

## Trust me: Arshavin

### Football

AFP, London

Arsenal's new signing Andrei Arshavin had a message for the Gunners' fans as he set off on his new career at the Emirates Stadium: "Trust in me and Arsenal."

Arshavin, who hopes to help bring silverware to the Arsenal sideboard after some barren years, also said it had been a "dream move" and told Sky television cameras he been a "Gooner," or Arsenal supporter, for some time.

Arsenal confirmed that the Russian playmaker had signed for the Premier League side on a "long-term" contract, believed to be three-and-a-half years.

The London club agreed a deal for the player with his former club, Zenit St Petersburg, just minutes

before Monday's 1700 GMT transfer deadline and had to wait until Tuesday for the move to be ratified by the Premier League.

Arsenal have not yet released information about Arshavin's fee, but it is believed to be around 15 million pounds.

The club have not won a major competition since they triumphed over Manchester United in the FA Cup final in 2005, one year after they went unbeaten to claim the Premier League title.

The 27-year-old is adamant that he has joined one of the best clubs in the world and is sure he can help add silverware to the Gunners trophy cabinet.

The Russian revealed the prospect of playing under manager Arsene Wenger was one of many reasons why he had his heart set on the move.

Arshavin had been linked

with a move to Barcelona after he shot to fame following his outstanding performances during Euro 2008, but the Russian said he was happy to join the Gunners, thanks partly due to Wenger.

Arshavin told Arsenal TV: "I moved because I like the Arsenal style, Wenger as a coach and I like some of their players."

The club are thought to have been locked in negotiations with Zenit over the switch since the transfer window opened.

"I followed each game and from the moment when I met Arsene Wenger," he added. "He told me every time I talked to him, he said: 'I want you to come to Arsenal.' He had confidence in me."

When asked if he had a message to the Arsenal fans, the 2006 Russian Footballer of the Year answered: "Trust in me and Arsenal."

## 13 nations, 11 WC bids

### Football

AFP, Geneva

England, Australia, the United States and South Korea were among the 13 countries to have formally expressed their interest in hosting the 2018 or 2022 World Cups, FIFA said Tuesday.

The 11 potential bids include joint efforts by Belgium and the Netherlands, who have already linked up to stage Euro 2000, and from 1982 World Cup hosts Spain and Euro 2004 hosts Portugal.

Indonesia, Japan (2002 co-hosts with South Korea), Russia, Mexico, the venue for the 1970 World Cup, and Qatar were the other countries that came forward by Monday's preliminary deadline, world football's governing body said in a statement.

One nation noticeable by its absence from this list is China, who decided to pull out of the race due to the serious problems and low standards of the game in the country.

state media reported. The 13 potential hosts now have to firm up their interest and register their bids by March 16.

The host nations are due to be appointed by FIFA's executive committee in December 2010, about six months after they are meant to have submitted detailed bids.

The situation over joint bidders is uncertain with FIFA's executive committee set to decide by the March deadline whether to change their rules to permit joint bids.

"It is remarkable that so many high-quality contenders have expressed an initial interest in hosting our flagship competition," said FIFA president Sepp Blatter, calling football a "symbol of hope and integration."

"The current worldwide economic crisis has brought another dimension of uncertainty into the lives of many people around the world.

"But we are in a good starting position and providing we put a good bid together I believe we have a better than even chance of succeeding."

No African countries have come forward to succeed South Africa, which will become the first African country to host football's World Cup next year.

Latin American countries were out of the running since Brazil is due to host the event in 2014.

England, the 1966 hosts and champions, are perceived as being among the favourites although one bid board member, Sir Keith Mills, was last week keen to play down that role.

"I don't think we are the favourites at all now," he claimed.

"There's going to be strong competition from Spain and Portugal and Russia, and we shouldn't underestimate that."

"Australia will be getting the backing of Asia so it is not a foregone conclusion at all.

"But we are in a good starting position and providing we put a good bid together I believe we have a better than even chance of succeeding."

## Lampard wins red card appeal

### SOCERNET

Frank Lampard's appeal against the red card he received in Chelsea's 2-0 Premier League defeat at Liverpool has been successful.

