

## Atletico snap up Riquelme

AFP, Madrid

Atletico Madrid continued their summer spending spree Wednesday in snapping up Argentine playmaker Juan Roman Riquelme from Villarreal, Cadena Seradio reported. The radio said both parties had reached agreement, to be sealed officially Thursday, on a two-year contract with an additional year option.

Riquelme, out of favour with Villarreal's Chilean coach Manuel Pellegrini and recently plying his trade on loan to Boca Juniors in his homeland, had earlier said he would be willing to play for nothing if hard-up Boca had paid a transfer fee. The 29-year-old spent the second half of last season on loan at Boca and helped the Argentines to victory in the Copa Libertadores but the club said they believed that all in all they would have to find some 20 million dollars to buy him, including image rights.

Riquelme's deal with Villarreal ran to June 2009 and he had been training on his own since the start of the new season, while his teammates enjoyed a 3-0 away success last weekend at Valencia.

Atletico, having lost striker Fernando Torres to Liverpool, have responded by spending 77 million euros this summer on new talent, not quite as much as the 120 million shelled out by neighbours Real, who beat them 2-1 at the Bernabeu last Saturday.

Other arrivals were keeper Christian Abbiati on loan from AC Milan, midfielder star Luis Garcia from Liverpool, Riquelme's former Villarreal teammate Diego Forlan, Portuguese forward Simao and attacking midfielder Jose Antonio Reyes from Arsenal.

## Injury strikes Eto'o again

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona striker Samuel Eto'o will be sidelined for at least two months after straining a tendon in his right leg, according to the Spanish league side Thursday.

The Cameroon international sustained the injury in a friendly between Barcelona and Inter Milan, dubbed the Gamper Trophy, and won 5-0 by the Catalan side on Wednesday.

Eto'o came on as a substitute and lasted only two minutes before picking up the injury. No other player was involved.

Barcelona, who signed Frenchman Thierry Henry from Arsenal in the summer, have yet to decide whether Eto'o's injury will require surgery.

Last season the Cameroonian striker missed four months of the season because of a knee injury.

## Dyer breaks leg

AFP, London

West Ham's England international midfielder Kieron Dyer has suffered a double fracture of his right leg, the Premier League club confirmed on Wednesday.

The 28-year-old, who was making only his third appearance since his seven-million-pound move from Newcastle, crumpled on the turf after Rovers' Joe Jacobson shouldered him during West Ham's 2-1 win over Bristol Rovers in the League Cup second round on Tuesday.

West Ham said in a statement that Dyer had broken both the tibia and fibula of his right leg.

"It is too early to say at this stage how long the player will be out for as this will become clearer once the first stage of surgery is completed," the club said.

West Ham manager Alan Curbishley accused Jacobson of "lashing out" at Dyer.

Curbishley said: "We're devastated for Kieron. I can't put it into words. The game was just immature after that."

"The player has got to be disappointed with his tackle. As far as I could see, he lashed out after losing the ball."

## Anelka signs new deal

AFP, Bolton

France striker Nicolas Anelka has pledged his future to Bolton after signing a new four-year contract on Thursday.

Anelka had hinted he was looking to leave the Premier League club before the transfer window shuts on Friday night, sparking speculation that Manchester United, Portsmouth and West Ham were ready to bid for him.

But the former Arsenal and Real Madrid star has had a change of heart, perhaps because no Champions League team made him an offer, and has agreed to stay with Bolton until 2011.

"I seem to have been linked with every club in the country of late but my heart is with Bolton," Anelka said.

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Russian star Maria Sharapova celebrates winning a point over Italian Roberta Vinci during their first round encounter at Flushing Meadows at the US Open on Tuesday. Sharapova won 6-1, 6-0.

## AJAX FALL PREY

# Big guns progress

INTERNET, undated



Arsenal, Werder Bremen, Glasgow Celtic and Valencia advanced to the European Champions League with victories Wednesday night, while Ajax Amsterdam was eliminated in qualifying for the second straight season.

Arsenal beat visiting Sparta Prague 3-0 on goals by Tomas Rosicky, Cesc Fabregas and Eduardo da Silva to advance on 5-0 aggregate and join English rivals Manchester United, Chelsea and Liverpool in Thursday's draw.

Werder Bremen won 3-2 at Dinamo Zagreb on two penalty kicks from Diego and a goal from Bouabacar Sanogo. The German club

advanced 5-3 over the Croatian champion, who got goals by Ognjen Vukojevic and Luka Modric.

Celtic defeated visiting Spartak Moscow 4-3 on penalty kicks after a 1-1 draw after extra-time that left the teams with a 2-2 aggregate score. Rivals Glasgow Rangers won their qualifier a night earlier.

Scott McDonald scored in the 27th minute for Celtic but Roman Pavuchenko, who hit a post with a penalty kick in the 25th minute, tied the score in the 45th. Celtic's Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink hit the crossbar with a penalty kick in overtime.

