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Sports World

With **LAKIS KONISTIS**

USA CLIMBS TO 21ST

The United States climbed seven spots to 21st in the October FIFA rankings.

The ranking announced Wednesday is the highest since June for the Americans, who had dropped to 31st in August, matching their low since 1997.

European champion Spain remained No. 1, followed by Italy and Germany. Brazil is South America's best, advancing two spots to fourth. The Netherlands (5th) and Croatia (6th) dropped a place each and Argentina remains 7th.

In the one change to the Top 10, Russia has moved up to 9th at the expense of fellow Euro 2008 semifinalist Turkey, which dropped three places (13th).

Cameroon (12th) continues to rise as the leading African nation.

Japan (32nd) leads the Asian Confederation.

The Scots took the biggest drop among the leading nations, down 10 places to 26th.

AUSSIE QUALIFIERS

Australia will play two critical matches in round 4 of the 2010 FIFA World Cup Qualifiers in Sydney.

Australia will meet Uzbekistan on 1st April 2009 and Bahrain on 10th June 2009 in two of their four home qualifying matches in round 4.

"Round 4 is well and truly the business end of qualifying for the 2010 FIFA World Cup, and these two home matches are vital to our chances," said Football Federation Australia (FFA) CEO, Ben Buckley.

"Everyone remembers how good it felt to be part of the 2006 World Cup, and we all want to be there again in 2010."

In the meantime, NSW Premier Nathan Rees, said he was looking forward to having the Qantas Socceroos back in Sydney. "It's great to welcome the Socceroos back to their spiritual home, Sydney, for these two crucial 2010 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifiers.

"It will be the first time we have seen Uzbekistan in Australia and the Bahrain game could well be the decisive match in the Socceroos qualifying schedule. If the Socceroos end up in sudden death play-offs after this round is complete in June, like the unforgettable Uruguay qualifier in 2005, Sydney will also play host to those matches."

Premier Rees urged football fans to get behind the Socceroos for these two crucial qualifiers for the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

"The NSW Government and Events NSW have forged a strong relationship with Football Federation Australia and I'm sure that the people of Sydney will once again head out in droves to support our Socceroos."

Australia's schedule for round 4 of the 2010 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifiers involves:

- 19 November 2008, Bahrain v Australia, Bahrain

- 11 February 2009, Japan v Australia, Tokyo
- 1 April 2009, Australia v Uzbekistan, Sydney
- 6 June 2009, Qatar v Australia, Doha
- 10 June 2009, Australia v Bahrain, Sydney
- 17 June 2009, Australia v Japan, Melbourne

Australia needs to finish in the top two of its group to qualify for the 2010 FIFA World Cup at the end of this round.

FOOTBALL TRIVIA...

Football facts, figures and trivia for you all as we head into Round 8 for UNICEF of Hyundai A-League 2008-09.

It's Universal Children's Day on 22nd October, so this round has been dedicated to raising awareness and funds for our partner, UNICEF, to support children in Australia and south-East Asia

FFA is encouraging football fans to donate to UNICEF Australia by visiting www.unicef.org.au. Funds raised will support UNICEF programs for vulnerable children.

800 goals, 300 matches in 3 years!

Yes, the third goal scored this weekend will be the Hyundai A-League's 800th goal of all time. Just who will score it?

And the Newcastle Jets v Melbourne Victory game this Saturday, will be the Hyundai A-League's 300th match. 4 million spectators last round; 300 matches this round!

UEFA's DEBT CONCERN

UEFA officials have suggested that clubs with excessive debt could be excluded from the Champions League and UEFA.

David Taylor, the General secretary of European football's governing body, told a conference in London that the organisation would next week begin discussions on possible changes to the way clubs are licensed with a view to introducing stricter guidelines on how they run their finances.

In comments that reflect concern about English clubs' current domination of European competitions and a perception that their higher debt levels are creating an uneven playing field, Taylor said: "We cannot let things stay as they are."

The Scot went on to stress that exclusion would only ever be introduced as a last resort, but made it clear that UEFA's leadership intends to push ahead with moves which could have repercussions for the likes of Manchester United, Liverpool and Chelsea.

"There would be forms of communication, even warnings, even reprimands before one would ever get to a situation of exclusion but it's absolutely possible," Taylor said. "That is the ultimate sanction."

The global credit crunch and its fallout have created specific problems for individual clubs: Liverpool have put plans for a new stadium on hold while West Ham's spending will be curtailed after the club's owner Bjorgolfur Gudmundsson lost money in the collapse of Landsbanki, Iceland's second largest bank.

Overall however, English clubs are seen as well-placed to weather an economic downturn because of the relative reliability of their revenues.

Television rights, which account for the bulk of clubs' income, are guaranteed for this season and next while the inherent loyalty of fans makes a sharp downturn in ticket sales appear unlikely.

SHARKS CEO DEPARTS...

And finally, closer to home, Sutherland Sharks General Manager Bruce Spiteri has resigned from his position.

In a letter sent to Football NSW Bruce Spiteri says, "I wish to advise that I will no longer be the General Manager of Sutherland Sharks FC..... I am sorry to be leaving but am proud of my involvement and improvement of the club since I took on this position. Through the good work and commitment of the whole committee the club has gone from being 6th in the Super League to be Premier of the NSW Premier League in four years".

Something which Bruce and the committee can be extremely proud of.

Οι αγώνες του τριήμερου



A-ΛΙΓΚ - 8η αγωνιστική

Κούνισλαντ Ρόαφ-Αντελάιντ Γιουνάιτεντ
Σήμερα, 19:30, Suncorp Stadium

Νιούκαστλ Τζετς-Μέλμπουρν Βίκτορι
Αύριο, 19:00, EnergyAustralia Stadium

Περθ Γκλόρι-Σίδνεϊ FC
Κυριακή 19 Οκτωβρίου, 14:00,
Members Equity Stadium

Σέντραλ Κοστ Μάρινερς-Ουέλινγκτον Φοίνιξ
Κυριακή 19 Οκτωβρίου, 15:00,
Bluetongue Stadium



ΓΙΟΥΘ ΛΙΓΚ - 3η αγωνιστική

Κούνισλαντ Ρόαφ-Αντελάιντ Γιουνάιτεντ
Σήμερα, 16:45, Suncorp Stadium

Νιούκαστλ Τζετς-Μέλμπουρν Βίκτορι
Αύριο, 16:15, EnergyAustralia Stadium

Περθ Γκλόρι-Σίδνεϊ FC
Κυριακή 19 Οκτωβρίου, 11:15,
Members Equity Stadium

Ρεπό: Αντελάιντ Γιουνάιτεντ