



MORE TO COME: Liverpool star Steven Gerrard (L) scores from a penalty to put his side 2-1 ahead in a 4-1 thrashing of Manchester United during their Premier League clash at Old Trafford on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Capello praises English clubs

AFP, Rome

England manager Fabio Capello has revealed why he thinks the English clubs dominated their Italian counterparts in Europe this season: physical and mental superiority.

All three Italian teams who reached the Champions League second round were defeated by English opposition.

Inter Milan went down 2-0 on aggregate to champions Manchester United, Juventus lost 3-2 to Chelsea and AS Roma went closest of all but were ousted by Arsenal on penalties.

"I would say that there's a big difference in mentality and normally the game is more physical and combative (in England)," Capello told Rai.

"From this point of view, our teams (in Italy) lack something in comparison to the English and even if AC Milan beat Manchester (United in 2007) it was mostly because they had quality players.

"That's something we have to improve on if we want to return to the highest level in Europe."

An element of the mentality that Capello believes needs changing is the Italian propensity to dive all the time looking for freekicks and penalties, rather than getting on with the game and trying to win through what a team creates honestly.

"We play with nine defenders and one forward and leave him to try to do something."

"And then there's another problem, in Italy there are too

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## Chelsea face City test

AFP, London



When Chelsea met Manchester City in only the fourth game of the season, the match was played against a backdrop of speculation surrounding City's prospects of upsetting the established order and breaking into the top four.

Then, City had just pulled off the audacious coup of snatching Real Madrid's Robinho from under Chelsea's noses, confirming that the Eastlands outfit had supplanted their opponents as the Premier League's big spenders following the takeover by the Abu Dhabi United Group.

However, the subsequent 3-1 drubbing inflicted by Chelsea only confirmed the yawning chasm between City and a side harbouring hopes of qualifying for the Champions League.

Nothing has happened to the two clubs in the intervening six months to suggest that the gap has been narrowed ahead of their meeting this weekend at Stamford Bridge.

Guus Hiddink's restoration job in West London has gathered pace and the Dutch manager goes into this game having won five and drawn one of his six in charge.

That one blemish on his record came in Turin this week when Chelsea were held 2-2 by Juventus in the

first knockout round of the Champions League.

Yet it proved to be just enough to ensure Chelsea joined Liverpool, Manchester United and Arsenal in the quarterfinals, having won the first leg 1-0 at home.

A few days earlier victory at Championship club Coventry City set up an FA Cup semifinal against Arsenal or Hull City while a succession of single-goal league victories have maintained Hiddink's side's interest in the Premier League title race.

The Dutchman has been adamant from day one that Chelsea's only hope of catching Manchester United has been to win all their remaining league games and hope that the runaway leaders slip up.

Chelsea have kept their part of the bargain but, unfortunately for Hiddink and his players, Sir Alex Ferguson's reigning champions have refused to play ball, and the Blues manager admitted Liverpool's visit to face United at Old Trafford twenty-four hours before his own side's meeting with City was their final hope of a slip-up.

"If Liverpool can do some harm then great because it will make for a more exciting end to the season," said Hiddink. "But United look very determined."

"When I said we could win the league we were on schedule at that time but United

have not made any mistakes since and neither have we but until it is impossible then we will fight."

Facing Chelsea will be a City side that quickly discovered the addition of a high-profile signing like Robinho doesn't bring immediate success, although the recruitment of former Blues fringe players Shaun Wright-Phillips and Wayne Bridge has at least added consistency to Mark Hughes' side.

Hughes has always publicly maintained he is happy to have Robinho on board but privately he is believed to have grown frustrated at the play-maker's failure to perform away from home.

Hughes' main priority this summer - if he survives his new owners' end of season review - is to strengthen the spine of the team with Chelsea skipper John Terry figuring high on his wish-list following a failed approach for the England defender at the turn of the year.

