

## Bridge quits England

AFP, London

Manchester City defender Wayne Bridge has turned his back on England after deciding the fall-out from John Terry's alleged affair with his ex-girlfriend has made his position in the team untenable.

Bridge released a statement through his lawyers on Thursday confirming that he did not wish to be selected for Fabio Capello's squad for this year's World Cup in South Africa because his presence would be potentially "divisive".

The former Chelsea left-back has been considering his international future since reports of Terry's affair with his former partner Vanessa Perroncel, a French underwear model with whom he has a four-year-old child, first came to light.

Terry was stripped of the England captaincy by Capello as a result of the scandal and the Italian had thought Bridge would continue to play for his country.

With first choice left-back Ashley Cole out with an injury, Bridge would have lined up alongside Terry in the England defence in Wednesday's friendly against Egypt at Wembley.



Inter Milan striker Diego Milito (2nd from L) shoots to score the opening goal against Chelsea during their Champions League encounter at San Siro on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Togo 'keeper stuck in SA

AFP, Rennes

Togo goalkeeper Kodjovi Obilale, injured in a rebel attack at the Africa Cup of Nations in Angola, is stuck in South Africa with unpaid medical bills, the president of the player's French club said Thursday.

Separatist rebels in the Angolan enclave of Cabinda fired on the Togo bus on January 8, two days before the tournament started, killing the team's assistant coach and its squad spokesman. Obilale, shot in the back and abdomen, was airlifted to South Africa for treatment the following day.

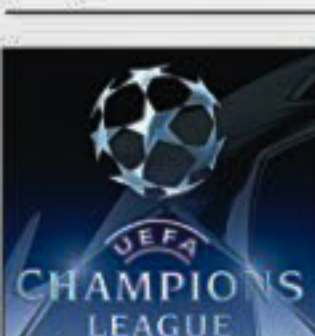
"As the host nation, Angola promised to pick up the bills but nothing has been done," said Philippe Le Mestre, president of the French club Pontivy where Obilale plays.

"The player has been given the medical all clear and was supposed to leave on Wednesday but the plane is blocked at the base."

He said Obilale was to be repatriated by special flight organised by SOS International at a cost of 65,000 euros but an official signature from Angola needed to secure approval for the flight had not been forthcoming.

## Jose draws first blood

AFP, Milan



Jose Mourinho got one over his former employers as Inter Milan beat Chelsea 2-1 in the Champions League last 16, first leg clash at the San Siro here on Wednesday.

It's a slender advantage but a crucial one for Inter ahead of the second leg at Stamford Bridge on March 16th and also represented a milestone as it was the first victory for the Italians against an English team since 2003 and a 3-0 win over Arsenal in London.

For Chelsea coach Carlo Ancelotti it was an unhappy return to the stadium where he served AC Milan for eight years with such distinction, winning two Champions League titles and one scudetto.

Mourinho did not gloat over taking a slender advantage to London in three weeks time.

"Of course I am happy inside," said the Portuguese.

"Because as a professional I want to win and as a professional I want to win more trophies than anyone else."

"There were no surprises from us tonight (Wednesday) and Chelsea didn't have any either."

"We are evenly matched sides. Chelsea are not better than us, they have different qualities just as we do."

Inter were off to a flying start and went ahead after just three minutes following some shoddy defending by Chelsea, as Thiago Motta played the ball into Samuel Eto'o who fed it on to Diego Milito, the Argentine cutting too easily inside the wrong-footed John Terry and shooting home at Peter Cech's near post.

Chelsea midfielder Frank Lampard, who was returning after missing last weekend's match because of a virus, said that the early goal conceded to the Italians had knocked the stuffing out of them.

"I felt overall we were the stronger team but them getting the early goal made it more difficult for us," said Lampard.

"But going back to Stamford Bridge at 2-1 makes it fairly even but obviously we have got to win the match itself."

It was just the dream start Inter would have wanted but Chelsea's reaction was awe-inspiring as the visitors took total control.

Their first chance came on 11 minutes as Nicolas Anelka shot wide of the near post before a minute later Salomon Kalou twisted and turned on the edge of the box but shot straight at Julio Cesar.

Then up stepped Didier Drogba on the quarter-hour mark to crash a free-kick from 25 yards against the cross-bar and follow that up with a fine effort that forced Cesar into a sprawling save.

Cesar then had to parry from Michael Ballack and Drogba hooked a volley wide after controlling the ball on his chest in

the box and then sent another volley wide when fed by John Obi Mikel.

