



Former Austria international Andreas Herzog plays keepy-uppy with the ball during a photoshoot after he was appointed as ambassador for Euro 2008 on Wednesday.

Adriano boost for Inter

Football

REUTERS, Rome

The return to form of Inter Milan striker Adriano will have boosted the holders' confidence ahead of Wednesday's trip to Sampdoria for the first leg of their Italian Cup semi-final (kickoff 2000 GMT).

The game is the first of two in five days between the teams. Inter return to Genoa again on Sunday in an attempt to extend their run of 13 Serie A wins in a row.

Adriano, who was criticised in the Italian media for being out of

shape and overweight after failing to score in his first 13 matches for the club, has hit the target in each of his last four games.

The Brazilian gave his best performance yet for the Serie A leaders last weekend, setting up one goal and scoring another in a 3-1 win over Fiorentina.

That display prompted Brazil coach Dunga to recall him for the friendly with Portugal in London on Feb. 6 and earned praise from Inter coach Roberto Mancini.

"In the last month he has started to train seriously again. Now he just has to continue the good work," Mancini was quoted as saying in La Gazzetta dello Sport.

"He had arrived at a critical point in his career, and he understood just in time that it was time to turn a page.

"The merit for his return to form is all his and his team mates, who have always encouraged and put their faith in him."

Adriano is expected to start against Sampdoria but even if he does not, Inter can still call on Argentine internationals Hernan Crespo and Julio Cruz, who has recovered from a knee injury.

Sampdoria held Inter to a 1-1 draw at the San Siro stadium in September and Mancini was not expecting an easy match.

"Sampdoria are among the few

teams to have stopped us in Serie A this season. I'm expecting a very difficult tie," he said.

In the other semi-final tie, AC Milan host AS Roma on Thursday.

The game will be a chance for Milan to show off their latest signing -- Italy defender Massimo Oddo, who was joined for 7.75 millions euros (\$10.09 million) from Lazio on Tuesday.

Roma, beaten by Inter in the last two Cup finals, are expected to field a strong side, with midfielders Daniele De Rossi and David Pizarro returning to the starting line-up after missing Sunday's 1-1 draw at Livorno due to suspension.

Van Persie out for six weeks

AFP, London

Arsenal striker Robin van Persie was ruled out Tuesday for at least six weeks with a broken foot after coming on as a substitute last weekend and scoring the equaliser in the Gunners' come-from-behind 2-1 Premiership win against leaders Manchester United.

The Dutch forward sustained a fractured metatarsal bone at the Emirates Stadium on Sunday and now looks set to miss a significant part of the season as Arsenal chase down the top three of United, champions Chelsea and Liverpool.

"We have lost Robin van Persie for a while, how long I do not really know," said Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger.

"It will be six weeks at least if not more. It is big blow, but we have to take it. Robin has been on fire he has had a great season until now," the Frenchman added of Arsenal's leading scorer this term.

"What is terrible for me is that I did not want to use him at all (against Manchester United)," Wenger also told Arsenal TV on Tuesday.

"We were 1-0 behind and I decided to put him on -- but he got injured and you can never predict that."

Seedorf extends Milan contract

INTERNET, undated

Milan have announced that Clarence Seedorf has extended his contract until June 30, 2011.

The Dutchman has put pen to paper on a deal that will keep him at the San Siro for another four years.

By the time the new agreement expires, he will already have turned 35 years of age and been at the club for nine seasons.

Seedorf joined the Rossoneri from archrivals Inter in 2002, having previously worn the jerseys of Ajax, Sampdoria and Real Madrid.

The Netherlands international made history as the first player to win the Champions League for three different clubs and with Milan has also celebrated a Scudetto, European Super Cup, Coppa Italia and Italian Super Cup.

Del Piero had United option

INTERNET, undated

Alessandro Del Piero has admitted that he rejected an offer from Manchester United after Juventus' demotion to Serie B.

