

Lyon coach picks perfect time to quit

AFP, Lyon

Paul Le Guen, who masterminded Lyon's fourth consecutive French league title triumph, announced Monday that he was quitting as coach. "I've decided not to extend my contract," Le Guen told a press conference. "I leave proud of my achievements. I leave happy and thanking everyone in the club, Jean-Michel Aulas (president), the training staff and the players who have all allowed me to have three exceptional years." Lyon wrapped up the title with a 2-1 win over Ajaccio on Sunday to make sure of the championship with three games still to play and join St Etienne (1967-1970) and Marseille (1989-1992) as only the third French club to have put together such a four-in-a-row record.

Since succeeding Jacques Santini, the 41-year-old former Rennes coach Le Guen has proved himself a manager out of the top drawer.

Santini left the north Rhone club to become coach of France on the crest of a wave after delivering them a first French title since their launch half a century earlier.

Le Guen's departure will likely start a chase for his services next season with some of the biggest club sides in Europe bidding to become his new employers.

Ronaldo's peace mission in ME

AFP, Jerusalem

Brazilian superstar Ronaldo is due to visit Israel and the Palestinian territories next week when youngsters from both sides of the Middle East divide will play in football tournaments in his honour.

The World Cup-winning Real Madrid hitman has been invited to the region in his capacity as a goodwill ambassador for the United Nations' development fund for a one-day visit on May 16.

He will first travel to the West Bank town of Ramallah where he will be greeted by Prime Minister Ahmed Qorei before helping out with a children's match, senior Palestine Football Federation official Bader Mekki told AFP.

He will then travel to the Israeli coastal town of Herzilya as a guest of the Nobel prize winning Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres where the tournament will take place, the Peres Centre for Peace said in a statement.

Ronaldo's trip follows a similar visit by Jose Mourinho, manager of English premier ship champions Chelsea, in March.

Abahani meet

FROM PAGE 12

TEAMS
ABAHANI: Nizam, Obaidur, Pradeep, Shipon, Lajuk, Parvez, Joy, Ndem, Ujjal, Ibrahim and Farhad.
MUKHTIJODDHA: Titumeer, Arman, Riad, Shahin (Tota), Ashraf, Ujjal, Enamul (Haris), Pranotosh, Adil, Edward and Paul.

Shoaib demands

FROM PAGE 12

Shoaib, who is Pakistan's most successful current bowler, was called back halfway through the Australian tour earlier this year because of a hamstring injury.

He then pulled out from the tour of India before being overlooked for the West Indies tour.

The Pakistan Cricket Board and the team management have issued contrasting statements that have made Shoaib's omission a mystery.

"The final decision regarding the composition of the team is of the selectors and if they don't want to select me, I respect that," Shoaib said.

Warne draws first blood!

Cricket

AFP, London

England now know how big a mountain they have to climb after Shane Warne set down an early marker for the Ashes with his cheap elimination of England opener Andrew Strauss.

The master leg-spinner, with more than 500 Test wickets behind him, appears to be marking Strauss as an easy target - if his initial assessment of the Middlesex left-hander was an accurate guide after Hampshire's county championship victory over the Londoners on Monday.

Strauss had 19 to his name when Warne bowled him on the front-foot defence on his way to a four-wicket haul which helped his team complete a 64-run Division One win by bowling Middlesex out for 236 on the last day at the Rose Bowl.

"That is the first time I have bowled against him. I don't really see it as a psychological boost, but I

wanted to have a look at him and see if he had a gameplan against me," said Warne.

"When he started to try to reverse-sweep I thought that was a sign that he was not sure what to do,



SHANE WARNE

and that gave me an advantage. "After the first time I have bowled against him, I was quite happy with what I saw."

Former Australian fast bowler Rodney Hogg has already said England are petrified of Warne.

Hogg, who took 41 wickets in the 1978-79 Ashes series, also believes England all-rounder Andrew Flintoff could become Warne's next "bunny" in much the same way that former South African batsman Darryl Cullinan fell regularly to Warne.

