

## FIFA to earn \$2.7b from WC TV rights

AFP, Johannesburg

World football's governing body FIFA will earn 25 billion rands (2.7 billion dollars, 2.1 billion euros) on television rights to broadcast the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, the organisation said on Monday.

The announcement was made by FIFA TV director Niclas Ericson (EDS; correct) during a press conference in Johannesburg, according to the SAPA news agency.

FIFA will also broadcast the games to hundreds of millions of cell phones worldwide, and has entered special agreements with African TV networks across the continent, he added.

"We have entered an agreement with the African Union of Broadcasters to place the TV rights in 41 sub-Saharan countries before the end of 2009," Ericson said.

"The dream would be for an African team to reach the final, which would boost TV viewership," said Ericson.

FIFA will spend 1.5 billion rands on their TV production of the world's biggest sporting tournament - with over 26 billion worldwide spectators.

It will be the first time that the World Cup is held in Africa.

## Cannavaro in Juve talks

AFP Rome

World Cup winning captain Fabio Cannavaro's agent revealed on Monday that talks have opened over a possible return to Juventus for the Real Madrid centre-back.

Cannavaro's contract at Real is up at the end of the season and it is widely thought he will return to Italy.

He spent two years at Juve before leaving to join the Spaniards when the Old Lady of Turin were relegated to Serie B for match-fixing.

But according to Gaetano Fedele a reunion is on the cards.

"Juve have made an interesting offer, exactly what he's been looking for," said Fedele in an interview with website calciomercato.it.

"It's a good offer and it's being evaluated. Juventus's bosses could be more clear, though. This week will probably be decisive.

"Interest from a big club such as Juve can only make Fabio happy. He wants to continue his glorious career and signing for a top level club is his wish."

## Becks launches anti-malaria campaign

AFP, London

England football star David Beckham and world-class British tennis player Andy Murray joined Prime Minister Gordon Brown to launch an anti-malaria campaign on Monday.

Beckham, Murray and British Olympic gold medal-winning heptathlete Denise Lewis posed for the cameras in front of a blue mosquito net draped over the front door of 10 Downing Street, the prime minister's official residence.

The trio have pledged their backing to Malaria No More UK, a charity launched in a bid to prevent millions of deaths from the disease worldwide.

England and AC Milan midfielder Beckham said: "It's truly incredible to think we can stop this killer disease forever and it's such a simple thing to do."

"For less than the cost of a football you can protect a family from dying. I urge the UK public to get behind the Malaria No More UK campaign to save a life and make malaria no more."

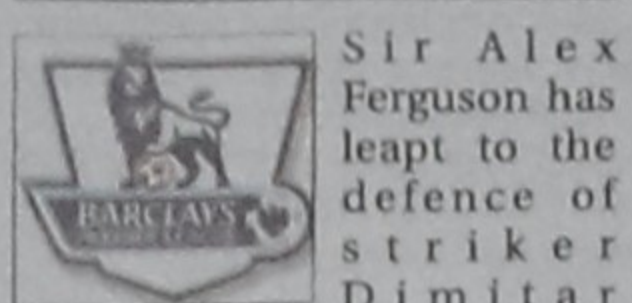
Malaria, despite being treatable, threatens half the world's population and pregnant women and children are particularly at risk.

Murray, fresh from reaching the semifinals of the Monte Carlo Masters tournament at the weekend, said: "This is the first global charity I've been involved with in this capacity and it was an easy decision."

"Malaria is completely preventable and stoppable but yet it still kills more children in Africa than any other single disease. We can radically change this, it is a huge opportunity and I'm urging the UK public to help save a life and get behind Malaria No More UK, a truly world-changing and life-saving initiative."

## Fergie defends Berbatov

AFP, Manchester



Sir Alex Ferguson has leapt to the defence of striker Dimitar Berbatov as Manchester United look to put their season back on track following their unexpected FA Cup exit.

Berbatov has struggled to justify the 30 million pounds transfer fee United paid Tottenham for the Bulgaria international's services in September.

He has scored just eight times in 27 league appearances while his miss, after coming on as a substitute, in Sunday's FA Cup semifinal penalty shootout defeat by Everton proved critical as United's quintuple dream bit the dust.

Ferguson's Premier League champions get a quick chance to return to winning ways when they entertain Portsmouth at Old Trafford on Wednesday.

In the build-up to that match, the United manager has defended Berbatov from accusations he is not living up to his exorbitant transfer fee.

"I don't see any evidence of that," said Ferguson. "He has had his injuries but I thought

he did well when he came on in the semifinal.

"He was disappointed to miss his penalty and he'll get criticism for that.

"When you pay 30 million pounds for a player everyone thinks he should be able to score a penalty kick. But anyone can lose on penalty kicks.

