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in Yokohama on Tuesday.

Football

Van der Sar delighted at new deal

AFP, Yokohama

Veteran Manchester United goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar says he is delighted to have signed a new contract and didn't think twice before putting pen to paper.

The contract extension will see the Dutchman remain at Old Trafford until June 2010, taking him up to what is likely to be the end of his epic playing career.

"It was not difficult at all," van der Sarsaid. "It's a great club to be at, with a great atmosphere in the dressing room, the boss is fantastic and we have the best

stadium in England. "I've enjoyed every minute of the three-and-a-half years I've been here so far and I'm really looking forward to playing for another season after this one."

The goalkeeper, 38, arrived at Old Trafford from Fulham in 2005 and was a key figure in United's back-to-back Premier League titles and last season's Champions League victory.

Ben Foster and Tomasz Kuszczak are currently backup goalkeepers and Sir Alex Ferguson will decide which one will be his number two during the close season.

Van der Sar is in Japan with the team this week to play in the Club World Cup.

City lose Benjani

AFP, Manchester

Mark Hughes, the Manchester City manager, admits Zimbabwe striker Benjani Mwaruwari could be out of action for "a number of weeks" because of a hamstring problem.

The former Portsmouth forward was replaced at halftime during Saturday's 1-0 home Premier League loss to Everton here at Eastlands.

"We're a little bit light on numbers at the moment, Hughes told City's official website.

"A number of the guys are carrying injuries, so that will have an impact, and that's difficult when you've got games coming up thick and fast; you have to have a fit and able squad," the former Manchester United forward added.

"At the moment we're just struggling a little bit in that respect.

We've lost Benjani again at the weekend with a hamstring and he'll probably be out for a number of weeks. We're a bit threadbare."

City, despite the backing of their wealthy Abu Dhabi consortium owners, are only currently above the relegation zone on goal difference alone.

However, they are widely expected to spend heavily during the January transfer window.

'Real can bounce back' Rooney not punished

AFP, Madrid



Reigning Spanish champions Real Madrid can bounce back despite being Barcelona after their weekend loss to the Catalan sidelined. giants, Real's new coach

the 12 points," Ramos said in an interview published in sports daily As two days after Real's 2-0 loss away to Barcelona, his first

league match since taking over Real last week. "We will not give up on anything. My formula is clear. We are going to win, win, win,

without thinking about Barcelona," he added. The former Sevilla and Tottenham coach said Real would be more competitive in January when the club has new signing and key players return from injury.

"Clearly we want a right winger and a training session per day this season." central midfielder. The club is working to find them and I hope they arrive soon. I want players of quality and desire who are await the draw on December 19.

ready to play," he said.

"I have only been working here a week, but I can say that injuries have already had an effect on the backbone of the team," he added.

Pepe, Gabriel Heinze, Mahamadou Diarra, 12 points adrift of leaders Arjen Robben and Ruud van Nistelrooy are among the Real players who are currently

Ramos started his term as coach at Real with a 3-0 win over Zenit St. Petersburg in their final I am totally convinced that we can recover Champions League Group H game on Wednesday.

Spanish media however said Monday that it would take a "miracle" for Real to catch up to an in-form Barcelona who are eight points ahead of their nearest rivals, second-placed Valencia. Real will face Valencia at home on Saturday in

their last match before the winter break. In preparation for the match Ramos has scheduled two daily training sessions -- in the morning and the afternoon. His German predecessor Bernd Schuster had only held one

Both Barcelona and Real have qualified for the last 16 of the Champions League and

Blackburn sack Ince

Football

AFP, London

Premier League strugglers Blackburn Rovers announced Tuesday they had sacked Paul Ince as their manager - just six months after appointing the former Manchester United and England midfielder.

Rovers are currently second bottom in the table and on course for relegation from English football's lucrative top flight after winning just three of their 17 league games so far this season.

"It is with great sadness the board announce that Paul Ince is to leave the club," said a statement on Blackburn's official website. "After a board meeting yesterday (Monday) it was decided to relieve Paul of his duties.

"The board, having selected Paul back in June, were desperate for him to succeed and wanted to give him as much time as possible in the unforgiving environment of Premier League management, where time is such a precious commodity."

