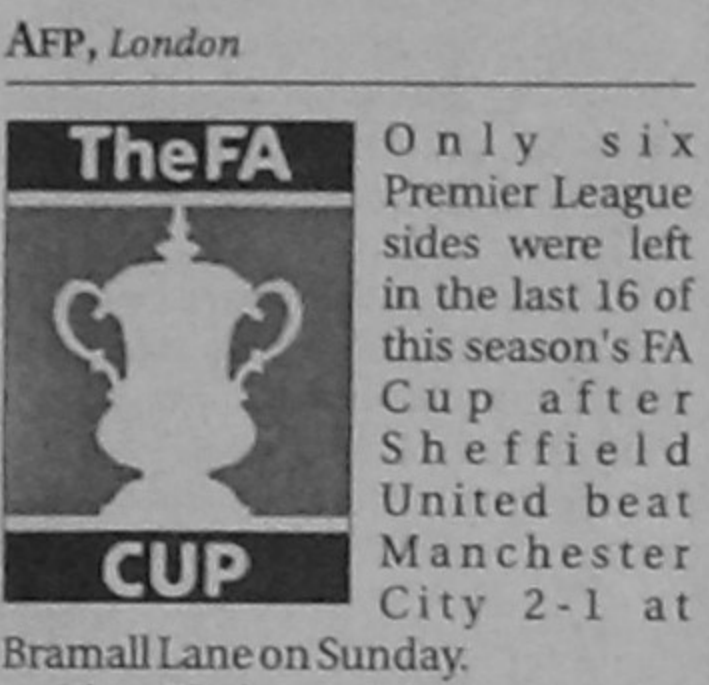


Manchester United winger Cristiano Ronaldo converts a penalty to give his side the lead during their FA Cup clash against Tottenham Hotspur at Old Trafford on Sunday.

# City head Premier scrapheap



Only six Premier League sides were left in the last 16 of this season's FA Cup after Sheffield United beat Manchester City 2-1 at Bramall Lane on Sunday. The Blades, relegated to the second-tier Championship at the end of last season, were 2-0 up inside 25 minutes through Luton Shelton's balloon-assisted opener and Jonathan Stead before City substitute Daniel Sturridge pulled one back early in the second half. City's defeat left Arsenal, holders Chelsea, Liverpool, Middlesbrough, Portsmouth and Manchester United - who beat Tottenham 3-1 earlier on Sunday - as the lone representatives from English football's top flight left in the hat for Monday's fifth round draw. "The first-half went wrong," said City manager Sven-Goran Eriksson. "We were not up for it and we lost too many balls up front and in midfield. We got better in the second half but it was not enough. "It's the beauty of the Cup which hit us today. You can't just play good football, you have to battle as well."

City went behind in bizarre fashion with a goal that owed much to the balloons in their colours littering the pitch in front of Joe Hart's goal. Lee Martin, on loan from Manchester United, delivered a low cross that took a slight deflection off the leg of City captain Richard Dunne. The ball also clipped a balloon, a deviation that appeared to deceive Michael Ball as he missed his clearance. It almost confused Shelton too but the Jamaica international kept his composure and beat Hart from six yards in the 12th minute. A bemused Eriksson said: "It's a very strange goal. The ball changed direction, two balloons made a one-two with Michael Ball. "We asked the fourth official twice during the first-half to ask the referee to stop the game and clear the pitch. "The referee told Joe Hart to clear it when the ball was in the other half of the pitch but that's not right - you can't ask a player when the ball is live to clear the pitch. "But it would be stupid of us to say we lost because of the balloons. Blades manager Bryan Robson added: "It was a good win for us and our attacking play was very good. "There was a bit of fortune about the first goal but we haven't

been getting much luck in the Championship," said former Manchester United captain Robson who has been under pressure with the mid-table Blades. Sheffield United, after City's Elano hit the post and had a curling shot saved by Paddy Kenny, doubled their lead when Stead scored from 12 yards after seizing on a loose ball. Eriksson's decision to bring on Sturridge after half-time was rewarded when, with his first touch of the game, he struck a left-foot volley off the underside of the crossbar. At Old Trafford, Cristiano Ronaldo took his tally for the season to 25 goals as he scored twice in a come-from-behind victory. Spurs, who earlier in the week thrashed Arsenal 5-1 to book their place in the League Cup final, had to play the final 21 minutes with 10 men after defender Michael Dawson was sent-off for deliberate handball. Ronaldo scored from the ensuing penalty and was on-target again two minutes before time in a match where Spurs striker Robbie Keane gave the visitors the lead in the 24th minute. "It was a fantastic Cup tie," said United manager Sir Alex Ferguson. "Tottenham had the best chances of the match but they didn't take them. We started well