The captain was one of the first to confirm he would stay with the club following the Calciopoli scandal, but the decision to stay in Turin did see him turn down an Old Trafford move.

"It's true, in August I refused an offer from Manchester United," said Del Piero in an interview with the Sun newspaper.

"I was very disappointed about Juventus and I was seriously considering the idea of leaving," continued the World Cup winner.

"However, I have been a Bianconero for 13 years and I want to end my career here. I am sure Sir Alex Ferguson understood the reasons behind my refusal," ended the striker.

Pinturicchio had already stated in the past that he was tempted by an adventure in the Premiership and was ready to leave Juve in the summer -- probably given the presence of then boss Fabio Capello.

"There was a situation that was leading me far from Turin, but I would have never stayed in Italy," he had declared.

"I could have never even imagined of playing for an Italian club different from Juventus. Then the conditions changed and I am glad I decided to stay."

Man of Peace!

INTERNET, undated

He may have been vilified after the World Cup, but Marco Materazzi received a prize from the World Organisation for Peace.

The Inter and Italy defender, famously head-butted by Zinedine Zidane in the Berlin Final on July 9, was given a two-match ban by FIFA for "provocation."

However, the hard man is appreciated for another side to his character, as the WOPF presented Materazzi with the 'Football and Peace in the World' prize.

The centre-back was chosen as a "man of peace" and a "symbol" of the World Cup winning squad.

The award consists of a book containing messages of peace from the Presidents of the various football federations of the globe.

Materazzi was also named as an ambassador for the World Organisation for Peace, invested with the title by President Carlos Peralta at Inter's Appiano Gentile training ground.

They hope to organise a tournament of peace between teams from nations that are currently in war, with Italy chosen as the hosts.

Mourinho feeling at home

AFP, London



Jose Mourinho has hinted he will stay at Chelsea after making his peace with

striker Andriy Shevchenko. The English champions' Portuguese manager also said his desire to stay put had persuaded captain John Terry to sign a new Chelsea contract.

Shevchenko was back in Mourinho's good books after his double strike against Wycombe clinched a place in next month's all-London club League Cup final against either Tottenham or Arsenal.

The Ukrainian had been frozen out by Mourinho after failing to live up to his 30 million pounds price tag.

But he went some way to redeeming himself as he celebrated his recall with two clinical finishes and an assist for the first of Frank Lampard's two goals in the 4-0 semifinal second leg victory here Tuesday.

Shevchenko's two-goal salvo clinched a 5-1 aggregate win and led to a glowing tribute from Mourinho.

The Blues boss insisted he had never fallen out with Shevchenko and admitted the forward was finally beginning to adapt to Chelsea's style of play.

"Sometimes you need to kiss a player and sometimes you kick them. It is what I do with every player. It doesn't matter if you cost 30 million pounds or 300,000 pounds," Mourinho told reporters after Tuesday's victory.

"Sheva needed some time to adapt but if he can do what he did today with his sharpness and movement then he is arriving at where we want him to be.

"One of the principles of my work is the players that work more and perform better game after game will be in the team."

"I'm very happy Sheva got the message. If somebody thought I did not play him because of a personal situation then he is a very silly sod.

"At this moment he has won the right to play on Sunday. If he has the same performance then he will play again on Wednesday. It is as simple as that.

"It is a process. You cannot open a player's head and put the philosophy inside.

"He has come from seven years at another club (Italy's AC Milan), so when he comes to a different club with players who know what makes me happy it is not easy."

Shevchenko added: "I'm very happy to get to the final. It is very important. I've had unbelievable support from the team and fans."

Mourinho's long-running dispute with Chelsea's Russian billionaire owner Roman Abramovich over the west London club's failure to sanction the signing of new players during the January transfer window had fuelled speculation that the former Porto manager would be lured away by either Real Madrid or AC Milan.

But he indicated he had persuaded England skipper Terry to sign a new contract worth 150,000 pounds per week by assuring the centre-half he plans to be at Chelsea next season.

