

Robinho wants 5m euros

AFP, Madrid

Chelsea target Robinho says he'll stay put at Real Madrid if they agree to double his salary to five million euros a year, local media suggested here Tuesday.

The Spanish champions have reportedly turned down a 25-million-euro (37.5-million-dollar) bid for the Brazilian striker from the English Premier League side.

Robinho has reportedly told Real he wants to join Chelsea, coached by his compatriot Luiz Felipe Scolari.

But the 24-year-old, who has 50 caps for Brazil, is ready to stay if Real can hike his salary from 2.1 million euros to five million euros a year, the sports newspaper AS said.

Real are ready to go as high as 3.5 million, it said.

If he leaves, Real could step up their bid for Valencia's David Villa.

Villa's agent said last week that the star of Spain's Euro 2008 winning team was staying at the Spanish Cup winners.

Domenech opts for youth

AFP, Paris

France coach Raymond Domenech on Tuesday opted for youth over experience with veteran goalkeeper Gregory Coupet overlooked in the 20-man squad for a friendly against Sweden in Gothenburg on August 20.

The 35-year-old Coupet paid the price for his first team place not being assured in his new club Atletico Madrid and his mediocre performance at the European championships where he conceded six goals during their first round exit.

Rennes right back Rod Fanni and Yoann Gourcuff of Bordeaux have been given their first call-up.

Gourcuff has returned to France after a forgettable passage at AC Milan, who have loaned him to Bordeaux, while Fanni has been called in to fill the gap left by injured Bayern Munich defender Willy Sagnol and Lyon's Francois Clerc.

Midfielder Hatem Ben Arfa, who failed to make the grade for Euro 2008, has been recalled after his impressive start to the season with Marseille, as has defender Philippe Mexes, who benefits from the international retirement of Lilian Thuram.

Barcelona defender Eric Abidal, suspended for the first World Cup qualifier against Austria on September 6, and midfielder Samir Nasri and Fiorentina goalkeeper Sebastien Frey are also notable absences.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Steve Mandanda (Marseille), Hugo Lloris (Lyon)

Defenders: Jean-Alain Boumsong (Lyon), Bacary Sagna (Arsenal/ENG), William Gallas (Arsenal/ENG), Patrice Evra (Manchester United/ENG), Rod Fanni (Rennes), Philippe Mexes (AS Rome/ITA) Gael Clichy (Arsenal/ENG)

Midfielders: Mathieu Flamini (Arsenal/ENG), Lassana Diarra (Portsmouth/ENG), Jeremy Toulalan (Lyon), Florent Malouda (Chelsea/ENG), Hatem Ben Arfa (Marseille), Alou Diarra (Bordeaux), Yoann Gourcuff (Bordeaux), Sidney Govou (Lyon)

Strikers: Thierry Henry (Barcelona/ESP), Nicolas Anelka (Chelsea/ENG), Karim Benzema (Lyon)

The delay has allowed us to get some of the boys who had small injuries to get back on their feet -- Steven Dias, Climax Lawrence and NP Pradeep," he said.

"To some extent the others, especially Baichung (Bhutia), have benefited from this rest. Meanwhile, Tajikistan too have had a player suspended, so its all been going well for us."

Overall Medal

	Gold	Silver	Bronze
AUS	3	2	5
JPN	3	1	2
GER	3	1	1
RUS	2	4	3
GBR	2	1	2
CZE	2	0	0
PRK	1	2	4
AZE	1	2	0
NED	1	1	2
SVK	1	1	0
ESP	1	0	1
FIN	1	0	1
ROM	1	0	1
IND	1	0	0
THA	1	0	0
FRA	0	7	2
ZIM	0	2	0
AUT	0	1	1
CUB	0	1	1
KAZ	0	1	1
COL	0	1	0
HUN	0	1	0
NOR	0	1	0
SWE	0	1	0
TUR	0	1	0
VIE	0	1	0
BRA	0	0	3
ARM	0	0	2
INA	0	0	2
TPE	0	0	2
ALG	0	0	1
ARG	0	0	1
BLR	0	0	1
CRO	0	0	1
GEO	0	0	1
KGZ	0	0	1
MEX	0	0	1
SUI	0	0	1
TJK	0	0	1
TGO	0	0	1
UKR	0	0	1
UZB	0	0	1



