

Memorable 500th for Kahn

AFP, Munich

Veteran goalkeeper Oliver Kahn may have endured a difficult World Cup with Germany - playing second fiddle to Jens Lehmann - but he shrugged off that disappointment to become the star of the opening weekend of the Bundesliga.

The Bayern Munich captain made his 500th Bundesliga appearance in Friday's curtain raiser against Borussia Dortmund and produced a fine display to help his team to a 2-0 win.

"It was an enormously important victory for us," said Kahn. "We put the poor pre-season results behind us and go off to a perfect start."

"It is great to reach the landmark 500 Bundesliga games. Now I will concentrate on playing many more."

The 37-year-old moved to Bayern in 1994 and has since become a regular in goal and becomes one of the few players to reach the 500 mark.

"Dortmund had too many chances and we owed a lot to Oliver Kahn," Bayern coach Felix Magath said. "He was excellent and kept them at bay."

Club vice-chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge agreed.

"It needed a world-class performance from Oliver Kahn to ensure we came away with a clean sheet," said Rummenigge.

It was a 185th clean sheet in the Bundesliga for the irrepressible Kahn who has won every honour at club level with Bayern collecting seven Bundesliga titles, five German cups and the Champions League in 2001.

He was also voted best player at the 2002 World Cup when Germany went all the way to the final before losing 2-0 to Brazil.

His international career is now over but Kahn is contracted with Bayern until June 2008 and wants more trophies - including the Champions League.

"I want to win as much as I can with Bayern and winning the Champions League again remains a big aim of mine," Kahn said.

Moyes warns Van der Meyde

AFP, London

Everton boss David Moyes has read the riot act to Dutch winger Andy van der Meyde telling him he will be on his way out of the club if he once more steps out of line.

The 26-year-old Van der Meyde ended up in hospital last week after a night out in Liverpool, and afterwards claimed that his drinks had been spiked.

But Moyes showed little sympathy once the player was discharged from hospital, issuing him with a club fine for being out socialising two days before a match, the Aberdeen friendly last Tuesday.

Moyes told the club's official website, evertonfc.com: "It will be his last chance. If I hear of him stepping out of line again, there will not be another opportunity for him."

"We like players to enjoy themselves here and we make sure they do. But it's at the right time and when it suits Everton."

"That's why you have a contract and why you agree to club rules. You agree to the things expected of a professional footballer. If Andy doesn't fit into that, I'm sorry, but it won't work for him."

The Scot, however said he had been happy with the player's response to the fine, adding: "I would say, though, that he's a good lad, very remorseful and he's determined to show that he can play for Everton."

"That's what I want him to do. There's a talent and a pedigree there and we want him to succeed."

Rosicky out of friendly

AFP, Prague

Arsenal midfielder Tomas Rosicky and Jiri Jarosik of Celtic were the only significant absentees from the Czech Republic squad announced Monday for Wednesday's friendly against Serbia Montenegro.

Coach Karel Bruckner has brought in Jiri Stajner, who plays in the Bundesliga for Hannover, and Marek Kulic, to cover for the injured duo.

Rosicky picked up a groin problem in Arsenal's Champions League qualifying win against Dinamo Zagreb last week while Jarosik says he picked up an injury playing for Celtic at the weekend.

But the local press dispute Jarosik's claim, saying his absence owes more to the fact that he wasn't picked to play in the World Cup and his stated intention not to turn out for his country as long as Bruckner remains as coach.

"Jarosik picked up to the last minute against St Mirren. It seems that he's simply decided not to meet Bruckner," the Czech newspaper Sport suggested.

Wednesday's match is being used by the Czechs as a warm-up to the Euro 2008 qualifiers which they kick off with against Wales in Teplice on September 2.



AC Milan midfielder Kaka (R) gets the better of the challenge from Juan Rodriguez of Deportivo La Coruna during their Teresa Herrera tournament final at the Riazor Stadium in Coruna on Sunday.

Deportivo dump Milan

Football

INTERNET, undated

Milan were defeated 3-1 by Deportivo La Coruna on Sunday in the final match of the Teresa Herrera Trophy.

The Rossoneri failed to impress and were a shadow of the team that had won against Atletico Madrid only the day before.

Coach Carlo Ancelotti fielded a 4-3-1-2 formation with Alessandro Costacurta guiding the defence and the striking duo of Alberto Gilardino and Filippo Inzaghi.

