

Romario's last dance

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Brazil coach Carlos Alberto Parreira has included 13 uncapped players for next week's friendly at home to Guatemala and recalled 39-year-old Romario for a farewell appearance.

"He will start the game and play for at least the first few minutes," said Parreira. "It's a tribute to one of Brazilian football's great players."

Romario, who scored five goals as Brazil won the 1994 World Cup with a team also coached by Parreira, last played for his country in a World Cup qualifier away to Uruguay in 2001.

He currently plays for Rio de Janeiro's Vasco da Gama, the club where he began his career.

Parreira was forced to pick only home-based players for the game, which is not being played on a FIFA international date and has been arranged to celebrate the 40th anniversary of a Brazilian television station.

Despite not being able to call on any of Brazil's top players, such as Ronaldo, Ronaldinho, Kaka and Adriano, Parreira said he was spoilt for choice when picking the side.

"There wasn't room for everyone," he said. "It was difficult to get it down to 22. That shows how strong Brazilian football is."

Brazil face the Central Americans at Sao Paulo's Pacaembu stadium on April 27. The teams drew 1-1 in their only previous meeting at the CONCACAF Gold Cup in 1998.

Lehmann denied contract

AFP, Sydney

Australian selectors dashed any faint hopes batsman Darren Lehmann held of regaining a spot in the national side Tuesday when they included the 35-year-old in a group of six players not offered new contracts for the 2005-06 season.

Selectors opted to bring fresh faces into the 25-man group of contracted players, which forms the core of Australia's Test and one-day squads.

They axed ageing fringe players Martin Love, Ian Harvey, Matthew Elliott, Jimmy Maher and Brad Williams, who had failed to pressure the incumbent starting line up.

Instead, selectors opted for Victorian all-rounder Cameron White, 21, South Australian off-spinner Daniel Cullen, 21, Queensland all-rounder James Hopes, 26, NSW wicketkeeper Brad Haddin, 27, and Victorian quick Michael Lewis, 30.

NSW fast bowler Nathan Bracken, 27, found his way back into the fold after being dropped in 2004-05.

Lehmann was the highest-profile casualty, with chairman of selectors Trevor Hohns confirming the bats and his international career is over after 27 Tests (1798 runs at 44.95).

"We are indicating that it is time for us to look toward the future," Hohns said. "We are confident that the young players on the contracted list will fill the void left by Darren's omission."

Cricket Australia's contracted players for 2005-06: Ricky Ponting (captain), Nathan Bracken, Michael Clarke, Daniel Cullen, Adam Gilchrist, Jason Gillespie, Matthew Hayden, Brad Haddin, Brad Hodge, Brad Hogg, James Hopes, Michael Hussey, Michael Kasprovicz, Simon Katich, Justin Langer, Brett Lee, Michael Lewis, Stuart MacGill, Damien Martyn, Glenn McGrath, Andrew Symonds, Shaun Tait, Shane Warne, Shane Watson, Cameron White.

Kasparov hit on head with chessboard!

AP, Moscow

Garry Kasparov, the world's former No.1 chess player who quit the professional game last month to focus on politics, has said he has been hit over the head with a chessboard in what appears to have been a politically motivated attack.

Kasparov was not injured when he was hit with the chessboard on Friday after signing it for a young man at an event in the Russian capital.

A spokeswoman for Kasparov, Marina Litvinovich, said the assailant told the chess champion: "I admired you as a chess player, but you gave that up for politics."

She said the unidentified attacker -- who did not reveal his political allegiance -- had tried to hit Kasparov a second time but was hauled away by security guards.

"It was a fairly nasty incident, it was not very pleasant psychologically," Kasparov told the private NTV television.

"Yesterday, I was just about able to muster up enough humour to joke darkly that, luckily in the Soviet Union, chess and not baseball was popular."



SHEER WIZARDRY! Brazil's Kerlon Moura (C) sets off on a 'seal dribble' through two Uruguayan defenders during their U-17 South American final round match at Pachencho Romero stadium in Western Maracaibo, Venezuela on April 17.

PREVIEW: PREMIERSHIP

Sparks will still fly

Football

AFP, London

Chelsea may have an 11 point lead over Arsenal at the top of the Premiership table and be closing in on their first top-flight title in 50 years ahead of Wednesday's meeting with their London rivals at Stamford Bridge but not everything is so assured off the field.

The Blues were forced to issue another denial Monday that they had tapped up Rio Ferdinand after evidence emerged the Manchester United defender met Chelsea officials not once but twice at different London restaurants on the same evening.

Chelsea insisted again they had "no interest in signing Rio Ferdinand and, regardless of where this encounter took place, there is absolutely no significance in Peter Kenyon seeing Rio."

But United manager Sir Alex Ferguson, trying to negotiate a contract extension with Ferdinand - who is apparently demanding 150,000 pounds a week - is unlikely

to be alone in his suspicions of Chelsea's good faith.

