



Barcelona winger Ludovic Giuly celebrates after scoring the only goal of the game against Espanyol during the first leg of the Spanish Supercup at the Olympic Stadium in Barcelona. PHOTO: AFP

### Salihamidzic hangs up int'l boots

REUTERS, Sarajevo

Bosnia's Hasan Salihamidzic has called time on his international career because of recurring injuries which prevent him from giving his best, a Bosnian daily reported on Friday.

The 29-year-old Bayern Munich player has been a key member of the Bosnia team since his debut 10 years ago when he scored their first official goal but doctors told him he could not continue on two fronts.

"After countless injuries and ten operations in 10 years and after consultations with doctors in the United States and Germany I decided it would be best to bid farewell to the national team because of my health," Salihamidzic told Bosnia's best-selling daily Dnevni Avaz.

Salihamidzic was capped 41 times and scored six goals for Bosnia, who have never qualified for a major tournament.

"I intend to continue playing for several more years, depending on my health," Salihamidzic told the newspaper after Bosnia's 2-1 friendly loss to World Cup runners-up France on Wednesday in Sarajevo.

"I want to concentrate on Bayern now. I want to win another Champions League title and secure a new contract," said the player nicknamed 'Brazzo' (little brother) who is tied to Bayern until next June.

### Wenger launches Real attack

INTERNET, undated

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger is unhappy with Spanish side Real Madrid in their pursuit of Gunners forward Jose Antonio Reyes.

The Spanish giants have been tracking the 22-year-old during the summer and the former Sevilla midfielder has regularly expressed his desire to move back to Spain.

He did not play in Arsenal's win over Dinamo Zagreb in the Champions League and it seemed he was set for a move to the Bernabeu after not being cup-tied.

But a deal has yet to be struck and Wenger has grown increasingly frustrated with Madrid's approaches.

He said: "Real Madrid create unrest everywhere. You see the same situation at Lyon in France and you see the same situation here. They come up with nothing.

"They just destabilise the players and that is why we are not very happy."

## SPANISH SUPER CUP Barca draw first blood

Football

REUTERS, Barcelona

French winger Ludovic Giuly gave league champions Barcelona a 1-0 victory over King's Cup winners Espanyol in the first leg of the Spanish Super Cup at Montjuic on Thursday.

The former Monaco player steered a first-time shot past goalkeeper Gorka Iraizoz in the 44th minute after Ronaldinho had threaded a clever pass through the defence.

Barca struggled to find their rhythm in the first half of the traditional curtain-raiser to the season

## Mourinho to block Gallas exit

Football

AFP, Lisbon

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho reckons wantaway defender William Gallas will probably have to see out the remaining year of his contract with the Premiership champions.

The France international is keen for a move as he is unhappy at being played out of his favoured position as a central defender.

But his boss told Friday's edition of Publico: "He still has a year left of his contract with Chelsea. He's probably going to be staying. I have to defend Chelsea's interests."

## Cole left out of opener

AFP, London



Ashley Cole, linked to champions Chelsea, misses Arsenal's Premiership opener against Aston Villa on Saturday despite the England international insisting he is ready to play.

Cole criticised Arsenal in the promotional material for his autobiography and was tipped to receive a hostile reception from Arsenal fans if he were to play for the club again.

He didn't play in the Champions League qualifying win against Dinamo Zagreb and was not included in the official team photo for the new season at the Emirates Stadium.

and it was city rivals Espanyol who had the better of the opening minutes.

The goal settled the nerves of the European champions and they would have extended their lead in the second period but for a string of fine saves from Iraizoz.

Frank Rijkaard's side host Espanyol in the second leg at the Nou Camp on Sunday.

Espanyol, who beat Real Zaragoza 4-1 in the final of the King's Cup but only avoided relegation thanks to a last-gasp goal in the final match of the season, played the more fluent football for much of the first half.

Brazilian midfielder Fredson twice went close, lashing over after

good work by new signing Francisco Rufete and also forcing Victor Valdes to make a fine reaction save from a venomous 20-metre drive.

Valdes came to the rescue again when he parried a fierce shot from midfielder Pablo Zabaleta.

Barca were in better form in the second half and substitute Lionel Messi and Ronaldinho had several chances but were thwarted by the alert Iraizoz.

Rijkaard gave Italian World Cup winner Gianluca Zambrotta his debut late in the game.

