

Eto'o seeks forgiveness

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

Barcelona striker Samuel Eto'o has begged for forgiveness over his insulting comments about his former club Real Madrid during Barca's title celebrations.

The 24-year-old Cameroon international, the leading scorer in the Primera Liga, chanted "Madrid, cabron, saluda al campeon" (Madrid, bastards, hail the champions) into the microphone during a speech at the Nou Camp on Sunday.

Many of the 100,000 fans at the stadium to celebrate the club's first league title in six years joined in the chorus.

"I would like to ask forgiveness for what I said," Eto'o told a news conference on Monday. "One thing is what you think and another is what you say."

"I would like to ask the fans, the club and anyone else who might have felt offended to accept a thousand apologies from me. I never wanted to show any lack of respect to anyone."

"What happened was that in a moment of joy I started to sing and that was all. If it hadn't been for Real Madrid I would never have got this far, so I beg forgiveness and hope that people will understand me."

Eto'o's behaviour during the title festivities met widespread criticism.

"This character is a fantastic player, but he leaves a lot to be desired as a person," president of the federation of Real Madrid fan clubs, Fermin Calero, was quoted as saying on the Real Madrid website.

"He has forgotten that it was Real Madrid that first allowed him to escape hunger and with these unfortunate declarations the only thing he has done is to encourage violence."

Eto'o was spotted by a Real Madrid scout when he was 15 playing for Cameroon in a youth



PHOTO: AFP

I'M SORRY! Barcelona's Samuel Eto'o at a press conference at Camp Nou Stadium in Barcelona on Monday where he apologised for having insulted the Real Madrid football club during Sunday's celebration after winning the Spanish Primera Liga.

tournament in the Ivory Coast and was taken from his homeland to sign for Real 1996.

Barcelona president Joan Laporta said the incident had been unfortunate.

"I don't think they (the remarks) were ill-intentioned and they should be understood in the context that they took place, at a celebration party and in an atmosphere of unrestrained euphoria, but they are

difficult to justify."

Spanish TV compared Eto'o's comments to those made by Luis Figo when he celebrated Barcelona's last title triumph in 1999.

The Portuguese winger shouted "Blancos, llorones, felicitad a los campeones" (Real Madrid, cry babies, hail the champions) from a balcony to celebrating crowds, just a year before signing for Real.

Football claims two young lives

AFP, Stockholm

Two boys have died during football practice in Sweden, bringing the number of youths killed while playing sports in the Scandinavian country to six this year alone, police said on Tuesday.

"In the middle of the day yesterday (Monday), during a football game at a school here, an 11-year-old boy having difficulty breathing was taken to hospital, but his life could not be saved," Lars Foerstell, a police spokesman in the southern town of Malmoe, told AFP.

According to Swedish daily Expressen, the boy had been playing goalkeeper during the game and the ball had struck him on the chest.

The boy, whose name was not revealed, may have suffered from the same condition that kills hundreds of youths in the United States each year who are struck in the chest by baseballs, according to heart surgeon Mats Boerjesson.

"They suffer from a so-called heart-shaking when the blow to the heart happens at an unfortunate moment in the heart rhythm. The same thing can happen with a football, although it is very unusual," he told Expressen.

On Monday evening, a 13-year-old boy also collapsed following football practice in Stockholm.

He was taken to hospital by helicopter, but was declared dead on arrival, Expressen reported, indicating that the boy may have had a congenital heart disorder.

The two latest tragedies follow the deaths earlier this year of three other youths between the ages of 10 and 15 during football practice in Sweden, and the death of 15-year-old during ice hockey practice.

Glazer to become all in all

AFP, London

US tycoon Malcolm Glazer said Monday he had raised his stake in Manchester United to 75.7 percent, potentially allowing him to delist the world's richest football club from the London Stock Exchange.

Glazer has now acquired more than 75.0 percent of the total issued equity of the club, according to an official statement issued by his Red Football Limited investment vehicle.

That enables him to end United's 14-year stretch as a stock market-listed company, possibly taking United into private, non-quoted ownership.

Glazer has not yet provided details of his plans for United, but he has pledged to stick by the current management team.

The 76-year-old tycoon, who owns NFL franchise Tampa Bay Buccaneers, launched last Thursday a 300-pence-per-share formal cash takeover offer valuing the club at 790.3 million pounds (1.16 billion euros, 1.47 billion dollars).

