



Liverpool's new-signing, Ukrainian striker Andrey Voronin (C) jumps over the outstretched legs of Werder Bremen's Leon Andreasen (R) during a pre-season friendly in Grenchen, Switzerland on Tuesday.

Rooney backs Tevez chase

AFP, Tokyo

Wayne Rooney has given the thumbs up to Manchester United's 30 million pound move for Argentina striker Carlos Tevez after admitting that he is desperate to team-up with the West Ham star.

Tevez flew into Manchester on Tuesday ahead of a medical prior to his proposed switch to the Premiership champions, despite current club West Ham refusing to grant permission for the player to undergo the examination.

While United and West Ham attempted to thrash out a compromise that will smooth the way to Tevez moving to United, current Old Trafford forward Rooney insists he is already looking forward to playing alongside the Argentina star.

"Carlos Tevez was unbelievable for West Ham in the second-half of last season. He did brilliantly for them, keeping them up in the

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Lazio, Stuttgart play out draw

INTERNET, undated

Lazio held Stuttgart to a 1-1 draw in their first major friendly of the season with Stefano Mauri on target.

The Biancocelesti took on the Bundesliga side at the Franz Feteke Stadium in Kapfenberg, where they are holding their pre-season training.

The Italians had taken the lead after just eight minutes of play thanks to a goal from midfielder Mauri, but Farnerud drew level before the half-hour mark.

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Chelsea forward Didier Drogba (C) kicks the ball past Suwon Bluewings goalie Kim Dae Hwan to score during their friendly match at the Home Depot Centre in California on Tuesday.

PHOTO: INTERNET

Voronin shines on Reds debut

Football

AFP, Berlin

Ukrainian striker Andriy Voronin scored twice to shine on his Liverpool debut as the Premier League side enjoyed a 3-2 friendly win over Bundesliga team Werder Bremen on Tuesday.

The 27-year-old, who signed a four-year deal to switch from Bayer Leverkusen to play for Rafael Benitez's team, scored either side of half-time and was a constant threat to the Bremen defence on his debut in the famous red shirt.

But Bremen were back level three minutes later when a shot clipped the post and forward Kevin Schindler

champions, warmed up for the game in Grenchen, Switzerland, with two friendly wins over British minnows Wrexham (3-2) and Crewe (3-0), but were rarely troubled by Bremen.

As well as Voronin, Benitez gave debuts to new summer signings Fernando Torres, signed from Atletico Madrid, and Ryan Babel, from Ajax Amsterdam.

The game got off to a lively start as Voronin showed great finishing by intercepting a pass and rounding Bremen goalkeeper Tim Weise to slot into the back of the net to give the Reds a lead after just three minutes.

But Bremen were back level three minutes later when a shot clipped the post and forward Kevin Schindler

headed home on six minutes.

Liverpool's Norwegian midfielder John Arne Riise put the visitors ahead when his long-range powerful free-kick beat Weise on 13 minutes as the Reds went 2-1 up.

Early in the second-half, Voronin clipped the cross bar with his shot, but he made no mistake later on with a well-struck shot on 61 minutes to seal the win.

The Ukrainian made way for Liverpool's new signing Torres to make his debut soon afterwards as Bremen pulled a late goal back when substitute Frank Loening saw his shot deflected into the net by Liverpool's Stephen Darby on 81 minutes.

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Drogba delights Chelsea

Football

AFP, Los Angeles

Didier Drogba's 80th-minute strike lifted Chelsea to a 1-0 victory over South Korean side Suwon Bluewings here Tuesday in a friendly football match.

Chelsea, tuning up for the English Premier League season, claimed their second victory in as many matches of their US tour, following a 2-1 win over Mexican side Club America at the weekend.

Drogba, who scored 33 goals for Chelsea last season, including the winner in the FA Cup final, notched his first pre-season goal after

Shawn Wright-Phillips, on the right

when, three minutes into the half, Drogba attempted a tightly angled shot that was blocked by Bluewings keeper Kim Dae Hwan, who also had to stop a follow-up.

