



England's out-of-form striker answers questions from the press following a training session in Buhlteral on Sunday.

PHOTO AFP

Rebrov wants Sheva reunion

AP, Potsdam

Sergiy Rebrov thinks if he's reunited with Andriy Shevchenko up front, Ukraine has a good chance of salvaging some pride following its embarrassing 4-0 loss to Spain in its World Cup debut.

"I understand Andriy very much," Rebrov said Saturday. "When I played with Dynamo Kyiv with him, I got to know him well. He is the player I understand the best of my life."

"For me to play with him now it's nice because I know, as soon as he goes forward I give him the ball - I think we can do very good against Saudi Arabia if we are playing together."

Ukraine plays Saudi Arabia in a must-win Group H match on Monday, and Rebrov is hopeful of getting a recall to the starting 11. Ukraine needs the win to have any chance of making the second round.

Spearheading the attack, Rebrov and Shevchenko formed a dangerous duo at Ukraine's most prestigious club in the late 1990s.

In 1999, the pair led Dynamo to the Champions League semifinal before being eliminated by Bayern Munich.

"We could well have won the Champions League and everyone was afraid of us," recalls Rebrov.

Rebrov, one of the Europe's most highly rated strikers while with Dynamo, saw his partnership with Shevchenko dissolve when "Sheva" joined AC Milan in the summer of 1999. Rebrov opted to play at home another season.

Even without his accomplice, Rebrov continued to shine both at home and in Europe and the following year several of Europe's top clubs were clamouring to sign him. He signed for the English club Tottenham Hotspur.

Rebrov sank into anonymity after that, with disappointing stints at Tottenham and West Ham. But he has since reclaimed his stature, blossoming again since returning to Dynamo, the club closest to his heart.

Ukraine coach Oleh Blokhin did not start Rebrov against Spain, but put him in after defender Vladyslav Vashchuk was sent off and Ukraine was already down 3-0 against Spain.

His intuitive combination with Shevchenko could accomplish little at that point.

"I came on the pitch after 3-0 and we were playing with 10 players. It was difficult to try and change the game," Rebrov said. "I tried to do my best. I could score first goal but even if I score, it's very difficult to play against that kind of team, and with 10 players."

Saudis want

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Paqueta also denied reports in some media that he had called Ukraine a "weak" team at a news conference after the Spain loss.

"Who? Weak? Ukraine? No!" Paqueta said in English when asked about the reported comments. "I did not say that! I did not say that! That's not true...It's crazy. It's wrong."

He added: "I said it was a 'unique' game, a difficult game for Ukraine because they were down two goals after 15 minutes."

Owen unfazed by 'goal-drought'



AFP, Buhlteral

A defiant Michael Owen dismissed fears over his World Cup form here Sunday and insisted he could still make a major impact for England at the tournament.

The Newcastle United striker has been substituted after less than an hour in England's two opening Group B victories and has looked short of match sharpness after missing most of last season through injury.

Owen's failure to find the target has led to speculation that his place in England's starting line-up could be under threat for the first time in five years under coach Sven-Goran Eriksson.

Eriksson however has indicated that Owen will start in England's final group game against Sweden

on Tuesday -- and the former Real Madrid striker is determined to repay his coach's faith in him.

"I've been out for a large part of the season and it's inevitable that I'm not going to be absolutely on top of my game straight away," Owen said after an England training session here Sunday.

"I feel I'm playing all right and coming into a little bit of form. I feel good in training. It's not a confidence thing as I've got the belief about me as I've done it before."

"I don't feel as if I'm playing poorly, tripping over the ball every time I get it or giving the ball away or anything like that. I just haven't scored."

"In two games, I've played 55 minutes and not scored, it's not the end of the world. I've been in this situation before."

Owen, England's third all-time scorer with 36 goals in 79 games, said the current speculation over his place mirrored the experiences of previous England strikers who came under pressure after enduring lean spells.

"I've seen it all before with Alan Shearer, Gary Lineker, players like that have all been criticised in the past," Owen said.

"I've not scored in games before. At the last World Cup, I don't think I scored in the group stage, but I did in the second round against Denmark and the quarter final against Brazil."

"I know I can do it at this level and there's a belief inside me which is different to confidence," Owen acknowledged that he is not in peak condition but insisted that he was fully recovered from the broken foot which ruled him out for almost the entire final five months of the English season.

"Since the back-end of the Premiership season I've not missed a training session or a match."

"I had a long rest during the season unfortunately, but since then I've not missed a training session or a match and I'm pleased with that."

'A Victory in a Tie'

AFP, Washington

US media were aglow Sunday after the USA team -- at the bottom of the Group E standings -- managed to keep alive their World Cup hopes by holding on for a 1-1 draw against European giants Italy.