Glazer has been stalking the club for months, but his overtures were greeted coldly by club directors, and outright hostility from fans.

Application

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And many feel that the boys of Dav Whatmore need to apply themselves than playing some flashy shots. Mushfiqur Rahim has shown them the way.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the third and final day of the three-day match between Bangladesh and Sussex at Hove on Tuesday:

SUSSEX: First innings 549 for 7

BANGLADESH: First innings
Nafees lbw b Wrigth 16
Iqbal c Ambrose b Lewry 12
Bashar retired hurt 22
Aftab c Ambrose b Van der Wath 1
Ashraful lbw b Wrigth 2
Saleh c Ambrose b Davis 19
Rahim c Montgomerie b Van der Wath 18
Mortuza b Lewry 17
Jubair b Van der Wath 0
Enamul b Lewry 7
Shahadat not out 1
Extras: (b-1, lb-5, nb-2) 12
Total: (For 9 wickets in 47 overs) 127
Fall of wickets: 1-32, 2-42, 3-59, 4-59, 5-102, 6-102, 7-103, 8-126, 9-127.

Bowler **O** **M** **R** **W**
Lewry 10 4 12 3
Wright 9 4 18 2
Van der Wath 13 5 21 3
Hopkinson 3 0 6 0
Davis 10 2 26 1
Yardy 2 0 4 0

BANGLADESH: Second innings (following on)
Nafees c Nash b Van der Wath 16
Iqbal b Yardi 33
Aftab c Montgomerie b Wright 33
Ashraful c sub b Yardi 7
Saleh c Wright b Yardi 10
Rahim st Ambrose b Yardi 63
Mortuza b Van der Wath 0
Enamul c Ambrose b Van der Wath 0
Jubair c Ambrose b Yardi 5
Shahadat not out 12
Bashar absent hurt

Extras: (b-7, lb-5, w-1, nb-4) 17
Total: (For 9 wickets in 63.3 overs) 196
Fall of wickets: 1-32, 2-42, 3-59, 4-59, 5-102, 6-132, 7-132, 8-151, 9-106.

Bowler **O** **M** **R** **W**
Lewry 11 4 14 0
Wright 18 3 56 1
Van der Wath 12 3 31 3
Yardy 22.3 6 83 5

Result: Sussex won by an innings and 226 runs.

FINAL PREVIEW: CSKA MOSCOW V SPORTING LISBON

The home factor

UEFA CUP

REUTERS, London

Sporting coach Jose Pezeiro believes home advantage will not be a significant factor in the UEFA Cup final against Russia's CSKA Moscow on Wednesday.

Three years after Feyenoord won the UEFA Cup in their own De Kuip stadium, Sporting will bid to match the feat at their Jose Alvalade ground in Lisbon.

"Portugal were favourites to beat Greece (on home soil) in Euro 2004 and look what happened," said Pezeiro. "You can't take anything for granted."

Other than Feyenoord, three clubs have achieved the feat in European club competition history -- Real Madrid in the 1957 European Cup, Inter Milan in the same competition eight years later and Barcelona, who lifted the 1982 UEFA Cup Winners' Cup.

Sporting's only European trophy was the 1963-1964 Cup Winners' Cup when they beat Hungary's MTK Budapest.

Their performances in this season's competition, in which they are averaging more than two

goals a game, make them favourites for the trophy and they boast a matchwinner in Liedson. The Brazilian striker, the Portuguese league's top scorer, has hit nine

WINNERS IN THE LAST TEN YEARS

AFP, Lisbon

Previous 10 winners in the UEFA Cup:

2004: Valencia (ESP)
2003: FC Porto (POR)
2002: Feyenoord (NED)
2001: Liverpool (ENG)
2000: Galatasaray (TUR)
1999: Parma (ITA)
1998: Inter Milan (ITA)
1997: Schalke 04 (GER)
1996: Bayern Munich (GER)
1995: Parma (ITA)

UEFA Cup goals.

CSKA are only the second Russian team, and the first for 33 years, to reach the final of a major European competition.

The army side expect to have only 2,000 fans in the Alvalade Stadium but coach Valery Gazzayev feels his team can

handle the pressure.

"I think we're ready to face Sporting even in their own back yard," said Gazzayev.

