important for the victims of the tsunamis and I think the players did a great job."

Lennart Johansson, boss of UEFA, European football's governing body, praised the speed with which football responded to the tsunamis.

"Many governments reacted slowly to the catastrophe, football reacted immediately," he said.

Addressing the teams beforehand Mohamed Bin Hammam, president of the Asian Football Confederation, said: "You're all extraordinary players but you're also extraordinary people."

In total football has raised an estimated ten million dollars for the December 26 disaster.



VERY NICE TO MEET YOU! Brazilian star Kaka shakes hands with French ace Zidane Zidane while world player of the year Ronaldinho exchanges pleasantries with English superstar David Beckham before the start of the tsunami benefit match 'Football for Hope' at the Nou Camp stadium in Barcelona on February 15.

PHOTO: AP

'Fixed' game to be replayed

Football

AFP, Berlin

One of the games at the centre of the German match-fixing scandal is to be replayed, the German Football Federation (DFB) announced on Tuesday.

The second division fixture between Ahlen and Wacker Burghausen on October 22 last year is one of the four games referee Robert Hoyer has admitted to manipulating for cash from a Croatian betting syndicate.

Last month Hoyer told the DFB he had orchestrated a 1-0 win for Ahlen when he awarded a 65th minute penalty for a non-existent hand ball by a Wacker Burghausen player.

"If I hadn't allowed myself to be influenced by my financial gain I'd never have blown for a penalty," Hoyer has told the DFB.

The decision to replay the match - the first time this has happened in German football - was made by the DFB's sports tribunal investigating the affair.

"It's been proved that discussions on manipulation took place before the match and that betting influenced the result," Rainer Koch, the tribunal's president said after a three hour hearing in Frankfurt.

Hoyer has told investigators he was contacted by Ante S, one of the alleged members of the Croatian mafia behind the affair, a few days before the encounter to arrange for an Ahlen win.

In a further development Hoyer in the scandal 29-year-old Dominik Marks, alleged in Monday's Der Spiegel magazine to have taken 36,000 euros for fixing two lower division games, was suspended on Tuesday night by the DFB.

On Monday the DFB had already suspended Torsten Koop, 39, for not having told them about Hoyer approaching him about fixing a match.

Also on Tuesday it was revealed that Hoyer, who has admitted to fixing four games, is to be quizzed by police on a total of 63 matches he was involved in.

The DFB have handed the list to police in Berlin.

The file includes fixtures from the Bundesliga, German Cup, friendlies and an indoor competition. Hoyer acted as referee in 36 of them, assistant referee in six others and supervisory referee in the remaining 21.

The affair has tarnished Germany's image at a sensitive time a year before it hosts the World Cup, Franz Beckenbauer, president of the 2006 World Cup organising committee, said.

"Obviously it'll produce a negative image," Beckenbauer told a press conference here.

He said that in the interests of the World Cup he hoped the scandal would be "cleared up as quickly as possible".

On Saturday Hoyer was arrested and placed in police custody over fears that he might flee the country.

Maradona on weight-loss mission?

REUTERS, Cartagena

One of Diego Maradona's doctors has denied reports that the former Argentina captain has undergone liposuction surgery to make him thinner.

Maradona, whose weight has ballooned in the last two years, has been in the historic Caribbean city of Cartagena since last Wednesday but doctors say he is not there for any type of surgery.

"It has not been considered," Francisco Holguin, director of the Medigel Clinic, told Reuters by telephone.

"He's here in Cartagena on holiday, for a rest. He's been here a couple of times to check his arterial pressure. The possibility of an operation has not been considered."

Maradona, who is barely recognizable from his playing days, is staying at an apartment in one of the city's plush neighborhoods.

He was briefly seen in public on Friday when he waved from the balcony.

Maradona spent more than a week in the intensive care unit of a Buenos Aires hospital last April with heart and breathing problems. He was then confined to a psychiatric clinic by his family.

In September, Maradona returned to Cuba, where he has lived since 2000, to undergo more treatment for drug addiction but under a stricter regime than before.

At Christmas, Maradona defied his doctor's advice and returned to Argentina for one month. He went to Greece on a business trip last month.



The legendary Diego Maradona waves to fans from the balcony of a hotel in Cartagena, Colombia on February 11.

PHOTO: AP

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12					13				14	
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18							19	20		
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23	24	25	26		27		28		29	30
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DOWN

1 Padlock-ed fastener

2 Cave come-back

3 "Repeat that, please"

4 Big trucks

5 Trail-blazer

6 Joan of —

7 Delibes opera

8 Ear shell

9 "Saturday Evening Post" illustrator

10 It goes without saying

11 Coaster

ACROSS

38 Party bowful

40 Drag tender

41 "Mona —"

43 Dawn goddess

45 Toy maker

47 Andean pack

51 "— Rhythm"

52 Agenda

54 "Smooth Operator" singer

55 Honest politician

56 Neighbourhood

57 Stomped damages

58 Disen-cumber

59 Jerry's longtime partner

Solution time: 21 mins.

V A R I S S O D B E S T I
O R E I O T W O L U L U
Y E R E L U E S A R A B
O A R T I S S I C I P P E
S A V Y A K
S U P E R L A M B D A S
A P E X E R D O W T O W A
L A W Y E R S C R E E P
S E A M O T I E L I K
G L E A M H O N E S T P I E
R E A D M H O N E S T P I E
A N T I A D D O E I R E
B A S E T O R S C A N

CRYPTOQUIP

J P Y F Y O I S Z B M I S F T

V S Y I S R V Z F T A Y U V Q

M U T R R T M Y R Y D O J P T, X T ' M

B S S D U T Y B B Q R X Y U A .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: AFTER THE FATHER LET HIS WEE KIDS HAVE SEVERAL FELT-TIP PENS, HE WAS A MARKED MAN.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: R equals S

The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.