AROUND THE WORLD

PAUL GASCOIGNE WAS ALL SMILES FOLLOWING HIS FREE
TRANSFER FROM MIDDLESBROUGH TO EVERTON

ENGLAND • Gazza surfaces at Everton
Former England talisman Paul Gascoigne received
another lease on life when he joined Everton on a free
transfer from Middlesbrough on July 17.
The controversial, oft-injured midfielder is reunited with
Everton manager Walter Smith, who first signed Gascoigne
five years ago while in charge of Scotland’s Rangers.
Gascoigne, 33, whose career has faded amid injury and
troubles with alcohol, was released by Middlesbrough al¬
though a year remained on his contract.
“l can’t afford to let anyone down because I realize it’s a
big gamble by the club, and by Walter in particular, to bring
me here,” said Gascoigne, who played only eight Premier
League games last season before breaking an arm in Febr¬
uary. “It’s up to me now to show I can still do it.”
He dismissed questions about his fitness and commit¬
ment, saying he was “only 33 now and I know I am still an
intelligent footballer. As long as I stay fit and injury-free, I
don’t see any reason why I can’t carry on at the top.”
Everton hopes Gascoigne’s arrival will bolster its
midfield, which has been depleted by the departures of
Nick Barmby to Liverpool, John Collins to Fulham and Don
Hutchison to Sunderland.
Gascoigne, who has played 57 times for England but
not since before the 1998 World Cup, also said he’s hop¬
ing to resume his international career.
“I am out to prove everyone wrong” he said.

ITALY • Fiorentina nabs Nuno Gomes
Fiorentina swooped in to purchase Portuguese
striker Nuno Gomes from Benfica, filling a hole opened
when Gabriel Batistuta departed for Roma.
The Florence-based club also made it clear that goal¬
keeper Francesco Toldo, the hero of Italy’s run to the Euro
2000 final, wasn’t for sale — at any price.
Nuno Gomes, 24, impressed during Euro 2000 but
picked up an eight-month international and UEFA ban,
which has been appealed, for excessive protests after an
overtime penalty decision enabled France to beat Portu¬
gal in the semifinals.
Sources close to Benfica pegged the transfer fee at $19
million.
Fiorentina earlier re-signed Toldo, 28, and Portuguese
midfielder Rui Costa, 28, and it also added former Brazilian
youth international Leandro Amaral, 23, who’s moving
from Brazilian club Portuguesa after a planned transfer to
FC Porto broke down.
Chairman Vittorio Cecchi Gori said that Fiorentina last
spring turned down a $75 million offer for Toldo, but he
decided to identify the big-spending club.
“I’m holding onto him. He’s unique,” Cecchi Gori said.
“You can’t put a price on that sort of talent.”

NETHERLANDS • Gov’t halts Kezman fee
The Dutch government has forbidden PSV
Eindhoven to pay a $14.7 million transfer fee, for the
acquisition of 21-year-old striker Mateja Kezman, di¬
rectly to Partizan Belgrade because of international
sanctions against Yugoslavia.
The Dutch Finance Ministry said the fee could be put
into an escrow account that Partizan could access after
sanctions are lifted.
“This is entirely new for us,” said PSV director Peter Fossen.
“I will ask the KNVB [Dutch federation] to clear it up.”
Kezman, who signed a five-year pact reportedly worth
$4.7 million, was red-carded for a wild tackle 44 seconds
after coming on as a substitute during Yugoslavia’s 1-0
Euro 2000 victory over Norway.
AROUND THE WORLD

SPAIN • Religious Roa returns
A year after he gave up soccer because it clashed with his religion, Argentine goalkeeper Carlos Roa returned to Real Mallorca to resume his career.

Roa, Argentina’s goalkeeper at the 1998 World Cup and the top Spanish netminder during the 1998-99 season, is a Seventh-day Adventist who cannot play or train on Saturdays before sunset.

"There will be no problem," he said. "Here they understand me, and that is very pleasing because I can work with total peace of mind, but I won't train or play during the day [on Saturdays]."

Most Spanish League games are played on Sundays.

BRAZIL • Grandpa Rai retires
Former Brazil international Rai, who followed in his older brother Socrates’ footsteps by captaining the national team, says he will retire following a domestic tournament in late July.

The Sao Paulo midfielder, a grandfather at 35, was one of Brazil’s most elegant players and won 48 caps. His only World Cup, in 1994, was a disappointment; he struggled with the team’s tactics and progressed during the tournament from starting captain to the bench.

His last international appearance was a friendly against Argentina two years ago.

"I have to find other challenges, other personal and professional projects," said Rai, who returned to Sao Paulo two years ago after six seasons with Paris St. Germain. "I think this is the right moment."

Rai’s ‘94 coach, Carlos Alberto Parreira, has a new job. He signed on to coach Atletico Mineiro, his first post since parting company with Fluminense last season.

NIGERIA • Berger wins title at end
Ambrose Duru’s goal deep into stoppage time gave Julius Berger FC the Nigerian Super League title July 16 with a 1-0 triumph over Katsina United, which needed only a tie to triumph.

Katsina, which also had lost Challenge Cup finals in 1995, ‘96 and ‘97, lost on a 32-yard lob after starting goalkeeper Andrew Aikhomoghe departed with an injury. Aikhomoghe halted several superb Berger chances.

Berger, based in Lagos, won $20,000 and a berth in next year’s African Champions’ League competition. The club, twice champions in 10 years, failed to attract neutral Lagos fans, who preferred Plateau United’s more beautiful but less successful soccer.

Defending champion Lobi Stars finished third.

SOUTH AFRICA • McCarthy: Out of Africa
Bafana Bafana striker Benni McCarthy, devastated by the deaths of 13 spectators at South Africa’s aborted World Cup qualifier in Zimbabwe, told Spanish sports daily AS that he will never again play for his country in Africa.

"I’m lucky to be alive," the Celta Vigo player said upon his return to Spain. "It was the most shocking experience of my life."

The fans died in a stampede after police fired tear gas to quell crowd trouble late in the July 9 match in Harare. The game was abandoned after 82 minutes with South Africa leading, 2-0.

"I know this isn’t the first time events like this have happened in Africa," McCarthy said. "When a team isn’t winning, the fans start fighting. This now seems to have become standard behavior… The only thing I’m totally sure of is that I’m not going to play another game with [South Africa] in Africa."