



Australia striker John Aloisi (C) heads their friendly against Paraguay in Brisbane on Saturday.

Paraguayans spoil Aussie farewell

Football

AFP, Brisbane

An own goal in injury time from substitute Michael Beauchamp spoiled Australia's emotional farewell for four senior international players in a 1-1 draw with Paraguay here on Saturday.

Australia looked set to be celebrating victory after defender Tony Popovic, playing in his last international, headed an 88th-minute goal off a Marco Bresciano free-kick to break the South Americans' stout resistance.

But Beauchamp, who was only on the field for a minute, headed past his goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer, who himself had only just been on the field as a replacement for another Soccerro who was making his farewell appearance, Zeljko Kalac.

It sent the Paraguayans into wild joy as they got the goal to spoil Australia's party before a near 50,000 full-house at Lang Park.

The Australians used the Brisbane match to say farewell to senior players Tony Vidmar, Stan Lazaridis, Popovic and Kalac, in their first match together since the

World Cup in Germany last June.

In effect, Australia's decision to make mass substitutions to give their outgoing players a deserved round of applause from the home fans, backfired spectacularly with the injury-time clanger between two fresh players.

"After the game it was a bit of an anti-climax, but again we've been done by a dodgy decision in the last second of the game," said new skipper Lucas Neill, who was devastated when he conceded a last-minute penalty against eventual champions Italy to knock the Soccerros out of the World Cup.

"But I think the emotion of the night and the constant changing of substitutions disrupted the performance in the end.

"It's hard for the new guys to come in and get used to the pace of the game straight away even though there's only a couple of minutes left.

"It was devastating for Megsy (Beauchamp) when he came on because he's been pushed in the back (by Cardozo) to be honest and that's going to haunt him for a while."

Asked how Beauchamp felt after the match, Neill said: "Head down, same as I was against Italy."

The match looked headed for a scoreless draw, as two of three earlier meetings between the two

teams in Australia six years ago had done, before the late excitement.

Australia dominated the early stages with crisp passing and running off the ball but were not sharp enough up front to convert the approach play.

The best chance came near halftime when Bresciano was brought down in a heavy tackle from Paraguayan skipper Carlos Gamarra inside the area.

The South Americans looked dangerous on the break with Oscar Cardozo and Nelson Cuevas worrying the Australians with their pace.

Paraguay's players were incensed when defender Julio Manzur was yellow-carded by Japanese referee Joji Kashiwara in the 25th minute for bringing down Aussie skipper Lucas Neill after the referee didn't punish a couple of earlier rasping Australian tackles.

Kalac, who almost cost Australia passage into the second round of this year's World Cup conceding a fumbled goal against Croatia, was slow to come out in an aerial challenge on Cardozo in the 40th minute, but the Paraguayan's header went over the bar.

Tackles flew in early in the second half, Edgar Barreto went down in a challenge with Tim Cahill bringing the Paraguayans off the bench

in fury.

The Paraguayans claimed Cahill had used an elbow but television replays showed the Everton midfielder had flicked his fingers across the face of Barreto, who theatrically fell to the ground clutching his face.

Cahill received a yellow card.

Kalac saved at the second attempt to stop a Cuevas volley, while at the other end Bresciano fired straight at Paraguayan goalkeeper Justo Villar.

Lazaridis, playing his 60th and final international, received an emotional send-off when he was replaced by Archie Thompson just after halftime.

Gamarra was also taken off in his last international and replaced by Paulo Da Silva midway through the half.

Interim Australian coach Graham Arnold also took off Vidmar and Popovic, before summoning Kalac out of goal in the last minute of normal time to another huge roar -- only for the crowd to be silenced by the mix-up at the end.

Mascherano committed to West Ham

AFP, London

Argentina midfielder Javier Mascherano has vowed to ignore calls from his national coach Alfio Basile to quit West Ham.

Mascherano has endured a nightmare start to his West Ham career following his surprise move to the English Premiership club in August.

Alan Pardew's side have yet to win since Mascherano and his international teammate Carlo Tevez arrived from Brazilian side Corinthians.

Mascherano was dropped for West Ham's last match, a home defeat against Reading, amid suggestions that he and striker Tevez, who has yet to score for the club, had unsettled the rest of their new teammates.

But he is happy to stay and fight for his place and told the London Evening Standard: "I came with the idea of staying a long time. I think when you arrive, and more so in a club like this, you need time to adapt, to get to know it all."

Basile is keen for the pair, both key players for Argentina, to leave London already because he claims they are playing with no enthusiasm and does not want their troubles to affect the national team.

West Ham have lost their last five matches, including a UEFA Cup first round exit against Palermo, and Mascherano has been linked with a move to Italian club Juventus in the January transfer window.

"Maybe the first year is just about getting to know it. My idea is to stay a long time," added Mascherano.