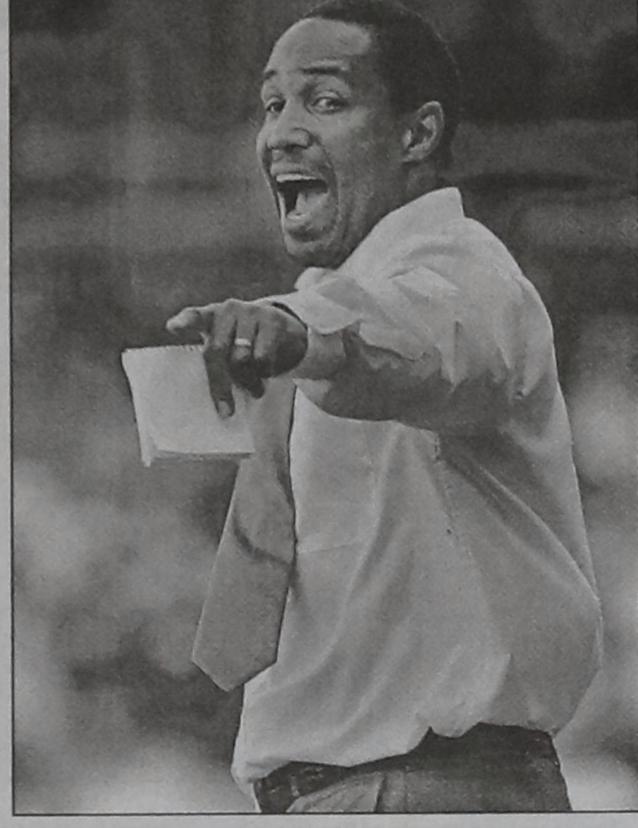
But now Ince, 41 appointed after former United bounce back, he is a fighter teammate Mark Hughes took over at Premier League rivals sacked six months into a three-year contract

John Williams said the northwest club had been left with little their Premier League status.

"Three wins in 17 games has seen a squad, which finished seventh last season, fall to 19th position," Williams said.

"We are currently in real danger of becoming detached from the pack," added the chairman, whose team are five new manager to jokingly cut points adrift of safety.

"The survival of the club in the Premier League is paramount and our focus is on finding a replacement who will be able to maintain our top division status."



PAUL INCE

He added: "Paul will and we wish him well."

Manchester City, has been English football's top flight, there was plenty of goodwill towards Ince who was seen to However, Rovers chairman have risen through the ranks after managing in the country's lower divisions, with option as they sought to preserve Macclesfield and MK Dons - Keegan (Newcastle), Juande whom he led to the League Two (fourth-tier) title before moving to Ewood Park.

At a press conference to announce Ince's appointment, Williams said Rovers were "not a club struggling in the bottom three", only for his

in: "Not yet anyway". Sadly for Ince, his words

have since proved all too true. Rovers have not won in the Premier League since September and the final straw

Lancashire side came following Saturday's 3-0 league loss away to local rivals Wigan - a team The first black manager in managed by another former United player in Steve Bruce.

Ince's exit saw him become the sixth Premier League manager to lose his job so far this season after Alan Curbishley (West Ham), Kevin Ramos (Tottenham), replaced by former Portsmouth boss Harry Redknapp, and Roy Keane (Sunderland).

Curbishley is among those who have now been linked with the job, as has former Rovers manager Graeme Souness.

Sam Allardyce, the ex-Bolton Wanderers and Newcastle manager, appeared to rule himself out of a move to Ewood Park at the weekend, having been considered for the Blackburn post when Ince for Ince's time with the gotthejobinJune.

AFP, Nyon

Wayne Rooney has escaped a sanction from European football's ruling body UEFA following an alleged stamp in a Champions League match last week.

The Manchester United striker had been accused of stamping on Aalborg's Kasper Risgard during a 2-2 draw at Old Trafford last week.

However after reviewing video evidence UEFA said Monday that no charges would be brought against Rooney.

A spokesman said: "UEFA will not open any disciplinary proceedings against Wayne

It means the England star, who on Monday was given the backing of national team manager Fabio Capello, will be available for United as they enter the knockout stages of Europe's premier club competition.