"At least we are guaranteed a full house there and it should be a great atmosphere for the final."

The final will be CSKA's 19th European match this season, equalling the most ever played in a season.

Having exited the Champions League after the group stage, CSKA offloaded Sergei Semak to France's PSG and Czech midfielder Jiri Jarosik to English Premier League leaders Chelsea.

Brazilian striker Vagner Love's move back home to Corinthians fell through, however, and his goals, along with those of fellow Brazilian Daniel Carvalho, helped CSKA to overcome Benfica, Partizan Belgrade, AJ Auxerre and Parma en route to the final.

CSKA have already faced Portugal's two other 'big' teams in European competition this season -- collecting an away 0-0 draw and 1-0 home defeat to Porto in the group stage of the Champions League, then a 2-0 home win and 1-1 away draw with Benfica in the third round of the UEFA Cup.

Henry out of FA Cup final

REUTERS, London

Arsenal suffered a major blow when French striker Thierry Henry was ruled out of Saturday's FA Cup final against Manchester United.

Henry, the Premier League's top scorer, had suffered a recurrence of a long-standing Achilles problem, the club said on Monday.

Henry did not feature in Arsenal's final league game against Birmingham City on Sunday which they lost 2-1.

He had played 45 minutes in midweek after returning from a groin injury in the 7-0 thrashing of Everton.

Henry, scorer of 25 league goals, has had an exhausting season. He played every first team game for Arsenal -- excluding the League Cup -- until January when he was rested for the FA Cup third round match with Stoke City.

Arsenal have played in three of the last four FA Cup finals but Henry is yet to score in the showpiece occasion.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger is likely to play Jose Antonio Reyes up front in Cardiff with either Dennis Bergkamp or fellow Dutchman Robin van Persie.

The Cup final is the last chance for Arsenal and United to win a major trophy after Chelsea won the league title and the League Cup.

Maradona thanks daughters

Football

REUTERS, Buenos Aires

Diego Maradona said Monday that if he returned to his old lifestyle, he would die.

"I can't go back to that, it would kill me," he told a news conference shortly after returning from a trip to Spain and Cuba.

Maradona, who last year spent 10 days in intensive care with heart and breathing problems, said his daughters had brought him to his senses.

"My daughters got me out of a really ugly situation," said the former Argentina captain. "I no longer live for the night and I sleep in my parents' home."

"Before, I had lots of money and I didn't have any time. Today, I have less money but I have more time for

my daughters."

Maradona, 44, underwent a drugs rehabilitation programme in Argentina and then Cuba after leaving hospital last year and also had a stomach stapling operation in Colombia in March.

Maradona, who had become scarcely recognisable from his playing days, said he had lost 28 kilos and had even been able to play a six-a-side football match during his visit to Spain.

He did not want to commit himself on whether he would accept an offer to take charge of the youth division at Boca Juniors, the club he supported as a boy and where he had two stints as a player.

"We have to keep talking," he said. "It's a complex contract, not something to sign immediately. If I don't fix up something with Boca, I'll go back to Cuba."



MARADONA

Good news for England

AFP, London

England were boosted Monday by news that pace bowler Simon Jones had recovered from a recurrence to a back injury ahead of the opening Test against Bangladesh at Lord's on May 26.

Jones was able to play on Sunday but was initially ruled out of his county side Glamorgan's one-day match with Hampshire on Tuesday.

But Jones bowled in practice Monday and was then included in Glamorgan's squad for the match in Cardiff.

Jones, 26, has had a career blighted with injury, most notably suffering cruciate ligament damage in his knee at the start of England's 2002-03 Ashes tour.

It kept him out of serious cricket for a year, and he did not feature for England again until the spring 2004 tour of West Indies.

Uncapped Gloucestershire seamer Jonathan Lewis, 29, could make his Test debut against Bangladesh if Jones were ruled out through injury.

He was called up as late cover during the South Africa tour and has been chosen in the squad for the Bangladesh Test ahead of regular 'back-up' paceman James Anderson.

Team watch

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replacement. The national midfielder is infamous for his rough tackles and often misses important games through suspension.

"Joy is indispensable. We missed him in the Federation Cup semifinal. The midfield is our main strength and we are hoping that it will cover the gaps in the defence."

