



Brazilian national team players take part in a training session at the Kuwait Sport Club in Kuwait City on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Chelsea deny pitch sabotage

AFP, London

English Premiership champions Chelsea denied suggestions they had deliberately damaged their pitch ahead of a Champions League clash with Barcelona.

Reports in the English press had drawn attention to pitch repairs carried out at Stamford Bridge this week that involved pouring tons of sand across the field.

It was claimed the sand may have been put down to hinder Barcelona's fluid passing football when the European champions play Chelsea on October 18.

The controversy echoes a similar incident when the sides met in the Champions League second round last season.

Then Barcelona claimed Chelsea had watered the turf excessively before the Spanish team trained at Stamford Bridge in a bid to disrupt their preparations.

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## Americans keen on Becks move

AFP, London

A rumoured move by former England captain David Beckham from Real Madrid to a club in the United States would be a "marriage made in heaven", according to a US Major League Soccer official.

According to reports, the MLS is set to announce a rule change that will allow clubs to break the salary cap to sign certain players, and that will enable the likes of Red Bull New York to make a move for Beckham.

If the former England captain can be lured across the Atlantic from Real Madrid, MLS deputy commissioner Ivan Gazidis believes he can help the MLS grow more quickly.

"We have 65 million people that we want to grow," said Gazidis.

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## Pele backs Dunga

Football

REUTERS, Dubai

Pele backed Brazil's new coach Dunga to succeed in his job despite his inexperience in the role.

"I have confidence in Dunga's capabilities. I think he has everything he takes to be a great coach," Pele told the Brazilian Football Confederation's (CBF) official Web site.

"I think his success will depend a lot on the luck factor, which is also important in football."

Pele, who was visiting the team in Kuwait on Friday ahead of Saturday's friendly international, felt last month's 3-0 friendly win over arch-rivals Argentina gave Brazilian fans a boost following their quarterfinal exit at the World Cup.

"This was very good," he said. "After the World Cup failure ... he has already brought some happiness back to the supporters by beating Argentina. So, he's already shown that he has luck."

Dunga, who captained Brazil at the 1994 and 1998 World Cups, was named as a surprise replacement for Carlos Alberto Parreira in July even though he had no previous coaching experience.

He has already started a re-building job and has made top players such as Kaka start on the substitutes' bench.

"There are always going to be transitional periods, the important thing is that it happens gradually in the way Dunga is doing," said Pele.

Dunga has placed a big emphasis on team spirit and commitment, something many feel was missing from Brazil's World Cup squad.

"I often quote Pele as an example, as there was a day when he sat on the bench," Dunga said.

"I tell the players that if Pele can sit on the bench without causing problems, then nobody else has the right to be any different."

Brazil are unbeaten in three games under Dunga, a record they are comfortably expected to continue against Kuwait on Saturday.

Dunga said he was not taking for anything for granted, however.

"They are not a team which is prominent in terms of world football but they will have a lot of motivation and will create a lot of problems for Brazil," he said in a televised interview.

Brazil beat the United Arab Emirates 8-0 on their previous visit to the region last year.

## World Cup 'trophy' upsets Boston fans

REUTERS, Boston

Boston's mayor kissed it. Fans lined up for a glimpse of it. Some paid 5 dollars for a picture with it. But the World Cup soccer trophy that toured Boston this week turned out to be an impostor -- and fans are fuming.

The gold-plated World Cup trophy that arrived in Boston's soccer-mad Italian north-end amid a buzz of publicity on Wednesday as part of a tour by brewer Anheuser-Busch was a replica of the actual 18-carat, 14-inch trophy.

Some Boston soccer fans said they were crushed after learning the trophy's true identity on Friday.

Angelo Martiniello, a 32-year-old Italian immigrant who works at a coffee shop that was visited by the trophy, said when he touched it he thought he had seen and touched the same trophy Italian players embraced when they won the 2006 title.

"I'm upset," he said. Boston Mayor Thomas Menino said that he had understood the trophy was the real World Cup awarded to the Italian team and would be deeply disappointed if it was anything else.

The object is making its way across the United States, under heavy security, on a tour sponsored by Anheuser-Busch Cos., a key sponsor of the 2006 and 2010 World Cup matches.

"We apologise for any misunderstanding about the World Cup Winner's Trophy visit to the United States," Anheuser-Busch spokeswoman Francine Katz said in a statement late on Friday.

She said the trophy would be awarded to the winners of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa and was not the trophy awarded to Italy in July.

"We regret any embarrassment this caused civic leaders, residents of the Boston-area and our local wholesaler," she said.

Money from people who paid to be photographed with the trophy would be donated to charity and the brewer would cover the city's costs for the event, she added.

## Ref beaten up

REUTERS, Sofia

Bulgarian referee Hristo Ristovkov is recovering in hospital after being beaten up by three masked men outside his home in the south-west town of Sandanski on Thursday night, police said.

"I'm shocked," said Ristovkov. "I have no explanation where this came from."

Ristovkov was in charge in the latest derby between Levski Sofia and their bitter city rivals CSKA last month when Levski won 1-0 thanks to a disputed penalty.

"He (Ristovkov) has been attacked by three men in baseball hats and with bats in front of his home in Sandanski," confirmed police spokesman Gergana Moralieva. "He's been taken to hospital with cuts and wounds to his face."

"I feel better now but doctors said it would be better for me to stay in hospital for another night," said Ristovkov on Friday.

