



PHOTO: INTERNET
Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard attends a press conference in Hong Kong on Monday. Liverpool, Portsmouth and Fulham are joining Hong Kong's South China to play in the Asia Trophy tournament in Hong Kong between July 24 and 27.

United hit six

 Football

AFP, Macau

English Premier League champions Manchester United handed FC Shenzhen a footballing lesson with a 6-0 victory in Macau Monday, even though they were missing injured midfielder Paul Scholes.

Scholes sat out his side's win with a knee injury that is set to end his role in the club's Far East tour.

The former England international, 32, is expected to fly home on Tuesday for a scan in Manchester after injuring his knee in training, but United hardly needed the veteran as they made light work of Shenzhen.

United manager Sir Alex Ferguson was able to hand Portuguese winger Nani his club debut against Shenzhen after the 20-year-old had sat out the first two

games of the tour with an ankle injury.

The 17.3 million pounds (35.5 million dollars) close season signing from Sporting Lisbon showed a glimpse of his talent midway through the first half.

By that stage, United had already shown that they were far too strong for their Chinese opponents. Cristiano Ronaldo and Wayne Rooney went close to opening the scoring before Ryan Giggs made it 1-0 on 12 minutes.

Giggs, captain for the night, tapped in from six yards after Darren Fletcher's neat pass had found Rooney on the edge of the penalty area before the United forward unselfishly squared for the Welsh forward to score.

Shenzhen could not escape their own half and Rooney doubled United's lead eight minutes later with a sublime chip over the helpless

goalkeeper.

England star Rooney had been released by Giggs and he spotted the goalkeeper off his line, coolly lofting the ball over his head from 20 yards.

The crowd inside the Macau Stadium were desperate to see new boy Nani make an impact and the youngster produced the goods on 24 minutes when he netted his first United goal with a right-foot strike from 20 yards, again after good work by Giggs.

Dominant United then had a goal disallowed on 42 minutes when Wes Brown's close range strike from a Giggs corner was ruled out following a foul on goalkeeper Xiao Jianjia.

Then Ronaldo went agonisingly close to scoring one minute before the interval with a dipping free-kick that crashed against the crossbar.

United showed no mercy in the

second half as they tore Shenzhen apart and rattled in three more goals to complete an emphatic victory.

Republic of Ireland midfielder John O'Shea claimed United's fourth goal on 55 minutes when Brown and Ronaldo linked up before O'Shea was left to tap in from close range.

Two minutes later, United's attacking trio of Rooney, Nani and Ronaldo teamed up, with Ronaldo netting to make it 5-0.

United manager Sir Alex Ferguson introduced Chinese forward Dong Fangzhuo as a substitute on the hour and the youngster teed up Chris Eagles to make it 6-0 with a dipping volley from 30 yards on 64 minutes.

But United failed to extend their lead, with striker Alan Smith twice having close range efforts saved by the goalkeeper in the closing stages.

Dortmund humiliate Roma

INTERNET, undated

Borussia Dortmund gave AS Roma a heavy a good lesson when they drubbed the Romans 4-0 on Sunday night.

The Giallorossi fielded a relatively full-strength line-up in Germany, but evidently the strains of pre-season training were too much for the players, who seemed sluggish and ineffective.

It took just 10 minutes for Kuba to break through with a deflected left-foot strike from the edge of the area and Klimovicz's header followed.

Cristian Chivu, playing perhaps his final game in a Roma jersey ahead of his Inter transfer, went close to pulling one back from a free-kick.

Rodrigo Taddei also threatened, but after the break Valdez took advantage of a couple of Gianluca Curci howlers to net a brace.

Mirko Vucinic and Edgar Alvarez failed to make the scoreline less embarrassing, as they were denied by goalkeeper Weidenfeller.

Portsmouth eye European spot

AFP, Hong Kong

Portsmouth are hoping to build on their top-10 Premier League finish and push for European football next season, their coach and captain said on Monday.

Coach Harry Redknapp said he had bolstered the squad with new signings and was optimistic of improving on last season's ninth place.

"We certainly over-achieved last season with the squad we had," said Redknapp.

"We reached our maximum but we've improved the squad again this year so we're going to look for another top-10 finish and see where it takes us from there."

Portsmouth have made seven new signings over the summer including England striker David Nugent.

"Last season we over-achieved a little bit," said captain Dejan Stefanovic.

