Berbatov's dream move

bly tired Berbatov told the press,

who greeted him with a round of

despair... I have never been

through anything like this," he

Berbatov is the highest ever paid

for a Bulgarian player and the

forward enjoyed a hero's welcome

at home after a far from bright

Tottenham were clouded by his

squad for Tottenham's Premier

League clash against Sunderland

on August 23, claiming he was not

goodbye at White Hart Lane.

desire to leave the club.

applause.

King Kahn bows out

Football

AFP, Munich

Former Bayern Munich and Germany goalkeeper Oliver Kahn bowed out of the game on Tuesday after 20 years as a professional, his testimonial at Bayern's Allianz-Arena finishing 1-1 between Bayern and a German select XI.

Kahn, 39, made 557 appearances in the Bundesliga for Dortmund and Bayern and bade farewell, having Monday insisted that "there aren't many things I miss" about the game.

Kahn played the match for Bayern, with whom he won eight league titles as well as the Champions League in 2001.

He was also voted player of the tournament at the 2002 World Cup, where he helped Die Mannschaft reach the final only for a mistake to give Brazil the opening goal in a 2-0 win for the South Americans.

For his final game he was World Cup qualifier.

coached by new Bayern handler Jurgen Klinsmann, who famously dropped him at the 2006 World Cup but the only blot on the evening was agoal he conceded after 33 minutes.

"Tonight was very moving for me, perhaps the most moving moment of my career," he said. "I was under pressure my whole

career whereas now I just had the joy of being out there in this stadium and before these fans one last time." After 75 minutes and having

made several top-drawer saves Kahn gave way to Michael Rensing in the Bayern goal before embarking on a lap of honour to cheers from the 50,000 fans at the Allianz-Arena.

"It's the end of an extraordinary part of my life but also the start of something new," said Kahn, whose only regret - aside from not capturing the World Cup - was not scoring

He will now begin working as a TV consultant on September 10, when Germany meet Finland in a

Niemi retires

Football

AFP, London

Fulham's Finnish goalkeeper Antti Niemi announced his retirement on Wednesday after conceding defeat in the fight to return from a wrist injury.

Niemi, who joined Fulham in January 2006 and made 62 appearances, has been sidelined with the injury during pre-season and wouldn't have been able to play for another two months.

The 36-year-old, who won 67 international caps, was planning to hang up his gloves at the end of the season and the injury accelerated his decision.

"My plan was always to finish my career after this contract, which runs out next summer," he told Fulham's website.

"Due to my wrist injury it would be another two months before I could start training

"I asked the club for their views. I was very grateful that they understood where I was coming from and thankfully we settled the contract. So it's come a little bit earlier than I expected."

Niemi also played for Southampton, Rangers and Hearts during 11 years in the British game.



Legendary Germany and Bayern Munich goalkeeper Oliver Kahn bids goodbye to fans during his testimonial match at the Allianz Arena in Munich on Tuesday. Bayern took on a Germany select XI to honour their departing goalkeeper, most famous for his sterling performances as the German number one in the 2002 World Cup - a series of performances that ended with a gaffe in the final which handed the title to Brazil.

Silva pulls out

AFP, Madrid

Valencia midfielder David Silva on Tuesday withdrew from Spain's squad for their upcoming World Cup qualifiers against Bosnia and Armenia due to a left ankle injury, Spanish media reported.

Spain coach Vicente Del Bosque will not replace the 22-year-old who was ruled out of the squad following tests at a Madrid clinic on his injury, the online edition of daily newspaper El Mundo reported.

Silva will be the squad's second big absence. Del Bosque on Monday tipped Barcelona striker Bojan Krkic to replace Liverpool's Fernando Torres who pulled a hamstring during a weekend English Premiership

Silva and Torres were two of the squad's best players during Euro 2008 which was won by Spain.

Spain will face Bosnia on Saturday in Murcia and Armenia four days laterin Albacete.

It will be the team's first competitive matches since winning the European tournament in June. Del Bosque has since replaced Luis Aragones who joined Turkish side Fenerbahce.

Curbishley quits Hammers

AFP, London

Alan Curbishley has resigned as West Ham manager, the Premier League club confirmed on Wednesday. Curbishley's decision to quit was

apparently triggered by the departures of Anton Ferdinand and George McCartney to Sunderland just before the transfer deadline. He had wanted to keep both

defenders but the club's board allowed the sales to go through. Curbishley responded by tendering his resignation on Wednesday and it was immediately accepted by West Ham owner Bjorgolfur Gudmundsson.

