

Danone wants Zidane on board

AFP, Paris

French football star Zinedine Zidane could one day be scoring from the boardroom of French food industry giant Danone, company chief executive Franck Riboud has suggested in an interview with the Financial Times newspaper.

Zidane has a promotion contract with Danone. Riboud recounted that four years ago he asked the footballer what he would do when he retired, and his answer was "nothing".

Riboud explained that "I told him nothing was not a job", and that he tried to provoke Zidane into thinking about the matter by half-seriously asking him if he wanted to be a non-executive director.

Riboud, citing the example of French skiing star Jean-Claude Killy who became a director of Coca-Cola drinks and Rolex watches, told the newspaper: "It could be a reality - why not?"

Riboud, who knows Zidane well, said he was not concerned about a head-butted committed by the player in the final of the World Cup.

Zidane, who earns substantial sums from promotional contracts with industry, was sent off in disgrace but seems to have been forgiven by the public.

He has an 11-year contract with Danone to promote campaigns aimed at children.



ZINEDINE ZIDANE

Shah rejects Wright claims

REUTERS, New Delhi

The Indian cricket board has dismissed former coach John Wright's criticism of its selection process.

The former New Zealand captain, who held the post for almost five years until April 2005, has called for a professional set-up in his forthcoming book "John Wright's Indian Summers". India's five-member selection panel represents different zones and they have been criticised in the past for trying to push players from their respective regions under pressure to keep their post.

The coach and captain participate in selection meetings but have no vote.

"My peeve with the selection process is that I have never liked the system," Wright said in an interview aired on the Times Now channel late on Sunday.

"I have worked with some good people but I felt the way the system is operated is very tough on the selectors."

Wright also discussed his relationship with former skipper Saurav Ganguly, with whom he formed a successful combination after linking up in October 2000 when India was mired in a match-fixing scandal.

However, India's first foreign coach blamed Ganguly for the inclusion of batting legend Sunil Gavaskar as consultant on the eve of the 2004 home Test series against Australia, which the hosts lost 2-1.

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UEFA clamps down on racism & diving



AFP, Geneva

UEFA on Monday announced a range of tougher sanctions for European football, including a five-match ban for racist or insulting conduct and a two-match ban for players who simulate being fouled.

European football's new disciplinary regulations for the coming season also include "improper conduct of a team" if a referee disciplines at least five players in a

match, UEFA said in a statement on its website.

The stiffer sanctions on discrimination are meant to bring Europe in line with a FIFA clampdown announced earlier this year.

They also follow growing pressure for action following a wave of incidents involving some supporters who hurled racist abuse at black players in rival clubs during the UEFA Cup and Champions League.

Anyone who displays offensive behaviour based on "colour, race, religion or ethnic origin", or who "insults the human dignity of a

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person or group of persons, by whatever means" can count on a stiffer minimum ban, UEFA said.

Beforehand, a three-match ban was the norm for players or team staff, a spokesman said.

Clubs or associations will be liable to a 30,000 Swiss franc (19,000 dollar) minimum fine for the racist behaviour of supporters.

Last year, some clubs were fined less than half that amount following the racist behaviour of some of their supporters in European club competitions and forced to play

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Donadoni's debut dilemma



INTERNET, undated

Italy boss Roberto Donadoni has admitted he will have to face his debut on August 16 without most of the Azzurri's World Cup winners.

La Nazionale will play Croatia in a friendly match at the Armando Picchi Stadium, where the former Milan midfielder spent most of the previous season training Livorno.

Many of the 2006 World Cup winners are still on holiday and are

slowly joining their teams for pre-season training, but it seems unlikely that they will all be available for Mister Donadoni.

"Facing Croatia without the world champions? I think it's unavoidable," said Donadoni in an interview with La Gazzetta dello Sport.

The new tactician had already stated at his official presentation that his doors would be open to all players and, considering the recent changes in Italian football, he would not limit his selection to Serie A stars.

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him that they still have the correct mindset.

"I need to understand what their spirit is and I want them to show me that they are still hungry for success, not only with words", added Donadoni.