Spartak's Martin Stranzl was ejected in the 85th for a tackle on Vennegoor of Hesselink. Celtic advanced after goalkeeper Artur Boruc saved Spartak's fifth penalty from Maxim Kalinichenko on Spartak's fifth penalty kick.

Valencia beat Swedish cham-

ption Elfsborg 2-1 to advance on a 5-1 aggregate.

Ajax lost 2-1 at Slavia Prague, who got two goals from Stanislav Vacek, and were eliminated 3-1 on aggregate.

Fenerbahce won 2-0 at Anderlecht in a match briefly interrupted by rowdy fans and advanced on 3-0 aggregate. Referee Massimo Busacca paused the game in the 81st for five minutes after some 50 Anderlecht supporters tried to push through a barricade to storm the field. Riot police also had to keep Fenerbahce and Anderlecht fans apart after bottles and garbage was thrown.

Shakhtar Donetsk beat visiting Salzburg 3-1 on goals by Cristiano Lucarelli, Nery Castillo and Brandao and advanced on 3-2 aggregate. Benfica won 1-0 at

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## Ribery best in Bundesliga

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich's French star Franck Ribery has been chosen as the Bundesliga's player of the month for August, it was announced on Thursday.

Ribery, 24, became the most expensive player in Bundesliga history when Bayern signed him on a four-year contract for 26 million euros this summer, and he has been a major force in his side's march to the top of the table.

In a survey by German sports magazine Kicker and television channel DSE, Ribery picked up 55.5 percent of the votes with Schalke defender Christian Pander second on 40.3 percent and VfL Bochum's Tommy Bechmann in third.

A fierce competitor, Ribery's passing skills and strength has won several admirers including German coach Joachim Loew who "admired his intelligent play", while Brazilian Giovane Elber has compared Ribery to Ronaldinho and Kaka.

# Nadal struggles through

AFP, New York



Rafael Nadal struggled on a sore left knee past unheralded Australian Alun Jones on Wednesday to reach the second round of the US Open but his bid for a third Grand Slam final in a row appears doomed.

The second-ranked Spaniard escaped with a 7-5, 3-6, 6-4, 6-1 victory after two hours and 44 minutes over a 123rd-ranked wild card in his first top-level match outside his homeland, Nadal lacking his usual spark due to tendonitis.

"Maybe if I'm in another tournament I never go to the court," Nadal said. "But it is the US Open and it is very important tournament to me. I hope the knee improves."

World number one Roger Federer, who plays a second-round night match against Chilean qualifier Paul Capdeville, defeated Nadal in an epic five-set Wimbledon final last month after the Spaniard beat him in June's French Open final.

Eighth-seeded Australian Open champion Serena Williams was the other feature night attraction at Arthur Ashe Stadium. The eight-time Grand Slam winner took 87 minutes to defeat Italy's Maria Elena Camerin 7-5, 6-2.

"I feel a lot better than in my first round. I'm definitely getting a lot stronger," said Williams, who next plays Russian 27th seed Vera Zvonareva. "It's going to be a tough match but I always enjoy a challenge."

Women's world number one Justine Henin, Wimbledon winner Venus Williams, Serbian third seed Jelena Jankovic and Serbian fifth seed Ana Ivanovic also advanced to the third round impressively.

But the day's top story was Nadal's injury, which he said is not a long-term worry after an MRI. Nadal suffered the injury Sunday while practicing at Arthur Ashe Stadium with compatriot Carlos Moya.

"Two days ago I was so much worse than right now," Nadal said. "I didn't move so much but I played. I hope it will improve. If not I will try my best but..."

Nadal grimaced when his left knee was being treated by a trainer after the third set, a sign that the three-time Roland Garros champion could struggle in round two against Serbian Janko Tipsarevic.

"It's tough when you can't play at 100 percent," Nadal said. "I didn't move too much. I can't move too much. I tried to move as little as possible."

"But for me, the tournament is not finished. I'm still there."

In the pivotal third set, Jones rallied from triple break-point down to hold and pull level at 3-3, then broke to seize a 4-3 lead as the drama built.

That's when Nadal, 21, had a trainer retape his left knee and his fortunes changed. He broke at love in the next game, won eight games in a row and advanced on a service winner.

"If I have to go out I have to go out," Nadal said. "But I'm playing more aggressive and I have to continue playing like this."

Nadal's quarter of the draw was eased by the ouster of Chilean seventh seed Fernando Gonzalez, the highest-ranked loser so far. Russian Teimuraz Gabashvili outlasted the Australian Open runner-up 6-4, 6-1, 3-6, 5-7, 6-4.

That could also help Britain's Tim Henman, who kept alive his Grand Slam career by defeating Russian Dmitry Tursunov 6-4, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4. Henman, who turns 33

next week, will retire after a Davis Cup tie at Wimbledon next month.

