



PHOTO: AFP

Anderlecht's Moroccan forward Mbark Boussoufa poses with his trophy after winning the Gouden Schoen (Golden Shoe) award during a gala evening in Oostende on Wednesday.

## Milan clubs under scrutiny

INTERNET, undated

The president of Internazionale and the vice president of Milan have been placed under investigation by an Italian magistrate probing false accounting in Serie A football, a judicial source said on Wednesday.

Milan public prosecutor Carlo Nocerino plans to summon Inter's Massimo Moratti and Milan's Adriano Galliani for questioning in the investigation into possible balance sheet irregularities, the source told Reuters.

The prosecutor is investigating whether clubs manipulated their balance sheets by inflating the prices of players they bought and sold, the source said.

In Italy, being placed under investigation does not indicate guilt and does not necessarily lead to criminal charges.

Inter Milan refused to comment on the news, although they had previously said they were confident they would be able to refute any claims of financial irregularity. AC Milan have also insisted their books are correct.

Milan's public prosecutor has questioned whether Inter could have passed the financial tests required to take part in the 2004-05 Serie A season without improperly adjusting its accounts.

Nocerino intends to hand his findings to the Italian Football Federation, which could then decide whether to open its own investigation, the judicial source said.

Last September, Rome magistrates called for the president of AS Roma, Franco Sensi, and the former president of Lazio, Sergio Cragnotti, to stand trial for false accounting. Both men denied the accusations.

Other investigations into false accounting in Italian football are under way in Genoa and Turin.

## Milan dream of Ronaldo

AFP, Rome

AC Milan vice-president Adriano Galliani said Wednesday Ronaldo was a player they've dreamed of having for a long time as the Serie A club tried to persuade Real Madrid to release the unsettled striker.

The two clubs are in negotiations about a possible transfer and Milan are hoping they can lure the 30-year-old Brazil international back to Italy.

"Ronaldo is a player we've dreamed about for a long time and we'd love to have him here," Galliani said of the Brazilian who spent five years with Milan's rivals Inter between 1997 and 2002.

"The whole of the Milan family, from president (Silvio Berlusconi) to the caretaker at the training ground, have given the thumbs-up to the possible arrival of Ronaldo."

Galliani confirmed that Milan had made an offer for Ronaldo, but are said to be unwilling to pay a transfer fee for a player whose contract ends in 18 months.

"It all depends on Real, he's their player," he said.

The Gazzetta dello Sport reported Wednesday that Milan have offered Ronaldo, who cost Real 30 million euros (38.7 million dollars) when they bought him from Inter in 2002, a staggering six million euros (7.8 million dollars) a season.

SEE PAGE 22 COL 8

## COPPA ITALIA

# Inter grab semi spot



Football

INTERNET, undated

Fabio Grosso marked his comeback with a goal as Inter beat Empoli on Wednesday and continue the defence of their Coppa Italia title.

After Adriano and Ivan Cordoba goals secured a 2-0 away victory in the first leg, it took 28 minutes for the Nerazzurri to put their passage beyond all doubt.

Mariano Gonzalez ran down the flank and put in a cross for Esteban Cambiasso to tap in at the back post.

Empoli had the opportunity to get right back into the match moments later when Olivier Dacourt brought down Eder, but Mirko Gasparetto fired his penalty on to the crossbar.

It was a fiery moment of the tie, as another few minutes passed and Inter also hit the woodwork with Fabio Grosso -- returning from an injury -- dispossessing Lino Marzoratti in the area.

Cambiasso nearly scored a bizarre goal on the stroke of half-time, as a Grosso free kick hit his face by accident and almost went in!

In the second period Francesco Toldo took the ball off Gasparetto's head, while Santiago Solari and Gonzalez skimmed the target.

Grosso marked his comeback

with a spectacular goal. The 2006 World Cup her smashed in a curling left-foot drive from distance that slotted into the far top corner.

Inter progress calmly through to the semifinals with a 4-0 aggregate win, where they will face Roberto Mancini's old club Sampdoria who eliminated Chievo 3-1 on aggregate.

In the other match on Wednesday, Parma staged a valiant fight-back, but David Pizarro's volley secured a 2-2 draw and saw Roma through to the Coppa Italia semifinals.