Lampard was sent off by referee Mike Riley for his challenge on Xabi Alonso in the 59th minute of Sunday's match.

An independent regulatory commission hearing on Tuesday upheld his claim, resulting in the withdrawal of his three-match suspension.

The third dismissal of Lampard's career was shrouded in controversy, after replays showed the England midfielder made contact with the ball first.

Chelsea boss Luiz Felipe Scolari leapt to Lampard's defence, insisting the challenge was legitimate and the club lodged their appeal with the Football Association on Monday.

Had the claim failed, Lampard would have missed Premier League matches against Hull and Aston Villa and an FA Cup fifth-round tie at Watford.

Meanwhile, goalkeeper Petr Cech has vowed to keep the pressure on Manchester United and Liverpool at the top of the Premier League.

"Eight points in football, especially in the Premier League, means everything can happen," he told the club's official website.

"You can see that from last year. Arsenal were eight points clear and ended up third, so we will keep playing, we will try to keep winning and we will put the pressure on the others.

"We are behind and we need to keep winning so if Man United or Liverpool drop points we can close the gap."

"This is the only way now for us to get back into it. We need to keep winning because we don't have the control in our hands."

## Cesc looking for Barca return

AFP, Madrid

Arsenal's Spanish international mid-fielder Cesc Fabregas wants to return to Barcelona next season where he would have a better chance of playing in the Champions League, sports daily Marca reported Wednesday.

The 21-year-old, who has been in Spain recovering from a serious knee injury that has left him sidelined since December, has met with people linked to the runaway leaders of the Spanish club in recent weeks, it said.

"The message he has sent out to all is that he is crazy for Barcelona to sign him for next season," said the report, without naming sources.

Barcelona does not want to pay more than 20 million euros (26 million dollars) for the player because "no one would understand a huge payout for a player who came through the club's youth team," the newspaper added.

Fabregas, who was injured after a tackle by fellow Spaniard Xabi Alonso during Arsenal's 1-1 draw against Liverpool on December 21, is under contract with the English side until 2014.

He joined Arsenal from the youth ranks of Barcelona in July 2003.

