



Lyon defender Sebastien Squillaci (L) is ecstatic after scoring a late winner to settle a Ligue 1 encounter with rivals Lille at Lille Metropole Stadium on Friday. PHOTO: AFP

## Fergie wants tighter agent control

AFP, Manchester

Sir Alex Ferguson has revealed how he had to ban an agent from Manchester United's training ground after he was caught trying to approach players as young as 12.

Comments that will fuel growing calls for a crackdown on the activities of agents who make fortunes from acting as middlemen in football's multi-million pound transfer market, the United boss recalled how they had to go to extreme measures to stop the agent from approaching the youngsters.

"We barred him - so he started to wait outside the academy picking out the cars of the parents, stopping them and tapping them up."

Ferguson, whose son Jason previously worked as an agent, weighed into the debate a day in the wake of an intervention by his club captain Gary Neville, said they should be kicked out of the game.

The Scot does not go that far but admits the time has come for them to be bound by more stringent guidelines in order to stem the flow of money going out of the game.

United, the only Premiership club to publish details of payments to agents, shelled out a total of 1.8 million pounds last year alone.

"In an ideal world, Gary is correct, but agents are here and I have no problem with players taking their advice," said Ferguson.

"But I'd like there to be an investigation into the payments or tariffs of agents. They are taking a lot of money out of football - so much so that clubs are in danger of not being able to buy players."

"That's a dangerous precedent because agents are starting to control the market because they are buying all the top players and that's happening at this moment."

"But if they were paid the same tariffs and same rates as lawyers and accountants, and had a responsible attitude towards the industry, then there is nothing wrong with that."

Neville said earlier in the week that he would like to see his professional peers rely less on agents and take more advice from their union, the Professional Footballers Association (PFA).

"One guy can go in (to a deal) and expect to be giving hundreds of thousands or, in this day and age, even millions (to an agent) - and that money is going out of the game," Neville said.

"The clubs should keep that money - or, if they're earning it, the players."

"Players need good advice and good accountants - but they don't need people taking hundreds of thousands off them."

**Vogts hires Haessler**

REUTERS, Berlin

Nigeria's German coach Berti Vogts said on Saturday he had hired former Germany midfielder Thomas Haessler as an assistant coach.

"Thomas has a great reputation around the world, especially in Africa, because he had great skill around the ball," Vogts, who recently replaced Austin Eguavoen as coach, told Bild newspaper.

Vogts had previously coached Germany and Scotland. Haessler, a free kick specialist, will also keep his assistant job at second division side Cologne.

He was on the West Germany team that won the 1990 World Cup and also on Germany's side that won Euro 96. He was named Germany's footballer of the year in 1992.

## Lion-hearted Lyon

AFP, Paris



Brazilian international striker Fred inspired French champions Lyon to a come from behind 2-1 victory at Lille here on Friday and give them a much needed boost ahead of their Champions League clash with AS Roma next Wednesday.

For Lille - who were watched by Sir Alex Ferguson manager of their Champions League opponents Manchester United - it was a bitter disappointment even if victory would still have only meant they trailed Lyon by 12 points in the title race.

Lyon manager Gerard Houllier commiserated with Lille over their late disappointment.

"It is always dreadful to lose to a late goal and that happened to us recently," admitted the former France and Liverpool handler.

"However for us it is a vital win as we did not have a great January but now we have won two in a row and tonight was a gutsy win."

His Lille counterpart Claude Puel said it was imperative that his side learn from this.

"Things haven't really been running for us of late but we mustn't get down and instead grow from this," said the former Monaco coach.

"The game against Manchester United will be different but again we mustn't commit the same errors and lose focus like we did tonight."

It looked as if Lille would gain their vital confidence booster when the rarely used former Lorient star Johan Audel struck in the 52nd minute as one on one with

France 'keeper Gregory Coupet he slotted home easily in what was only his third appearance of what has been a troubled season for him.

However Lyon who have been a shadow of their dominant selves since the turn of the year, and devoid of the inspirational midfield talents of the injured Portuguese international Tiago and the suspended Juninho, gradually fought their way back into the match.

