

## Cech calls for Nedved's return

AFP, Prague

Chelsea keeper Petr Cech called Thursday for Pavel Nedved to reverse his decision to quit national service and help the Czech Republic at Euro 2008.

The Juventus midfielder, with 18 goals from 91 caps to his name, called time on his international career after the 2006 World Cup.

But pressure has mounted for the 2003 European Footballer of the Year to return to the national fold.

Cech told the Dnes newspaper: "Pavel is part of the team, he's always made an important contribution to it. We're in need of a player with such experience and blessed with such skills."

"His presence at the Euro would naturally be welcome, that's obvious," noted Nuremberg's Czech striker Jan Koller.

Czech defender Radoslav Kovac said Nedved was "in excellent form at the moment and would surely enjoy an excellent Euro".

Calls for Nedved to figure at Euro 2008 have grown following the long-term injury suffered by Arsenal midfielder Tomas Rosicky.

Since his international debut in 1994 Nedved has taken part in three European championships, helping his country to the final in 1996 and semifinals in 2004.

The Czech Republic start their Group A campaign against co-hosts Switzerland on June 7, with next up Portugal on June 11 and Turkey four days later.

## Kidnap attempt forced Cruyff out of 1978 WC

AP, Madrid

Former Dutch soccer star Johan Cruyff claims a kidnap attempt, in which he says a rifle was held to his head, played a part in his decision to skip the 1978 World Cup.

Cruyff said the incident occurred the previous year, when he was nearing the end of a five-year stint with FC Barcelona.

"To play a World Cup you have to be 200 per cent," Cruyff told Catalonia Radio on Tuesday. "I had a rifle at my head, I was tied up, my wife tied up, the children were in the apartment in Barcelona. There are moments when there are other values in life."

Cruyff didn't say why his family was targeted or how the kidnap attempt failed. He told the radio station that police guarded his house for four months and escorted his children to school.

At the time, Cruyff's decision to skip the tournament in Argentina was widely attributed to his dislike of that country's military dictatorship. He also was at odds with the Dutch soccer federation at the time.

The Netherlands reached the final in 1978, losing 3-1 to host Argentina. Four years earlier, Cruyff led his country to its first World Cup final, when it lost to host West Germany 2-1.

## Jelena, Maria advance

AFP, Charleston

Top seeded Serbian Jelena Jankovic is off to another strong start at the WTA Family Circle Cup, beating qualifier Alexandra Stevenson 7-5, 6-0 in her opening round match Wednesday.

The defending champ Jankovic had failed to advance past the second round in three previous showings in the main draw of this 1.3 million dollar Tier I tournament before rolling to the title last season, dropping just one set in five matches.

That crown was one of four titles in a career year for the 23-year-old, who has yet to capture a championship this campaign.

Jankovic is coming off her first appearance in a final this season, losing to Serena Williams at the Sony Ericsson Open earlier in the month.

One of the top eight players to get a first-round bye, Jankovic's next opponent is Russian Anastasia Rodionova, who advanced with a 6-3, 6-4 win over Aravane Rezai of France.

If Jankovic is going to repeat as champion, she might just have to do it against Maria Sharapova in the final.

The second-seeded Russian is probably the favourite for the title after she broke through with her first career claycourt title at the Bausch and Lomb Championships on Sunday.

Sharapova demolished American Bethanie Mattek 6-0, 6-0 in Wednesday's night match.

In early results, fourth seed Elena Dementieva made little work of American Jill Craybas, 6-0, 6-2. The Russian reached the final here in 2005.

Next up for Dementieva will be No. 13 Victoria Azarenka, a 7-6 (7-4), 6-0 winner over Tiantian Sun.

Seventh seed Patty Schnyder also moved into the third round with a 7-6 (7-2), 6-0 win over Olga Govortsova.

The Swiss player next will face No. 11 Agnieszka Radwanska of Poland, who dispatched Romania's Edina Gallović, 6-7 (7-9), 6-2, 7-5.



PHOTO: AFP

Bayern Munich striker Luca Toni (L) embarks on his trademark celebration after scoring against Eintracht Frankfurt on Wednesday.

## Toni restores Bayern's lead

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich who went behind against Eintracht Frankfurt and struggled for periods hit back mainly thanks to a double by Italian striker Luca Toni to notch up a 3-1 away victory and restore their 10-point advantage at the top of the German league on Wednesday.

Bayern look set to earn their 21st league title with just five matches to go.

Ottmar Hitzfeld's men, who beat Borussia Dortmund 5-0 on Sunday, had a poor first half despite the return of France international Franck Ribery who had been rested at the weekend.

However Ribery, like the whole of the Bayern team, did not play up to the usual high standard against more focused and motivated opponents.

Eintracht went ahead after a superb move which concluded with a Benjamin Koehler header who made the most of both Brazilian Lucio and Frenchman Willy Sagnol failing to mark him.

Frankfurt almost went two goals to the good before the break but Ioannis Amanatidis failed to find the target though Bayern's

## TOP SIX

German football league table after Wednesday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Bayern Munich	29	18	9	8	55	17	63
Werder Bremen	29	16	5	8	62	41	53
Schalke 04	29	14	9	6	47	31	51
Hamburg	29	12	12	5	37	21	48
VfB Stuttgart	29	15	3	11	48	43	48
Bayern Leverkusen	29	14	5	10	50	31	47

## Hicks steps up Parry attack

Football

AFP, London

Liverpool co-owner Tom Hicks stepped up his attack on Rick Parry on Thursday, the Texan tycoon branding the chief executive's reign at Anfield as "disaster".

