

Royalty for FA Cup final

AFP, 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

AFP, 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 star winger.

Ronaldo, who was left with stud-marks 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.

Tevez relishing MU clash

INTERNET, undated

West Ham striker Carlos Tevez is relishing playing Manchester United in the final game of their bid to stay in the Premiership.

The Hammers need a point to be assured of safety, although will stay up anyway if Wigan fail to beat Sheffield United.

And Tevez, 23, has led the fight-back with some style, scoring six goals in his last nine matches and creating the lion's share of the others.

"We have to face the champions at their stadium," he told Ole. "It is one of those special matches, even more so, as we playing for important things."

After a tough start in life in East



CARLOS TEVEZ



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

AFP, 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.

But fans hit out at the cancellation, which robs Malaysia of its first Manchester United match since 2001.

"I feel very disappointed. I was hoping to get a close-up view of the Red Devils who have a huge fan base in Malaysia," N. Ganananathan, a 41-year-old fan, told AFP.

"I think AFC is being selfish for asking FAM to cancel United's rare

trip," he said.

Gananathan 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.

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.

The New Straits Times newspaper also attacked Hammam, who called on Manchester United to call off their tour altogether.

"The AFC has also got to realise that no matter what it does, the fans can't be forced into the stadiums unless the quality of play is top-notch," it said.

Lawrence How, president of Malaysia's Manchester United Fan Club, said he understood supporters' unhappiness.

"I am not surprised that they are upset. You must remember many of the fans cannot afford to visit Old Trafford to watch United play," he said.

Manchester United have also arranged matches in Macau, Japan and South Korea during their Asian tour which was due to end in Malaysia.

"We are currently attempting to clarify with our tour organisers what the situation is in regards to Malaysia but we are confident that the rest of the tour will go ahead," United spokesman Phil Townsend told AFP.

Clear-the-air talks at Bayern

INTERNET, undated

A four-hour peace summit has cleared the air amongst Bayern Munich chiefs after the Bavarian giants' worst season for ten years had threatened to tip the club into crisis.

General manager Uli Hoeness, Franz Beckenbauer and club president Karl-Heinz Rummenigge met in a Munich restaurant on Tuesday before emerging to declare that talk of a crisis at the Allianz Arena is unfounded.

"Everything has been cleared up," Beckenbauer told Bild. "There are no more problems at all. The meeting showed that it makes sense for us to meet in such a small group more often."

"The conversations were very good. One thing is clear: all of us at Bayern Munich will pull together."

Beckenbauer had been told by Rummenigge to stop criticising Bayern's management after he made some hard hitting remarks in response to the team's failure to retain the title, sparking speculation that the club was on the verge of a meltdown.

Rummenigge told Die Welt: "His [Beckenbauer's] criticisms don't only irritate me but also the financial directors and administrators of the club."

Bayern has failed to qualify for next season's Champions League, and the only European football they will be playing next year will be in the UEFA Cup after a top-three finish proved beyond Ottmar Hitzfeld's side.

Frings snubs Juve

INTERNET, undated

Germany midfielder Torsten Frings has turned down a move to Juventus and opted instead to extend his contract at Werder Bremen until 2011.

"I had a great offer from Juventus but for me Werder are an affair of the heart," Frings, pitted above with teammate Miroslav Klose, told Bremen's official website.

"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.

Werder are in third place, two points behind leaders Schalke 04 and one shy of VfB Stuttgart.

Sven interested in Toon job

Football

INTERNET, undated

Former England coach Sven-Goran Eriksson would be interested in talking to Newcastle about the vacant manager's job.

There has been no contact between the Magpies and the Swede's representatives in the wake of Glenn Roeder's departure.

However, his agent Athole Still has revealed the job at St James' Park is just the kind he would seriously consider.

Eriksson fared well in a phone poll of fans carried out by Newcastle-based radio station Metro, although he is not understood to figure high on chairman

Freddy Shepherd's shortlist, which is topped by overwhelming favourite Sam Allardyce with Lyon manager Gerard Houllier today emerging as a surprise candidate.

Still told PA Sport: "There has been no contact whatsoever, but if Newcastle were interested in Sven-Goran Eriksson, I am sure Sven-Goran Eriksson would be interested in talking to Newcastle."

Only last month, Shepherd dismissed speculation Eriksson was being lined up to replace Roeder.

However, the 51-year-old's resignation on Sunday saw Allardyce swiftly installed as the main contender with most bookmakers suspending betting.

