PHOTO: AFP

Russian youngster Anna Chakvetadze takes time out for a light soccer practice with a local footballer in Melbourne on Tuesday. Chakvetadze will play top seed Maria Sharapova in the quarterfinals on Wednesday.

Baros, Carew in swap deal

Football

AFP, *Lyon*

Czech international forward Milan Baros left Aston Villa for Lyon on Monday with giant Norwegian forward John Carew heading in the other direction, the French champions said.

Baros signed a three-and-a-half year deal and could now come into the reckoning for Lyon's clash with Bordeaux on Wednesday.

The 25-year-old had already been approached by Lyon 18 months ago but opted to join Villa from Liverpool instead.

However, he rejoins former manager Gerard Houllier, who signed him from Banik Ostrava in 2002 during his Liverpool reign.

"Eighteen months ago I never thought I had made a bad decision," said Baros. "I weighed up Lyon's offer. This is a different opportunity and I will try to bring everything that I can."

Houllier was pleased to finally land his man, a year and a half after claiming he would never give a player a second chance to turn him down.

"He wanted to join us and I wanted to improve our attack," said the Frenchman.

"He is a good player and should do well for Lyon. He's a hard worker. He will link up well with the squad and will give us something extra that we don't have at present."

Houllier also vowed to use Baros more than he had done Carew, while also moving to assure young forward Karim Benzema that this signing did not single the end of his first team opportunities.

Lyon president Jean-Michel Aulas hailed a prestigious signing.

"He's one of the European strikers who has made the best impression on us over the last few years," said Aulas.

Carew has yet to sign his deal with the English Premiership side but is expected to do so shortly.

Meanwhile, Lyon are tracking Rangers centre-back Jeremy Clement, who is also interesting his former boss at the Glasgow giants, Paul Le Guen, now in charge of Paris St Germain.

"I really hope he comes to Lyon and I don't think it would be a good thing for him to go to Paris," said Houllier.

Clement started his career at Lyon but made little impression on the first team and joined Rangers last close season in a 1.5 million euro deal. He was reportedly meeting with Le Guen on Monday.

Aulas admitted it may be hard to match PSG's offer for the player.

"We have to come to an agreement with his club given that PSG have made a very good offer," said Aulas.

"I don't know if we can match it but we have to be sure the player wants to come here.

"We have made an offer to Rangers but we also have other avenues to explore.

"Gerard Houllier's priority is Jeremy Clement, if it's not too late, but playing at Lyon on the four fronts (the league, Cup, League Cup and Champions League) that we are still involved in is also a challenge that may interest him."

Blanco loaned to West Ham

AFP, *Madrid*

Spanish joint league leaders Sevilla said Monday they have loaned out Spanish under-21 international striker Kepa Blanco to English Premiership side West Ham until the end of the season, according to the Spanish club.

Blanco, 23, has been unable to hold down a place in the Seville side this season after six goals in 26 games last season.

A statement on the club's website said that "Kepa will play for the rest of the season at the English team West Ham".

The Londoners will have the option to buy him at the end of June, when he will be out of contract.

New statutes for Italian federation

AFP, *Rome*

The Italian Football Federation (FIGC) has adopted new statutes following an extraordinary general meeting on Monday.

The new statutes will bring the FIGC's regulations in line with new sporting rules implemented by the country's courts in the wake of the match-fixing scandal that engulfed Italian football last year.

The new statutes are aimed at giving the federation more administrative autonomy while reforming its judicial system.

"It's an important change in direction: we are turning the page following one of the most tortuous periods of Italian football," said FIGC emergency commissioner Luca Pancalli, according to Italian press agency Ansa.

"The most important thing is that we all have the desire to change, that's a great base from which to begin ... the aim is to send out a strong message: the football world wants to change."

The FIGC's emergency administration, put in place after the mass resignations of the previous board following the match-fixing scandal, will meet at the end of February to elect a new president.

Interim head Pancalli will not stand.

Nowotny calls it quits

AFP, *Berlin*

Former German international centre-back Jens Nowotny told the German press on Monday that he is ending his career due to a serious knee injury.

