

## I'll be back: Adriano

INTERNET, undated

Now that he seems to have recovered his physical shape, and with a coach who believes in his potential, as well as a fanbase that still wants to see him get back to being the player he was a couple of years ago, the ingredients seem to be in place for Adriano to finally make his comeback.

Ahead of tonight's match against Catania, the 26-year-old Brazilian striker gave an interview to Sky.

"I remember when I was competing for the Golden Ball with Andriy Shevchenko three years ago, but after that everything went downhill," he said. "I think playing in the Champions League can help me to regain status, everyone can see I am still a great player and that I still have a lot to show. Some people have lost faith in me, but I know that if I work hard, I'm a good boy, I can still become great."

On the importance of winning the Champions League, Adriano said: "We have a very strong desire to win it this year. Because everyone asks for it, especially the fans. We have a great chance to win, because we have a lot of good players and I think that if we work hard every day, we can make it. Against Werder I have very good memories and I hope to continue doing well..."



Werder Bremen star Diego (L) is challenged by Cottbus' Daniel Ziebig during their Bundesliga encounter at the Weserstadion in Bremen on Saturday.

## 'FIFA virus' hits hard

INTERNET, undated



Spanish football has been hit once again by the dreaded "FIFA Virus". This is the name given by the Spanish media to the problem of La Liga's most important players leaving to play for their national teams every month or so.

The problem has become more acute in recent years, as Spanish clubs have imported an increasing number of foreign stars.

Nowadays, around half of the players in La Liga are foreigners - and many of them are regularly called up for national team duty.

Across Spain for the past two weeks, as the first World Cup qualifying matches have been played, the Liga clubs have been organizing training sessions for just a handful of players - those not

called up by their respective federations.

For example, there have only been nine players at the Real Madrid training ground for the past fortnight, whilst new Barcelona coach Josep Guardiola has had to organize training with just 10 squad members, most of them youngsters from the club's nursery sections.

The clubs were looking forward to Thursday, when the international stars would finally return and start to prepare for the weekend matches.

But the "FIFA Virus" has struck again.

No less than 19 internationals will miss this weekend's Liga matches because of the injuries or fatigue caused by the World Cup clashes.

The virus has hit Barca and Atletico Madrid with particular virulence, because these two giants have brought forward their games to Saturday in order to have time to prepare for their Champions

League matches scheduled for Tuesday.

Guardiola had had no choice but to leave defenders Rafa Marquez and Martin Caceres out of his squad for Saturday's home game against Racing Santander, due to their late returns from international duty.

Marquez flew in from Mexico on Friday evening, Caceres has still not returned - the same as most Uruguayan internationals - because his flight has been delayed by fog.

Lionel Messi did manage to return on Friday morning, but is in poor physical shape after playing twice for Argentina and will probably start on the bench on Saturday.

"This is a really annoying situation for Barcelona," according to Catalan television channel TV-3 on Saturday morning.

Atletico, for their part, will have to get by without Uruguayan striker Diego Forlan away to Valladolid. Sergio Aguero, the same as fellow Argentine starlet Messi, is jet-lagged and exhausted - and will

probably be left on the bench.

In addition, John Heitinga has returned from Netherlands duty with a twisted knee, whilst fellow defenders Giourkas Seitaridis, Tomas Ujfalusi and Luis Perea have all returned bruised and weary.

"This is a real setback," said Atletico coach Javier Aguirre on Friday evening.

"Seitaridis returned late on Thursday and has not trained. Perea flew in at seven in the morning, without sleeping. It looks like he is sleep-walking on the pitch."

The Mexican coach concluded sadly that "it is the price that you have to pay for being amongst the top clubs."

Getafe, meanwhile, are struggling to get by without goalkeepers Roberto Abbonanzi and Oscar Ustari, both seriously injured playing for Argentina.

Lowly Betis, for their part, will be without injury victims Mehmet Aurelio and Mark Gonzalez for a few weeks - because of the dreaded "FIFA Virus".

## C'Ron to make surprise return

INTERNET, undated

Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson has revealed that Cristiano Ronaldo could make a surprise return to action against Villarreal in the UEFA Champions League next week.

