



Bahrain's Sayed Mohammed Adnan (L) tries a sliding tackle on Inter Milan's Argentinian midfielder Santiago Solari during their friendly match at the Bahrain National Stadium in Riffa on Saturday.

## Adriano lights up Bahrain

INTERNET, undated

Adriano had a disastrous 2006, but started the new year on the right foot with a brace and fine performance for Inter in Bahrain.

The Brazilian had struggled throughout the last 12 months, his goal against Atalanta just before the Christmas break his first for the club since March, but he seems to have found his form at last.

He scored two goals in Sunday's 6-1 friendly victory over the Bahrain national side at the National Stadium in Manama, but also earned a penalty and performed a stunning nutmeg on an opponent, suggesting his confidence is back.

Luis Figo also impressed in front of a crowd he'll see again soon enough, as he has already signed a princely contract -- said to be worth 5.7-million-pounds for one year -- with Saudi club Al-Ittihad to begin in July.

Adriano rose to nod in Figo's cross after 28 minutes and then ran on to another of the Portuguese legend's passes to delicately flick the ball over the goalkeeper.

L'Imperatore earned a penalty for a push from the shot-stopper, which Zlatan Ibrahimovic converted, and Douglas Maicon tapped in Inter's fourth of the game.

Santiago Solari's sweeping cross found Mariano Gonzalez at the back post and in the final minutes Bahrain netted a consolation goal with Hussain's left-foot strike.

Gonzalez completed his brace at the end by pouncing on a parried Lampros Choutos effort.

## Ferguson rates Scholes best

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United boss Sir Alex Ferguson believes former England midfielder Paul Scholes is playing well enough to be an early contender for Footballer of the Year.

Scholes, who has grabbed five goals this season, has returned to top form after suffering blurred vision and Ferguson has nothing for admiration for the veteran.

"I think everyone at the club and the supporters would be delighted if Paul got an honour," said the United manager.

"He's scored five goals for me and that is up with the best of them in the country in that role.

"His football brain -- and the football he produces at times -- is marvellous. It would be great for him to get an award like that."

Ferguson has hinted he could make two new signings in the transfer window but is already pleased with the quality in his squad.

"I am happy with what I have," he said ahead of the FA Cup match against Aston Villa on Sunday.

"The players are improving. They are good professionals and train well. You expect to see an improvement when they are at a young age.

"We have lot of cover as well, if you look at our back four positions. I am okay there and we have reasonable cover in midfield.

"Up front, we have brought in Henrik Larsson and that is a bonus. Then there is Ole Gunnar Solskjaer. He will get 15 goals for us this season if he stays fit."

## Mourinho's darkest hour

Football

REUTERS, London

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho scoffed on Saturday at suggestions he was going through the toughest phase of his career.

Speaking after the Premier League champions thumped fourth division Macclesfield 6-1 in the FA Cup third round, Mourinho told reporters: "I've been laughing a lot about it.

"Also in my country it's been written 'the dark moment of Jose Mourinho'.

"Is the dark moment of my career three (Premier League) draws, second in the premiership, last 16 of the Champions League and semi-finals of the League Cup? It means my career has not been bad."

The Portuguese added, however, that a string of injuries were causing problems.

Chelsea trail league leaders

Manchester United by six points after drawing at home to Reading and Fulham and away at Aston Villa over the last two weeks.

One of the chief criticisms of the champions has been the poor form of Andriy Shevchenko, bought from AC Milan for around 29 million pounds (56.32 million dollars) last year.

Mourinho said last week the Ukraine striker was not performing. Shevchenko failed to score again on Saturday but Mourinho said his performance was much improved.

"It's frustrating for a striker to be in a team that wins 6-1 and not be on the score sheet," said the Chelsea manager.

"In some other matches maybe he accepted this without a fight. Today he fought hard and worked for the team."

Mourinho said England stalwart Frank Lampard, who scored a hat-trick, should have been rested but French under-21 midfielder

Lassana Diarra failed to turn up in time for a team meeting and had been dropped.

"I started with Lamps and in the first half he was crucial for us."

Lampard's treble was followed by goals from Shaun Wright-Phillips, John Obi Mikel and Ricardo Carvalho.

Macclesfield played most of the second half with 10 men after goalkeeper Tommy Lee was sent off for bringing down Shevchenko in the area.

Chelsea are missing captain John Terry, fellow defender Khalid Boulahrouz, wingers Joe Cole and Arjen Robben and goalkeepers Petr Cech and Carlo Cudicini through injury.

Mourinho said with Carvalho suspended for Wednesday's League Cup semifinal first leg against Wycombe Wanderers, Chelsea would be playing with a makeshift central defence of full-back Paulo Ferreira and midfielder Michael Essien.

## Figo deal completed

INTERNET, undated

Former World Player of the Year Luis Figo has signed an 18-month contract with Al Ittihad for an undisclosed sum, the Saudi club said on Sunday.