"Our target will be to win all the matches against the bottom five teams first," said Amlesh who rated holders Brothers and Muktijoddha as their main oppositions.

"Mohammedan have built a stronger side than us on paper but they have simply failed to show that on the field. Sheikh Russel on the other hand are entirely dependent on their foreigners."

The Sky Blues are set to break away from the trend of awarding the number 10 jersey to only foreign booters. No local player has worn the shirt after the legendary Salahuddin retired in 1984. Farhad is expected to don the prestigious number this season.

Squad: Nizam, Anwarul (goalkeepers), Obaidur, Shipon, Shawkat, Pradeep, Lajuk, Afzal, Ruku, Shamim (defenders), Joy, Parvez, Zahed, Selim, Asif, Nodem, Ripon, Tushar (midfielders), Ibrahim, Farhad, Ujjal, Tipu, Anwar (forwards).

First ODI today

WI rest Lara for Pak one-dayers

Cricket

REUTERS, London

Brian Lara is being rested for West Indies' three one-day internationals against Pakistan from Wednesday so he is ready to face them in the two-Test series.

The selectors left the batsman out of West Indies' 13-man squad named on Monday for the three one-dayers in St. Vincent and the Grenadines on May 18 and in St. Lucia on May 21 and 22.

Head of Selectors Michael "Joey" Carew said they needed to rest Lara before the Tests against Pakistan starting later this month and thought the one-day series was the correct time.

"His absence puts a lot of additional responsibility on the team and we look forward to them taking up this challenge," Carew said in a statement.

"As we had stated earlier we would

be trying different combinations and we have brought back Wavell Hinds and Pedro Collins," he added.

The team must recover from the South Africa series that ended on Saturday, which they lost 5-0 to become the first West Indies side to be whitewashed in a home one-day rubber.

"We have to put the South Africa series behind us and take what we learnt from it into the matches against the Pakistanis and I look forward to some measure of success in this series," added Carew.

The first Test is scheduled for May 26-30 in Barbados with the second Test from June 3-7 in Jamaica.

SQUAD

Shivnarine Chanderpaul (captain), Christopher Gayle, Xavier Marshall, Runako Morton, Ramnaresh Sarwan, Wavell Hinds, Dwayne Smith, Dwayne Bravo, Courtney Browne, Corey Collimore, Daren Powell, Pedro Collins, Ian Bradshaw.

Federer, Holmes world's best

AFP Estoril

Switzerland's triple 2004 Grand Slam tennis champion Roger Federer won the top male individual prize here Monday at the sixth annual Laureus World Sports Awards ceremony.

Federer fought off competition for the Laureus World Sportsman of the Year award from Michael Phelps, winner of six Olympic swimming gold medals in Athens, Morocco's 1,500 and 5,000m Olympic champion Hicham El Guerrouj, and America's six-time Tour de France cycling winner Lance Armstrong.

Also nominated were two motor racing aces, Germany's seven-time Formula One world champion Michael Schumacher and Italy's Valentino Rossi, for his fourth world MotoGP championship.

British middle-distance runner Kelly Holmes, winner of the 800 and 1500 metres gold medals at last year's Athens Olympics, won the World Sportswoman of the Year award.

King ready to take blame

Cricket

CRICINFO, undated

Bennett King, the West Indies coach, is willing to take his share of the blame for his team's crushing defeats in the Tests and one-day internationals against South Africa.

King, who took over the coaching position ahead of the VB Series in Australia, has said that his side is committed to improve.

"I'm prepared to take the blame for a lot of the stuff because we've had to try and come in in a very short space of time and play Test cricket and one-day cricket, and we've worked the boys hard in that time," King was quoted as saying in the Trinidad Express.

"We're pushing them harder. I offer no excuses there. And that's why I said I'm not blaming my players for feeling tired when they come into matches, that's my fault. To be honest, they've fronted up in matches and they've been tired, physically, which probably goes into their mental side as well."

"I wasn't expecting anything different," he said. "The results, even though they won the ICC

Champions Trophy, you have to look at the history over the last three or four years. It's been a tough road for the West Indian fans and the cricketers themselves. I'm pretty realistic about where we are at the moment."

West Indies, who lost the Tests 2-0, slumped to their first one-day series whitewash at home when South Africa won the fifth one-dayer by seven wickets in Trinidad.

