

PHOTO: AFP
Brazilian superstar Ronaldinho Gaucho celebrates his second goal from the spot against Paraguay at Beira Rio stadium in Porto Alegre, Brazil on Sunday.

Owen in Adriano swap?

Football

INTERNET SOURCE

A sensational swap involving Real Madrid striker Michael Owen and Inter Milan star Adriano is being mooted.

Adriano's comments on Brazilian television that he could quit Inter after the 2006 World Cup has fuelled talk that the club's majority shareholder Massimo Moratti is ready to open talks with Real president Florentino Perez.

Real are set to offer Owen and defender Walter Samuel in part-exchange for Adriano, who warned: "Next season I will definitely be wearing the Nerazzurri jersey, but if we don't win anything then I will ask to be sold after the

2006 World Cup.

"A player needs to win important things in his career."

"I'll ask to join a club where I can finally become a Champion."

Inter president Giacinto Facchetti has played down Adriano's comments over the weekend.

Facchetti said: "His comments do not annoy us. Adriano has the intention to kickstart everyone at the club and improve the atmosphere."

"Indeed, he is showing more responsibility than you would expect from such a young player and it just shows how much he loves the Inter shirt."

Meanwhile, England captain David Beckham said he believed Owen wants to continue at Real Madrid. What is obvious is that he has had a great season and he has scored a lot of goals."

ing him with a move to the Premiership.

The 25-year-old striker has enjoyed a profitable first season in Spain, hitting the back of the net 13 times in the Primera Liga despite initially finding himself in the shadow of Ronaldo and Raul.

Owen has constantly been linked with a move back to the Premiership since he arrived in Madrid, with Manchester United, Chelsea, Newcastle, Arsenal and former club Liverpool all mentioned at one point or another.

But Beckham feels that Owen has much more to offer to Real.

He told Marca: "I think Owen wants to continue at Real Madrid. What is obvious is that he has had a great season and he has scored a lot of goals."

No action taken

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Chief selector Faruque Ahmed also did not want to talk about the incident. But Faruque, who also represented Bangladesh in the ICC cricket committee, said that the game's governing body is maintaining a tough line against anything that goes against the spirit of the game.

"I don't want to say anything regarding that catch. However, as far as the present policy of the ICC is concerned I'm sure they are taking any incident that brings the game into disrepute very seriously," said Faruque.

'Tiger Pataudi'

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born into a Muslim royal family in Madhya Pradesh and bore the nickname "Tiger Pataudi" during his cricketing years.

He was appointed captain of India at the age of 21 in 1962 and played 46 Tests, scoring 2,793 runs and six centuries.

His wife Sharmila Tagore was a famous Bollywood actress in the 1960s and 1970s and Pataudi's son, Saif Ali Khan, is a well known Bollywood actor.

Nadal writes French

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with the effort, only one thing on his mind.

A break in the opening game of the third set spelled danger for Puerta and he managed just one game as Nadal ran through it.

Puerta was forced to go for too much on each point and he began to miss. It was only by millimetres but it was enough to hand Nadal the momentum.

The Argentine double-faulted to give Nadal the third set and trudged back to his seat.

Puerta had trailed by two sets-to-one before winning both his semi-final and quarter-final, however, and was not finished.

The pair traded breaks of serve early on in the fourth set and little could separate them as they matched each other from the baseline.

An impromptu Mexican wave by the crowd at 4-4 seemed to inspire the Latin player and he broke for a 5-4 lead with a jabbed backhand volley.

Again, though, Nadal saved his best for the emergency, saving three set points, the second after a rat-a-tat exchange at the net which ended with

CONMEBOL QUALIFIERS

Brazil outclass Paraguay

AFP, Porto Alegre



A Ronaldinho double and further goals from Ze Roberto and youngster Robinho earned Brazil a 4-1 victory over

Paraguay here on Sunday to put them within one point of leaders Argentina whom they meet in three days time.