Govou held for drunk driving

AFP, Lyon

French international midfielder Sidney Govou was held in a police station overnight Sunday after he was found to be over the limit while driving following the 0-0 draw with Marseille.

The 29-year-old was found to have a level of 2.6grammes per litre of blood when the police stopped him.

Govou was held in a cell till the end of Monday morning before going before a magistrate.

Diarra going to Bernabeu

AFP, Madrid

Portsmouth's French international midfielder Lassana Diarra is close to signing with Real Madrid, Spanish sports newspapers reported Tuesday.

Real has been on the lookout for a defensive midfielder since Mali international Mahamadou Diarra was last week sidelined for the rest of the season after undergoing knee surgery.

The Spanish champions hope to confirm the transfer of Lassana Diarra, who has also played for Chelsea and Arsenal, from the English Premier League side in the "next 48 hours," the AS newspaper said.

A rival sports newspaper Marca said Lassana Diarra is the "best placed" to replace his namesake at Real.

It said the transfer fee for the 23-year-old could be

Ferguson rubbishes 39th game

AFP, Yokohama

Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson on Tuesday rubbished the idea of a 39th Premier League game played in Asia, saying he does not believe it will ever happen.

The controversial proposals were first flagged earlier this year but were slammed by Asian football chiefs who argued it would adversely affect their own countries' domestic competitions. But since then the idea has

been gaining support in the region, with AFC President Mohamed Bin Hammam recently saying he was now firmly in favour. But Ferguson, who criti-

cised the idea when it first emerged, again strongly condemned it when asked to comment on the sidelines of the Club World Cup. "I don't think there will ever be a 39th game and I don't

Singapore.

believe there should be. I certainly am not in favour of it," he said, citing too many games already. "You look at our domestic programme allied to our cup competitions. It is impossi-

Asian cities touted as possible venues when the decade. idea was first floated included Bangkok, Beijing, Hong Kong, Melbourne and

important for us to win it." United will have to catch up two games with their main

Manchester United coach Sir Alex Ferguson holds a FIFA Club World Cup flag at a press conference

Fergie defends Club WC

Premiership rivals on their AFP, Yokohama return to Britain on December Manchester United boss Sir 22, but the Scot said the trip to Alex Ferguson came to the Japan could also have its defence of the Club World Cup benefits. Tuesday, calling it a presti-"Playing different types of gious tournament that was opposition will certainly do us

important for his team to win. no harm, but the big incentive There has been criticism in is to win the world championthe British press that the long ship," he said. "We can win that in playonThursday. trip to Japan mid-season for a tournament of continental December but we can't win champions was a pointless the Premiership in December. Yes, it is a relative handicap exercise that could derail their

Premier League campaign. but that is what happens when Ferguson admitted jet lag you are successful. would be a problem, both here "We are here as champions of Europe and I hope to be and against Stoke City back here again in Abu Dhabi next home on December 26, but insisted it was all part of being year." successful.

This tournament can add to the United Arab Emirates prestige to a football club next year for two years before which is why we are here and returning to Japan in 2011. In 1999 United won the why we want to win," he said at a news conference ahead of annual Intercontinental Cup,

their semifinal against Japan's which was contested between Gamba Osaka Thursday. the European and South "I think it is mainly the American champions before it became the Club World Cup, a media in Britain who don't development Ferguson said take this tournament as seriwas good for the game.

"The nitty gritty is that we could look back in 30 years grown because, with countries and say that Manchester like Japan, South Korea and China developing on the United was the world chamfootball side, there needed to pion and that is what this club be a better balance," he said.

"It is an extra game for us and the South American team but the prestige attached to it is now even greater."

PHOTO: AFP

Darren Fletcher said he was excited at the prospect of bringing more silverware to Old Trafford, but admitted the team were battling jetlag. United only arrived on

Monday afternoon following their 0-0 draw with Spurs on Saturday and must be ready to "We are doing the best we

can to prepare but the jetlag does have an effect," he said. "Lack of sleep will affect

anyone's performance but dealing with it is part of the challenge. "Obviously, the opposition

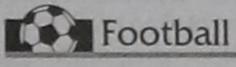
will have a huge advantage in The Club World Cup moves that respect but we will prepare as best as we can. The general feeling is that everyone is not too bad at the moment and hopefully we will be alright for the match."

