

## Scolari supports Portugal's WC bid

AFP, Lisbon

Portugal coach Luiz Felipe Scolari has backed a suggestion made by the head of the Portuguese Football Federation that the country table a bid to host the 2018 World Cup.

"It would be positive for Portugal. Everyone had doubts when Portugal bid for Euro 2004 but the country showed all its qualities and capabilities and ensured the event was a success," the Brazilian was quoted as saying on Friday in daily newspaper Correio da Manha.

Earlier this week the president of the Portuguese Football Federation, Gilberto Madal, said Portugal should consider making a bid to host the football finals in 2018 using the stadiums put in place for the Euro 2004 tournament which it hosted.

"If in 2018 the World Cup returns to Europe, I think Portugal and the Portuguese Football Federation should prepare, just like England is doing, a bid," he told the Lusa news agency.

Last week British Sports Minister Richard Caborn said England are "very keen" to bid for the World Cup in 2018.

The 2010 World Cup takes place in South Africa while Brazil is tipped as a favourite to host the 2014 event.

## Greek fans jailed

AFP, Athens

Two Greek football fans were jailed on Thursday for their part in a pitch invasion that marred an Athens championship derby between AEK and Panathinaikos last month, the Athens News Agency (ANA) reported.

An Athens judge handed the two unidentified fans 10-month prison sentences and fines of 300 euros (383 dollars) for foul language and threats, ANA said.

Three police officers and another 17 people suffered minor injuries in clashes that erupted after around 100 AEK supporters invaded the pitch ahead of the match, prompting a barrage of rocks and firebombs from the Panathinaikos fans.

Twelve cars parked outside Athens' Olympic Stadium were also damaged during the confrontation.

Violence regularly erupts in Greek sports, particularly football and basketball, but the perpetrators are rarely apprehended.

Prison sentences are rarer still. Successive Greek governments have spent years trying to eradicate hooliganism, but their efforts have failed to solve the problem in the long run.

## Japan-South Korea match in March

AFP, Tokyo

Japan plan to host a friendly against South Korea on March 24 as the national team's first match in 2007, the football association said Friday.

"We have yet to sign a contract on the match but talks are under way in that direction," Japan Football Association president Saburo Kawabuchi said.

The match is planned to be staged at Nissan Stadium in Yokohama, the site of the 2002 World Cup final match in which Brazil beat Germany 2-0.

In their last international encounter, Japan beat South Korea 1-0 away in the East Asian Championship in August 2005.

## Beach football erupts in violence

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Argentina and Uruguay brawled on Copacabana beach after a stormy quarterfinal in the Beach Soccer World Cup on Thursday.

Plastic chairs were thrown and players attacked security men after Uruguay scored two late goals to win 2-1 in a match between the old rivals and neighbours.

Furious Argentina claimed that Uruguay should have returned the ball to them in the move that led to the equalising goal.

As soon as the final whistle went, television pictures showed the Argentines lashing out at their opponents, leading to a fight on the sand.

Uruguay fled the arena through the nearest exit and media reports said they tried to lock themselves in the medical room.

The fighting lasted for around five minutes before police calmed the angry players.

The tournament is being played in a purpose built arena on the beach. Brazil, France and Portugal are the other semi-finalists.

# Patience running thin at PSG

AFP, Paris



It's a make or break week-end for Paris St Germain coach Guy Lacombe - again.

Time is running out for Lacombe to prove he is the man to lead the big-spending capital giants into the Champions League.

PSG sit 12th in the table on 15 points and in terms of both position and points, they are closer to the relegation zone than they are to qualifying for Europe's elite competition.

And with a tricky trip to Le Mans on Saturday, Lacombe may find himself joining the dole queue on Monday morning if his under-performing charges do not come away with three points.

Following a dismal 3-1 home defeat to Lens last week, Lacombe's 31 league matches in charge of PSG, since taking over in January, have yielded just eight victories and 36 points.

"I am not thinking about the worst case scenario," Lacombe insisted.

"If I had panicked against Lens, that would have been a mistake. I am also rational.

"When it's not working, I say so. But I also tell the lads when they're doing well.

"I have confidence in my players. We will win matches. This will turn around."

It must do soon as Lacombe's league record is poor. But for a Cup final victory over Marseille in May Lacombe might already be out of a

job.

At an average of 1.16 points per match, that does not compare well to his two predecessors: Laurent Fournier managed 1.62 points per game from February to December 2005 and Vahid Halilhodzic earned 1.68 points per game in his 63 matches from July 2003 to February 2005.