City received a further knock-back from Valencia's David Villa this week, but Hughes' primary concern rests with the current campaign and his side's attempt to finish in the top seven whilst ending the club's 33-year wait for a trophy in the UEFA Cup.

With Craig Bellamy, Nigel De Jong and Vincent Kompany all missing at Stamford Bridge, City could well receive another painful lesson in the difference between money and footballing wealth.

## Argentina name team for qualifiers

INTERNET, undated

Diego Maradona will prepare for his first competitive games as Argentina coach in two weeks' time when the gruelling CONMEBOL 2010 World Cup qualifiers resume.

Los Albiceleste have been extremely wobbly in the qualifying zone recently, winning just once in their last seven rounds, although they remain third in the 10-team standings. But this will be Maradona's first ever qualifying game as team coach and he is hoping to get his side back on track.

He has summoned his three diminutive dynamites in attack with Barcelona's Lionel Messi, Atletico Madrid's Sergio Aguero and Manchester United's Carlos Tevez all making the squad.

In total, he has called up 18 players based in Europe, one from Mexico, goalkeeper Federico Vilar, who will replace Sergio Romero, and seven from Argentina, including Juan Sebastian Veron.

The big news, however, still centres around Boca Juniors playmaker, Juan Roman Riquelme. Maradona had pencilled him in his provisional squad earlier in the week prior to the player's announcement that he will never return to the national side as long as Maradona is in charge. "El Diego" was hoping to have a chat with his talisman to clear the air before finalizing his squad, but he had no such luck.

We had 27 players in the group, but now we only have 26," Maradona told reporters.

"We are not going to find another player like Riquelme in this world. A lot of coaches will be happily rubbing their hands together in the knowledge that Argentina will be without him," he added.

Argentina will resume their WCQ campaign against Venezuela on March 28 before taking on Bolivia on April 1.

### SQUAD

**Goalkeepers:** Juan Pablo Carrizo (Lazio, ITA), Mariano Andujar (Estudiantes), Federico Vilar (Atlante, MEX)

**Defenders:** Martin Demichelis (Bayern Munich, GER), Gabriel Heinze (Real Madrid, ESP), Javier Zanetti, Walter Samuel (Inter, ITA), Daniel Diaz (Getafe, ESP), Juan Forlin (Boca Juniors), Emiliano Papa (Velez Sarsfield), Marcos Angelen (Estudiantes)

**Midfielders:** Fernando Gago (Real Madrid, ESP), Javier Mascherano (Liverpool, GBR), Maxi Rodriguez (Atletico Madrid, ESP), Luis Gonzalez (Porto, POR), Jonas Gutierrez (Newcastle United, GBR), Angel Di Maria (Benfica, POR), Sebastian Battaglia (Boca Juniors), Juan Sebastian Veron (Estudiantes), Daniel Montenegro (Independiente)

**Forwards:** Lionel Messi (Barcelona, ESP), Sergio Aguero (Atletico Madrid, ESP), Carlos Tevez (Manchester United, GBR), Ezequiel Lavezzi (Napoli, ITA), Lisandro Lopez (Porto, POR), Diego Milito (Genoa, ITA)

# L'pool massacre Man United

AFP, Manchester



Liverpool breathed fresh life into the Premier League title race on Saturday after coming from a goal down to complete a stunning 4-1 defeat of Manchester United in front of a disbelieving Old Trafford crowd.

Knowing victory would effectively wrap up a third straight title, United looked to be firmly on track when Cristiano Ronaldo fired them ahead from the penalty spot.

But a rare mistake by Nemanja Vidic, whose miserable afternoon ended with a straight red card 15 minutes from time, gifted Fernando Torres an equaliser.

A Steven Gerrard penalty ensured Liverpool were ahead at the break and Fabio Aurelio's perfectly freekick ended the contest after Vidic's professional foul on Gerrard.

Substitute Andrea Dossena then rubbed salt into the wounds in stoppage time, running on to a Jose Reina punt upfield before beating Edwin van der Sar with a deft lob.

