

SPORT with Chris de Kretser and Daryl Timms

CONFIDENTIAL

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Curse swooshes stars

WHAT do Argentina and superstar Lionel Messi have going for their chances of winning the World Cup?

They are not cursed by the Nike commercial *Write The Future*, which has now gone viral on YouTube.

Almost every soccer idol featured in the campaign has fallen from grace in South Africa as their nations bombed out of the competition.

The fallen stars include Cristiano Ronaldo (Portugal), Fabio Cannavaro (Italy), Didier Drogba (Ivory Coast), Wayne Rooney (England), Franck Ribery (France) and Landon Donovan (US).

Only the Spanish trio featured in the campaign, Cesc Fábregas, Andrés Iniesta and Gerard Pique, remain, but none has reached great heights in the tournament so far.

And despite being the pre-cup favourite, Spain struggled

to advance to the quarter-finals.

Then there's World Cup king Brazil, which is represented in the campaign by Ronaldinho. The wizard of past cups didn't even make his country's squad.

It all adds up to another advertising curse.

The Nike campaign follows last year's Gillette Curse — and who could forget the calamities that befell the shaving razor stars?

They included Tiger Woods, Thierry Henry and our own Michael Clarke... and even the usually unbeatable Roger Federer is still showing some after-effects of that curse.

So if you believe in the hand of fate, get on the "Hand of God", Argentina's coach Diego Maradona, and his boys.

Or jump on board Germany or the Netherlands, because their stars don't feature in the campaign either.

Go to heraldsun.com.au to see the Nike ad.



Cursed: Cristiano Ronaldo



Sunny outlook in many areas but depression over Heathrow as shower drifts in from South Africa

Stormy: The Sun

All gloom in Sun

THE Sun is noted for showing its disdain towards England's woeful soccer performances on the world stage and its front page on Tuesday was typical.

Accompanied by a weather map, *The Sun's* headline read: "Sunny outlook in many areas but depression over Heathrow as shower drifts in from South Africa".

The accompanying report said a shameful shower was forecast to hit balmy Britain that morning — England's humiliated World Cup team.

"As most of the UK basked in sunshine, Fabio Capello's football flops were due a frosty reception at Heathrow at 6am from fans depressed over their South African exit," *The Sun* declared.

Pies by the book

THE coaching deal involving Mick Malthouse and Nathan Buckley as well as the suspensions of Heath Shaw and Alan Didak rank among the biggest news stories in Collingwood's history, according to a new book.

The updated version of the *Official Collingwood Illustrated Encyclopedia* (\$59.95), to be launched today by stars Dale Thomas and Steele Sidebottom, claims they are the biggest stories involving the famous club in the 2000s.

Thomas and Sidebottom will be at Angus and Robertson, Bourke St, today from 12.30pm to launch and sign copies of the book, written by Michael Roberts and the *Sunday Herald Sun's* Glenn McFarlane.

Back to school

FORMER Hawthorn star Ben Dixon had to harden up when he went to Assumption College at Kilmore.

Dixon, who runs The Ultimate Goal, is now taking the lessons he learnt from school and league football back to his old college, where he will simulate an AFL draft camp next week.

The 12-to-17-year-olds attending will get specialised tuition from current and former players, including Shane Crawford and Robert Campbell.

"There will be many activities, including fitness testing and leadership programs and there will also be analysis, so when the kids go away they know where they have to improve," Dixon said.

"It will be the same as an AFL draft camp.

"We will be getting a lot of kids before they get to any pathway and it gives us the chance to mould them and help them improve on things, such as kicking, before they get there."

Fitness experts, club recruiters, a nutritionist and player agents will also talk at the camp, the first run by The Ultimate Goal.

There are two packages, which start at \$499 for the skills coaching, fitness work, leadership testing, meals, two nights' accommodation and a pair of football boots valued at \$249. For more details go to theultimategoal.com.au.



Pictures: GETTY IMAGES

Now that's a doubles act

THEY are the best looking tennis veterans in the business.

Anna Kournikova and Martina Hingis (pictured) were back on court at Wimbledon yesterday playing in the veterans' doubles at age 29.

And they caused as big a stir as when they first wooed the crowds as teen prodigies.

The legs were lithe and the figures still impressive as the pair, who once called themselves the Spice Girls of tennis, showed they could still cause a stampede

among the adoring snaparazzi.

Only the fans were a little less kind with catcalls of "C'mon grannies" greeting them as they took the court.

But the former darlings of the game, who both burst on to the scene aged 14 and retired at 22, still had form.

They beat British pair Sam Smith, 38, and Anne Hobbs, 50, in straight sets, 6-2 6-4.

And Kournikova showered Hingis with kisses to celebrate the triumph.



Pagan returns to coaching

THE famous "Pagan's Paddock" has been replaced with housing blocks and other forms of real estate.

Former North Melbourne coach Denis Pagan no longer has to worry about the pressures of football.

He and son Ryan, who played three games for the Kangaroos in 2000, are in the real estate business after buying Stockdale and Leggo's Essendon office.

But they weren't selling real estate on Tuesday, instead selling footy to primary school students at Stockdale and Leggo's annual football clinic at Windy Hill.

Pagan was assisted by two of his former players, Daniel Pratt and Drew Petrie, who took the youngsters through their paces in chilly conditions.

North's Matt Campbell and Essendon's Mark McVeigh, Brent



Clinic: (from left) Drew Petrie, Denis Pagan, Matt Campbell and Daniel Pratt at Windy Hill.

Prismall and Ricky Dyson were also on hand, Pagan said he wanted to do something for the local kids.

Horsepower lets Danny down

IT'S been a big couple of days for top jockey Danny Nikolic.

After being cleared by the Racing Appeals and Disciplinary Board on Tuesday of four potentially career-ending charges, Nikolic was travelling to Geelong for yesterday's race meeting when his new BMW X5 suffered engine failure.

Stranded on the side of the road at Werribee and starting to feel like the local ducks, Nikolic scanned his *Herald Sun* formguide to see which of his colleagues might be en route to the racetrack. He contacted fellow jockey Ben Melham, who happened to be 20 minutes behind him and answered the SOS.

With time running out, Melham piloted Nikolic to the track just in time for him to ride Screen in the opening race.

The Lonhro filly missed the start, but motored home to win. She paid \$4.90.

And speaking of prestigious cars, Aquanita trainer Robert Smerdon was



Nice bonus: John Green presents Robert Smerdon with his car.

this week presented with the keys to a Mercedes by Warrnambool Racing Club boss John Green.

Smerdon trained seven winners at the Warrnambool carnival in May to become the first trainer to receive the coveted trainer's bonus, this year a Mercedes-Benz ML300 CDI, courtesy of local dealer Callaghan Motors.