



PHOTO: AFP

Pakistan's Aisam-Ul-Haq Qureshi celebrates a point against Great Britain's Lee Childs during their first round match of the Wimbledon in London on Tuesday.

Abbiati loaned out to Atletico

AFP, Rome

AC Milan goalkeeper Christian Abbiati has joined Spanish first division side Atletico Madrid on a one-year loan, Milan confirmed on their website on Tuesday.

The 29-year-old former Italy international spent the whole of last season on loan to Milan's Serie A rivals Torino.

Abbiati joined AC Milan from Monza in 1998, but after four seasons as their number one keeper he lost his place to Brazilian Nelson Dida.

Abbiati was Milan's reserve keeper up until August 2005 when he was loaned out to their fierce rivals Juventus, making 19 league appearances for the Turin club.

He returned to Milan at the start of the 2006-07 season only to be sent out on loan again, this time to Torino.

Eriksson agrees City deal



Football

INTERNET, undated

Sven-Goran Eriksson took a step closer to taking over at Manchester City next season after agreeing in principle to a three-year deal with the sleeping Premiership giants.

City have been searching for a new boss since the sacking of Stuart Pearce at the end of last season, with a host of top names being linked to the post.

Eriksson is the first choice of Thaksin Shinawatra, the former Thai premier who is now the majority stakeholder of the club, and who expects a full takeover bid to be completed within the next three weeks.

But the Swede will have to wait a little longer before officially being announced as City's new boss. That is expected to happen once Thaksin has upped his stake in the club to 75 per cent.

The job is Eriksson's first since

leaving his post as England manager in the wake of their failed World Cup campaign last summer and as such his candidature has been met with a mixed reaction.

Many feel his reputation in England to have been irreparably damaged during his time at the helm of the national side, even though he has a proven track record at club level, most notably with Lazio in Italy.

With Thaksin's takeover at Eastlands looming large, Eriksson will be able to rely on a sizeable transfer war chest with which to strengthen the City squad for the next campaign, when he will be hoping to improve on last year season's disappointing 14th place in the Premiership.

Eriksson, who will reportedly earn 3million-pounds a year, is likely to bring in Roland Andersson, the current Sweden assistant coach, as his second in command.

Inter complete Suazo signing

AFP, Rome

Honduras international striker David Suazo has officially joined Inter Milan, the Serie A champions confirmed on Tuesday.

Inter had been involved in a bitter tug-of-war with city rivals AC Milan over the 27-year-old Cagliari striker.

Last week AC Milan announced that they had snapped up Suazo only to be told that the player had already signed a contract with Inter.

Inter will unveil Suazo at a press conference at their Appiano Gentile training ground on Wednesday morning.

Suazo, who joined Cagliari from Honduran club Olimpia in 1999, scored 14 goals in Serie A last season.

His best return since arriving in Italy was 22 goals in 37 matches in the 2005-06 season.

Platini hails blood testing

AFP, Paris

UEFA president Michel Platini on Monday hailed the decision by European football's governing body to introduce blood testing as part of their anti-doping campaign during next year's Euro 2008 tournament.

"We must make sure that the scourge of doping is not allowed to taint the world of football and this is another weapon in our armament," said Platini.

"Football has a very good reputation in the fight against doping, and now with the decision to introduce blood testing ... both at the competition and out-of-competition, we are further stepping up our controls."

The anti-doping programme approved by UEFA's Executive Committee on Saturday means that as well as testing urine for unauthorised substances, the blood of two players per team selected at the end of the match for the doping control will also be tested.

The tournament will be hosted by Austria and Switzerland.

No Reds offer for Torres

AFP, Madrid

Atletico Madrid president Enrique Cerezo brushed aside reports Monday he had received an offer from Liverpool for Spanish international striker Fernando Torres.

"We've received no offer from Liverpool or any other club or player," said Cerezo.

Reports Monday claimed Liverpool manager Rafa Benitez was interested in signing the striker from his homeland.

"There is nothing linking Torres with any team. He's on holidays, he's resting and he'll return to work on July 9," added Cerezo.

Torres is regularly linked with moves away from struggling Atletico, who finished seventh last season, tenth in 2005-2006 and 11th in 2004-2005.

The 23-year-old, who has 42 caps, scored 14 goals in La Liga this season.

Gimelstob makes history

AP, Wimbledon



In what might have been his last Wimbledon match, Justin Gimelstob made a bit of history: He was the first player to use instant replay at the All England Club.

During his 6-1, 7-5, 7-6 (3) first-round loss to Andy Roddick on Monday, the 155th-ranked Gimelstob invoked the "Hawk-Eye" challenge system to check one of his serves that was called wide in the first set.