Another manager who is far from happy is Marseille's Albert Emon. After watching his side streak to a share of top spot after the first six matches, Emon's players have lost four of their next six and slumped to 11 points off the pace down in sixth spot.

Marseille, who lost at home to unfashionable Lorient last week, face a tough task on Sunday as they travel to third placed Lille, who have three wins and two draws in their last five league matches.

But Marseille chairman Pape Diouf has laughed off suggestions his coach should resign.

"It is Albert Emon who guided the team to the top of the standings and I don't see why he should resign even if, to be honest, I have to add that no coach is appointed for life," Diouf said.

Whatever the troubles of PSG and Marseille, they pail in comparison to Monaco, who only two and a half years ago lined up against Porto in the Champions League final.

They have lost eight of their opening 12 matches and prop up the table, despite being able to call on the likes of Czech international striker Jan Koller, former Italian international forward Marco Di Vaio and former Spain international midfielder Lopez Gerard.

Monaco travel to Troyes on

Sunday.

Another team struggling compared with last season is Bordeaux. Second last time out they are down in ninth this season, although they will be boosted by an international call-up for their Brazilian midfielder Fernando, ahead of the visit of Auxerre on Saturday.

The 25-year-old has been called up before, five years ago, but never made it onto the pitch, something he is hoping to achieve against Switzerland in Basel on Wednesday.

"To be picked by Brazil is the highest level, it's something which brings great pleasure, particularly when you see how many players Brazil have to choose from.

"Now I hope to be part of the squad more often, not only every five years."

Champions Lyon, who lead the league standings by nine points from surprise package Nancy, host Valenciennes on Friday night in a match brought forward due to the France-New Zealand rugby Test to be played at the Stade Gerland on Saturday.

Lyon lost their unbeaten record last week in a 1-0 defeat at Rennes.

## FIXTURES

<b>Saturday</b>	Bordeaux v Auxerre, Le Mans v PSG, Lens v Rennes, Lorient v AS Nancy, Nantes v St Etienne, Nice v Sochaux, Toulouse v Sedan
<b>Sunday</b>	Lille v Marseille, Troyes v Monaco

# Mentor faces master

AFP, Blackburn



If Sir Alex Ferguson was to retire tomorrow, Mark Hughes would be a credible candidate to succeed him at the helm of Manchester United.

But the Blackburn boss, whose side beat United in both their Premiership encounters last season, believes it could be years before that particularly vacancy becomes available.

Hughes knows Ferguson better than most having played under him for years, and the two men face each other in opposite dug-outs on Saturday as Blackburn look to continue their good run against the Premiership leaders.

Despite being singled out as a possible successor, Hughes insists Ferguson is still in it for the long term at United.

"I don't think who will succeed Sir Alex is something that anybody needs to worry about for a number of years yet," said Hughes.

"You look at him now and he has that glint in his eye again because he is building another team and he's got young players coming through.

"He really enjoys that part of the job when he sees them come through and achieve their potential. He has built teams before and dismantled them and that's the part of the job he really loves.

"I've only been at Blackburn for two and a bit years and I know how hard the job is, so for Sir Alex to stay at the top as long as he has does him great credit."

Despite United's embarrassing exit from the League Cup at the hands of Championship side Southend United on Tuesday, Hughes believes that the only competition that really matters to Ferguson is the Champions League. And he thinks that Ferguson might just opt to walk away from United if he can get his hands on the trophy one more

time.

"He is still hankering after another Champions League and that's probably what's driving him now," said 43-year-old Hughes, who helped United win two titles, three FA Cups, the European Cup Winners' Cup and League Cup during two playing spells at the club.

"He's still got that drive and that ambition, absolutely, but a Champions League victory would maybe get him asking whether or not he wants to do it anymore."

Despite watching his side lose their last three league games, Hughes is refusing to press the panic button. Blackburn are still without influential midfielder Robbie Savage, out for a month with a damaged thigh, while striker Jason Roberts, Steven Reid and New Zealand defender Ryan Nelsen are long-term absentees.

Ferguson is desperate for United to bounce back in style after entering their 21st year under his command with a humiliating cup defeat. Freddy Eastwood's spectacular free-kick proved sufficient for Southend to win a place in the quarter-finals as a United side containing 10 internationals went down to the Championship's rock bottom club.

United have won four, lost four and drawn four of their 12 Premiership visits to Ewood Park, but they have not left with all three points in eight years, since Andy Cole, Paul Scholes and David Beckham scored in a 3-1 triumph in April 1998.

Scholes, who was rested in midweek, is set to make his 350th Premiership appearance as Ferguson fields his strongest possible line-up with French striker Louis Saha, United's seven-goal leading scorer, also returning to the fold.

