

Rijkaard arrives

Football

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard will look back on this season with a mixture of satisfaction and relief once the immediate euphoria of winning the Spanish league title on Saturday has subsided.

Satisfaction, because the Catalan club has ended a six-year barren streak that stretched back to when they were last Spanish champions in 1999.

"Winning your domestic championship is a product of all your hard work over the length of a season. It proves that everything and everyone has been working consistently well," said the dread-locked Dutchman.

Into the bargain, Rijkaard ensured that Barca kept a resurgent Real Madrid at bay despite their eternal rivals' big improvement over the second half of the season after the arrival of their new coach Wanderley Luxemburgo in December.

However, there will also be considerable relief in the Rijkaard household because winning the championship finally confirms the former Milan and Ajax player's coaching credentials.

Many pundits had spoken of the 42 year-old former Dutch international's qualities as a tactician and strategist but, until Saturday, he had no silverware to show for the kind words.

Two years at the helm of the Dutch national side saw him take the men of Orange to the semi-finals of Euro 2000, despite repeated dressing room turmoil, but they were ousted from the tournament on home turf after a penalty shoot-out against Italy.

Rijkaard resigned immediately after the defeat.

"My ambition was to win this championship. We have not done so, so I have no other choice than to go," said a glum Rijkaard, in the wake of his departure.

He then went into club management for a season with struggling Sparta Rotterdam but had been out of the game for a year before new Barca president Joan Laporta came calling in the summer of 2003.

The Barcelona lawyer, only a year older than Rijkaard, was looking for a young face and attitude, but



FRANK RIJKAARD

nevertheless someone who was prestigious name, that fitted his new philosophy.

Laporta must have had his doubts he had made the right decision as Barca slumped to 12th after the first 18 games of last season and they were slated to finish in the bottom half of the Spanish first division for the first time in more than 50 years.

However, Laporta didn't react like so many Spanish club presidents would have done.

Rather than firing Rijkaard, he gambled and backed his man to the hilt, a risk that paid off.

Rijkaard finally got his players to respond to his ideas and they embarked on a 17-game unbeaten run which saw them rise to second place by the end of last season.

Last summer, he used Laporta's cheque book to sign, among others, Cameroon international striker Samuel Eto'o from Real Mallorca, Portuguese international Deco from Champions League winners Porto, and French international midfielder

Ludovic Guilly from Monaco.

As plenty of coaches have found before, buying talented players is one thing but handling a collection of rampant egos is quite another, but the unassuming Rijkaard has proved himself to be a master of this particular skill.

"My aim is to create a team spirit so that every player feels he is contributing to the team's success. Then everybody is happy.

"Ever player is different but whether someone is a 'star' or not is something the public creates, not the player.

"I can guarantee you that wherever our players have come from, they would look around the dressing room and know that whatever success they achieved personally was dependent on the other guys," commented Rijkaard in a recent interview with the respected magazine World Soccer.

Now, after his first title in Spain, the ever-elegant Rijkaard looks dressed for more success as a coach.

Match fee for Nat'l League cricketers

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has decided to pay match fee to all the participating cricketers in the recently concluded 16th National Cricket League.

The board's advisory committee approved the cricket operations committee's proposal of giving remuneration for the first time to bring professionalism in the first class competition.

There was disappointment among the players for receiving a poor amount for travel and dining allowances and this incentive will definitely be a boost for them.

The BCB has to disburse Tk. 25 lakh for the additional payment and it has already taken steps to bring sponsors for all six participating divisions in the next season in a bid to increase the cricketers' earnings.

The cricketers will receive the payment in four categories: Tk 10,000 (1-5 matches), Tk 15,000 (6-12), Tk 20,000 (13-20) and Tk 25,000 (21-30).

Meanwhile, each 4-day match will be counted as two one-day matches.

Akhtar's no to film role

AFP, Karachi

Fiery Pakistan fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar said Sunday he was not interested in a role in an Indian movie because winning back a place in the national cricket team was his first priority.

