



AFP, Paris

Montpellier striker Victor Hugo Montana (L) celebrates scoring the opening goal against Lyon during their League One encounter at the Gerland Stadium on Wednesday.

# Schumi is back to win

AFP, Berlin



time world he said champion

Schumacher said he was gunning for an eighth title in his comeback to Formula One racing with Mercedes GP from next season, in an interview published Thursday.

can be to fight for the world championship," Schumacher told the Berlin daily Der Tagesspiegel.

only be to again stand on the top step.

October 2006 and suffered a neck injury in a motorbike accident in February but the German pilot, who will be 41 on January 3, said had "no doubt" about his skills behind the wheel.

"I never stopped my physical training," he said.

Schumacher signed a three-year deal Wednesday to return to F1 racing with Mercedes GP for a reported seven million euros (9.9 million dollars) per year.

He will be linking up with Mercedes's team principal Ross Brawn, who was the brains behind all of his world titles, and on the grid when the new season starts with the Bahrain Grand Prix on March 14.

The German said Mercedes was the natural choice for him.

Football

Craig Levein, the new man-

ager of the Scotland national

side, marked his first news

conference in charge by say-

ing he would consider all

four-and-a-half year contract

here Wednesday, succeeded

George Burley, who was

sacked last month after a 3-0

friendly defeat by Wales fol-

lowed Scotland's failure to

reach the play-offs for a place

in next year's World Cup finals

overshadowed by several

high-profile disputes with

Burley's time in charge was

in South Africa.

opportunities.

players.

in April.

bench.

ers."

Levein, appointed on a

eligible players for selection.

AFP, Glasgow

seriously considered driving,"

"It was the combination of Ross Brawn and Mercedes. Mercedes helped me get into Formula One. I am happy that I can give back some of what Mercedes gave me."

Schumacher was 37 when he hung up his racing helmet, "Obviously our only goal having competed in 250 Formula One Grands Prix, 180 of them for Ferrari.

He won 91 races, 71 for Ferrari, took 68 pole positions, "And of course my goal can 58 for Ferrari, and set 75 fastest laps on his way to seven drivers' world titles, including five Schumacher retired in forthescarletscuderia.

Schumacher retired having just fallen short of Italian Ricardo Patrese's record of lining up in 256 races. He had been due to make a

remarkable return last season for Ferrari -- for whom he acted as a consultant after retiring -as a replacement for the injured Felipe Massa.

But he was unable to race due to persistent neck pain from the February crash.

delighted with his Mercedes link-up, the automaker's works council slammed the pilot's hefty salary as the rest of the company was cutting back and sending jobs abroad.

Werner, head of the works council at the parent company

"I think there is no other Daimler's plant in the northern team for which I would have German city of Bremen, told the Frankfurter Rundschau stood it better had Mercedes

> newspaper. "They are telling us it is an One racing altogether."

## Carlo doesn't fear Roman

AFP, London

Chelsea manager Carlo Ancelotti insists he doesn't fear being sacked by Blues owner Roman Abramovich despite his team's recent struggles.

Ancelotti's side head into the Christmas programme on the back of a disappointing run of just one win in their last six matches.

Exiting the League Cup at the quarterfinal stage against Blackburn was never likely to be taken too seriously, but lacklustre displays against the likes of Everton, Apoel Nicosia and West Ham were more worrying for Ancelotti.

Luiz Felipe Scolari was axed While Schumacher was by Abramovich in February following an equally inconsistent spell that saw the Blues slump out of the title race.

But Ancelotti knows his strong relationship with Abramovich should stand him "It is really difficult to in good stead even if Chelsea explain to people," Uwe are unable to stay ahead of Manchester United at the top of the Premier League.

investment in the future. But the staff would have under-

pulled out of pricey Formula Earlier this month, Daimler decided after other cost-

cutting measures to move some of its production of Cclass cars from Germany to the US city Tuscaloosa. It is unclear whether the move will lead to job cuts here. Meanwhile an automobile

industry expert said he doubted the Schumacher deal would pay off for Mercedes.