## Burnley upset West Brom

AFP, London

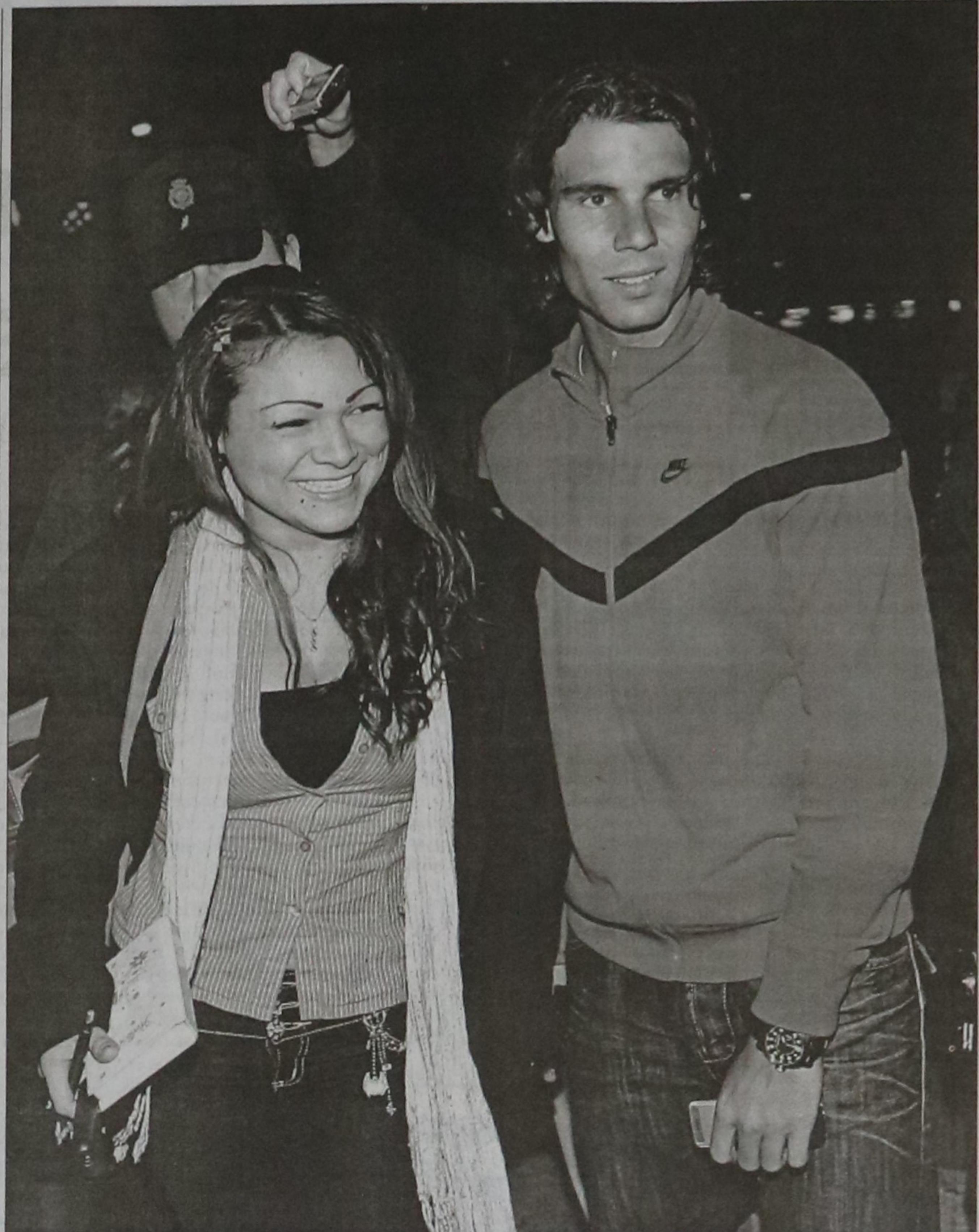
Steven Thompson's two goals for Burnley in a 3-1 FA Cup victory over Premiership side West Bromwich Albion on a wintry Tuesday night kept up their giantkilling efforts in the cup.

Wade Elliot's long-range volley on the stroke of half-time started things off and Thompson fired home Burnley's second in the 52nd minute of this fourth round replay.

Under-strength Albion were given hope by Gianni Zuiverloon's sweet 60th-minute strike, but in-form Thompson netted again late on for his fourth goal in two games to seal Burnley's fourth Premier League scalp of the season.

Owen Coyle's impressive Championship outfit, England's second flight, bundled Fulham, Chelsea and Arsenal out of the League Cup and came agonisingly close to overcoming Tottenham in an epic semifinal encounter.

Burnley play the winner of the Arsenal versus Cardiff fixture which was called off because of the impressive snow falls in Britain, also prompting many fixture postponements.



World number one Rafael Nadal (R) of Spain poses with a fan upon his arrival from Australia at Palma de Mallorca's airport on Tuesday. PHOTO: AFP

## Sania blow for India

### Tennis

AFP, Perth

India's chances of reaching the next stage of the Federation Cup have been dealt a major blow with the late withdrawal of Sania Mirza.

India's top-ranked female player, having reached a peak of 27 in late 2007, Mirza was expected to spearhead India's challenge in the Asia-Oceania play-offs here this week.

However, she was back in India when her reduced three-woman side started their first tie against New Zealand here on Wednesday.

Mirza's comeback from the wrist problems that dogged her in 2008 gathered momentum when she combined with Mahesh Bhupathi to win the mixed doubles at the Australian Open -- becoming the first Indian woman to win a grand slam title in the process.

She was named in the four-strong Indian Fed Cup squad for the play-offs, but cited a stomach strain for her withdrawal.

"Right now, I will be taking a week's rest because of a tear in my abdominal muscle before beginning preparations for the Thailand and the Dubai Opens," she said at a

media conference in Hyderabad on Tuesday.

