



Swiss world no. 1 Roger Federer goes crosscourt to hit a backhand against Michael Russell of USA during their French Open first round match at Roland Garros in Paris on Tuesday.

Fiorentina confirm Toni's departure

AFP, Rome

Italian club Fiorentina announced Monday the departure of their star forward, Luca Toni who has been linked with a move to Bayern Munich.

A Fiorentina statement said Toni met with the Tuscan club's president Andrea della Valle earlier Monday.

"We thank him for the significant contribution he has made to the club over two seasons, scoring 49 goals. The president of the club wanted to allow the player to pursue his career with a different club as he wished," said the club.

According to the Italian press, Toni is expected to sign for Bayern with the German giant's president, Franz Beckenbauer, confirming his interest in the player this month.

"He is guaranteed to score goals, he has character and is always devoted to his club: he is a unique player," Beckenbauer told La Gazzetta dello Sport.

The 30-year-old was the top scorer in Serie A last season with 31 goals before winning the World Cup last summer.

Toni has scored 16 goals this season for Fiorentina who qualified for next season's UEFA Cup after finishing fifth in the league despite being clocked 15 points for their part in the match-fixing scandal.

Gascoigne in emergency surgery

AFP, London

Troubled former England midfielder Paul Gascoigne has undergone emergency surgery on a perforated stomach ulcer, his agent said on Monday.

"Gazza", one of the most talented players of his generation, was taken ill as he celebrated his 40th birthday on Sunday.

"Paul Gascoigne was admitted to hospital last evening with severe stomach pains," the star's agent Jane Morgan said.

"He underwent emergency surgery for a perforated stomach ulcer and will remain in hospital for a few days."

"He's recovering well from the surgery."

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

McLaren 1-2 under scrutiny

AFP, Monte Carlo



McLaren claim they are confident an investigation into their team tactics in Sunday's Monaco Grand Prix will clear them of breaking the rules.

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SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Nesta gone for good?

Football

INTERNET, undated

Milan defender Alessandro Nesta may have quit the Italian national side for good, coach Roberto Donadoni has said.

Nesta was not included in Donadoni's squad for the Euro 2008 qualifiers in Faroe Islands on Saturday and Lithuania a week on Wednesday after asking to be left out as he is getting married.

However, the coach said his absence may now be much longer.

"I hope it was just an off-the-cuff remark or at least I try to be optimistic as it seemed his choice was definite," Donadoni told reporters as his squad gathered for training at their base near Florence.

Nesta missed out on playing in Italy's World Cup final win over France last July through injury and other knocks have meant he has only featured once since in the 3-1

victory in Georgia in October.

Nesta follows Francesco Totti in walking away from the national team.

AS Roma striker Totti, who was Serie A's top scorer this season with 26 goals, has not played for Italy since the World Cup and has shown no inclination of wanting to return.

"Everyone is free to choose what they think is right. I do not interpret it as a refusal to play for the world champions, more a decision about their current condition," Donadoni added.

"Whoever joins up must be fit, but also must be committed and motivated. I have talked with Totti and Nesta, accepting the justifications they have given me. Have I tried to convince them? I have done what was right but there is a limit."

"I repeat, for my point of view there is no problem." Italy are fourth in Group B, two points behind leaders Ukraine, Scotland and France.

Both the top clubs are level on points.

Barca appealing Ronnie's red

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona said Monday they were appealing against the red card earned by striker Ronaldinho in Saturday's 1-0 win at the Nou Camp over Getafe.

The Brazilian was sent off five minutes before the break, having netted the only goal in the second minute, for aiming a kick at rival David Belenguer.

Although he barely appeared to make contact, referee Perez Burrull showed him the red card.

Barcelona said on their official website that they would Tuesday present their case, including video evidence, to the Spanish league's competition commission in their wifesitting.

If the card stands then Ronaldinho could be forced to sit out the Catalan club's last two league games against Espanyol and relegated Gimnastic Tarragona as they bid to overhaul Real Madrid in the title race.

Both the top clubs are level on points.

Federer off to a rollicking start

AFP, Paris



Roger Federer's latest bid to add the French Open to his glittering collection of 10 Grand Slam titles got off to a winning start at Roland Garros on Tuesday.

The world number one beat American journeyman Michael Russell 6-4, 6-2, 6-4 in a match which had been held over since Monday, one of many victims of the torrential rain which swamped Paris on the opening two days of the tournament.

Federer led 6-4, 4-1 when play was halted the previous evening, but he took less than 50 minutes to wrap up victory in bright sunshine on Court Philippe Chatrier on Tuesday to set up a second round meeting with French wildcard Thierry Ascione.

Spain's Tommy Robredo, the ninth seed and who could face Federer in the quarterfinals, also went through beating Argentina's Sergio Roitman 6-3, 6-4, 6-2.

Argentina's 19th seed Guillermo Canas, playing here for the first time since serving a 15-month doping ban and who has defeated

Federer twice this season, was also a first round winner Tuesday.

Canas, twice a Roland Garros quarterfinalist, defeated Victor Hanescu of Romania 6-3, 6-1, 6-4.

It was promising to be a bumper day of action at the French Open, where organisers are trying to relieve the backlog caused by two days of heavy rain which meant only 14 matches were completed on Sunday and Monday.

In the women's championship, where prize money matches the men's for the first time, fourth seed Jelena Jankovic, sixth seed Nicole Vaidisova, and 13th seed Elena Dementieva all cruised into the second round.

Serbia's Jankovic, buoyed by victory in Rome in the run-up to Roland Garros, eased past France's Stephanie Foretz 6-2, 6-2 while Czech teenager Vaidisova, a semifinalist in 2006, saw off Switzerland's Emmanuel Gagliardi 6-4, 6-3.

