

Royalty for FA Cup final

APP, London

Britain's Prince William will attend the first FA Cup final to be played at the newly-revamped Wembley stadium later this month, a royal spokesman said Tuesday.

William, 24, who serves as the president of the Football Association, attended his first FA Cup final last year at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff, Wales.

As part of his role as president, to which he was appointed in September 2005, he presented victorious Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard with the trophy after the club beat West Ham.

The prince, second-in-line to the throne, played football for his house team at Eton school and also Sunday league sides throughout his four years at the University of St Andrews.

He is an avid supporter of Premier League club Aston Villa, while his brother Prince Harry, 22, is a fan of Arsenal.

The FA Cup final will be held on May 19 at Wembley, a 90,000-seat national stadium, rebuilt at a cost of 800 million pounds (1.17 billion euros, 1.59 billion dollars).

Ball charged over C'Ron stamp

APP, London

Manchester City defender Michael Ball faces a three-match ban after being charged with violent conduct over a stamp on the chest of Cristiano Ronaldo during Saturday's Manchester derby.

Referee Rob Styles missed the incident but video footage of it left United boss Alex Ferguson in no doubt that Ball had deliberately attempted to hurt his starwinger.

Ronaldo, who was left with stumps on his chest, had the last laugh, drawing a foul from Ball which won United a match-winning penalty that he converted himself.

Another player in hot water with the Football Association is Fulham midfielder Michael Brown, who was also hit with a violent conduct charge on Tuesday.

Brown appeared to head-butt Liverpool's Xabi Alonso during Saturday's Premiership match at Craven Cottage, the Spanish midfielder being left with a bloody nose.

Referee Steve Bennett and the other officials all missed the incident. Fulham won the match 1-0 with a 69th-minute goal from substitute Clint Dempsey.



PHOTO: AFP

Peruvian players Israel Zuniga (R) and Joel Herrera at a training session in Lima on Tuesday. Peru will play two friendly matches against Ecuador and Hungary, before taking part in the 2007 Copa America tournament next June in Venezuela.

Malays slam Man Utd

Football

APP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysian Manchester United fans voiced anger and disappointment on Wednesday after a tour match featuring the newly-crowned Premier League champions was cancelled.

Fans branded the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) "selfish" for pressuring Asian Cup co-hosts Malaysia to call off the match scheduled for July 27 - two days before the tournament's final.

Malaysian football bosses last year signed an agreement not to promote other matches during the Asian Cup, the region's premier football tournament.

He added the AFC should be blamed for the poor support for Asian football.

"If Asian football is good, definitely people will watch," he said.

Frederick Fernandez, senior writer with the Star newspaper, said he had been looking forward to the United game.

"I had made plans to watch the Red Devils in action especially Cristiano Ronaldo and Wayne Rooney with my two nephews," he said.

Ganapathan added that the match would not attract fans away from the Asian Cup, as the AFC fears.

"I don't think it is a valid argument to say United will steal away fans from the Asian Cup. One game will not hurt the tournament," he said.

Schoolteacher R. Sanderan, 48, slammed the AFC for pressuring Malaysia to scrap the match.

"I am upset with AFC president Mohammed Bin Hammam. Asian football is not entertaining at all except when Japan and South Korea play," he said.

"I love to see United play because they score goals and this for me is entertaining," he said.

"I've thought about it, and struggled with the decision, long enough," the 30-year-old added in an interview with kicker.de.

Frings, an influential member of the Germany team that finished third at the World Cup last year, had been in talks with Juventus, with the blessing of his current club.

His surprise decision to stay on will be a boost to title-chasing Werder as they prepare for the final two league games of the season.

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