Liverpool's performance was all the more remarkable for the handicaps they carried into the match. A calf strain deprived Benitez of Xabi Alonso and a warm-up injury to Alvaro Arbeloa necessitated a last-minute defensive reshuffle, Sami Hyypia starting at centreback with Jamie Carragher shunted into Arbeloa's berth at right-back.

As anticipated, Ferguson inserted

Anderson's combativeness and Park Ji-Sung's pace into his midfield. Less expected was the promotion of Carlos Tevez at the expense of Dimitar Berbatov but the Argentinian justified his selection by instigating the move that enabled United to take the lead after 22 minutes of scrappy preliminaries.

Tevez played Park in behind the Finnish centre-back and the midfielder was also too quick for Reina, whose mistimed dive upended the Korean.

Ronaldo's spot-kick was dispatched into the goalkeeper's right-hand corner with such ferocity that even Reina, a specialist in the art of stopping penalties, was unable to get a glove on it.

The degree of comfort with which United's back four had initially neutralised the threat posed by Gerrard and Torres, and the Spaniard's grimaces at the pain emanating from his heavily strapped right ankle, also augured badly for Liverpool.

Yet within five minutes they were level, courtesy of a double lapse from Vidic, who misjudged Reina's punt, allowing it to fly over his shoulder, then allowed Torres to nip in from behind and steal the ball away.

Vidic then slipped, ensuring Torres was unchallenged as he tapped the ball past van der Sar.

Torres's ability to unnervingly the very best defenders was in evidence again four minutes later. Having nodded the ball past Vidic in the

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## 'Nadal not invincible'

Tennis

AFP, Indian Wells

Confidence and concentration make world number one Rafael Nadal a formidable foe, but they don't make the world number one unbeatable, rival Novak Djokovic said Friday.

Serbia's Djokovic, ranked number three in the world, defeated Nadal in the semifinals en route to the title here last year, and he could face the same task again if he is to defend his crown.

This time around, however, Nadal arrives in the California desert as the world number one, having toppled Swiss star Roger Federer from the top spot last August.

He also has the first Grand Slam title of the year to his credit - after a thrilling triumph over Federer in the Australian Open final.

Despite some nagging troubles with his knee, Nadal is a force to be reckoned with, Djokovic said.

Nadal, who won't open his campaign here until Sunday, said he was settling in nicely and getting over jet lag after flying in on Tuesday.

He was up before daybreak on Wednesday and Thursday - relaxing in the Jacuzzi of his bungalow and getting in a little golf at dawn - but by Friday the Spaniard said he had adjusted to California time.

He has also adjusted to being the man to beat at any tournament he enters.

"My feeling didn't change too much, being number two or number one," Nadal said. "Sure, if I can continue to be number one, it will be very

nice. But my goal is to be a better player for all the tournaments, no?"

Nadal said gaining the top ranking hadn't meant an end to his efforts to improve his game.

"I always work on all aspects," said the 22-year-old, who will be vying to regain the title he won here in 2007. "Play

more aggressive, serve a little bit better, be more complete player."

"If you can slice, you have another option. If you can go to the net, it's another option to do. When you have more options, you have more resources. When you have tough matches that's really important."