Arsenal come into this match on the back of a 3-0 FA Cup semi-final humbling of Blackburn Rovers.

But they are set to be without France striker Thierry Henry, who missed the victory in Cardiff with a groin problem while midfielder Freddie Ljungberg is doubtful after he went off with a recurrence of his hip injury just after half-time at the Millennium Stadium.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger, citing Arsenal's own experience, warned Chelsea their golden spell would come to an end.

"We climbed Everest but, at some stage, you have to come down again. Then you have to go up again and that takes a while to find your togetherness and motivation."

Manchester United, who will face Arsenal in the FA Cup final, after a 4-1 stroll against Newcastle on Sunday, are three points behind the Gunners in the race for second spot.

They travel to fourth-placed Everton, themselves involved in a manic scrap for the last Champions League place.

Former Everton striker Wayne

Rooney will return to Merseyside having already come through the experience of playing in February's 2-0 FA Cup win at Goodison Park.

The 19-year-old England forward, who has scored 15 goals for United so far this season, said he had asked United manager Sir Alex Ferguson to make him captain for the Cup game.

"There was no way that I wanted to miss that game. To go back to Goodison was special for me," he told the official United magazine. "I actually went up to the manager and said, 'You should make me captain' I wanted to be the captain but I'm not sure Roy (Keane) would have been too happy about that."

FIXTURES

(1845GMT unless stated)
Wednesday: Aston Villa v Charlton, Blackburn v Crystal Palace (1900GMT), Chelsea v Arsenal (1900GMT), Everton v Manchester United (1900GMT), Manchester City v Birmingham, Norwich v Newcastle, Portsmouth v Liverpool, Tottenham v West Brom

Ferrero advances

Tennis

AFP, Barcelona

Spain's former King of Clay Juan Carlos Ferrero showed increasing signs of life on the surface Tuesday, scraping through a 6-3, 3-6, 7-5 marathon over compatriot Alberto Montes at the 850,000-euro Barcelona Open.

The former Roland Garros champion, who lifted the Barcelona trophy in 2001, struggled in the first round meeting before finally following up on a semifinal showing last week in Monte Carlo.

The former world number one who suffered through a season of injury and illness in 2004, overcame a potentially distracting moment late in the match as Montes took treatment for thigh cramps at 30-all while serving for the match 5-4.

But after the delay, Ferrero held his nerve, breaking his countryman to square the set at 5-apeice.

The end came two games later after two hours, 42 minutes, when Montes drove a forehand into the net as he returned a Ferrero ball which bounced off the net cord.

Ferrero, unseeded but with a Special Exempt entry due to his prowess last week in the Principality, where he lost to Guillermo Coria, notched his 13th victory of the season

against nine defeats.

The Spaniard, who dominated the surface two seasons ago, has vowed to lift his level. He next faces another of the 19 other Spaniards who began the week at the real Club de Tenis when he takes on 12th seed Feliciano Lopez.

"I have a lot of tournaments until Roland Garros," said Ferrero. "I'm am going to try to be better and better each tournament. We'll see how I'll do."

Play on the clay dragged during a sunny afternoon with 11th-seeded Czech Radek Stepanek earning a comeback win over Irakli Labadze of Georgia 4-6, 6-2, 7-5.

Spanish and South American specialists sailed through with Argentine 14th seed Juan Chela ousting Spaniard Alberto Portas 6-4, 7-6.

Locals Alberto Martin, a 6-4, 6-3 winner over Yves El Aynaoui, and Santiago Ventura, who beat veteran Galo Blanco 6-3, 6-3, also reached the second round.

Argentine Agustín Calleri ended the hopes of French teenager Gael Monfils 7-6, 7-6.

Third-seeded former champion Carlos Moya, a Monte Carlo first-round victim, was opening against Finnish qualifier Jarkko Nieminen, who beat him in their only other meeting on hardcourt in Bangkok two years ago.

Reds' crucial tie

FROM PAGE 12
final of the Independence Cup after recovering from a knee injury while Rajani missed the last match due to a one-game ban.

Despite their recent high, Manik said that his side would adopt a cautious approach.

"A win is my main concern. It doesn't matter how it comes. We won the away match with similar tactics and we will stick to it here. We don't want to be over enthusiastic in bid to dominate and lose the game."

Tikolo regains

FROM PAGE 12
In addition to Tikolo, the selectors have included two new capped players including 17-year-old batsman Tanmay Mishra for the April 22-24 in Kampala.

But there was no place on the side for seamer Ragheb Aga who acted as stand-by captain in the semifinals and finals of the inaugural Intercontinental Cup in the United Arab Emirates last November.

