



Mexico striker Nery Castillo (C) shoots the ball past Brazilian goalkeeper Doni as Maicon (L) and Alex (R) look on during their opening Copa America match at Puerto Ortaz in Venezuela on Wednesday.

Too old to coach

AFP, Paris

Veteran French football coach Guy Roux's contract to coach first division side Lens next season has been overturned by the Professional Football League on the grounds that he is too old.

The 68-year-old Roux, who retired after 43 years as Auxerre coach two years ago, had been set to make a comeback in charge of Lens.

But the LFP confirmed on Wednesday that the two-year contract signed three weeks ago had been declared invalid by their legal commission because Roux was aged over 65 years, the age limit allowed by the professional football charter.

Roux said that he was not surprised by the decision and insisted that "justice would be done before the CNOSF".

"I'd been warned that the legal commission is a body whose bible is the football charter and who work bizarrely outside the law. I knew at this stage it would be no. So we'll see what happens."

Roux is one of the best-known figures in French football as much for his managerial skills as his outspoken comments and television punditry.

He took unfashionable Auxerre out of the second division to win the French league title in 1996 along with four French Cup triumphs in

SEE PAGE 22 COL 1

Federer sets up Safin clash

AFP, London



Roger Federer stroked his way to a 50th straight win on grass and took another graceful step towards matching Bjorn Borg's five consecutive Wimbledon titles.

The Swiss maestro, resuming his rain-delayed match against Argentinian teenager Juan Martin Del Potro at 2-0 in the 3rd set, quickly wrapped up a 6-2, 7-5, 6-1 victory to set up an intriguing third round clash with former US and Australian Open champion Marat Safin.

The world number one has not lost on his favourite surface since he was beaten in the first round here in 2002 by Croatia's Mario Ancic and, on Thursday's evidence, even a player of Safin's pedigree will struggle to halt his progress towards another final.

Federer has won seven of his nine career meetings with Safin but the pair have not played each other since the world number one edged a tight three-set battle on grass at Halle two years ago.

Safin however emerged victorious in the most important match the pair have played, the semifinal of the 2005 Australian Open which the Russian went on to win.

The big Russian, who claimed earlier this week that his confidence was shot, appeared to have recovered some self-belief as he made short work of Pakistani qualifier Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, winning 6-4, 6-2, 7-6 (7/4).

Qureshi, the first Pakistani to play in the Wimbledon men's singles since Haroon Rahim in 1976, had dreamt of becoming the first player from his country to reach the third round.

But Safin was in imperious form on the baseline and repeatedly picked off his opponent who attempted to serve and volley his way into the history books.

"I'll just go for it," he said of his clash with Federer. "I've got nothing to lose, he is the favourite."

French youngster Jo-Wilfried Tsonga fully justified the tournament organisers' decision to award him a wildcard by advancing to the third round.

The Muhammad Ali-lookalike, who had floored Lleyton Hewitt in the warm-up tournament at Queen's, demonstrated that he packs a punch on grass once more by sweeping experienced Ecuadorian Nicolas Lapentti aside 6-4, 6-2, 6-3.

In the women's singles, sixth seed Ana Ivanovic, basking in her new-found status as the darling of the British tabloids, showed she is

not just a pretty face as she eased past American Meilen Tu.

But France's Tatiana Golovin was forced to pack her bright red knickers away after being upset by Austria's Tamira Paszek.

The 17th seed, who again sported scarlet hot pants under her all-white outfit, went down to a 6-2, 3-6, 6-1 defeat by her Austrian opponent, who will now face Russian 12th seed Elena Dementieva.

British interest in the women's singles ended with Katie O'Brien's 6-0, 6-1 thrashing at the hands of Michaela Krajicek, the younger sister of former men's champion Richard who sends down her serve with similar venom to her big brother.

O'Brien had been the only British female to reach the second round and she admitted afterwards that many of her peers, backed by the huge resources generated by Wimbledon, were in need of a kick up the backside.

"We're lucky in this country, there's so many different things that we can do," O'Brien said. "It's easy to get financial security. You can just have a nine-to-five job and guarantee an income all the time."

"It's no secret that Eastern Europeans, they've had to fight for everything they've had. It's the best opportunity for them to make something of themselves."

Altitude ban to be rethought

AFP, Zurich

FIFA said on Thursday it would decide within days whether or not to allow World Cup qualifiers to be played in Bolivia's high altitude capital, La Paz, after a request from Bolivian President Evo Morales.

Morales made the formal request during a meeting with governing body president Sepp Blatter at FIFA headquarters in Zurich, a spokesman said.

"FIFA is well disposed to the request," FIFA spokesman Nicolas Maingot told AFP.

The footballing body's emergency committee is likely to make a decision early next week, he added.

FIFA's executive committee on Wednesday eased its recent ban on international matches at high altitudes following protests from several Latin American nations.

However the decision to tolerate World Cup qualifying matches at altitudes up to 3,000 metres -- instead of the 2,500 metres announced in May -- still left Bolivia's main stadium at 3,577 metre-high La Paz out of the reckoning.

Sania wants Israeli Peer

AFP, London

India's Sania Mirza is braced for another political and religious storm after agreeing to renew her doubles partnership with Israel's Shahar Peer at Wimbledon.

Mirza, a Muslim, and Peer are close friends on the tour and played together at the 2005 Japan Open where they reached the semifinals.

However, under pressure from militants furious over a Muslim and Jew playing together, the partnership broke up.

"We both didn't have partners and so close to the tournament I think we were very lucky to find each other because it's very hard to get good partners," said the 20-year-old Mirza.

"I think we complement each other. She plays on the backhand side, I play the forehand side."

"We've known each other forever and we've grown up together so I think we have a great chance. It's a great opportunity for us to play at a big event."

Peer said she was delighted to be back playing with Mirza.

"I always enjoyed playing with Sania," said Peer.

"But she asked if we could stop playing together last year because of pressures."

"I was pleasantly surprised when she suggested playing together at the French Open last month, but I had already promised to partner Dinara Safina. I'm really pleased to be with her again."

Mirza is no stranger to controversy.

Afatwah was once issued against her by extremists angry over the short skirts she wears on court.

Mirza and Peer have been seeded 16 at Wimbledon and will take on Lisa Osterloh and Sofia Andersson in the first round.

Mexico blank Brazil

Chile rally against Ecuador

AFP, Puerto Ordaz



Mexico masterminded a stunning 2-0 win over defending

champions Brazil in the opener for both teams at the 2007 Copa America championship on Wednesday.

Nery Castillo scored at the 24th minute before Ramon Morales made it 2-0 just five minutes later for underdog Mexico.

In the other Group B match on Wednesday, Chile rallied with two late goals to beat Ecuador 3-2.

Morales scored off a free-kick and Castillo beat a defender before hitting the mark to open the scoring against a depleted Brazil squad which was missing some key players.

Brazil had chances to score in the second half but Robinho's drive sailed off the crossbar.

Substitute Carlos Villanueva was the key as he stepped off the bench with 20 minutes remaining to set up one goal before scoring himself to clinch the victory for Chile.

Mexico coach Hugo Sanchez is confident his side will make it to the semifinals of the Copa America at the very least following their stunning victory.

"I'm not the best or the worst coach, it's simply a line of work. It's the players who made it happen, I direct them. There was no magic formula, just dedication and work."

"The boys played very well and

showed that Mexico are one of the most powerful teams on the continent. Mexico will reach the semifinals," said Sanchez.

Goal-hero Castillo was delighted to have defeated one of the best sides in the world.

"Brazil have the best players on the planet and we were better than them because we played good football," said the Olympiacos midfielder.

Brazil coach Dunga reflected: "The team played well but we let in two goals through lack of concentration."

"We created chances but weren't able to capitalise on them. But We're still in with a chance."

"Obviously we'd have liked to have started with a win but we have time to improve."

Real Madrid's Robinho added: "I prefer for the side to play badly and win than play well and lose."