Brazil's Cristiane (L) skips a sliding tackle from Nigeria's Christie George during their women's football first round match at the Beijing Olympic Games on Tuesday. Cristiane scored a hat-trick as Brazil won 3-1.

Cristiane leads Brazil

AFP, Beijing



Tuesday

A brilliant first-half hat-trick by Cristiane saw 2004 silver medalists Brazil book their place in the quarterfinals with a 3-1 win over Nigeria here on Tuesday.

The 23-year-old struck her triple in a 15 minute purple patch after Nigeria had opened the scoring from the penalty spot through Perpetua Nkwocha in the 19th minute.

Nigeria made the early running as Brazil failed to get out of the gate.

The Nigerians lived off the pace of the Nigerian striker Sarah Michael had two early efforts, one in the ninth minute from long range was beaten away by the diving Brazilian goalkeeper Barbara.

Michael should have done better in the 13th minute when having done well to turn a defender inside out she was one on one with Barbara but her tame shot was turned away for a corner.

However, the Africans took the lead in the 19th minute as they were awarded a penalty by Korean referee Hong Eun-Ah and Nkwocha tucked it away into the far right hand corner.

The Brazilians, though, levelled in the 33rd minute as Nkwocha was beaten out on the left by Rosana and the Brazilian fullback, who plays for Austrian side Neulengbach, produced the perfect cross for Cristiane to head past Precious Dede.

Remarkably the Brazilians were ahead two minutes later as Nigeria failed to clear inside their box and Cristiane, who plays in Sweden for Linkopings, produced an audacious and stunning overhead kick

which looped over a stranded Dede.

Cristiane rounded off a quite superb last 15 minutes of the first-half with her third in time added on as Mayson set her up, and criminally unmarked she stroked it home past a helpless Dede.

Nigeria tried to make a fist of it in the second-half but they could only muster their first shot on the hour mark as Michael teed up Rita Chikwelu, but her shot was a weak one and was easily saved by Barbara.

Cristiane almost had her fourth in the 65th minute but her goalbound shot was superbly tipped away for a corner by Dede.

Only brave last ditch defending by Cynthia Uwak prevented Brazil extending their lead 10 minutes from time as Lyon's Simone twisted and turned in the box and homed in on Dede, only for Uwak to deflect her close range effort for a corner.

Challenge Cup final today

FROM PAGE 17
Gachibowli Stadium in Hyderabad but torrential rain had rendered the pitch unplayable. The third-place play-off between Myanmar and North Korea will be played at the same venue earlier today.

The Asian Football Confederation, after a quick inspection of the facilities, decided to move the final to the Ambedkar Stadium in the capital and Houghton underlined the unexpected switch means his squad have been able to recuperate from what has been a gruelling tournament.

"The delay has allowed us to get some of the boys who had small injuries to get back on their feet -- Steven Dias, Climax Lawrence and NP Pradeep," he said.

"To some extent the others, especially Baichung (Bhutia), have benefited from this rest. Meanwhile, Tajikistan too have had a player suspended, so its all been going well for us."

The Central Asian nation won the inaugural edition of the tournament in 2006 in Dhaka but Kodirov knows they face a difficult task to

retain their title this time around.

"Last time, we played Sri Lanka in the final. They were not the host country but India are so it will be a great advantage for them," he said.

Geoff ICC's mediator

REUTERS, Karachi

Pakistan's Australian coach Geoff Lawson was asked to return home by the International Cricket Council (ICC) to ally player safety fears over travelling to Pakistan for next month's Champions Trophy.