"Berbatov was upset but then it was a disappointed dressing room, you'll always get that after a semifinal (defeat).

"And it was our first semifinal we've lost, don't forget that. We've got to move on.

"We've done it in the past and we'll do it again," said the veteran United manager, who fielded a largely second-string side against Everton.

Ferguson remained defiant despite having seen the club's hopes of an amazing clean sweep of trophies go out of the window at Wembley.

He fully expects to see his side bounce back against Portsmouth and keep the pressure on title rivals Liverpool, who are in action against Arsenal at Anfield on Tuesday where a draw will see them overtake United at the top of the table before United kick-off against Pompey.

"We have to overcome defeats at some point and in most cases we have done alright," added Ferguson.

"We lost two in a row, to Liverpool and Fulham, but since then we have beaten Aston Villa, Porto and Sunderland and didn't 'lose' at Wembley.

"I think there is enough motivation among our players to look forward to the game," he insisted.

Wayne Rooney, Cristiano Ronaldo and Edwin van der Sar, who were all rested at the weekend, are set to return to the side.

"Trying to deal with the tiredness after Wembley, especially after extra-time, was always going to be the issue," said Ferguson.

"But there is enough freshness in the rest of the squad to be alright on Wednesday, that's how we planned it."

Portsmouth, who have yet to secure their Premier League future, will be without Croatia international Niko Kranjcar after he was carried off on a stretcher during Saturday's 1-0 victory over Bolton.

"It's a blow because he's been doing really well for us and he's an important part of what we do," said manager Paul Hart.

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Saturday's incident led to Italian football authorities deciding Juventus should play their next home league match in front of closed doors.

Juventus, though, appealed their sanction which would see fans banned from their clash against Lecce at the beginning of next month.

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## Platini tough on racism

AFP, Rome

UEFA boss Michel Platini revealed on Tuesday that European football bosses are considering suspending matches for 10 minutes if fans take part in racist chanting.

Platini was speaking in Rome where the Champions League trophy was officially handed over by current holders Manchester United to the city that will stage the final next month.

Racism in football has been brought to the fore following taunts aimed at Inter Milan's Mario Balotelli during the 1-1 draw at Juventus on Saturday.

Italian under-21 international Balotelli is of Ghanaian origin and was targeted by small sections of the crowd.

"It would take courage but the decision of UEFA would be to stop the match for 10 minutes if there is racist chanting and to call it off altogether if it continued," he said.

That was a view partially supported by Italian Referees Association (Aia) president Marcello Nicchi.

Nicchi believes stopping a match is an option although he said it should not be up to the referee.

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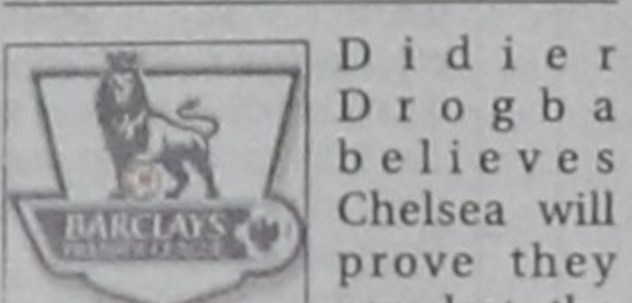
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UEFA president Michel Platini (L) passes the Champions League trophy to Mayor of Rome Gianni Alemanno during the handover ceremony at Rome's city hall on Tuesday. The Champions League final will take place in Rome on May 27.

## Drogba confident

AFP, London



Didier Drogba believes Chelsea will prove they can last the pace in the Premier League title race by brushing aside fellow FA Cup finalists Everton on Wednesday.

With three trophies still in their sights, Guus Hiddink's team have no time to rest on their laurels after Saturday's FA Cup semifinal win over Arsenal.

Hiddink admits beating Everton in the final on May 30 would be the perfect way to end his brief reign as Chelsea manager before resuming his full-time post as Russia coach.

But Hiddink will head back to Moscow with even more medals in his suitcase if Chelsea, who face a Champions League semifinal against Barcelona later this month, can triumph in Europe and overhaul Manchester United in the league.

The Blues trail United by four points and the leaders have a game in hand so there is no margin for error.

Chelsea's task is made harder by the frantic nature of their fixture list from now until

that Wembley date with Everton. But Drogba is convinced they are strong enough, mentally and physically, to last the pace.

"When you go to the end of the season there are big games all the time and when you play at Chelsea you have to perform in them if you want to win trophies," he said.

"That is what you try to do. It doesn't work every time but at least we have the chance to try."

"I feel stronger now. I am really happy that in July I took the right decision not to go to pre-season because I needed to rest."