Ecuador had dominated their game and had deservedly broken the deadlock through Antonio Valencia, who collected a pass from Carlos Tenorio before firing home.

In the 19th minute, Colo Colo striker Humberto Suazo equalised with a superb effort from distance, but Ecuador was soon back in front when Cristian Benitez took advantage of an error by Chilean goalkeeper Claudio Bravo to make it 2-1 in the 22nd minute.

Luis Fernando Suarez's side continued to dominate and had chances to further extend their lead but failed to convert any of them.

Chile's Uruguayan coach Nelson Acosta brought on Miguel Riffe and Juan Lorca during the interval in a bid to increase his side's attacking threat and it paid off.

Acosta hailed his side's determination of coming back from behind to win the match.

"Ecuador played better than us for the majority of the game, but in the second half we improved. The players overcame all the difficulties they faced," said Acosta.

"We did not play well, but to win always helps and gives us confidence."

Midfielder Rodrigo Melendez is confident Chile can go on to make history in the tournament.

"In the first half we controlled the ball, but Ecuador scored in the crucial moments," he said. "But we didn't give up and secured three important points. I believe that this team can make history."

Meanwhile, Ecuador coach Luis Fernando Suarez criticised the Chilean style of play.

"Chile aren't famous for being a team that shows spectacular soccer," he said. "We are a great team, but today we did not play well and that cost us the derby."

"Today we committed many errors that we cannot repeat if we want to qualify for the next round."

Chile next face Brazil while Ecuador face Mexico on Sunday.

ANOTHER HEAD ROLLS AT BERNABEU

Real get rid of Capello



AFP, Madrid

Newly-crowned Spanish champions Real Madrid on Thursday sacked their Italian coach Fabio Capello, sporting director Pedja Mijatovic announcing the board had made a unanimous decision.

Mijatovic made the announcement of the 61-year-old Capello's sacking -- the Italian is presently on holiday in Tibet -- following a Real board meeting.

"We have decided not to continue with Fabio Capello as our coach for next season," said Mijatovic.

"It was not an easy decision to take as he has worked well."

"But he is not the ideal person to achieve all that we want," added the former Real Madrid striker.

The decision was taken "with absolute unanimity" following a 75-minute board meeting, Mijatovic added.

"The board has taken important decisions for the future of the club. As sporting director I have submitted a detailed report of what transpired last season and presented it to the chairman and to the board, which has taken a unanimous decision not to continue with Fabio Capello as coach next season."

"It was a difficult decision to take as in spite of everything Capello did well over the season and won the title but, taking everything into account the board decided not to stick with him."

"We have taken a good decision even though it was not easy in the least," said Mijatovic, adding that the club would now "take time to look" for a successor.

Mijatovic would not be drawn on who they had lined up to replace

Capello, who is not the first Real coach to suffer the boot after delivering the title as Vicente del Bosque was despatched after the 2002-03 season.

That Liga win was the club's last honour until Capello landed the

club's record 30th league title. "There are candidates," said Mijatovic.

