

'Captain England' nears his 50th

Football

David Beckham prepared for his 50th game as England captain Monday night by rounding on the critics who have suggested that he is unworthy to lead the national side.

Beckham's suitability for the job, but Wayne Rooney's outburst during the 1-0 defeat by Northern Ireland in September led to speculation that certain players were unhappy with his leadership.

"It's great, not just to have the support of the manager but also the players," Beckham said.

"The players have always spoken well of me or stuck up for me when things have gone badly. That is the way I am to them and it's nice that it is like



that back. I'm pleased that I definitely have that support." His first match as England captain ended in a 1-0 defeat at the Stadio Delle Alpi in November 2000. Gennaro Gattuso scored the only goal, having two minutes earlier given Beckham a clip round the back of the head behind the referee's back, for which he should have been sent off.

Not responding to Gattuso's provocation was an impressive show of self-control from the new captain. When Taylor handed the reins to Eriksson, the Swede kept faith with a man who had been public enemy No 1 for being sent off in the World Cup second-round defeat by Argentina.

It's for Ferguson

Football

Over the flood of criticism directed at manager Sir Alex Ferguson was the spur to Manchester United's battling defeat of champions Chelsea, Rio Ferdinand has revealed.

"It will mean absolutely nothing if we got and play badly in our next game against Charlton," Ferdinand told The Sun. "This has to be the start of big things."

Ferdinand has been under pressure himself in recent weeks. After being dropped from the England starting line-up last month, he has been jeered by a section of the United support for error-strewn performances which have scarcely justified his reported 120,000 pounds a week salary.



Ferdinand was one of the players criticised by Keane in his controversial outburst on MUTV last week, which the club decided not to broadcast.

NCL squads named

Khaled Mahmud, Mehrab Hossain Ope, Talha Jubair, Shahadat Hossain, Anwar Monir, Rashedul Haque, Mohammed Riyad, Arafat Sunny, Mosharrad Hossain, Mohammed Sharif, Sajjad Kadir, Anwar Hossain, Mahbubul Alam, Kamrul Islam and Ashraf Khan. SVLHET DIVISION: Rajin Saleh (captain), Alok Kapali (vice-captain), Golam Rahman, Golam Mabud, Moniruzzaman, Enamul Haque Jr, Nazmul Hossain, Hasibul Hossain, Golam Mawla, Ejaj Ahmed, Rezaul Haque Nayeem, Siddiqur Rahman, Zakwan Ahmed, Rana Mia, Imtiaz Hossain, Ashiqur Rahman, Junaid Siddiqui, Saif Mahmud, Golam Mortuza and Tapash Baisya. RAJSHAH DIVISION: Khaled Mashud (captain), Hasanuzzaman Rosel (vice-captain), Naeem Islam, Jahurul Islam, Farhad Reza, Anisur Rahman, Mushfiqur Rahman, Shamimul Haque, Kamrul Islam, Saifulah Khan, Rezwatul Islam, Jubair Ahmed, Moniruzzaman, Nuruzzaman, Shafaq Al Jabir, Mohammed Shahjada, Sumon Saha, Alamgir Kabir, Farhad Hossain and Rafiqul Islam. KHULNA DIVISION: Habibul Bashar (captain), Manzarul Islam (vice-captain), Tushar Imran, Sajjadul Hasan, Hasanuzzaman, Monirul Islam, Salahuddin Ujjal, Shafiul Alam, Jamauddin Babu, Abdur Razzak, Mashrafe Bin Mortuza, Syed Rasel, Ziur Rahman, Manjurul Islam, Mohammad Salim, Sahagir Hossain, Al Amin,

Debabrata Pal, Rezaul Islam and Shamsur Rahman. CHITTAGONG DIVISION: Akram Khan (captain), Nafees Iqbal (vice-captain), Aftab Ahmed, Nazim-uddin, Faisal Hossain, Gazi Salahuddin, Masumudowlah, Dhiman Ghosh, Tarek Aziz, Gazi Alamgir, Waikarani Palash, Waseluddin Ahmed, Shabir Khan, Yasin Arafat, Sajju Datta, Moha-mmed Rabbi, Habib Moballik, Niaz Mohammad and Ilias Sunny. BARISAL DIVISION: Shahriar Nafees (captain), Hannan Sarkar (vice-captain), Shahriar Hossain, Nasiruddin Faruque, Imran Ahmed, Raquibul Hasan, Humayun Kabir, Prasenjit Bose, Nadif Chowdhury, Ali Arman, Tariqul Islam, Arif Hossain, Mohammed Shahin, Ashikul Islam, Golam Rabbani, Anisur Rahman, Ishraq Sonnet, Sajid Islam, Arafat Salahuddin, Towhidul Islam. Visitors slip FROM PAGE 12 caught and bowled Faisal Athar for eight in an impressive seven-over spell. Raza, 23, and Yousof then combined to put Pakistan 'A' on the brink of victory at 232 for four when Yousof was given out leg before wicket to Flintoff. Raza, the only Pakistan 'A' player in the Pakistan squad for the first two Tests against England, was in superb form and struck three sixes, including a pull over mid-wicket off Flintoff.