The Portuguese winger underwent an ankle operation in the summer and had been expected to be sidelined until October.

However, Ferguson has now stated that his star asset is "likely to be involved" against Villarreal on Wednesday.

The 23-year-old has returned to first-team training and could now hand Ferguson a massive boost as United begin their defence of the European Cup, live on Sky Sports 2 and HD2.

"Ronaldo is training now, he's with the first-team," Ferguson told United's official website.

"He's come on leaps and bounds. He's likely to be involved next week."

## FIFA kicks out Ethiopia

AFP, Paris

Ethiopia was kicked out of the World Cup by FIFA on Friday after the long-running power struggle within the game in the African nation failed to be resolved.

FIFA, the sport's world governing body, said that all four matches played by Ethiopia to date in African zone Group 8, as well as the results of those matches, are now cancelled.

The group now comprises three teams - Morocco, Mauritania and Rwanda. Ethiopia had won two matches in the group and had garnered six points.

"The Bureau of the Organising Committee for the FIFA World Cup has decided to exclude the Ethiopian Football Federation (EFF) from the preliminary competition with immediate effect," said a statement.

The FIFA Emergency Committee suspended the EFF on 29 July 2008 due to the non-compliance of the EFF with the roadmap agreed in February 2008 by FIFA, the African Football Confederation (CAF) and the EFF in order to normalise the situation of the federation.

## Keegan holds shock talks

AFP, London

Former Newcastle manager Kevin Keegan held shock talks with the Premier League club's owner Mike Ashley on Friday.

However, it was unclear whether or not the discussions were linked to Keegan returning to the manager's hot-seat, just eight days after he sensationally walked out.

The League Managers Association (LMA) confirmed that talks "to resolve several issues were held" between Keegan and Ashley.

"However, the discussions failed to reach a satisfactory conclusion," said an LMA statement.

Former England manager Keegan resigned as Newcastle manager for the second time on September 4, stating: "It's my opinion that a manager must have the right to manage and that clubs should not impose upon any manager any player that he does not want."

Keegan's departure led to a

backlash from supporters against the Newcastle board, and specifically Ashley and executive director of football Dennis Wise.

Protests have been planned ahead of Saturday's Premier League match against Hull at St James' Park.

Keegan, 57, may have to pay compensation to Newcastle for leaving his post after less than eight months, and discussions over that issue could also have prompted a meeting with Ashley.

It is not clear whether or not the two men will hold further talks after the news of the unexpected meeting sparked hopes of a reconciliation on Tyneside.

As rumours over the meeting's nature grew, some bookmakers responded by suspending betting on Keegan taking over as the next manager.

Keegan tendered his resignation after becoming increasingly disillusioned with how team affairs were being run.

He was furious with the way the club had addressed the process of strengthening his squad when, after

selling midfielder James Milner to Aston Villa for 12 million pounds with just days of the summer transfer window remaining, they recruited only Spain Under-21 striker Xisco and loan signing Ignacio Gonzalez.

Keegan met managing director Derek Llambias on several occasions, but having consulted the LMA and his lawyers, eventually decided to walk away.

That came as a surprise to his employers, who believed they were making progress, and when the LMA suggested on his behalf that the board's role in the club's summer transfer dealings had been the major factor, the club hit back.

Newcastle issued a statement last Saturday claiming Keegan had been fully aware of his responsibilities, and those allotted to Wise and his recruitment team.

In recent days, a series of candidates have been linked with the vacant post, with Tottenham number two Gus Poyet, Blackburn boss Paul Ince and former France skipper Didier Deschamps leading the way.