The later start to the Ashes series, which begins on July 21 and ends in mid-September, means the Tests would be played at the height of summer, when the pitches were dry and more receptive to spin.

It could see Warne break the Ashes record.

England off-spinner Jim Laker holds the series record with 46 wickets in five matches in 1956 at just 9.60 per wicket, including a match-haul of 19 wickets in the Old Trafford Test.

Warne is Test cricket's leading wicket-taker with 583 in 123 matches.

England's Ashes tonic

Cricket

AFP, London

Michael Vaughan said the inclusion Monday of seven England players in the world squads for the International Cricket Council's Super Series against Australia later this year was a welcome boost ahead of the upcoming Ashes series.

"It's a great achievement to be selected in the squad of 30 and it's fantastic to see seven English players involved in the Test and ODI squads," said England captain Vaughan on hearing of his selection for the ICC World XI Test squad.

"It's a great incentive to try and get into the squad of 20 and then into the final 13.

"I'll be trying to have a good summer against the Aussies to try and push myself into that final 13," the Yorkshire batsman added.

"To get into the final squad we're going to have to play well against Australia. Goals are important and there's an ultimate goal to aim for there."

Vaughan is one of four England players selected for the ICC World XI Test squad. Andrew Flintoff, Steve Harrison and Andrew Strauss are in the frame for the Super Test in Sydney.

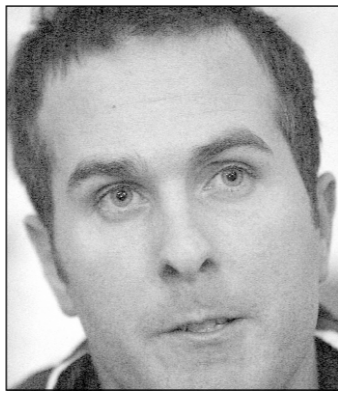
Meanwhile Flintoff, Darren Gough, Kevin Pietersen and Marcus Trescothick are all in the

ICC World XI Test squad.

Pietersen only made his international one-day breakthrough during England's recent tour of his native South Africa and Vaughan said: "It's a testament to how Pietersen has played since he came into the England team."

"To score three centuries in South Africa was a great achievement. For him to get into the ODI squad of 30 is a great effort, as it is too for Andrew Strauss who is in the Test squad."

"He hasn't played that many games either so for Strauss to get



MICHAEL VAUGHAN

into the 30 is a huge boost to him and just goes to show how well he's played since he got into the England

team."

Vaughan also praised the stamina of veteran pace bowler Gough, formerly a colleague at Yorkshire but now at Essex.

"The enthusiasm Goughy at the minute tells me that there is plenty of juice in his tank and I know he's as eager as ever to play well and make sure he continues to perform to the standards that he has set himself."

The inaugural Super Series will pit world champion Australia against ICC World XI Test and on-day teams in the three One-Day Internationals at Melbourne's Docklands Stadium on October 5, 7 and 9 and a six-day Super Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground from October 14-19.

All the matches have been accorded official status and the final squads of 13 players for the Super Test and 14 for the ODIs, plus management and coaching appointments, will be confirmed in August.

Combined prize money and match payments for the one-day series will be 1.254 million dollars, while the total money available for the Super Test will be 1.390 million dollars.

England, who have lost the last eight Ashes series, start their bid to end that streak in the first Test at Lord's which begins on July 21.

Federer finds his feet

Tennis

AFP, Hamburg

World number one Roger Federer indicated that all is well with his problematic feet by making a winning return to the ATP Tour on Monday after a three-week absence in the Masters Series.

Federer overcame Fernando Verdasco, the left-handed Spaniard who has twice overcome world number three Andy Roddick this year, but never looked likely to repeat the upset against the number one seed.