The club's other two close-season signings, Eidur Gudjohnsen and Lilian Thuram, were left on the bench.

with the value of the player then he will end up staying put."

Gallas, who celebrated his 29th birthday on Thursday with a goal in France's 2-1 win over Bosnia and Herzegovina the day before, said he hoped the transfer would be resolved soon.

"I still want to leave," said Gallas, who was outstanding in the centre of defence as France reached the World Cup final.

"I hope that it will be settled soon, but that doesn't stop me from still playing for them while it is being settled," added Gallas who has been linked with Premiership rivals Arsenal and Italian giants AC Milan.

Arsenal TV Online: "If he doesn't go, of course he is a great player.

"He has permission to go somewhere if he wants to do it, but if there is not an opportunity for him and the club, he will stay at the club (Arsenal)."

Wenger meanwhile is unhappy with Spanish side Real Madrid in their pursuit of Gunners forward Jose Antonio Reyes.

"Real Madrid create unrest everywhere. You see the same situation at Lyon in France and you see the same situation here. They come up with nothing.

"They just destabilise the players and that is why we are not very happy."

Wenger had earlier told

### Capello cautions Milan duo

INTERNET, undated

Real Madrid boss Fabio Capello has told Milan and Inter to archive any thoughts of signing Ronaldo this summer.

The former Juventus maestro was questioned about the Brazilian's future on Thursday and was categorical in his response.

"Ronaldo will not move to Milan and will not go to Inter either, just to make things clear," he declared.

"I only like to talk about players who I have on my team and I don't like discussing sales or new signings before they are finalised.

"However, in this case, I can confirm that Ronaldo is going absolutely nowhere," concluded the former Italian international.

The 29-year-old has been paired with the two San Siro clubs with the Rossoneri supposedly slightly favoured in the chase.

Ronaldo is now back in training after becoming the World Cup's top scorer of all time during Germany 2006 when he grabbed his 15th Finals goal against Ghana.

### Owen injury 'long-term'

INTERNET, undated

Newcastle striker Michael Owen could be out of action for the whole season, according to Magpies' boss Glenn Roeder. Owen suffered ruptured his anterior cruciate ligament during England's ill-fated World Cup run, and is set to undergo an operation in an effort to heal the injury.

"It's a long term injury," Roeder said. "I don't know if he'll play again this season."

"He's getting the best possible treatment and will have the best surgeon in the world operating on him."

"Michael has an injury that will take a fair bit of time to repair," he added. "If we put a date on it and we say that he'll be back by next March, and then he's not fit, then it will cause more problems."

Owen signed for Newcastle from Real Madrid in August last year, but the England striker had been plagued by injury since his arrival on Tyneside and has rarely played for his new club.

The 26-year-old missed the second half of last season with a broken foot but recovered in time to appear for his country in Germany, only to suffer his latest injury against Sweden in the group phase.

The operation to work on his cruciate had been delayed until now as he required urgent surgery on cartilage in his right knee immediately after the World Cup in July.

### Kanu signs for Pompey

AFP, London

Veteran Nigerian international striker Kanu became Portsmouth's fifth summer signing on Thursday when he agreed a one-year deal at Fratton Park.

The 31-year-old was part of Arsenal's double-winning side of 2001-02 and gained another Premiership title medal in 2004.

He scored 37 goals during his stay at Highbury.

Kanu left West Brom in the summer following the Midlands' relegation from the Premiership.

### Lampard warns of complacency

AFP, London

England midfield star Frank Lampard warned his Chelsea team about the dangers of complacency as the Londoners get set to begin the defence of their English Premiership title.

Lampard and his teammates take on Manchester City in their 2006/2007 opener on Sunday, with the player agreeing with manager Jose Mourinho that they may struggle in the first few weeks.

"We're not invincible, we know that. That image is something that gets created outside the club," said Lampard.

"We've lost games before, the important thing for us is to start the season well."

Chelsea are favourites to become the first club to win three successive Premiership titles but boss Mourinho has acknowledged a chink in their armour.

With so many players involved at the World Cup Chelsea were forced to start pre-season late, leaving the Blues boss to admit his team may be vulnerable until the end of the month.

"We haven't spoken about winning three successive titles but we've spoken about the desire to win the Premiership again," said Lampard.