"Mercedes in particular is a company for which sportiness is not a selling point but rather security and quality, Ferdinand Dudenhoeffer of the University of Duisburg-Essen in western Germany told Bayerischer Rundfunk public

"Why should a driver decide to buy a Mercedes because of Formula One?"

He said the cost of investing in F1 would have to be passed on to consumers.

sold for 200 to 300 euros more | boss Martin Jol's triggerfor Mercedes to finance | happy team in the 18th minute Formula One."

Mercedes sport chief Norbert Haug dismissed the criticism.

"The whole engagement will sell a lot of cars and make a lot of people aware of the quality of the star," he told ZDF public television, referring to the company emblem.

including 16 international

caps for Scotland - and as a

been favourite to succeed

Burley since Rangers manager

Walter Smith ruled himself out

of a return to the Scotland job.

Tannadice appeared to be

foundering Tuesday on the

issue of compensation, with

Dundee United chairman

Stephen Thompson saying the

club had been treated "shab-

Wednesday that United were

Wednesday with snowbound

conditions preventing Levein

getting from his Fife home to

Hampden until the afternoon,

where there were then several

hours of contractual negotia-

the length of time today fool

you. That is no indication of

how much I wanted this job.

tracted but so what?"

Edinburgh club.

in October 2006.

But Levein said: "Don't let

"Today was a little bit pro-

Levein, whose career as a

Hearts defender was cut short

by injury, made his name as a

manager during a 2000-04

spell in charge of the

as manager of English

Championship side Leicester

followed and Levein returned

to management in Scotland

with Raith Rovers before

taking over at Dundee United

He guided the Tangerines

A brief, unsuccessful stint

seeking a new manager.

But Thompson confirmed

There was a further delay

bily" by the SFA.

Levein's move from

The 45-year-old Levein has

coach.'

IN BRIEF

### Almeria hire Lillo

SPORT

Spanish first division side

The 44-year-old Lillo was in charge of second division club Real Sociedad during the 2008-2009 season.

Almeria are currently languishing in 17th place in the top flight, and are fourth from bottom.

AFP, The Hague

amateur outfit WHC Wezep 14-1 in a mismatched Dutch Cup round of 16 tie on Wednesday.

Markoi Pantelic started the "Every car will have to be rout for former Tottenham and Ajax had raced to a 6lead by the break.

> minutes old, with goals 12, 13 and 14 coming in the final five minutes. The night proved a per-

sonal triumph for Ajax Uruguay winger Luis Suarez who scored no fewer than six of the Amsterdam side's haul.

the amateur C league, were unable to exploit home advantage, their ground boasting a 500-seater covered stand.

AFP, Madrid

Almeria have appointed Juan Manuel Lillo to take over as coach following the sacking of Mexican Hugo Sanchez.

## Ajax wrack up cricket score

Dutch giants Ajax whipped

Ajax's seventh goal came when the second half was

WHC Wezep, who play in

Launched in 1930 WHC have fallen on hard times compared to their halcyon days back in the 1960s when they were crowned second division champions five

### severe headaches after collapsing to home defeats to Montpellier and Auxerre

respectively on Wednesday.

I loss to one of the season's surprise packages

Lille, who enjoyed a 4-0 goal spree at Nancy,

Montpellier go into third on 33 points, one

The dominant force of the past decade, Lyon

Montpellier, while Marseille fell 2-0 to Auxerre.

jumped into second, on 34 points, nine behind

Bordeaux who extended their lead with a 2-1

win over Toulouse in Wednesday's late kick-off.

point clear of Marseille and Auxerre with strug-

have now won just once in their last eight

stages of the Champions League, slipped up

due to second half goals from Colombian

striker Victor Montano and Joris Marveaux with

Bafetimbi Gomis getting their only contribu-

the midway point of the season without figur-

ing in the top three since the 2002-2003 cam-

time titleholders will be that they ended up

frustrated and whistled manager Claude Puel's

name when it was announced before kick-off.