"We have asked Geoff to join us in Australia and New Zealand when we present to stakeholders, including player groups, the result of the task team visit," an ICC spokesman said on Tuesday.

"As a former Australia Test player, a coach and someone who lives in Pakistan he is in a unique position to give his perspective to those stakeholders."

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said the former Australia fast bowler has left on the advice of the ICC task force, set up after Australia, South Africa, England and New Zealand raised safety concerns over travelling to Pakistan for the event.

The main obstacle to England's progress will be Croatia, who stopped Steve McLaren's team reaching Euro 2008 when they won 3-2 at Wembley last year.

But Capello isn't concerned about any opponent and made the kind of bullish prediction that could come back to haunt him in two years time.

"We will qualify for the World Cup. We will be in South Africa. I am sure of it," he said. "We are a very good team. It is always the same. For us, the opponent is not important. The important thing is what we do."

England's failure to qualify for Euro 2008 led to claims that Capello has taken over a squad lagging behind the rest of Europe in technical and tactical ability.

But the Italian watched most of the tournament, which finished with Spain's final triumph over Germany, and saw nothing that made him think England were inferior.

"I watched some games live and saw the rest on TV," he said. "Only Spain played in a different style. Only the characteristics of their play was different."

One Mendis

REUTERS, Karachi

FROM PAGE 17
"For a new batsman to go in straight away and face two spinners is never easy. We are not offering excuses as overall we did not play quality cricket," said Kumble.

"It is not about a couple of batsmen alone. It is important for everyone to contribute. The middle and lower order did not contribute and that let us down in the series."

Indian opener Virender Sehwag and Gautam Gambhir alone salvaged their reputations, playing key roles in their team's victory in the second Test in Galle.

Sehwag smashed an unbeaten 201 and 50, while Gambhir made successive half-centuries to give solid starts. But it was the only occasion when the Sri Lankan spin duo looked under pressure.

Dhoni bats for India veterans

PTI, Chennai

As India's experienced players drew flak for their lacklustre show in the just lost Test series against Sri Lanka, ODI captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni yesterday came in their defence, saying they did not need to prove themselves.

Dhoni, who gave the Test series a miss but is returning to lead the team in the shorter version matches, disagreed that experienced players should be more accountable than other members of the team in the Tests.

"You cannot ask a Rahul Dravid, Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly, VVS Laxman or Anil Kumble to prove their credentials," Dhoni told PTI in an e-mail interview.

Indian middle-order batsmen were specially underfire as they failed to put on enough runs on board in the entire Test series against Sri Lanka which India lost 2-1.

Asked if he was ready to lead in the Tests as well, Dhoni said, "I think you should ask the selectors and the Board of Control for Cricket in India this question. I am happy with whatever they have in mind." The Khel Ratna awardee wicketkeeper-batsman, however, agreed that it was high time India improved to consistently win matches and reach the top of the world rankings.

"I think it is just with time we should start winning in ODIs consistently. We are a great team and we start doing well pretty soon."

"Australia as a team is still far ahead. Yes, we can beat Australia and we have proved that. But to do it consistently we have to improve a lot. I think once we become more consistent we can think of being number one," he said.

Akhtar back in Pakistan fold

REUTERS, Karachi

Controversial fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar, who has not played for Pakistan since December, has been named in a 15-man squad for next month's Champions Trophy.

"Shoaib has been picked after doctors cleared his fitness," Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chief operating officer Shaheer Nagma said on Tuesday.

Last month, the PCB left the paceman out of a Pakistan training camp over an unpaid fine after he had been chosen in a preliminary squad for the tournament.

Fellow fast bowler Umar Gul and all-rounder Shahid Afridi were also included in the 15-man squad despite fitness fears.