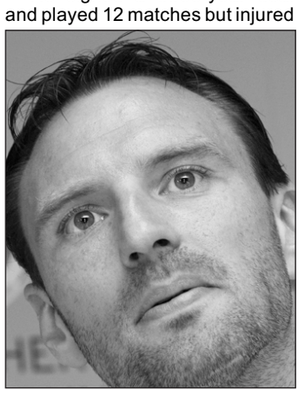
The 33-year-old quit his Croatian team Dinamo Zagreb earlier this month because of the knee problem.

"This latest injury was the final straw," Nowotny told Kicker magazine. "Of course on a physical level I have suffered worse injuries, but the thought of spending another extended period on the sidelines, another recovery and another return to training, that's too much."

The former Bayer Leverkusen captain played in the German team that finished third at last year's World Cup.

Nowotny spent 10 years at Leverkusen, where he arrived from Karlsruhe, before joining Dinamo after the World Cup.

He signed a three-year deal and played 12 matches but injured his knee in August.



JENS NOWOTNY

He went under the surgeon's knife in Zagreb but that failed to cure the problem. He had another operation in Germany but in mid January he and the club agreed to part their ways.

Nowotny played 334 games in the German Bundesliga, scoring 11 goals, and played 48 times for the national side, scoring once.

Nowotny was a last minute call-up to Jurgen Klinsmann's World Cup squad last year, having missed the 2002 version through injury.

He suffered that during the Champions League semi-final second leg against Manchester United that year and missed the end of Leverkusen's 'nightmare' 2002 season in which they finished runners up in the league, Cup and Champions League.

Victory delights Cesc

AFP, *London*

Cesc Fabregas believes Arsenal's season has been saved by a crisis meeting that followed the lowest point of their campaign.

The teenage midfielder revealed Arsenal's players held clear-the-air talks immediately after their 1-0 defeat at Sheffield United on December 30 in an attempt to resolve the team's problems.

That result looked to have ended Arsenal's title hopes and raised questions about their ability to grind out results consistently enough to challenge for major honours.

But the frank discussion in the Bramall Lane changing rooms ended with the Gunners determined to be more ruthless in close matches and Fabregas, 19, is convinced the showdown was significant in the team's development.

Since that dismal defeat Arsenal have gone on a five-match winning run that has revitalised their season.

Arsene Wenger's side have scored 17 goals in those five wins, which have included knocking Liverpool out of the FA and League Cups at Anfield and culminated in Sunday's dramatic 2-1 victory against Manchester United that breathed new life into the English Premiership title race.

Fabregas said: "After the Sheffield United game we had a talk in the dressing room and said something had to change in our mentality and we need to be stronger in every part of the game.

"We lost 1-0 that day and there were a lot of things to improve and think about and that is what we did," the Spain international added.

"Since then we have been showing everyone we have changed and nobody can stop us if we carry on playing the way we do.

"And if you win these games it gives you confidence. The team believes we can do a lot of things together and tonight it was one of them."

Despite their late heroics at the Emirates Stadium against United, Arsenal are still 12 points behind the leaders and, although he refuses to write off his side's title hopes, Fabregas admitted he was frustrated to be so far from first place.

"It is a bit annoying to beat Tottenham, Liverpool three times, Manchester United two times and draw at Chelsea and then look at the table and see they are far away. It is difficult to take.

"If we had drawn or lost against United then we could say goodbye to the Premiership. Now there is still a small chance. Until someone says to me it is over I will believe we can do it.

"We have to win something because we are Arsenal and our obligation and our target every year is to win something. The results were very positive for us because Chelsea lost, Portsmouth lost, Bolton lost, Man United lost.

"We are there. Even if we don't think about that right now, there is still a chance.

"United have been playing amazing but they still have to go to difficult places."

It was Thierry Henry's injury-time winner just minutes after Robin van Persie had cancelled out Wayne Rooney's goal that gave Arsenal renewed hope they might be able to have a say in the title race.

Fabregas is full of admiration for France striker Henry and he said: "He is unbelievable. He has always been at the top.

"He never scores less than 24 goals a season and that tells you a lot about him because he is an important player for us because of his experience.

"He scored the second last week at Blackburn which made us more relaxed and here with two minutes to go he scored again.

"It was a great cross from Emmanuel Eboue but you still have to put it into the net. That is why he is the best."