After the draw "the USA players fell, one by one, to the turf," The Washington Post said, under the headline "A Victory in a Tie."

"Mostly it was a product of the exhaustion of playing shorthanded for nearly half the game against one of international soccer's most fabled teams. However, the enormity of what they had just accomplished...sapped the Americans of energy and emotion," the Post added.

USA goalkeeper Kasey Keller paid tribute to his teammates.

"These guys bled today for our country and our team," Keller said. "I'm proud of everybody."

The result leaves the group wide open going into the final round match with Italy on four points, followed by the Czech Republic and Ghana both on three and the Americans.

The "Americans Flash Their Spikes and Their Pride," observed The New York Times, adding "The Americans moved the ball, challenged Italy's defence, and rushed back on defence."

"The United States soccer team's reputation, in tatters after a meek loss Monday to the Czech Republic, is again intact," crowed The Los Angeles Times.

Swiss sweat on Magnin

INTERNET, undated

Switzerland are sweating on the fitness of left-back Ludovic Magnin ahead of Monday's World Cup Group G match with Togo.

Magnin injured his foot during the goalless draw with France in Stuttgart but team doctors are hopeful he will be able to face the African country.

Valon Behrami is also a cause for concern with a knee injury with doctors having already admitted the Lazio player may not be able to play in the World Cup.

Meanwhile, coach Kobi Kuhn has also been receiving treatment for a slight fever.

A family affair

AFP, London

Manchester United owner Malcolm Glazer has put three more of his children on to the club's board, the English Premiership team said on Sunday.

Glazer's sons Kevin, 44, Edward, 36, and daughter Darcie, 37, have all been appointed as non-executive directors.

The 78-year-old American's other sons Joel, Ave and Bryan have been on the board since the Tampa Bay Buccaneers owner took over at Old Trafford last summer.

A United spokesman said: "The move reflects common practice. All Glazer family members are involved in all the family's business interests."

Ukraine optimistic about dogfight



AFP, Hamburg

Ukraine's star striker Andriy Shevchenko is optimistic his side can still make it into the last 16 despite suffering a shock 4-0 drubbing in a Spanish master class of attacking football.

Ukraine face Saudi Arabia, who drew 2-2 with Tunisia in their Group H opener, here on Monday and Shevchenko admitted it had come down to a dogfight with the two Arab nations to progress to the knock-out phase of World Cup.

"We still have a chance. So we will play each of our games like it is the last one," said Shevchenko, who became Chelsea's new record signing before football's showpiece tournament.

"The game with Saudi Arabia is our last chance, and we are going to prepare for that game with that in mind."

"If we play two successful games, then we will have a chance to advance out of our group."

"Now for us that is the main goal. The competition is between three teams and we will compete for that. For me it's no secret and we have two more matches."

The former AC Milan striker has been struggling with a knee injury and he looked out of sorts against the Spaniards, although he said just getting that game under his belt would help.

"I'm glad I played the full 90 minutes after not being in action for such a long time," he said. "The knee was fine but my physical condition is still a long way from my optimal form, but I need to play games to get that form."

Shevchenko rued the nerves his side showed against Spain and also the 47th minute red card shown to defender Vladyslav Vashchuk - David Villa's resulting successful penalty made it 3-0 to Spain.

He admitted his mother didn't watch the match through worry, while his father's blood pressure had been sent soaring as the hammering unfolded.

"Throughout qualifying the entire team defended very well," argued Shevchenko. "It let through almost no balls and

always was looking for approaches to attack."

"Everything worked out for us then, but this time it didn't work out."

"I think the entire team did not play particularly well, including me. I am the first person to admit that."

Looking ahead to Monday's game, Shevchenko said he had been impressed with what little he had seen on videotape of Saudi Arabia, who conceded the equalising goal to Tunisia two minutes into injury time.

"This is a team that hasn't really participated in any serious cups, so it has given me a very good impression. It's a team that's at the World Cup and there are no weak teams here."

"We will be extremely careful... We have a second and third chance to play a good game and we will use that chance."

Shevchenko denied he was holding himself back ahead of the gruelling English Premiership season that starts in August.

"I'm not protecting my legs, I am playing football and I enjoy that. If I am on the field I will give 100 percent."

Lampard slams critics



AFP, Baden-baden

Frank Lampard has lashed out at ex-international players who have criticised England's start to the World Cup.

The Chelsea midfielder expressed disappointment that several former players now working in the media, have had harsh words about England's performances.

Though Lampard did not name names, it is clear that his rebuke was directed at former skipper Alan Shearer, now working as a pundit for the BBC.