but then we seemed to be too relaxed. We allowed Tottenham a bit of momentum, they scored a fine goal and I think it roused us." Spurs went ahead when Aaron Lennon moved past Patrice Evra and squared the ball to Keane who scored from close range as United conceded for the first time in five matches. But United were level before half-time when veteran Wales winger Ryan Giggs shielded the ball from Lee Young-Pyo and so allowed space for Carlos Tevez to shoot beyond Spurs keeper Radek Cerny. United's second goal came after keeper Edwin van der Sar's long punt downfield saw the ball travel from one box to the other and Dawson, under pressure from Wayne Rooney, was red-carded after pushing the ball away with his hand. Ronaldo scored from the spot after sending Cerny the wrong way. Tottenham almost had an equaliser when Bulgaria striker Dimitar Berbatov hit the post six minutes from time with van der Sar beaten. But Ronaldo then sealed victory when a deflected shot squirmed under Cerny's body in the 88th minute. In Sunday's other fourth round tie Championship Cardiff City won 2-1 away to League Two Hereford.

## Juventus snap up Mellberg

AFP, Birmingham

Olof Mellberg will move from Aston Villa to Juventus at the end of the season, the Sweden defender announced Monday.

The 30-year-old Mellberg said he was looking forward to the challenge of playing in Italy after seven years with English Premiership side Villa when his contract with the Midlands club expired at the end of the current campaign.

"I am very happy with the agreement," he said. "It will be an important experience, at a prestigious club and in one of the most important leagues in the world."

## NFA still backing Vogts

AFP, Sekondi

Under-fire Nigeria coach Bert Vogts has won a vote of confidence from the Nigeria Football Association (NFA) despite the team's below-par performances at the 2008 Africa Cup of Nations.

Nigeria are on the brink of a first round elimination after taking only one point from two matches in Group B of the tournament in Ghana.

Vogts has come under fire from both the public and the press for the team's performances and there have been suggestions that he could be quickly on the way out after only 10 months in charge.

However, NFA chairman, Sani Lulu, told reporters that Vogts is the best man for the job and that he was not to blame for the team's poor showing in Ghana.

"We have utmost confidence in Bert Vogts. We will still give him time. It is too early to say sack him or disband the team," said Lulu.

"You can't entirely blame him for the team's performance here. If you follow the team's trainings, it is clear the players have not been doing on match day what they do in training."

Two-time champions Nigeria will now need to beat Benin Tuesday by at least two clear goals and hope Group B leaders Ivory Coast also beat close rivals Mali, if they are to make it to the knockout stages of the competition.

"Personally, I have lost hope in us getting to the next round but God in his miraculous ways could still give us the results we need," said Lulu.

The Super Eagles last failed to go past the first round of the Nations Cup at the 1982 edition in Libya when they lost to both Algeria and Zambia.

## Eto'o targets more records

AFP, Kumasi

Cameroon star striker Samuel Eto'o has said he wants to be the all-time top scorer of the Africa Cup of Nations after he tied a 14-goal record held by the Ivorian star Laurent Pokou at the weekend.

"I'm really happy I have got my name into the African football record books, it was a proud moment to tie the record held by a legend like Pokou, but I also want to beat the scoring record in my next game," said Eto'o, who has so far netted three goals at this tournament.

The Indomitable Lions of Cameroon tackle bottom team Sudan in Tamale Wednesday in their final Group C match.

The Barcelona forward matched Pokou's record, which has stood for 38 years, when he scored in the 65th minute from the penalty spot in Saturday's game against Zambia after Billy Mwanza had handled his free kick inside the box.

It was a fitting milestone for a proven goal scorer, who has spent most of this season on the sidelines due to a thigh injury he suffered in September at his Spanish club.

Pokou scored his 14 goals at two Nations Cups, in 1968 and 1970, while Eto'o made his in five tournaments beginning with his goal against the Ivory Coast at the 2000 edition which was jointly hosted by Ghana and Nigeria.

Nigeria striker Rashidi Yekini managed a total of 13 goals in this tournament, Egypt's Hassan El-Shazly netted 12 goals while Patrick Mboma of Cameroon and the Egyptian Hossam Hassan have scored 11 goals.

"Eto'o is a great talent and deserves all that he has got in this game," said Roger Milla, Eto'o's childhood hero, who recorded a total of seven goals in the competition.

Eto'o is the man for the record books.