Brazil recall Adriano

INTERNET, *undated*

Brazil Coach Carlos Dunga has included in-form Inter ace Adriano in his squad for the upcoming friendly with Portugal.

The striker did have a difficult start to the season, but finally ended his nine-month goal drought against Atalanta just before Christmas.

Since then, the former Parma and Fiorentina forward has rediscovered his best form and has rippled the net on a further three occasions.

"He had some problems but he is finally back on track and I am sure this call-up will motivate him even more," explained Dunga, whose side will face Portugal on February 6 in London at the Emirates Stadium.

"In Brazil's national team there are no reserves, every single player must earn his spot in the squad," added the former Selecao captain, who also included Inter men Julio Cesar and Maicon, as well as Milan star Kaka.

The 22-strong squad to play Portugal in a friendly in London on February 6:

Goalkeepers: Helton (Porto/POR), Julio Cesar (Inter/ITA)

Defenders: Adriano Correia (Sevilla/ESP), Maicon (Inter/ITA), Gilberto (Hertha Berlin/GER), Daniel Alves (Sevilla/ESP), Alex (PSV Eindhoven/NED), Juan (Bayer Leverkusen/GER), Lucio (Bayern Munich/GER), Luizao (Benfica/POR)

Midfielders: Dudu Cearense (CSKA Moscow/RUS), Edmilson (Barcelona/ESP), Tinga (Borussia Dortmund/GER), Elano (Shakhtar Donetsk/UKR), Gilberto Silva (Arsenal/ENG), Kaka (AC Milan/ITA) Diego (Werder Bremen/GER)

Forwards: Robinho (Real Madrid/ESP), Rafael Sobis (Real Betis/ESP), Ronaldinho (Barcelona/ESP), Adriano (Inter/ITA), Fred (Lyon/FRA)

RvN reiterates Basten rejection

AFP, *The Hague*

Real Madrid striker Ruud van Nistelrooy has said he does not want to play for Holland again under coach Marco van Basten.

The 30-year-old former Manchester United front man, who has appeared 54 times for his country, said he did not have sufficient confidence in the team's backroom staff to play for his country again.

"Van the Man" has not been picked for his country since the 2006 World Cup where he scored one goal.

Van Basten said on the Dutch football federation website that he had explained to van Nistelrooy in Madrid on Friday that he could not be guaranteed a place in the starting line-up because of all the good strikers at his disposal.

Midfielder Mark van Bommel of Bayern Munich has also refused to play for Holland over the last few months because of his poor relationship with van Basten.

Larsson shrugs off setback

AFP, *London*

Manchester United striker Henrik Larsson has warned Chelsea that his side will not let the agonising defeat at Arsenal ruin their English Premiership title challenge.

United were just seven minutes away from opening up a nine-point lead on second-placed Chelsea when they led 1-0 against the Gunners on Sunday.

But Sir Alex Ferguson's league leaders were unable to hold on as Robin van Persie equalised for Arsenal before Thierry Henry headed the winner three minutes into injury-time.

Henry's goal gave reigning champions Chelsea renewed hope of overhauling United's six-point advantage, but Sweden striker Larsson is adamant his team have the character to cope with the setback.

"That is the way it is in football," Larsson said. "We controlled the game but they scored two goals, it just shows what can happen.

"It is still a six-point gap so nothing really changed. I don't know if they will be smiling at Stamford Bridge.

"I don't think too much about them. We only concentrate on ourselves. This is a quality squad, a quality side."

Former Barcelona and Celtic forward Larsson, 35, is on a three-month loan at United from Swedish club Helsingborgs but he played down suggestions he may extend his stay until the end of the season and insisted "nothing has changed".

Platini, Johansson face-off

Football

AFP, *Paris*

Michel Platini comes up against Lennart Johansson for the presidency of European football's governing body UEFA on Friday as Germany plays host once again to a major event, hot on the heels of the World Cup.

The experience of 77-year-old Johansson, who has been president since 1990, is on the line against 51-year-old former French midfield maestro Platini, who is the choice of change, at the vote in Dusseldorf.

Encumbent president Johansson has been pitched as the candidate of "stability" and "continuity," whose experience helped develop the European Champions League and its ensuing financial windfall.

Since the 1992/93 season, the prestigious club competition has generated more than five billion euros with 635 million euros going into the coffers of national federations and leagues.