Allardyce's own departure from Bolton with two years of his con-

tract still to run means there is an issue of compensation and that could yet prove a stumbling block, while allegations made against him - which he strongly denied - by the Panorama bungs programme are a further complicating factor.

Eriksson's pedigree means the link is inevitable, although Shepherd has repeatedly played down an interest in the man who quit as England manager after last summer's World Cup finals.

He has been touted for virtually every high-profile job which has come up since, although is awaiting the right opportunity.

Still said: "Sven is very keen to get back into club football and he would be interested in talking to any club which had real ambition."

Lalas awaits Becks impact

Football

INTERNET, undated

is doing.

"He is worth every penny, without a doubt," Lalas told PASport.

Claiming the league as a whole needed to do something 'big and bold' to reach the next level, Lalas believes signing Beckham was a 'no-brainer'.

"You can't get any bigger than David Beckham," he said. "You have to pay for it, but the international attention that the Galaxy have got and the league has got is unprecedented."

"The deal is unprecedented in the world of sports and it reflects the iconic stature of David Beckham and what we feel he's going to do for us as a soccer player and as an ambassador for the game."

Beckham will not be alone. His arrival has been facilitated by the new designated player rule which allows clubs to break their salary cap for one chosen player.

Mexican star Cuauhtimoc Blanco will ply his trade in Chicago, while the Red Bulls, who traded with Kansas City to acquire a second designated player spot, are employing former Premiership

stars Claudio Reyna and Juan Pablo Angel this season.

But amid the influx of foreign talent, MLS is determined not to repeat the mistakes of the North American Soccer League, which famously shipped in the likes of Pele, Franz Beckenbauer and George Best during the 1970s, only to fail in bankruptcy as the novelty wore off.

Unlike the NASL, MLS is starting from a position of strength. The league has enjoyed rapid growth in its first 11 years, establishing relatively small but strong pockets of support in its host cities.

The focus on having teams build their own soccer-specific stadiums continues to bear fruit, adding revenue and credibility to those clubs who have taken the plunge.

Last summer, before Beckham's name had even appeared in the gossip columns, the league signed the biggest television rights deal in its history, an eight-year contract with ABC/ESPN which will see the league turn a profit on its rights for the first time. Expansion continues apace. Toronto FC joined the league this season and there is a queue of cities - the likes of Atlanta, Seattle, Miami, St. Louis, Philadelphia and the Bay Area included - competing to win one of three more franchises set to be created in the next three years.

The league has come a long way in a short space of time as Lalas - a player in the inaugural season - knows as well as anyone.

"It was the Wild West there for a while," he said of the first year of MLS in 1996.

"The progress that has been made is unprecedented in terms of how dramatic and sudden the improvement has been."

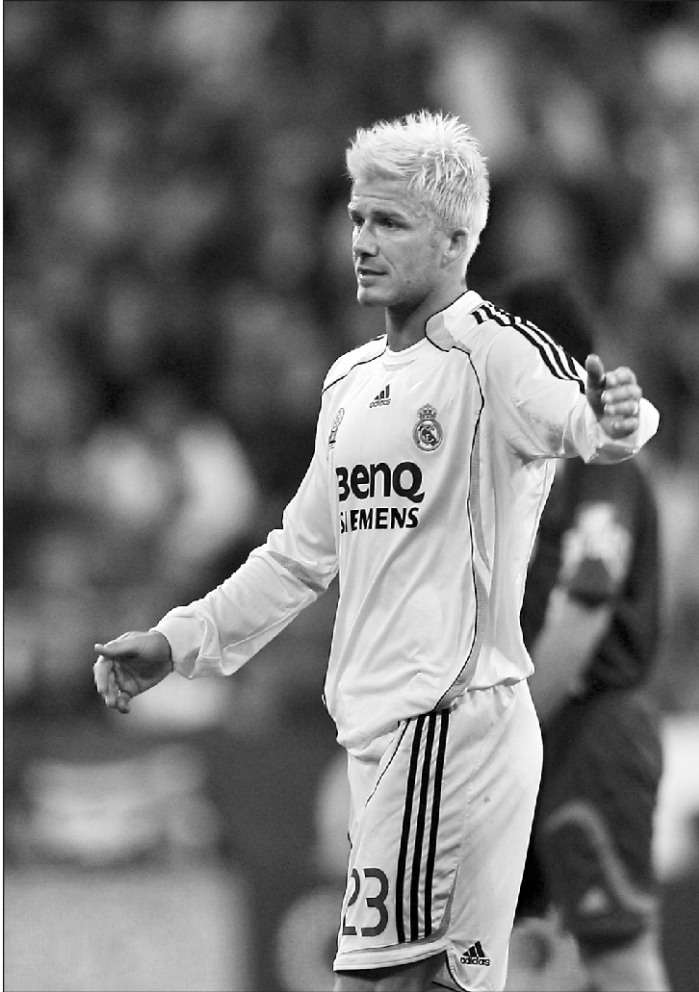
That growth is what gave the league the confidence to aim for the next level.