"I needed to work on my knee to come back strong. That was the sacrifice I made at the beginning of the season and it's paying dividends now."

While the odds are against Chelsea in the league, it would be foolish to completely write them off while Drogba is in such fearsome form.

The Ivory Coast forward has scored eight goals in his last nine games including Saturday's winner against Arsenal, and looks back to his imposing best after a frustrating season.

Everton should be in buoyant mood after Sunday's

penalty shoot-out win over United clinched their first FA Cup final appearance since 1995.

David Moyes's side stayed down in London after beating United to prepare for Wednesday's match and Phil Jagielka, who hit Everton's winning penalty, can't wait to score a few psychological points ahead of the final.

Jagielka has enjoyed quite a season with his first England cap and now an FA Cup final appearance to savour, but the 26-year-old will have to be at his best to snuff out Drogba.

"In a strange way it is nice to see Drogba coming back to form," Jagielka said. "It was disappointing as a football fan when he wasn't doing very well. Now he seems to be back to his best, throwing defenders to one side."

Jagielka insists Everton are determined to catch fifth-placed Aston Villa, so there is no chance of the Toffees taking their eye of the ball in the league.

"We want to finish well in the league and fifth place is still up for grabs," he said. "It is about time the squad we have here comes of age and starts to win trophies."

Manchester City have suffered a blow to their chances of claiming a place in Europe for next season following confirmation that Craig Bellamy is likely to miss the Premier League run-in.

The Wales captain, who arrived from West Ham in January's transfer window, has missed the last three matches after suffering a knee injury during the UEFA Cup quarterfinal first-leg defeat at Hamburg.

City manager Mark Hughes told the club's website: "Craig has got to have complete rest for two weeks then he comes back for strength work."

"Hopefully he might get the last couple of games, but the probability is that he won't."

City are tenth in the English top flight but they are only four points behind West Ham, who are currently occupy seventh place, which is likely to be the final qualifying spot for next season's Europa League, the successor to the UEFA Cup.

There was better news for Hughes regarding the fitness of Bulgaria striker Valeri Bojinov, who was due to play for the reserves at Middlesbrough after missing the weekend victory over West Brom.

"He needs more physical work and we're hoping he comes through at Middlesbrough to be available at the weekend," Hughes said.

Shaun Wright-Phillips is still struggling to recover from the ankle damage that has ruled him out of the last three games and is thought unlikely to feature in Saturday's match at Everton.

## Wembley needs step up

AFP, London

Football Association (FA) officials admitted Monday that the much criticised pitch at Wembley Stadium needs improvement.

The 'old' Wembley was renowned for the quality of its playing surface but the state of the pitch has been a talking point ever since the rebuilt stadium opened two years ago.

Debate intensified during last weekend's FA Cup semifinals, where the top surface gave way under the players' feet.

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger called it "a disaster" and "laughable" while fellow losing manager Sir Alex Ferguson said the soil looked "dead" and withdrew several senior players because of concerns the pitch might cause injuries at a key time of the season.

It was just such an issue that prompted the Australian Rugby Union to investigate whether the pitch was responsible for injuries to two Wallabies during a November international against the Barbarians.

Although the rebuilt

Wembley cost some 750 million pounds, the pitch has had to be relaid five times in just two years.

"Whilst recent changes to the surface have seen improvements in player traction, we accept there are still further improvements to be made," an FA statement said.

"Wembley Stadium will continue to work hard to address these issues for our next matches," the governing body added.

"The grounds team has made continual improvements to the pitch since opening in 2007, however, the stadium's unique environment continues to prove challenging."

Before the end of the season, three Football League play-off finals plus the Blue Square Premier play-off final, the FA Cup final, the finals of the FA Trophy and Vase will be played at Wembley as will England's World Cup qualifier against Andorra on June 10.

Aside from football, there is an ACDC concert on June 26 and, in July, three Oasis dates and four Take That concerts.

The turf will be re-laid again for the Community Shield in August.

However, David Saltman,

formerly in charge of Millennium Stadium pitch and now the managing director of www.pitchcare.com, said the pitch at Wembley will never be as good as a Premier League club's surface because of the need to stage other events there in order to make the ground pay for itself.

"This pitch is the most spotlighted pitch in country if not the world," he told BBC Radio Five Live.

"The number of events on the grass and off it is staggering."

"One of the problems with Wembley and the Millennium is they're not just pitches for football."

"Managers such as Ferguson and Wenger are used to playing on pitches which are just prepared for football week in, week out and the levels are superb. The pitch is cut short and the players know what they are going to be going on to."

"At Wembley and the Millennium the pitches are turfed - they have to be because of the other events - so you're never going to have the same sort of perfect level you have with an in-situ pitch you get in the Premier League and the Championship."