Brazil Platini's top bet

AFP, Rome



Brazil will be outstanding favorites to defend the World Cup in Germany next summer, French legend Michel Platini has said.

"That's only natural because Brazil has five or six phenomenal players in attack and they have good players on defense as well," he told Gazzetta dello Sport. Next to Brazil, Platini said that it would depend which out of France, Italy, Germany, Spain (if they qualify), Argentina, England and the Netherlands manage to produce their best form at the right moment.

PREMIERSHIP Bolton baffle Spurs

AFP, Bolton

Bolton captain Kevin Nolan's long-range strike send his side rocketing up to third in the Premiership Monday with a 1-0 win over Tottenham at the Reebok Stadium.

Nolan's seventh goal of the season came in the 32nd minute and was enough to divide two of the top flight's top teams. The match was watched by England coach Sven-Goran Eriksson, who was in the stands to see Spurs' international contingent ahead of Saturday's friendly with Argentina. And Eriksson left the stadium with 'Nolan for England' ringing in his ears after his stunning strike gave Bolton their third 1-0 win in a row - with the 23-year-old also the match-winner against Charlton and Zenit St Petersburg. Nolan admitted that luck had been on his side as Spurs striker Jermain Defoe had a goal ruled out for offside and the visitors twice hit the woodwork in the closing stages.

Desailly gets homesick

AFP, Paris

Former French captain Marcel Desailly has quit his club in Qatar to return to France and said he wants to continue to play football. "I am a little homesick because of the distance from my family who stayed in France," the 37-year-old Desailly told AFP.

"That's why, after a superb year at Al-Gharafa with (French coach) Bruno Metsu, and a champions' title last year, I'm leaving Qatar to head off on some new adventures. "I came to an agreement with (Qatar FC) officials on Sunday to cut short my contract," said Desailly, who holds a record 116 caps for France and left Al-Gharafa in the offseason to join Qatar FC. "I still want to play football. I want to bounce back," he said, adding that he would be training in France to keep in shape. Desailly said, however, that he had had no contact with any clubs in France. "I'll come back to France and see. I don't have any concrete ideas, I just want to play football while being closer to my family."

Langer out of 2nd Test too

AFP, Sydney

Opening batsman Justin Langer will miss Australia's second Test against the West Indies next week as he struggles to recover from a broken rib, Cricket Australia said Tuesday.

Langer already missed Australia's decisive 379-run victory over the West Indies in the first Test in Brisbane after suffering the rib injury while batting for Western Australia in a domestic first class match. Cricket Australia said Langer was steadily improving but did not feel he was sufficiently recovered to play in the second Test beginning in Hobart on November 17.

Telecasting

FROM PAGE 12 followed by three new venues in Rangpur, Chandpur and Cox's Bazar before Dhaka hosts the final leg. "We will meet the information minister tomorrow to seek his help regarding this matter," he added. The qualifiers ended on September 25 with six teams -- Kacharipara Sporting Club of Jamalpur, Rangamat Mohamammed, Naba Nabin Shamabesh of Munshiganj, Khulna Town Club, Feni Soccer Club and Bangladesh Army -- making it to the finals. They will join automatic qualifiers Brothers Union, also the defending champions, runners-up Mukti-joddha Sangsad, Mohammedan Sporting Club and Abahani, all from Dhaka.

Adidas versus Puma: The shoe story

Football

REUTERS, Berlin

Pele stopped the referee with a last-second request to tie his shoelaces at the opening whistle of a 1970 World Cup finals match and then knelt down to give millions of television viewers a close-up of his Pumas.

The Brazilian was complying with a request by Puma's representative Hans Henningsen to raise the German sports shoe company's profile after they gave him 120,000 dollars to wear their boots. The clandestine advertising for Puma was a huge triumph for the company over hated cross-town rivals Adidas in the early days of the war for market supremacy in sports merchandise.

Barbara Smit, a Dutch author and journalist, has spent five years trawling the archives of the Adidas and Puma headquarters in the Bavarian town of Herzogenaurach to research Rudolf and Adolf Dassler -- brothers who started making sports shoes in their mother's laundry room in the 1920s before becoming sport and business giants.

Her new book, 'Drei Streifen gegen Puma' ("Three Stripes versus Puma"), tracks the remarkable rise of the Dassler brothers during Germany's sport-obsessed 1920s, their cooperation with the Nazis, their ugly post-war split and their hatred-driven competition that created separate empires. "As embittered rivals, the

Trinidad on the brink

REUTERS, London



Trinidad and Tobago will complete an amazing comeback if they beat Bahrain in their two-legged playoff and reach the World Cup finals for the first time in their history this month.

Goalkeeper Shaka Hislop believes reaching Germany 2006 would be one of the most significant achievements in the Caribbean country's history. "We've been close to the World Cup before but never been there and it would be a big boost not just for Trinidad and Tobago but for the whole Caribbean region," he said. "We feel we've got the players and the ability to put our country on the map. I wouldn't like to guess what it would be like over there if we make it. "I'm sure there will be street parties. It would be a special time in our history and I'm sure the people would make it a time to remember." That they are even playing Bahrain represents a huge achievement in itself, as with more than half the CONCACAF final qualifying group completed, Trinidad and Tobago had looked down and out.