It paid off eventually eight minutes from time as Fred struck an unstoppable freekick past Lille's Senegalese international 'keeper Tony Sylva.

That was bad enough for the hosts but it became even worse a minute from the finish as Jeremy Toulalan's freekick saw former Monaco defender Sebastien Squillaci lob Sylva for the winner and Lyon's first win at Lille in the past five seasons.

## Clarke scotches Roman rumours

AFP, London



Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich has been absent from their last six matches but assistant manager Steve Clarke scotched talk he was losing interest in the club after a reported argument with manager Jose Mourinho.

Clarke said the Russian billionaire would in fact attend Saturday afternoon's FA Cup fifth round tie against Norwich at Stamford Bridge.

It has been claimed in the British media that an argument between Abramovich and Mourinho following the 4-0 win over Wigan in

January was the root cause of a growing rift.

"The Russian billionaire's ensuing failure to attend any of Chelsea's next six games intensified speculation over his alleged spat with Mourinho and fuelled suggestions he was losing interest in the club."

But Clarke said: "Roman has been on business - he's very busy and has had other things to do."

"He's back today and we're looking forward to seeing him. There's no question he's committed to Chelsea. He's proven that ever since taking over."

"He doesn't have to prove anything else. It's good when you see him with and around the team. He enjoys being with the players and coaching staff."

"It will be good for the atmosphere around the club and maybe the speculation over why he's not there will stop."

"He's been in Russia taking care of business and, if you're worth that amount of money, it's understandable when he has matters to take care of."

Clarke's contract expires at the end of the season and the former Blues defender is in no hurry to begin negotiations over a new deal.

He said: "It's not difficult when I see speculation about other coaches being brought in."

"I focus on my job. I'm a level-headed fellow and the speculation doesn't affect me. I've been at this club for 18 out of the last 20 years."



FC Porto midfielder Bruno Moraes (L) shifts past the outstretched challenge of Naval defender Orestes Alves during their Portuguese Superliga match at the Dragao Stadium in Porto on Friday. PHOTO: AFP

## China prepare for Australia

AFP, Hong Kong

China's under-fire Olympic squad will be looking to put their recent troubles behind them as they prepare for Sunday's clash against the Australia Olympic team in the four-nation Lunar New Year tournament.

Since arriving in Hong Kong on Friday night, the squad have refused to talk to reporters just days after the team left Britain in disgrace following a large-scale brawl against London club Queen Park Rangers.

The Chinese squad cancelled a morning training session on Saturday but are expected to take to the field in the afternoon at Mongkok Stadium.

China coach Ratomir Djukovic will make do with seven new players who have been called up to replace the seven sent home in disgrace following the brawl in London.

The Chinese squad completed their tour of Britain with a record of three wins, four draws and two losses.

They were plunged into further controversy with reports of another fight, this time involving eight-time Chinese champions Dalian Shide and second division side Chongqing Lifan that resulted in the pre-season friendly being abandoned.

Djukovic knows his side will have a tough task ahead of them against Australia, one of the favourites in the tournament, which also includes the Jamaica Olympic squad and the Hong Kong League XI, who play in the other opening day match.

The Australians were dealt a blow earlier with the news that they will be without captain Mark Milligan, who has been ruled out of the tournament because of a broken nose.

Teenage duo Sebastian Ryall and Jason Naidovski have been added to the Olyroos who edged Taiwan 1-0 in an Olympic qualifier earlier this week.

Jamaica will take on the hosts looking to reach Wednesday's final but despite being led by a world class coach in Bora Milutinovic -- the only man to coach five different teams at the World Cup -- the Jamaicans remain an unknown quantity.

Hong Kong will be looking to win the tournament for the first time in 14 years as they field a team comprising their best local and expatriate players from the Hong Kong League.

The hosts also reached the 2003 final against Honduras, but several players are doubtful for the clash with the Jamaicans because of injury.