This will be the first time Lyon have reached

The only source of comfort for the seven-

The fans at the Stade Gerland are becoming

The mood wasn't much better down on the

Marseille, who had been unable to beat 10-

man Saint Etienne on their last outing, disap-

morale appears to be fading by the week.

gling Lyon 13 points off the top.

slipped to sixth place after a 2-

Multiple champions Lyon

pointed again with Auxerre's three points coming from Denis Oliech's double. Before the game Marseille had deemed Lyon and Marseille went into "insufficient" an offer from Greek side the Christmas recess nursing

Olympiakos for winger Hatem Ben Arfa. At Nancy Ivory Coast international

Gervinho bagged two of Lille's four goals to jump to the top of the French first division scoring charts with an 11-goal haul.

This was Lille's sixth consecutive win. There was festive cheer meanwhile up in the French capital where Paris Saint Germain dished out a 4-0 drubbing to basement club Grenoble to improve their prospects of playing in Europe next term.

Later Bordeaux, already assured of the summit at the midway stage of the season, were on the back foot after just four minutes when Toulouse's Paulo Mechado found the back of Marouane Chamakh had the champions

league matches and their title challenge and back level five minutes later with Brazilian winger Wendel grabbing the 75th minute win-Lyon, who are at least into the knockout "Frankly this is extraordinary!" said

Chamakh. "We're enjoying a pretty good first half of the

season, now we have to continue like that and retain the same spirit."

Down at the foot Le Mans just managed to stay out of the relegation zone occupied by Grenoble, Boulogne and Saint Etienne, with a battling 1-1 draw against Monaco.

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## Fergie slams Man City have been a terrible position to Diouf has officially joined the

AFP, Manchester

champions that season.

south coast at the Velodrome.



slammed neighbours Manchester

City for the way in which they handled the sacking of his former player Mark Hughes this week.

City have been widely pilloried in the football community for the manner in which the highly-respected Hughes was forced to take control of his team in last Saturday's 4-3 victory over Sunderland before being sacked and replaced by Italian Roberto Mancini immediately after the game.

Now the Manchester United manager, an influential figure at the League Managers' Association, has added his voice to the general condemnation of City's behaviour while praising the actions of Sunderland manager Steve Bruce, a former team-mate of Hughes' at United in the 1990's. "That is one thing I do not

need to discuss, it is so obvious, that kind of behaviour is unacceptable," said Ferguson when asked for his reaction to Hughes' treatment last Saturday. "It doesn't matter whether

you have lost 20 games or, as in the case of Mark Hughes, two games. There is a way to treat people, surely. "But Christmas time seems

to bring the worst out of directors. Sitting there throughout the game, knowing something was going on, must have been terrible. Brucey felt that himself, the rumour mill was working overtime. "Mark had obviously real-

ised it was his last game, it must

be in. I think everyone was shocked, obviously. I spoke to Mark the next day and I could tell he was suffering. "I was talking to him about

Steve Bruce and Brucey was fantastic. In the game of football you have disputes with managers from time to time, as they had had, but what Steve Bruce did was defend an old team-mate. "They were part of our team

in '94 that stood by each other and fought like the devil together and what Steve Bruce said was, 'That's my team mate you're talking about.' "I was really proud of Steve

Bruce and I know Mark appreciated that. He really appreciated that kind of loyalty, which he didn't get at City, from an old team mate.' Ferguson, who had traded

veiled jibes on occasion with Hughes this season, also backed the Welshman to bounce back from his 18month City experience. "Of course he will," said

Ferguson. "He did a great job with Wales, which is not an easy job, a great job with Blackburn and he was the right man for Manchester City at the time." Meanwhile, Ferguson had a

kinder view of the other major managerial appointment this week, which saw Craig Levein take over from George Burley as manager of the Scotland national team.