The Spanish side scored six minutes into the game with former

Milan player Fabricio Coloccini taking advantage of a mistake by the Rossoneri defence and easily sending the ball past Ferdinando Coppola, who replaced Dida for the evening.

Milan were assigned a penalty 23 minutes later when a cross by Serginho from the left ended up on Alberto Lopo's arm and Kaka managed to temporarily equalise.

Four minutes later though and Deportivo took the lead again with Ivan Sanchez Riki as he netted a free-kick from the right with the help of some indecision by Coppola.

The second half was a relatively dull affair with few scoring opportunities after both sides made numerous changes.

Deportivo did manage to ripple the net with another free-kick, this time by Juan Rodriguez, to ensure that his side won the match 3-1.

The Spaniards went on to win the Teresa Herrera Trophy in front of their fans at the Riazor Stadium for the 14th time, the sixth edition in a row, whereas no Italian team has been able to win the tournament since Roma in 1984.

Milan will now rest for two days before returning to train in view of the Champions League preliminary match against Real Star Belgrade, scheduled for August 23.

The Rossoneri won their first leg 1-0 thanks to a Pippo Inzaghi goal.

US billionaire takes over Aston Villa

Football

AFP, London

Aston Villa said Monday it had accepted a takeover bid from US billionaire Randy Lerner valuing the struggling English Premiership football club at 62.6 million pounds (\$2.9 billion euros, 118.3 million dollars).

The Villa board on Monday recommended that shareholders accept the 547-pence-per-share cash bid from Reform Acquisitions Ltd, a takeover vehicle controlled by Lerner, who is owner of NFL franchise the Cleveland Browns.

"The boards of RAL and Aston Villa are pleased to announce the

terms of a recommended cash offer by RAL to acquire the entire issued and to be issued share capital of Aston Villa," the groups said in a joint statement to the London Stock Exchange.

After the completion of Lerner's takeover, two Premiership football clubs will be controlled by owners of American football teams. Manchester United was purchased last year for 790 million pounds by Malcolm Glazer, owner of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Monday's news will bring to an end the long reign of Aston Villa chairman Doug Ellis, who has been Villa Park owner since 1982 and also had a spell as chairman from 1968 to 1975.

Directors of the Birmingham-

based club, including Ellis, who account for 35.9 percent of the equity, have irrevocably undertaken to accept Lerner's offer.

"It is my belief and the basis for my bid to acquire Aston Villa... that it can compete at the highest level within the Premiership and in Europe," Lerner said in the statement.

"The club has a rich history and a long tradition of passionate fan support."

Ellis added: "I am sure that this transaction will be the beginning of a new chapter in Aston Villa's proud history."

Aston Villa's board, advised by investment bank Rothschild, said it considered the terms of the offer "fair and reasonable".

Capello not satisfied

Football

AFP, Madrid

New coach Fabio Capello said he was far from satisfied with his Real Madrid team despite watching them coast to a 2-0 victory over Real Salt Lake in a pre-season friendly.

A penalty from Dutch striker

Ruud van Nistelrooy and a goal from Brazilian Robinho were enough to secure the victory but Capello was anything but all smiles after Saturday's match.

"There were some positive things but we have to correct certain aspects that did not please me. The players were a little distracted," said the Italian, now in his second stint at the club.

Capello won the Spanish title in

his first and only season in Spain, back in 1996-97, but he has his work cut out to try to prise the title back from Barcelona, where it has ended after the last two campaigns.

And the renowned disciplinarian is already casting a disapproving eye over certain members of his squad.

Dane Thomas Gravesen is already certain to be heading out the exit door and according to Spanish media reports, Capello has little time for Brazilian pair Julio Baptista and Robinho.

Madrid daily Marca claimed on Sunday that AC Milan are chasing Ronaldo while Guti is also rumoured to be on the verge of a switch to city rivals Atletico, if the two clubs can agree a fee.

With van Nistelrooy signed from Manchester United, Emerson and Fabio Cannavaro, both from Capello's old club Juventus, already brought into the ranks and rumours abound that Real will bid for Arsenal's Jose Antonio Reyes and Lyon's Mali international Mahamadou Diarra, Capello is already instigating some sort of a revolution at Madrid.

The nine-time European champions have failed to win a trophy of any sort in the last three seasons.

On Saturday, van Nistelrooy stepped up to convert a 45th minute spot kick awarded after Salt Lake defender Willis Forke's dubious tackle on Antonio Cassano from behind.