"I felt great out there," Henman said. "I was obviously going to enjoy it mentally. I played really well as well."

The Englishman, who had lost five of six prior matches to Tursunov, advanced to a second-round date with France's Jo-Wilfried Tsonga.

Belgian top seed Henin, who won her sixth Slam title at June's French Open, beat 130th-ranked Bulgarian Tsvetana Pironkova 6-4, 6-0 in 68 minutes and plays a third qualifier in a row, Russian Ekaterina Makarova, for a last-16 spot.

"I'm happy the way I won my last two matches, just go step by step and try to build my confidence day by day," Henin said.

US 12th seed Venus Williams took 69 minutes to oust Romania's 84th-ranked Ioana Raluca Olaru 6-4, 6-2. Williams will next face Ukrainian 21st seed Alona Bondarenko with fifth seed Ivanovic possibly awaiting in the round of 16.

"I missed a few shots that were easy but ultimately it's important to get to the next round. I think my game will be there," Williams said.

Williams defeated Ivanovic in the semi-finals at Wimbledon last month on her way to the title.

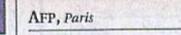
"Whoever I play, they are across the net," Williams said. "I control my side. If I execute, it goes pretty well. It's all about me for me."

Ivanovic beat France's 61st-ranked Aravane Rezaï 6-3, 6-1. She next faces Russian Vera Dushevina with potential revenge against Williams looming.

"This is a different tournament, different circumstances," Ivanovic said. "I feel fitter than I did at Wimbledon. I feel I have a chance."

# France recall Trezeguet

AFP, Paris



AFP, Paris

France coach Raymond Domenech has named Juventus striker David Trezeguet among his 24-man squad for crucial Euro 2008 qualifiers against Italy, on September 8, and Scotland four days later.

Trezeguet hit out at Domenech last week when he was demoted to a second string France team while 'Les Bleus' played a friendly in Slovakia, saying the France coach had shown him a "lack of respect".

Trezeguet, who has played in three World Cups and two European Championships, could however start both qualifiers on the bench as wantaway Bolton striker Nicolas Anelka continues his recent run of form.

Alongside Thierry Henry of Barcelona, Domenech also has other striking options in Karim Benzema and Franck Ribery although Trezeguet exorcised some of his frustration with France by scoring a hat-trick for Juventus last weekend.

Goalkeeper's usual number one goalkeeper Gregory Coupet is still out injured.

After seven of their 12 qualifiers France sit top of Group B on 18 points, their only defeat coming at the hands of Scotland.

Italy sit second with 16 points

while Scotland are third on 15.

Domenech meanwhile is waiting to hear news on an appeal against a one-match ban which will rule him out for the Italy game.

The Frenchman was handed the ban, and a 10,000 Swiss Francs (8,000 dollars) fine, by UEFA for bringing the game into disrepute.

He claimed that a "referee being bought" during a tie between France and Italy's under-21 sides in 1999. Domenech was coach of the junior French team at the time.

England face Israel at Wembley on September 8 and then host Russia four days later - but Beckham's participation in both Euro 2008 qualifiers could be decided by the results of a scan, which he is set to undergo on Friday.

The midfielder limped off Galaxy's Superliga final with Pachuca, won 4-3 by the Mexican side, after twisting his knee in a tackle with Fernando Salazar and immediately expressed pessimism.

"At this stage it's hard to tell, but it doesn't feel good," said Beckham, who has also been playing with a sore ankle since arriving at the Major League Soccer side.

"A ligament strain is four to six weeks but we'll have to wait for the results of the scan on Friday. If it's four to six, I won't be flying to England."

Beckham has recently hit the headlines for his transatlantic efforts to turn out for both club and country.

He played for England last Wednesday night in London against Germany, then flew overnight to play for the Galaxy against Los Angeles MLS rivals Chivas USA on Thursday night in California.

But he admitted after Wednesday's match: "Maybe it's a sign that I need a rest and don't come back until it's right."

# Puerta laid to rest

AFP, Seville

Thousands of football fans gathered at Sevilla's stadium Wednesday to pay their last respects to defender Antonio Puerta, who died three days after suffering a heart attack during the club's opening match of the Spanish league on Saturday.

The body of the 22-year-old, who made his national team debut last season, was moved to the Sanchez Pizjuan stadium from the hospital where he died on Tuesday as supporters chanted: "Puerta, friend, Seville is with you".

Puerta was then cremated at a cemetery in Seville in southwestern Spain at 2pm (1200 GMT), reporters said at the scene.

Fans from both Sevilla and its cross-town rivals Real Betis left football scarves, candles and dozens of flower arrangements at the stadium while long lines formed to file past the player's coffin, which was draped in Sevilla's centenary flag.