Federer's 6-4, 6-3 success was based on two perfectly timed breaks of serve, and on excellent movement on the slowest of clay court, suggesting that the blisters which kept him out of last week's Rome Masters have healed.

"I was quite worried going into this match to be honest," said Federer.

"I know what a good player he is and what potential he has for the

future.

"He's also a lefty which is dangerous because it can be difficult for my backhand, especially on clay."

"But I coped well with it which is a bonus for me. After three weeks without a match, this was difficult for me."

Federer's last match had seen him beaten by the 18-year-old Frenchman Richard Gasquet, but now he was rolling smoothly, his ground strokes fluently creating angles and options as he probed for openings.

Verdasco responded by trying to deny Federer time, trying to swing the ball from side to side, occasionally taking chances, coming forward in conditions not suited to net attacks, and winning his first four service games.

Verdasco also looked odds on to reach 5-5 when he reached 40-love in the tenth game, only for Federer to put together a wonderful rally in which he worked his way forward and finished it off with a neat volley.

That seemed to inspire the defending champion to move into a higher gear. Suddenly he was dominating the rallies, winning a fierce forehand-to-forehand exchange to reach set point and converting it with an audacious

forehand nimbly taken from wide on the backhand side.

Something similar happened in the second set. Verdasco clung to his service games up to 3-3 at which stage Federer again produced a supreme shot, a backhand slice carved so short it became a drop shot winner, again lifting his game for a killer surge.

Once again he completed the break by skipping across to the back had to take his big forehands, and two inside-out drives did the damage which took him to 5-3.

StanChart cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Mamun Islam scored a sparkling 70 but his side South Zone-2 still lost to North Zone-1 by six wickets in the Standard Chartered Young Tigers (Under-15) National School Cricket Tournament at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

North Zone scored 174-4 in reply to South's 170. Ashraful Aziz made 56 for the winners.

In another match, West Zone (203) beat East Zone (169) by 34 runs at the Jagannath Hall ground.

United want to build casino

AFP, London

Manchester United are applying to the British government for a licence to build a casino on land close to their Old Trafford stadium.

United also hope to build a luxury five-star hotel, restaurants, health club and sports bar.

"There is a lot of work still to be done and any plans will of course consider the social issues associated with gambling and we will take expert advice on putting an agreed plan in place to deal with those matters comprehensively," said United commercial director Andy Anson.

Trafford Council local authority has agreed to support the joint proposal from Manchester United plc and Las Vegas Sands.

DPRK- Japan game in Bangkok

AFP, Beijing

FIFA has ordered North Korea to play its World Cup qualifier against Japan behind closed doors in Bangkok next month following crowd trouble in Pyongyang during earlier games against Bahrain and Iran.

"The organising committee for the FIFA World Cup has announced that the North Korea-Japan preliminary competition match will be played on June 8 at a neutral venue in Bangkok, Thailand," FIFA said on its website.

"As no appeal was submitted by the North Korean Football Association within the time allotted by the FIFA disciplinary code, the disciplinary committee's decision is now final."

FIFA's disciplinary committee ruled 11 days ago that the Japan-North Korea match should be played on a neutral ground and without spectators. The committee also fined the impoverished Stalinist state 16,800 dollars.

North Korean players jostled the referee and fans threw chairs, bottles and other objects onto the pitch when their team lost to Iran 2-0 at home on March 30. FIFA also cited trouble at North Korea's match against Bahrain on March 25.

On Friday North Korea's state-controlled media called on FIFA to reverse the decision which they said was "unreasonable" and probably influenced by pressure from Asian football champions Japan and political enemies of North Korea.

North Korea's hopes of reaching the World Cup finals for the first time in 40 years have all but faded after losing their first three final qualifying matches.

Japan beat North Korea 2-1 at home in February, amid political tensions over the Stalinist state's kidnapping of Japanese citizens during the Cold War years.

Senor Becks!