Platini's manifesto has a different emphasis. He said the "small" nations -- UEFA has 52 members -- would also have his ear and that he would give "primary emphasis to the game," prioritising the good of all over finance.

The presidential campaigning has been eventful. Platini was the first to reveal his hand, throwing his hat into the ring on March 15 2005. At that time, a mouth-watering duel with another glamorous former player Franz Beckenbauer had been expected. Johansson announced in January 2006 that he had decided to retire but several days after the end of last summer's World Cup, he unexpectedly announced he would be a candidate once more and Beckenbauer pulled out of the race.

Platini pledged to "reinforce and strengthen the ties between national federations and the members" of UEFA, while his opponent vowed to preserve what had been achieved during his tenure. The first non-official polls of the summer indicated a big victory for Johansson.

A new twist emerged on January 2 when the president of the German football federation Theo Zwanziger put his support behind Johansson.

It was more backing from a major federation for the Swede, who already had the support of four UEFA vice-presidents in Senes Erzik of Turkey, Norway's Per Ravn Omdal, Angel Maria Villar Llona of Spain, England's Geoffrey Thompson, plus treasurer Mathieu Sprengers of the Netherlands.

The small nations all have a vote, however, meaning that the support of Armenia has as much weight as Germany, contrary to what many think.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter helped Platini on January 12 in Paris while visiting the new offices of the French football federation, along with 42 member federations of UEFA, stating his "sympathy" lay with the Frenchman.

Observers in the know predict a close race in Dusseldorf with, as usual in elections, undecided voters having the power to decide the contest. "People might say one thing and do the opposite," Johansson said recently.

It was revealed on Monday that should three rounds of voting not bring a winner, the vote would be decided by lottery. Each member state has a vote and an absolute majority is required (at least half of the votes plus one) to elect the new president.

Several days from the vote, Platini seemed relaxed, saying: "Everyone now knows what I stand for whether I win or lose. If I win, it's a show of support, if I lose it's my last will and testament in footballing terms."

CARLING CUP

Spurs up against history

Football

AFP, *London*

As if trying cope with a resurgent Arsenal wasn't hard enough, Tottenham will also have to defy history if they are to reach a cup final for the first time in five years.

Martin Jol's side clash with their north London rivals in the first leg of the League Cup semifinal on Wednesday knowing they face an uphill struggle to reach the final.

Arsenal will make the short journey to White Hart Lane buoyed by a dramatic victory against Manchester United on Sunday that extending their winning run to five matches.

In contrast, Tottenham, with just one win in six matches, needed a late goal to salvage a draw against 10-man Fulham.

As if that wasn't disheartening enough for Tottenham, they also have to cope with the psychological scar of failing to win any of their last 15 meetings against their old enemies.

It is not the first time these feuding neighbours have met in a semifinal and Arsenal will take heart from their recurring habit of getting one over on Spurs when the stakes are highest.

The Gunners have triumphed against Spurs in the last four of the League Cup in 1968 and 1987, as well as the FA Cup in 1993 and 2001. Tottenham's solitary semifinal success was a Paul Gascoigne-inspired 1991 FA Cup victory.

While the history books point to a win for the red half of north London, Tottenham can at least draw comfort from their superb record in cup competitions this season.

They are unbeaten in the FA, League and UEFA Cups, winning 10 of their 11 matches.

Jol is adamant his side can get revenge for their 3-0 Premiership drubbing at Arsenal in December and take a step closer to their first major trophy since they beat Leicester in the 1999 League Cup final.

"Arsenal probably had their worst home game ever but we still couldn't give them a good game," Jol said.

"I didn't say it after the match but one goal wasn't a penalty and their third was a handball. I think we were unfortunate but I couldn't say anything because we didn't play well so hopefully we can put that straight now."

However, Jol will be without Teemu Tainio after the Finnish midfielder suffered an ankle injury at Fulham.

Robin van Persie will be absent for Arsenal after the Dutch striker broke a bone in his foot while scoring his side's equaliser on Sunday.

The metatarsal injury is likely to keep van Persie out of action for at least two months, leaving Thierry Henry and Emmanuel Adebayor to shoulder the burden of leading the Gunners' attack.