Ristovkov, 35, is also a UEFA referee whose most recent international was Norway's 2-0 home win over Moldova in a Euro 2008 qualifier last month.

More than half a dozen referees have been beaten up in Bulgaria in the last few years. Ristovkov made his debut in the league in 2000.

## Beximco baffle CPA

SPORTS REPORTER



Defending champions Beximco got off to a perfect start as they trounced debutants Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) by 77 runs in the opening match of the GrameenPhone Corporate League at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

The newcomers, a team predominantly made up of Chittagong-based players, struggled to chase down a stiff target of 183 runs in 27 overs set up by Beximco's all-rounder Nadif Chowdhury, after overnight rain delayed the start of the opening match. They could only muster 105 for nine.

Nadif struck half a dozen sixes in his 25-ball whirlwind of 52 runs. He struck only a single boundary in his marauding knock.

Put into bat by CPA skipper Murad Khan, Beximco started off quite steadily as their openers Golam Rahman and discarded national opener Al Shahrar were both dismissed by the seventh over with the score on 28. Shahrar tried to force the pace on a sluggish wicket at the Dhanmondi ground but holed out at mid-off to seamer Mohammad Rubel. Rahman was run out soon after, after a bad mix-up with another national discard Alok Kapali who came to bat at number three.

But all-rounder Kapali soon paid back as he struck a quickfire 49 off 48 balls. The Sylhet batsman shared a solid third-wicket stand of 80 runs with Beximco's foreign recruit Hemang Badani.

The 30-year old left-handed batsman was the anchorman as he helped Kapali to play his strokes.

Kapali struck three boundaries and a beautiful flicked six in his knock of 49, while Badani played out 43 balls for his 27 which was laced by only a couple of fours.

The stage was then set for Nadif as he entered after the dismissal of the Tamil Nadu batsman.

The young left-hander brought the CPA bowlers down to earth, especially on their two left-arm

spinners Murad and Monirul Haq. He was finally dismissed when he tried one too many slogs, as he was caught out at mid-wicket off Sabuj, who took 2 for 35 in six overs.

The port city team was off to a disastrous start as they lost four quick wickets, three of which went to fast bowler Mohammad Shahjada. Only middle-order batsman Mostafizur Rahman batted with some purpose. The right-hander scored 48 off 66 balls, that included five fours and a six. Sabuj also

displayed some resistance as he struck a run-a-ball 29 not out, coming in at number eight.

For Beximco, Kapali took two wickets, while Arafat Sunny and Nazmul Hossain took a wicket each.

Debutants StarTel and Channel F2 face each other in today's match at the Fatullah Stadium, while another newcomer Syfang Fan takes on Acme Laboratories in Dhanmondi.



State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Professor Rezaul Karim (4th from L) inaugurates the GrameenPhone Corporate Cricket League at a ceremony at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Zidane amongst FifPro nominees

Football

INTERNET, undated

Former France captain Zinedine Zidane has been nominated for this year's FifPro Player of the Year award.

The former Juventus and Real Madrid man received the nomination, despite dramatically bowing of the game by getting himself sent off when he head-butted Italy defender Marco Materazzi in the chest during this summer's World Cup final.

Zidane is one of 55 players to be short-listed for the award, with Materazzi and 2005 winner Ronaldinho also on the list.

The Premiership is well represented on the list of 55, with 18 players earning a nod for the award.

Chelsea have the most players represented on the list with nine

players, which include summer signings Ashley Cole, Michael Ballack and Andrei Shevchenko.

Six England internationals are also in contention, with Ashley Cole, John Terry, Frank Lampard, Rio Ferdinand, Wayne Rooney and Steven Gerrard also making the list.

The list was comprised from 43,000 ballots received from players around the world, with a world XI also to be chosen as a result as well.

The 2006 FifPro Player of the Year award takes place on November 6 in Athens, Greece.

**Goalkeepers:** Gianluigi Buffon (Italy), Petr Cech (Czech Republic), Dida (Brazil), Jens Lehmann (Germany), Edwin van der Sar (Holland).

**Defenders:** Roberto Ayala (Argentina), Cafu (Brazil), Fabio Cannavaro (Italy), Roberto Carlos (Brazil), Cicinho (Brazil), Ashley Cole (England), Rio Ferdinand (England), William Gallas (France),

Fabio Grosso (Italy), Philipp Lahm (Germany), Lucio (Brazil), Rafael Marquez (Mexico), Marco Materazzi (Italy), Miguel (Portugal), Alessandro Nesta (Italy), Carles Puyol (Spain), Willy Sagnol (France), John Terry (England), Lilian Thuram (France), Gianluca Zambrotta (Italy).

**Midfielders:** Michael Ballack (Germany), Deco (Portugal), Cesc Fabregas (Spain), Luis Figo (Portugal), Gennaro Gattuso (Italy), Steven Gerrard (England), Kaka (Brazil), Frank Lampard (England), Claude Makalele (France), Andrea Pirlo (Italy), Juan Roman Riquelme (Argentina), Francesco Totti (Italy), Patrick Vieira (France), Ze Roberto (Brazil), Zinedine Zidane (France).

**Forwards:** Adriano (Brazil), Hernan Crespo (Argentina), Didier Drogba (Ivory Coast), Samuel Eto'o

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THE PROTEST GOES ON: Shooters of the country (L) and the Alumni Association of BKSP (R) organised separate human-chains in the city yesterday to protest the barbaric police attacks on national shooters.

PHOTOS: STAR