Mourinho said: "He asked me if I was staying and my answer was I think so. "JT has told me it is very difficult to play for another manager and he would like to play with me until the end of his career. It is because he accepts my philosophy and he is comfortable with it."

Totti handed one-match ban

INTERNET, undated

Roma's Francesco Totti will be available for the Scudetto showdown with Inter after he was handed just a one-match ban.

The Giallorossi captain saw red in Sunday's match with Livorno after reacting to an elbow by Fabio Galante.

Er Pupunone was subsequently sent off by referee Nicola Ayroldi, before losing his cool by pushing over his personal trainer Vito Scala while leaving the field of play.

The incident did lead to suggestions that Totti could be punished with more than the mandatory one-game suspension.

However, the disciplinary commission have opted for just a 90-minute stop which means he'll miss the Siena game at the weekend.

Totti should therefore be available for the February 4 tie at the San Siro when Roma will attempt to cut the gap between themselves and the Nerazzurri.

Totti also received a 7,000-pound fine and may also be financially punished by his club as suggested by director general Rosella Sensi on Monday.

Meanwhile, Catania will be without top scorer Gionatha Spinesi for three matches for diving and verbally abusing the referee at the end of the game against Cagliari.

Higuain prefers Argentina

REUTERS, Paris

Teenage striker Gonzalo Higuain, the French-born son of Argentine parents, was quoted as saying on Wednesday he would rather play for Argentina.

"It's a choice from my heart," the 19-year-old Higuain, who joined Real Madrid from River Plate in a six-and-a-half year deal last month, told French sports daily L'Equipe.

"All my friends, my family and my football are from over there. I couldn't imagine myself taking another decision."

Higuain is a French national but does not speak French.

France coach Raymond Domenech surprisingly included Higuain in his squad for a friendly against Greece in November but the player turned down the call-up.

L'Equipe said Higuain had now started legal procedures to become a full Argentine national.

Higuain's father Jorge played professional football in France for Brest where Gonzalo was born in 1987. He was only 10 months old when he moved to Argentina with his family and he lived there until moving to Spain.

Football

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich have threatened to prevent its players turning out for the German national team following a row over sponsorship.

The Bavarian giants have been alarmed by reports that US sports-wear company Nike are pulling out all the stops to replace home favourites Adidas as the leading sponsors of the German team.

Adidas are shareholders in Bayern and for club players to wear Nike on their shirts would be seen as a betrayal.

Cavenaghi joins Bordeaux

REUTERS, Tel Aviv



Moscow on a four-and-a-half year contract, the Russian premier league club has announced.

The 23-year-old, the Russian League's most expensive signing when he joined Spartak from River Plate for a 11.5-million-dollar fee in July 2004, never fully settled at the Moscow club.

Cavenaghi scored just nine goals in all competitions for

Spartak in 2006 after hitting seven the previous year.

He scored 55 goals in 88 league matches for River Plate, helping them win three "clausura" championships in 2002, 2003 and 2004.

Although the terms of the Bordeaux deal were kept confidential, Russian media estimated the deal at around 13 million dollars.

Spartak coach Vladimir Fedotov said the move to France should help Cavenaghi.

"He (Cavenaghi) is a very good player and I'm happy for him that he will get a chance to re-start his career," Fedotov told Reuters at the opening of a six-team invitational tournament in Israel sponsored by Chelsea's billionaire

owner Roman Abramovich.

"He just needs to find a club that suits his style of play. He wasn't able to do it in Russia but it was not totally his fault. We have to share the blame as well, so I'm sure he would start scoring goals again, but for Bordeaux."

Fedotov said Spartak would buy another striker before the transfer window is closed.

"No doubt, we're looking for a top striker and I'm certain we'll get one soon," he said.

Top clubs from Russia, Ukraine and Israel -- Spartak, CSKA Moscow, Dynamo Kiev, Shakhtar Donetsk, Maccabi Haifa and Hapoel Tel Aviv, will compete for 6 million dollars in prize money over the next 10 days.



