



PHOTO: AFP

Manchester United defender Wesley Brown (R) tries to evade a sliding challenge from striker Ole Gunnar Solskjaer (C) during a training session at the club's training ground in Carrington on Wednesday.

Schweini might miss qualifiers

AFP, Berlin

German international midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger has been forced to postpone his comeback from injury and could miss his country's two Euro 2008 games in June, Bayern Munich said on Tuesday.

Schweinsteiger had been hoping to return to the Bayern lineup for their final match of the season against San Marino on June 2 and Slovakia on June 6.

Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld told the club's website that the most important thing was that Schweinsteiger was "fit again for the start of preparations for the new season."

Reigning champions Bayern are set to finish fourth in the Bundesliga, missing out on Champions League qualification and making it a disastrous season by their standards.

Club bosses have promised a shakeup and new signings.

Tired Ronnie opts out of Copa

AFP, Sao Paulo

Brazil's hopes of recapturing the Copa America in July have been dealt a further blow with a request from midfield star Ronaldinho not to be considered for selection.

The Barcelona star has told the Brazil Football Federation that he is too tired to play after a long season in Spain and Europe which is still underway.

That follows hard on the heels of a similar request from AC Milan's on-form midfielder Kaka. The two men are key elements in the side coached by Dunga.

Before the Copa America in Venezuela (June 26-July 15), Brazil

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Hoyzer begins jail-term

AFP, Berlin

A former referee convicted for a match-fixing scandal that shook football in Germany before the 2006 World Cup will begin serving his jail sentence on Friday, he told a German magazine.

Robert Hoyzer, 27, was jailed for two years and five months by a Berlin court in 2005 after he admitted fixing matches in a two-million-euro (2.7-million-dollar) betting scam.

The severity of his sentence surprised many observers because prosecutors had only called for a suspended jail term, but Hoyzer failed in an appeal in December last year.

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C'Ron looking to retain title

INTERNET, undated



champion.

Ronaldo was the inspiration behind Manchester United's successful title drive this season.

And, after scooping the PFA and FWA player of the year awards, the 22-year-old winger added another two personal accolades to his collection at a plush ceremony at Old Trafford on Monday when he picked up the United fans and players' player of the year trophies.

His next winners' medal could arrive on Saturday when United face Chelsea in a mouth-watering

first FA Cup final at the new Wembley.

However, if anyone thinks the Portugal superstar will be satisfied with one season of glory, they have got it badly wrong.

"We all want more trophies," he told MUTV. "I have waited a few years to win the Premier League but now we have done it once, we want to win it again."

"I am at a great club, with great players. We should be looking to win something every year."

"This season is not over yet either. We still have a chance to win the double and, while you can never say who will win any match, the confidence in the team is high and I believe we have a good chance."

If United are to complete an unprecedented fourth domestic double, they will have to do so without skipper Gary Neville.

The full-back, who has not featured since injuring his ankle against Bolton on March 17, had been given every chance to prove his fitness by Sir Alex Ferguson.

However, a return to football training on Monday only brought further pain and Neville has now undergone an exploratory operation to determine the extent of the problem.

Ferguson will choose between Wes Brown and John O'Shea to replace Neville. But while the Scot has options, Neville's injury blow is more serious for England coach Steve McClaren.

Already without Manchester City's Micah Richards, who has had calf surgery, McClaren now faces the June 1 friendly with Brazil and the much more important Euro 2008 qualifier in Estonia the following week with his two right-backs unavailable.

Neville ruled out of Cup final

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United confirmed Tuesday that captain Gary Neville has been ruled out of the FA Cup final because of an ankle injury.

The 32-year-old has been out of action since March 17 and the club have confirmed he will not play again this season.

A club statement said: "Gary Neville has undergone an exploratory operation on his right ankle and he will miss the FA Cup final."

Ryan Giggs is set to lead out United in the first final at the new Wembley with Neville's place in defence going to either Wes Brown or John O'Shea.

Sir Alex Ferguson had vowed to give the United skipper every chance of featuring against Chelsea on Saturday.

Neville's injury blow is more serious for England coach Steve McClaren.

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Bradley set for US

AFP, New York

Bob Bradley, named interim coach of the US national football squad five months ago while a job search continued, will be named to the post full time here on Wednesday, ESPN reported Tuesday.

Citing unnamed sources with knowledge of the decision, the television sport network's website reported that Bradley would get the job, ending a 10-month search to replace Bruce Arena following last year's first-round World Cup exit.

US Soccer has scheduled a news conference here Wednesday.

