

Klasnic surgery unsuccessful

REUTERS, Berlin

Croatian international striker Ivan Klasnic's kidney transplant carried out last week was not successful and he will be out of action for at least six months, his attorney said on Monday.

In a statement published on his club Werder Bremen's Web site, Klasnic's attorney K.-Peter Horndasch said the kidney transplant on Thursday had failed, dashing hopes he might be back playing within six to eight weeks.

"Unfortunately the transplanted kidney was rejected by his body," Horndasch said. "The exact reasons for that are now being analysed by the doctors. The investigation will take about six weeks."

"The time will be used to perform preliminary tests on other people related to Ivan Klasnic with the goal of attempting another transplantation in about six to eight weeks."

Klasnic, 26, has played for Werder since 2001 and scored 42 goals in 135 matches. He has played 26 times for Croatia, scoring eight goals.

Ancelotti has Azzurri dream

INTERNET, undated

Milan boss Carlo Ancelotti has admitted that he dreams of one day sitting on the Azzurri bench.

The Rossonero, who is contracted to the Via Turati club until 2008, endured a difficult start to the season and was paired with an exit in June.

The San Siro outfit has now managed to return to winning ways and are only three points shy of a Champions League spot.

"I hope I can someday coach the Azzurri, I would enjoy a spell with the Nazionale," said Ancelotti to Radio Anch'io Sport on Monday.

"I know it might not sound nice, because Roberto Donadoni is a friend of mine, but this is a dream I have," continued the former midfielder.

"In any case, I hope Donadoni does well in the next European Championship and the 2010 World Cup."

The tactician then moved on to comment on Ronaldo's likely arrival, as Adriano Galliani will fly to Madrid on Monday to finalise the details of the Brazilian's transfer.

"Ronaldo fat? I don't think so, he is just sturdy and has an imposing figure. He is very motivated and I think he has proved that by choosing to come here even if he might earn less."

"He's a great striker and is very fast. He hasn't trained much after being dropped at Real Madrid, but he remains an excellent player, who scored almost 100 goals with the Merengues in five years."

The coach is also aware that achieving Champions League qualification is the club's primary objective, although it will not be an easy target to reach.

"The Champions League has always been important for us and it is even more so this year, also from an economical point of view," he said.

"We are struggling and are not at our best, due to the summer scandal. We had to change our plans and this has caused many injuries, which did not allow us play the first half of the season as we could have."

C'Ron quiet on Madrid link

INTERNET, undated

Cristiano Ronaldo has admitted that he knows about Real Madrid's interest in him, but is under strict instructions not to comment on it.

Ronaldo was approached by two Spanish journalists from AS on Sunday and asked to comment on Real Madrid's interest.

Ronaldo was diplomatic with his answer, and refused to give anything away.

"I know about Real Madrid's interest but I cannot speak about it," he said.

"I have discussed the matter with Alex Ferguson and Carlos Queiroz and they have prohibited me from talking about Real Madrid; you must understand because I do not want any problems."

Later the journalists tried again to squeeze a soundbite out of the Portuguese star by asking him if he was privileged to be linked with Real, but again Ronaldo refused to take the bait.

"I have said to you that I cannot say anything about Real Madrid, you must respect me because I can say no more."

Real have been linked with a 35-million-pound move for the player, but United insist he is not for sale at any price.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Werder Bremen forwards Hugo Almeida (L) and Miroslav Klose (R) hug teammate Per Mertesacker after the defender scored a goal during their Bundesliga clash against Hannover at the Weser Stadion in Bremen on Sunday.

Werder reach summit

AFP, Berlin



Hanover.

Tim Borowski. Hugo Almeida and Per Mertesacker scored the goals that sunk the visitors as Werder moved back above Schalke 04—who won 3-1 at Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday—on goal difference.

Having scored a glut of goals—nine—in their last two clashes with Hanover, Werder were always likely to have a field day and did enough to start the second half of the campaign as they did the first—on top of the league. But despite the result, Mertesacker was not satisfied.

"We were too lethargic. We missed far too many chances and that has to change," he said.

The big losers from the weekend's games were champions Bayern Munich who lost 3-2 at Borussia Dortmund on Friday and slipped to six

points off the pace set by the top two.

Borowski opened the scoring for Werder after just five minutes and Almeida doubled the hosts' advantage midway through the second half.