"We are fortunate enough to get

English TV and we see it," said Lampard. "There's nothing worse than seeing an ex-player who has played in the pressure cooker situation of a World Cup come out and give negative remarks."

"It's very easy to give a negative remark rather than something constructive and it only makes an issue of things."

"I certainly don't like to see ex-players having a pop at me or my teammates. Ex-players should know better."

"You certainly won't see me sitting in 20 or 30 years' time, slagging off an England team performance," added Lampard. "Shoot me if you do."

Other former England internationals believed to have irked Sven-Goran Eriksson's squad include Ian Wright, Chris Waddle and Terry Butcher.

Lampard diplomatically declined to

specify who exactly he was talking about.

"I just stand by what I said. I suppose we are talking about recent ex-internationals," he said.

"When you play for England it's the best thing you can do in football."

"There are so many great things about playing for England but one of the hard things that comes into it is the press and the criticism you get when there's a bad result."

"We understand that, but the one thing you ask as a player is that an ex-player who's been through this doesn't add it."

Shearer has been particularly scathing of England's performances so far, two lacklustre victories over Paraguay and Trinidad and Tobago, criticising the team's performance and Eriksson's tactics.

Klinsmann's positivity infects German fans



AFP, Berlin

When Germany crashed out of the Euro 2004 finals in Portugal without winning a match, not even the most optimistic fan thought lifting the World Cup two years later was possible, but all of a sudden there is real belief that the dream could come true.

When Jurgen Klinsmann took over as Germany coach in August 2004 he was ridiculed for setting the target of lifting the trophy on home soil.

"We want to win the trophy. Anything less would be a failure," Klinsmann said.

To emphasise that fact, Germany booked hotel rooms in Berlin for the July 9 final.

Some Germans claimed Klinsmann had been in the United States too long and said the sun had gone to his head, but now it seems as if Klinsmann's positive thinking has rubbed off on the fans.

After the 1-0 win over Poland on Wednesday thousands of fans in Dortmund left the stadium chanting "Berlin, Berlin. We're going to Berlin (for the final) at the top of their voices."

The win helped Germany secure a spot in the last 16 but there are still three games to win to reach the Berlin final.

Supporters donned t-shirts with '1954, 1974, 1990 and 2006' in reference to Germany's World Cup triumphs -- although the 2006 edition has yet to be decided.

Apparently the dates of their previous titles are a good omen for Germany with statisticians pointing out that 54 multiplied by 74 equals 3996. If you then subtract 1990, that leaves 2006.

So is it Germany's fate to win a fourth World Cup crown on July 9?

"We are going to do it," said German fan Joachim Holzhauser, a 38-year-old mechanic, who was strangely sporting a Brazil shirt.

"We have the momentum and home support seems to be pushing the players to a different level."

"Perhaps we do not have the best players in this tournament but we have one of the best teams."

What makes the renewed German optimism all the more

remarkable is their pessimism in the build-up to the finals.

A 4-1 drubbing by Italy in March, dubbed 'the Florence fiasco', had German fans up in arms and the media predicted an early World Cup exit for the hosts.

Away defeats to Slovakia (2-0) and Turkey (2-1) -- two teams that failed to qualify for the finals -- also put doubt in the fan's minds but Klinsmann, a World Cup winner with West Germany in 1990, remained positive throughout.

"If we win a few matches then everyone will believe in us and we will ride the wave," he predicted.

A 4-2 win over Costa Rica and a last ditch 1-0 victory over Poland has seen Germany qualify for the last 16 with one game to spare and the hosts can top the group with a win over Ecuador on Tuesday.

"Klinsmann, you are already celebrating like a World Cup winner," declared Bild, the country's best-selling newspaper.

The mood in the country has certainly been lifted but evaluating Germany's chances is difficult

given that they have only played two competitive matches -- against Costa Rica and Poland -- in just under two years.

In 23 months under Klinsmann Germany have only lost once at home -- 3-2 to Brazil in the semi-final of last year's Confederations Cup -- but have failed to beat a recognised top footballing nation.

Germany captain Michael Ballack admits the current team is a shadow of West Germany's team that won their last World Cup in 1990.

"We should not forget that we do not have a team like at the 1990 World Cup or even at Euro 1996," Ballack confessed.

"Those sides had a lot more established players with international experience."

"But there are still a lot of things to encourage us and we can certainly do it (win World Cup)."

If Klinsmann can lead the nation to glory against the odds then there could be a lot more Germans adopting his stay positive philosophy at future World Cups.

Deschamps 'agrees' Juventus move



INTERNET, undated

Didier Deschamps has seemingly agreed to join Juventus after admitting to talks with the Serie A giants.

Reports Saturday suggested that the former Bianconeri midfielder had met with the new board of directors to discuss the possibility of replacing Fabio Capello at the crisis-hit club.