Beckham's signing is a multi-million dollar gamble, but not one taken lightly. Competing on a sporting landscape dominated by the NFL, baseball and the NBA, MLS had to do something radical to boost its profile.

It will never overshadow those more established leagues, but it can take its place alongside them.

And in the wider soccer world, Lalas believes the US can become a major power.

"It's going to take a lot of work," he said. "But at some point I want to reach the day where a kid in Europe, when they think about the world's best teams, they will think about Real Madrid and Manchester United, but also the Galaxy."



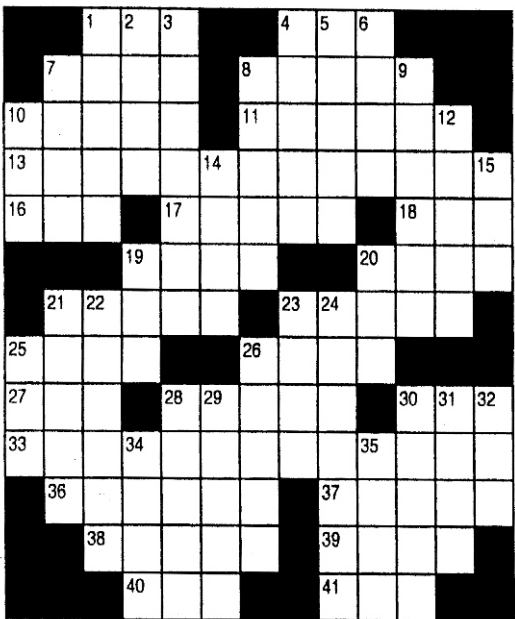
DAVID BECKHAM

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	27 Mole, maybe	2 Sword handle	19 Clear the tables
1 Third degree?	28 Chopping tool	3 "Lakmé" composer	20 "Monty Python" intro
4 Discoverer's call	30 Moreover	4 Island farewell	21 —
7 Soft cheese	33 "Hook" star	5 Rundown	New Guinea
8 In accompaniment	36 Punish with a fine	6 From the start	22 They're the pits
10 Fringe benefit	37 Scent	7 Very dry	23 Bread spread
11 Book-store section	38 Long stories	8 Anxious	24 Ticket price, perhaps
13 1978 Kansas hit	39 Mysterious character	9 Software problem	25 Hallucinations
16 \$ dispenser	40 Document safety	10 Food safety org.	26 Analgesic targets
17 — metabolism	41 Burns	12 Uppity ones	28 Mournful music
18 As well	42 Early bird?	14 Church area	29 Ancient Peruvian
19 Group of quail	DOWN	15 Comedian	30 Surrounded by
20 Cold War weapon (Abbr.)	1 Spectrum creator	DeLuise	31 Appellation
21 Obey a comma			32 Geneticist's abbr.
23 Four-letter words			34 Ship-building wood
25 Some are chocolate			35 1960s dance
26 Baba and MacGraw			

Solution time: 21 mins.

LOAF	UFO	SLICK
ABLE	NUN	DOZE
TOFU	BROADWAY	
HEADWAY	WEARS	
ATIR	SON	
DEALT	BELTWAY	
URN	BOX	ICE
ORANGUTAN	LUIGIES	
ROD	KEN	
POLAR	FAREWAY	
STEINWAY	EASE	
STAN	QVA	SCAN
TIONY	EELK	TOPS



CRYPTOQUIP

D Q N - P N P N R K N V Y L N Q L

BRNGVD BCCGKICGH CM DGRR

W G B R G D C B C G M V M C L G W

Y M W R H D : " R M C D N V D I B Q G . "

Yesterday's Cryptquip: IF FOLKS PURCHASE MERCHANDISE THAT'S FULL OF MANY TINY CRACKS, DO THEY PAY A FISSURE PRICE?

Today's Cryptquip Clue: N equals I