In 2006, he became the first player to win the CAF African Footballer of the Year for a record three years running on the back of stirring displays for both club and country.

He scored four goals in 2000 as the Indomitable Lions beat Nigeria on penalties in Lagos to win the Unity Cup.

## An old head on young shoulders



AFP, Rome

No-one in Milan has failed to be impressed by the start teenage striker Pato has made to life in Serie A.

A brace in AC Milan's 2-0 home win over Genoa on Sunday took his tally to three goals in four games since making his belated debut for the European champions after the end of the winter break.

Pato has started all four games in which he has featured and although he was substituted in midweek against Atalanta, where Milan lost 2-1, having failed to shine, he responded with aplomb on Sunday.

And what was even more impressive was that his two goals came after he had missed two great chances, yet he never let his head drop and still proved to be the match-winner.

And that was despite foraging as a lone attacker up front after usual strike partner Ronaldo was unavailable with a muscle problem

and Italy forward Alberto Gilardino was confined to the bench for the entire 90 minutes.

"I missed two chances but I scored two important goals and I don't have any problems playing on my own up front. I play where the coach wants me to," Pato said.

Pato missed an easy first half chance before his two goals following the break but he didn't lose his nerve.

"During the interval my teammates told me to be more calm than in the first half and the goal would come," he revealed.

It's not just the press and fans impressed by Pato's progress since his big money move from Brazilians Internacional, but also his teammates, although they are worried about how much attention is being focussed on such young shoulders.

"Pato is very young and we, the team and the coaching staff, need to look after him to keep him relaxed," said veteran Dutch midfielder Clarence Seedorf.

"He's an intelligent lad but it can be very dangerous to be that famous at his age."

## Portsmouth loan Baros

AFP, Portsmouth

Portsmouth announced Sunday they had signed former Liverpool and Aston Villa striker Milan Baros on loan for the rest of the season.

Baros, 26, arrives at the Premier League side from French club Lyon and Portsmouth manager Harry Redknapp has an option to bring the Czech Republic international to the south coast club in a permanent move should his loan spell at Fratton Park prove successful.

The striker could prove an important transfer window addition to the Pompey squad which is currently depleted by the loss of strikers Kanu and John Utaka to the ongoing Africa Nations Cup.

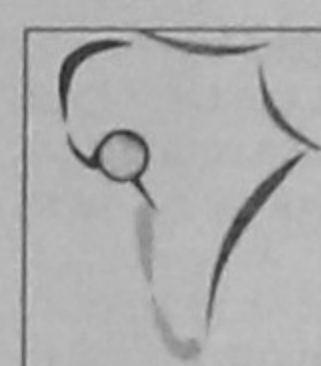
Baros will train with his new teammates on Monday and could be involved when Portsmouth, eighth in the table, face leaders Manchester United on Wednesday at Old Trafford.

"It's a terrific opportunity to have a look at him," Redknapp told Portsmouth's official website following Baros's loan signing. "It's a loan deal until the end of the season and then we'll see how it goes from there."

"He's a good player who's played at Liverpool and Aston Villa - and he's been the golden boot winner at a European Championships. He's got good pace and makes good runs," Redknapp added.

## Manucho Angola's star

AFP, Accra



Africa Cup of Nations GHANA 2008

Sir Alex Ferguson's latest find, Manucho, starred in Angola's 3-1 upset win over Senegal to leave the shock African Nations Cup qualifiers on the brink of qualifying for the quarterfinals.

In Sunday's second Group D tie Carlos Alberto Parreira's South Africa folded tamerly against Tunisia, the 2004 title winners beating the 2010 World Cup hosts by an identical scoreline.

It was a survivor from Roger Lemerre's Cup winning Tunisian side, veteran striker Francileudo Dos Santos, who scored after eight and 34 minutes with Chaouki Ben Saada claiming the second.

Steven Pienaar grabbed a consolation goal three minutes from full-time for South Africa, who seem destined to make a third consecutive first-round exit.

That left Parreira, a World Cup winning coach with Brazil, with a real scrap on his hands to get South Africa, joint bottom on one point with Senegal, into the quarterfinals.

Angola on the other hand are flying high, level on four points with Tunisia, who await them in their final first round tie on Thursday, after Manchester United-bound Manucho stole the spotlight in Tamale.

A draw will take both teams through to the last eight.

The teenager's double lifted Angola to only their second triumph in 11 Nations Cup matches spanning four tournaments while 2002 runners-up Senegal lost by more than one goal for the first time in their 42-match Cup history.

Senegal shaded the first half and led through an Abdoulaye Faye header only to be taken apart in the second as Manucho pounced twice before Flavio Amado added the killer third.

