



## Riquelme guides Boca to glory

Football

AP, Porto Alegre

Juan Roman Riquelme scored a pair of second-half goals and Boca Juniors defeated Gremio 2-0 to win its sixth Copa Libertadores title on Wednesday.

Riquelme, playing his farewell match with the Argentine club, scored with a well-placed shot from outside the area in the 69th minute and added another in the 80th minute on a rebound from a shot by Palacio.

"We played well in both matches and took advantage of the result in the first leg," said Riquelme, who was selected the finals most valuable player. "I'm very happy with the title. The fans deserved it."

Boca won the first leg 3-0 last week in Buenos Aires and could have clinched its fourth title in seven years even if it had lost by two goals.

Needing to score at least three time, Gremio pressed from the start,

but could not finish its chances. Boca defended well to hold off the Brazilian attack.

"Our team made too many mistakes, just like in the first match," Gremio defender Lucio said. "All we can do is congratulate Boca players and move on."

The title moved Boca within one trophy of Argentine rival Independiente, which has a record seven. Boca's other titles came in 1977-78, 2000-01 and 2003.

"We knew we had a good advantage," Boca striker Martin Palermo said. "But we still had to play good enough to contain Gremio and their fans. After we scored the goals at the end everything was easier."

Boca also earns the right to play in FIFA's Club World Cup, which also will have European Champions League winner AC Milan. Boca beat Milan in 2003 when the club world title was only contested between the European and South American champions.

## Why Spain so lucrative

Football

AFP, Madrid

Foreign footballers plying their trade in Spain enjoy a relative tax boon given their special income tax rate of 24 percent which was introduced in 2004, financial newspaper Cinco Dias said Wednesday, quoting an Ernst Young study.

"In 2004, the government set up a special contributions regime for people coming to work in our country and who establish their fiscal residence there," Cinco Dias reported.

The ruling was dubbed "Beckham's Law" as it was applied just months after England star David Beckham arrived at Real Madrid and allowed a Spanish club to pay out less than English, German, Italian and French counterparts to foreign players in salary-related costs.

"On the basis of the same net annual salary a Spanish club pays around 29 percent less than Chelsea, 32.5 percent less than Inter Milan and 26 percent less than Bayern Munich in terms of gross salary," the study shows.

Adding to the advantages the

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## San Siro to host Italy-France tie

AFP, Rome

Milan's San Siro stadium will host the crucial Euro 2008 Group B qualifying match between world champions Italy and France, Italian football federation (FIGC) president Giancarlo Abete said on Thursday.

The match, which will take place on September 8, is a repeat of last year's World Cup final match-up in Germany which Italy won after a penalty shoot-out.

The San Siro is home to both AC Milan and Inter Milan.

After seven matches, France top Group B with 18 points, followed by Italy on 16 points and Scotland on 15 points.

The top two teams in the group will qualify for Euro 2008, which will be co-hosted by Austria and Switzerland.

## Milan angered by Kaka photo

INTERNET, undated

AC Milan have reacted furiously to a photo of Kaka which appeared in a Spanish newspaper.

The Brazilian has long been linked with a move from Milan to Madrid and was this week pictured holding up a copy of newspaper AS proclaiming Real as Spanish champions.

However, the Italian giants claim the photo is a fake and was actually taken at the Milan Sports Centre in April.

The European champions are furious at what they view as an attempt to unsettle Kaka. He's been linked strongly with Real in the last year, with Bernabeu president Ramon Calderon a confirmed suitor.

The Rossoneri issued a statement on their official website which read: "Milan have decided to answer 'As' with a letter which we have published in part:

"We have found on your online edition of your newspaper a reproduction of a photograph that shows our player Kaka in your paper, presumably in an edition that is not June 18, 2007.

"The image is however fruit of an obvious photomontage because the photograph was taken at the Milanello Sports Centre in the middle of April 2007.

"Consequently, Kaka could not exhibit a newspaper that would have been published only two months later.

"The photomontage is not innocent: it re-enters, in fact, in the greater context of the repeated

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## Thaksin wins City bid

AFP, London



Thailand's ousted premier Thaksin Shinawatra, facing corruption charges at home, won acceptance on Thursday for an 81.6-million-pound bid for English Premiership football club Manchester City.

The formal bid for the Blues, worth 121.5 million euros or 162.6 million dollars, was made by Thaksin's UK Sports Investments company and was backed by management at Manchester City, the boards said in a joint statement.

The offer came as Thai prosecutors in Bangkok laid formal criminal corruption charges against former prime minister Thaksin in the first case to reach court since a coup last year removed him from power.

Manchester City, which finished a disappointing 14th place last season in the Premiership, has become the latest English football team to attract takeover interest from abroad.

"This offer provides an exciting opportunity to take Manchester City to the next stage of our development and deliver the on-field success we have been striving for," Man City chairman John Wardle said in the statement.

If the bid for Manchester City is completed, eight Premiership clubs will be under foreign ownership -- including also Aston Villa, Chelsea, Fulham, Liverpool, Manchester

United, Portsmouth and West Ham United.