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"I will have to find names from everywhere, but I trust that those who need to come back for the Champions League will be part of the match."

The newly appointed Azzurri Coach also explained that the Germany '06 heroes must prove to

Carlos stays at Real

REUTERS, Madrid

Brazilian defender Roberto Carlos has said he wants to continue with Real Madrid after speaking to new coach Fabio Capello.

"I want to stay at the club. I say it loudly and clearly," the fullback told Spanish sports daily AS on Monday.

After 10 years with Real the 33-year-old had hinted at a possible move at the end of last season, saying he had received an offer from English champions Chelsea for a three-year contract.

Turkish side Fenerbahce, now managed by Brazilian Zico, are also reported to be interested in taking the player who has one year left on his contract at Real with an option of another dependant on the number of games he plays next season.

"After returning from my holidays I feel good. Capello has given me new enthusiasm and I am a lot happier," he added.

"We have had a long chat and spoken about everything. He has told me he is counting on me, that he wants me in the side and that he expects a lot from me."

Roberto Carlos has yet to speak to Real sports director Predrag Mijatovic, who is arriving at their pre-season training camp in Austria on Tuesday.

"I would like to make sure of the second year of my contract so that I know I can continue in the team until 2008," he said.

"But we will have to see what happens. I have spoken to Capello and now I have to explain to Mijatovic what I told the coach."

Roberto Carlos, who has won three Champions League titles with Real, retired from international football after the World Cup finals in Germany.

Serie A kick-off delay?

INTERNET, undated

Reports in Italy suggest that it is very unlikely that the Serie A and Serie B championships will start on August 27 as scheduled.

The probable starting date may be September 10, after an almost four-month break, considering that the Azzurri will play their first Euro 2008 qualifying matches on September 2 and 6.

Federal Commissioner Guido Rossi had guaranteed there would be no delay, but the appeals of the teams involved in the Calciopoli scandal and the evolving second phase inquiries will probably take up most of August.

On Monday the trio of Juventus, Fiorentina and Lazio presented their appeals to the CONI (Court of Conciliation and Arbitration), the highest degree in sporting justice, hoping to overturn the verdicts handed down on July 25.

CONI's decisions should arrive within August 10 and if the clubs and officials involved are still not satisfied they may decide to appeal to the civil courts, namely TAR.

The commission who was assigned the second phase of the Calciopoli inquiries ended its inquiry on Thursday afternoon and chief Francesco Saverio Borrelli submitted his report on Monday.

FIGC prosecutor Stefano Palazzi may call for new indictments for Reggina and possibly Arezzo, Messina, Siena and Lecce before the end of the week, while the first degree verdicts are expected for mid-month.

Regina are the ones risking the most and are being investigated with regards to six matches played in the 2004-05 season.

The clubs involved have pleaded their innocence and denied any wrongdoing, but it will be very difficult to wrap up all the appeals before the end of August

Bayern invite Robbie Williams

REUTERS, Berlin

Robbie Williams has been invited to train with Bayern Munich while he is in the Bavarian capital for a series of concerts this week, the club's sporting director Uli Hoeneß was quoted saying on Monday.

"Naturally we'll invite Robbie Williams to join us," Hoeneß told German reporters travelling with the team for a test match in Japan against the Urawa Red Diamonds on Monday.

Williams' management had earlier asked Bayern Munich whether it would be possible to take part in a workout.

Williams, who practised with a local soccer team in Berlin during a previous concert stay, was given three choices to practise with the defending Bundesliga champions: Tuesday, Thursday or Friday.

Dutch triumphs in Spain



AFP, Terrassa

Netherlands won the men's field

hockey Champions Trophy defeating Germany 2-1 here Sunday. Spain took third place over Australia, winning 5-4 on penalty strokes after the scores were locked at 2-2 after extra time and Pakistan took fifth place with a 3-1 win over Argentina.

Two first half goals were all Netherlands needed to strike gold.

Taeke Taekema converted Netherlands' first penalty corner opportunity and Teun de Nooyer was left free at the top of the circle to score a goal.

Tim Wess scored off Germany's only penalty corner in the second half but their chances of salvaging a draw were dealt a blow eight minutes from time when Philipp Zeller received his marching orders after a yellow card.