At the coffin's side were the recent trophies which Puerta helped the club win, including last season's UEFA Cup.

Also mourning in Seville were Real Madrid chairman Ramon Calderon, who headed the club's delegation to Wednesday's ceremony alongside sporting director

Pedja Mijatovic and top stars Raul and Guti.

Others present from the league champions were former Seville stars Sergio Ramos, Javier Saviola and Brazilian Julio Baptista.

The Sevilla squad went directly to the stadium after rushing back from Athens where they had been set to play a Champions League return leg against Aek Athens on Tuesday night.

UEFA postponed the encounter. Accompanied by Sevilla president Jose Maria del Nido and the club's coach Juande Ramos, the squad was greeted with applause on their arrival by some 20,000 supporters with cries of "Sevilla! Sevilla! Sevilla!".

The player's family, including his girlfriend Mar, who is seven months pregnant, held a silent vigil by the coffin.

The Champions League match has now been scheduled for Monday although the UEFA Cup champions' Super Cup match against Champions League winners AC Milan, scheduled for Friday, has been maintained.

Spain's sports newspapers also paid homage to Puerta.

"Antonio Puerta, the injustice of dying at the age of 22. Why?" wrote sports daily Marca in its headline while daily newspaper La Razon said: "The heart of football has stopped."

In an editorial, top-selling daily

newspaper El Pais said Puerta's death had touched the public and "raised questions about the demands of professional sports."

Sevilla has scheduled four "high level" matches in just nine days, it said.

Puerta, who reportedly sparked interest from English Premiership sides Arsenal and Manchester United earlier this year, collapsed after half an hour of Sevilla's 4-1 win over Getafe.

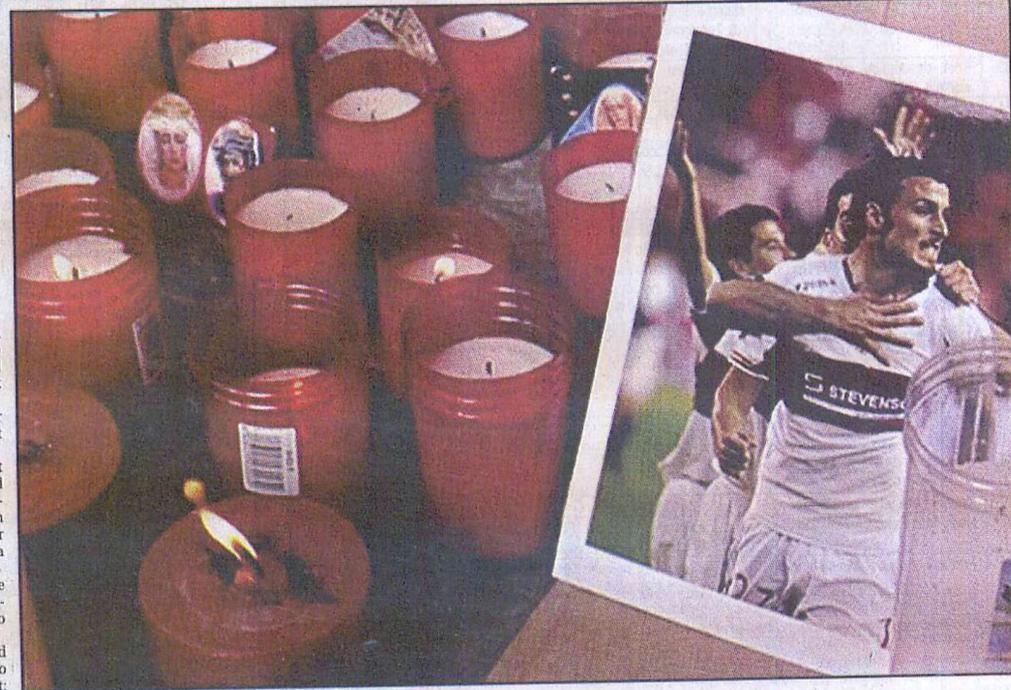
He was able to walk to the dressing rooms where he collapsed a second time before being taken to hospital where he remained hooked up to a life support machine until he died.

Clubs continued to express their bewilderment, meanwhile, at what had happened.

Angel Torres, chairman of last weekend's rivals Getafe, said Puerta's death "is a blow for football and for sport," adding the pain of the affair was made all the harder as his own club was playing Sevilla when the player collapsed.

Torres spoke of the "immense grief" felt by Spain's sporting community and offered condolences to Puerta's family.

Spanish media quoted Liverpool's Spanish star Fernando Torres as saying on his website that: "Puerta's death leaves a vacuum which is impossible to fill. May he rest in peace."



Fans light candles beside a photo of Sevilla defender Antonio Puerta (R) on Wednesday after he passed away in a hospital in Seville on Tuesday.

PHOTO: INTERNET