"I can confirm that Luis Figo of Inter has signed an official contract with Ittihad starting on July 1, 2007," Ittihad director-general Rafat Turki told Reuters.

"I have no right to release the value but we concluded a deal acceptable to both sides that is the highest, not just in the Middle East, but in Asia for a player that is worth the value."

Italian and Saudi newspapers had been reporting for weeks that the 34-year-old Portuguese midfielder, whose contract with Inter expires at the end of the season, was on the brink of moving to the Jeddah-based club.

Inter dismissed the report several days ago saying in a statement on its Web site that there was no negotiation under way.

Inter coach Roberto Mancini, who was in Bahrain with his team for a training camp and a friendly against Bahrain's national team, told the Gulf Daily News that Figo would stay at least until his contract expired at the end of the year.

But Turki said Ittihad had clinched the deal in Bahrain on Thursday night.

## Alex savours San Siro date

INTERNET, undated

Alessandro Del Piero admits he enjoyed facing off against Milan on the grand stage of San Siro again and can't wait to return next season.

"I really enjoyed myself," said the Juventus star after the 3-2 Trofeo Berlusconi defeat on Saturday evening.

"It was great to come back to San Siro. It's a fantastic stadium, there's no doubt about it, and we can be fairly happy with our performance."

Del Piero had scored the goal that put the Bianconeri 2-1 up, but a late push saw Milan emerge with the silverware in this prestigious friendly postponed from the summer due to Champions League commitments.

It was an important game for the World Cup winner, who has been treading the boards of Serie B this term and relished the opportunity to play in the spotlight.

"Juve still need to improve, but the players must focus on doing well this season and above all performing our duty for this club."

They may be climbing towards an immediate promotion into the top flight after their demotion in the Calciopoli scandal, but not all is relaxed in Turin.

David Trezeguet and Gianluigi Buffon have confirmed they will only stay with Juventus if they can challenge for the Scudetto straight away, so how does Del Piero see the situation?

"It's not just them the club has to convince, but me as well! Of course all of us want to fly high and be part of the great side that is Juventus. I'm sure the directors will do everything they can to give us a competitive squad."

### FRENCH CUP

## Calais stun Lorient

Football

AFP, Paris

Tiny Calais caused the shock of the round in the last 64 of the French Cup, beating first division Lorient 2-0.

Calais, from the fourth rung of the complicated French league structure, are no strangers to improbable cup runs having reached the quarterfinals a year ago and gone all the way to the final in 2000.

But few could have expected the part-timers to embark on yet another glorious cup campaign when matched with Lorient.

Yet goals from Mathieu Hoguet on 24 minutes and Djazon Boutoille 15 minutes from the end were enough to see-off their top flight opponents.

"I feel only joy, this is the magic of the cup," said Calais coach Sylvain Jore. "This will bring great joy to the people of Calais."

Lorient were not the only victims of an upset as Rennes lost 3-1 after extra time at home to third division Romorantin.

Gilles Fabien gave Romorantin the lead shortly after the break but

John Utaka equalised for the hosts on 72 minutes.

In extra-time, though, it was the visitors who turned on the pressure, scoring twice in the second period to seal their passage into the next round.

On-loan Liverpool striker Djibril Cisse scored a hat-trick for Marseille as they narrowly avoided a shock, coming through 4-1 after extra time against fifth division Cambrai.

Cisse gave the former European Cup winners, and last season's beaten finalists, the lead on 18 minutes but Julien Bailleul equalised for hosts Cambrai with a quarter of an hour to play.

But the first division team proved to strong in the extra period with Cisse completing his first treble for Marseille before Toifilou Maoulida rounded off the scoring.

France's 1998 World Cup winning goalkeeper Fabien Barthez, who has gone back on his decision to retire, played his first game for Nantes but had little to do as his new employers beat Guingamp 1-0.

The match was Barthez's first since playing in France's 2006 World Cup final loss to Italy in Berlin last July.

A year ago Monaco were the

victims of a shock against Colmar but they made no mistake at fourth division Quevilly, coming through 2-0 thanks to goals from Lopez Gerard and Gonzalo Vargas.

There were no fairytales for the two smallest teams left in the competition as Pont de Cheruy of the seventh tier lost 1-0 at home to top flight Sedan.

Pluvinger of the sixth tier also lost at home to first division opposition, going down 3-0 against Le Mans.

First division Troyes were upset 4-2 by Second Division Libourne St Seurin as Croatian striker Zvonimir Deranja bagged a hat-trick while beleaguered Nantes looked to be heading for extra-time against second division Guingamp until Nicolas Savinaud's last minute winner broke the deadlock.

Auxerre needed a late goal from former France international Bruno Pedretti to earn a 2-2 draw at home to second division Niort to take that into extra-time.