Florent Malouda tried from long range a minute later, Kim punching the shot back.

Brazilian striker Eduardo got a look for the Bluewings, but fired high over the crossbar from the edge of the penalty area.

Mourinho said the South Korean club was just the kind of test his players need.

"They are fast, they are strong physically, and there's no danger of injury because they play fair football," he said.

Now that he has had the chance

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Brazil on top

AFP, London

Brazil and Argentina have both benefited from their surge to the final of the Copa America, with Dunga's side moving up two places to assume top spot following their victory in the competition and runners-up Argentina rising to second.

England have dropped to 12th in the latest FIFA world rankings published Wednesday, their worst position since June 2004.

Steve McLaren's side, out of the top 10 in FIFA's hit parade for the first time in almost two years, have slipped four places since the last rankings were announced without even playing.

The Netherlands, Croatia, the Czech Republic and Mexico, who have leaped 16 places, have all overtaken McLaren's team.

Italy, who Brazil replaced in first place, are now in third, while World Cup runners-up France also drop two spots to fourth.

Elsewhere, Scotland (22nd) Northern Ireland (28th) and Wales (74th) have all moved up a place but the Republic of Ireland have slipped from 38th to 39th.

Ayala quits int'l football

AFP, Madrid

Veteran Argentine defender Roberto Ayala, officially presented by Real Zaragoza on Wednesday, used the occasion to reveal he is quitting international football after winning a national record 115 caps.

"It's a decision I took a while ago and has nothing to do with what happened in the Copa America final" which saw the 34-year-old put through his own net in Sunday's 3-0 loss to arch-rivals Brazil.

Instead of donning the albiceleste shirt of the two-times world champions former Valencia star Ayala will concentrate on extending his club career with Zaragoza.

"I just think cycles come to an end and mine has with the national side," said Ayala, who scored seven times for his country, including in the World Cup quarterfinal thriller with Germany.

He later missed a penalty as Argentina went out on spotkicks.

During last season Ayala was all set to join Villarreal after agreeing terms but has now bought out his contract to join Zaragoza, who qualified for the UEFA Cup.

Roma complete Giuly signing

AFP, Rome

Roma completed the signing of Ludovic Giuly from Spanish side Barcelona on Tuesday.

The 31-year-old French forward, whose contract with Barcelona was due to expire next year, has signed a three-year contract.

Barcelona, who were pipped to the Spanish league title on the final day of the season by fierce rivals Real Madrid, will initially receive 3.2 million euros from Roma.

The Serie A club will then pay a further 400,000 euros if they qualify for the Champions League.

Giuly, who arrived in Italy on Monday to discuss the transfer, expressed his delight at finalising the move.

"I am happy and my first day here left a very good impression on me," he said.

"I would like to win the Champions League and the Italian league title, and that's why I chose Roma."

Giuly, who plays as a central striker or a wide midfielder, said he would have no problem adapting to any role with his new club.

"I prefer to play on the right but I would be happy to play on either wing," he said.

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Roche to coach Hewitt

AFP, Sydney

Former world number one Lleyton Hewitt on Wednesday hired compatriot Tony Roche as his coach in an attempt to return to the pinnacle of men's tennis.

Hewitt, 26, is currently ranked 21 in the world and has been without a coach since parting ways with Roger Rasheed in January.

The former Wimbledon and US Open champion will be hoping Roche can weave the same magic he brought to world number one Roger Federer, with whom he split before the French Open in May.

Hewitt said Roche would travel with him to all the major Grand Slams between now and the end of 2008, renewing a relationship that began when he was a teenager playing in the Davis Cup for the first time and Roche was team manager.

"He's a very positive guy, he's obviously one of the best coaches in the world," Hewitt told reporters.

"I'm really looking forward to renewing our partnership. We both

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Korea secure qtrs berth

AFP, Jakarta



South Korea squeezed into the Asian Cup quarterfinals with a narrow 1-0 victory over Indonesia here on Wednesday, silencing 90,000 heartbroken fans in the heaving Gelora Bung Karno Stadium.