The half ended in controversial fashion as Samuel appeared to trip Kalou in the box referee Manuel Gonzalez waved away Chelsea appeals.

Chelsea got what their play deserved just six minutes after the restart but from some poor Inter defending.

Motta let Branislav Ivanovic run forward from right back to the edge of the Inter area without a challenge before the Serbian cut across the box and tapped the ball out to Kalou, whose nonchalant side foot from 20 yards somehow found its way through a crowd of defenders and past Cesar, who possibly should have done better.

And yet four minutes later Inter were back in front as Esteban Cambiasso's wild shot from distance, which was going wide, struck Ivanovic in the midriff and came back to the Argentine whose second effort deceived Cech and found the far corner.

Mourinho then made the surprising move of bringing on striker Mario Balotelli for Motta while Cech suffered a serious knee injury and was replaced by Henrique Hilario.

On 65 minutes great play between Drogba and Anelka teed up Lampard but Cesar parried his close range effort.

Chelsea dominated the ball but created little in the way of clear cut chances in the final stages and it is advantage Inter and Mourinho.

## Mutu will be cleared: lawyer

AFP, Rome

Romania captain Adrian Mutu's lawyer believes the Fiorentina player will be cleared of doping when he faces trial next week after twice testing positive for a banned substance.

The 31-year-old's tests on January 10 and 20 showed the presence of the appetite suppressant sibutramine and he has been suspended ever since the results were made public.

Mutu tested positive after scoring in his side's 2-1 home win over Bari in the league on January 10 and also tested positive for the same substance 10 days later, following Fiorentina's 3-2 Italian Cup win over Lazio, in which he scored a brace.

It is not the first time the forward has tested positive for a banned substance having taken cocaine during his spell at Chelsea, which then saw him fired by the club.

"We're optimistic. With regards good faith we want to show that the substance wasn't taken to enhance performance and that the player didn't know that the product he took contained a banned substance," said his lawyer Antonio D'Avirro.

"Plus from the studies conducted by some experts it has emerged that the amount of sibutramine in the product he used was minimal."

Mutu, who has 29 goals in 69 appearances for Romania, risks a lengthy ban if he is found guilty of doping as it would be his second offence and at his age, that could spell the end of his career.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport last year upheld the 17.17-million-euro fine handed to Mutu by FIFA as a punishment for breaching his contract with Chelsea.

## Anderson out for 6 months

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United midfielder Anderson has lost any chance of playing for Brazil at the World Cup after being ruled out of action for six months with a serious knee injury.

United boss Sir Alex Ferguson confirmed on Thursday that Anderson ruptured a cruciate ligament in the Premier League champions' win over West Ham on Tuesday.

"It is a bad blow for the boy and a bad blow for us," Ferguson said.

Anderson had been hoping to make a big impact for United over the final three months of the season as he tried to secure a place in Brazil's World Cup squad.

But the 21-year-old suffered the injury just 19 minutes into his first appearance for over a month against West Ham at Old Trafford on Tuesday.

Recent reports claimed Anderson, who has started only 37 league games for United, had spoken to Ferguson about his lack of first-team opportunities since his 2007 move from Portuguese club Porto.

## Stoke stun City

AFP, London



Manchester City's hopes of turning petrodollars into silverware this season were crushed on Wednesday when Stoke ended their interest in the FA Cup with a 3-1 extra-time win in a fifth round replay.

City remain in the hunt for a place in next season's Champions League. But any prospect of winning something in their first campaign under Abu Dhabi ownership disappeared at the Britannia Stadium with a defeat that will pile the pressure on to increasingly beleaguered City manager Roberto Mancini.

Goals from Ryan Shawcross and Tuncay Sanli sealed Stoke's win after Craig Bellamy had forced the tie into extra-time, two minutes after substitute Dave Kitson had given the home side a 79th-minute lead.

City also had Togolese striker Emmanuel Adebayor sent-off three minutes before the final whistle in normal time.

While Stoke can look forward to a quarter-final trip to holders Chelsea, Mancini was left to contemplate what was City's fourth defeat in 15 matches under the Italian's stewardship.

While City suffered a difficult evening, two of their rivals for fourth spot in the Premier League, Tottenham and Aston Villa, kept their Cup hopes alive by easing into the last eight.

Spurs sauntered to a 4-0 win over Bolton while Villa - who are due at Wembley on Sunday to play Manchester United in the League Cup final - beat Crystal Palace 3-1 to set up a

quarterfinal meeting with Reading, who clinched a 3-2 win over West Brom in extra time.