The Gialloblu had given themselves a chance with a late away goal in the first leg 2-1 defeat, while Christian Wilhelmsson and Francesco Tavano made their debuts for the visitors.

Parma had a strong start and after a save on Cigarini, Amantino Mancini lost the ball in midfield and Zlatan Muslimovic nodded Andrea Gasbarroni's cross into the far top corner.

Gianluca Curci was under siege with Ferdinand Coly's effort, but Roma fought back with Rodrigo Tadei and Stefano Okaka Chuka going close.

Daniele De Rossi managed to level the scores on the half-hour mark with a powerful header on David Pizarro's free-kick, the ball going beneath young goalkeeper Virgili.

However, just before the break Muslimovic struck yet again thanks to an error. This time De Rossi's slip handed the ball to Coly, whose through ball found the striker and a static defence. The hitman went off injured and they missed his firepower in the second half with the tie level on aggregate.

Mancini, De Rossi and Vitali Kutuzov had good chances, while Max Tonetto's cross-shot clipped the frame of the goal.

Parma wasted a couple of golden opportunities to book their spot in the semifinal, as Kutuzov's angled drive was wide with only Curci to beat again following a midfield fumble -- then Coly incredibly ballooned over on his own from Gasbarroni's cross.

Francesco Tavano made his official debut in the Roma jersey for the final minutes, but it was another player who put them through to the next round.

As extra time was looming, a corner was cleared out only as far as Pizarro's splendid volley that squirmed through Virgili's hands. Roma drew 2-2 at the Stadio Tardini, but go through to the semifinals of the Coppa Italia for the third year running, where they will face either Milan or Arezzo.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Inter Milan defender Fabio Grosso (L) celebrates with teammate Esteban Cambiasso after scoring during their Italian Cup quarterfinal match against Empoli at the San Siro on Wednesday.

## Steely Sharapova

AFP, Melbourne

Maria Sharapova justified her top seeding at the Australian Open with a 6-0, 6-3 demolition of fellow Russian Anastasia Rodionova Thursday, erasing memories of her horror start to the tournament.

The 19-year-old had a point to prove after coming within two points of bombing out to unseeded Frenchwoman Camille Pin in her first outing at Melbourne Park, when extreme heat left her cramping and feeling "delusional".

Sharapova flourished in milder conditions, pummelling Rodionova into submission in less than an hour to get her Australian Open campaign back on track.

"All my brain cells were restored today so I was able to think a little bit out there, unlike the previous match," she said.

"It was very important to get out there and get off to a good start then end the match on a good note rather than dragging it out."

Asked if she had completely recovered from her draining opening match Tuesday, Sharapova replied: "I'm getting there, I'll be fine ... I'm looking forward to getting better with every single match."

After a day's rest, the reigning US Open champion showed no obvious ill effects from her ordeal in the centre court furnace, appearing sharp and aggressive where she had previously been disoriented and distressed.

SEE PAGE 22 COL 1

## Sampras, Vicario into Hall of Fame

AFP, Newport

Pete Sampras, winner of a record 14 Grand Slam singles titles, and Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario, a three-time French Open champion, have been elected to the International Tennis Hall of Fame.

Officials announced Wednesday that the American tennis icon and the Spanish superstar will be inducted to the honour shrine on July 14 along with Swede Sven Davidson and photographer Russ Adams.

Sampras will play in an exhibition match the following day before the finals of the grass-court ATP Hall of Fame Classic.

The 53-year-old tennis shrine has previously inducted 200 people from 18 nations. A 75 percent approval rate in voting by a media panel is required to be inducted.

Sampras was world number one for a record 286 weeks, including 102 in a row from April 15, 1996 to March 30, 1998. He was the year-end world number one and ATP Player of the Year for six years in a row starting in 1993.

The all-time ATP leader in career prize money with more than 43 million dollars, Sampras finished with a career record of 762-222 that included a 203-38 record in Grand Slam events.

SEE PAGE 22 COL 1

## Ortega treated for alcoholism

AFP, Buenos Aires

Former Argentina striker Ariel Ortega is taking a break from his club River Plate to receive treatment for alcoholism.

"I feel very bad and I'm no longer thinking of my game," the 32-year-old attacker, who skipped training for River Plate on Monday announced.