"I am a cricketer and want to remain a cricketer. At the moment my priority is to win back my place in the national team," Akhtar told AFP.

Reports said Akhtar had been approached by Indian film producer Mahesh Bhatt for a role in his upcoming film titled "Gangster."

Akhtar said he had cordial relations with the Indian director and often met him but would not be changing his career.

Tough draw

FROM PAGE 12

PARTIAL FIXTURES
(two rounds)
May 20: Brothers v Dipali
May 21: Muktiyodha v Wanderers
May 22: Russel v Farashganj
May 23: Abahani v Youngmen's
May 24: Mohammedan v Arambagh
May 26: Russel v Youngmen's
May 27: Brothers v Farashganj
May 28: Abahani v Wanderers
May 29: Mohammedan v Dipali, Muktiyodha v Arambagh

Cricket

AFP, Port of Spain

Ashwell Prince and Justin Kemp, helped by a comedy of fielding errors from their opponents, piloted South Africa to a six-wicket victory in the fourth one-day international against West Indies on Saturday.

Chasing 232 to win from 50 overs, South Africa reached their target in the 47th over, when Prince swung a delivery from Corey Collymore over the top and into the mid-wicket boundary for the last of his half-dozen fours to give the visitors a 4-0 lead in the best-of-five series that ends on Sunday here.

Prince, who had held four catches in the West Indies' innings, hit the top score of an undefeated 89 from 117 balls to earn the man-of-the-match award, and Kemp struck five fours and two sixes in 65 from 75 balls.

The two added 132 for the fourth wicket that completely knocked the fight out of the home team on a hard, easy-paced Queen's Park Oval pitch under sunny to overcast skies.

Prince, who was batting for the first time in the one-day series, acknowledged it has been a good tour for him.

Cricket

BBC ONLINE/PTI, undated

Desmond Haynes has described the possibility of being appointed India's new coach as an "honour".
The former West Indies opening batsman was revealed on Friday as one of four short-listed candidates.

He has no coaching experience at senior international level but has worked in South Africa and England, as well as in the Caribbean.

"I have got the eye to pick up flaws and correct them," said Haynes, who is due to be interviewed next week.

Greg Chappell, Tom Moody and Mohinder Amarnath have also been linked with the job and the two Australians are regarded as the favourites.

But Haynes is respected throughout the cricket world as one of the finest West Indian batsmen of the modern era, who was equally adept in Tests and one-day internationals.

"It's an honour to be associated with the Indian team," he told CricInfo.

"My first job would be to get to know the players -- to know what makes them click, how we can get

them to perform.

"Then I would outline my style: I play fair, but I like to play tough." He added: "Over the years I've had a very good relationship with some of the former Indian players, and that is a plus point for me."

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) hopes to make an appointment by next month at the latest.

And president Ranbir Singh Mahendra insists money will not be a major issue.

Chappell is reported to want a deal worth up to 500,000 dollars a year, but Mahendra told BBC Hindi: "Our first aim is to select the best available coach and then talk to him about details. I do not think money will come in the way at all."

"Money will not stop us from making the best choice."

The Indian team return to action in August when they take part in a triangular one-day series in Sri Lanka, also involving West Indies.

It is due to be followed by a tour to Zimbabwe, then a busy winter programme which will see them play host to Sri Lanka and England either side of a series in Pakistan.

The Indian cricket coach's post became vacant after New Zealand's Wright stepped down after a four-year tenure at the end of the series against Pakistan.

BARCA FACTS

REUTERS, Barcelona

Factbox on Barcelona who won the Primera Liga for the 17th time on Saturday.