MADRID

David Beckham made one of a fashion statement as he arrived for his 30th birthday party in Madrid Monday night.

The England skipper looked like a flamenco star as he wore a dinner suit cummerbund with an open neck shirt and casual trousers.

Which was quite fitting really as wife Victoria, 31, had laid on a group of the Spanish dancers and musicians to give the night a true Iberian feel.

Asked how he was doing as he arrived at the city's Buddha bar, Becks replied: "Great, thank you. I'm looking forward to a good party."

His parents Ted and Sandra and Posh's mum and dad Jackie and Tony joined guests including Geri Halliwell, Elle Macpherson, Liz Hurley and David's Real Madrid team-mates Michael Owen, Luis Figo and Ronaldo at the party.

Becks is quickly learning that enjoying himself in Spain is easy as A, B, Sil (Internet Source)

PREVIEW: ITALIAN CUP SEMIFINALS

Inter's last shot at glory

Football

AFP, Rome

Nigerian striker Obafemi Martins is determined to help Inter Milan win the Italian Cup to make up for another season of underachievement at the big-spending club.

Inter play away to Cagliari in the first leg of their semi-final on Thursday, while Roma host Udinese the day before.

"We want to win the cup to make amends for missing out on our first two objectives - the Serie A title and the Champions League," said the 20-year-old forward, who scored twice in Inter's 3-0 win at Brescia on Sunday that almost guarantees them third place.

"To lift the trophy would also be a strong foundation on which to build for next season."

The cup is normally lightly regarded by Italy's leading teams, but having been eliminated from the Champions League in the quarter-finals and with no chance of catching Serie A leaders Juventus or second-placed AC Milan, it represents Inter's only hope of silverware.

Despite spending close to 300 million euros on players in the last decade, Inter have not won a trophy since 1998 when they lifted the UEFA Cup.

The last time they won the league was in 1989 and they haven't won the cup since 1982. The club's most successful period was in the 1960s when they won three league titles and two European Cups.

Inter are 22 points ahead of

Cagliari in Serie A, but the Sardinians have lost only once at home this season.

Martins has scored four goals in the cup and 20 in all competitions.

Winning the cup would also be a welcome boost for struggling Roma.

Knocked out in the first round of the Champions League, the 2001 Italian champions are languishing in 14th place in Serie A, just four points clear of third-from-bottom Chievo with three games of the season remaining.

Udinese meanwhile have been one of the dark horses. They are currently tied for fourth place with Sampdoria and are hoping to secure the last Champions League place.

Inter host Cagliari for the second leg on May 18, while Udinese entertain Roma the following day.

Johansson's carrot for Liverpool

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, London

Liverpool's bid to defend the Champions League trophy, should they win it in Istanbul later this month, received backing from UEFA president Lennart Johansson on Monday.

At present, even if they beat AC Milan in the May 25 final, Liverpool will not be allowed to defend the title as they are guaranteed to finish outside one of the four Champions League places reserved by the FA for the leading four clubs in the Premiership.

A fortnight ago Johansson backed Liverpool's opinion that the reigning champions of Europe's premier club competition should be allowed to defend the title regardless of their domestic position, only for UEFA communications director William Gaillard to declare this should not be the case.

However, Johansson has told England's Football Association (FA) on Monday to submit an appeal in writing to the European football's governing body - a move which could lead to all champions being allowed to defend the title.

He told Sky Sports news: "Let's deal with it when we know the facts after the final of the Champions League."

"And then see to it that we are crystal-clear that the champion must always be given the opportu-

nity to defend the title."

Liverpool cannot finish in the top four after defeat at Arsenal on Sunday guaranteed their Merseyside rivals the coveted fourth spot.

Johansson added: "We should see to it in the future that we have rules and regulations that are understandable from the very beginning. In the view of the reactions now, I understand the champions like to defend their title."

"If the English FA would like to do so, they should make a proposal that would mean extending the number of teams from England in the Champions League next time from four to five."

