



Brazil superstar Ronaldo (R) of Corinthians celebrates scoring his second goal against Ponte Preta during their Paulista Championship encounter at the Pacaembu Stadium in Sao Paulo on Wednesday.

Riera fires Turkey warning

AFP, Madrid

Liverpool's Albert Riera warned his Spanish teammates that Turkey, who face the Euro 2008 champions in a World Cup qualifying game on Saturday, are a "very aggressive" team which "plays as one."

'Germany lack top 'keepers'

AFP, Berlin

Germany does not currently have a world-class goalkeeper worthy of helping the national team win next year's World Cup, insists both ex-captain Oliver Kahn and national goalkeeping coach Andreas Koepke.

Ronaldo scores a brace

AGENCIES, undated

Ronaldo scored twice to lead Corinthians to 2-2 draw with Ponte Preta on Wednesday in the Sao Paulo state championship.

Whelan slams Ashley

Football

AFP, London

Wigan's chairman Dave Whelan has launched an extraordinary attack on his Newcastle counterpart Mike Ashley, claiming he knew the Magpies were set to nosedive as soon as he saw Ashley wearing a replica shirt in the boardroom.

as well as a football rival to Ashley, launched his tirade after claiming there was "no chance" of Wigan manager Steve Bruce, who comes from the Newcastle area, taking charge of the beleaguered club, as long as Ashley is in charge.

Pele backtracks

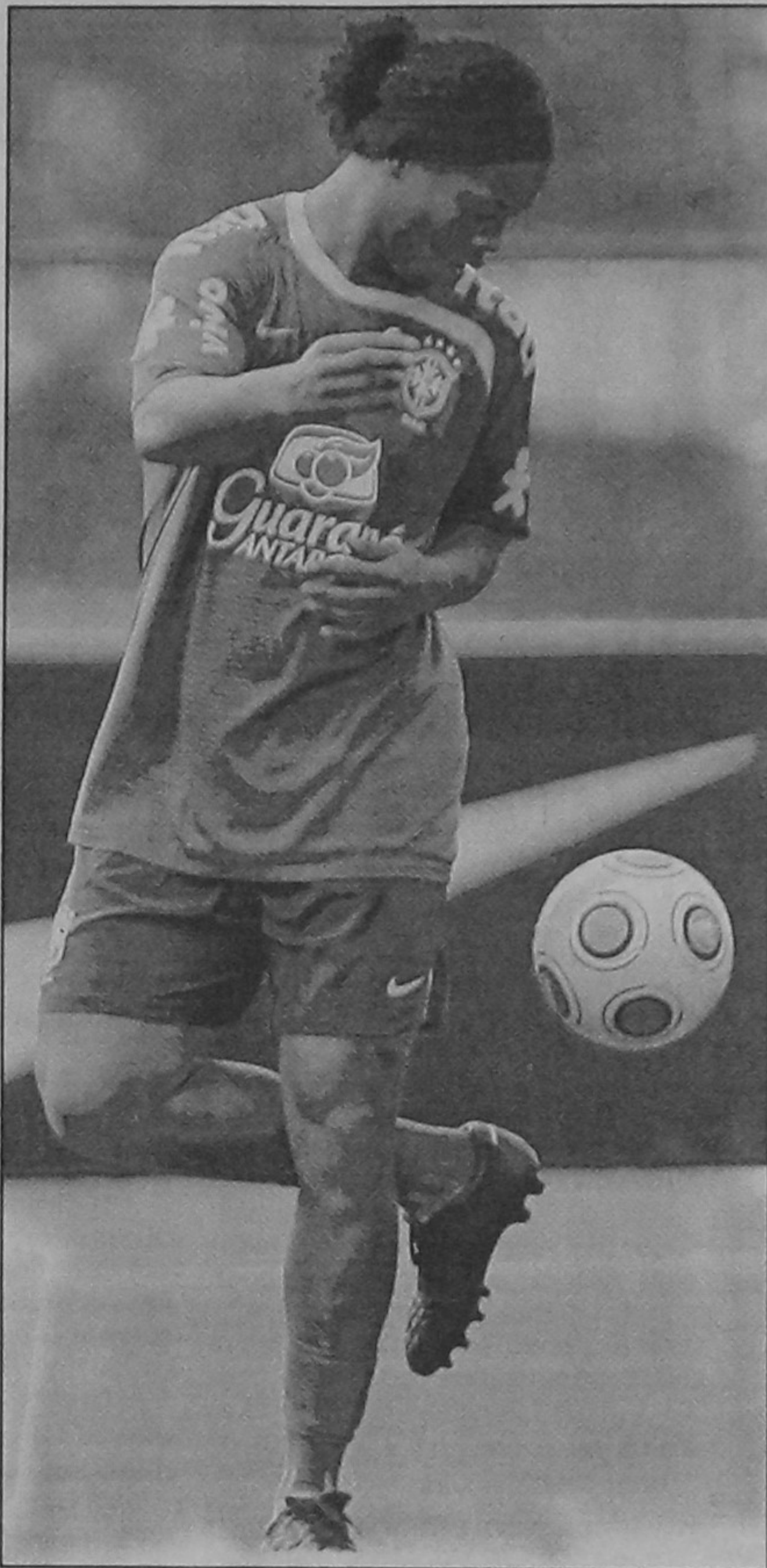
AP, Rio de Janeiro



Robinho and Ronaldo have been misinterpreted.