And Deschamps, who was being lined-up to be handed the job before Capello was hired two years ago, has seemingly given the operation the green light.

"Juventus will always be Juventus, no matter whether in Serie B or Serie C1," he stated. "The club's past is its strength."

The 1998 World Cup winner and former Monaco boss met with director Carlo Sant'Albano, sporting director Alessio Secco and also John Elkann the Agnelli family member who is reconstructing the club after the departure of the Triade.

"Sant'Albano wanted to meet with me so I decided to see him along with other Juventus officials," continued Deschamps. "The fact that Juve have got problems doesn't scare me."

However, the player famously described as a 'water carrier' by Eric Cantona, insists nothing has been decided.

"We have to take things slowly before we reach a conclusion," warned Deschamps, a man who won numerous honours during Marcello Lippi's first stint in charge

at Turin.

"At this moment in time Juventus have a Coach and a quality one in Fabio Capello. It's far too early to say how things will end up."

Nevertheless, it seems almost certain that Capello linked with Real Madrid will leave, especially if the club are stripped of their Serie A status for alleged sporting fraud.

Secco also commented on Friday's discussions with the former Les Bleus captain. "We saw him to discuss his plans and hear his ideas," noted the Juventus employee.

Other options to replace Capello include Alberto Zaccaroni, a Scudetto winner with Milan, and former Livorno boss Roberto Donadoni.

Michel to quit Ivory job



INTERNET, undated

Ivory Coast boss Henri Michel has announced he will stand down after the World Cup. Frenchman Michel's side are already out after two defeats ahead of Wednesday's third and final Group C game against Serbia and Montenegro.

The former France coach's contract with the Elephants was

due to expire anyway, and Michel confirmed no talks had been held regarding an extension.

"The Ivorian Soccer Federation did not ask to extend my contract, so for me it finishes with the match against the Serbians," said Michel.

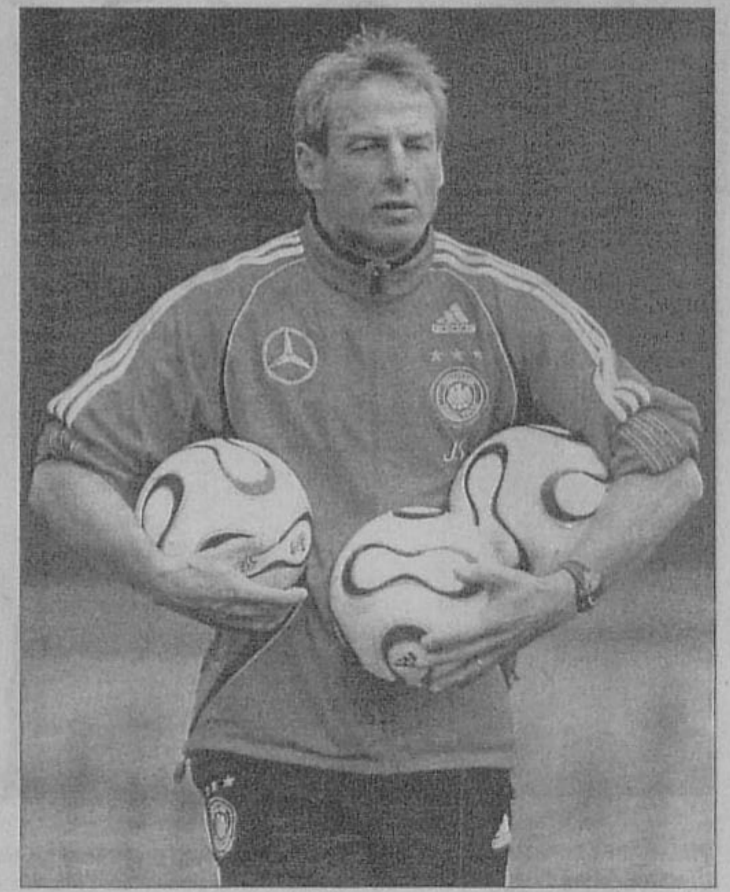
A vastly-experienced coach, Michel - who has also managed Cameroon, Morocco and Tunisia - hinted he is unlikely to take the reins of another African nation.

"I have given quite a lot to Africa already," he said.

scoreline against the Netherlands to end their first-ever World Cup prematurely and leave Michel with a bitter taste in his mouth.

"We could have done something great here but it turned out otherwise... But there is hope for the future," he said. "This is a World Cup of regrets, especially with regard to the refereeing."

"I watched the game against the Netherlands again last night and saw some very obvious mistakes. I am under the impression there is a favouritism for larger countries over smaller ones when it comes to refereeing."



JUERGEN KLINSMANN