Ronaldinho, the 2004 FIFA World Player of the Year, had a superb game and was often in the heart of the action apart from converting two first half penalties.

Brazil are now going into their match against arch rivals Argentina in Buenos Aires on Wednesday in good spirits though that cannot be said for their opponents who lost their unbeaten record in a 2-0 defeat away to Ecuador on Saturday.

Argentina lead the 10-nation, South American World Cup qualifying table with 28 points and Brazil now have 27 points from their 14 matches. The top four qualify automatically with the fifth-placed team playing off with the Oceania winners.

Brazil coach Carlos Alberto Parreira went ahead and included 21-year-old Santos striker Robinho, as well as Inter Milan's Adriano, and Ricardo Oliveira was left on the bench.

Robinho put on a stellar show after getting a rare start due to the absence of Real Madrid superstar Ronaldo who asked Parreira to be left out because of his recent separation from his fiancee Daniella Ciccarelli.

The 50,000 fans in the crowd were simply treated to a goal feast.

First up was a 32nd minute penalty from Ronaldinho following a handball. The Barcelona star struck the ball firmly to the left as Paraguay keeper Justo Villar dived the other way.

Ronaldinho got another spotkick in the 40th minute when Robinho was brought down in the area, and he again hit it to the left but a little harder and higher leaving Villar, once again, no chance.

Brazil could easily have added another couple of goals early in the second half when Brazil's Ze Roberto hit the crossbar and a Carlos effort skimmed the left hand post.

With 20 minutes to go, Ze Roberto made up for his earlier miss when he received the ball on the edge of the area and, after controlling the ball, curled it left-footed into

the top left hand corner to leave Villar no chance.

Roque Santa Cruz pulled a goal back for Paraguay with a header two minutes later but that was a minor blip in Brazil's fortunes.

Robinho, with only Villar to beat, coolly slotted the ball through the keeper's feet in the 83rd minute to leave Brazil fans in a buoyant, party mood.

Meanwhile Parreira has something to prove when they meet Argentina on Wednesday as it has been nearly 10 years since they last won in the Monumental stadium in Buenos Aires.

Parreira has led Brazil against Argentina seven times but only twice at the Monumental stadium – when they lost 1-0 in 1983 but drew 1-1 in 1993 – and he is out to vastly improve those statistics with a win.

STANDINGS

Standings in the South American qualifying zone for the World Cup finals after Sunday's match (played, won, lost, for, against, points)

Argentina	14	8	4	2	24	14	28
Brazil	14	7	6	1	25	13	27
Ecuador	14	7	2	5	21	15	23
Paraguay	14	5	4	5	17	21	19
Colombia	14	4	5	5	17	12	17
Chile	14	4	5	5	15	15	17
Uruguay	14	4	5	5	19	26	17
Venezuela	14	4	3	7	15	21	15
Peru	14	3	5	6	13	19	14
Bolivia	14	4	1	9	16	26	13

(Top four teams qualify for the World Cup finals in Germany and the fifth team goes into a playoff against the winner of the Oceania group)

Looking at winning only

Cricket

AFP, Ashford

Ricky Ponting has claimed he is not losing any sleep about becoming the first Australian captain to lose an Ashes series for almost two decades.

Alan Border was skipper when Australia last lost to England in 1986-87 since when Border himself, Mark Taylor and Steve Waugh have presided over eight straight wins over their oldest enemy.

Ponting took over from Waugh when the latter retired in 2004 and when he landed in England on Sunday to prepare for this year's renewal he insisted he was not fretting about being the one to lose Australia's proud record.

Ponting said: "I'm not looking at it as being the first to lose them (the Ashes), I'm looking at being another Australian captain to retain the Ashes.

England's resurgence in form in the last two years, under the captaincy of Michael Vaughan, has seen them move up to second place in the ICC World Rankings. In the hugely unlikely event of them beating Australia 5-0 in the Ashes series

they will take over at the top of the table.