Founded: 1899

Stadium: Nou Camp. Capacity: 98,772

President: Joan Laporta

Coach: Frank Rijkaard

Nickname: Los Azulgranas (the blue and scarlets), fans are called "cules"

Colours: Scarlet and blue striped shirts, blue shorts

Spanish champions: (17) 1929, 1945, 1948, 1949, 1952, 1953, 1959, 1960, 1974, 1985, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1998, 1999, 2005

King's Cup winners: (24) 1910, 1912, 1913, 1920, 1922, 1925, 1926, 1928, 1942, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1957, 1959, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1978, 1981, 1983, 1988, 1990, 1997, 1998

European Cup: (1) 1992 beat Sampdoria 1-0 at Wembley

Losing finalists to Benfica in 1961, to Steaua Bucharest in 1986 and to AC Milan in 1994.

Cup Winners' Cup: (4) 1979, 1982, 1989, 1997

Fairs Cup: (3) 1958, 1960, 1966

European Super Cup: (2) 1992, 1997

Spanish Super Cup: (5) 1983, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1996

Most league games: Migueli, 391 from 1973-1988

Most league goals: Cesar, 194 from 1942-1955

Record signing: Marc Overmars \$35.5 million from Arsenal

Record sale: Luis Figo to Real Madrid who paid the \$56 million stipulated in the player's buy-out clause

2004-2005 top scorer: Samuel Eto'o

Biggest victory: 10-1 at home to Tarragona in 1949

Biggest defeat: 12-1 away to Athletic Bilbao 1931

Interesting facts:

* Barcelona are the only team in Europe to have participated in European club competition in every season since 1955 and have never been out of the Primera Liga since it was founded in 1928, together with co-founders Athletic Bilbao and Real Madrid.

* Barcelona have been involved in both Primera Liga games during which individual players scored a record seven goals.

Athletic Bilbao striker Bata scored seven of his side's goals in their record 12-1 victory over Barcelona in the 1930-31 season and Barca forward Ladislao Kubala also scored seven when the Catalans beat Real Gijon 9-0 in the 1951-52 season.

Jealousy led to separation?

Football

RIO DE JANEIRO

Real Madrid football star Ronaldo and his former girlfriend Daniella Cicarelli denied on Thursday that they had signed a million-dollar agreement in case of separation before they became a couple.

In a press release, the couple, who on Wednesday confirmed they had separated, denied press reports that she would receive US\$5.79m because the relationship failed.

"The matrimonial union was not carried out under any pre-nuptial agreement, rather simply on the basis of trust," the release said, saying no party would benefit financially.

Cicarelli, a model and presenter for MTV channel, returned on Wednesday from Madrid.

The newspaper said that the couple broke up because of jealousy. On the one hand Ronaldo complained that Cicarelli was butting into his life too much, and she countered that he left her at home while enjoying nightlife in Spain.

Folha de Sao Paulo also said that Cicarelli was bitter at Ronaldo because he did not travel to Brazil in April to be with her after she suffered a miscarriage.

Ronaldo and Cicarelli began dating in June last year and on Feb 14 threw a lavish party at the French castle of Chantilly that cost 700,000 euros to mark their union.

There will be no need for divorce proceedings, Ronaldo and Daniella had an unofficial marriage ceremony at the party in France, but they never officially married because he was still going through a legal divorce from his first wife, Milene Domingues. (Internet Source)

STANCHART CRICKET North Zone-1 lift U-15 title

SPORTS REPORTER

North Zone-1 thrived on fifties by Rocky Barman and Abu Yousuf Shahajada to emerge champions in the Standard Chartered Young Tigers Under-15 National School cricket tournament with a 63-run victory over South Zone-2 in the final yesterday.

Rocky made 52 off 116 balls and Shahajada hit a quickfire 64-ball 69 as North Zone scored 209-8 in the stipulated 50 overs after deciding to bat first at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium.

In reply, South Zone were bundled out for 146 in 45.1 overs.

Rocky, followed up his half century with economic figures of 1-22 from ten overs, was adjudged man-of-the-match.

DIV I FOOTBALL

Victoria win opener

SPORTS REPORTER

Victoria Sporting Club cashed in full points when the last year's Premiership relegated side beat Agran Bank by a solitary goal in the opening match of the First Division Football League at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

Midfielder Rahel struck the match winner two minutes before the breather.