Two late penalties from John Carew sealed Villa's win over Palace. The tie had appeared destined for extra-time after Darren Ambrose had cancelled out Gabby Agbonlahor's first-half opener for Villa with a 73rd-minute spot-kick.

But Villa went through after Carew was twice brought down by Matt Lawrence in the final nine minutes.

On both occasions, the giant Norwegian striker got up to take the penalties himself and he twice left the otherwise impressive Julian Speroni with no chance.

Agbonlahor had given Villa a deserved lead when he headed in Ashley Young's corner, three minutes before the end of an opening period which had seen Speroni make several fine saves.

Palace got back on equal terms in the 73rd minute after England hopeful Stephen Warnock was adjudged to have brought down Alan Lee.

Ambrose sent Brad Guzan the wrong way from the penalty spot but Villa's late pressure and the Palace defence's problems in containing Carew made the difference.

Russian striker Roman Pavlyuchenko scored his second successive double for Tottenham, whose other goals were provided by own-goals from Bolton goalkeeper Jussi Jaaskelainen and defender Andy O'Brien.

Spurs now face London rivals Fulham at Craven Cottage for a place in the semifinals while Bolton have only a fight for Premier League survival to look forward to.

Reading - who knocked Liverpool out of the competition in the third round - reached the last eight for the first time since 1927 thanks to a Gyfi Sigurdsson winner in the fifth minute of extra time.



Stoke City defender Ryan Shawcross (R) celebrates his goal with teammate Dave Kitson during their FA Cup fifth round replay against Manchester City at the Britannia Stadium on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Pato sends Milan second

AFP, Milan



Brazilian striker Pato scored two minutes into injury time to give AC Milan

a crucial 2-1 victory at Fiorentina which moved them up to second in Serie A.

With nine minutes left in this match, originally scheduled for December but postponed due to bad weather, Milan were a goal down and their title hopes were hanging by a thread.

But substitute Klaas-Jan Huntelaar equalised Alberto Gilardino's first half opener and then Pato scored the goal that moves Milan a point above AS Roma and just four behind leaders Inter Milan.

For a team who knew they could go second it was no surprise to see Milan come out on the attack.

In just the second minute Andrea Pirlo tried his luck from distance and it needed a combination of Fiorentina goalkeeper Sebastien Frey and captain Riccardo Montolivo to clear the hosts' lines.

But La Viola soon wrested control of the game from their visitors and Peru international Juan Vargas lashed a shot into the side-netting from a tight angle when released down the left into the box.

And Fiorentina deservedly went in front on 14 minutes after a flowing team move as Montolivo slipped Vargas into a similar position as before only for the Peruvian to pull the ball back for Stevan Jovetic, whose shot bobbed over Gilardino's foot and past a bemused Christian Abbiati in the Milan goal.

The hosts should have had another on 27 minutes but were guilty of overplaying the ball and when Lorenzo De Silvestri pulled the ball back for Gilardino when he should have shot himself, the striker's scuffed effort was cleared.

Milan were holding on but they came back into the game late on in the half and substitute Mathieu Flamini, who had earlier replaced the injured Massimo Ambrosini, shot inches wide from 22 yards.

Milan, and Pato in particular, had a new lease of life after the break and on 51 minutes the young Brazilian cut in from the right and his inswinging left

foot cross almost crept in at the far post.

Pato then fired a cross from the same side to Pirlo at the back post but the midfielder dallied rather than shooting first time and was crowded out.

Moments later Pato again found space in the box but lashed his shot high and wide.

Fiorentina were soon back bossing the game, though, and a tricky run from Marco Marchionni saw him almost tee up substitute Keirison.

But just as La Viola seemed to be in control, substitute forward Huntelaar, who coach Leonardo had brought on for defensive midfielder Gennaro

Gattuso in a bold attacking move, played a one-two with Ronaldinho and then fired a crisp low shot under Frey.

Keirison could have won it for Fiorentina four minutes from time but his shot from five yards as he fell over was blocked by Abbiati, who then made a flying one-handed save from a Vargas thunder-bolt.

But then deep into injury time Ronaldinho crossed from the left and Pato finished clinically to break the hosts' hearts.

In the day's other game Sardinians Cagliari missed the chance to go fourth as they were beaten 2-1 at lowly Udinese.



Milan striker Alexandre Pato (R) scores the winning goal against Fiorentina during their Serie A clash at the Artemio Franchi Stadium on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP