

Scholes to miss UCL opener

AFP, Monaco

Paul Scholes is suspended for Manchester United's opening Champions League match next month after being sent off in their 2-1 European Super Cup defeat to Zenit St Petersburg here on Friday.

The Red Devils midfielder was given his marching orders by referee Claus Bo Larsen in the final moments of the match following his second yellow card for deliberate handball.

United manager Alex Ferguson said afterwards: "It was a pity Scholes was sent off and he will miss the first Champions League match. It was a bit unfortunate but it happens."

Scholes will miss the Group E home match against Spaniards Villarreal on September 17. Scotland's Celtic and Aalborg of Denmark are the other teams in the pool.

Ferguson added England midfielder Owen Hargreaves, who has been struggling with tendinitis and hasn't made a first team appearance for United since helping win the Champions League in May, had been doing speed work in training for the last 10 days and had been disappointed he was not able to play in the match.

Juve to miss Treze-gol

AFP, Rome

French forward David Trezeguet will miss Juventus's Serie A season opener against Fiorentina on Sunday due to a knee injury, the club said on Saturday.

Trezeguet, as he is known to the Juve faithful, has a sprained knee and will be out until Wednesday.

The Frenchman's absence adds to an already lengthy injury list for the trip to Florence as coach Claudio Ranieri is without midfielders Cristian Zanetti, Marco Marchionni and Momo Sissoko as well as defenders Jonathan Zebina and Giorgio Chiellini.

The match against Fiorentina is being billed as the first clash between championship challengers.

Both sides qualified for the lucrative Champions League group stage in midweek.

Fulham sign Etuhu

AFP, London

Fulham said late Friday they had signed Nigerian international midfielder Dickson Etuhu from fellow English Premier League club Sunderland for an undisclosed fee.

The 26-year-old has signed a three-year contract with the London club to end manager Roy Hodgson's summer-long search for a defensive midfielder.

"It feels great to have signed for Fulham Football Club. These are exciting times at the club and I've joined to become an integral part of Fulham's future success," Etuhu said.

"The club has made some terrific signings over the summer, adding to an already talented pool of players. Last Saturday's win over Arsenal shows just how competitive Fulham are in the Premier League."

"I'm looking forward to meeting up with my new teammates over the next few days, settling down and preparing for the club's next home game against Bolton Wanderers in a few weeks' time."

"This is a crucial stage in my career and I'm delighted to have committed myself to Fulham for what I hope will be my prime years as a professional footballer."

Etuhu made 20 appearances for Sunderland after joining from Norwich City last year.

Fulham, who only avoided relegation on goal difference last season, bolstered their squad in the close season with the most expensive acquisition being striker Andy Johnson from Everton for 10 million pounds on a four-year contract.

Clean bill of health for Ozat

AFP, Berlin

Cologne's Turkish defender Umit Ozat was given a clean bill of health by doctors and released from hospital on Saturday after collapsing during a league game at Karlsruhe the previous night.

Ozat lost consciousness after 25 minutes of the match for no apparent reason and was stretched off after teammates signalled to the bench he needed treatment. The match resumed five minutes later and Cologne went on to win 2-0.

The 31-year-old player swiftly regained consciousness but was taken to hospital for cardiologist tests and stayed there overnight for observation.

Medical tests showed that there was no serious health problem and doctors said that he had probably not eaten or drunk sufficiently before the game had started.



RUSSIAN REVOLUTION: Zenit St Petersburg players are over-the-moon as they pose with the Super Cup title after outplaying Manchester United during the final at the Stade Louis II stadium in Monaco on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

Blues driven by revenge

AFP, London

Luiz Felipe Scolari has warned Tottenham that his Chelsea stars will be motivated by revenge in Sunday's London derby at Stamford Bridge.

Scolari spoke to John Terry, Frank Lampard and company about their meetings with Spurs last season and quickly realised they are still sore over the 4-4 draw that dented Chelsea's title chase.

Although Chelsea lost the League Cup final to Tottenham it is the painful memories of their March visit to White Hart Lane which will fire up Scolari's players this weekend.

The Blues led three times before conceding a last minute equaliser to concede crucial ground on Manchester United. They eventually lost the title by just two points and the momentum squandered at Spurs proved crucial.

"They have talked to me about the 4-4 game, not the League Cup. One mistake in the last two minutes meant they lost the Premier League," Scolari said.

"They also told me they respected some of the Tottenham players and at this moment it is important for Tottenham not to lose another game."