Argentine sensation Fernando Cavenaghi (C) poses with new coach Ricardo (L) and president Jean-Louis Triaud (R) during a press conference after putting pen to paper for Bordeaux in a move from Spartak Moscow on Tuesday.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Wax figures of David Beckham (L) and wife Victoria stand draped in the American flag at Madame Tussauds New York on Tuesday. The figures, imported from Madame Tussauds London, will be in New York for two weeks in honour of the couple's upcoming move to the United States where Beckham has signed a five-year contract with Major League side Los Angeles Galaxy.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS										DOWN																																																											
1	Acknowledge	37	Miss America's topper	2	By way of	23	Basin accessory	3	Rowing tool	4	Decline	5	Enthusiastic, plus	6	"I" strain	7	Billings resident	8	Pretentious	9	Portent	10	Medley component	11	Terrier variety	12	Change	13	Individual	14	Two rites making a wrong?	15	Drag along	16	Shorten, maybe	17	Neck hair	18	Chomp	19	Week units	20	Before	21	Long way	22	"L" Miss Brooks'	23	Actor Beatty																				
5	Jewel	38	Undeveloped state	4	Decline	5	Enthusiastic, plus	6	"I" strain	7	Billings resident	8	Pretentious	9	Portent	10	Medley component	11	Terrier variety	12	Change	13	Individual	14	Two rites making a wrong?	15	Drag along	16	Shorten, maybe	17	Neck hair	18	Chomp	19	Week units	20	Before	21	Long way	22	"L" Miss Brooks'	23	Actor Beatty																										
8	Privation	41	Pooch	42	Speaker's spot	6	"I" strain	7	Billings resident	8	Pretentious	9	Portent	10	Medley component	11	Terrier variety	12	Change	13	Individual	14	Two rites making a wrong?	15	Drag along	16	Shorten, maybe	17	Neck hair	18	Chomp	19	Week units	20	Before	21	Long way	22	"L" Miss Brooks'	23	Actor Beatty																												
12	Arrivederci	43	Serving cart	44	Take a shot at	50	Grimace	51	Adolescent	52	"Undenially"	53	Play area	54	Chopped	55	Large brass container?	30	Exist	31	"CSI" setting	32	Eggs	33	Moliere's miser	34	Tourney situations	35	Work units	36	Work units	37	Miss America's topper	38	Undeveloped state	39	Pooch	40	Speaker's spot	41	Pooch	42	Speaker's spot	43	Serving cart	44	Take a shot at	45	Adolescent	46	"Undenially"	47	Play area	48	Busy with	49	Take a shot at	50	Grimace	51	Adolescent	52	"Undenially"	53	Play area	54	Chopped	55	Large brass container?
13	Past	42	Speaker's spot	44	Take a shot at	50	Grimace	51	Adolescent	52	"Undenially"	53	Play area	54	Chopped	55	Large brass container?	30	Exist	31	"CSI" setting	32	Eggs	33	Moliere's miser	34	Tourney situations	35	Work units	36	Work units	37	Miss America's topper	38	Undeveloped state	39	Pooch	40	Speaker's spot	41	Pooch	42	Speaker's spot	43	Serving cart	44	Take a shot at	45	Adolescent	46	"Undenially"	47	Play area	48	Busy with	49	Take a shot at	50	Grimace	51	Adolescent	52	"Undenially"	53	Play area	54	Chopped	55	Large brass container?