Cristiano Ronaldo has been booed by opposition fans all season due to his role in Wayne Rooney's dismissal in England's World Cup exit, and the Portugal winger expects similar treatment at Blackburn.

## Marseille punished

AFP, Marseille

Marseille must play one match behind closed doors as punishment for the serious injury suffered by a fireman when a firework was thrown from the crowd during a French league match.

The officer, 20-year-old Anthony Roko, lost two fingers when the device was thrown onto the pitch during the match between Marseille and Nice on October 29.

The ban will come into effect from November 20 with the match affected to be decided by the league authorities (LFP).

But the decision was attacked by Marseille president Pape Diouf.

"It's unjust but I have the feeling the decision was inevitable," he said.

"The guilty fan has been arrested."

A 21-year-old student, a member of the Marseille 'Fanatics' wing of supporters, was arrested three days after incident.

## Hiddink promises vodka treat

REUTERS, Moscow

Russia manager Guus Hiddink says if his team qualify for the Euro 2008 finals he will reward the habit of a lifetime and down a shot of vodka.

"As you know I'm not a drinker, I don't like to drink, but I'm very aware of this very Russian tradition," the Dutchman told Reuters on Thursday at the national team's training centre ahead of next week's Euro 2008 qualifier against Macedonia.

"So for that I'm ready to make an exception. I can promise you that if we qualify, I'll have a drink."

Russia, however, have made a slow start to their qualifying campaign.

They are in fifth place in Group E behind England, Israel, Croatia and Macedonia with five points from three matches after being held to draws by Croatia and Israel in their first two home games.

Despite his sober habits, the Dutchman said he felt at home in Russia.

"I feel very welcomed, very much at home here," said Hiddink, who was inundated with gifts when he celebrated his 60th birthday on Wednesday. "I had so many people coming up to me and wishing me a very healthy future."

The former South Korea manager said he would not try to match former Russian ice hockey coach Vladimir Krikunov, who acclaimed vodka as the perfect remedy for post-game stress.

"Three shots of vodka after every game. It's a must," Krikunov once said.

Hiddink said: "I would drink, not a bottle of vodka, of course, but a small glass."

The Russians face Macedonia in Skopje on Nov. 15.

## Spain draft Morientes

AFP, Madrid

Spain coach Luis Aragones has called up Valencia forward Fernando Morientes for a friendly against Romania next Wednesday in Cadix.

Morientes returns to the squad after an eight-month hiatus having been left at home by Aragones for the World Cup in Germany, where Spain failed to get to the quarter-finals stage.

Aragones named his squad Friday and there was still no place for Spain and Real Madrid icon Raul, nor Atletico Madrid striker Fernando Torres who has struggled to find the net at his club.

Barcelona defender Carles Puyol asked not to be considered following the recent death of his father.

His club teammate Xavi is also sidelined, though injury.

Surprise additions to the squad include defenders Javi Navarro (Sevilla), Alberto Lopo (Deportivo La Coruna), Angel David Lopez (Celta Vigo), Valencia midfielder David Jimenez Silva and Deportivo La Coruna striker Angel Javier Arizmendi.

Raul, who has scored 44 goals in 102 appearances for Spain, was sidelined by Aragones at the end of September for the Euro 2008 qualifier against Sweden.

It was the first time Raul, neither injured nor suspended at the time, had been left out a Spain squad.

Morientes, who has 26 goals in 43 appearances, will join a largely Valencia-inspired attacking front line for Spain.

The former Liverpool striker last played for Spain on March 1, in a 3-2 World Cup warm-up victory over Ivory Coast.

## SQUAD

**Goalkeepers:** Iker Casillas (Real Madrid), Jose Manuel Reina (Liverpool/ENG)

**Defenders:** Antonio Lopez (Atletico Madrid), Juanito (Real Betis), Sergio Ramos (Real Madrid), Joan Capdevila (Deportivo La Coruna), Alberto Lopo (Deportivo La Coruna), Angel David Lopez (Celta Vigo), Javi Navarro (Sevilla)

**Midfielders:** Francesc Fabregas (Arsenal/ENG), Andres Iniesta (Barcelona), Xabi Alonso (Liverpool/ENG), Luis Garcia (Liverpool/ENG), Borja Ubina (Celta Vigo), David Jimenez Silva (Valencia), Marcos Senna (Villarreal)

**Strikers:** Fernando Morientes (Valencia), David Villa (Valencia), Miguel Angel Angulo (Valencia), Angel Javier Arizmendi (Deportivo La Coruna)

## Leverkusen retain Barnetta

AFP, Berlin

Swiss international midfielder Tranquillo Barnetta has extended his contract with German Bundesliga side Leverkusen by two years until 2010, the club confirmed Friday.