Fortunately for manager Arsene Wenger both have proved adept at tormenting Tottenham.

Adebayor netted the first goal and produced a man-of-the-match display in that 3-0 win last month, while Henry has scored five times against Spurs during his time in England.

Arsenal captain Henry, who scored the winner against United, believes he is finally close to his peak form after an inconsistent start to the campaign partly caused by his involvement in France's run to the World Cup final.

"I am getting there," he said. Ten days of training at the start of the season to prepare is not enough.

"So what did I do with the staff and the fitness coach while I was out? I did a pre-season. I am starting to feel better and better now.

"I have played 15 games and scored nine goals. I was getting hammered by the critics. But that is not a bad ratio. When you don't do what you usually do, you get hammered. That is just the way it is.

"I just want to be fresh and help my team."

PHOTO: AFP

Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson tastes Hungarian brandy in a Budapest restaurant on Monday. Ferguson arrived at the Hungarian capital to attend a conference of coaches called by Hungarian Soccer Alliance.

CROSSWORD *By Eugene Sheffer*

ACROSS

1 Carrot *companion?*
4 Hardly lively
9 Attempt
12 Kid at Halloween, maybe
13 Foolish
14 Coloration
15 Aggressive warrior
17 18-wheeler
18 That guy
19 Causing distress
21 Fabled site of "Seven Cities"
24 Sweater material
25 Perp. to vert.
26 Sprite
28 DuPont creation
31 "How sweet —!"
33 Dimwit
35 Verdi opera
36 Less ruddy
38 They're between las and dos
40 30-Down in French
41 Dregs
43 One who leaves homeland
45 Influenza
47 Communications instr.
48 Meadow
49 Pat Boone song
54 Landers or Sothern
55 Superman comparison
56 Trigger's passenger
57 Pesticide letters
58 Ragwort plant
59 Ram's mate

DOWN

1 Fairy-tale home builder
2 Ostrich's cousin
3 Mimic
4 Manly
5 1-, 2- and 3-Down, e.g.
6 Crony
7 Post-wedding relative
8 Church officer
9 Exhilarating
10 Destroy
11 Safe-cracker
16 Greek P
20 Georgetown athlete
21 Poker coin
22 Tittle
23 Genius-level
27 Obese
29 Stench
30 Appellation
32 Leak out slowly
34 Acts inspired by devoutness
37 Meal
39 Having 29-Down
42 Dividing membranes
44 Under the weather
45 Pleased
46 Tear in bits
50 Stimpy's cartoon companion
51 Raw rock
52 Take an oath
53 Storm center

Solution time: 24 mins.

V	I	M		A	C	T	S		B	Y	E	S
E	R	A		T	O	A	T		R	O	D	E
R	A	G		H	U	L	A		A	L	G	A
A	N	I	M	A	L	C	R	A	C	K	E	R
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V	E	G	E	T	A	B	L	E	S	O	U	P
I	D	O	L		I	R	O	N		S	P	A
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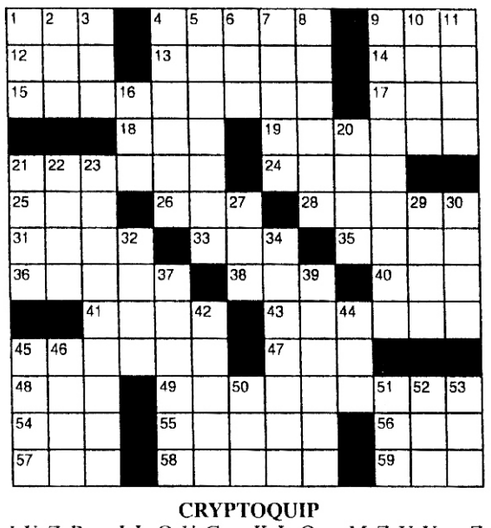

CRYPTOQUIP

J Y Z B J L O V C K L O M Z V V Z Q N O G N B E Z R R I C D G Q D C I K L O E M Z E B D E I ? D ' C Q Z K Y I ' Q Z J Y I I V Q B D G N I E !

Saturday's Cryptoquip: WHEN SOMEONE IS COMMANDED TO CHANGE A WORKOUT REGIMEN, I RECKON THAT'S A RETRAINING ORDER.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals Y