Such was Werder's comfort zone, they could even afford top scorer Miroslav Klose to miss a penalty 20 minutes from time, before Mertesacker sealed the win four minutes later.

In Sunday's other game, Bayer Leverkusen came from 2-0 down to win 3-2 at Alemania Aachen. Laurentiu-Aurelian Reghecampf gave the hosts the lead from the penalty spot on nine minutes and Vedad Ibisevic made it two on the half-hour.

Bernd Schneider pulled a goal back on the stroke of half-time and after Striker Andriy Voronin levelled matters, the German international midfielder sealed the points on 57 minutes.

Germany striker Kevin Kuranyi scored a brace to earn victory for Schalke after Japan's Naohiro Takahara had cancelled out Gustavo Varela's early opener for the visitors in Frankfurt.

"Kuranyi was incredible. He didn't just score two goals he also did a lot of

work for the team," said Schalke coach Mirko Slomka.

SV Hamburg's miserable season continued as Marcio Borges's last minute equaliser denied them a much-needed victory at Amnia Bielefeld.

Serbian forward Daniel Ljuboja had given Hamburg a 10th minute lead but the result leaves the club rooted in the bottom three and means the pressure remains firmly on under-fire boss Thomas Doll.

"It hurts because we had chances to make it 2-0. We have to keep our self-belief, despite our position in the table," he said.

It was also a bad day for fourth-placed VfB Stuttgart who slumped to a 4-1 trouncing at Nuremberg.

Ivan Saenko opened the scoring for the hosts before Brazilian Cacau equalised for the visitors.

But further goals from Vratslav Gresko, Markus Schroth a Ludovic Magnin own goal completed a miserable day for Stuttgart, who had Serdar Tasci sent off.

Fifth-placed Hertha Berlin closed to within two points of Schalke with a 2-1 win over VfL Wolfsburg, courtesy of Marko Pantelici's penalty four minutes from time.

Psychic Morimoto

AFP, Rome

Catania's Japanese striker Takayuki Morimoto said he knew he was going to score on his Serie A debut for Sicilian side Catania.

The 18-year-old forward came on for the last six minutes of Sunday's match at Atalanta and scored the equaliser in a 1-1 draw which left Catania tied for fourth place.

"When (coach Pasquale Marino) told me I was going on all I thought about was the moment when I would score," Morimoto was quoted as saying in Monday's Gazzetta dello Sport.

Morimoto finally got his chance after spending months with the reserves following his one-year loan signing from second division J-League club Tokyo Verdy last summer.

Marino said Morimoto deserved his chance.

"Now he is ready, tactically and physically," said the Catania coach.

"When he came on he freshened up our attack, which was tiring after three games in a week."

Morimoto, who played for Japan in the 2005 World Youth Championships in Holland, is the youngest player ever to score in the J-League having found the net two days before his 18th birthday.

Mancini denies Blues talk

INTERNET, undated

Inter Coach Roberto Mancini has denied stating that he would be happy to join Chelsea at the end of the season.

The Nerazzurro's contract expires in six months and The Sun reported last week that Blues owner Roman Abramovich was planning to replace Jose Mourinho with Mancini.

"I have never spoken to anyone and I certainly haven't said that I'd like to join Chelsea," said the former Sampdoria striker.

"It's as if a good player who plays in a great team is wanted by another important club. It is satisfying because it means that I am doing a good job."

"If the Press pick up on something that I may have said a few years ago, for example that I would want to work in England after I finish my adventure with Inter, then that is a different story."

Chief Massimo Moratti said that he was optimistic about Mancini renewing his contract and believed that the parties only needed to find the time to sit down and discuss the issue.

"Do I believe there are grounds to continue with this project? I think so, there's no problem whatsoever," Mancio continued. "However, I don't know how long this spell will last."

"Sir Alex Ferguson has been at Manchester United for 20 years, but this is very difficult in Italy, you would have to always win for that to happen."

"Here, if you win for four or five straight years and then you fail in the sixth year, things change," concluded Mancini.

Inter netted their 14th straight win in Serie A on Sunday, defeating Sampdoria 2-0 at the Marassi and maintaining their 11-point lead over Roma.

Allardyce fears for Ben Haim

AFP, London

Bolton manager Sam Allardyce fears Chelsea are set to make a renewed bid for Tal Ben Haim after the defender pulled out of his side's FA Cup draw at Arsenal on Sunday.