Van Nistelrooy, who was left out of the Holland squad named last week for Wednesday's friendly against the Republic of Ireland, then set up Real's second when in the 64th minute he back-heeled to Robinho who shot past Salt Lake keeper Jay Nolly.

Salt Lake had not helped their chances when Atiba Harris picked up a red card for a sliding tackle on Sergio Ramos shortly after the break.



FABIO CAPELLO

Fergie in no rush

AFP, London

Manager Sir Alex Ferguson says that he is still in the market for a new midfielder at Manchester United despite the encouraging 3-0 win over Sevilla on Saturday.

Ferguson took satisfaction from his side's performance against the Spaniards with Louis Saha, Cristiano Ronaldo and young midfielder David Jones all finding the net.

And approaching his 21st season as United boss, Ferguson remains relaxed about the challenge of trying to snatch the title back from Chelsea.

"We are trying very hard to get another midfielder player in," he said.

"But, at the end of the day, I have a terrific squad of players with great ability."

"The boys have to accept the challenge. We are ready and hopefully they can do the business."

Fernando Torres was widely assumed to be on his way to Old Trafford but Ferguson declined to meet Atletico Madrid's 27million pounds asking price.

Instead, the manager opted to keep Giuseppe Rossi rather than sending him out on loan and rely on Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, Ronaldo, Paul Scholes and Ryan Giggs as striking back-up should injuries start to bite.

It seems the plan will get an immediate test as Wayne Rooney struggles to overcome a groin injury in time to face Fulham in the Premiership opener next Sunday.

Boro move for Emerton, Distin

INTERNET, undated

Middlesbrough boss Gareth Southgate is waiting for a response on bids made for Manchester City defender Sylvain Distin and Blackburn winger Brett Emerton.

Southgate has only brought Julio Arca from Sunderland to the Riverside since taking over from Steve McClaren this summer and is keen to bolster his squad.

Distin, the 28-year-old French centre-back, was among the squad to travel to China for a pre-season tour with City, and the club revealed their intention to keep him at Eastlands.

Boro and Portsmouth have been linked with a move for the defender, with a report on the official website confirming a bid by Southgate.

Southgate said after the goalless draw with Chievo at the weekend: "We're very close with a couple. Hopefully once we get past the weekend we should have some news. We've got bids in and it's just a case of waiting to hear back from the clubs."

Emerton, 27, played for Australia at the World Cup in Germany during the summer after his third season at Ewood Park.

Triple swoop for Allardyce?

INTERNET, undated

Bolton boss Sam Allardyce is hoping to complete the signings of up to three new players this week.

Allardyce has endured a frustrating summer in the transfer market with Abdoulaye Meite and Quinton Fortune, from Marseille and Manchester United respectively, his only major recruits.

He hopes that will change in the lead-up to Saturday's Barclays Premiership opener against Tottenham but he admits any new arrivals will probably come too late to feature in that game.

"Hopefully by the middle of the week," Allardyce told the club's official website, when asked about possible incoming transfers.

"But having said that, if we bring somebody in next week he won't be ready for Tottenham, Fulham or Charlton because that would be too early for them to be included."

"If we could improve on the core of the team - one up front, one in the middle and one at the back, I think that would be enough."

Allardyce's preparations for the season have also been hampered by a number of injury problems and this week's international call-ups have been disruptive.

Allardyce added: "It's about getting the injured players fit here - as many as possible to get the team ready for Tottenham on Saturday."

"The restrictions we've had placed on us have made it the most difficult ever to prepare for a new season because it's international week."

"Of course, some of our players will be spared that because they are injured and some of them will go away and hopefully play only 45 minutes and be ready to play against Tottenham."

"The ones we can control must obviously be wrapped in cotton wool."

McClaren takes WC blame

Football

INTERNET, undated

New England manager Steve McClaren insists he has not tried to wash his hands of predecessor Sven-Goran Eriksson's disappointing reign.

Former Middlesbrough boss McClaren worked as Eriksson's assistant for five years until taking over from the Swede after this summer's World Cup.

McClaren has tried to make a clean break - particularly by omitting former captain David Beckham from his first squad - but he does not want to disassociate himself with Eriksson completely.

McClaren told Sky Sports: "I was a part of it and I was responsible for it along with the players and the rest of the staff."

"I'm not saying I've moved away from that. I had a great respect and friendship with Sven and really appreciate the five years I had with him. I would never criticise him."

One of Eriksson's most controversial decisions was the selection of Theo Walcott for the World Cup in Germany even though the 17-year-old striker had not played in Arsenal's first team.