Badda Jagarani will take on Wari Club in today's match at the same venue.



PHOTO: STAR

International Master Reefat bin Sattar makes a move against his opponent in the opening round of the Open FIDE Rating chess tournament at the Bangladesh Chess Federation hall room on Sunday.

Real shake up on the way

Football

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid's Santiago Solari uttered a telling phrase last week that could be repeated many more times in the next few months

"It's only at Real Madrid that second place could be considered a disaster," commented the Argentine international.

And, in many eyes, finishing behind their eternal rivals Barcelona is a disaster.

The embarrassment at having to settle for second in the Spanish league is compounded by the fact that for the second year in succession, Real have ended the season without any major silverware to add to their extensive collection.

The lack of honours, which has coincided with the arrival of England captain David Beckham in the summer of 2003 and the infamous promise by president Florentino Perez that the world's most recognisable footballer would win more trophies at Real, prompts the inevitable question, 'What now for the galacticos'?

The famous five - Ronaldo, club captain Raul Gonzalez, Beckham and former World Players of the Year Luis Figo, and Zinedine Zidane - now look to be on different paths

rather than travelling together for greater glory.

Raul's future is secure and so too is Ronaldo's despite his below-par start to the season.

Concerns by Real's current coach Wanderley Luxemburgo, who arrived in December, that Ronaldo's private life was distracting him too much from his task of actually performing on the field have abated.

Beckham has been giving out many mixed messages over the last 12 months but is also expected to stay.

"I've said many times that I'm happy here. My family is happy here. It is just when my children become the focus of attention that I become upset," said Beckham recently.

"I also don't want to leave Real empty handed," added the former Manchester United star.

His return to form over the second half of the season has also seen speculation about a summer departure decline.

By contrast, Luis Figo is almost certain to leave, probably to a club in his native Portugal, his unhappiness heightened by being left on the bench by Luxemburgo for the last seven games.

Zidane has had an erratic season by his own high standards, and despite his stunning right foot goal from 30 metres in Real's 2-2 draw at

Sevilla on Saturday, the Frenchman has indicated that his motivation is waning.

"I'll certainly retire in 2007, but I don't rule out it could maybe be earlier. I will take the decision when I believe the appropriate time has come," said Zidane on Thursday.

Perez said last week that he was looking at two big names signings during the summer, as well as four other players to strengthen the squad.

With Figo probably going, who will be the other star who makes way for a new arrival?

Many pundits' fingers have pointed at Michael Owen, and although the England striker is not strictly-speaking a 'galactico' and is not quite on the same wages as his five colleagues, he was Real's big signing last summer.

Spanish sports daily Marca repeated a rumour on Sunday that has been circulating in the British media.

"Newcastle United are ready to sign Owen. The club are prepared to pay up to 25 million euros," said Spain's biggest selling newspaper.

"I'm happy to stay here for as long as the club want me," said Owen recently, who has also never ruled out a return to his former club Liverpool.

Team watch: Brothers

FROM PAGE 12

Moroccan midfielder Hicham Inani as their two foreign recruits but were yet to decide about Adil Okero, whose spectacular goal earned them a 1-0 win over Muktiyodha Sangsad in the Federation Cup final.

"We have no problems fielding three foreign booters but I am against the federation's new ruling about increasing the quota from two. It will affect the rise of local youngsters.

"We have a balanced side but I think defence is our biggest strength. The experience of Masud Rana and Jewel counts against big names. I have seen the young players fumble against the likes of Alfaz or Arman but they have formed a tough defence in association with skipper Sujon," he added.

Veteran coach Gazi has used Masud Rana successfully as libero in a three-man central defence but the only worry is the lack of a backup for the ace defender.

"A tournament and a league is totally different. So we have to be steady in the long run. I believe my players will take inspiration from the two tournaments we have played this year," Gazi said.

"I can not discard Abahani or Mohammedan as contenders although they have failed at the start. They can not fail consistently. Muktiyodha have similar success like us and Sheikh Russel will also give nothing away," said Gazi assessing his oppositions.

