



PHOTO: AFP

England star Wayne Rooney (L) speaks to coach Steve McClaren during a training session in Manchester United's Carrington training ground on Wednesday.

## McClaren set to tinker

AFP, London

Conscious that a perceived lack of tactical flexibility was one of the sticks used to beat his predecessor Sven-Goran Eriksson, Steve McClaren insists he is ready to shake up England's formation on the road to Euro 2008.

Classic 4-4-2 formations have enabled McClaren's reign to get off to a flying start with three straight wins.

But the loss of his first choice holding player, Owen Hargreaves, to a broken leg means the England coach has some thinking to do ahead of the matches against Macedonia, here on Saturday, and in Croatia next Wednesday.

"We might have to change it a little bit because losing a big player like that just changes the balance of the team," the former Middlesbrough boss admitted.

Tough-tackling duo Scott Parker and Phil Neville offer McClaren the

chance to replace like with like, while Manchester United's Michael Carrick will be hoping for another opportunity to display his impressive range of passing at the base of a midfield diamond.

"I haven't decided who it will be but I have something in my mind for the two games," McClaren said. "Players have to be adaptable and flexible. They have to be intelligent and be able to adapt to different roles and different responsibilities."

"I'm not averse to changing systems. I was very flexible at club level, playing 4-4-2, 4-5-1, 4-3-3 or 3-5-2, to adapt to any situation and to adapt the players within that."

"The players have to be intelligent and I think at international level that's what you need. I firmly believe that you can't just have one system and be rigid in that."

McClaren will not however be abandoning his commitment to constructing a side with real pace throughout and the ability to turn defences through the use of skilful wide players, an objective which has contributed to the one-paced, non-dribbling David

Beckham being left out in the cold.

"Our game is about tempo, keeping a high tempo, but international football, European football, is totally different and perhaps we have to adapt," McClaren added.

"We need to play with periods of intensity and to have periods of non-intensity, but we should always be in control of the game."

Having beaten Macedonia with something to spare in Skopje last month, England will be confident of improving on that 1-0 victory at Old Trafford on Saturday.

But the trip to Zagreb to take on a Croatia team managed by former Everton and West Ham defender Slaven Bilic has the look of a mission that, handled badly, could bring about the end of McClaren's honeymoon period.

"Croatia is a big test for any team," he acknowledged. "They are a very good team technically. I had a chat with Slaven recently and he told me they had a very good young team. In Croatia you're also dealing with the atmosphere, the intensity of the crowd, so it will be a big test for our players."

Carrick, 25, is expecting McClaren

to mix things up a bit this week.

"He's talked about 3-5-2, and throughout the games that he's been in charge he's changed formations," the Manchester United midfielder said.

"We have a home game and an away game coming up, and I wouldn't have thought the manager would want to play the same way in both matches."

"I haven't really played the holding role since I went to Manchester United. I've been getting forward more than I did in all of my Tottenham career."

"I really enjoyed playing that role at Tottenham, but it's a slightly different system at United and we sort of take turns in doing the role."

"I'm getting used to being in more forward positions, but I'm comfortable playing the holding role because I've done it for so long. It comes pretty naturally."

"Ricardo Oliveira? He mustn't feel he is constantly compared with me, when I started everyone reminded me of Marco Van Basten's performances," continued Shevchenko, who has just turned 30.

Sheva joined the Stamford Bridge outfit in a 31-million-pound move this summer, but so far has been overshadowed by Didier

Appiah's free-kick from just outside the box three minutes later was also punched away by the intrepid Japanese keeper.

After Ghana's goal, Japan struggled to fight back but Brazilian-born right winger Alessandro Santos's 84th-minute free-kick, which flew over the bar after hitting a Ghana wall, was the closest they could get to scoring.

The Africans will now travel to Seoul for another international friendly on Sunday against South Korea, who also failed to make the second round in Germany.

Japan will head to Bangalore for an Asian Cup qualifier against India on October 11.

Diego Maradona had been among those to call his family after the accident in Montevideo on Sept. 24.

"I'm fine and I'm happy," he said in a radio interview. "I will be grateful for the rest of my life, it means I have left an important mark in the hearts of many people."

Silva, who was out of contract at the time, suffered an exposed fracture in his right leg after his pickup truck collided with a lamppost on Montevideo's sea front.