A club statement said: "We can confirm that we have accepted Alan Curbishley's resignation as we feel it is in the best interests of both parties.

"We wish Alan all the success in the future. A shortlist of candidates is being drawn up and an announcement will be made in due course about the new West Ham United

Despite being under heavy pres-

Since then a host of first teamers favourite to replace Curbishley.

Keegan's future unclear

AFP, Newcastle



English Premier League club admitted that talks are continuing between the warring factions.

have made clear his disgust at the club's transfer policy in talks with Newcastle's directors this week and reports on Wednesday claimed the former England coach could walk away from St James'

Newcastle responded by insisting Keegan is still their manager but they revealed he is still discussing the situation with owner Mike Ashley. "Newcastle United Football

Club can confirm that discussions are ongoing between the Board and Kevin Keegan," a statement on

Arsenal star Samir Nasri will do

anything to banish memories of

France's disastrous European

Championships - even if it means

missing the Muslim celebration of

Football

AFP, Paris

ramadan.

Newcastle's website read.

"Both the Club and Kevin would Kevin Keegan's like to reiterate that Kevin remains as manager. He has not resigned nor has he been sacked, as has been confirmed in respective statements made by Kevin and balance on Wednesday after the Newcastle United Football Club." The chief executive of the

League Managers' Association, Richard Bevan, admitted Keegan The 57-year-old is believed to was "in a difficult position". "It is not ideal having to speak to you on managers' positions so

early in the season but I was speak-

ing to Kevin Keegan at length last night," Bevan told BBC radio. "He has not resigned."He is in a difficult position - he'll be discussing really important issues with the Newcastle board over the next few

"The football club and fans everybody knows are massively important to Kevin and after such heavy coverage and speculation yesterday it was important to make this statement that he has not

marked this weekend's World Cup

qualifier against Austria as the

perfect time to show that France is

still a top force in international

Euro was a bad experience, but I

don't see it like that," Nasri told

reporters at the team's training

"When you experience failure as

camp on Tuesday.

The young midfielder has ear- a young person you try not to

Portugal winger Ricardo Quaresma poses with his new jersey after signing

for Inter Milan in Appiano Gentile on Tuesday.

Nasri settling well

Bevan said he could not confirm that the club's attempts to sell England international striker Michael Owen had been the final straw for Keegan. The club are also believed to

have gone against Keegan's wishes by trying to offload Joey Barton, the midfielder who served a prison sentence this year for assault and is facing a long suspension from the Football Association for another

The club's only business on deadline day was the 5.7-millionpound signing of Spanish striker Xisco and the loan signing of midfielder Ignacio Gonzalez, although Keegan had reportedly not expressed an interest in either player.

Keegan's relations with Ashley were also strained in May when the manager said he did not believe Newcastle had the resources to finish in the top four of the Premier

reproduce the same errors," he

and want to do well to show

another side (to our game), one

Nasri said he will not participate

"I will not be celebrating

The former Marseille star said

"It's going well. The environ-

in ramadan, the Muslim practice of

fasting during daytime during the

ramadan. It is difficult to with the

summer schedule. And with the

back-to-back matches it is not

he was enjoying life in London, not

least because he has found a verita-

ment pleases me: it is all young

people, and a lot of the players

speak French. In the dressing room

speaking English is complicated:

between the French, the Swiss

guys, the Africans and the coach,

(Saturday's 3-0 win over

Newcastle) we saw the true Arsenal

style. It's a real pleasure to play in

He added: "I hope to bring

something to the team. Playing for

Arsenal, you evolve with the cream

of European football, and as a

result you reach the level of the

a fillip to under-scrutiny coach

Raymond Domenech, who on

Tuesday was bullish ahead of the

pressure is any less than in previ-

"I don't have the feeling that the

"I've always approached the

game by telling myself 'this could

be the last match'. On my arrival in

2004, I'm not sure the pressure was

Nasri's confidence will come as

"On the field in our last match

good for the body."

ble home from home.

everyone speaks French!

this team."

France team."

two crucial games.

ous years," he said.

anyless."

ninth month of the Islamic calendar.

"People often say to me that the with more quality than you saw at

the Euros.'

"We're in the mood for revenge

Gerrard likely for MU clash

AFP, Liverpool

on course to be fit for his side's clash against Premier League rivals Manchester United later this month.

The 28-year-old was expected to be sidelined for two weeks as he recovers from a groin operation which has ruled him out of England's World Cup qualifiers with Andorra and Croatia.

But Reds manager Rafa Benitez

Benitez.

yet to hit peak form but he is convinced they will improve once he has a full squad to pick from.