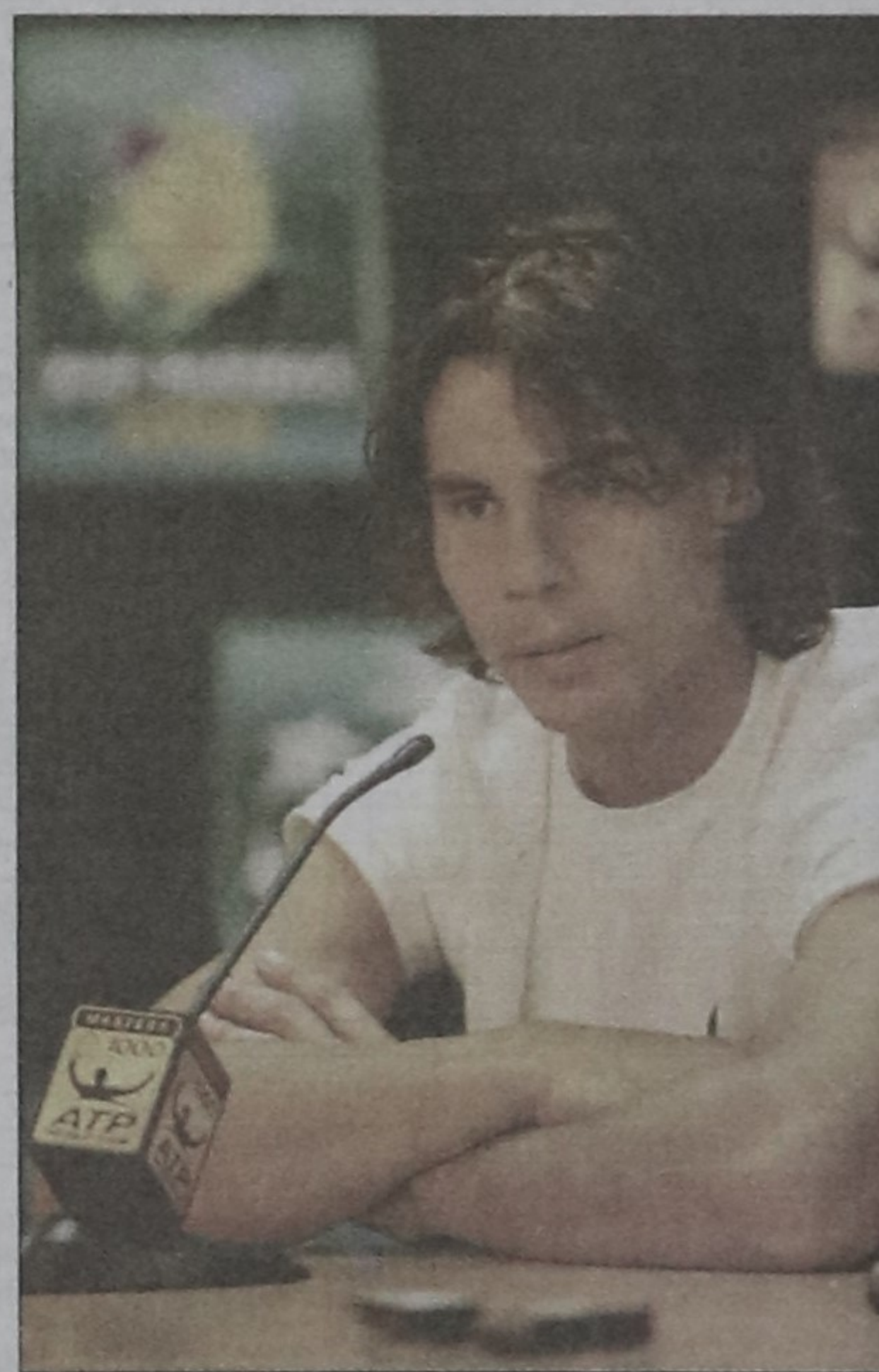


PHOTO: AFP

World number one Rafael Nadal of Spain addresses a press conference during the BNP Paribas Open at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden on Friday.

## Grafite sinks Schalke

AFP, Berlin



Brazilian striker Grafite scored a hat-trick to help VfL Wolfsburg beat Schalke 4-

3 on Friday to lift his side into second in the Bundesliga behind leaders Hertha Berlin.

With Hertha hosting Bayer Leverkusen on Saturday, Wolfsburg did not waste their chance to move up the table and close the gap to just a single point while Grafite has now scored 17 goals in 15 league games.

But Wolfsburg coach Felix Magath was unimpressed about his team's credentials in the title race after they conceded three goals.