But several of the Australians have played county cricket in England and Shane Warne, who will just be playing in the Test matches, is currently captaining Hampshire who are top of the English County Championship.

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Ponting added: "From the outside looking in it seems that they deserve to be number two in the world. They have beaten everyone they have come up against in the last couple of years and that indicates they have improved quite a lot. That makes it exciting for us.

Two new faces the Australians will face this summer are Andrew Strauss and Andrew Flintoff.

They will eventually get underway.

Strauss has had a dream start to his career scoring five centuries in his first year of Test cricket whilst Flintoff has never played in Ashes Test because of a mixture of poor form and injuries.

His form in the last two years, however, sees him come into the Ashes series -- that starts at Lord's on July 21 -- as one of the world's premier all-rounders.

Australia will play England in an international Twenty20 game in Southampton on 13 June, then take part in a triangular one-day series with the hosts and Bangladesh. After three further one-dayers against England the Ashes series

will eventually get underway.

Inzamam rides his luck

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Collymore had pegged Pakistan back to 119 for three, after their openers gave the second innings a flying start.

Yasir Hameed and Malin set upon some loose bowling from the West Indies new ball pair of Darren Powell and Tino Best, as well as support bowler Reon King, in an opening stand of 66, before Collymore made the breakthrough in his second over.

Earlier, West Indies extended their innings to about half-hour after lunch, and were dismissed for 404, replying to Pakistan's first innings total of 374.

Shabbir Ahmed, whose bowling action was reported to the International Cricket Council last week, and Shahid Afridi shared the last six West Indies wickets equally after either side of the home team reached 374 for seven at lunch.

Shabbir was the pick of Pakistan's bowlers with four wickets for 64 runs from 22 overs, and Afridi supported with three for 51 from 13.1 overs.

Armed with the second new ball, Shabbir removed batting kingpin Brian Lara for a majestic 153 and

Browne for a first-ball duck off successive deliveries in his first over with the cherry, and later added Powell.

BRIEF SCORES

PAKISTAN: First innings 374 (Younis 106, Kamal 51, Inzamam 50, Akmal 49, Afridi 33; Collymore 7-28, Powell 2-69)

WEST INDIES: First innings 404 (Lara 153, Hinds 63, Sarwan 55, Gayle 33; Shabbir 4-64, Afridi 3-51, Razzaq 2-83)

PAKISTAN: Second innings 223 for 4 (Inzamam 64 not out, Malin 64, Younis 43; Collymore 3-36)

Shuttlers off to Nepal

SPORTS REPORTER

A six-member Bangladesh badminton team left the city yesterday to take part in the Nepal Asian Satellite Badminton Championship that begins at Kathmandu today.

Squad: Mukter Hossain, Enayet Ullah Khan, Kanika Rani Adhikari, Dulali Halder, Sheikh Nur Islam (manager) and Golam Aziz (coach)

Referee: Ramkrishna Ghosh

Parreira satisfied

REUTERS, Porto Alegre

Brazil coach Carlos Alberto Parreira said his team, who beat Paraguay 4-1 in Sunday's World Cup qualifier, could have won by even more.

"It was a modest result considering the amount of play we had," he said. "(Brazil goalkeeper) Dida didn't have a single save to make, not one. Their goalkeeper made several.

"It wasn't just the four goals which made me happy," he added.

"Paraguay played very cautiously, they know how to defend but we created a lot of chances, we controlled the game and we did it all playing the Brazilian way."

Parreira singled out midfielder Ze Roberto for special praise after he scored the third goal, hit the crossbar and provided the pass for Robinho to add the fourth.

"People who say this player doesn't have a place in the team are doing him an enormous injustice," said Parreira.

"It's not just his tactical discipline,

it's his passing, his shooting and his team spirit which make him so important. This was probably his best game for Brazil."

The win left Brazil second in the 10-nation South American qualifying group with 27 points from 14 games and moved them one behind Argentina, whom they face in Buenos Aires on Wednesday.

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