## SATURDAY SCORES

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

- Liverpool 2 (Brown 26 og, Babel 77) Manchester United 1 (Tevet 3)
- Blackburn Rovers 0 Arsenal 4 (van Persie 8, Adebayor 45, 81, 90)
- Fulham 2 (Gera 14, Zamora 41) Bolton Wanderers 1 (Davies 82)
- Newcastle United 1 (Xisco 77) Hull City 2 (King 34, 55)
- Portsmouth 2 (Defoe 59, 87) Middlesbrough 1 (Mido 24)
- West Bromwich 3 (Morrison 2, Bednar 37, Brunt 83) West Ham 2 (Noble 28, Niell 35)
- Wigan Athletic 1 (Zaki 81) Sunderland 1 (Bramble 13 og)

BUNDESLIGA

- Bremen 3 (Diego 75, Frings 80, Sanogo 83) Cottbus 0
- Hamburg 3 (Guerrero 36, Olic 51, Petric 72) Leverkusen 2 (Barnetta 4, Helmes 24)
- Berlin 2 (Kacar 57, Santos 85) Wolfsburg 2 (Costa 1, Riether 90)
- Dortmund 3 (Subotic 67, Frei 71 & 89) Schalke 3 (Farfan 20, Rafinha 39, Westermann 54)
- Hoffenheim 0 Stuttgart 0
- Cologne 0 Bayern 3 (Toni 53 & 60, Podolski 90)

## Hughes plans wise spending

INTERNET, undated

Mark Hughes accepts Manchester City are now going to be linked with all the best players in the world - but insists not even limitless funds can guarantee buying them.

City's amazing capture of Robinho for a British record fee of £32.5million on transfer deadline day underlined that there was suddenly a new player at the top table of world football - and one underwritten by the bottomless coffers of the oil-rich Abu Dhabi United Group.

He said: "It's not as simple as going to the club and saying, 'We are now going to take your best player from you', it's a not a process that's as straightforward as people are making out."

He added: "The other club have to want to sell you the player."

"It's about getting the right players in the right positions, and being able to get those right players."

Saturday night's match against Chelsea will be dominated by the debut of Robinho, snatched by City under the noses of Roman Abramovich's club.

There will be added spice however with the return to Eastlands of Shaun Wright-Phillips, back for his second spell at City after three largely-frustrating years at Chelsea.

Wright-Phillips scored twice against Sunderland on his return two weeks ago, but insists playing Chelsea will be no big deal.

He told the club's website, www.mcfc.co.uk: "The day I came here to sign was when I realised I could be making my first start again in front of the home fans against Chelsea. I am looking forward to it as all the players are."

"It doesn't mean a lot to me that it's Chelsea, it's more about playing my first home game after coming back to City. I started as a Blue here, became a Chelsea blue and am back now as a Blue. The smile is never going to go and hopefully the goals will keep coming just as they started here."

## Ince rules out Newcastle

AFP, London

Blackburn manager Paul Ince has pledged his future to the Premiership club to douse reports he might take over the vacant Newcastle post and team up with former England teammate Dennis Wise.

Wise, Newcastle's director of football, set Ince on his way in management by giving him a coaching role while manager of Swindon.

Ince said he was "flattered" to be linked with jobs elsewhere but clarified his position on the Newcastle link, insisting he was "very happy" with his current job.

"As I said at our pre-match press conference earlier today, I cannot control media speculation and nor do I normally choose to comment upon it," Ince told Blackburn's official website, www.rovers.co.uk.

"However, I feel I owe it to the club, the players and the supporters to say that I am very happy at Ewood Park."

"I am only a few weeks into the role and I am thoroughly enjoying the experience. My only focus is Rovers and getting on with the job."

Former England manager Kevin Keegan resigned from the Newcastle job on September 4, after only eight months in charge, after disagreements on transfer dealings.

## Casillas exudes confidence

AFP, Madrid



Real Madrid have enough players to compete well in all tournaments this year despite having signed few players over the summer, the reigning Spanish champion's goalkeeper Iker Casillas said Friday.

"As a team we are together and we are capable of competing in every competition. Any transfer decisions are the decisions of the club," he said.