Barnetta, 21, arrived at the German in 2004, before being loaned for the 2004-2005 season to Hanover.

Leverkusen coach Michael Skibbe is also negotiating an extension to his contract, according to club executive director Wolfgang Holzhauser.

## Keane slams divers

Football

AFP, London

Former Manchester United midfielder general Roy Keane has shown support for under-fire referees by hitting out at the "conmen" and "cheaters" in the English game.

Keane, who is now manager at Championship side Sunderland, was never one to back away from arguing with referees during his time as a no-nonsense midfielder at Old Trafford.

The performances of some referees have come under the spotlight this week after a number of controversial decisions by top official Graham Poll in games involving Chelsea and Everton.

Yet Keane feels referees are not being helped by the players and is particularly concerned by the recent number of diving incidents in the Premiership.

The 35-year-old said: "Players are conning each other, there's a lot of sneaky stuff going on and I'm glad I'm not playing.

"There were lads I played with who went down like they'd been shot, and it drove me crazy. I'd pull my hair out.

"We all know the players and I wouldn't give them the time of day. I can't get my head round a player who rolls round then he's up 30 seconds later. I'd be embarrassed.

"It's cheating and if I'd done that my family would disown me. Referees are scrutinised left, right and centre and the players aren't helping them."

Keane's comments may come as a surprise, particularly to those who remember his outburst at Andy D'Urso in a United match against Middlesbrough seven years ago.



ROY KEANE

But Keane said of that incident: "I wouldn't say I'm embarrassed by that, but it's hard to make excuses. I was 100 per cent wrong.

"I still think the veins were super-imposed by a bit of camera trickery. Mr D'Urso was the middle man in the (Arsene) Wenger and (Alan) Pardew incident, and my heart went out to him, it always seems to be him."

## Smith mulls Cardiff option

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United striker Alan Smith is considering joining Championship leaders Cardiff on loan, United boss Sir Alex Ferguson revealed on Friday.

Smith has been unable to break back into the United team since his return from a serious leg break and Ferguson believes the move would do the former Leeds and England forward good as he continues his comeback.

"They phoned us yesterday morning and I thought about it and the fact we are no longer in the League Cup, I thought a short term loan would be ideal for him in terms of getting games," Ferguson said.

"I think he has spoken to someone at Cardiff and he is uncertain about what to do. He is not certain about whether to take it or not."

"As an option to play games that is really the idea and it's a good opportunity to get some in given we are not in the League Cup and he really needs football.

"Reserve team football is really for the youth team and it doesn't present the right challenge for an experienced player like Alan.

"There is a bit of risk about sending him out but in the present situation he needs games quickly. He needs to get through competitive matches and he is still a bit short for us in that. But he is improving and it's only through games that he's going to get it back."

# Cologne look to Daum

Football

AFP, Cologne

Struggling former German giants Cologne have turned their attentions to controversial coach Christoph Daum after firing boss Hanspeter Latour on Thursday.

Cologne, the first ever winners of the Bundesliga in West Germany and the league's most successful team during its early years, currently sit eighth in the second division, a massive 12 points off leaders Karlsruhe.

Swiss Latour paid for his side's poor start - they began the season among the favourites for promotion following last season's relegation from the top flight - after a 1-0 home defeat to Aue on

Wednesday.

Cologne's sporting director Michael Meier said the club had already approached former Stuttgart coach Daum.

Daum is a controversial figure in German football, having once ruled himself out of the running for the national team hot seat after admitting to taking cocaine.

But he has had a successful career as a coach, claiming the German title with Stuttgart in 1992 and winning three Turkish league titles, with Besiktas in 1995 and Fenerbahce in 2004 and 2005.

Daum was fired from the Fenerbahce post at the end of last season after his side were pipped to the title on the final day by perennial rivals Galatasaray.

Meier revealed Daum said he

would consider the offer from Cologne, who have not won in six matches.

Latour, 59, who was known as the "volcano" for his fiery temperament, had only taken over the reins in January but failed to arrest the team's slide into the second division.

He said: "I am very disappointed because the team did not respond to our ideas, even though I am convinced we could have turned it around.

"But I have no complaints against the Cologne management."

Former Germany international Thomas Hassler, Cologne's youth team coach, will take charge of the team on a temporary basis until a successor is appointed.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Argentina players threaten security with a plastic chair during a scuffle with Uruguayan players at the end of their quarterfinal match of the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup at Copacabana beach in Rio de Janeiro on Thursday.