Two other people in the vehicle escaped with minor injuries. The following day, doctors said they had no other option but to amputate the leg below the right knee.

Lots of people had called to offer their support, he said. "Maradona was the one which caused the biggest impact. He spoke to my family because I was unconscious at the time."

Silva made 49 appearances for Uruguay, including the 2002 World Cup finals, and scored 14 goals. His club career took him to local sides Defensor Sporting and Penarol, Spanish clubs Espanyol, Sevilla and Malaga, Italy's Cagliari and English Premier League side Portsmouth.

When the radio interviewer said he would visit him in hospital, Silva joked: "Don't take too long because I'm leaving soon."

## 'Hands off Messi'

INTERNET, undated

Barcelona president Joan Laporta says he has no intention of selling Lionel Messi and the Catalan club could keep Javier Saviola.

Laporta told El Mundo Deportivo that there is no chance of Messi leaving Nou Camp, even though he is fast becoming one of the most admired players in Europe.

The 19-year-old Argentinian is under contract at 2010 and looks set to be a key figure for Barca for many years to come.

"He is not for sale," stated Laporta. "He is a reference player for us and we are excited by him."

Fellow countryman Saviola could prolong his stay in Catalonia after returning from a loan stint with Sevilla.

"Javier finishes his contract (next year) and we have a good relationship with him. His representative will come to us and we'll see what we do when the contract ends," he explained.

"He has the ability to be in the team and now has a chance of playing after what happened to Eto'o."

The 24-year-old scored in the recent win against Athletic Bilbao.

## Kaka is my heir: Sheva

INTERNET, undated

Andriy Shevchenko believes that Brazilian starlet Kaka will become his successor at Milan. "He is an extraordinary player," stated the Ukrainian.

The Rossoneri have failed to find a replacement for the striker after his summer move to Chelsea and are suffering a goal drought, resulting in three straight goalless draws, but Sheva is confident that things will change.

"There is a man who can become my heir and that is Kaka, he is an exceptional player who still has an enormous potential," said the player to La Gazzetta dello Sport.

"You haven't yet seen what he can really do, I am sure he will write an important page in the history of Milan."

"I have heard of a small disagreement between him and Coach Carlo Ancelotti, but there are always discussions in football teams. I don't think that represents a problem just as long as there is mutual respect."

"Milan's form? We all go through bad periods as I am not scoring either, but these things can happen. You just need to be patient and wait for things to improve."

"Ricardo Oliveira? He mustn't feel he is constantly compared with me, when I started everyone reminded me of Marco Van Basten's performances," continued Shevchenko, who has just turned 30.

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## Dario full of gratitude

REUTERS, Montevideo

Former Uruguay striker Dario Silva expressed his gratitude on Tuesday for the support he has received since having his lower right leg amputated after a car crash last week.

The 33-year-old said Diego Maradona had been among those to call his family after the accident in Montevideo on Sept. 24.

"I'm fine and I'm happy," he said in a radio interview. "I will be grateful for the rest of my life, it means I have left an important mark in the hearts of many people."

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# Houllier, Domenech at loggerheads

Football

AFP, Paris

France manager Raymond Domenech went on the defence Tuesday after being accused of lacking courtesy by Gerard Houllier.

The Lyon coach had attacked Domenech on Friday over what he regarded as the lack of respect he displayed when selecting Lyon players for the national team.

Eight of Houllier's French champions figure in Domenech's squad for the Euro 2008 qualifiers against Scotland on Saturday and the Faroe Islands four days later.

"More and more of my players are being used 100 days a year by the national team, and I don't even get a handshake nor a phone call (from Domenech)."

"One day this is going to blow up. I'm going to blow a fuse," said a clearly irate Houllier.

The former Liverpool and

France manager added: "We see (Pierre) Mankowski, (Bruno) Martini (Domenech's two assistants) coming to watch our games, but only because they're picked up by the TV cameras in the stand."

"They leave without speaking to us."

"He (Domenech) calls (Robert) Duverne (Lyon's physical fitness trainer), but as far as I'm aware, Robert isn't the manager here..."

Houllier compared Domenech's approach to that of one of his predecessors in the top job, Michel Hidalgo.