TEAM

Steve Tikolo (capt), Thomas Odoyo, Kennedy Obuya, David Obuya, Maurice Ouma, Martin Suji, Peter Ongondo, Hitesh Modi, Collins Obuya, Tanmay Mishra, Lamech Onyango, Malhar Patel, Kalpesh Patel, Nehemiah Odhiambo.



Whip of the Jatiya Sangsad Syed Wahidul Alam inaugurates the Sunnysdale third mini boys handball tournament at the Dhanmondi Women's Sports Complex on Tuesday.

Prepare to be bewitched

Football

BBC ONLINE

Ronaldo, Ronaldinho Gaucho and Adriano did not become overnight stars for the Brazilian national team.

All of them first represented their country at Under-17 level, and the experience was invaluable as they made their way in senior football.

It would be wonderful if the current star of Brazil's Under-17 side could go on to make a similar impact.

Kerlon of Cruzeiro was top scorer in the South American Under-17 Championship, which came to a close in Venezuela on Sunday.

He curled home some wonderful free-kicks, outpaced the defence to lob past the keeper and scored with some typical penalty area poachers' finishes.

But it is not just his eight goals in Venezuela which will be remembered. The more lasting memories will surely come from his new invention - the seal dribble.

Kerlon flicks the ball in the air and runs with it like it is tied to his forehead.

He does it quite systematically, a few times in every game, and his

close control with his head and overall co-ordination are so outstanding that he can perform the feat at pace or while changing direction.

It may sound like a circus trick, but the seal dribble is no laughing matter for the opposition. It is a move which is very difficult to stop by legal means.

On the evidence of the South American Under-17 Championship, on the majority of occasions either Kerlon manages to get past the defender or he wins a foul. If he chooses the right time to unleash the move then it is a highly effective weapon.

It is truly inspirational to find a young player with the creative genius to come up with such a move.

The game is all the richer for improvised and acrobatic inventions such as the backheel, the bicycle kick and the Cruyff turn, and maybe Kerlon's seal dribble can take its place among them.

As football looks forward in the search for new ways to win, the game also looks back to honour the heroes of the past - a point also made very clear in the South American Under-17 Championships.

Boosted by Kerlon's goals, Brazil were the champions - but only just.

With the last kick of the championship Uruguay's Acosta blasted a free kick against the Brazilian bar. Two inches lower and the title would have belonged to his country.

Uruguay's outstanding player was six-goal striker Elias Figueroa, who showed strength, an excellent left foot and the rare gift of having time in the penalty area. His name is already familiar to football fans.

The first Elias Figueroa was one of the game's truly great defenders - good enough to represent Chile from the World Cups of 1966 to 1982.

He remains an idol in Brazil, where he starred for Internacional, and in Uruguay, where he played for Peñarol.

The father of Uruguay's current Under-17 striker is a Peñarol fan who happens to share the same surname as 'Don' Elias. In tribute to the great Chilean he gave his son the name of Elias Figueroa - and by the ironies of football he is turning into a proficient scorer of goals rather than a master of the arts of preventing them.

Kerlon's seal dribble and Elias Figueroa the second, stars of the future and heroes of the past were all in evidence in Venezuela at the South American Under-17 Championship.

PREVIEW: SERIE A

Milan in minnow awe

Football

AFP, Rome

Another minnow threatens to derail AC Milan's title challenge when the reigning Italian champions host lowly Chievo at the San Siro on Wednesday.

Milan trail leaders Juventus by three points after Sunday's shock 2-1 defeat at struggling Siena and can ill afford another hiccup with just seven games of the season left.

The Scudetto holders have swept aside Barcelona and Manchester United on their way to the semi-finals of the Champions League, but they have lost to Messina, Bologna, Siena and Livorno in Serie A.

Milan's Ukrainian striker Andriy Shevchenko explained why the six-time European champions have often struggled against mediocre opponents.

"We've had difficulty against the little teams as they defend in numbers and don't allow you space to play," said the European Footballer of the Year.

"That is something we need to improve on. Against Siena we were 1-0 up and had the game in the palm of our hands only to throw it away."

Milan will be looking for maximum points and hope city rivals Inter can do them a massive favour by stalling Juventus in Turin.

Asked if he would be cheering Inter on Wednesday, Shevchenko replied: "Certainly, it's an important match, but I believe we should be thinking only about ourselves, our games and where we can improve."

In the battle for Champions League places, fourth-placed Sampdoria play away to fourth-from-bottom Parma, Udinese host Livorno and Palermo take on second-from-bottom Brescia.

FIXTURES

(all 1930 GMT kick-off)
Wednesday: AC Milan v Chievo, Cagliari v Lazio, Fiorentina v Messina, Juventus v Inter Milan, Lecce v Bologna, Palermo v Brescia, Parma v Sampdoria, Reggina v Atalanta, Roma v Siena, Udinese v Livorno

SAN MARINO GP

Montoya out, Wurz in

REUTERS, London

Austrian Alexander Wurz will stand in for injured Colombian Juan Pablo Montoya at McLaren in Sunday's San Marino Grand Prix, the Formula One team said on Tuesday.