If Bradley indeed receives the full-time backing, his first match

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Blatter calls for professionalism

AFP, Zurich

Two weeks before standing unopposed for a third stint as FIFA president, Sepp Blatter on Tuesday warned the sport he heads that it must become more professional.

Blatter said the organisation of football needed to correspond closer to the outside world and set the standard of refereeing and the battle against violence in the sport as his biggest challenges ahead.

But the Swiss also had words of support for the beleaguered organising committee of the 2010 World Cup Finals in South Africa.

Asked what his aims in his third term would be, Blatter said: "The organisation of football needs to be more professional and in particular FIFA needs to correspond to the outside world."

"It's not enough to have one or two commissions looking after a sport that concerns two or three billion people."

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HILARIO'S STRIKER ROLE?

Injury woes haunt Chelsea

AFP, London



Manchester United in the FA Cup final later this month.

Mikel John Obi was the latest casualty after limping off the field against Everton on Sunday, adding to those undergoing treatment -- Andriy Shevchenko, Michael Ballack, Ricardo Carvalho and Arjen Robben are undergoing treatment, while Ashley Cole is facing a race against time to be fit.

Mourinho could have just 15 senior players fit for the May 19 Wembley showpiece.

"If Ashley is ready we have 15 players for the final," Mourinho told Chelsea TV. "I will have to choose between Hilario because he is not bad playing forward, or I'll bring one of the kids to make 16."

Michael Essien and Claude Makelele were rested against Everton on the final day of the

Premiership season, with Mourinho using youngsters Sam Hutchinson, Ben Sahar and Nuno Morais off the bench.

Mikel picked up a muscle injury in the 1-1 draw and limped off with 16 minutes remaining. "We will see but I think he is out of the game," said Mourinho.

Chelsea have recorded one win since April 18 and that was the Champions League semi-final, first leg against Liverpool which was cancelled out at Anfield.

Jose Mourinho's men have also seen the Premiership title go to Manchester United, who they face at the new Wembley Stadium on Saturday.

Keeping pace with United has not been helped by the injuries in Mourinho's squad which may lead to goalkeepers Hilario and Carlo Cudicini being on the bench for the final game of their season.

Victory for Chelsea's depleted squad at the weekend would put a smile back on the face of John Terry, who is determined to be the first skipper to lift the FA Cup at the new national stadium.

"I have not been too happy recently but that is the same for all the lads and it is good to see," he said. "The last thing I would have

wanted was to get knocked out of the Champions League, lose the Premiership and be happy, and it has been nice to see everyone moping about a bit."

After conceding their Premiership crown, Terry and his team-mates then gave United a respectful guard of honour at Stamford Bridge when they clapped the new champions on to the pitch.

Terry added on club website chelseafc.com: "I certainly didn't like it. As I'm sure they didn't like it two years ago. But it is part and parcel of the game and we both showed respect."

However, Terry wants to pick up his players for the club's first FA Cup since 2000.

"This is a competition we as a team haven't won yet, like the League Cup two years ago when it was a first chance to win a trophy together," he added. "It is a great trophy and the first one at the new Wembley. That is another reason to be fired up."

"It is like not having won the Champions League together. If we can keep building on things like winning the FA Cup, hopefully next year the Champions League might come."

Jose's run-in with police



INTERNET, undated

Jose Mourinho has admitted to being cautioned by police after an incident involving his pet Yorkshire terrier but pledged to co-operate fully with the authorities.

Mourinho was released without charge last night following a misunderstanding over the documents required for veterinary regulations.

A spokesman for Mourinho said: "Jose Mourinho can confirm that he was cautioned by police, and released without charge earlier this morning, after an incident involving his pet dog."

"The incident occurred due to a misunderstanding over documents required for veterinary regulations."

"Mr Mourinho would like to make it clear that his pet dog was bought in England from a reputable breeder and has had all its necessary inoculations. Full co-

operation will be given to the authorities over any animal health issues."

Officers were concerned the dog had been taken abroad, then back to Britain, without the required jabs.

Reports suggested that Mourinho had refused to let police take the dog and got into an argu-

ment with officers.

He received a caution for obstructing police at a west London police station.

A Scotland Yard spokesman said officers went to an address in central London at 7.45pm on Tuesday with an officer from the Animal Health and Welfare Service.

He said: "A 44-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of obstructing police and was taken to a west London police station."

"He subsequently received a caution for obstructing police."

Scotland Yard said the dog was to be seized for alleged offences under the Animal Health Act of 1981 and the Rabies Order of 1974.