14	Uncontrollable	43	Serving cart	44	Take a shot at	50	Grimace	51	Adolescent	52	"Undenially"	53	Play area	54	Chopped	55	Large brass container?	30	Exist	31	"CSI" setting	32	Eggs	33	Moliere's miser	34	Tourney situations	35	Work units	36	Work units	37	Miss America's topper	38	Undeveloped state	39	Pooch	40	Speaker's spot	41	Pooch	42	Speaker's spot	43	Serving cart	44	Take a shot at	45	Adolescent	46	"Undenially"	47	Play area	48	Busy with	49	Take a shot at	50	Grimace	51	Adolescent	52	"Undenially"	53	Play area	54	Chopped	55	Large brass container?
15	Bearnaise ingredient	48	Busy with	49	Take a shot at	50	Grimace	51	Adolescent	52	"Undenially"	53	Play area	54	Chopped	55	Large brass container?	30	Exist	31	"CSI" setting	32	Eggs	33	Moliere's miser	34	Tourney situations	35	Work units	36	Work units	37	Miss America's topper	38	Undeveloped state	39	Pooch	40	Speaker's spot	41	Pooch	42	Speaker's spot	43	Serving cart	44	Take a shot at	45	Adolescent	46	"Undenially"	47	Play area	48	Busy with	49	Take a shot at	50	Grimace	51	Adolescent	52	"Undenially"	53	Play area	54	Chopped	55	Large brass container?
17	Say it isn't so	49	Take a shot at	50	Grimace	51	Adolescent	52	"Undenially"	53	Play area	54	Chopped	55	Large brass container?	30	Exist	31	"CSI" setting	32	Eggs	33	Moliere's miser	34	Tourney situations	35	Work units	36	Work units	37	Miss America's topper	38	Undeveloped state	39	Pooch	40	Speaker's spot	41	Pooch	42	Speaker's spot	43	Serving cart	44	Take a shot at	45	Adolescent	46	"Undenially"	47	Play area	48	Busy with	49	Take a shot at	50	Grimace	51	Adolescent	52	"Undenially"	53	Play area	54	Chopped	55	Large brass container?		
18	Hot tub	50	Grimace	51	Adolescent	52	"Undenially"	53	Play area	54	Chopped	55	Large brass container?	30	Exist	31	"CSI" setting	32	Eggs	33	Moliere's miser	34	Tourney situations	35	Work units	36	Work units	37	Miss America's topper	38	Undeveloped state	39	Pooch	40	Speaker's spot	41	Pooch	42	Speaker's spot	43	Serving cart	44	Take a shot at	45	Adolescent	46	"Undenially"	47	Play area	48	Busy with	49	Take a shot at	50	Grimace	51	Adolescent	52	"Undenially"	53	Play area	54	Chopped	55	Large brass container?				
19	Emotional pang	52	"Undenially"	53	Play area	54	Chopped	55	Large brass container?	30	Exist	31	"CSI" setting	32	Eggs	33	Moliere's miser	34	Tourney situations	35	Work units	36	Work units	37	Miss America's topper	38	Undeveloped state	39	Pooch	40	Speaker's spot	41	Pooch	42	Speaker's spot	43	Serving cart	44	Take a shot at	45	Adolescent	46	"Undenially"	47	Play area	48	Busy with	49	Take a shot at	50	Grimace	51	Adolescent	52	"Undenially"	53	Play area	54	Chopped	55	Large brass container?								
21	Ghost costume	53	Play area	54	Chopped	55	Large brass container?	30	Exist	31	"CSI" setting	32	Eggs	33	Moliere's miser	34	Tourney situations	35	Work units	36	Work units	37	Miss America's topper	38	Undeveloped state	39	Pooch	40	Speaker's spot	41	Pooch	42	Speaker's spot	43	Serving cart	44	Take a shot at	45	Adolescent	46	"Undenially"	47	Play area	48	Busy with	49	Take a shot at	50	Grimace	51	Adolescent	52	"Undenially"	53	Play area	54	Chopped	55	Large brass container?										