Korea took second place in group D behind Saudi Arabia, who thrashed Bahrain 4-0, and thus ended plucky Indonesia's dreams.

Korean coach Pim Verbeek was a relieved man having taken only one point from his first two games, in which his team twice squandered 1-0 leads.

"We spoke to the players before this game and told them that every game from now on would be a final," he said.

"We played well, we scored a good goal and created many chances. We're ready for the next match."

Indonesia's Bulgarian coach Ivan Kolev was not too dispirited by his side's failure to make it to the knockout phase, saying his team did the nation proud.

"I feel disappointed because we did not qualify but I am also proud," he said.

"They fought to the death, until the end of the game. I'm proud of my players for what they did from the first to the third match."

"They played their best even though before the tournament we all knew that we had very tough opponents such as Saudi Arabia and South Korea."

As always with games involving the co-hosts it started at a frantic pace and Indonesia should have had a penalty after just three minutes.

Eli Abio won a race to the ball in the penalty box and he nicked it away from goalkeeper Lee Woon-jae, only to be brought down by a combination of goalkeeper and covering defender.

But Korea were given a lucky reprieve by referee Mark Shield of Australia.

Verbeek had loaded his side with tall players -- eight of the starting 11 measured at least 1.82m, all much

taller than every Indonesian player -- and it was clear they were looking for free-kicks around the box.

Indonesia, who appeared to have arrived in the land of the giants, could have taken the lead on 28 minutes after a sweeping counter-attack with the ball transferred quickly from Budi Sudarsono to Barnabang Pamungkas and on to Eli, but after working some space he curled his effort high and wide.

Korea went in front six minutes



PHOTO: AFP

Evans emerges as Vino vanquishes

AFP, Briancon

Another dramatic day of racing in the thin air of the French Alps left Cadel Evans gasping for breath, but inching closer to the Tour de France yellow jersey on Tuesday.

Colombia's Mauricio Soler, of Barloworld, claimed a well-deserved victory on the ninth stage, a 159.5km run from Val d'Isere to here which included the first two unclassified graded climbs of the race.

"My objective is to defend the yellow jersey for as long as possible. Why not all the way to Paris?" said a bullish Rasmussen.

A handful of riders, including Evans, Valverde and German's Andreas Koden, will be doing everything in Saturday's first time trial, in Albi, to make sure his time in yellow comes to an end.

On the day Alexandre Vinokourov's yellow jersey hopes suffered a crushing blow on the legendary Galibier climb, Evans showed a rare glimpse of the grit which is needed to make the difference on the race's steep gradients.

"He always seems to have one or two more team mates than I do in the final and a faster sprint."

Ahead of three days of racing which should see a lull in the battle for the race's main prize, the 30-year-old Australian sits fourth

overall at 2:41 behind Michael Rasmussen.

The skinny Dane retained the leader's yellow jersey with another solid performance which has virtually made him Rabobank's new title contender after Russian Denis Menchov trailed in over four minutes adrift to sit 18th overall at 7:10 behind the Danish two-time winner of the race's polka dot jersey.

"When he went (again) I tried to stay with him, but I couldn't. He's very mature for his age."

Contador then joined Ukrainian teamate Yaroslav Popovych at the Galibier summit, with Evans following around 25secs later.

Despite valiant efforts on the winding descent, he failed to bridge the gap and was eventually caught by the group he had left earlier in order to counter Contador's jump.

After a few tactical skirmishes on the final 20km of the race, a group of around 15 riders formed in the pursuit of Soler, who claimed a well-deserved win with a 38-second cushion.

On the uphill climb to the finish, Evans meanwhile put in a late burst which surprised everyone, except for



PHOTO: AFP

Shakhtar Donetsk's new recruit Cristiano Lucarelli signs autographs for young fans during his presentation at the Ukrainian city of Donetsk on Wednesday. A prolific scorer in Italy, Lucarelli signed a three-year contract worth 8 million euros (US 11.02 million dollars) with Shakhtar.