"We've got to find a way where these players understand the requirements that are needed for international cricket. And that's my responsibility. Yes, we take some losses but, in the long term, what we are working towards is that there are going to be a lot more smiles rather than a lot more disappointment."

King pointed to the inconsistency of the batsmen as being the main reason for the team's failure.

"I still believe that Chris Gayle at his tender age and Ramnaresh Sarwan at his tender age, they're still only 24, 25 and when you look around the globe with cricketers, people are starting to come into their own by the time they are 27, and they are actually playing much better when they are in their 30s...I'm not asking people to be patient, I'm asking people to be

thoughtful which is what we ask our players to be."

King was vocal about the state of regional cricket in the Caribbean. "Some of the bowling issues for me stem from regional cricket," he continued.

"How much time do you need to develop some of these people for international cricket? We're going to have to keep them in there and people are going to have to suffer through some bowling spells that may not be quite as good if they are the people we're gonna target to lead West Indies into the future. We've got to take a trusting approach and be prepared to spend large amount of times so that they learn."

However, West Indies have very little time to reflect on their performance, as they face another tough challenge when they play Pakistan in three one-day matches and two Tests, with the first one-dayer beginning on Wednesday in St. Vincent.

"It's very, very tight," he said. "There's a lot of things we want to do with the players and we need to do with the players and when you've got back-to-back series like this...it's hard to get the work into players that we want."

Ronaldo gets mixed

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Shah Alam, however, defended their case.

"It's not unlikely to see mismanagement in such a big tournament, but we were forced to accommodate the Kishoreganj boys' and girls' teams at the same place as they reported late on Monday night. I think the remark is exaggerated," the BAF office bearer explained.

On the opening day, Narail and Kishoreganj clinched two gold medals each.

Following are the results of the day's events:

RESULTS

1500m (boy's u-18): 1. Abu Abdullah (Narail), 2. Babul (Pabna), 3. Swapan Ali (BKSP).
800m (girls' u-18): 1. Ferdous (Naogaon), 2. Jahanara (Khulna), 3. Mahai Ching (BKSP).
Shot put (boy's u-18): 1. Anisur (Rajshahi), 2. Imtiaz (Noakhali) 3. Moinal (Naogaon).

High jump (girls' u-15): 1. Dina (Khulna), 2. Sultana (Naogaon), 3. Nipa (Pabna).
Long jump (boy's u-15): 1. Yousuf (Narail), 2. Rezaul (Laxmipur) 3. Sarwar (Rajshahi).

Javelin throw (girls' u-15): 1. Afsana (BKSP), 2. Prameela (Keshabpur College), 3. Nazma (Narail).
4x100m relay (boy's u-15): 1. Kishoreganj, 2. BKSP, 3. Bagerhat.

4x100m relay (girls' u-15): 1. Kishoreganj, 2. Narail 3. BKSP.

Rating chess

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points each to share the lead with FM Sheikh Nasir Ahmed, FM Khondakar Aminul Islam, FM Abu Sufian Shakil, Aminul Islam Palash, FM Rezaul Haque, Mohammad Javed, Uten, Hasan Imam, Imran Ali Elin, Mohammad Ali, Robin and women champion Shamima Akhter Liza.

In this round, Reefat beat Mostafa, Rakib beat Arman and Rajib beat Ferroz.

will be peace," he told a news conference.

Ronaldo, a goodwill ambassador for the United Nations Development Program, visited a UN youth center, played soccer with giggling Palestinian youths, and met with local dignitaries, including Qureia, in whose office the Brazilian star autographed soccer balls as the prime minister looked on.

She said the presence of Ronaldo was far more exciting than the growing list of world leaders, including British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Russian President Vladimir Putin, who had recently visited the city.

INDIA'S TOUR

PCB proposes Karachi as Test venue

CRICINFO, undated

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has proposed Lahore, Karachi and Rawalpindi as venues for the three Tests for India's next tour of the country.

During India's historic tour of Pakistan in 2004 the team only played a one-day international at Karachi, fearing that an extended stay in the city could expose them to the risk of a terrorist strike.

However the one-dayer went off without incident and Pakistan now hope that India will be willing to play a Test at Karachi.

However the PCB has problems of its own -- with the managements of the Pindi Cricket Stadium and the Arab Niaz Stadium in Peshawar, the Dawn reported.