Ben Haim told Allardyce he wasn't fit to play in the fourth round tie after suffering a calf strain in training on Saturday.

But, with the transfer window closing on Wednesday evening, Allardyce is worried the Israel centre-back's withdrawal may have been prompted by Chelsea signalling their intent to make an improved offer.

Allardyce said: "Tal failed a fitness test this morning having picked up an injury on Saturday."

"Tal determined he would not play. We were disappointed but if a player says he is not fit to play, he is not fit to play."

"My chairman is in Australia and I only spoke to him a few minutes ago and he's had no contact from anybody. I hope it's like Tal tells me and it's just a genuine injury."

Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho has been desperate to sign a defender to bolster his squad for their title challenge and Ben Haim is top of his wanted list.

Bolton have reportedly already rejected a three million pounds (six million dollars) offer for the player and Allardyce has warned Chelsea it would take a substantial improvement on that bid to persuade him to sell.

Allardyce said: "If there is a big bid coming, it will have to be really big. It will cost them much more now than it would have done three weeks ago because there are only two days for me to get a replacement."

Wenger fancies 'panic buy'



Football

AFP, London

Arsene Wenger has hinted he may make a late move in the transfer market to ease the strain of Arsenal's increasingly lengthy injury list.

Wenger had insisted he would not sign any new players before the transfer window closes on Wednesday night because he was happy with his squad.

But Brazilian midfielder Julio Baptista became the latest Gunner to be struck by the injury jinx when he suffered a groin injury in Sunday's 1-1 FA Cup fourth round draw against Bolton.

Emmanuel Eboue, Alexander Hleb, Robin van Persie, Freddie Ljungberg and William Gallas are already sidelined, forcing Wenger to

consider changing his transfer plans.

Asked after the Bolton match if he would make a signing in the three remaining days of the window, Wenger said: "That is a good question, but I cannot give you an answer."

"Normally I would say no, we won't do anything, but we have lost van Persie and we will see what Baptista has."

"I would see it as a panic buy because it was not planned."

If Wenger does do any business, it will be completed by the time Arsenal meet Bolton again for their replay at the Reebok Stadium on February 14.

Arsenal needed a late goal from Kolo Toure to rescue them after Kevin Nolan had given Bolton the lead early in the second half.

Wenger's side are becoming adept at salvaging unpromising situations and this was the 12th time

this season they have avoided defeat after falling behind. Wenger's side have won just one of their last eight meetings with Bolton and, after being beaten at Allardye's side at the same stage of the competition last season, they will not relish another trip to the Reebok Stadium, where they lost 3-1 in November.

With Arsenal also playing PSV Eindhoven in the Champions League a week after their Valentine's Day date with Bolton, Wenger is unsure if he will field a full-strength side at the Reebok.

"I will see when we play and with whom we play because at the moment it is important for us not to lose too many players," he said.

"If we continue to have injuries I will have to choose what we go for."

Lens stage comeback

AFP, Paris



A combination of defensive errors and opportunistic scoring saw Champions League hopefuls Lens claim

a share of the points in a dramatic 3-3 draw with St Etienne on Sunday.

Lens were being led 3-0 at home by 'Les Verts' after Bafetimbi Gomis's 16th minute opener, and a double from Marek Heinz before the half-time whistle.

However a spirited second half fightback saw the 'Red and Gold' save face and grab a point which pushed them back up to third place at the expense of Marseille.

Seydou Keita was the hero for Lens, giving them hope by beating St Etienne keeper Jeremie Janot with a 66th minute header from 15 metres out.

Adama Coulibaly then rose to beat Janot with a header to reduce Lens's arrears two minutes from time.

In a dramatic finale, the St Etienne defence then remained

rooted to the spot as Keita rose to meet a corner from the right to beat Janot for the second time.

Lyon remain virtually uncatchable as they romp towards a sixth consecutive domestic title.

But the fight for the second automatic qualifying spot for the Champions League is far from over.

Only five points separate the next six teams below Lyon, although Lille (38), Lens (37) and Marseille (36) are currently setting the pace ahead of Saint Etienne, Sochaux and Bordeaux.

On Saturday, Milan Baros celebrated his recent move to Lyon by scoring a face-saving goal in a 1-1 home draw with Nice.