> Michael Carrick added that despite the long trip, everyone was motivated to win.

"The tournament is hard enough to qualify for in the first place, so we'll be doing all "This tournament has we can to win the trophy," he

"It's a great opportunity for us to represent Europe and it'll be a great experience for all the players."

is about and that is why it is Spurs plan new stadium around 10 million euros.



AFP, London

Tottenham Hotspur gave their fans a glimpse of the future by revealing the first images on Monday of the club's proposed new 60,000-seater stadium.

Project, a large-scale development incorporating leisure facilities, public space and housing as well as the new stadium which is sited near the Premier League club's existing north London home at to chase headline capacity. White Hart Lane.

list of around 22,000, are conscious of the need for a larger stadium than White Hart Lane, which holds just over 36,000 but were

equally keen to stay close to their roots.

Tottenham chairman Daniel Levy stressed the new stadium would put "fan experience first"

tects was to design an iconic stadium that would be one of the best in Europe. My over-riding priority is to re-create the terrific atmosphere we have at the current The Northumberland Development stadium, within a world class stadium that offers state-of-the-art facilities. "This means designing a stadium

He added: "The brief I gave the archi-

which has supporters as close as possible to the field of play and not simply looking "Our fans will find themselves closer to Spurs, who have a season-ticket waiting the pitch than at any other comparable

stadium in the UK. This design puts fan experience first.

The new stadium will also benefit from point above the drop zone.

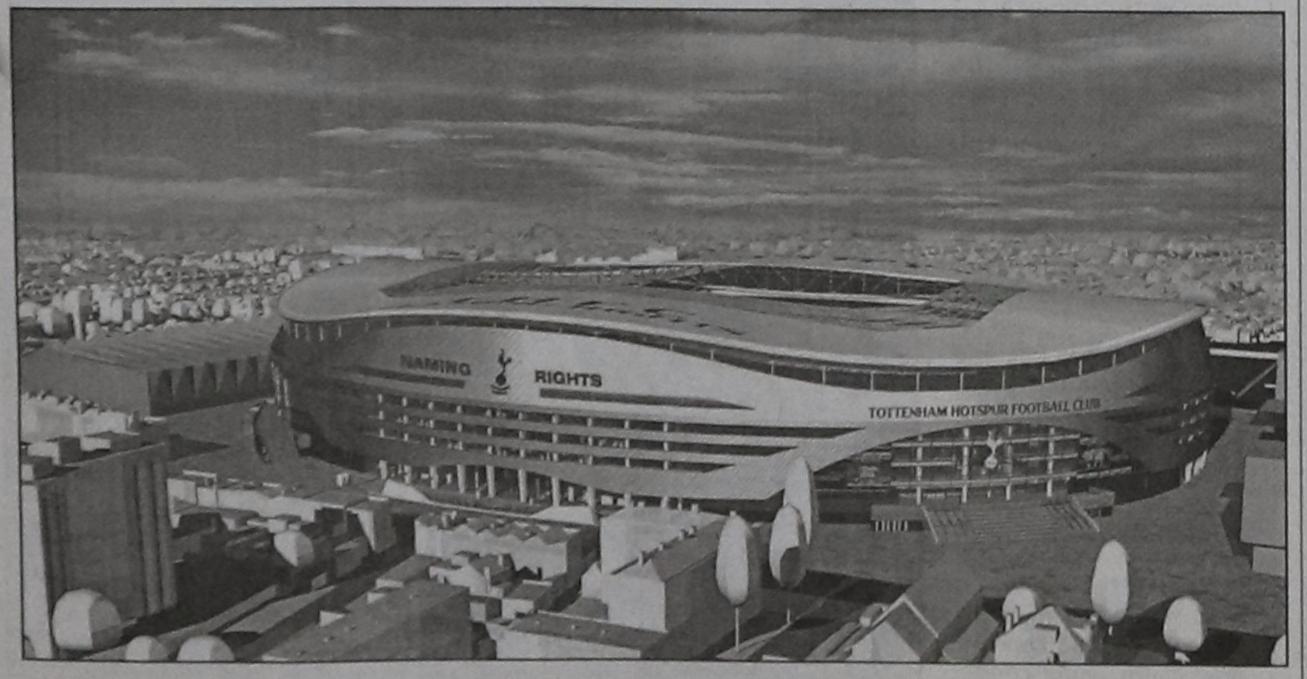
a club museum, shops and homes.