Angola manager Oliveira Goncalves conceded that Senegal had turned up as pre-match favourites but said: "The strongest side doesn't always win."

He added: "Senegal deserved their advantage in the first half, but I made some changes at half-time and asked the players to keep the ball low, and we played faster."

"Senegal are a big team but we deserved the win, despite their star players."

Senegal coach Henri Kasperczak said his side had

changed character during the match.

"In the first half we were committed, strong and reliable, but in the second half Angola's goal hit my players mentally. We knew before that if we lost this we'd still have a chance of qualifying, but it's going to be tough against South Africa."

With another half a dozen goals added Sunday the overall tally for the competition stands at 54, some 21 more than at the same stage in Egypt two years ago.

Monday's programme sees hosts Ghana aiming to secure their pass to the knockout stages against Morocco with the other Group A fixture pitting Guinea against Namibia.

All four are still in with a shot of prolonging their pursuit of the continental crown, even if for the Namibians that would involve winning by an unlikely seven-goal margin and Morocco losing.

Ghana's pre-match build-up involved a gospel sing-a-long with Ghana President John Kufuor at the team's hotel in Accra.

He told the team to ignore taunts from fans which had driven Udinese striker Asamoah Gyan to pack his bags and nearly quit the squad on Saturday "and win against Morocco".

## Finland appoint new coach

AFP, Helsinki

Finland have named Englishman Stuart Baxter as their new coach replacing compatriot Roy Hodgson with a view to qualifying the country for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

Hodgson left the position after failing to qualify Finland for the Euro2008 finals and he subsequently took over as manager of English Premier League side Fulham.

The 54-year-old Baxter was in charge of the South African national side from 2004-2005 and has been coach at several Swedish clubs including Helsingborgs since 2006.

Finland, who have never before qualified for the World Cup finals, have been drawn in a tough group that includes Germany, Russia, Wales, Azerbaijan and Liechtenstein.

## Kuranyi to miss Cup clash

AFP, Berlin

Germany striker Kevin Kuranyi will miss Schalke 04's German Cup clash with VfL Wolfsburg on Wednesday as he struggles to shake off the effects of pneumonia.

The 25-year-old, who has 44 caps for Germany, has only been back in full training for a week and sat out the first fortnight of the Royal Blues' preparations after the domestic league's winter break.

With Schalke set to face VfB Stuttgart in Gelsenkirchen next Sunday, Kuranyi says he is concentrating on getting ready for the arrival of the defending Bundesliga champions when the league resumes after a six week break.

"I am still not 100 per cent ready and if I play in the Wolfsburg game I will miss two important training days recovering," said Kuranyi.

"I just want to concentrate on getting ready for the Stuttgart game and making sure I am ready."

## Benzema strike saves Lyon

AFP, Paris



A superbly-executed free kick from Karim Benzema gave leaders Lyon some breathing space Sunday in bringing a 1-1 draw at local rivals St Etienne to leave the reigning French champions four points clear.

After a goalkeeping blunder left them with work to do it was only in the dying seconds that France international Benzema rescued Alain Perrin's side to take Lyon onto 46 points from 23 games with his 15th league goal of the campaign.

Rivals Bordeaux earlier saw their title charge hit the buffers as a

1-0 loss at Lorient left Laurent Blanc's men stuck on 42 points after a run of four straight wins ended.

St Etienne took the lead on the stroke of half time thanks to a howler of a clearance by Lyon's French international goalkeeper Gregory Coupet, who mishit a clearance straight at Bafetimbi Gomis.

He reacted to nod the home after initially appearing to have no chance of latching onto the loose ball.

Lyon, who welcomed back striker Sidney Govou after a fortnight out with injury, came into the fray with the best away attack after scoring 17 times on their travels but were up against a mean home defence.

Lorient earlier left Bordeaux's former World Cup winner Blanc dejected but realistic after

Christophe Jallet's penalty 15 minutes from time clinched the three points.

Bordeaux's Brazilian defender Henrique fouled Rafik Saiki and Jallet secured a gutsy win after sending Ulrich Rame the wrong way to give Lorient a fifth win on a roll at their Moustoir stadium home.

"That's life I guess and I have told the players to put it behind them and move on," said Blanc.

"We made an individual error and were punished with the penalty that won the match but I am not too down as we took nine points out of 12 in January."

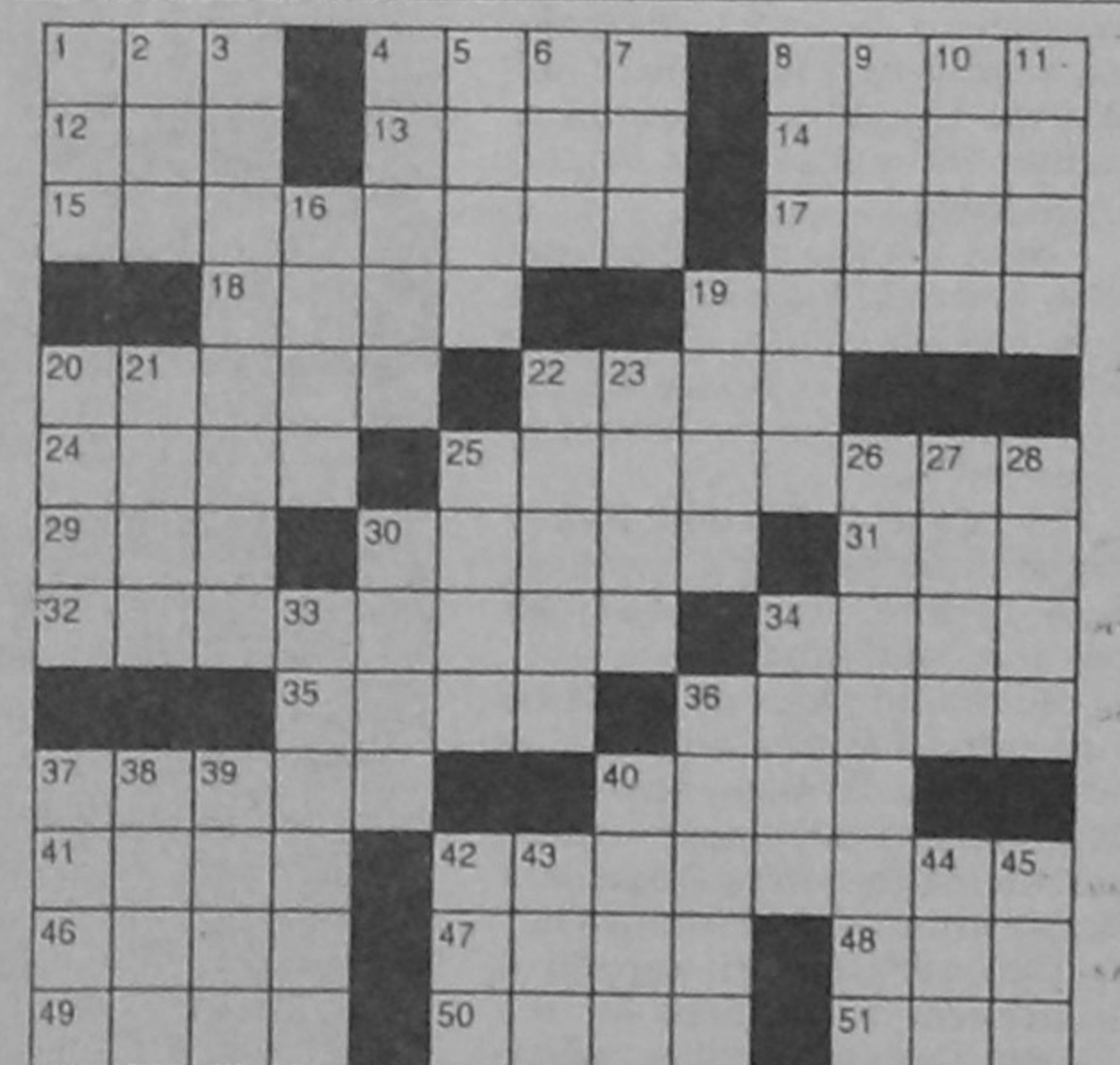
The result moved Lorient up three places to seventh, just three points off the European places, whereas Bordeaux are now looking nervously over their shoulders at third-placed Nancy, now just four points behind.



Lyon striker Karim Benzema (R) rolls the ball past the challenge of Saint-Etienne midfielder Blaise Matuidi during their Ligue 1 match at the Geoffroy Guichard Stadium on Sunday.

## CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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CRYPTOQUIP PRFFWPX HWR DSWQX L TXBAGWJ WM DWSVQ KQLQ ZWJ'Q XBAPQ DWRTZ HWR GLTT QKLQ L MAGQAWJLSH? Yesterday's Cryptogram: WHOEVER FIRST USED THE WORDS "INNIE" AND "OUTIE" FOR BELLYBUTTONS HAD A VERY NAVELE IDEA. Today's Cryptogram Clue: Q equals T