The race will be the 31-year-old's first since the season-ending Malaysian Grand Prix of October 2000, when he drove for Benetton.

Montoya fractured his shoulder in a sporting accident last month, officially playing tennis although the paddock rumour mill has suggested he was on a motocross bike, and is now expected back at the Spanish Grand Prix in May.

"It is disappointing that Juan Pablo is not yet fully recovered from the injury he sustained to his shoulder...however it is imperative that his shoulder heals properly to ensure no additional risk," said McLaren chief executive Martin Whitmarsh.

"We will assess the situation again next week but at this stage we are optimistic he will return for the Spanish Grand Prix as the shoulder is healing well."

"As Alex is now fully comfortable in the MP4-20, we have taken the decision that he will deputise for Juan Pablo at Imola," he added.

Montoya was replaced by Pedro de la Rosa in Bahrain, the Spaniard finishing a fine fifth in that race, but McLaren had hoped the Colombian would recover in time for the first race of the European season.

He had more tests and scans on Monday but doctors advised it was too soon for him to return.

Boys' handball

SPORTS REPORTER

St Jude's International, Sunnysdale and BAF Shaheen got off to flying starts in the Third Mini Boys Handball Tournament which began yesterday at the Dhanmondi Women's Sports Complex.

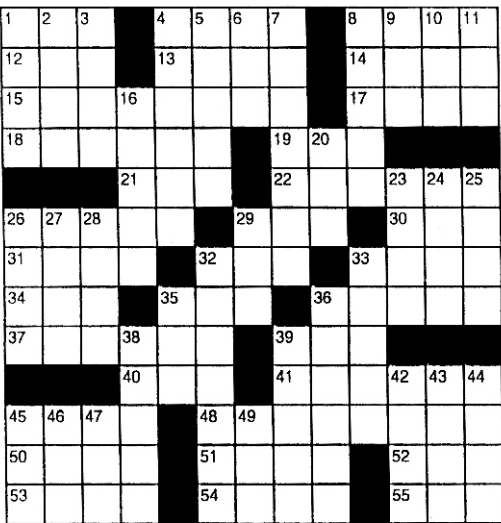
St Jude's International thumped South Point 15-0 while Sunnysdale blanked Summer Field 13-0 and BAF Shaheen outplayed Radiant International 13-0.

In the day's other matches, Ansar and VDP beat BIS 7-1, Banani Bidyaniketan defeated Dhanmondi Tutorial 8-2 and Green Herald beat Scholastica 6-2.

A total of 14 schools split into four groups are taking part in the first phase.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS										DOWN										24 Check for proof of age									
1 Food container	37 Cartoon kid with a laboratory	1 Throw	2 Vicinity	3 Barber-shop call	4 House of worship	5 Omission	6 Have a bug	7 Visionary	8 Moss pink, e.g.	9 Goller's concern	10 Metrical tribute	11 According to	16 Rib	20 Society newbie	23 Carol Higgins Clark novel	39 Urban flood	42 "Exodus" author	43 Pianist Peter	44 Moment of truth, maybe	45 Freak (out)	46 Inseparable	47 Brightened up	49 Tide competitor						
4 Dressed	39 Nursery item	3 Barber-shop	4 House of worship	5 Omission	6 Have a bug	7 Visionary	8 Moss pink, e.g.	9 Goller's concern	10 Metrical tribute	11 According to	16 Rib	20 Society newbie	23 Carol Higgins Clark novel	39 Urban flood	42 "Exodus" author	43 Pianist Peter	44 Moment of truth, maybe	45 Freak (out)	46 Inseparable	47 Brightened up	49 Tide competitor								
8 Beanbag-chair sound	41 in the neighborhood	45 Fairy-tale baddie	48 Having a particular surface	50 "What's — for me?"	51 Pennsylvanian port	52 Public radio's Glass	53 Compre-hends	54 Back talk	55 Sauce source																				
12 "All the Things You —"	13 It's over your head	14 Stash	15 Multiply by six	17 Groucho-like look	18 Spuds	19 Big flap	21 Expert	22 Vicente Fox's land	26 Opposite of "go"	29 Char-lotte's creation	30 Train component	31 Easy gait	32 Standard	33 Titanic problem	34 Smeltley input	35 Predicament	36 Tea holder												



CRYPTOQUIP

B I D V G P R O D S E O D U P
Y R Z S I C H D G P R Z P B V I P Z H D,
G P R B E M M D A D V U R C M M G
I C A D U P Y P V G R Y
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: HAVE YOU HEARD THAT THE VANDALS DESTROYED ROAD SIGNS, PULLING OUT ALL THE STOPS?
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Y equals P
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.