There were two all-first division ties with Sochaux winning 3-1 at St Etienne and Lens coming back from 3-1 down to force extra-time at Nancy.

## Whither Roman's billions?

Football

REUTERS, Singapore

Roman Abramovich's billions have brought glory and silverware to English champions Chelsea, but they have done little to enhance the prospects of teenage hopefuls at the London club.

Filipino midfielder James Younghusband was released from Chelsea last year after 10 years at Stamford Bridge and says it is harder than ever to make the grade at the Russian oligarch's club.

"Before Roman Abramovich's time, out of about 100 youths, seven or eight would make it," said Younghusband, who is in Singapore to represent the Philippines in a friendly international against the hosts.

"Now, with increased competi-

tion from other European youth players -- and more finances -- only three or four succeed."

The 20-year-old has moved to semi-professional side AFC Wimbledon and is rapidly coming to terms with the realities of life outside the top flight, while younger brother Philip remains at Chelsea.

"Leaving Chelsea was the lowest point of my football career, a big setback," he told Singapore's Sunday Times.

"It's more physical in the lower leagues, not pretty football.

"You face bigger-sized players, the ball's in the air more," said the midfielder who played for Chelsea from the Under-10s to the U-19s levels, and made 30 appearances for the reserves in the two seasons before being let go.

While James will take part in this month's Asean soccer championships, staged in Singapore and

Thailand, his brother has ruled himself out.

"Unfortunately, I won't be going. I have spoken with Chelsea and they feel it is best I stay here at such an important time during the football season," he told Filipino media.

"This is the period where decisions will be made about my future."

The Asean soccer tournament - formerly the Tiger Cup -- is a biennial tournament featuring national sides from South-East Asia and takes place this year from January 12-February 4.

The Filipinos have been grouped with three-time winners Thailand, Myanmar and Malaysia, while the Singapore group features Vietnam, Indonesia and Laos, the top team in the qualifying stage.

## Kahn sets quit year

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich goalkeeper Oliver Kahn has said he will retire from football in 2008 at the end of his current contract.

The 86-times capped custodian retired from international football after last summer's World Cup finals, but at 37-year-old decided to play on for another two years at club level.

"I will honour my contract with Bayren until 2008 and after that it will be the right time at 39 years to call a halt and concentrate on something else," he told the Sunday edition of Bild newspaper.

Kahn has been with Bayern since joining them from Karlsruhe in 1994 and has played 516 times for the Bavarian giants winning seven German league titles, and five German Cups as well as the 2001 Champions league title and the 1996 UEFA Cup.

They are currently lying third in the Bundesliga, three points adrift of leaders Werder Bremen.



Bayern Munich goalkeeper Oliver Kahn (L) signs autograph for a fan during a training session at the Police Club in the Gulf emirate of Dubai on Sunday.

### CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS		DOWN	
1 "Not only that, but ..."	36 Rapper's entourage	1 Basilica area	23 Comic-strip penguin
4 Tropical fish	37 Cashew-family shrubs	2 It may be a proper subject	24 Understands, to a Scot
8 Dangling site	39 Ornate vase	3 Div.	25 Egg on
12 "Ulalume" writer	40 Noon on a sundial	4 Gets lost	26 Probability
13 Buffalo Bill	41 Bean	5 Freebies	27 Options list
14 Exploding star	45 "Monopoly" corner	6 Oklahoma city	28 Mosque VIP
15 Krypton evacuee	48 Overlord	7 The Carrington saga	29 TV network
17 Basin accessory	50 Farm fraction	8 Message	32 Withstands
19 Lawyers' org.	51 Barber-shop request	9 Without further ado	33 High trump card
21 Mornings (Abbr.)	52 Election Day abbr.	10 Leading lady	35 Anal. or biol.
22 Logic-puzzle fad	53 Honey bunch	11 Anvil locale	36 Opening remarks
26 Leaves	54 Tries the wine	16 Poet's Muse	38 Wheel-base termini
	55 Whatever amount	20 Future rose	39 Open a

Solution time: 25 mins.

TALC	DRAW	PHO
OLTO	AIDA	EAR
PERSIMMON	RNA	
SEAWAN	OUSKY	
GM	CLAMP	
LAPS	ZOO	PIGS
AGE	INN	RIP
COIN	NEE	MEGA
SAUCY	MA	
GRAMP	NIGORA	
LEA	PERSONNEL	
OLD	ETUI	ETNA
BYE	RAGA	TOTS

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
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CRYPTOQUIP

U L C L U Y M A L K I S K Q

NYLSI N XNWC ZLU BJLE

R Q L R X Q Z Q Q X W Q Q R

ACERNIJC: "RMIC BLENK." Yesterday's Cryptquip: IF A BOAT IS TRANSPORTING THINGS SUCH AS GAS AND COAL, THAT COULD BE A SHIP OF FUELS.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: R 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.