"It's not right for a player to spend a year in one country, another year in another, another in another, that's too hard.

"Not just in terms of football, but the life you lead, for your family, everything. I want to be here for a long time."

Scolari wishes Silva recovery

AFP, Lisbon

Portugal coach Luiz Felipe Scolari on Friday wished a rapid recovery for Uruguay striker Dario Silva, who had his right leg amputated following a car accident.

"We want to send a message of concern and solidarity to Dario Silva. He's an athlete who has had a misfortune and we hope that he recovers as soon as possible," the Brazilian World Cup-winning manager told reporters in Lisbon.

Silva, 33, left a hospital in Montevideo on Thursday, 10 days after doctors amputated his leg below the knee.

He was driving his van in the company of former footballers Elbio Pappa and Dard Pereira when the accident occurred on September 24 near Montevideo.

His two friends received only minor injuries.

Silva played for Portsmouth in the English Premiership last season but was without a club at the time of the accident.

The player, who previously played for Cagliari, Espanyol, Malaga and Sevilla in his decade in Europe, was on holidays in his homeland awaiting news of a possible transfer to a new club.

He scored 15 goals in 49 international games for Uruguay, and played at the 2002 World Cup.

Two-match ban for Hoeness, Mihajlovic

AFP, Paris

European football's governing body, UEFA, has slapped two-match general bans on Bayern Munich coach manager Uli Hoeness and Inter Milan's assistant coach Sinisa Mihajlovic after the pair became embroiled in an ugly pitchside row during a Champions League match.

The duo were "banned by UEFA from exercising functions for two UEFA club competition matches."

In the 85th minute of the Group B game between Inter and Bayern in Milan on September 27, "an aggressive verbal confrontation took place between Hoeness and Mihajlovic, following the red card given to Inter's Fabio Grosso", UEFA said.

Both moved out of the technical zone and were sent to the stand by referee Steve Bennett.

Grosso, who was dismissed after seriously fouling Bayern defender Willy Sagnol, was given a two-match ban, while Inter striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic, who was sent off for two yellow-card offences in the match, which Bayern won 2-0, was suspended for one game, UEFA said.

Country comes after club!

Football

REUTERS, Milan

Representing your country is routinely described as the greatest honour in a footballer's career but more players seem to be turning their backs on international teams, a trend which risks devaluing competition.

This weekend's Euro 2008 qualifiers will take place without several well-known players who have turned down call-ups, raising the question of whether international football has now become an 'optional extra' for top performers.

Italy coach Roberto Donadoni would love to have playmaker Francesco Totti lining up against Ukraine at his home ground, the Olympic stadium in Rome.

But although Totti is fit enough to be featuring for his club, he says he wants a break from the national team until 2007.

Totti's decision has been taken with remarkable ease by Donadoni and the rest of Italian football.

While the muted reaction may reflect the player's limited contribution to Italy's World Cup triumph, it surely also reflects a mood of resignation among most national coaches.

Sweden coach Lars Lagerback is without one of his best players this weekend after striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic rejected a call-up.

Lagerback disciplined Ibrahimovic last month, sending him home along with defender Olof Melberg and midfielder Christian Wilhelmsson for staying out too late ahead of the qualifier against Liechtenstein.

Ibrahimovic believed the sanction was too harsh and decided not to respond to the call-up for Saturday's home game against Spain and the match in Iceland four days later.

Netherlands coach Marco van Basten has also been unable to persuade Ruud van Nistelrooy and Mark van Bommel to play this weekend.

In Brazil, Dida has retired from the national side despite being only 32, arguably the perfect age for a goalkeeper.

What is notable in all these cases is there no longer appears to be anger or particular surprise when players reject an international call.

"I do not think I can persuade someone to play in the national side or, based on FIFA's rules, make them play," said Lagerback in a statement.

Van Basten agreed, saying: "Van Bommel called me and made it clear he was no longer available. He was so determined that it was no use trying to persuade him."

In one sense the coaches are right, there seems little point in enforcing call-ups on unwilling players.

"We don't want any player who doesn't want to represent Brazil, who doesn't have any pleasure in being here," said Brazil coach Dunga.

"The player has to put his heart and soul with the team as well as his body."

France coach Raymond Domenech takes a different view.

Domenech told Chelsea's Claude Makelele he must carry on playing for France even though the midfielder wanted to retire from the international stage.

Under FIFA rules, if Makelele had refused to turn out for France he could have been suspended from playing for Chelsea.

Domenech's determination to keep Makelele has resulted in a compromise, the player agreeing to stick with France until qualification is assured for Euro 2008.

If Domenech's hardline approach pays off, other national coaches may follow suit and insist call-ups are heeded or suspensions imposed.

The Lagerback and van Basten attitude, while it has a certain logic and avoids club v country conflicts, could lead to the erosion of the status of national teams.