"It's unfair to talk of drugs in football just because of one or two cases, as happened with Ronaldo and Robinho, who had that problem," Pele said last week at a tourism conference.

An unidentified spokesman for Pele told the Jornal do Brasil newspaper on Wednesday that Pele was questioned about general problems soccer players had faced. While his quote seemed to connect Robinho and Ronaldo along with Diego Maradona to past drug use, the spokesman said that was not Pele's intention.



Brazil midfielder Ronaldinho does a trick during a training session in Teresopolis on Wednesday.

Blatter's plan shocks FIFA vice-president

AFP, Seoul

FIFA vice-president Chung Mong-joon said Thursday he was "shocked and disappointed" at Sepp Blatter's proposal to enforce an age limit on Olympic football players.

Chung said he would launch a campaign against the FIFA president's move last week to cap the limit at 20 for players in the 2012 Olympics and do away with wildcards.

Previously, teams could field athletes aged up to 23, plus three over-age players. Blatter's proposal, which requires approval by the FIFA general assembly in June in the Bahamas, "runs against the spirit of the Olympics," Chung told reporters.

Real expecting record revenues

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid announced Thursday it expected record revenues for the 2008/2009 season of 407 million euros (552 million dollars), up from 366 million previously.

Darren eyes Dutch scalp

AFP, Luss



Scotland midfielder Darren Fletcher believes George Burley's side can stun Holland in Amsterdam - if they right the wrongs from the last meeting between the countries.

offensive from the start the last time and we got beat 6-0. I think there will be more of a cautious approach this time around.

little bit with Scotland, where we are resilient and hard to break down.

"But it can't just be backs to the wall and the manager has stressed there has to be a spell when we are good enough to keep possession and create chances. It's a lottery trying to sit behind the ball for 90 minutes.

Chelsea want South-Asian talent

AFP, London

Chelsea have launched an initiative aimed at identifying promising young players from a south Asian background in a bid to address the community's chronic under-representation in English football.

Britain is home to over three million people with family roots in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka but the country's largest ethnic minority has virtually no presence in the national sport at the professional level.

Zesh Rehman, the former Fulham defender, is one of a handful of players from a south Asian background to have made it to the Premier League, and he is backing Chelsea's move to stage a weekend of trials specifically for young Asians in early May.

Chelsea's initiative is being backed by the Football Association, the anti-racist organisation Kick it Out, and the Asian Media Group.

France call-up Remy, Luyindula

AFP, Paris

Strikers Loic Remy and Peguy Luyindula were called-up into the French squad on Wednesday for back-to-back World Cup qualifiers with Lithuania following a training ground injury suffered by Jimmy Briand.

'Juve will sign one star in summer'

AFP, Rome

Juventus chief executive Jean-Claude Blanc said on Wednesday that the Italian giants will sign a star player in the summer.

Juve are currently trailing Inter Milan by seven points in Serie A with only nine games remaining. Following their elimination from the Champions League by Chelsea earlier this month, club coach Claudio Ranieri said they needed bigger stars to compete for the top honours.



Dutch forward Dirk Kuyt (L) fights for the ball with teammate Stijn Schaars during a training session in Katwijk on Wednesday.

Make or break for Saudis

AFP, Singapore



Japan and North Korea go in search of crucial home victories on Saturday to boost their World Cup final hopes, while heavyweights Iran and Saudi Arabia meet in a must-win match in Tehran.

New Zealand to claim the fifth slot available for South Africa in 2010.

Saudi Arabia have made the last four World Cup finals but are in danger of missing out on a fifth with a daunting task ahead in Tehran's Azadi Stadium against Ali Daei's Iran.

"We have complete confidence and faith in our players and their capabilities to achieve positive results."

Japan are well placed behind Australia but coach Takeshi Okada, who has called up his big-name European stars led by Celtic's Shunsuke Nakamura, warned that Bahrain will be no pushovers.

"I think Bahrain are a tough match-up for any team, not just us," he said ahead of the match in Saitama.

"They don't really take the game to anyone, but their style rather is to take away your strengths and make the game difficult for you."

The last time the two teams met was during qualification for the 2011 Asian Cup in January. Then, for the second time in the space of 12 months, Japan lost.

Wednesday's other match sees Uzbekistan desperate to claim all three points at home to Qatar before they make the trek to Australia next week to face Pim Verbeek's men in Sydney.

Coach Mirdjalal Kasimov has named three new caps in his provisional squad, including midfielder Stanislav Andreev, goalkeeper Michael Naumov and defender Artyom Filipoyan.