"You could see we are not title candidates," said the ex-Bayern Munich boss, whose side have lost just five of their 24 games this season.

"If you lead 3-1 and 4-2, you need to close the game down. Schalke exposed some of our weaknesses."

Wolfsburg are unbeaten at home in the league this season, but the record was in

danger early on as Schalke's Germany defender Heiko Westermann's pin-point accurate shot gave Wolfsburg goalkeeper Diego Benaglio no chance.

His goal after only nine minutes was cancelled out when Grafite was brought down in the penalty area, only to gather himself to convert the spot kick on 26 minutes.

The home side took a 2-1 lead into the break when Bosnia striker Edin Dzeko kept up his remarkable scoring record with his eighth goal in six games to bring his tally to 13 goals in 22 games.

Schalke left Dzeko unmarked on 44 minutes and the sharp-shooter slotted his shot past the guest's goalkeeper Mathias Schober.

After the break, Grafite knocked in his second when midfielder Zvezdan Misimovic slipped him a pass and the Brazilian found the target again after 74 minutes.

Germany midfielder Jermaine Jones scored just two minutes later to keep Schalke in the game, but Grafite completed his hat-trick when substitute Ashkan Dejagah picked up a loose ball and forced a two-on-three situation.

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PHOTO: AFP

FC Zenit's new signing Portuguese defender Fernando Meira poses with his team jersey in St Petersburg on Friday. Meira transferred from Turkish giants Galatasaray on a three year contract.

## Ranieri blasts Trezeguet

AFP, Rome



Juventus coach Claudio Ranieri blasted French international striker David Trezeguet as a 'spoilt brat' on Friday after the former Monaco striker hit out after being substituted in Tuesday's Champions League exit.

Trezeguet had complained that he didn't understand why Ranieri replaced him during the 2-2 draw with Chelsea when Juve were leading 2-1 at the time and still needed to score another goal to progress to the quarterfinals.

"I feel betrayed by Trezeguet. Not by the player but by the man and for me that's something much worse," said Ranieri.

"This is an inexplicable outburst from a spoilt brat. (Ryan) Giggs or (Paul) Scholes don't always play and they don't complain when they're substituted or left on the bench."

"These quotes have really

annoyed me. These sorts of things should be left in the changing rooms."

Juventus were down to 10 men when Ranieri replaced Trezeguet with Brazilian striker Amauri, the team's top scorer.

They were chasing the game with a man disadvantage but also had Alessandro Del Piero and young attacking midfielder Sebastian Giovinco already on the pitch.

"After the sending off of (Giorgio) Chiellini we weren't playing 10 against 11 but nine against 11," added Ranieri.

"Trezeguet wasn't playing any more and I needed someone in his place, another type of player."

"Trezeguet touched the ball six times in the first half and half a dozen times in the second with one good pass (to create Juve's opening goal) and a header on goal."

"But when I saw that we weren't managing to get in behind Chelsea, I introduced Amauri, our top scorer."

Meanwhile, Juventus will be without Amauri for a month after he injured his

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## S Korea submit World Cup bid

AFP, Seoul

South Korea has submitted an official bid to host either the 2018 or 2022 World Cups to football governing body FIFA, a Korea Football Association spokesman said Saturday.

"We've sent an official bid to FIFA ahead of the Monday deadline," spokesman Lee Won-Jae of the KFA told AFP.

Earlier this year FIFA invited countries to express interest, by February 2, in hosting the 2018 or 2022 tournaments and the KFA submitted a preliminary bid.

Australia, China, England, Indonesia, Mexico, Qatar and Japan are also among the countries that expressed their interest.

The hosts for both tournaments will be chosen in December 2010.

FIFA requires a World Cup host to have about 12 stadiums with more than 40,000 seats each, one of them with 80,000 seats.

African countries are precluded from bidding for the 2018 tournament as the next World Cup, in 2010, will be staged in South Africa.

South American countries are ruled out of the bidding for both 2018 and 2022 as Brazil is to host the 2014 event.