Tributes flow Barthez way

Football

THE GUARDIAN

Former teammates and coaches have paid tribute to Fabien Barthez after he announced his retirement from football.

"Fabien informed me of his decision 10 days ago. To me, he is the greatest goalkeeper France have had," the Toulouse coach, Elie Baup, who gave Barthez his debut in 1990, told L'Equipe on Friday.

The former Manchester United goalkeeper, 35, was without a club after leaving Marseille at the end of last season but played through the World Cup where France lost to Italy on penalties. Barthez, who also played for Monaco, is France's most-capped goalkeeper after playing 87 times, the last in that World Cup final.

"He broke new ground thanks to his ability to play as an outfield

player. Let's be positive -- he ended his career with a World Cup final," Baup added.

"I will always remember the way he used to joke in match warm-ups. In 1998, before the World Cup final, he just fell down and told me his knee was hurting," said the former France goalkeeping coach Philippe Bergeroo. "I panicked and he just burst out laughing, saying: 'It's all right, don't worry. We're going to play this final and we'll win it.'"

"He is among the geniuses," said Marseille's chairman, Pape Diouf. "Losing (Zinedine) Zidane and Barthez in the same year, it's very moving."

"We will miss him but in the meantime I am happy for him because he assuaged his passion," said the former France captain Marcel Desailly, who won the Champions League with Barthez in 1993 when Marseille beat Milan 1-0 in the final.

Barthez says he retired when Toulouse failed to offer him a contract after he moved to the area to be near his ill mother. "I never took that decision. It just dawned on me: 'No club, OK, let's move on to something else,'" Barthez said.

"I know I'm still able to play two years at the highest level," added the keeper, who announced his retirement on Thursday. "If I could have played for Toulouse, everything would have been clear as I was not coming for money," he said. "But I have no right to complain. I've been privileged."

He was a surprise first choice for this year's World Cup but has since been replaced by Gregory Coupet.

Parreira still optimistic

Football

REUTERS, Lusaka

Carlos Alberto Parreira said on Saturday he was still optimistic over taking charge of South Africa even though he faces the possibility of starting the job next year with this new side in a precarious position.

The Brazilian said the challenge of leading the team at the 2010 World Cup finals filled him with optimism but conceded there was concern about the country's chances of qualifying for the 2008 African Nations Cup finals.

After being held to a draw at home in their first qualifier last month, South Africa now face the possibility of going five points behind main rivals Zambia if they lose in their crunch Group 11 game

in Lusaka on Sunday.

Parreira, who is in Lusaka to watch the game ahead of taking over the South Africa post in mid-January, said the country faced a massive challenge if they were to be competitive at the 2010 finals, which they will be hosting.

"I am still optimistic and still positive for my work which starts next year. But we have to work a lot in South Africa on creating the right infra-structure and organisation."

"We won't reach the heights we want to if good ground work is not laid down," he said in an interview.

Parreira said he would not be involved in preparations for Sunday's game in Lusaka, preferring only to observe.

"But I'm picking up a lot about the players, about the culture, about the behaviour."

"When I do get involved, then I'll

really be involved. I don't believe in doing a half job. It has been a good idea to just come and watch and to see what kind of foundation we need."

Parreira's first game in charge will be a Nations Cup qualifier in Chad in March but by then South Africa face the possibility of being considerably behind in their group standings, if the lose on Sunday.

Only the winner of the 12 qualifying groups plus the three best second-placed finishers qualify for the 16-team Nations Cup finals in Ghana in 2008.

Parreira led Brazil to the 1994 World Cup title and also took charge of them at this year's tournament in Germany.

Spain 'sabotage' Gibraltar dream

Football

INTERNET, Undated

Spain was accused of sporting "sabotage" after Gibraltar's elevation as a footballing nation was delayed by UEFA.

European football's governing body looked set finally to approve the Rock's seven-year-old application for UEFA membership at talks in Slovenia.

The move had been on hold for years following Spanish protests that

only countries recognised by the United Nations should be permitted as members.

Then last month the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne, Switzerland, dismissed the Spanish objections, clearing the way for a Gibraltarian national team competing alongside the world's greatest sides for some of the sport's big prizes.

But Spain submitted new protests at UEFA's Executive Committee meeting in Ljubljana, prompting the organisation to postpone a decision until another meeting in December.

One of the Rock's Euro MPs,

Liberal Democrat Graham Watson, reacted angrily, saying: "It is abundantly clear that 11th-hour sabotage by the Spanish authorities has resulted in the delay of what would have been a proud day for all Gibraltarians."

"Since July, UEFA has been legally bound to accept Gibraltar as a member. Its decision to not formally do so is a depressing setback for Gibraltar and its citizens."

The new Spanish objections are believed to relate to Gibraltar's facilities for UEFA-level football games.