The spokesman said officers discussed the removal of the animal from the address with the owners.

Mourinho, 44, was at Chelsea's player of the year awards when his wife Tami telephoned to tell him the dog was being taken away.



JOSE MOURINHO

Benitez cool on Gerrard deal

INTERNET, undated



extensive contract talks that should produce a new long-term deal for Steven Gerrard before next week's reunion with Milan.

The Liverpool captain leads a cast of senior players negotiating with the club's owners Tom Hicks and George Gillet about a contract extension, including Jamie Carragher, Xabi Alonso, Jose Reina and Steve Finnan, and yesterday he revealed his signature is imminent on a four-year deal worth £120,000

a week.

"I have told the club I want to stay and it is just around the corner," said Gerrard, who has two years remaining on his existing deal. "It is a question you would have to put to (chief executive) Rick Parry, and the American owners, but I'm ready to sign any time. As soon as it is put in front of me I will do so."

Hesitation on the part of the Anfield hierarchy almost prompted an acrimonious departure by Gerrard to Chelsea following the European Cup win in 2005 but now, with Liverpool's ambitions for this summer made clear to their captain, Benitez is adamant that contract talks can serve as a fillip prior to Athens.

"It is a different situation to two

years ago," claimed Benitez, who travelled with his squad to La Manga in Spain last night. "We have tried to show the players we have confidence in them. I think Steven has received that message. We know the players' ideas and they know ours. Now it's the agents talking to the club, so the players can concentrate and focus on the final. It must be done in one meeting. If we can't do it in one meeting, we'll do it after the final. But there's no pressure. It'll be two friends trying to find an agreement and it will not have a big difference for the final."

Benitez delivered a withering retort yesterday to Jorge Valdano's condemnation of the Champions League semi-final between

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PHOTO: AFP

Newly signed Newcastle United manager Sam Allardyce speaks to the press during his unveiling at St James' Park in Newcastle on Tuesday.

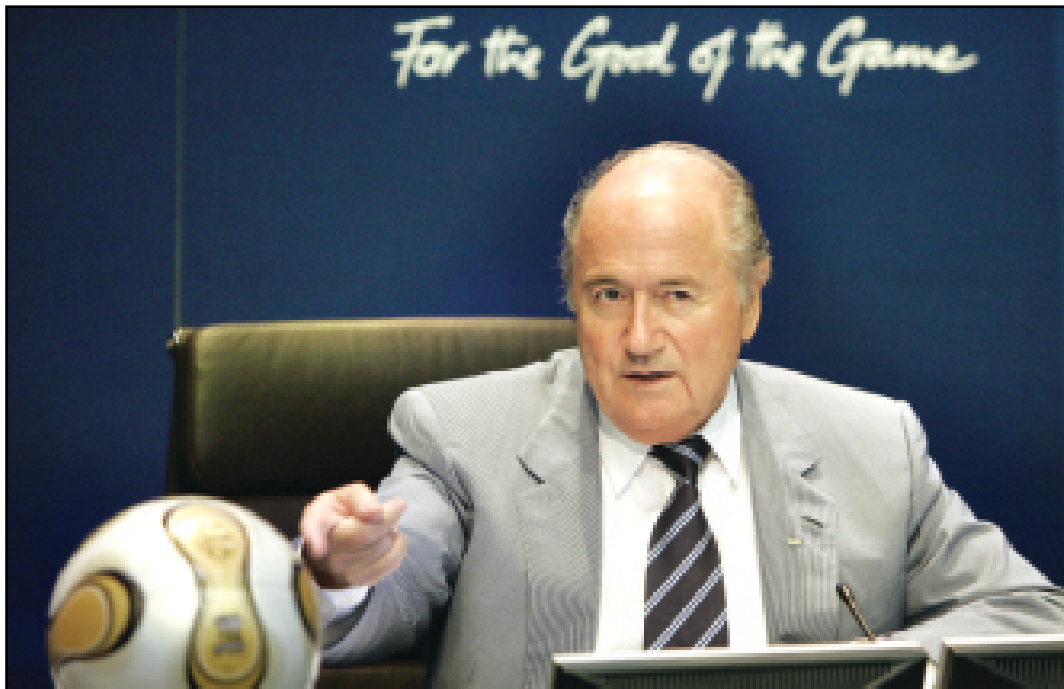


PHOTO: AFP

FIFA president Sepp Blatter gestures during a roundtable with journalists at the International Football Federation headquarters in Zurich on Tuesday.