"Shoaib, Gul and Afridi carry a lot of experience and we are confident they will be 100 per cent fit for the tournament," said chief selector Salahuddin Ahmed.

According to media reports, the choice of Shoaib and Afridi led to a dispute between coach Geoff Lawson and the selectors on Monday because the Australian had doubts over their fitness.

Wicketkeeper Kamran Akmal was recalled after being dropped for the recent Asia Cup.

SQUAD

Nasir Jamshed, Salman Butt, Younis Khan, Shoaib Malik (captain), Khalid Latif, Misbahul Haq, Kamran Akmal, Shahid Afridi, Bazid Khan, Saeed Aijmal, Shoaib Akhtar, Umar Gul, Rao Iftikhar, Sohail Tanvir, Abdur Rauf.

Capello vows qualification

AFP, London

Fabio Capello has guaranteed England will qualify for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

Capello is in confident mood ahead of the World Cup qualifying campaign, which begins against Andorra on September 6, and the Italian believes England have more than enough quality to reach the finals.

The main obstacle to England's progress will be Croatia, who stopped Steve McLaren's team reaching Euro 2008 when they won 3-2 at Wembley last year.

But Capello isn't concerned about any opponent and made the kind of bullish prediction that could come back to haunt him in two years time.

"We will qualify for the World Cup. We will be in South Africa. I am sure of it," he said. "We are a very good team. It is always the same. For us, the opponent is not important. The important thing is what we do."

England's failure to qualify for Euro 2008 led to claims that Capello has taken over a squad lagging behind the rest of Europe in technical and tactical ability.

But the Italian watched most of the tournament, which finished with Spain's final triumph over Germany, and saw nothing that made him think England were inferior.

"I watched some games live and saw the rest on TV," he said. "Only Spain played in a different style. Only the characteristics of their play was different."

Juve target return

AFP, Turin



Juventus are looking to take a big step towards regaining their place among Europe's football elite when they entertain Armedia Bratislava in their Champions League final qualifying round, first leg tie on Wednesday. The Serie A giants have not played in Europe since drawing 0-0 to Arsenal in Turin in April 2006 to crash out of the tournament 2-0 on aggregate at the quarterfinal stage shortly before the explosion of the match-fixing scandal that led to their relegation to the second tier.

After Juve won promotion back to Serie A at the first attempt and finished third in the standings last season to earn a ticket to the Champions League, the Slovak champions are not expected to pose a major threat to their ambitions in the competition they won in 1985 and 1996.

Indeed, coach Claudio Ranieri is

hoping to make fast work of them.

"We have to wrap up the question of qualification (to the group stage) at home," Ranieri said after his side drew 0-0 at European and English champions Manchester United last week.

Ranieri has some injury headaches, as midfielders Marco Marchionni and Cristiano Zanetti are doubts after missing training on Sunday with muscle strains, while Croatia defender Dario Knezevic, a new signing from relegated Livorno, is battling for fitness too.

Juve are also without Czech midfielder Pavel Nedved, who is suspended after being sent off against Arsenal two years ago, as well as forward Sebastian Giovinco and midfielders Paolo De Cejle and Claudio Marchisio, all members of the Italian Olympic squad.

But defenders Zdenek Grygera, Jonathan Zebina and Cristian Molinaro and striker Vincenzo Iaquinta are back training after shaking off knocks.

Armedia scored 10 goals and conceded just three as they

knocked out Malta's Valletta and Finland's Tampere United in the first two preliminary rounds.

But the prospect of facing the visitors' prolific attack, led by 25-year-old striker Juraj Halenar, is not keeping Ranieri awake at night.

Apart from a 3-0 thumping from Hamburg at the Emirates Cup in London this month and a 1-0 defeat to Serie B Placenza, Juventus's form has been good in pre-season friendlies.

They beat Danish side Brondby and Germany's Borussia Dortmund 1-2 and 1-3 respectively last month and claimed a 1-0 victory over Arsenal at the Emirates Cup before the respectable draw in Manchester.