On the eve of the talks Mr Watson

said UEFA's decision to accept Gibraltar would "reverberate well beyond the footballing world" - a reference to the long-standing and bitter Anglo-Spanish dispute over the British colony's sovereignty.

Even if provisional membership is granted at UEFA's December meeting, Gibraltar would have to wait until January for confirmation at the Association's Congress in Dusseldorf.

Gibraltar would then be eligible to enter the qualifying competition for Euro 2012.

I'm in charge: McClaren

Football

INTERNET, undated

Steve McClaren hit back at his critics after claims the England manager is not in control of team selection.

"The players do not pick the team," a visibly annoyed McClaren told a press conference ahead of the Euro 2008 qualifying match against Macedonia.

Friday reports suggested that the England players had held a meeting to discuss tactics for the match.

"I can categorically say that the players did not have a meeting," McClaren countered.

"Yes, we will ask the players (but) I, along with the coaches, pick the team, the tactics, the formations and the gameplan."

The former Middlesbrough boss refused to clarify whether he will adopt an experimental 3-5-2 formation for the Old Trafford clash or Wednesday's away match in Croatia.

"It's no secret that this week we've had two (training) sessions working on a 3-5-2 using different personnel," he said. "We may see it this weekend, we may see it on Wednesday, we may see it in the future, who knows?"

McClaren also spoke on Manchester United striker Wayne Rooney, who has been criticised recently for a slump in form and has not scored an England goal for over two years.

"I am sure Wayne will explode back

to form, and let's hope it is on Saturday against Macedonia. He is a world-class footballer who, importantly, wants to get better.

"Wayne Rooney will always be under scrutiny in every detail of everything he does. If he mis-controls a ball he will be criticised, but that is just part and parcel of football."

"He has got great strengths and he is a great asset to the team and to the squad."

Gallas promises video nasty

INTERNET, undated

William Gallas has threatened to lift the lid on his bitter bust-up with Chelsea by taking part in a television interview.

After leaving The Blues to join Arsenal on transfer deadline day Gallas was criticised heavily by the Premiership champions as they released an extraordinary statement.

Chelsea stated that Gallas threatened to score an own goal or make deliberate mistakes if he was not allowed to leave the club, as well as claiming the French international initially refused to play for Jose Mourinho before last season's FA Cup semifinal.

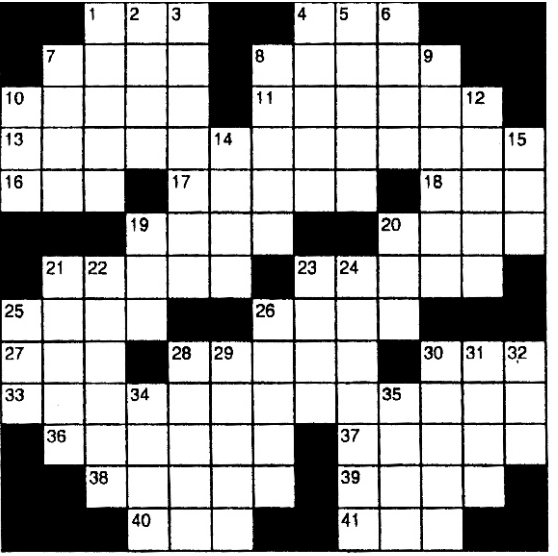
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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	25 Pork cut	2 Detergent	19 Eternity
1 Merit badge	26 Anthracite, e.g.	3 Least favorably	20 Holbrook or Linden
4 "Terrill"	27 Branch laundry	5 Cats' hangout	21 "M*A*S*H" settling
7 Santa's stains	30 Dept. of Transp. agency	6 Amorphous mass	22 With agility
8 Dispatches	33 Society event	7 Undo a dele	23 Legal wrong
10 First Little Pig's building material	36 Llama's cousin	8 —	24 Operator's percentage
11 Inuit residences	37 Bay window	9 Drenched	25 Young fellow
12 Stay alert	38 Hayseed	10 Schuss	26 Gondolier's place
16 "Impossible"	39 Conflagration	12 "Ghostbusters" gunk	28 Put on the line
17 Despicable	40 Actor Beatty	14 Siestas	29 Wore a rut in the rug
18 Spectra or Sportage	41 Campy	15 Once around the track	30 Tooth purchaser?
19 Catch sight of			31 Sheltered
20 Rope fiber			32 Every last iota
21 "Landing"			34 Surmounting
23 Swap			35 Cheese choice

Solution time: 21 mins.

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CRYPTOQUIP
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E D R O D P O C D H B V C S F E M O E
Yesterday's Cryptquip: THE HAUGHTY MAN REFUSED TO STAY IN THE HOSPITAL. HE WAS SIMPLY TOO GOOD FOR WARDS.
Today's Cryptquip Clue: Z equals P
The Cryptquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.