Forget Sir Alex Ferguson, Jose Mourinho and Guus Hiddink, Everton coach David Moyes is the best manager in the world, club chairman, Bill Kenwright claimed on Tuesday.

"Evertonians owe everything to David Moyes, he took on our club when it was on its knees," Kenwright told the BBC.

"We laid out a plan and he has never come off it. I worship the man, he is the greatest manager in the world."

Kenwright was speaking barely 48 hours after Moyes had guided Everton to the FA Cup final after a penalty shoot-out win against Manchester United at Wembley on Sunday.

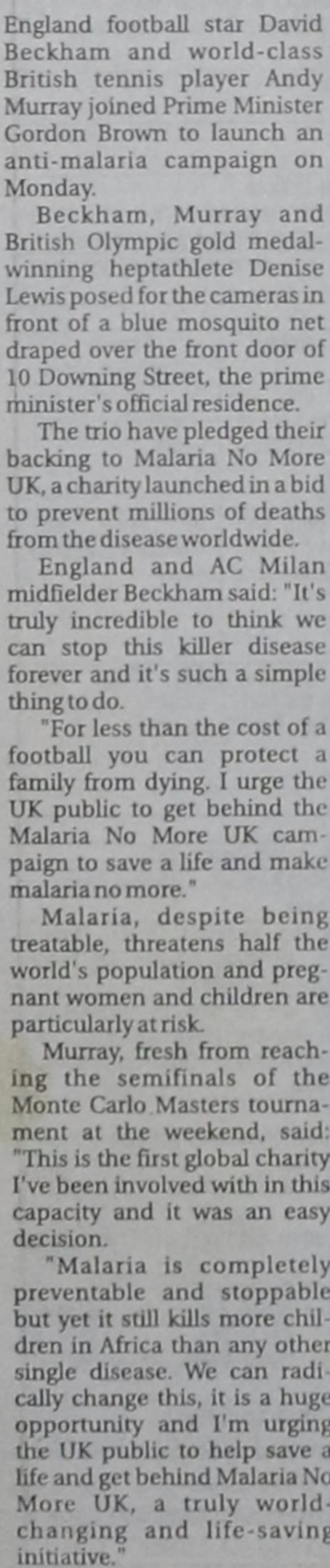
Kenwright, who has been searching for a suitable buyer for Everton, said Moyes, who took up his post at Goodison Park in 2002, had persuaded him to stay on at the club.

"I've been in situations when I've thought I can't go on," said Kenwright.

"He's said 'don't leave, the players and I will miss you. Come on, we'll do this together'."

"He's my best friend in football and I'd do anything for him."

"When you see him looking up with that clenched fist he's looking at me saying 'look where we've got to'."



World number one Rafa Nadal of Spain poses with the book 'Play, set and game' inspired by his own life in Barcelona on Monday.

## Blues to gamble on Mancienne?

SoccerNet



Michael Mancienne has emerged as a potential candidate for the unenviable role of man-marking Barcelona star Lionel Messi when Chelsea face Barcelona in next week's Champions League semifinal.

With Chelsea's first-choice left-back Ashley Cole unavailable for the first leg trip to the Camp Nou through suspension, coach Guus Hiddink must decide how to handle right-sided Argentine Messi, one of the best players in the world, who is enjoying the best form of his career.

Primarily a centre-back or right-back, Mancienne played on the left of Chelsea's defence in Monday's reserve-team draw against West Bromwich Albion as Hiddink ran the rule over the England Under-21 international.

Aware that he could be asked to face Barcelona and Messi out-of-position, 21-year-old Londoner Mancienne insists he is ready to answer the club's call.

"It was a new one on me, I've never really played there before. I would love the challenge of facing Messi."

Mancienne told Chelsea TV: "The manager came to watch and I was asked to have a go. The manager is keeping his options open."

"They told me a couple of days ago I would have a go at left-back and I did ask Ashley a few questions about it. It felt all right."

With Cole suspended, Jose Bosingwa injured and the versatile Branislav Ivanovic currently filling in at right-back, Chelsea are thought to have even considered asking Florent Malouda to restrict his attacking flair and deputise as a defender. But with the Frenchman seemingly rejuvenated on the left wing, limiting his impact on the game could prove counterproductive.

Other than opting for Mancienne, Hiddink's only other option would be to rely on Brazilian Juliano Belletti who also featured in Monday's 2-2 draw with West Brom.

The former Barcelona player is a right back by trade and so could replace Ivanovic allowing the Serbian to move into the troublesome left-back berth.

Hiddink's choice appears to be between playing the inexperienced, but lightning quick Mancienne or shuffling his pack to create space for Belletti who may not be 100 per cent after returning from injury.

## 'Moyes world's best manager'

AFP, Liverpool

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