Captain Alessandro Del Piero and David Trezeguet, who have looked sharper than Iaquinta and new Brazilian signing Amauri in recent games, are likely to lead Juve's attack on Wednesday, according to Italian media reports.

The return leg of the Champions League final qualifying round takes place in Bratislava on August 27.

Gunners rely on Cesc

AFP, London



Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger expects Cesc Fabregas to ruin Steve McLaren's Champions League debut with FC Twente in the third qualifying round on Wednesday.

The Gunners travel to the Netherlands for the first leg against former England coach McLaren's new club with plenty of questions still to be answered about Wenger's side.

After his chastening experience as England coach, McLaren would love to stick two fingers up at his critics by knocking out Arsenal.

But Twente are making their Champions League debut after defeating Ajax in a play-off last season and, although Arsenal have only just completed their pre-season programme, McLaren knows his side have only a slim chance of advancing to the Champions League group stages.

He is already describing the match more as a learning experience for his players than a realistic opportunity to progress in the competition.

"Playing Arsenal will be a great experience for the players and if they don't become better players after

playing against Arsenal, they shouldn't be in football," McLaren said.

"That's how you learn. That's how you grow and playing against one of the best teams in Europe, obviously the players will grow from that."

McClaren is still finding his feet at Twente - his knowledge of the Dutch language only extends to "thank you very much" so far - and the match has probably come too early for him and his team.

While McLaren bids for redemption, Wenger has loftier ambitions. He wants to erase the painful memories of last season's Champions League quarterfinal exit against Liverpool and Fabregas is the key to achieving that target.

The Spanish star has returned from his post Euro 2008 break just in time because Wenger has been unable to sign replacements for departed central midfielders Mathieu Flamini and Gilberto Silva.

Wenger has gone on record with his desire to bring in a new partner for Fabregas, but links with Gokhan Inler, Udinese's Swiss international, Aston Villa's Gareth Barry, Manchester City's Michael Johnson and Xabi Alonso of Liverpool have yet to yield a positive conclusion.

So, although Fabregas is still of full match fitness, the midfielder's presence at Vitesse Arnhem's Gelrodome will be reassuring for Wenger.



Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni (C) shares a light moment with teammates Irfan Pathan (R) and Yuvraj Singh during a practice session at the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore on Tuesday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	DOWN
1 World a cleaver	13 "Monopoly"
5 Sturgeon young	14 "Converse"
8 "Thirty days"	15 "Les Miserables"
12 Shake in the grass?	16 Here-today-gone-tomorrow
13 Grecian vessel	17 Jellied entree
14 "Soprano" actress	18 "Gis"
15 Census data	19 Melodrama
16 It may hit the fan	20 Soak up some rays
18 Nick-name of football's Ed Jones	21 Existed man?
20 Ready for battle	22 Cincinnati team
21 First lady	23 Scrips
22 Work with	24 CBS logo
23 "Across" temple	25 Morse symbol
26 Gypsum board	26 "Simple"
27 That girl	27 "Sculptor's medium"
31 Conger, a	28 "Vicinity"
32 Old Oldsmobile	29 "Covers"
33 Trap	30 Whip
36 Half of 100	31 Shock and—

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12					13			14		
15					16			17		
18				19				20		
23	24	25			26			27	28	29
30				31				32		
33		34	35				36	37		
				38			39			
40	41	42			43			44	45	46
47					48			49		
50					51			52		
53					54			55		

CRYPTOQUIP

TI MHWJNTIZSIZ JMMQ WEZW

QWAA EMVI TIE YTPDWE

GPYN ETGTZW. SO VTD ONW

WTHW MQ EWDJYOSMI

Yesterday's Cryptquip: DO YOU NEED A PIECE OF FURNITURE FOR SERVING POTATOES, BEETS AND CELERY? USE A VEGETABLE.

Today's