Lyon coach Gerard Houllier brought the Czech striker from Aston Villa, with striker John Carew going in the opposite direction in the hope of revitalising the team's stuttering attack.

Nice had Houllier's men worried for a brief moment when Bak Kone opened the scoring in the 34th minute.

However, Baros replied five minutes later, latching on to a well-timed cross from Sidney Govou to beat Hugo Lloris from close range in

the Nice goal.

Paris St Germain gave their suffering fans a little relief after taking a welcome point from a scoreless draw at home to Sochaux.

A defeat could have put PSG into the drop zone, but they managed to avoid such ignominy and moved to relative safety—although that was mainly because fallen former French champions Nantes went down 2-0 at home to Lorient.

Former Rangers manager Paul Le Guen was called in to save PSG from the drop, however the tactician is still looking for the win that could kickstart a late season revival.

Portuguese international Pauleta—who hails from the Azores islands—spurned several chances to give PSG the lead, and later apologised to his team.

"We all played really well and we should have won, but I just wasn't up to scratch," said the PSG skipper.

"I'm really disappointed. So much so that I'd love to just get on a plane and go home to the Azores."

Marseille, PSG's bitter rivals, are in a much healthier position but spurned a chance to take second spot with a 2-0 away defeat at Le Mans.

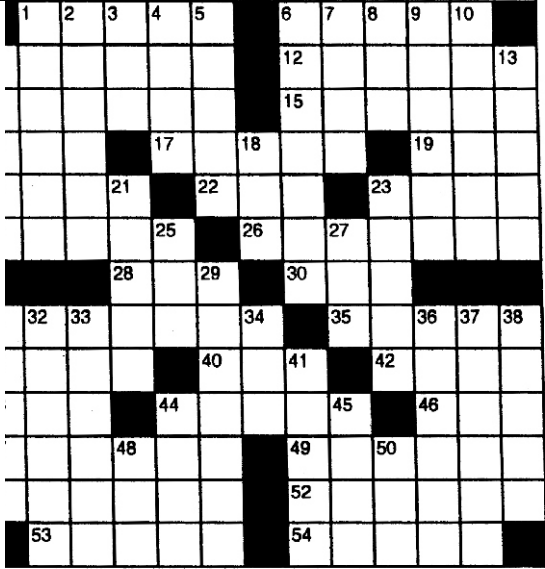


PHOTO: AFP

St. Etienne forward Marek Heinz (R) sets off to celebrate his goal during their Ligue 1 match against Lens at the Felix Bollaert Stadium on Sunday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS**
- 1 Works hard
 - 6 Misbehave
 - 11 Raid
 - 12 Of a radio-active element
 - 14 Get cozy together
 - 15 Small pool
 - 16 Work with
 - 17 Tire
 - 19 Needing a doctor
 - 20 Cellulite
 - 22 Tackle
 - 23 Moguls
 - 23 Body sci.
 - 24 Guy (Sl.)
 - 26 They get the lead out
 - 28 — Wan Kenobi
 - 30 Bro's counter-part
 - 31 Region of southwest France
 - 35 Actor Robin
 - 39 Aussie flock
- DOWN**
- 1 Dishevel
 - 2 Severe experience
 - 3 — never work
 - 4 Springy
 - 5 Palm tune
 - 6 Foreign aides?
 - 7 Gunky stuff
 - 8 Young fellow
 - 9 Water nymph
 - 10 Post gift
 - 11 Shoe-polish target
- Solution time: 27 mins.**
- DECEMBER**
- TEACH**
- HOUSTON**
- SEASON**
- TEND**
- AFRICA**
- BOO**
- TODDY**
- BEER**
- FLAHER**
- FORCE**
- YORE**
- MIXED**
- ONE**
- ORB**
- EVER**
- MADRID**
- LOUISIANA**
- ESTER**
- GRUE**
- WAS**
- GUARAN**
- MYC**
- OBIE**
- TERRA**



CRYPTOQUIP

HKQZ EJJQ SKYYJL LFUM'A
KA NM ARK VYTC CKVFTUK
K XNXM'A RFHK ARK
FTEKQ NXKMANSNVFANJM.
Yesterday's Cryptquip: A HIT TUNE ABOUT
OMEONE GETTING A MAIL IN PURCHASE
EBATE IS CALLED "RETURN TO SPENDER."
Today's Cryptquip Clue: X equals D