Hong Kong businessman Carson Yeung is bidding to buy Premiership newcomers Birmingham City, while Arsenal may soon face a takeover offer from US magnate Stan Kroenke, who recently built up a 12.0-percent stake in the London club.

Finally, Newcastle United were this month bought by British tycoon Mike Ashley.

Premiership clubs are being sought at a time when income of each of the league's 20 teams is set to rise by an average of more than ten million pounds per year following a record-breaking overseas television rights deal.

"I am delighted that the board of Manchester City has recommended my bid for the club and I look forward to continuing the excellent work of the club back to its rightful place at the highest level of competition in both the Premier League and European football."

Manchester City have long lived in the shadows of neighbours Manchester United. While the Red Devils have won countless domestic honours as well as European titles over the past two decades, success for City has come only in the form of promotion to the Premiership.

City sacked Stuart Pearce as their manager at the end of the 2006-07 season and have yet to find a replacement.

Sven-Goran Eriksson's agent has rubbished claims the former England manager is set to fill the role should Shinawatra win control of the club.

With City in limbo, the club has been unable to attract new players, while last season's star performers, Joey Barton and Sylvain Distin, have joined Newcastle and Portsmouth respectively in time for the new season which begins in August.

If Thaksin takes control at Man City, Wardle will remain on the board, while Alistair Mackintosh will stay as chief executive.

Although Thaksin has won over the board, he must still gain the backing of other shareholders and pass a standard "fit and proper person" test. This is carried out by the Premier League, which runs the Premiership.

In Bangkok, meanwhile, Noppadon Pattama, Thaksin's lawyer and spokesman in Thailand, said that Thai police should deliver corruption charges to the former premier overseas, rather than demand the exiled leader return to Thailand.

Thaksin and his wife Pojman were ordered to appear before police in Bangkok next week to face corruption charges over an alleged fraudulent filing to the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Thaksin has stayed in exile since the military toppled his government in September last year, staying mainly at his London home.

## Capello adamant about Real stay

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid coach Fabio Capello insists he will not resign despite reports in the Spanish media suggesting his days at the Bernabeu are numbered.

The Italian coach is under contract with Madrid until June 2009 but has come under increasing pressure in recent weeks with Getafe coach and former Madrid star Bernd Schuster strongly linked to take over at the club this summer.

"I will not resign," Capello told the Italian media.

"I have not presented my resignation because I want to continue. I am under contract and I am very happy living in Madrid."

The 61-year-old joined Madrid from Juventus last summer and guided Los Merengues to their first Primera Liga title since 2003.

However, Capello's uneasy relationship with Madrid president Ramon Calderon has reportedly left the tactician out of favour at the club.

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## Barca dream of Henry

AFP, Madrid



The best attack by a distance, the joint best defence and the most exhilarating football proved a recipe for failure for Barcelona this season as they went from kings of Europe and Spain to empty-handed bridesmaids.

After gifting the league title to Real Madrid and losing their Champions League crown after bowing out to finalists Liverpool the Catalan club now stand at the hub of the Europe-wide phoney war that starts when championships end in the shape of a summer of frenzied transfer activity.

As far as the voracious Spanish media are concerned, Arsenal's Thierry Henry will wear Barca's colours next season and could smooth down the feathers mutually ruffled this campaign by Samuel

Eto'o and Ronaldinho, leaders of "the two dressing room factions," according to AS sports daily.

According to Barcelona-based El Mundo Deportivo, Barca vice-chairman Ferran Soriano "is negotiating a transfer (for Henry) directly with Arsene Wenger" for upwards of 20 million euros.

AS insists Henry, 30 in August, has all but reached the exit door at Arsenal having been irritated by the surprise departure in April of vice-chairman David Dein, who cited "irreconcilable differences" with the rest of the Gunners board.

That move could impact negatively on manager Arsene Wenger's future at the Emirates Stadium and with the financial burden of the new venue weighing heavily, Arsenal may rely on the further development of youngsters such as Theo Walcott rather than splash out.

As AS points out, "Henry is set to turn 30 without important European honours with the club."

British media quoted Cameroon striker Eto'o as saying his close

friend would soon join him at the Nou Camp.

"He is a great mate of mine and we will play all together," Eto'o was quoted as saying by British newspapers, while former Arsenal skipper Patrick Vieira told the BBC, Arsenal must get the chequebook out if they want to keep the Frenchman.

According to AS, signing "Arsenal's French marksman has become a true obsession at the Nou Camp."

But AS also posed the question: "Who will sit on the bench?"

Leo Messi is also in Barca's array of attacking talent, as well as former Chelsea man Eidur Gudjohnsen, now seemingly surplus to requirements.

Eto'o seems sure to stay after AC Milan moved to sign Honduras international David Suazo and the European champions' vice-president Adriano Galliani said if the move was finalised they would drop their interest in the Barca man

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Former South African president Nelson Mandela smiles as he receives a Barcelona jersey from club manager Albert Perrin (unseen) at the Mandela Foundation in Houghton on Wednesday. Barcelona are in South Africa to play an exhibition match at Loftus Versfeld, one of the 10 venues for the 2010 FIFA World Cup, in Johannesburg later today.

PHOTO: AFP