

Argentina toast their 'golden boy'

INTERNET, undated

Argentine media on Monday celebrated the Ballon d'Or that striker Lionel Messi obtained for the second consecutive year.

"You are golden, boy" the sports daily Ole said in a headline.

Messi held off Barcelona team-mates Xavi and Andres Iniesta for the award, which surprised most observers. Ole noted the "national pride" inspired by the small striker's latest prize, though he has so far delivered mostly poor performances in the national team's jersey.

"Surprise: Messi again awarded the Ballon d'Or," the daily La Nacion said in its online edition. "The unexpected happened."

Clarín, Argentina's most popular daily, noted that at age 23, Messi "broke another record."

Argentine-born Alfredo Di Stefano won the Ballon d'Or in 1957 and 1959, though he won it as a Spaniard, while Omar Sivori won it as an Italian in 1961, the daily recalled. Last year, Messi became the first Argentine to win the Ballon d'Or, and now he doubled the stakes by winning back-to-back awards.

Spanish media cry foul

AP, Madrid

The Spanish media lashed out at FIFA President Sepp Blatter on Tuesday after Lionel Messi won the Ballon d'Or ahead of Barcelona teammates Andres Iniesta and Xavi Hernandez, who played for Spain when they won the World Cup.

Spanish daily AS said "Spain is very angry," and Marca has "Two Giants and one Anti-Spaniard" splashed across its front page in reference to Messi, coach of the year Jose Mourinho and Blatter. ABC newspaper wrote: "FIFA scorns the world champions."

Messi won the FIFA award for a second straight year on Monday, the Argentina forward's standout performances for Barcelona outweighing a disappointing World Cup, where Iniesta and Xavi helped lead the European champions to their first world championship.

Iniesta scored the winning goal in July's 1-0 extra-time win against the Netherlands at Soccer City in Johannesburg, South Africa, while Xavi has been labeled the brains behind the team as he orchestrated much of the team's play.

Despite six Spanish players being included in FIFA's 2010 world all-star team, Marca said "without a doubt the biggest loser on this night was Spanish football."

"(Blatter) had the chance to once again show his ill-will toward everything Spanish," Marca wrote. "Only a few days ago he left us without the chance to organize the World Cup by instead opting for Russia and yesterday he left us without a prize that Spanish football deserved."



TEN Cricket

South Africa v India

First ODI

Live from 6:30pm

STAR Cricket

Australia v England

First T20

Live from 3:00pm

ESPN

Sportscentre India

Sports News

Live at 8:30pm

STAR Sports

AFC Asian Cup

Uzbekistan v Kuwait

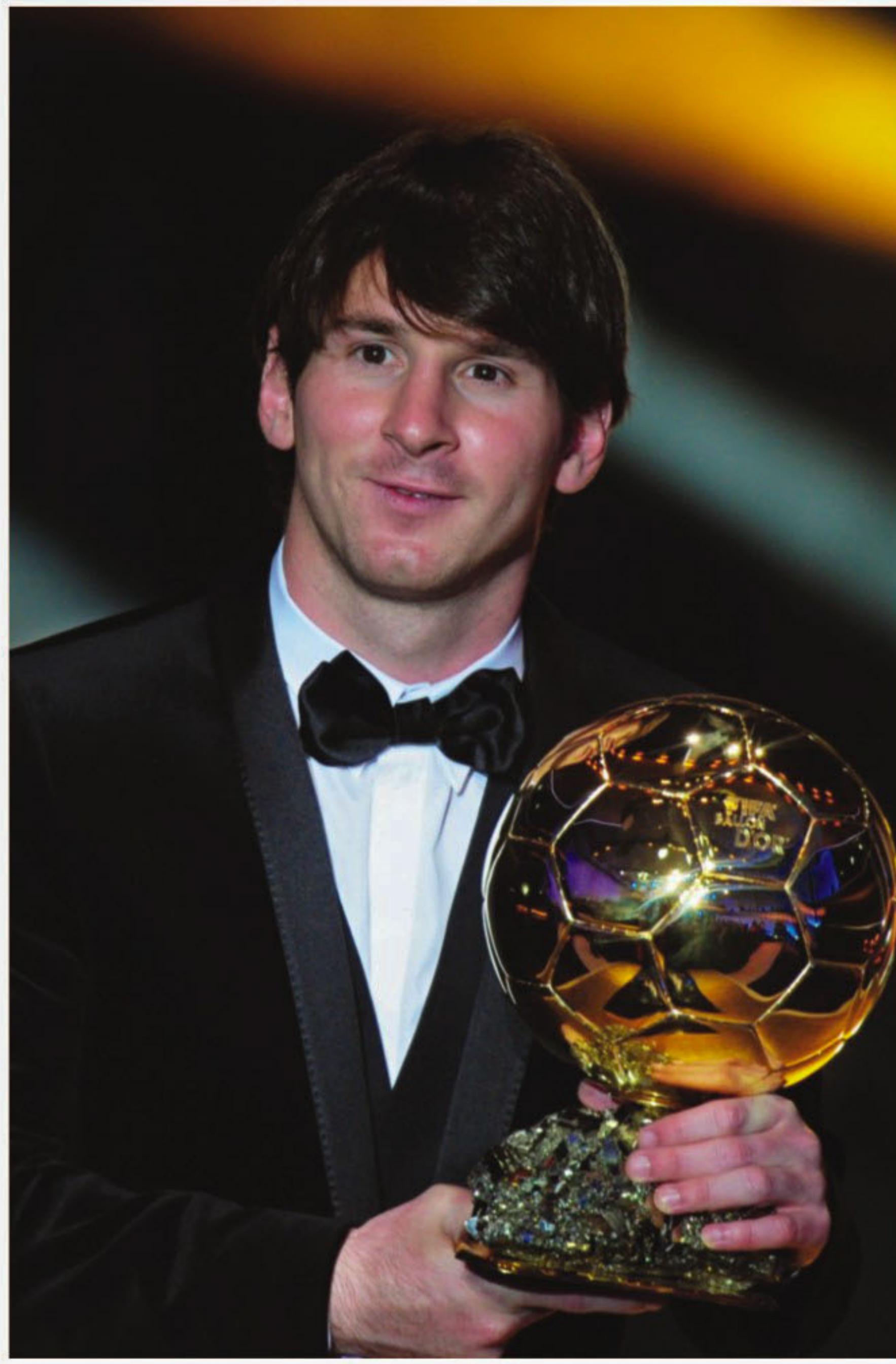
Live from 7:30pm

China v Qatar

Live from 10:30pm

English Premiership

Blackpool v Liverpool



FIFPRO TEAM OF 2010

Goalkeeper:

Iker Casillas (Real and Spain);

Defenders:

Maicon (Inter and Brazil), Gerard Pique (Barcelona and Spain), Lucio (Inter and Brazil), Carles Puyol (Barcelona and Spain);

Midfielders:

Andres Iniesta (Barcelona and Spain), Xavi (Barcelona and Spain), Wesley Sneijder (Inter and Holland);

Forwards:

Cristiano Ronaldo (Real and Portugal), David Villa (Barce-

AWARD ROLL

Men's World Player of the Year: Lionel Messi

Women's World Player of the Year: Marta

Coach of the Year for Men:

Jose Mourinho

Coach of the Year for Women:

Silvia Neid

Puskas Award:

Hamit Altintop

Fair Play Award:

Haiti Under-17 women's team

Presidential Award:

Lionel Messi the 'upset' winner

Mourinho takes coach accolade



AFP, Zurich

Argentinian Lionel Messi won the Ballon D'Or for the second successive year here on Monday beating his more favoured Barcelona teammates Andres Iniesta and Xavi.

The 23-year-old - the first player to win back-to-back awards since Marco van Basten in 1988/89 - had been seen as the outsider after a modest World Cup where he failed to score and Argentina went out in the quarterfinals.