The plans will enable the team to remain at the current site throughout construction. Spurs are due to submit a

formal planning application next year. Last month, Tottenham announced that revenue was up from 103 million pounds (130m euros) to 114.8m with net debt of 14.6m at the end of the financial year - though that figure includes prop-

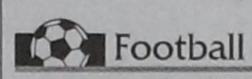
erty acquisitions. On the field, things have been looking up for Spurs since the October arrival of former

Portsmouth manager Harry Redknapp. From being on the road to relegation Spurs, who held English and European champions Manchester United to a goalless draw last weekend, are 15th in the table although they are currently just a



A handout computer generated image obtained from Tottenham Hotspur football club shows the club's proposed new stadium design on Monday.

Capello wants World Cup



AFP, London

ously as we do.

Fabio Capello believes the hard work has only just begun as he tries to conquer England's impossible job.

After a rough start to his lot," he said. reign, Capello has ended his first year as England coach with high approval ratings from the country's notoriously hard to please football public. The Italian arrived to find

morale in the squad at rock bottom after England's failure to qualify for Euro 2008, but he gradually managed to rebuild his players' shattered morale to the extent that they won their first four World Cup qualifiers.

In the boom or bust world of English football that winning streak has been heralded as a noteworthy triumph for Capello's management. But transforming England

from the widely derided underachievers into the cohesive unit who shattered Croatia's unbeaten home record and defeated arch rivals Germany in Berlin was the easy part according to Capello.

and Real Madrid manager knows he has to build on the foundations laid in the past 12 months and raise England to a far higher level than they have reached at any time in the last

merely taking part in the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. For such a serial winner, only

returning to London with the trophy itself will be enough.

"We started one year ago when all the people, all the journalists, they said it was the impossible job. The team was not very good after they missed out on qualification for the Euros but we worked a

"It is easy to progress when you start at the bottom and go up. Now it is more difficult.

"When you start at the bottom it is easy to go forward. Now we have to bond together to take the next step. It will be very difficult.

arrived at a good level. But now we have to consolidate this level and be even better. "Sometimes when we play during the game I can see

mistakes and we want to cancel out these mistakes. "But I think we have a great interesting young player." spirit in the team and we play with confidence. The most important work will be to keep

this psychologically." Africa, Capello will have to blend established stars like John Terry, Steven Gerrard and Wayne Rooney, with the emerging young talents who Now the former AC Milan have made convincing cases for regular international

action this season. Gabriel Agbonlahor's superb debut against beanydifferent. Germany underlined his credentials and his Aston Villa teammate Ashley Young is Capello isn't interested in clearly capable of making an to be fit when I decide the impact as well.

Villa boss Martin O'Neill has it's the same."

another potential England international on his hands as he sung the praises of winger

James Milner. "I'm very happy, because only Milner of the English players is not with us. He was close when he was a Newcastle player, but was injured before we put him in the squad,"

Capello said. "I saw a game against Liverpool for Newcastle but he was injured after half-an-

"He was very, very interesting when we saw him play for the U21s at Southampton "We did good things and we against the Republic of Ireland. He scored two goals in the first game I saw. "I remember this game

> because I thought he was a good player. Agbonolahor and Young played before for the national team, but Milner is another While Capello is keen to harness the enthusiasm and

energy of England's young guns, he is more circumspect To achieve success in South about the futures of David Beckham and Michael Owen. Both have faded from the picture under Capello, with Owen banished from the

> Beckham reduced to bit-part roles from the bench. Capello offered only a glimmer of hope that 2009 will

squad completely and

"Michael Owen is one of the important players for England. But first of all he has squad," Capello said. "For But Capello hinted that Beckham and all the players