"Football has taken a back seat," he added.

"I want to calm down a little, to stay at home, to feel good."

Ortega arrived in Buenos Aires on Tuesday to undergo treatment.

Before joining his existing Argentine first division side Ortega had spells in Europe with Valencia in Spain, then Sampdoria and Parma in Serie A before his last port of call before returning home in 2003 at Fenerbache in Turkey.

## Parma land Rossi

INTERNET, undated

Parma have announced the imminent arrival of Manchester United starlet Giuseppe Rossi on loan.

"We were very interested in Nicola Ventola, but the transfer market is tough at the moment, so our director of sport Zamagna made a lightning trip to Manchester where we took back Rossi on loan," revealed lawyer Giuseppe Cappelli.

"If everything goes well, then he should be in Parma on Thursday and the transfer will come through in time for him to play against Torino this weekend."

It is a return to the Stadio Tardini for the 20-year-old Italian-American, as Rossi grew up in the Parma youth system.

He left for England in 2004 during the Gialloblu's financial crisis and made his debut for Manchester

SEE PAGE 22 COL 5

# Blake, Hewitt through



AFP, Melbourne

James Blake's winning streak stretched to seven matches as former finalist Lleyton Hewitt worked his way into the men's draw with another victory at the Australian Open Thursday.

Fifth seed Blake, who has a potential fourth round match with 2005 runner-up Hewitt, downed occasional practice partner Alex Kuznetsov 6-4, 6-1, 6-2 to face a last-32 encounter with American compatriot Robby Ginepri on Saturday.

Hewitt, the 19th seed, moved into the third round with a 6-4, 6-4, 3-6, 6-4 win over 88th-ranked Canadian Frank Dancevic.

It is the sixth time in 11 Australian Open campaigns 25-year-old Hewitt has reached the third round or better. The tournament was last won by a home player in 1976 when Mark Edmondson lifted the trophy.

Hewitt will now face either Chilean 10th seed Fernando Gonzalez in the next round.

Meanwhile, Britain's big hope

Andy Murray eased past Spain's Fernando Verdasco 7-6 (7/4), 7-5, 6-4 to set up a clash with Argentina's Juan Ignacio Chela, who humiliated him here last year.

Back then, Chela dumped Murray out in the first round in straight sets.

Blake had some problems with two early service breaks but it was all plain sailing after the opening set against Kuznetsov with the seed not dropping serve and breaking the American qualifier's serve a further four times.

It was his seventh consecutive match win after beating experienced Spaniard Carlos Moya twice in four days in last weekend's Sydney final and the opening round here.

He out his better form down to improvements in his game.

"Earlier on the Tour my backhand was a weakness. Guys could attack it. I don't think they can do that anymore," he said.

"I also think I'm able to defend better on the backhand and the forehand. That's made a big difference. Mentally I feel like I'm much stronger."

Hewitt, the former Wimbledon and US Open champion, has had limited preparation for the Grand Slam tourna-

ment with just two matches since last September's Davis Cup semi-final against Argentina.

But the five-set win over American qualifier Michael Russell and the four-setter over Dancevic has helped him get ready for facing the other seeds.

"First steps first. You try to get through the first week. Now a lot tougher players, the tougher opponents. This is when you have to stand up and be counted," Hewitt said.

"You can't win the tournament in the first couple of matches. You got to find ways to win," he said.

"When you're a little under-done, sometimes there are tougher matches to get through, and they're most important ones to get through."

Elsewhere, eighth seed David Nalbandian of Argentina had a 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 win over Ecuador's Nicolas Lapentti and will now play former semi-finalist and 28th seed Sebastien Grosjean of France who eliminated Belgian Olivier Rochus.

Defending champion Roger Federer plays Russia's Mikhail Youzhny in the third round on Friday, while Andy Roddick has a mouthwatering clash with Marat Safin.

# Capello eases on Beckham

AFP, Madrid



David Beckham may still play for Real Madrid after manager Fabio Capello softened his stance on the English galactico appearing for the Spanish giants before he leaves for California in June.

Capello had called time on Beckham's Real career at the weekend after the former England captain had signed his 250-million dollar contract with Major League Soccer club Los Angeles Galaxy.