Iniesta and Xavi both had outstanding World Cups with the former scoring the only goal in the 1-0 World Cup final victory over Holland.

Messi won with 22.65 per cent of the votes cast, with Iniesta on 17.36 per cent and Xavi third with 16.48 per cent.

Inter Milan and Dutch playmaker Wesley Sneijder, who was a controversial omission from the short list, came in fourth with 14.48 per cent.

"I was surprised but also happy at the same time," said Messi.

"I am surprised because the prediction was that either Xavi or Iniesta would win.

"I would like to thank those who voted for me but Xavi and Iniesta equally deserved it because they had a great year and a wonderful World Cup."

Messi, who said that winning a World Cup would mean more to him than the Ballon D'Or, admitted that he desperately wanted to improve his record with Argentina, with whom he has never won a title.

"In 2011, I want to win my first title with the national side," he said.

"And as a result I asked Father Christmas to give me the present of the Copa America (which takes place this year in Argentina).

"I am going to do my utmost to win it. It is the gift I want to give to all Argentinians. My compatriots deserve a great year."

FIFA President Sepp Blatter, who along with FIFA has come under fire already for the decision to award Qatar the 2022 World Cup finals, had trumpeted Messi's claims only last week.

"No-one can deny that Lionel Messi is an exceptional player," said the Swiss, who didn't enjoy a great Monday as Guenter Hirsch, a former head of Germany's highest court, resigned from FIFA's Ethics Committee as he questioned the will of football's top

Meanwhile, Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho was named world coach of the year for securing the treble of Champions League, Serie A title and Italian Cup with Inter Milan last season.

The 47-year-old Portuguese - known as the 'Special One' - edged out Spain's World Cup winning coach Vicente Del Bosque and Barcelona's Pep Guardiola, who he is now crossing swords with as Real Madrid boss.

In landing the Champions League with Inter - when they beat Bayern Munich in the final last season - he became only the third coach to win European club football's most presti-



HAMIT ALTINTOP



JOSE MOURINHO

body to uphold its own rulebook.

This latest edition of the Ballon d'Or saw major changes to the way the title is nominated.

Set up in 1956 by France Football magazine the Ballon d'Or merged with FIFA's world player of the year award for the first time.

The voting committee, up to now made up of only journalists, now includes all the managers and captains of the 208 national sides affiliated to FIFA.

gious trophy with two different clubs having first landed it with Porto in 2004. Mourinho, never one to hide his high opinion of himself had in typically punchy fashion insisted last month that he and not Del Bosque was truly deserving of the honour.

"Me, I've made my choice. 11 months work, 57 matches played, three titles including the most important of all, 'THE' tournament, the Champions League. I have won everything. I could not do any more than that, equally so for the players."

Juve fissures run deep

INTERNET, undated



After a stuttering start to the season followed by a decent run that lifted them to the upper tiers of the Serie A, Juventus are in a crisis that threatens to compromise the remainder of their season.

Leaders AC Milan managed only one point from their last two outings, but Juve failed to capitalise, suffering two heavy defeats that ended a run of 13 unbeaten games.

A 4-1 home defeat against Chievo after a two-week winter break and a 3-0 loss at Napoli on Sunday dropped the Bianconeri 11 points from the top at the halfway mark of the season (19 matches).

To make the start of 2011 a true nightmare for Juve fans, Fabio Quagliarella, the team's most

prolific striker with nine goals to his name, ruptured a tendon in his knee against Chievo and is out for the season.

In addition, Brazil midfielder Felipe Melo earned himself a three-game ban for kicking a Chievo opponent.

Director general Giuseppe Marotta, a new arrival from Sampdoria along with coach Luigi Delneri in July, tried to blend discipline with confidence as he suggested that "it is better to stay silent, work and look ahead with optimism because anything can happen in the future."