The selection proved to be a mistake as Walcott did not feature in any of the games but McClaren understood why Eriksson made his choice - although he did not comment on whether he agreed or not.

He said: "I think it was looking at something different. There was a problem with Wayne Rooney - whether he was going to be fit - and Michael Owen, who hadn't played the games and just coming back to fitness."

"He was just excited by this

player. Whether I agreed or disagreed - and that's a private conversation we had - ultimately it was Sven's decision."

McClaren also dismissed suggestions that Eriksson had a relationship with his captain, Beckham, that proved detrimental to the rest of the team.

McClaren said: "I've appointed John Terry as skipper and I want exactly the same relationship. I want him to build the dressing room, I want him to build the spirit and be a part of the decisions."

"At this level players have an awful lot to contribute to what is happening on the field and what is happening off the field. That's how captains should be, they should be the benchmark for the rest of the squad."

"I believe John Terry is along those lines. On the field you need a leader and that's why I have picked John Terry."

Joseo blasts schedule

Football

AFP, Cardiff

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho slammed this week's round of international friendly matches, saying they screwed up clubs' preparations for the start of the season.

The Blues boss, with a squad stuffed full of international players, faces being left with only four of them in his training sessions ahead of their opening English Premiership match.

Chelsea kick off their quest for a third straight championship at home to Manchester City on Saturday before travelling to Middlesbrough on August 23 and Blackburn Rovers on August 27.

And Mourinho is seething that he will barely see his squad in the week beforehand due to an early glut of international ties.

"I have to work with two goalkeepers and two Portuguese players because Portugal is the

only country that is not playing a friendly game. I have to say -- this is intelligent."

"The players should be with their teams before the season starts, not playing with the national team, so I think the Portuguese coach was clever leaving the Portuguese players with their teams."

I have to work with Carlo Cudicini, Henrique Hilario, Ricardo Carvalho and Paulo Ferreira. That's my work for the next week.

"The other players will come on Thursday afternoon -- but after a game, so they cannot work. Friday is a day of recovery process, so no ball. As for Saturday, we have a game on Sunday so I cannot work much."

"And next week, I have two matches: Blackburn and Middlesbrough away, so I cannot work, I only play."

He said his side would therefore be nowhere near full fitness for the Manchester City match.

"We will be only 40 percent but I am not worried because the com-

petition is over 10 months.

"If something happens in the first two weeks, maybe you lose a game or four points, but that's why I like competitions of 10 months."

France play in Bosnia-Herzegovina on Tuesday while Iceland host Spain. Among Wednesday's matches are England v Greece, Germany v Sweden, Italy v Croatia, Norway v Brazil and Ireland v The Netherlands.

Liverpool's England striker Peter Crouch admitted the first international matches after the World Cup come irritatingly close to the start of the Premiership season, with the Reds due to play at newly-promoted Sheffield United on Saturday.

"It's a little bit frustrating but it's one of those things," he said.

"But I'm so proud to represent my country at any time, so when it comes along you grab it with both hands."

"I'm so looking forward to the internationals but it is quite close to Saturday as well."

Lehmann to retire in 2008

Football

AFP, Berlin

Germany international goalkeeper Jens Lehmann revealed Monday that he is likely to hang up his gloves after the 2008 European championships in Austria and Switzerland.

Arsenal custodian Lehmann

will be 38 by the time Euro 2008 comes around and feels it will be the right time to call it a day for club and country.

"My main ambition was to play in a World Cup and I have achieved that," Lehmann said in Kicker magazine.

"If I was 30 I would say 'ok now things really start' but at 36 I have the European championships in two years and I am working

towards that.

"After that I think it will be over for me in the national team and as a footballer."

The 36-year-old Lehmann was first choice for hosts Germany at this summer's World Cup after wrestling the number one jersey away from Oliver Kahn.

Germany coach Jurgen Klinsmann put his faith in Lehmann, capped 38 times by his country, and he repaid it with some sterling displays and was the hero in the quarter-final penalty shoot-out win over Argentina.

With Kahn now in retirement Lehmann is first choice under new coach Joachim Low and is expected to start Wednesday's friendly match against Sweden.

At club level Lehmann is also number one with Arsenal but his future with the Champions League finalists remains uncertain with his contract expiring at the end of the season.

"We will see how it goes this season and whether I extend my contract at Arsenal or not," said Lehmann. "But I would like to play in Germany again."

Lehmann started his career with German club Schalke 04 before spells at AC Milan and Borussia Dortmund.



JENS LEHMANN

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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