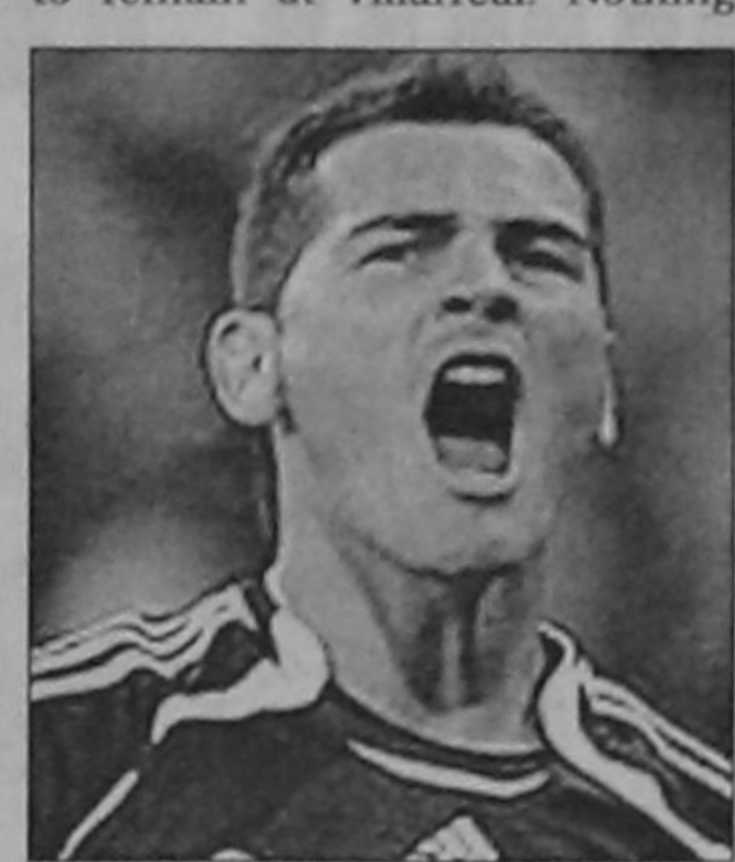
Real only recruited one player in the off-season, signing Dutch midfielder Rafael van der Vaart from Hamburg, but they have failed to fill the gap left by the sale to Manchester City of Brazilian Robinho.

Real coach Bernd Schuster was so concerned by the Brazilian's exit that he pressured the club to make two last-ditch offers for Valencia striker David Villa, top-scorer at

Euro 2008, before the transfer window shut but the player decided to stay put.

Casillas said he spoke to his fellow Spanish international to see what had happened.

"I called him to ask what had happened and he said he decided to remain at Villarreal. Nothing



IKER CASILLAS

changed between us because of it," he said.

Real face Numancia on Sunday

in the Spanish league. The squad are looking to register their first points of the season after an opening 2-1 defeat at Deportivo La Coruna a fortnight ago.

The club signed Argentine defender Ezequiel Garay from Racing Santander at the end of the season but under the terms of the deal the player will only join the club in the 2009-10 season.

In addition, midfielders Javi Garcia and Ruben de la Red, who helped Spain win the Euro 2008 title in June, have rejoined Real after a season with Osasuna and Getafe respectively.

Earlier Friday Real sporting director Pedja Mijatovic said the club did not envisage recruiting any new players in the winter transfer window.

"We have a squad of 24 players, and in Spain there are squads of 21 or 22 players. We have a big squad and we don't have plans to bring in any new players in January, but in football you never know what will happen," he told the Real Madrid television channel.

## 'Time together key'

Football

INTERNET, undated

Fabio Capello has revealed the key to England's stunning 4-1 win over Croatia was being able to spend with the squad over the last 10 days.

Capello has previously only had a couple of days to work with the team since replacing Steve McClaren as head coach, apart from the end-of-season trip to Trinidad & Tobago.

But with England fans impatient after not qualifying for Euro 2008, the side has been under fire from some quarters with the boo-boys unhappy with the national side's recent lacklustre performances.

However, the supporters were once again singing the praises of the Three Lions after thrashing Croatia 4-1 thanks to a Theo Walcott hat-trick and a Wayne Rooney strike.

The Italian boss believes one of the reasons behind the impressive display was being able to spend at least 10 days to prepare his squad for both the Andorra and Croatia 2010 World Cup qualifiers.

"Usually in my career I have worked every day with the players," he said.

"Here I have tried to change something in 10 days. I saw something. We spoke with the players. We asked them to do things during the training."

"The players know what I think about them. I have got to know the

players much better and also they know me better."