"We've done that every pre-season since Mourinho has been at the club but we also understand how tough that is."

## Lyon up against Bordeaux

REUTERS, Paris



Five times French Champions Olympique Lyon face their first real test of the season this weekend at runners-up Girondins Bordeaux.

Bordeaux are joint leaders of Ligue 1 with Lille and promoted Nancy, on six points from two wins in two matches.

Lyon are two points adrift after being held to a 1-1 draw at home by Toulouse last Sunday.

"We have to be fair, we didn't deserve to win. We were not at our usual level. Our attacking game was too slow and defensively we let them take the upper hand," said Lyon's coach Gerard Houllier.

"This bad experience will give us extra motivation. We shall not lose in Bordeaux," he added.

More than any other team in the French championship, Lyon's

league preparations have been affected by the World Cup.

Brazil's Cris and Juninho, Switzerland's Patrick Mueller, Portugal's Tiago and France's Gregory Coupet, Eric Abidal, Sidney Govou, Florent Malouda and Sylvain Wiltord were allowed to delay their return to training.

Six of their players, Coupet, Abidal, Malouda, Wiltord, Vincent Clerc and Jeremy Toulalan were members of France's squad who defeated Bosnia 2-1 in a friendly on Wednesday in Sarajevo.

Lyon chartered a plane to bring them home on Wednesday evening to increase their chances of starting Sunday's match.

Girondins Bordeaux young midfielders Julien Faubert, scorer of the winning goal, and Rio Mavuba also played in Sarajevo.

The match will be played at a packed Jacques Chaban-Delmas stadium. Bordeaux are regarded as the team most likely to end Lyon's five-year reign in the French championship.

Reinforced by the return of former Werder Bremen playmaker Johan Micoud, the Girondins made a perfect start to the season with wins at home against Toulouse and at Lorient.

Lille, who are in the race for a Champions League berth through the third qualifying round, travel on Saturday to Paris St Germain who are looking for their first win of the season. Nancy, the surprise third joint leaders, host another promoted team, Sedan.

Olympique Marseille host AJ Auxerre while Stade Rennes and Monaco, the only two teams still without a point face each other.

### FIXTURES

**Saturday**  
Auxerre v Marseille, Le Mans v Valenciennes, Lens v Lorient, Nantes v Troyes, PSG v Lille, Rennes v Monaco, Sedan v Sochaux, St Etienne v AS Nancy

**Sunday**  
Bordeaux v Lyon, Toulouse v Nice

## A futile exercise

Football

GABRIELE MARCOTTI

I engaged in a bit of masochism on Wednesday night. With the help of three televisions, two satellite dishes, my trusty DVD recorder and several cups of coffee, I watched four international friendlies: Ireland vs. Holland, England vs. Greece, Italy vs Croatia and Norway vs. Brazil.

(The plan was to stay up until 4 a.m. and watch Internacional vs. Sao Paulo, the second leg of the Copa Libertadores final, but alas, I'm not 20 anymore, so I taped it instead)

What I saw reminded me just why I hate friendlies, especially on television. After experiencing the World Cup first-hand, I found the friendlies to be dull, anti-climactic and thoroughly boring. It's like trading a Ferrarri for a bus pass.

With the start of most of Europe's top leagues coming up shortly, managers chose one of several approaches. Some, like England's Steve McClaren, opted to field what would be their first XI (injuries and suspensions permitting).

Others, like his fellow debutantes Roberto Donadoni of Italy and Dunga of Brazil, chose largely experimental sides. Holland's Marco van Basten, on the other hand, went with a mixed approach, bringing in some newcomers like Klaas-Jan Huntelaar (who probably should have gone to the World Cup) while keeping an unchanged back-bone.

Still, at the end of night, we were left knowing very little we didn't already know.

England rolled over Greece, 4-0, dominating the first half and taking its foot off the pedal in the second. Steven Gerrard started out on the right in David Beckham's old position and the benefits to Frank Lampard in the middle were obvious (though the latter didn't have a

particular good game, goal aside). Peter Crouch scored two goals and missed another open chance. None of the second-stringers who came on made much of an impact. And that's it. Some insight, huh?

The guys wearing blue shirts, who were defeated 2-0 by Croatia in Livorno, were supposedly Italy, though you wouldn't know it: Just one of the 23-man world-champion squad (third-choice goalkeeper Marco Amelia) played in the game.