"This season we've signed some new players so we're hoping to do something a little bit different and hopefully push for Europe."

Stoner wins US GP

AFP, Laguna Seca



Australia's Casey Stoner, on a Ducati, won the USA MotoGP in dominant style here on Sunday to extend his World Championship lead.

Stoner won the 115.52km race in 44 min 20.325sec, finishing 9.865sec in front of compatriot Chris Vermeulen on a Suzuki.

Marco Melandri, on a Honda, was third, 25.641sec behind the winner, shrugging off the after effects of a frightening crash in Saturday's qualifying.

"I felt really comfortable sitting on

the grid," said Stoner, who became the first rider this year to win from pole position. "I felt good about the tires and bike. I just had to go and do the job."

All but seven of Stoner's laps were inside the lap record set by Pedrosa last year on a 990cc Honda. This despite the fact that engine size was reduced to 800cc in bid to slow the bikes down.

American Nicky Hayden's bid for a third straight victory in front of home fans at the Laguna Seca raceway ended in a dramatic incident at the first corner.

The Honda rider collided with compatriot John Hopkins on a Suzuki, and while Hopkins eventu-

ally finished 15th, Hayden, after rejoining at the back of the pack, retired with 10 laps remaining.

Yamaha's Valentino Rossi finished fourth, five seconds behind Melandri and 30 seconds behind Stoner, who now tops the standings at 221 points to Rossi's 177.

"We've been quick most of the weekend, obviously not as quick as Stoner," said Vermeulen. "I went 100 percent for several laps, I thought I was gaining on Casey."

"I wasn't even looking at my pit board but when I did, Casey was seven seconds ahead of me," Vermeulen added. "So I just kept my head down in case Casey made a mistake."

Stepanek stuns Blake

 Tennis

AFP, Los Angeles

Radek Stepanek toppled second-seeded American James Blake 7-6 (9/7), 5-7, 6-2 here Sunday to capture his second career ATP title in the final of the 525,000-dollar Countrywide Classic.

Ranked 101st in the world, Stepanek converted two service breaks in the deciding set to claim the victory over the world number nine.

Stepanek came into the match fresh, after Germany's Nicolas Kiefer withdrew from their

Saturday night semifinal with a knee injury.

It was the Czech's second win in five career meetings against Blake, who had won the previous three encounters -- all on North American hardcourts. He won 73,000 dollars.

Stepanek had attained a career-high world ranking of No. 8 in July 2006 before suffering a back injury that sidelined him for the final third of the year.

He had failed to win three matches in a row this year until advancing to the semifinals at Gstaad last week, a run that proved a springboard to his performance here.

Leading 2-1 Stepanek took control by breaking Blake in the fourth game of the deciding set. After a double-fault, Stepanek seized on Blake's second serve and blasted a backhand winner down the line to lead 3-1.

Stepanek again took advantage of Blake's inconsistent serve in the eighth game to break him again and seal the match.

Stepanek, who failed to reach a quarterfinal in his previous 14 tournaments this year, had not dropped a set this week until the American took the middle set.

Blake was seeking his second title of the year to go with a victory in Sydney.

City to go private

 Football

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's ousted premier Thaksin Shinawatra has gained effective control of Manchester City football club and will delist it from the stock exchange, his lawyer said Monday.

Thaksin will also nominate two Thai footballers to be recruited by the club, said Noppadon Pattama, Thaksin's de facto spokesman in Thailand.

"Thaksin has gained control with a 75 percent stake in Man City. The next stage is to delist the club

from the stock market to become a completely private company," Noppadon told reporters.

Two of Thaksin's children -- Panthongtae and Pinthongta -- will be appointed as directors of Manchester City, he added.

The deposed premier last month launched the 162.6 million dollar takeover bid for Manchester City and has appointed former England manager Sven-Goran Eriksson as the club's boss.

"Man City is going to recruit new players from Brazil, Sweden and Italy. Two Thai players will be also included in the nomination," said Noppadon. He declined to name any

of the players.

The Assets Examination Committee (AEC), appointed by the military leaders who ousted Thaksin in a coup last September, has frozen 25 million dollars in accounts belonging to the Pramaisuri Property Company, linked to the Man City deal.

Pramaisuri was reported by British newspapers as holding a key stake in UK Sports Investments (UKSIL), the British-based company Thaksin set up to buy Manchester City.

But Noppadon said the asset freeze by Thai graft investigators will not affect his purchase which was "clean and legal."