24	Aforementioned	DOWN	1	Performance	2	Argonauts' patron	3	Neck hair	4	Chomp	5	Week units	6	Before	7	Long way	8	Miss Brooks'	9	Actor	10	Beatty	11	Terrier variety	12	Change	13	Individual	14	Two rites making a wrong?	15	Drag along	16	Shorten, maybe	17	Neck hair	18	Chomp	19	Week units	20	Before	21	Long way	22	"L" Miss Brooks'	23	Actor Beatty																					
25	Chopped	1	Performance	2	Argonauts' patron	3	Neck hair	4	Chomp	5	Week units	6	Before	7	Long way	8	Miss Brooks'	9	Actor	10	Beatty	11	Terrier variety	12	Change	13	Individual	14	Two rites making a wrong?	15	Drag along	16	Shorten, maybe	17	Neck hair	18	Chomp	19	Week units	20	Before	21	Long way	22	"L" Miss Brooks'	23	Actor Beatty																						
26	Large brass container?	1	Performance	2	Argonauts' patron	3	Neck hair	4	Chomp	5	Week units	6	Before	7	Long way	8	Miss Brooks'	9	Actor	10	Beatty	11	Terrier variety	12	Change	13	Individual	14	Two rites making a wrong?	15	Drag along	16	Shorten, maybe	17	Neck hair	18	Chomp	19	Week units	20	Before	21	Long way	22	"L" Miss Brooks'	23	Actor Beatty																						
30	Exist	1	Performance	2	Argonauts' patron	3	Neck hair	4	Chomp	5	Week units	6	Before	7	Long way	8	Miss Brooks'	9	Actor	10	Beatty	11	Terrier variety	12	Change	13	Individual	14	Two rites making a wrong?	15	Drag along	16	Shorten, maybe	17	Neck hair	18	Chomp	19	Week units	20	Before	21	Long way	22	"L" Miss Brooks'	23	Actor Beatty																						
31	"CSI" setting	1	Performance	2	Argonauts' patron	3	Neck hair	4	Chomp	5	Week units	6	Before	7	Long way	8	Miss Brooks'	9	Actor	10	Beatty	11	Terrier variety	12	Change	13	Individual	14	Two rites making a wrong?	15	Drag along	16	Shorten, maybe	17	Neck hair	18	Chomp	19	Week units	20	Before	21	Long way	22	"L" Miss Brooks'	23	Actor Beatty																						
32	Eggs	1	Performance	2	Argonauts' patron	3	Neck hair	4	Chomp	5	Week units	6	Before	7	Long way	8	Miss Brooks'	9	Actor	10	Beatty	11	Terrier variety	12	Change	13	Individual	14	Two rites making a wrong?	15	Drag along	16	Shorten, maybe	17	Neck hair	18	Chomp	19	Week units	20	Before	21	Long way	22	"L" Miss Brooks'	23	Actor Beatty																						
33	Moliere's miser	1	Performance	2	Argonauts' patron	3	Neck hair	4	Chomp	5	Week units	6	Before	7	Long way	8	Miss Brooks'	9	Actor	10	Beatty	11	Terrier variety	12	Change	13	Individual	14	Two rites making a wrong?	15	Drag along	16	Shorten, maybe	17	Neck hair	18	Chomp	19	Week units	20	Before	21	Long way	22	"L" Miss Brooks'	23	Actor Beatty																						
35	Tourney situations	1	Performance	2	Argonauts' patron	3	Neck hair	4	Chomp	5	Week units	6	Before	7	Long way	8	Miss Brooks'	9	Actor	10	Beatty	11	Terrier variety	12	Change	13	Individual	14	Two rites making a wrong?	15	Drag along	16	Shorten, maybe	17	Neck hair	18	Chomp	19	Week units	20	Before	21	Long way	22	"L" Miss Brooks'	23	Actor Beatty																						
36	Work units	1	Performance	2	Argonauts' patron	3	Neck hair	4	Chomp	5	Week units	6	Before	7	Long way	8	Miss Brooks'	9	Actor	10	Beatty	11	Terrier variety	12	Change	13	Individual	14	Two rites making a wrong?	15	Drag along	16	Shorten, maybe	17	Neck hair	18	Chomp	19	Week units	20	Before	21	Long way	22	"L" Miss Brooks'	23	Actor Beatty																						