But at a press conference on Wednesday the Italian said: "Beckham is a great professional and is still training with a lot of motivation. We can change our opinion."

He added: "We can't rule anything out. We'll have to see. The idea that we had is the one that you know about but one also has to be flexible from time to time."

Those comments were far removed from Capello's assertion last Saturday that: "He's not going to play anymore. He can train but not play. I think you can't play with

the same motivation if you have signed for another team."

Beckham, through his public relations representative Simon Oliveira, had expressed his shock at his coach's position.

"As far as David is aware, he has a contract for the remainder of the season and remains dedicated to the club and its supporters," Oliveira said.

Capello also insisted that out-of-favour Brazilian star Ronaldo remained a Real Madrid player despite reports that Italian side AC Milan have made an offer for the striker.

"Regarding Ronaldo, he's training despite a calf problem. He's a Real player. I see him with the Real Madrid jersey," said Capello.

Just as Capello was reopening the Bernabeu door for Beckham on Wednesday the club's president Ramon Calderon was holding a clear-the-air meeting with his players.

The tete-a-tete after training was called after Calderon's verbal onslaught at some of his team to law students on Tuesday and picked up by a Spanish radio journalist.

In particular he had suggested Beckham was heading off to the

United States to become a "second-rate actor" and that Guti, "at 31 was still a junior" and that in general his team wasn't especially civilised.

He later apologised "a thousand times" for his indiscreet observations on Real Madrid TV.

In a statement Wednesday the club said there was a "mood of complete sincerity and confidence" after the meeting.

It added: "Those players who wanted to gave their reaction to the president's opinion."

And a trio of Real captains -- Raul, Guti and Roberto Carlos, are scheduled to talk about the row at a press conference on Friday.

Calderon's criticism follows that last week of sporting director Pedja Mijatovic who intimated that players were turning up to training smelling of alcohol.

This was later strongly denied by Real keeper Iker Casillas.

Beckham, Ronaldo and Antonio Cassano were however noticeable by their absence from Capello's side to face Real Betis in the Spanish Cup on Thursday.

The trio have been omitted due to a "tactical decision," the club announced on its website.



PHOTO: AFP

Sevilla midfielder Antonio Puerta (L) hurdles the challenge of Rayo Vallecano goalkeeper Alberto during their King's Cup match at the Sanchez Pizjuan Stadium in Sevilla on Wednesday.

# Keane the Cardiff wrecker

AFP, London



Cardiff on Wednesday.

Keane was making his first start for six weeks after recovering from a knee injury and the Republic of Ireland striker made up for lost time as he scored Tottenham's second goal in their third round replay victory at White Hart Lane.

Martin Jol's side have struggled in recent weeks but fit-again Keane, captain in Ledley King's absence, gave them a much-needed spark as his strike and goals from Aaron Lennon, Steed

Malbranque and Jermain Defoe set up a home tie with Southend in the next round.

Tottenham had been forced to dig deep to escape with a goalless draw against their Championship opponents at Ninian Park earlier this month but they were always in complete control here and a first win in five matches was never in doubt.

Malbranque and Keane combined well in midfield to send Dimitar Berbatov through on goal, but the Bulgarian striker scuffed his shot wide of a post from the edge of the area.

Malbranque should have given Tottenham the lead after 24 minutes when Keane picked him out just 10 yards from goal, but the French midfielder's strike was too close to Cardiff keeper Neil Alexander, who saved well before the visitors cleared the danger.

Tottenham have been imperious in cup competitions this season,

winning nine of their ten matches in the FA, League and UEFA Cups before this match, and the goal their dominance deserved arrived after 27 minutes.

Didier Zokora slid a pass through from midfield and the ball skimmed towards Keane, who cleverly dummied to Lennon, and the winger kept his composure to easily beat Alexander at the near post.

Cardiff had no answer to Tottenham's superior passing and movement and the visitors' defence was sliced open again in the 30th minute.

Berbatov made Glenn Loovens look leaden-footed as he twisted past the Cardiff centre-back on the right side of the penalty area before crossing to Keane, who lifted his shot into the empty net from close range.

Cardiff visibly wilted with that blow and Tottenham, scenting the chance to put the result beyond

SEE PAGE 22 COL 5