"If it was going to be a Scotsman, he was the obvious candidate," said Ferguson. "He did a good job with

Dundee United and, hopefully, he does really well. Being Scottish, you want to see our team in the European Championships next time, see them qualify." Senegal's Mame Biram

club after the forward, signed from Norwegian club Molde earlier this year, received his work permit. However, United admit his international clearance will not

come through until after the third round FA Cup tie with Leeds on January 2. "Hopefully, we will get his international clearance by the (Manchester) City (Carling

Cup) semifinal," said Ferguson. "I don't want him to start that game, it will be too early for

him but he has been terrific in training with us."

## FA charges Arsenal, Hull

AFP, London

Arsenal and Hull City have been charged with failing to control their players by the Football Association (FA) here on Wednesday following their Premier League match on December 19.

A fiery match at the Emirates

Stadium was inflamed further

shortly before half-time when Arsenal's Samir Nasri appeared to tread on the ankle of Hull's Richard Garcia. Stephen Hunt then clashed with Nasri and a mass confrontation ensued, with Gunners

keeper Manuel Almunia running the length of the field to get involved. Referee Steve Bennett eventually restored order and

then booked both Hunt and Nasri. Arsenal won the match 3-0.

The clubs have until January 13 to respond.

## CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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unfairly

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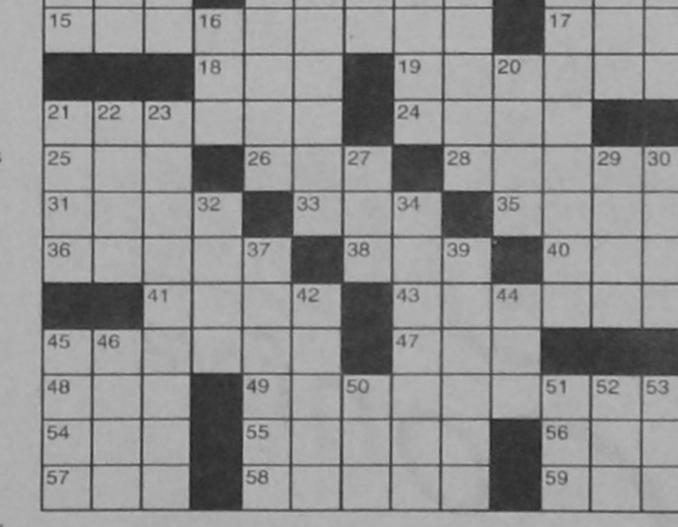
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### Rangers striker Kris Boyd refused to play under Burley after complaining of a lack of Star midfielder Barry Ferguson and goalkeeper Allan McGregor were then banned for life for their behaviour before and during a World Cup qualifier against Iceland The pair were dropped after an all-night drinking session and then made V-signs at photographers from the However, former Dundee United manager Levein paved the way for the trio's return to international duty by saying

Ukraine. "I won't rule out any players," he told reporters at a

Hampden Park news conference here Wednesday. "My job is to try to qualify. I'll be picking the best play-

his paramount concern was to

get Scotland through to the

Euro 2012 finals in Poland and

Earlier Wednesday, a state- really?" ment on the Scottish Football Association (SFA) website confirmed Levein's appointment by saying: "The Scottish FA are delighted to announce

the appointment of Craig Levein as new national life.' told the news conference:

Levein to consider exiles

"I really am thrilled to be

here today. "It's difficult to express just how proud I feel being a Scotsman and having followed the national team all my

SFA chief executive Gordon Levein, the long-time Smith said: "Craig was the favourite for the Scotland role, unanimous choice of the board and brings a wealth of "Not much of a secret was it, experience as a player

in the table. PHOTO: AFP

Scotland's new coach Craig Levein poses at the Hampden Stadium on Tuesday. Levein succeeds George Burley, who was sacked last month after a 3-0 friendly defeat by Wales.