"They want their first three points in the league so we have some problems, we know this. We need to respect them even more."

"If you win a derby it is fantastic. When I arrived here some people said to me 'you need to win three derbies - Tottenham, Fulham and West Ham'."

Tottenham have made a dismal start to the season but Scolari isn't taking another victory for granted. "Tottenham thought they would have a better start to the season than they have done because they have lost both games," he said.

"But I know Juande and the players at Tottenham. They made one or two mistakes in the games before ours but we need to remember this is a big chance for Tottenham because it is a derby."

Chelsea's 100 percent winning record under Scolari has showcased two completely different sides of the team. They turned on the style to rout Portsmouth in his first match, the ground out a 1-0 victory at Wigan.

The impressive play of Scolari's five-man midfield has been the highlight of those wins but the Brazilian could be missing three key players in the centre as Michael Ballack, John Obi Mikel and Michael Essien are all struggling with injuries.

While Chelsea will be driven by their revenge mission, Spurs make

the short trip across London with an equally pressing need for a positive result.

Defeat on Sunday will condemn Tottenham to their worst start to a season since 1979. The omens aren't good for Ramos's side as Spurs are without a win at the Bridge since 1990.

Ramos also has to cope with the unwanted distraction of Dimitar Berbatov's attempt to force a move to Manchester United. The Spanish coach dropped Berbatov from last weekend's defeat to Sunderland after he handed in a transfer request and was unsure whether to bring the Bulgarian back at the Bridge.

In the meantime, Ramos has told the rest of the squad they must improve.

"At the moment we owe something to our fans but we can and we must give a lot more and that's what we are working on," he said. "The team have to improve. We need to be ambitious and keep our concentration for the full 90 minutes."

"We are more concerned with the errors we have made in the last few games rather than obsessing about achieving our first victory."

"Chelsea are a great team but we also have a very solid base. I have no doubt in my mind that Tottenham are capable of beating any team."

Match-fixing on Brazil WC match?

AFP, Berlin

The German weekly magazine Der Spiegel reports in Monday's edition that the 2006 World Cup knock-out stage match between Brazil and Ghana was influenced by an Asian betting syndicate.

The magazine reports large sums of money had been bet on Brazil winning by at least two goals and a former Ghana international acted as an intermediary.

Ghana lost the last 16 round match 3-0 in Dortmund on June 27, 2006 which put Brazil into the quarter-finals where they lost to France.

The information in Der Spiegel comes from Canadian investigative journalist Declan Hill, whose book about betting on sport around the world is published in German next week.

Hill also claims two Bundesliga matches of the 2004-05 season were also the subject of a betting scam organised by Malaysian William Bee Wah Lim who was sentenced to two years and five months by a Frankfurt court.

German football endured the most serious crisis in its history in 2004 when referee Robert Hoyzer admitted having received 70,000 euros to influence the results of 23 matches, mainly second and third division games, between April 10 and December 3, 2004.

No love for Novak-Leryn

AFP, New York

Serbian third seed Novak Djokovic breezed into the third round of the US Open with a straight-set triumph Friday then brushed aside rumours of romance with Paraguayan Olympic beauty Leryn Franco.

Djokovic, coming to Flushing Meadows off a bronze-medal singles showing at the Beijing Olympics, denied he is involved in a romance with Franco, who placed 51st in the women's javelin at Beijing with a toss of 45.34 meters.

"I've heard this has been the main subject in the papers and they even showed it on the TV two days ago when I played my first match," Djokovic said.

"I'm denying this and I'm saying we don't have a romance like people call it already. I even heard she's here so it's kind of strange because I would be the first to know probably."

"The papers are trying to make another scandal of it. Another romance. This is part of my life and I have to accept it like this."

"We know each other. That's true. We met and then she came to watch my matches. But there is nothing more than friendship."

She's a good friend to have. Franco, 26, was 42nd at the 2004 Athens Olympics and is a famous model and beauty pageant contestant.

They have been linked in internet gossip columns but Djokovic tries to ignore such things to focus on his tennis.

"You try not to pay too much attention because media can make you a star and bring you down in a day," Djokovic said. "I accept it's part of my life. I have to be careful what I say and get used to it."

RUSSIANS WARN EUROPE

Zenith outclass Man Utd

INTERNET, undated



UEFA Cup holders Zenit St Petersburg became the first Russian team to lift the European Super Cup after beating Champions League winners Manchester United 2-1 on Friday.