Hicks also took a fresh swipe at George Gillett, warning his co-owner that the stalemate over the club's future will continue until he agrees to sell his stake.

And he said it had been Gillett and not him who had orchestrated the meeting with Jürgen Klinsmann in New York last year which undermined Reds manager Rafael Benitez.

Hicks has demanded Parry's resignation and vowed that his top priority if Gillett were to sell to him would be to offer Benitez a one-year extension to his current deal.

In a wide ranging interview with Sky Sports News he also revealed that he plans to rid the club of all debt by heading up a group of financial backers willing to invest in the club.

Hicks blamed Parry for Liverpool's failure to compete commercially with their Premier League rivals.

"Look at what's happened under Rick's leadership. It has been a disaster," claimed Hicks.

"We have fallen so far behind the other leading clubs. We should have the stadium built three or four years ago. We have two or three major sponsors when we should have 12 or 15."

"We are not doing anything in Asia, the way that Manchester United and Barcelona are, and we have a tremendous number of fans in Asia."

"We have still got the top brand

in the world of football but that's not good if you don't know how to commercialise."

"Rick needs to resign from Liverpool FC. He has put his heart into it but it is time for a change. I think Rafa has unique skills, he motivates the team and we have some great players who are learning how to play with each other."

Hicks and Gillett took over the club in February 2007 but Hicks admitted their relationship has now completely broken down.

"At this point it is unworkable," he stated.

"We started this as friends but 50-50 is a difficult business proposition because you cannot do anything without your partner's approval."

"If George doesn't sell - because I am not going to sell - I guess we stay in this position that we are in."

"I am planning to make him a very attractive offer. If I had a majority on it (ownership of Liverpool) I could put more capital in."

"My goal is to take all the debt off the club except the working capital needed and get the permanent financing totally in place for the stadium."

"My family loves Liverpool. The sad thing is that right now we can't go there as a family until we get this thing sorted out."

## Players risk trial by tape

AFP, Vienna

Referees at Euro 2008 will have the power to discipline a player for faking injury after a match with the use of video evidence if the original incident went unnoticed.

"Simulations aimed at deceiving the referee will be punished by a yellow card for anti-sporting behaviour," UEFA emphasised at a seminar for the dozen men in black officiating at Euro 2008.

"Those which aren't picked up by the referee during the game can be sanctioned later by the disciplinary authorities," European football's governing body added.

UEFA has reminded Euro 2008

referees that "any actions using excessive force, including the illegal use of arms or elbows" must be dealt with by a red card.

"Players must feel secure," UEFA stressed.

UEFA is also putting the accent on respect from players for any decision taken by a referee.

"Players involved in a collective appeal must realise that the key members of the appeal, including those who run up to join in, will be given yellow cards."

Managers are reminded to behave responsibly and that any over the top criticism of the referee will be dealt with accordingly.

But it was Parma that had the

first chance of the game in the

## Juve boost UCL hopes

opening minute with Couto's powerful header going wide.

Hasan Salihajdzic, who scored a brace last weekend against Milan, replied with a flying header from Alessandro Del Piero's free-kick which went just wide of the far post.

The hosts continued to surge forward and should have broken the deadlock in the 10th minute.

Trezeguet latched onto Christian Molinaro's cross but his header went off target. Juve's efforts finally paid off with Trezeguet taking advantage of confusion inside the Parma area following a corner kick to fire past Parma goalkeeper Luca Bucci.

Parma fans called for offside against the Frenchman but to no avail.

The visitors struggled to get past Juve's well-organized defense as Juve continued to dominate.

Bucci was called into action to

make a save from a second yellow card.

The Giallorossi's miserable night was completed a minute later when veteran defender Fernando Couto sent off for a second yellow card.

The outcome sees Juve climb seven points clear of fourth-place Fiorentina with five games remaining.

The encounter at Turin's Olympic Stadium should have been played last month but was rescheduled following the death of a Parma fan who was on his way to the stadium to watch the match.

Claudio Ranieri's men went into the game in a buoyant mood following last weekend's 3-2 triumph over AC Milan.

But it was Parma that had the

## TOP SIX

Italian football league table after Wednesday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Inter Milan	33	22	9	2	61	21	75
Roma	33	21	8	4	61	33	71
Juventus	33	18	10	5	59	30	64
Fiorentina	33	16	8	9	47	34	56
AC Milan	33	14	10	9	50	31	52
Sampdoria	33	15	7	11	46	38	52

## EURO 2008 BRIEFS

AFF, Istanbul

Fenerbahce's Brazil defender Roberto Carlos is set to miss the rest of the season as he continues his recovery from an injury suffered in February.

The former Real Madrid star picked up a knock to his shin in his Turkish side's Champions League game against Sevilla, and is now receiving treatment in Brazil.

A statement on Fenerbahce's website on Thursday reported:

"The treatment for his injury will continue for the rest of the season."

According to press reports here

Carlos, who is being treated by medical staff at another of his former clubs, Palmeiras, will not regain full fitness for at least three months.

Bremen got the winner with eight minutes to go. A penalty kick was saved by the Rostock keeper but the ball fell into the net.

Ribery went off midway through the half but from then on it was all Bayern as Italian World Cup winning striker Toni got two more goals, for his 19th of the season, to seal what might prove to be a crucial victory in the second half.

Ribery went off midway through the half but from then on it was all Bayern as Italian World Cup winning striker Toni got two more goals, for his 19th of the season, to seal what might prove to be a crucial victory in the second half.

Ribery went off midway through the half but from then on it was all Bayern as Italian World Cup winning striker Toni got two more goals, for his 19th of the season, to seal what