"Lots of coaches want to take on this team, we will not have many

SEE PAGE 22 COL 2

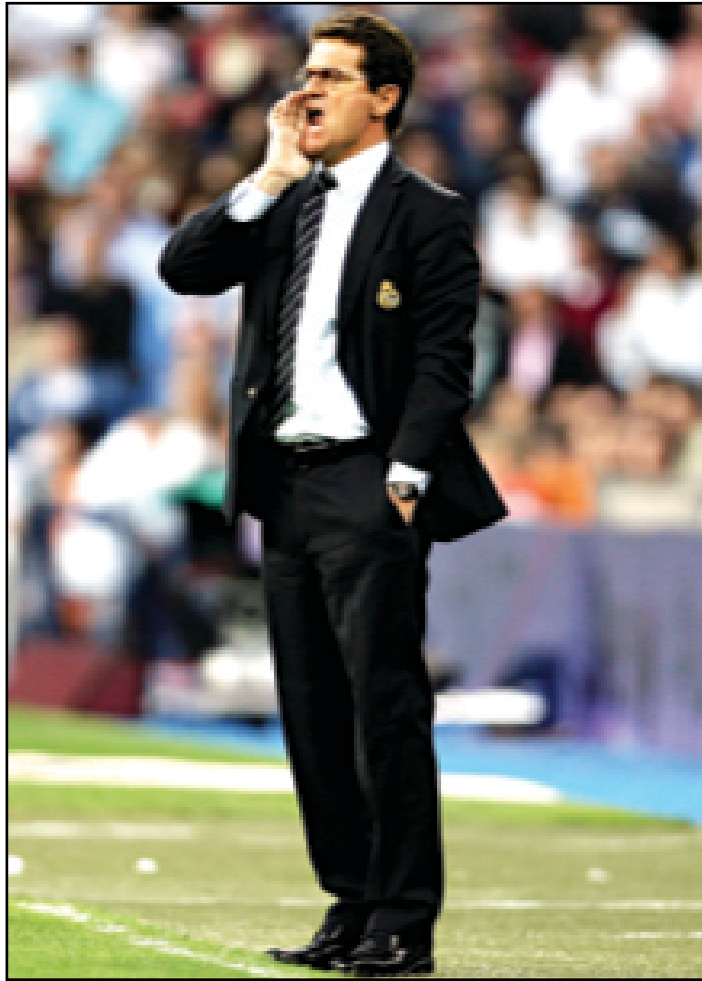


PHOTO: AFP FILE

Despite leading Spanish giants Real Madrid to their first league title in four years, Fabio Capello finds himself sacked by the glory-hunters of Bernabeu.

Fenerbahce move recharges Carlos



AFP, Fenerbahce

Brazilian fullback Roberto Carlos has said that his move to Turkish champions Fenerbahce from Spanish titleholders Real Madrid has given him a new lease on life and he expects to play for another four years.

"Normally at 34 people are finishing their sports careers, but I feel like I am starting mine," he told Spanish radio Cadena Ser on Wednesday.

"They made me feel important again, happy again. My future looked dark but they opened the door and I saw the light and followed the path," he added.

The 2002 World Cup winner reluctantly moved to Fenerbahce after 11 years at Real Madrid, whom he joined from Inter Milan, after failing to reach an agreement with the Spanish giants on a contract extension.

He had been linked to a return to

Inter Milan but failed to reach an agreement with the Italian side.

"Inter as with Real Madrid offered me a one-year contract and my plan is to play for four more years. Until my fitness lasts," he added.

"Fenerbahce has given me everything that Real Madrid would not give me. It hurts not to wear the white jersey again but I can't look back," he said.

Carlos said he was surprised to be blamed for Real Madrid being knocked out by Bayern Munich in the round of 16 of the Champions League in March.

"It bothered me. I got tired and I decided to go. I did not leave for money, at Fenerbahce I earn much less," he said.

Fenerbahce have not disclosed the duration or value of the contract, but Turkish newspapers reported that the club will pay Carlos four millions euros (5.3 million dollars) a year for two years and he will be eligible for bonuses totalling an additional one million euros (1.3 million dollars) a year.

But Carlos said he had signed for

three years with the club with the possibility to extend the contract for another two years.

Thousands of fans cheered Carlos last week when he formally signed his contract with the club at Istanbul's Suku Saracoglu stadium.

"It was incredible. I signed my contract before a packed stadium. They deserve to see Robert Carlos at his best. I am going to use my experience to win titles and get as far as possible in the Champions League," he said.

Fenerbahce began chasing Carlos last year, but the former international -- a World Cup winner in 2002 and finalist in 1998 -- decided to stay on with Real until the end of his contract.

During his tenure with Real, Roberto Carlos won three Champions League titles (1998, 2000 and 2002) and three Spanish league titles (1997, 2001 and 2003).

Fenerbahce crowned their centenary year this season with their 17th league title, but departed early from the Champions League.



PHOTO: AFP

World number one Roger Federer of Switzerland makes a forehand return during his second round match of Wimbledon against Juan Martin Del Potro of Argentina yesterday.