Goals from Pavel Pogrebnyak and record signing Danny, on his debut, gave Zenit's Dutch coach Dick Advocaat victory over his old rival Alex Ferguson who was bidding to become the first manager to win the trophy for the third time.

Ferguson might have had a feeling it was not going to be his night when an official almost tripped him up on a rope as he took his seat in the dugout before kickoff at the Stade Louis II.

His mood was not helped by midfielder Paul Scholes's 90th-minute red card for handball, his second caution.

United's best moment arrived when defender Nemanja Vidic pulled a goal back 17 minutes from time but Zenit, playing in front of 7,500 of their own fans as well as Chelsea's billionaire Russian owner Roman Abramovich, held on for victory.

Pogrebnyak, who missed the

UEFA Cup final win over Rangers through suspension, put Zenit in front after 44 minutes when he headed home a flick from Igor Denisov after a well-delivered set-piece by Alejandro Dominguez.

Danny, who joined this week in a 30 million euros deal (\$44.12 million) from Dynamo Moscow, doubled the lead after a superb solo run 15 minutes later.

He picked the ball up just inside United's half and finally beat Edwin van der Sar with an unstoppable low shot.

Zenit, looking fitter and sharper having played 19 games in the Russian league compared to United's two in the Premier League, started with six of the team that won the UEFA Cup in May.

Andrei Arshavin, linked with a move to England, started on the bench before coming on as a halftime substitute to help Zenit control the match for most of the second period.

The Russians had the first chance to score when Pogrebnyak skied his shot before a superb free kick by Dominguez flew narrowly wide.

Danny created most of Zenit's chances and went close with a header over the bar after 43 minutes.

A minute later Zenit deservedly went ahead.

Apart from a chance Wayne Rooney scuffed, United's only shot on target in the first half was a harmless 25-metre shot from Carlos Tevez which Vyacheslav Malafeev gathered easily.

With Cristiano Ronaldo still recovering from ankle surgery, United lacked potency in attack.

Menez to be benched

AFP, Rome

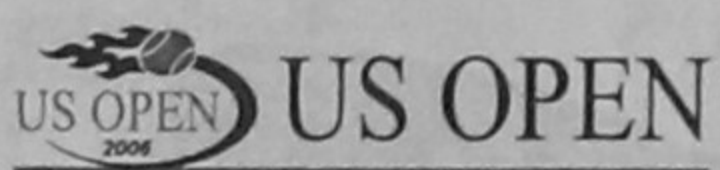
AS Roma's new French signing Jeremy Menez will start Sunday's Serie A opener against Napoli on the bench, coach Luciano Spalletti said on Saturday.

Spalletti confirmed the signing of the former Monaco attacking midfielder and said he would be a part of the match-day squad for the visit of Napoli.

"Right now I'll definitely have him on the bench. He'll be among the players we pick from," said Spalletti.

Roma signed the 21-year-old this week for a fee believed to be between 12 and 13 million euros.

Fed Express gains steam



AFP, New York

Roger Federer rolled to his 29th straight US Open match victory and the women shuffled the chairs in the race to knock Ana Ivanovic off her No. 1 perch Friday on a marathon day five of the US Open.

Four-time reigning champion Federer extended his brilliant run by breezing past Brazilian Thiago Alves 6-3, 7-5, 6-4 in the second round at Arthur Ashe Stadium.

Jelena Jankovic and Elena Dementieva, both of whom have a shot at seizing the No. 1 ranking, beat tough unseeded opponents to reach the fourth round.

American eighth seed Andy Roddick was featured in the night session. Roddick had to rally from a shaky first set to defeat Latvian teenager Ernests Gulbis 3-6, 7-5, 6-2, 7-5 in a match that ended in the early morning hours.

Federer, who is trying to salvage a season where he has yet to win a title on the hardcourts, has not lost a match at Flushing Meadows since 2003.

"This year was difficult because I couldn't really take tournaments off," Federer said. "I always had to chase the rhythm of playing on that particular surface that I was wanting to play on."

The 27-year-old Swiss superstar hammered 19 aces and won 80 percent of his first serve points in the two-hour, 14-minute match. "I served really well which is a big bonus," Federer said. "I am concentrating on my own game and physically I am fine."

Federer seeks to become the only player to win five or more successive titles at two separate

Grand Slams. He has had similar success at Wimbledon winning five in a row beginning in 2003.

After a record 237 weeks as the world's number one, Federer lost his position to Rafael Nadal on August 18.

This is the first time since the 2004 Australian Open that the Swiss has not been the top seed at a Grand Slam.

He clinched Friday's match with a forehand flick from the baseline that sailed crosscourt and just caught the line.

It has been a rough year for Federer that was punctuated earlier this month when he lost the number one ranking.

Federer, who has reached the semi-finals or better in 17 straight majors, remains two Grand Slam titles shy of tying Pete Sampras' all-time record of 14.

On the women's side, world number two Jankovic defeated Zheng Jie of China 7-5, 7-5 in a third round match on Friday.

Serbia's Jankovic is the lone top three seed remaining in the women's draw after the stunning upset of top seed Ivanovic on Thursday and the ousting of Russian third seed Svetlana Kuznetsova on Friday.

Zheng, of Cheng Du, made Jankovic work for the win, especially in the final game, which lasted 18 minutes and included 11 deuces.

"I had a really bad percentage of first serves," she said. "I was struggling with that stroke. But I managed to win at the end so that is the most important thing."

The second-seeded Jankovic moves through to the fourth round where she will play 14th seed Caroline Wozniacki of Denmark.

"I felt I had some chance but she had lots of heart," Zheng said. "I was not too bad. I tried to go to the

volley and put pressure on her but I felt my serve was not good. I double faulted too much."

Jankovic is one of two women's seeds in action Friday who can supplant Serbian Ivanovic as number one if they do well at Flushing Meadows.

Jankovic already spent time at number one this year even if it was for just one week. She reached the semi-finals at Wimbledon and the French Open. She would regain that No. 1 WTA ranking if she advances to the semi-finals.

Jankovic said she was amazed to hear about Ivanovic's loss.

"It's surprising," Jankovic said. "I have no idea how she played, what the other girl did. I have no idea. I only heard it on the news."

Fifth-seeded Dementieva needs to advance to the finals to surpass Ivanovic who still has a modest chance of holding on to number one.

Russia's Dementieva, who is trying to become the third player to win an Olympic gold medal and the US Open in the same year, defeated rising British star Anne Keothavong 6-3, 6-4.

Dementieva booked a date in the fourth round against China's Li Na, who beat Russian Ekaterina Makarova 6-1, 4-6, 6-2 to reach the fourth round. Li missed last year's US Open with a rib injury.

Two years ago, Li became the first Chinese woman to reach the fourth round at a US Open.

In other men's second round play, Russian fifth seed Nikolay Davydenko defeated Agustín Calleri of Argentina, 6-4, 6-4, 7-6 (7/2) and compatriot Dmitry Tursunov beat Victor Hanescu 6-7 (2/7), 6-3, 6-4, 6-2.

Gilles Muller outlasted Germany's Tommy Haas 2-6, 2-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3, 6-3.

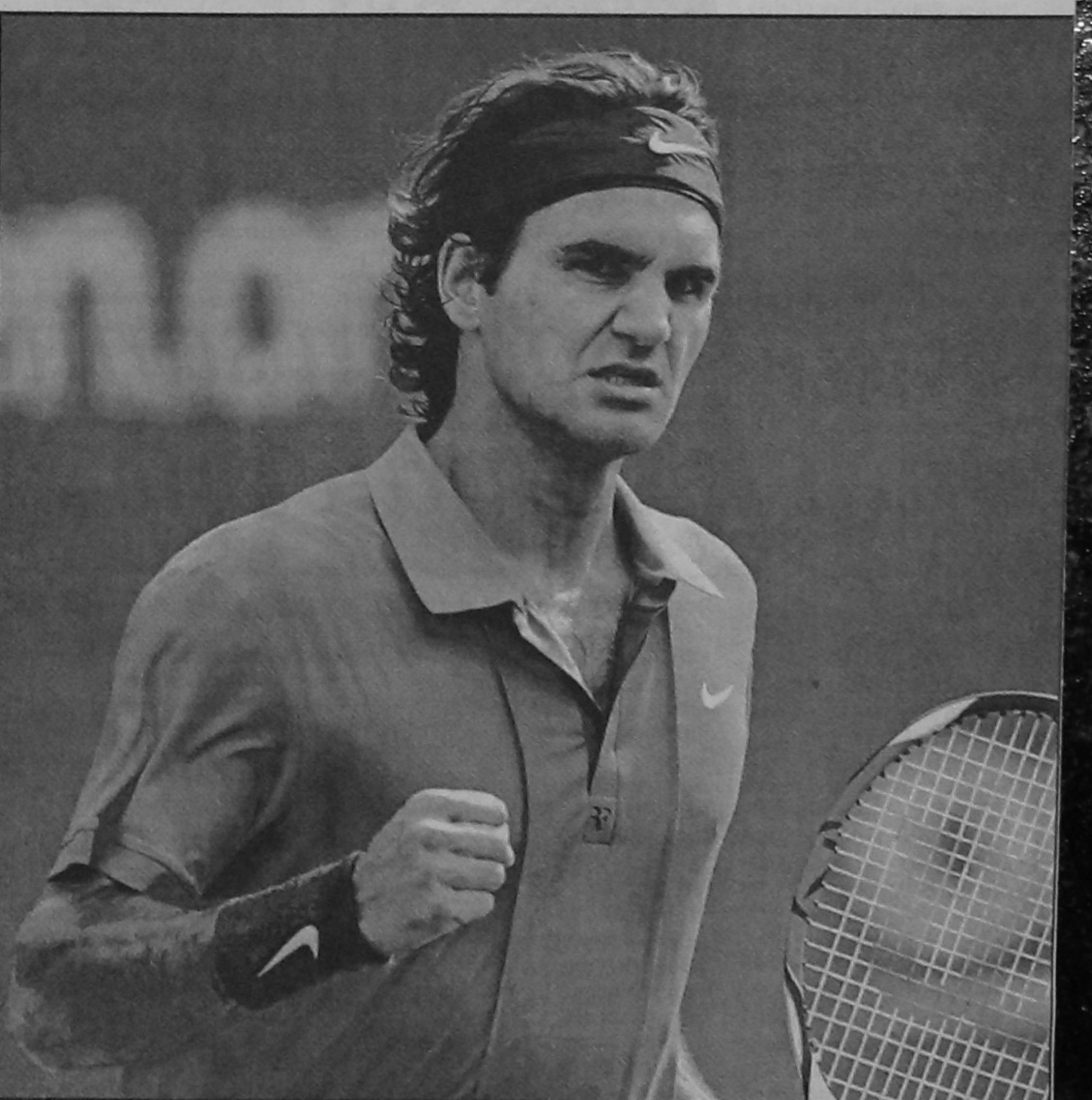
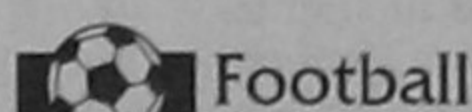


PHOTO: AFP

Swiss super star Roger Federer celebrates after beating Thiago Alves of Brazil in the second round of the US Open at Flushing Meadows in New York on Friday.

Stars battle sweet tooth!



INTERNET, undated

Miserable England players have turned to comfort foods as they prepare for their crucial World Cup qualifiers, directly challenging the authority of boss Fabio Capello.

The hardman Italian has introduced a strict regime which forces the national squad to go up to eight hours without food after training sessions.

But top stars have smuggled bags of crisps and chocolate bars into their rooms as they fight hunger pangs, according to reports.

Sources say the uncompromising 62-year-old's fasting plan - which applies only when they play for England - backfired in the recent drawn friendly with the

Czech Republic, causing a lethargic performance.

The Sun reports that one senior source, highly placed in the England camp, said: "Players were complaining of feeling light-headed and nauseous after training. They'd been together four days and couldn't believe how little they'd eaten. Most are used to diets packed with carbohydrates to keep going. Now all they're allowed is a bit of cereal and toast."

"It got so bad that some started smuggling supplies of chocolate and crisps into their rooms behind Capello's back."

Capello took the England job in a 6-million-pounds-a-year deal last December but his hard-line stance is not going down well with some senior players.

According to reports, the diet

plan even saw one player - believed to be Manchester United defender Rio Ferdinand - vomit at half-time during the friendly against the Czechs at Wembley.

The source said: "One senior player started suffering stomach cramps and was sick all over the dressing room floor. This isn't about the players being greedy. But suddenly they were going long periods with nothing to eat and their systems couldn't cope."

The source added: "There's been a bit of moaning about the diet behind closed doors, but no one's been brave enough to confront the boss head-on."

England start their World Cup qualifying campaign against minnows Andorra (in Barcelona) next Saturday and the following Wednesday (September 10), they play Croatia away in Zagreb.