

'Pressure on Barca'

INTERNET, undated

Bodo Zenden claims Barcelona could suffer from the pressure of playing in front of their demanding fans when Liverpool play in the Nou Camp on Wednesday.

The Dutch midfielder, who spent three seasons at Barcelona, believes if things do not go well for the European champions then their supporters could turn against them.

Ahead of the Champions League last-16 clash, Zenden told club website liverpoolfc.tv: "The Nou Camp is a massive stadium with a lot of fans, but they are a lot of fans who can be very critical. If things aren't going the way they want it, they could get on the back of the Barcelona players, so we can use that."

"The pressure is maybe a bit more on Barcelona because they won it last year and they'll be expected to get a result."

"Maybe the Barcelona fans will look at it as a game their team should be winning, but I don't care about that. Liverpool are a very big club as well, and I'm sure they won't be too happy at playing Liverpool at this early stage of the competition."

Pumpido resigns

REUTERS, Buenos Aires

Argentina's 1986 World Cup-winning goalkeeper Nery Pumpido resigned as coach of struggling Newell's Old Boys on Monday after they lost their first two games in the Clausura championship.

"Pumpido resigned today," said Newell's spokesman Jose Garcia.

Pumpido, who had been in charge of the Rosario-based club since October 2005, became the first coaching victim of the tournament.

The final straw was Saturday's 2-1 home defeat against River Plate. Although the match was abandoned with four minutes to play because of missile-throwing fans, the result is expected to stand.

Newell's have failed to win in their last 13 games, a run stretching back to last September.

Pumpido enjoyed his finest coaching moment in 2002 when he won the South American Libertadores Cup with Paraguayan club Olimpia.