"It is the biggest honour to play for your country. But unfortunately this injury came up."

"My body held up pretty well during the grand slam but

with just three players for the event, which features eight nations, split into two groups, in round robin ties including two singles matches and a doubles clash, over three days before the top side from each

division meets in Saturday's final.

The Indian team is world No.377 Abkita Bhambri, Sanaa Bhambri (478) and Rushmi Chakravarthi (509).

The winner of Saturday's final advances to the World Group II play-offs in April.

The other nations in the Asia-Oceania play-offs are Australia, Thailand, Taiwan, Uzbekistan, Indonesia and Korea.

Her absence has left India

14th not yet ready for a long, demanding schedule."

Mirza's previous trip to Perth, to play for India at the mixed teams Hopman Cup at the start of last year, ended in controversy when she was widely criticised in her homeland after being photographed with her bare feet resting near an Indian

flag.

Her absence has left India

Ricardo Quaresma is determined to put his nightmare spell at Inter

behind him and help reignite Chelsea's drive for silverware this season.

Chelsea became the fifth club of the 25-year-old's professional career when he signed on loan from the Serie A giants until the end of the season.

"The message he has sent out to all is that he is crazy for Barcelona to sign him for next season," said the report, without naming sources.

Barcelona does not want to pay more than 20 million euros (26 million dollars) for the player because "no one would understand a huge payout for a player who came through the club's youth team," the newspaper added.

Despite scoring on his debut, the Portuguese winger failed to establish himself at the San Siro and was criticised by Mourinho for what he saw as the winger's poor workrate.

Quaresma was not yet ready for a long, demanding schedule," he said. "I am not yet ready for a long, demanding schedule."

He joined Arsenal from the youth ranks of Barcelona in July 2003.

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AFP, London

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Quaresma is determined to show my qualities at Inter," Quaresma told Chelsea's website.

"I am really glad I have this opportunity to play with such a good club as Chelsea."

Chelsea's defeat at Liverpool on Sunday leaves them five points adrift of Premier League leaders Manchester United, who have a game in hand.

Quaresma is, however, hopeful that he can put Chelsea's faltering quest for silverware back on track.

"Now I aim to play the best that I can to help Chelsea to achieve their goals because all I want is to show what I am made of and hopefully I am going to help Chelsea achieve their goals," he added.

Quaresma is a great club and it has great quality players and I am very proud that I can have the chance to represent such a great club."

Quaresma was the only player to arrive at Stamford Bridge in the winter transfer window while Carlo Cudicini and Sergio Tejera left for Tottenham and Real Mallorca respectively.

He can play on either flank and will compensate for the absence of Joe Cole, who has

## Rafa defends Keane sale

### Football

AFP, Liverpool

selling of players and said last week that the decision to buy Keane had been the club's rather than his.

The Spaniard insisted however that the decision to sell was purely business: Keane was not performing on the pitch and Tottenham were prepared to pay top dollar to get him back to help their battle for survival.

"He is 28, and if he was not playing the situation and the fee in the summer could have been worse," Benitez argued.

Benitez could have taken Jermaine Jenas, Gareth Bale or David Bentley to Anfield in part exchange for Keane but Spurs baulked at releasing the one player Liverpool were interested in, Aaron Lennon.

"They were asking, and pushing because they are in a bad position and they believe Robbie can be a fantastic player for them," Benitez said.

Keane has maintained a dignified silence over the way he was treated at Anfield but it would be astonishing if he did not feel slightly aggrieved.

Benitez is refusing to sign a new contract unless he is given control of the buying and

selling of players and said last week that the decision to buy Keane had been the club's rather than his.

The Premier League has awarded four of the six audiovisual rights packages to BSkyB for seasons 2010-13, a statement on the Premier League's website said.

"We will be proceeding to a second round of bidding for the remaining two packages in due course."

The Times newspaper, which BSkyB is owned by News Corporation, reported that the broadcaster had paid more than one billion pounds (1.1 billion euros, 1.4 billion dollars) to retain its four existing packages.

They allow BSkyB's Sky channels to show 92 of the 138 live matches available each season.

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