## City seal Mpenza deal

AFP, London

English Premiership strugglers Manchester City boosted their ailing attack with the signing of veteran Belgian international striker Emile Mpenza until the end of the season on Friday.

The 28-year-old, who has finished his contract with Qatari side Al Rayyan, still awaits international clearance before joining City, who are presently fifth from bottom of the Premiership, though 10 points clear of the relegation places.

Mpenza, who has scored 17 goals in 52 internationals for his country and has mostly played abroad including two spells in the Bundesliga with Schalke 04 and Hamburg, has been on trial at City.

Mpenza, twice a winner of the German Cup with Schalke 04 in 2001 and 2002, will be unavailable for Sunday's difficult FA Cup fifth-round tie at Championship highfliers Preston.

## Porto warm up well

REUTERS, Lisbon

Porto crushed Naval 4-0 in the Portuguese Premier League on Friday as they warmed up for next week's Champions League clash with Chelsea.

Porto are top with 43 points from 18 games, six clear of Sporting who visit Pacos Ferreira on Saturday. Benfica, who meet Nacional at Madeira Island on Sunday, are third on 36.

Argentine striker Lisandro Lopez scored in each half for Porto, the first from an unmarked position inside the area after a neat pass by Bruno Moraes after 21 minutes.

Porto, missing the suspended Ricardo Quaresma, doubled their lead through Lucho Gonzalez after Naval goalkeeper Pedro Taborda could only parry a cross from defender Pepe after 36 minutes.

Striker Helder Postiga provided a killer pass for Lopez to score Porto's third goal after 47 minutes against Naval, who were promoted to the top flight last season.

Substitute Brazilian striker Adriano completed the rout with the fourth goal when he headed home a cross from the right by Slovakia defender Marek Cech in injury time.

## Atletico readying for Sevilla

INTERNET, undated



Atletico Madrid are preparing for a trial of strength and concentration when they travel to second-placed Sevilla in the Primera Liga on Sunday.

Atletico are fifth, just four points behind their hosts, but have a history of playing out badly, tempered, niggly affairs against their southern rivals.

A total of five red cards have been shown in the last two clashes between the sides, with the dismissal of Sevilla defender Javi Navarro and Julien Escude in the last match key to allowing Atletico to scramble a late 2-1 win in the Calderon.

"They are a tough side to play, especially at their stadium, and they have always had an intense rivalry with Atletico," midfielder Luciano Galletti said.

Left-back Mariano Pernia echoed his team-mate's sentiments of Sevilla, saying: "You need to be on top of your game, compact and very strong."

"They may not be playing as well as they were earlier in the season, but we must be careful because they still have the same players and always have the same attitude."

While the rivalry on the pitch is usually described as 'intense', off-the-pitch incidents have also been a feature of the last couple of matches in Madrid, with the meeting back in March last year suspended for around 40 minutes due to crowd trouble.

Sevilla won that encounter 1-0 as Atletico had three players sent off.

Atletico were fined after that fixture for fans throwing objects at the opposing team and match officials, so the atmosphere in the Sanchez Pizjuan is likely to be hostile.

Sevilla enter the game having received a lift to morale with a 2-0 win away to Steaua Bucharest in the UEFA Cup on Thursday.

That may help off-set the advantage Atletico have from not having played during the week.

"Things haven't been going very well so to get a result like this away from home in a difficult stadium is a confidence boost for us all. It could prove vital in the future," said

Sevilla midfielder Enzo Maresca. Before Thursday, the Andalusians had been struggling for form having only won once in six league outings.

They received further good news with the Spanish Football Federation's decision to overrule a yellow card full-back Daniel Alves received in last weekend's 0-0 draw against Real Betis, which leaves him free to play.

Midfielder Adriano Correia is out injured.

Atletico have one of the best away records in the league but have been inconsistent at best. They bounced back from a 3-1 defeat at Valencia two weeks ago to beat Athletic Bilbao 1-0 at home last weekend.

A training-ground bust up between midfielder Maniche and defender Antonio Lopez on Thursday has been brushed aside with minimal fuss.