Russia's Dementieva, the runner-up to compatriot Anastasia Myskina in 2004, was also a comfortable winner beating Germany's Angelique Kerber 6-3, 6-2.

Jankovic is being talked off as a potential champion at Roland Garros after winning three titles in 2007 and she said she is over the

illness which forced her to pull out of the Strasbourg semifinals last week.

"It was almost 40 degrees there last week and I was throwing up," said the 22-year-old.

"But I'm OK now. Being one of the favourites here doesn't bother me. I just try to give my maximum on court, that's all I care about."

Russian 11th seed Nadia Petrova, a semifinalist in 2003 and 2005, was knocked out losing 7-5, 5-7, 6-0 to Czech qualifier Kvet Peschke.

Peschke needed treatment on a back injury at the start of the second set and her movement became more restricted as the tie went on.

Russian 13th seed Mikhail Youzhny rebounded the second round when Czech opponent Jan Hernych withdrew because of a back injury during the first game.

Dutchman Martin Verkerk, the shock runner-up to Juan Carlos Ferrero in 2003 but who has slumped to 717 in the world after missing two years with a shoulder injury, couldn't repeat the magic of four years ago.

He slumped to a 6-1, 6-4, 6-4 defeat to Italy's Simone Bolelli to leave him still without a victory on the main tour since July 2004.

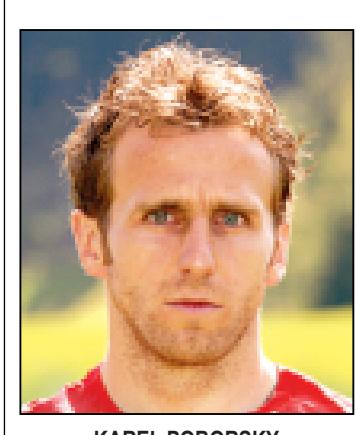
Poborsky hangs up his boots

AFP, Prague

The Czech Republic's most capped ever footballer Karel Poborsky retired from the sport on Monday.

The 35-year-old Ceske Budejovice midfielder said he had lost his enthusiasm for the game, which saw him win 118 caps -- scoring eight goals and featuring in the Euro '96 final as well as the Euro 2004 semifinals.

"I made my mind up during the winter break," said Poborsky, who is also president of the First Division club.



KAREL POBORSKY

"I was becoming more and more difficult to get motivated."

"I have invested in lots of other concerns, and no matter how difficult it is for me to say, I am no longer happy with football," added Poborsky, who ended his playing career with a 2-1 defeat at the hands of one of his former clubs Slavia Prague.

Poborsky, who also played for Manchester United, Benfica, Lazio and Sparta Prague and last month became technical director of the national side, said that he had hugely enjoyed his career.

"I won several national championships, I played in three European Championships finals and one World Cup," said Poborsky, who was part of the squad that failed to live up to expectations at last year's World Cup finals where they crashed out in the first round.

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"I was named best player of my country and my career brought me many happy moments."

Corradini in charge of Juve

AFP, Rome

Giancarlo Corradini will be in charge of Italian giants Juventus for their final two matches of the season it was announced on Monday.

The 46-year-old replaces France's 1998 World Cup and Euro 2000 winning captain Didier Deschamps, who resigned on Saturday despite guiding them back into Serie A after they were relegated because of the matchfixing scandal.

Corradini, a former defender with Torino and Napoli, has been at Juventus since 1999, starting as youth coach and was appointed Fabio Capello's assistant in 2004.

Deschamps, a former Juve player, is said to have fallen out with the club's management over concerns about losing key players and negotiations over a new contract -- he had one year remaining on his present one.

Last summer Juventus were demoted from Serie A and given a nine-point handicap in Serie B for their role in the Italian match-fixing scandal.

Morales hits out at stadia ban

Football

AFP, La Paz

FIFA has been urged to reconsider its ban on international matches played at stadia like La Paz in Bolivia situated over 2500m above sea level.

World football's governing body introduced the new ruling on Sunday citing its wish to better protect players' health.

But its decision has stirred up a storm in Latin America led by Evo Morales, the president of Bolivia, who has called on FIFA to shelve the idea.

"Everybody in the pit-lane and the media would be saying, 'what an idiot the team principal from McLaren is for allowing his cars to compete, when one of them is in the bar.'

Dennis added that his decisions were not tantamount to team orders but formed instead a team strategy to win the race.

"Team orders is what you bring to bear to manipulate a Grand Prix."

"And we do not, and have not, manipulated Grand Prix."

Alonso leads the drivers' title race on 38 points, the same number as Hamilton, but has the edge as he has won two races this season.

ignores the principle of legality and universality inscribed in the Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations."

The Bolivia president said he would be contacting other countries and cities affected by the ban to form a unified opposition to the ruling and is planning to hold a meeting in La Paz to discuss further action.

"We will be calling on our fellow presidents from Argentina, Brazil and other Latin American countries who are opposed to this decision so as to take into account those people who live at high altitude and who will find themselves excluded from playing sport."

Morales said: "This ban discriminates against the legitimate right of people to play football and

medical reasons and so to better protect the players the executive committee has decided that from now international games at over 2500m altitude will be banned."

South American delegates in at FIFA's meeting in Zurich at the weekend suggested FIFA would be prepared to reconsider the ruling if it received a formal request to do so from the continent's football confederation, Conmebol.

Part from the Bolivian capital which lies 3600m above sea level the ban will also cover the Colombian capital Bogota (2600m) and Quito (2800m) in Ecuador.</