Walcott inevitably grabbed the headlines with his superb treble and the national boss was impressed with the team's performance, including the Arsenal youngster.

"He (Walcott) has very good potential and he plays at a very important club (Arsenal) with a very good manager in Arsene Wenger. He is a very good manager to him," Capello said.

"But all the players did very well and Rooney was helped by (Emile) Heskey. Rooney played very well, scored a goal and had two assists."

"Heskey is important because he has big movement, he goes forward, and moves into space."

## Warner slates Keane

Football

AFP, London

The controversy between Sunderland manager Roy Keane and Jack Warner took a new twist on Friday with a letter from the FIFA vice-president hitting out at the former Manchester United star.

Keane was initially angered by Warner's criticism when Sunderland striker Dwight Yorke withdrew from Trinidad and Tobago's World Cup match against the United States two days ago, with reports saying Keane had a lot to do with the player's decision.

But Keane hit back to say: "Yorke is retired. I've told Jack what I think of him and where to go. He's a clown, a disgrace."

The Sunderland boss described Warner, a special advisor to the Trinidad and Tobago FA, added: "If he is vice-president of FIFA, then God help us", and suggested he wrote letters on FIFA-headed writing paper "just to impress everybody".

Now Warner has retaliated with a new letter attacking Keane - and criticising the Irishman's own conduct in walking out on the Republic of Ireland before the 2002 World Cup.

Friday's letter, which was seen by the British Press Association, said: "The disrespectful tone of your reported comments further demonstrates the total disrespect that you and others of your ilk have generally for players and officials from small countries."

"It is obviously difficult for you

to accept the fact that someone from a 'small' country could rise to become a vice-president of FIFA."

"I chose to respond on a FIFA letter-head because that is a privilege afforded me owing to my said status and the fact that your callousness showed utter disregard for FIFA's regulations regarding the release of players for international duty. Regrettably, but not surprisingly, you did not grasp the message."

"In closing, may I remind you that a player's greatest honour is to represent his country in spite of the fact that you chose to walk away from yours during the 2002 Korea/Japan World Cup after publicly abusing your manager... indictment that you will no doubt be proud of up to today. Poor Sunderland."

## Paszek stuns Hantuchova

Tennis

AFP, Nusa Dua

Austrian teenager Tamira Paszek shocked top seed Daniela Hantuchova 6-2, 5-7, 6-4 to set up a Bali Open final against Switzerland's Patty Schnyder on Saturday.

The 17-year-old Paszek, coached by Gustavo Kuerten's former mentor Larri Passos, caught fire against Hantuchova in a spirited display lasting just over two-and-a-half hours.

The Austrian secured a break for 5-4 before serving out the victory, her 14th of the season against the same number of defeats.

"I didn't played my best and I didn't serve very well," said Paszek. "So I'm very happy to have reached this final."

"I know I'm in good shape, I've been here for 10 days now and have adjusted (to the tropical conditions)."

Hantuchova, last year's runner-up to Lindsay Davenport, missed the spring season with a foot injury and was a first-round loser at the US Open three weeks ago.

"It was a very close match, she doesn't give up, she played tough all the way through," said the Slovakian.

"Overall I'm happy with how I played. I have some things to improve and I missed a lot of easy balls at the end."

Paszek will try for only her second WTA title against Switzerland's Schnyder, who lives just a short drive away across the border.

"We are good friends, she lives just an hour away," Paszek said. "We've played three times and twice they went to three sets."

Earlier Schnyder, 29, moved into her second final of the season with a 7-5, 6-1 hammering of Russian Nadia Petrova.

"This was my best match ever at Bali. I'm so happy to be in the final,

I'm ready for it," said the US Open quarterfinalist.

"I know that I can play well. It's just been a struggle to get going."

"But now that I've got the match rhythm, I want to keep it up."