They won just one of their first six matches under former coach Bertille St Clair, who was replaced after a 5-1 defeat to Guatemala last March. In came the experienced 63-year-old Dutch coach Leo Beenhakker who guided them to three wins out of their last four qualifiers which allowed them to recover to finish fourth in the six-team group and qualify for the playoffs against Bahrain, winners of the Asian playoff against Uzbekistan. Now Hislop, the 36-year-old West Ham United goalkeeper, cannot wait for Saturday's first leg against Bahrain in Port-of-Spain.

With a population of just over one million, Trinidad would be the smallest country at the tournament and the first Caribbean country to qualify since Jamaica in 1998. Hislop will undergo medical checks this week after being substituted in West Ham's 1-0 Premier League win over West Bromwich Albion on Saturday following a head injury, but it would take a brave doctor to prevent him from playing in what he describes as "the biggest game of my career". Captained by former Manchester United striker Dwight Yorke, now with Sydney United,

asked the American swimmer to wear Adidas at the medal ceremonies.

"The problem was only that they would probably be covered by the loose-fitting warm-up pants that swimmers wear," Smit wrote. "Dassler told Spitz he should carry the shoes in his hands instead. Spitz got carried away by Dassler's enthusiasm and held up a pair of Adidas 'Gazelles' as he waved to the crowd." She said Spitz had some explaining to do to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) after that.

Another notable moment in the Adidas v Puma battle came at the 1960 Olympics. Smit said it was the first time a prominent Olympian got money for wearing shoes. "Rudolf Dassler opened this Pandora's box in 1960 by paying German sprinter Armin Hary money to wear Pumas in the 100 metres final," Smit says. Hary had worn Adidas before and asked Adi for payment, but Adidas rejected this.

Hary won gold in Pumas, but then laced up Adidas for the medals ceremony -- to the shock of both Adi and Rudolf.

"With a keen business acumen, Hary hoped to cash in from both with the trick," she writes. "But Adi was so outraged he banned the Olympic champion." Rudolf and Adi Dassler learned at an early age the enormous impact that gold medals had on their shoe business.

When US sprinter Jesse Owens got to Germany for Berlin's 1936 Olympics, Adi Dassler drove from

Bavaria on one of the world's first motorways to the Olympic Village. There he found Owens, unpacked a suitcase filled with spikes and persuaded him to try them. Owens won four gold medals in Dassler shoes.

"Owens's success cemented the good reputation of Dassler shoes among the world's most famous sportsmen," Smit writes. "Letters from around the world landed on the brothers' desks, and the trainers of other national teams were all interested in their shoes."

Business boomed and the Dasslers were selling 200,000 pairs of shoes each year before World War Two.

The war exacerbated tensions between the two brothers and their wives. Although both Dasslers joined the Nazi party and signed their letters with a "Heil Hitler" salutation, Rudolf was a more devoted Nazi, according to Smit.

The origins of the split between Rudolf and Adi are hard to pinpoint but an Allied bomb attack on Herzogenaurach in 1943 illustrated the growing tension. Adi and his wife climbed into a bomb shelter that Rudolf and his family were already in.

"The dirty b**** are back again," Adi said, apparently referring to the Allied war planes. Rudolf was convinced his brother meant him and his family. The damage was never repaired.

In 1948, the brothers split their business. Adolf called his firm "Adidas"; Rudolf called his "Ruda" before changing to "Puma".

Red Devils go shopping in January

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United boss Sir Alex Ferguson has confirmed he will be delving into the transfer market in January, with a replacement for captain Roy Keane top of his shopping list.

United have been hit hard by a string of injuries and Ferguson told the club's website he would be looking to increase the size of his squad during the January transfer window.

Ferguson has reportedly been granted a transfer budget of ten million pounds by United's new owners, the Glazer family. Among the players seen as possible replacements for Keane are St Etienne's Didier Zokora, who has the significant advantage of not being cup-tied in the Champions League.

United have also been linked with Madrid's Danish midfielder Thomas Gravesen and Deportivo La Coruna's Aldo Duschner.

The Red Devils are also attempting to persuade Michael Ballack to join them next summer when the Germany captain's contract at Bayern Munich expires.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues and solutions. Includes 'Solution time: 25 mins.' and a list of answers for across and down clues.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with letters and numbers corresponding to vowels in the words below.

CRYPTOQUIP A E Z J V M M D G V ' R A D N Z Z J M Z H Z W M E Z D H E P O R Z , D A P J W Z H D N R E Z A P O G V REPOM " E D , E O J , D ' F E P F Z I " Yesterday's Cryptquip: IF A SUPERHERO'S POWERS CAME FROM APPLE PRODUCTS, I BET HE WOULD BE NAMED CIDER-MAN. Today's Cryptquip Clue: F equals M