"They cannot just explain their feelings, they should sit down and write a letter to the UEFA executive committee with a request to extend the number of teams from England from four to five."

FA communications director Adrian Bevington said: "We have been very proactive on this matter. "We have already submitted a written request to have an additional place for Liverpool should they win the Champions League."

"If Mr Johansson has said today we should put something in writing to the UEFA executive committee then we are happy to send another letter once again requesting an additional place for Liverpool should they - as we all hope they do - win the Champions League in Istanbul."

Mukti-East Bengal

FROM PAGE 12

always happened, the Kolkata giants' target would be to save their fort first, which might end up in a battle of similar styles.

His counterpart Shafiqul Islam Manik is often criticised for his ultra-defensive strategy and with his striking force heavily damaged following Saifur Rahman Moni's injury, the MuktiJoddha coach might resort to the simple style of defending first and then hit on the break.

"You can play attacking against a weaker opposition but it is not possible to go all out against a team of similar strength," told Manik.

Prolific Nigerian forward Paul is unavailable for the AFC Cup and Kanchan's form is a headache for Manik who was still finding a partner for the diminutive national striker.

"It could be Enamul, Rony or Amin Rana to start beside Kanchan but I have yet to decide on it.

"We will play to win to keep our slim hopes alive in the tournament. I know we hardly have five per cent chance to qualify for the next phase and it will need many ifs and buts to come our way. Anyway, it will be a prestige match and it would be also an inspiration," said Manik.

The hosts can qualify for the quarterfinals as one of the three best runners-up by winning their remaining matches, today and in Jordan against Al Faysaly, provided that second-placed Nebitchi FC of Turkmenistan lose both their matches.

Rare honour

FROM PAGE 12

former International Cricket Council chief, IJHS said "an adroit administrator and entrepreneur, he engineered the commercialisation of cricket in India and made the BCCI the richest cricketing body in the world.

No mercy for Southampton

AFP, London

Southampton's hopes of Premier-ship survival suffered a major setback Tuesday when the Football Association rejected the south coast club's appeal for wrongful dismissal on behalf of striker Peter Crouch.

The 24-year-old was sent off for violent conduct during Saturday's 2-2 draw at Crystal Palace after a tussle with Uruguayan defender Gonzalo Sorondo.

Giant forward Crouch, who has scored 16 goals this season, is ruled out of Sunday's final match of the Premiership season at home to Manchester United as well as the first two of next term.

Sunday's game is set to determine whether Southampton continue their 27-year-long unbroken stay in English football's top flight.



PHOTO: STAR

The Biman men's team members after winning the title on the Meril 27th National Table Tennis Championships at the Suhrawardi National Indoor Stadium in Mirpur on Tuesday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	34 Jackie's second noise	35 Moot topper	38 Portent	39 Gun the motor	40 Bega or Gehrig	42 Penn pal	45 Lure	49 Hindu prince	50 Chances, for short	52 Out of bounds	53 2004 hurricane	54 "Eureka!"	55 Particular	56 Note to the staff	57 Ill-lit	58 Soviet news source	22 Blue	23 Many millennia	24 Venomous vipers	27 Elvis hit	32 West of Hollywood	33 Grain bristle								
DOWN	1 Condor territory	2 Fairy-tale word	3 Stern	4 Negligent	5 Easter entree	6 Kyoto cummerbund	7 Tund bund	8 Way waters	9 Lake Nasser structure	10 "Wheel of Fortune" option	11 "Auld Lang —"	19 Dad	21 1991 album by 26-Down	25 Wisconsin tribe	26 Eddie Vedder's band	28 WWII propaganda agcy.	29 American relative	30 Tramac contents	31 Card-table call	36 Presidential middle name	37 Leading lady	38 Furnish	41 Functioning	42 Smart	43 Iccle's place	44 Freeway	46 Title	47 Poolroom supply	48 "Desire Under the —"	51 Greek consonant

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