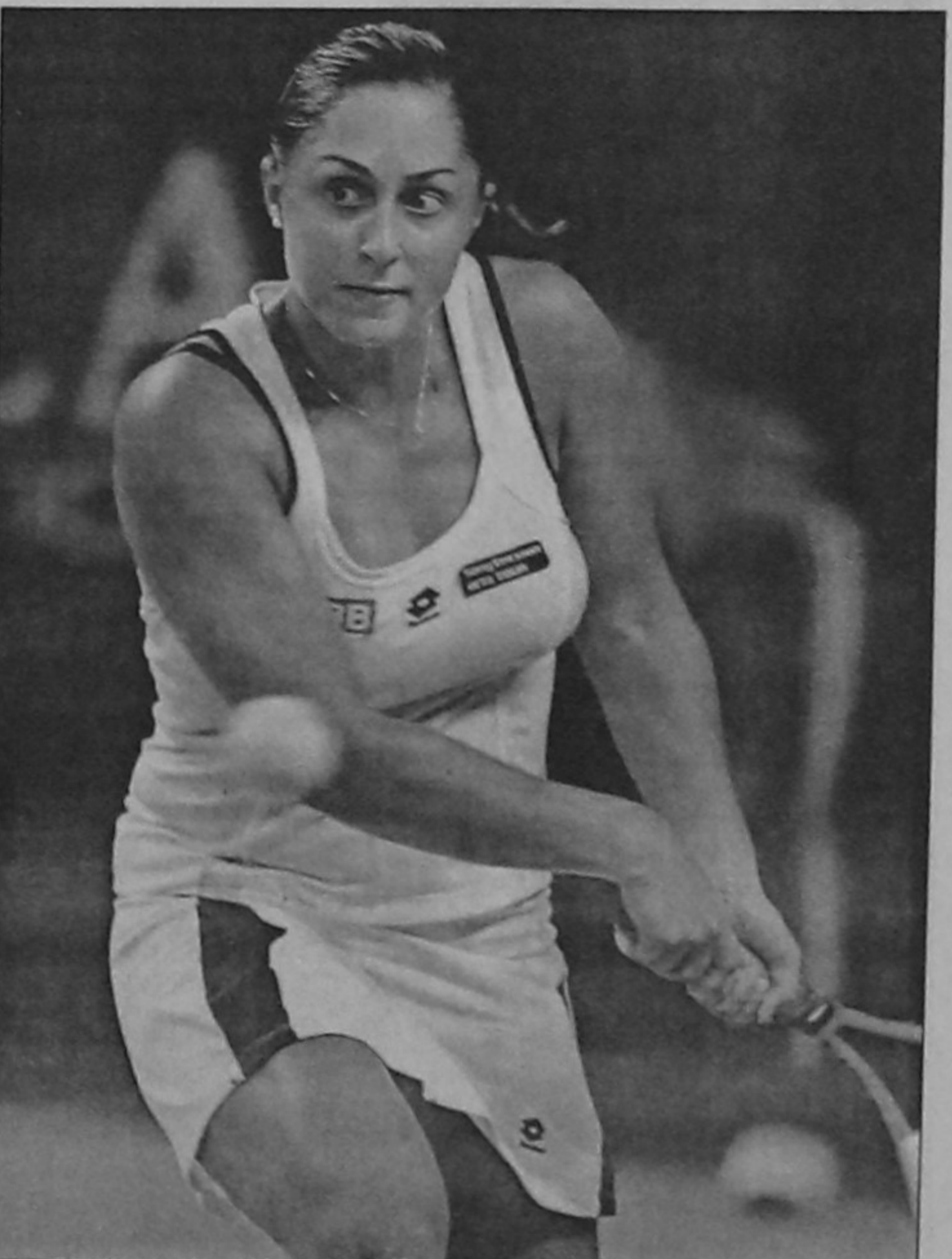
Schnyder won the last of her 10 career titles in Cincinnati three years ago, losing seven finals since.

"I hope to keep this up the rest of the season," she said.

Schnyder, who last finished

runner-up in Bangalore in February behind Serena Williams, was pleased with how she took control against the 22nd-ranked Petrova, once a top-five player.

"I served well and moved her around on the court," said the Swiss. "I was able to anticipate her movement. I attacked her second serve and held back a bit on my shots until I saw which way she was moving."



Austrian starlet Tamira Paszek makes a backhand return against Daniela Hantuchova of Slovakia during the semifinal of Bali International in Nusa Dua on Saturday.