And, because Italy's under-21 team played on Tuesday night, rather than selecting gifted youngsters who might one day develop into international-calibre players, Donadoni was left with a hodge-podge of third-tier players, most of whom are unlikely to ever feature for the Azzurri again. All we learned was that Slaven Bilic's new-look Croatia is better than Italy's C team.

As for Brazil, Dunga's appointment was greeted with scepticism and the draw against Norway did nothing to dispel it. Just three of the 11 who started the quarterfinal match against France at Germany '06 were included in the starting XI (among the notable absentees Dida, Ronaldinho, Kaka, Adriano and Ronaldo) and all those who were featured play outside Brazil.

Given the circumstances, it makes you wonder why he didn't give more domestic players a shot, though, to be fair, it was nice to see the oft-forgotten Moscow-based trio of Vagner Love, Dudu Cearense and Daniel Carvalho. Whether it means much in the greater scheme of things, that is, whether we ever will see them playing for Brazil again, is another matter.

Van Basten's Holland at least offered up the chance to see Huntelaar's debut and his two goals showed he can more than cope at this level. That said, playing Ireland - an Irish team without Richard Dunne, Robbie Keane and Damien Duff - in the very same week that coach Steve Staunton was threatened by a lunatic with a handgun

isn't a very telling test.

A more settled Irish team might have offered more of a challenge, this one was simply outclassed. What's more, as the game wore on, you got the sense that most players' minds were elsewhere -- namely with their club teams.

What was confirmed on Wednesday night however was that international friendlies really are pointless at this stage of the season. Indeed, most international friendlies, apart from those immediately before a World Cup or continental championship, are just exercises in futility.

Are-think is desperately needed. One solution could be leaving out the stars, the guys who you know will always start. This doesn't mean scraping the bottom of the barrel to conjure up 20-odd players, the way Donadoni and Dunga did. Instead, play the guys who have something to prove, either because they're trying to break into the team or because there is competition for their place in the line-up.

For example, there was no need to see John Terry and Rio Ferdinand Wednesday night in an England shirt. Why not play, say, Jamie Carragher and Michael Dawson instead?

That way, you would get truly motivated players with something to prove. The matches would feel more real and there would be less of a need to go through the half-dozen substitutions which regularly mark the second halves of such games. Clubs would be happier, too, as their big guns wouldn't be involved.

(Gabriele Marcotti writes for SI.com)

## Figo cool on Lisbon return

Football

AFP, Lisbon

Inter Milan's Portuguese midfielder Luis Figo dashed hopes that he will return to Sporting Lisbon, saying he had no plans for his future after his contract with the Italian side runs out.

"I have a year left on my contract

with Inter, after that I don't know, I really haven't decided what I will do in the future," he told Portuguese state television RTP when asked about Sporting's desire that he return to the club where he started his career.

The new president of the Portuguese side, Filipe Soares Franco, told Radio Renascenca on Wednesday that Figo's return was a possibility.

"I think it is possible that Figo could end his career as a footballer at Sporting but a series of factors would have to come together at the same time for this to happen," he said.

Figo, 33, made his debut with Sporting Lisbon in 1990. He went on to spend time with Spanish giants Barcelona and Real Madrid before signing with Inter Milan for two years in August 2005.

### Chelsea fire back at Bates

AFP, London

Chelsea's relations with former chairman Ken Bates have soured further with the Premiership champions accusing the outspoken 74-year-old Leeds supremo of making racist comments.

Chelsea, owned by Russian tycoon Roman Abramovich, lodged a complaint with the Football Association over the way Bates dismissed the Chelsea board in alleged derogatory terms.

Chelsea chairman Bruce Buck told Sky Sports News: "We believe the comments were inappropriate, insulting, rude and had racial and religious overtones, and because of that we filed a complaint with the FA because we believe those comments violate the rules of the FA."

The Premiership champions also accused Bates of waging a personal campaign against the club he sold to Abramovich three years ago.

Bates has instigated a FA probe of his own accusing Chelsea of trying to poach three of his club's Academy players.

The dispute relates to how Chelsea signed up Leeds academy players Michael Woods and Tom Taiwo about a year ago. Bates also believes an illegal approach was made for a third youngster, Danny Rose, who decided against moving.



LUIS FIGO