Marotta recalled how Roma last year lagged 13 points behind champions Inter Milan after 19 games but eventually were in the title race until the final match.

Coach Delneri, who on Monday had to swallow the death of his brother to his professional

troubles, has often repeated that his team is a work in progress.

"It is a season in which you must consider the changes, the (young) age of players, beside (veteran newcomer Luca) Toni and the (club's) finances (with possible income lost from elimination in the Europa League)," Delneri said.

For fans used to frequent success - Juve are Italy's most decorated club with 27 Serie A titles - bad periods are, however, hard to swallow.

International defender Giorgio Chiellini displayed confidence after the team's debacle in Naples, saying he feels "certain that it will not end as last year. There are no analogies."

Chiellini is likely to be right that Juve will not finish seventh with 15 defeats conceded as in 2010, but winning the title still looks like a dream for the fans.

Kuyt has faith in Dalglish



Football

AFP, Liverpool

Dirk Kuyt is sure Kenny Dalglish can turn around Liverpool's fortunes as the Scot prepares to take charge of his first Premier League game at Blackpool.

Dalglish has replaced Roy Hodgson, sacked by Liverpool on Saturday, and endured a 1-0 FA Cup defeat at bitter rivals Manchester United in his first game back at the helm 24 hours later.

Liverpool were much-improved despite slipping to a defeat at Old Trafford that saw captain Steven Gerrard sent-off on Sunday.

But Dalglish's main task is to improve the club's woeful position in the Premier League. They currently sit just four points above the relegation zone and have won just one away match all season.

Dutch winger Kuyt said he was disappointed to see Hodgson leave after just six months in the job.

But he is confident Dalglish can have a galvanising effect on the Liverpool squad and help drag them back into the top half of the table.

"It is very sad that Roy has gone because you can never just blame one man," said Kuyt. "We must all take the blame and perform better."

"It's disappointing to lose a manager like that but a very big plus that we can bring in someone like Kenny. He is a very experienced man and someone who can have a positive impact on the squad."

"The most important thing is to make Liverpool a winning team again."

"Kenny Dalglish is a legend and a very important man for this club."



English star David Beckham trains with Tottenham at the Spurs Lodge complex on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

IN brief

Hercules thrash Atletico

INTERNET, undated

A first-half blitz saw Hercules hand out a 4-1 La Liga thrashing to an abject Atletico Madrid side in Alicante.

Promoted side Hercules, who dealt a shock defeat to Barcelona earlier in the season, totally overran their guests in the opening 45 minutes, exploiting dreadful marking and positional play as Tote, Nelson Valdez, Olivier Thomert and David Trezeguet put them 4-0 up at the break.

Atletico were fractionally the better side in the second half and scored a late consolation when Jose Antonio Reyes pounced on an error from substitute Rufete, but it was a match long-lost by the Champions League hopefuls.

The defeat leaves Quique Sanchez Flores's side seven points off the top four, while Hercules - missing Royston Drenthe, who was disciplined after refusing to train when his wages were not paid - rise to 11th.

Flamengo snap up Ronaldinho

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

AC Milan's out of favour Brazilian star Ronaldinho is to sign for Rio giants Flamengo, after days of negotiations in his native Brazil, the football icon confirmed on his website Monday.

The 30-year-old Ronaldinho -- part of the Brazil side that won the 2002 World Cup -- said he would sign a three-and-a-half year contract with a monthly salary of nearly 900,000 dollars.

Twice named world player of the year, Ronaldinho made it known that he wanted to return to his homeland with hopes of playing for a local side and regaining his place in the national squad for the 2014 World Cup which Brazil are hosting.

Lampard's grim prospect

AFP, London

Chelsea star Frank Lampard has said that he faces the prospect of never being fully fit again for the rest of his career.

The England midfielder was sidelined by a hernia and groin problem for four months late last year and has only just returned to action.

The injury was far worse than at first thought and he is still in some discomfort.

"I've got to try to keep it strong because I've got a weakness there," Lampard said.