"Javier Mascherano, Lucas and Ryan Babel arrived late (due to the Olympics) and I am sure that in a few weeks' time it will be better," Benitez said. "We need to have better possession and work on having a higher

Germany won't miss duo

AFP, Oberhaching

Midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger

fying matches without key injured veterans Torsten Frings and Michael Ballack. "It is important to win these two

Helsinki nextWednesday.

potential and quality in the side. "We are young and we are hungry.

Defensive midfielder Frings, with 77 caps for his country, was forced to pull out of both games after breaking his nose playing in an exhibition game of basketball for his club

Germany captain Ballack, who has 87 caps, has had to withdraw after injuring his foot playing for Premier League side Chelsea.

and in his absence Bayern Munich striker Miroslav Klose is expected to captain Germany. with Russia, Finland, Azerbaijan,

not be an easy group. "Our objective is to finish first, but

the Russians showed what they are worth during Euro 2008 and Finland only just missed out on qualifying, said Bierhoff. In their only game since losing the

Vienna, Germany beat Belgium 2-0

on August 20 without both Ballack

and Frings.

Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard is

revealed the midfielder is making good progress and is hopeful he will be back in time for the Anfield fixture on September 13. "Steven is okay. He's started with

bicycle work and will start jogging, so I think he will be ready soon," said Benitez admitted Liverpool have

insists Germany will win both their forthcoming World Cup 2010 quali-

matches," said Bayern Munich's Schweinsteiger with Germany set to face minnows Liechtenstein in Vaduz on Saturday and Finland in

"We know that we have a lot of

"Of course, Ballack and Frings are two important players, but we are owed a victory.

Werder Bremen at the weekend. And attacking midfielder

Germany coach Joachim Loew says Ballack will need another "eight or nine days rest" before he will be fit

Die Mannschaft have been drawn Wales and Liechtenstein in Group 4 for the 2010 World Cup qualifiers and manager Oliver Bierhoff insists it will

34 caps, cast new light on his exit by revealing his true thoughts on England duty in 'Carra, My Autobiography', serialised in the Daily Mirror on Wednesday. Euro 2008 final against Spain 1-0 in

"Real Madrid were estimating

(135 million pounds). "But why not? We are going to be the biggest club in the world, bigger than both Real Madrid and

the Champions League," the Guardian quoted Al-Fahim as

Juventus for Zinedine Zidane in

ers in the world, and of course if the manager wants them, then we will get them," said Al-Fahim,

"focused enough."

But Berbatov said Tuesday he "would never let himself utter a "I lived between euphoria and single bad word about Tottenham.

"Tottenham gave me the chance to show what I had in me and I will always be grateful to the The transfer fee paid for club, its players and fans," he said.

He also thanked United manager Sir Alex Ferguson for putting his trust in him.

"From now on it is hard work that follows. I will put every effort Berbatov's last days in to find my place in the team, live up to the expectations and make the fans happy," Berbatov added.

He said United might be his last Boss Juande Ramos also lost patience with the unsettled stop as a player as he is 27 already, but added he wished no more. striker, leaving him out of the

> "Can you go higher from Manchester United?" he concluded with a wink.

City to pay £135m for C'Ron?

Football

Football

a dream come true.

Bulgarian striker Dimitar

Berbatov said Tuesday his last-

minute 30.7-million-pound (37.7-

million-euro, 54.7-million dollar)

red shirt... I am happy that every-

thing ended in the best possible

way and that my dream to play in

such a classy team came true,"

Berbatov told a press conference

public appearance since his trans-

fer saga with Tottenham ended.

This was the 27-year-old's first

"It was a tough month," a visi-

transfer to Manchester United was

"My only goal was to put on the

AFP, Sofia

AFP, London

Manchester City's new billionaire Arab owners say they are willing to pay 135 million pounds (210 million dollars) to land Cristiano Ronaldo from the Red side of the

"Ronaldo has said he wants to play for the biggest club in the world, so we will see in January if he is serious," the Guardian newspaper quoted Dr Sulaiman Al-Fahim, of City's new owners, the Abu Dhabi United Group, as saying on their website. According to the report

Tuesday, Al-Fahim also wants to track down other major stars, including Arsenal striker Thierry Henry and Valencia's David Villa as City, one of England's perennial under-achievers in recent decades, head for the footballing stratosphere.

Al-Fahim says he wants to build a "dream team" which can compete in the Champions League within the coming three years.

City have already stunned

million-pound move on deadline day late Monday.

And now Ronaldo, linked with Real for much of the summer, is seen as the potential jewel in the

his value at 160 million dollars but for a player like that, to actually get him, will cost a lot more; I would think 240 million (dollars)

Manchester United. "We want a team who can win

Were such a mega-deal to materialise it would be three times bigger than the current world record which Real paid

"If we can get the biggest play-

fellow moneybags club Chelsea who has agreed to acquire a in landing Robinho from Real majority stake in City, subject to Madrid in a British record 32.5 due diligence, from former Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Al-Fahim has not disclosed the

> amount he is paying for City when he made the purchase on Monday on behalf of the Abu Dhabi United Group for Development and Investment, of which he is a board member. The National, an English-

language Abu Dhabi daily, earlier Tuesday estimated the value of the buy-out at 177 million dollars. Robinho, 24, will earn a

reported 300,000 dollars a week at

City, which would make him the

highest-paid footballer ever. On Ronaldo, a United spokesman said curtly: "We have made it clear all summer that Cristiano is

not for sale." Ronaldo is currently on the sidelines as he recovers from July ankle surgery.

Last season he scored 42 goals to help United retain their Premier League title and also win the Champions League, the Portuguese wideman scoring in the final win over Chelsea.

The perks of being World Champion



PHOTO: AFP A picture of the Italian national team shirt is seen embossed with the first 'FIFA World Champions Badge.' FIFA is awarding the badge to the current world champions who will wear it on their jersey for the following period to be subsequently taken over by all future champions.

Football

AFP, Kome

Italy will wear a world champions badge on their shirts when they tackle Cyprus in a World Cup 2010 qualifier on Saturday.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter unveiled the new badge at a ceremony in Coverciano in Italy on Tuesday to honour the current world champions, who earned World Cup glory in Germany two years ago.

Italy will thus become the first world champions to wear the badge, which will subsequently be worn by all World Cup holders.

"Wearing a badge to mark the team's triumph in 2006 is a way to proudly commemorate, day after day, the title of world champion," said Blatter.

Italy coach Marcello Lippi, back at the helm two years after quitting his national team post following the penalty shoot-out victory over France in Berlin, was pleased to be making history.

"Italy have the honour of being the first team in the history of the World Cup to wear FIFA's new badge. It is a source of great pride for the whole of Italian football," hesaid

There are two different versions of the badge, white on a golden background and gold on a white background.

L'pool defeat hurts more

Football

AFP, Liverpool

Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher has admitted in his autobiography that an England defeat never hurt as much as losing with his club side.

When Carragher retired from international football in July last year he claimed he was tired of being played out of position. But the 30-year-old, who won

"Representing your country is the ultimate honour, especially in the World Cup. Not to me," he

the tournament (the 2006 World Cup when they lost on penalties to Portugal in the quarterfinals)? Of course I did. Passionately. I've list. never given less than 100 per cent

"Did I care we'd gone out of club.

in any game. "Despite this, whenever I returned home from disappointing England experiences one unshakeable, overriding thought pushed itself to the forefront of my mind, no matter how much

the rest of the nation mourned. "'At least it wasn't Liverpool,' I'd repeat to myself, over and over. "The text messages of consolation I received on the coach

included one from Kenny Dalglish. 'I would rather miss for England than LFC,' I wrote back.

"I confess: defeats wearing an England shirt never hurt me in the same way as losing with my

"I wasn't caring or indifferent, I simply didn't put England's fortunes at the top of my priority

"Losing felt like a disappointment rather than a calamity. I was never in love with playing for England in the first place.

"By the time I stopped I felt a huge weight lifting." After England's failure to qualify for Euro 2008 and their

lacklustre displays under Fabio Capello, many fans feel Carragher isn't the only player to put his club ahead of his country. Malcolm Clarke, chairman of

the Football Supporters' Federation said: "I do not want to generalise or criticise one player, but when England fans hear what has been said they will be extremely disappointed."

sure from fans unhappy with the club's mediocre performances last season, Curbishley, who took charge at Upton Park in December 2006, led West Ham to two wins from their first three matches but his lack of control over transfers appears to have proved the final straw.

Curbishley had initially been allowed to go on a lavish spending spree when he took charge at the east London club. But West Ham's Icelandic owners had hired Italian technical director Gianluca Nani to oversee the club's transfers in March.

including Ferdinand, McCartney, Freddie Ljungberg, Nolberto Solano and Bobby Zamora have all left, while Swiss international Valon Behrami was the only high-profile arrival, as the Hammers tried to slash their wage bill.Croatia coach Slaven Bilic, a former West Ham player, is the early