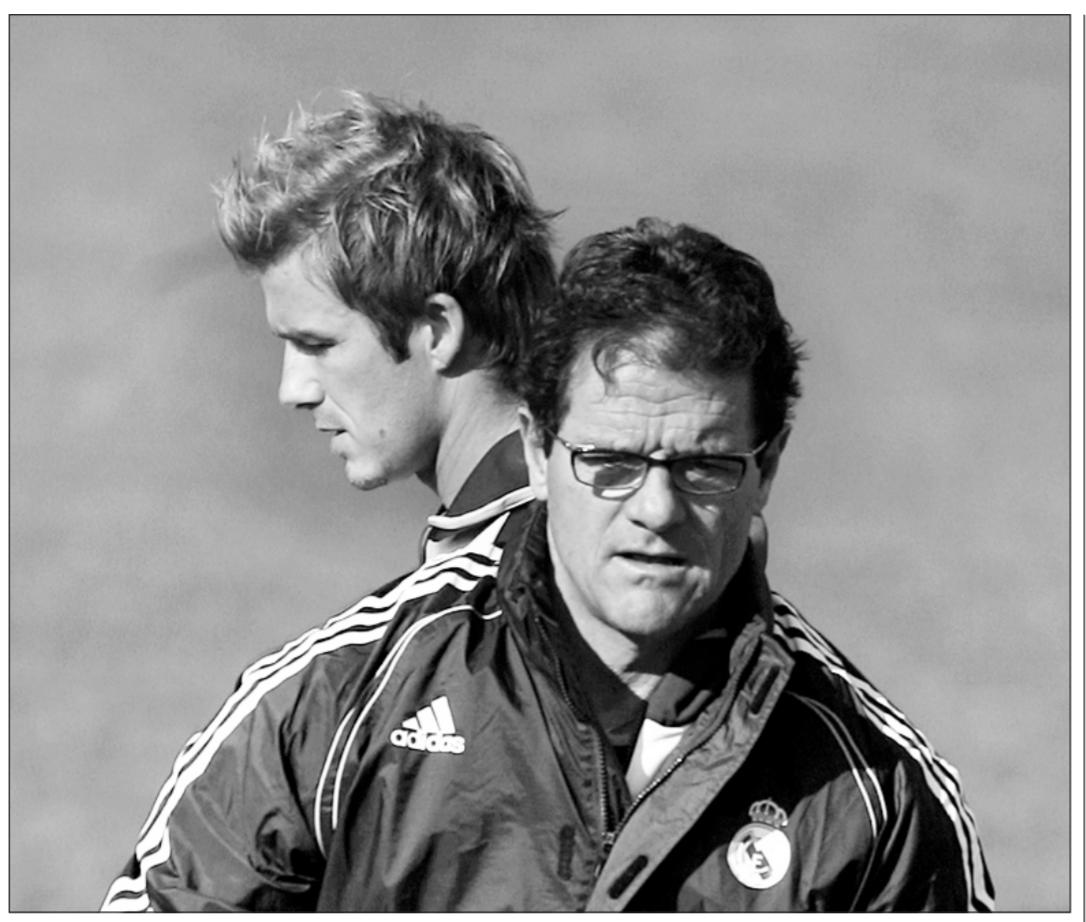


PHOTO: AFP
Real Madrid's Italian coach Fabio Capello (R) walks past English midfielder David Beckham during a training session in Madrid on Monday on the eve of their Champions League match against Bayern Munich.

Capello's last stand!

Football

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid may have denied that coach Fabio Capello offered to resign, despite radio reports to the contrary Monday, but the Madrid media on Tuesday prophesied that the Champions League match with Germany's Bayern Munich would be his swansong.

Miguel Angel Arroyo, spokesman for the club's board of directors, insisted that "we have had nothing presented to us in writing nor has anything been said to us verbally on this matter from Fabio Capello," after Cope radio reported Capello had threatened to resign after barely half a season in charge.

Capello was widely reported Tuesday to have retracted the threat after the club allegedly warned him that he would not receive a cent if he goes off his own free will.

His four million euros (5.2 million

dollars) a year contract runs to June 2009.

But many in the Spanish capital believe there is no smoke without fire and several media outlets said the final outcome would hinge on the Bayern game with a place in the quarter-finals at stake.

Some assessments were brutal, with El Mundo noting what it called a looming "divorce between Real Madrid and Capello."

"Capello is finished," blared Marca sports daily and even normally pro-Real AS sports daily was damning in its assessment with the axe apparently poised to fall.

"Capello has not resigned. A shame!" AS wrote in a front page headline.

The same paper added, in allusion to the Bayern encounter, that "the visit of the old German enemy is the last chance to unite Madridismo."

Possible replacements should Capello walk are Miguel Gonzalez of Castilla, Real's second division nursery incarnation and believed to be a favour-

ite of Real sporting director Pedja Mijatovic.

But what Marca calls Plan A involves making a bid to bring on board former Real, Barcelona and Atletico Madrid midfielder Berni Schuster.

The German has turned modest side Getafe into an established top flight outfit and is well-respected at Real. However, Bayern Munich are also looking for a long-term appointment with Oltrar Hitzfeld a stop-gap after replacing Felix Magath for a second spell in charge of the Bavarians.

Capello promised on Monday that "we will play a great game as our season hinges on it."

But AS spelt out what was at stake for a side set seemingly to complete a fourth season without silverware.

What awaits, opined AS, is "a night for resuscitation -- or to visit hell."

Former international defender Austin Eguavoen has been in charge of the country's team since July 2005. Officials disclosed he is now expected to assist Vogts.

United set for Macau friendly

AFP, Hong Kong

English Premiership leaders Manchester United are being eyed to play a friendly in southern China's Macau booztown, a media report said Tuesday.

The club is in talks to visit the tiny gambling haven as part of celebrations to mark the opening of the Venetian Macau, a hotel-casino resort that will be the largest in the world when it launches in the summer.

According to the South China Morning Post, the English side will stop off in the former Portuguese enclave during an off-season Asia tour that will also take in South Korea and Japan.

The paper said the tour would be discussed in detail at a press conference later in the week.

The report follows news last week that Liverpool as well as west Londoners Fulham and seaside club Portsmouth will visit Hong Kong as part of an off-season Asian tour.

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