He lost that, too. "I'd like to have a few more important records, but I'll take what I can get," said the American, who watched on one of the new court-side video screens when the replay showed it was, indeed, a fault. Several fans groaned in unison.

The challenge system is making its Wimbledon debut this year on Centre Court and Court 1. Its Grand Slam debut came at last year's U.S. Open.

There were a total of 16 challenges made Monday, with four calls getting overturned.

The 30-year-old Gimelstob had back surgery in September and figures this might be his final year on tour. That's why the results of his matches are less important than the experiences right now.

"It's a cliché, but it's so amazing out there, and I couldn't help but think a little bit towards the end of the match that this most likely is my last time I'll ever be on the court playing singles here," Gimelstob said.

"I kind of made a deal with the devil hoping to get through one more year," Gimelstob said. "After the U.S. Open last year it was very possible that my career was over."

Monday's match was played against a longtime friend. Gimelstob played doubles with Roddick's older brother as juniors.

"I have a ton of respect for Andy, personally and professionally, so I hope he goes on and wins the tournament," Gimelstob said.

He and Roddick made some friendly wagers about how the match would go -- including Roddick's first-serve percentage and the number of dives Gimelstob would make.

Using "Hawk-Eye" wasn't a subject of the gentlemen's bets.

"But when he did it, I thought of that," Roddick said. "So he has the first miss with 'Hawk-Eye' in Wimbledon history, as well."

HINGIS RALLIES

The "graveyard of champions" nearly claimed another victim Monday at Wimbledon.

Martina Hingis, the 1997 champion at the All England Club, needed to save two match points to beat British wild card Naomi Cavaday 6-7 (1), 7-5, 6-0.

"I was just like, 'No, this is not going to happen to me, not here again at Wimbledon,'" Hingis said. "I never lost on Court 2. I know it's a 'graveyard of champions,' but it's never been to me."

Hingis had not played since losing at the German Open in early May because of hip and back injuries.

"I don't want to miss out on Wimbledon no matter what happens," the ninth-seeded Hingis said. "It's about me taking the responsibility how far I want to take it. I'm trying to do everything possible."

Reflecting on her 1997 Wimbledon title, Hingis said she was happy to still be playing.

"The older you get, probably the more fears you have," Hingis said. "I was totally, like, pleased with myself. You think the whole world belongs to you."

After losing the first set, Hingis trailed 5-4 in the second, when Cavaday twice was one point from ending the match. But Hingis took the final nine games.

The 232nd-ranked Cavaday was torn after letting her big lead slip away -- something she might hear about from her mother, who happens to be a sports psychologist.

"It's difficult when it's your mom saying these things to you about tennis matches," Cavaday added. "I know she's there if I need her, but I tend not to use her, really."

HENMAN HANGS ON

Much to the home fans' delight, Tim Henman hung on to play another day at Wimbledon.

The four-time semifinalist, long considered Britain's best hope to win a title at the All England Club, was locked in a tight first-round match against former No. 1 Carlos Moya when play was suspended because of darkness at 5-5 in the fifth set Monday night.

Henman trailed by a set, then

was down a break in the fifth, but managed to prolong the match. The fans on Centre Court cheered wildly -- some even standing to applaud -- when Moya double-faulted to get broken to 4-4 in the decisive set.

After Henman held to go ahead 5-4, he wasted four match points, and Moya wound up holding serve. That's when the players met at the net and agreed it was too hard to see.

Henman lost in the second round at Wimbledon the last two years.

The last British man to win the championship at Wimbledon was Fred Perry in 1936.

POLICE REPORT

Even though police said there were no specific threats to players or spectators for Wimbledon, they are putting extra precautions in place this year -- particularly with an eye to making sure the Royal Box isn't a target now that Centre Court is without a roof.

The Civil Aviation Authority will alert police if any nearby aircraft raise suspicions.

"Every year we do change our tactics slightly," Metropolitan Police superintendent Pete Dobson said Monday. "We renew them and we refresh them. But mainly we change our tactics so if someone was trying to attack the venue they have something new to defeat every year."

Capdevila goes to Villa

AFP, Madrid

Spanish international defender Joan Capdevila has joined Villarreal from Deportivo La Coruna, the buying club said on Monday.

Villarreal said Capdevila will be officially presented on Wednesday and will join veteran Argentine defender Roberto Ayala, who joined from Valencia, as defensive reinforcements for the coming season.

The 29-year-old had been at Deportivo since 2000, having previously played for Atletico Madrid and Espanyol.