"The coach asks us to train with intensity because that's how he wants us to play on Sundays. There was a small argument nothing more. These things happen," said Galletti.

Sevilla have been warned.

## Sir Alex slams FA Academy

Football

AFP, Manchester

Sir Alex Ferguson has admitted that the development of young English football talent has reached crisis point.

But the Manchester United boss rejected a suggestion by Terry Venables that the failure of the much-vaunted academy system should be blamed on clubs who trawl the world looking for young talent.

"When Howard Wilkinson set up the academy system eight years ago, he said that England would win the World Cup within ten years, but I can't see it," Ferguson said on Friday, echoing a complaint by Venables, the former England boss who currently acts as an assistant to the current national team manager, Steve

McClaren.

Venables said this week that teams like Arsenal had stymied the development of English talent by recruiting talented teenagers from overseas, with Spanish midfielder Cesc Fabregas a notable example in the Gunners' first team.

"The academy system is something that hasn't really borne fruit in the way we wished it did," Venables said. "There are a lot of players coming from around the world, which makes it difficult for local boys."

"Arsenal have got a fantastic system but a lot of them are from abroad. That is okay but it does make it difficult for homegrown players to get through."

After the flop of England's so-called 'golden generation' at the 2006 World Cup, there is mounting concern that there are not enough quality young English players coming

through at a time when Premiership clubs are thriving on the European stage.

But Ferguson disagrees with those who point the finger at clubs, and rallied to the defence of his old adversary Arsene Wenger, the Arsenal manager.

"Arsene Wenger is very strong on French and African football, so why should he not take advantage," Ferguson said. "The problem doesn't lie with Arsene Wenger, it lies with the system."

"But if they were to bring in a format where you had to produce home-grown players, it would be different."

"There is a suggestion that all clubs should have four or five domestic players in their team and I think there is something sensible in that."

## 'Beckham can forget England'

Football

AFP, London

Former England captain Alan Shearer said David Beckham's decision to join American side Los Angeles Galaxy could mean he may never return to the national side and claimed top Premiership clubs did not want him.

David Beckham has hardly played for Real Madrid this season and late last year announced he would be moving to the Major League Soccer club on a 250 million-dollar, five-year deal.

Shearer, England captain at the 1998 World Cup, said England manager Steve McClaren had made his decision to omit him because he wanted pace and power on the right with the likes of Aaron Lennon and Steven Gerrard.

"He (Beckham) has hardly played any football for Real this season," Shearer told the Sun newspaper. "Not only that but he is about to fly off to America to play in a league which is probably on a parallel with our second division, with respect."

"I don't know what his reasons are for going out there at his age. He still has some years left in him at a high level. I certainly believe he could do a job in the Premiership."

"The problem is he would not want to play for a side outside the top four - and the top four don't

want him."

McClaren has frequently said the door is not closed for the midfielder to make a return to the England fold, but Shearer - like Beckham a former captain of the national side - said he may never add to his 94 caps.

He told The Sun: "I think Steve McClaren has made his decision and he will stick to it. I do not believe David Beckham will ever play for England again - that's it."

"Steve has decided he wants

pace and power on the right side. That is why he has gone for Aaron Lennon or Steven Gerrard. That is his style and he is happy to have those players in that position rather than Beckham."

"Once he has made that decision I can't see him going back on it," he added.

"As an individual, I'm sure he thinks he can still do a job. The problem is only one man's decision counts right now and Steve McClaren does not think Beckham will improve the England team."



ALAN SHEARER

## CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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8 Japanese	19 Feudal
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13 Heart of the matter	21 Data-
14 Unyielding	22 protection
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16 Popular	24 Prenatal
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20 Enjoy the buffet	26 Addict
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24 Pumpkin	28 Bikini
28 Gooey	29 half
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34 Discard	32 appear
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	41 Solution time: 21 mins.
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## CRYPTOQUIP

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SUPPOSE HE'S READY FOR A NEW CHAPTER.  
Today's Cryptquip Clue: Y equals E