"There will be many factors to win a League title and all must go smoothly. I believe consistency is vital and we have the team to do that," he added.

Brilliant Barca's Liga

FROM PAGE 12

from both sides exchanging a series of reckless challenges in midfield.

Barca's Brazilian midfielder Ronaldinho was fortunate to stay on the pitch after appearing to headbutt a Levante defender in the area after a penalty appeal.

Levante almost extended their lead at the start of the second half when Congo raced clear on the break, but Valdes stood his ground and managed to block the Colombian's shot.

The Catalans were given yet another scare when Jofre hit the post with a long range effort after Valdes was left stranded when he threw the ball straight to the feet of the Levante midfielder.

But the Catalans managed to grab the all-important equaliser as Cameroon international striker Eto'o scored his 24th goal of the season when he nodded in at the far post after Rafael Marquez headed on a corner from Xavi on the hour.

Earlier on Saturday it had looked as though Barca might be crowned champions without having to kick a ball after Real Madrid fell behind when Sevilla fullback Sergio Ramos cracked a 30-metre pilderiver past Iker Casillas in the 20th minute.

But Real were thrown a lifeline

before halftime when Sevilla centre-back Javi Navarro headed into his own net as he tried to cut out a Roberto Carlos cross under pressure from Michael Owen.

Buoyed by the goal, Real lifted their game in the second period and a stunning 20-metre strike from Zinedine Zidane put the visitors 2-1 up 16 minutes from time.

Third-placed Sevilla, fighting for a place in next season's Champions League, laid siege to the Real area and grabbed a deserved equaliser when striker Julio Baptista headed home with two minutes to go to end Real's seven-match winning run.

Real centre-back Ivan Helguera was sent off in injury time for a dangerous challenge from behind on striker Dario Silva on the half-way line.

TOP SIX

Spanish football league table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Barcelona	36	25	7	4	70	26	82
Real	36	24	4	8	68	31	76
Sevilla	36	17	8	11	44	39	59
Villarreal	35	16	10	9	61	33	58
Espanyol	35	16	8	11	49	43	56
Real Betis	35	14	13	8	56	46	55

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	37 Eggs	5 Painter	25 Carnival
1 Staff leader?	38 Furnish	Hierony-	locale
5 Valise	42 Impresario	mus	26 1963
8 At a distance	45 Wall	6 Help a hood	Paul Newman
12 Kegler's track	Street optimist	7 Martini ingredient	movie
13 Kimono closer	46 Race-car driver	8 Wife of Perseus	27 Geological time
14 Narthex neighbor	Mario	9 Ticket cost	28 Gratitude
15 Story-teller	48 False god	10 Hertz rival	29 Solidify
Hans	49 "Holy cow!"	34 Sudden blow	31 That girl
17 Plumbing problem	50 Perches	11 Agents, for short	34 Sudden blow
18 Existed	51 "Auld Lang —"	16 Colonial sewer?	35 State with conviction
19 Autumn abbr.	52 Have	20 D.C. personage	37 Bygone
20 Fourth estate	53 Harvest	21 Spicy sausage	38 Undergoes recession
21 Tray contents	1 Talon	22 Prized rock	39 Harbor structure
22 Moo — gai pan	2 Actress Turner	23 — relief	40 — Bator
23 51-	3 Remnants	24 Coffee-shop	41 From square one
Across writer	4 Retainer	Solution time: 21 mins.	42 Com-motion
26 Bikers' protection	DOA	ASS	FAIR
30 Saharan	ORFF	IMP	IDLE
31 Drone	FLOUR	MOI	FOLD
32 Albany canal	BLATHER	ETHYLS	
33 Caught some zzz's	EACH	DUB	FLAW
35 Tweak	ABHOR	NUMBERS	
36 Eg. and Syr., once	USEFUL	BOO	
	PERU	AIL	ZEST
	RAIL	ADA	ELLE
	ORGY	NEW	YEW

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