Two missed penalty strokes cost Australia after a 2-2 draw in regulation time against the hosts.

Three minutes after the start of extra time, Australia earned a penalty stroke, disputed for several minutes by Spain with umpire Hamish Jamson, but Brent Livermore hit the post.

The match went to penalties and

Australia's Luke Doerner failed with Australia's last penalty stroke to hand Spain third place.

"This result shows that all the teams are very close but I am confident of our team's chances at the World Cup," said Maurits Hendriks, Spain's coach.

"It was always going to be a very close match and it only takes one little mistake and it can be very costly," said Colin Batch, Australia's assistant coach. "In this tournament we have taken substantial steps forward in our preparation for the World Cup."

Luke Doerner converted Australia's first penalty corner three minutes into the second half and Eduard Tubau punished a defensive error to get a free shot on goal to score for Spain.

Michael McCann set up Grant Eglington to also get a free shot on goal for Australia to lead 2-1 before Spain's Pol Amat deflected in a free hit from outside the circle to equalise.

Pakistan beat Argentina for the second day in a row to avoid the wooden spoon.

Pakistan's Rehan Butt scored two field goals in the first half and Sohail Abbas converted the second of Pakistan's three penalty corners five minutes into the second half.

Argentina had four penalty corner chances with Mario Cammareri converting the third.

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Mahela hails the magician

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka captain Mahela Jayawardene on Monday hailed Muttiah Muralidaran as the greatest-ever spinner after another match-winning performance in the first Test against South Africa.

The 34-year-old spin wizard picked up a match haul of 10-172 as South Africa were thrashed by an innings and 153 runs to concede the lead in the two-match series.

Muralidaran grabbed 6-131 as the tourists, 587 runs behind on the first innings, were bowled out for 434 in their second knock after lunch on the fifth day at the Sinhalese sports club.

"There is no doubt in my mind that Murali is the greatest spinner ever," said Jayawardene, who was named man of the match for the fourth highest Test score of 374 in Sri Lanka's innings.

"These were difficult conditions to bowl in. It was very hot and humid and the wicket was getting slower, slower and slower as the match progressed."

"Yet Murali bowled 64 overs in the second innings and just kept probing the batsmen. He is so hungry for wickets."

"I am certain he would have been named man of the match if I had not got that big score or the record stand."

Sri Lanka had piled up 756-5 declared in their first innings with Jayawardene sharing a world record partnership of 624 with

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PHOTO: AFP

German legend Karl-Heinz Rummenigge (C) plays for the Bayern Munich All Stars against Japan's Urawa Reds All Stars during an exhibition match at Saitama Stadium on Monday. Rummenigge scored two goals as his team won 3-1.



REUTERS, London

Chelsea captain John Terry hopes new signings Andriy Shevchenko and Michael Ballack will finally bring the Champions League trophy to Stamford Bridge.

Premier League champions for the past two seasons, Chelsea are hungry for European soccer's biggest prize after two most recent campaigns were thwarted by Barcelona and Liverpool.

"We have to retain the Premiership again and build upon that and that is our target. But with the players we have brought in, we are really pushing for the Champions League," Terry told Chelsea's website on Monday.

"We are desperate for it."

Chelsea scored only nine goals in eight European games last season and Terry acknowledged: "Last year we didn't really score a lot in the Champions League."

"With these two players coming in, hopefully that is going to change."

Chelsea paid a reported 30 million

pounds (55.79 million dollars) to bring Ukraine striker and captain Shevchenko from AC Milan, while Germany skipper Ballack joined as a free agent from Bayern Munich to strengthen a midfield led by Frank Lampard.

"When you look at the experience they have got over the years, and the goals, if we can add their goals to the 18 or 20 that Lampy's banged in over the last couple of years then we have a chance," Terry said.

"We want a striker up there, banging in 25 to 30 goals, Ballack hopefully scoring similar to Lampy and everyone chipping in with their fair share."

Aside from success with Chelsea, Terry is also hoping to take over the England armband from David Beckham, who stepped down as captain after their World Cup exit.