"Michel used to telephone me to say 'I'm going to select such and such a player. How are they getting on at the moment?' Now, nothing. He (Domenech) behaves the same way with Arsenal, Barcelona, and the other teams. Just go and ask Arsene (Wenger) what he thinks..."

"There are the rules, but there's also courtesy. When you think about it, it's a big deal."

Domenech responded to Houllier's outburst at France's training camp near Paris.

"Gerard is a true friend," he said, his voice laced with sarcasm.

"He was manager of France for ... 15 months, he knows the situation well."

"Me, I was born in Lyon, everyone knows me down there, there's no difficulty in getting information on players. When someone has a problem they can always telephone," he added.

"It's a pity he (Houllier) didn't call me rather than create problems where none exist."

This spat follows Domenech's war of words with Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho, who criticised him for calling up Chelsea midfielder Claude Makelele against the veteran player's wishes.

Mourinho accused Domenech of treating Makelele like "a slave".



PHOTO: AFP

German captain Michael Ballack gives the thumbs up sign as he poses prior to attending the premiere of Soenke Wortmann's movie "Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen" (Germany. A Summer Fairy Tale) in Berlin on Tuesday.

# Lampard has a point to prove

Football

AFP, London

Chelsea midfielder Frank Lampard insisted Wednesday that is determined to prove himself to new England boss Steve McClaren.

Lampard played every minute of this summer's disappointing World Cup under previous manager Sven-Goran Eriksson despite a slump in form.

But despite looking certain for Saturday's European qualifying match against Macedonia and next Wednesday's game in Croatia, Lampard insists he is not taking his place in the team for granted.

"That is one of the really good and refreshing things with Steve McClaren and his staff," he said.

"From the moment you join up with the team on Tuesday afternoon, there is pressure."

"You know that you must train well, that you must be around the hotel with your mind on the game and that when the game comes you must perform at your top level."

McClaren has already stamped his authority on the side by omitting former captain David Beckham from every squad since taking over, and Lampard accepts no-one is certain of their place any more.

"This is England we are talking about, not some team that does not have young players pushing for places," he said.

"I have always had the idea that if my level drops I could be out of the team. The thing that keeps the top players on top is that they keep pushing themselves."

Concerns over Lampard's form have continued into the new domestic season but he has vowed to prove wrong those who have begun to doubt his ability since the World Cup.

The 28-year-old hit an incredible 23 goals for club and country last season but failed to find the net when it mattered this summer.

"After the World Cup, I rued the fact that I had not scored any goals," he said.

"You have to shut your ears off

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## Bayern no option for Klose

AFP, Berlin

Werder Bremen's German international striker Miroslav Klose said Wednesday that he is not interested in joining German champions Bayern Munich and if he leaves Werder it will be for a top club abroad.

"Bayern are a top club but I would like to emphasise that if I do change clubs I want the move to be abroad," Klose said in SportBild magazine.

Klose, golden boot winner at the World Cup, had been expected to leave Bremen at the end of this season but said he was not in a major hurry.

"We will sit down over the winter break and discuss my contract," said Klose. "Who said I want to go next year? I want to play abroad with a big club at some stage in my career but it does not need to be 2007."

The 28-year-old Klose started his career with Kaiserslautern before joining Bremen for five million euros in the summer of 2004.

The Polish-born forward is contracted at Bremen until June 2008 and the club has vowed to do everything to keep their star striker at the Weserstadion.

# Ghana down Japan

Football

AFP, Yokohama

World Cup revelations Ghana whipped hosts and Asian champions Japan 1-0 here Wednesday in a debut international friendly match for Frenchman Claude Le Roy as the Africans' coach.

The sole goal came in the 73rd minute when Haminu Dramani, a midfielder with the Turkish club Genclerbirligi, banged in a short cross from FC Copenhagen forward and late substitution Razak Pimpong from deep right field.

Both sides squandered several scoring chances before 52,400 spectators at the Nissan Stadium in their first international clash since 1994. Their head-to-head

tally was level at 2-2.

The Black Stars placed in their starting line-up nine players from Ghana's World Cup squad, who lost to Brazil in a last-16 match in their first World Cup finals in Germany.

Japan, without the help of Europe-based stars tied with their club commitments, lacked precision both on the offensive and the defensive.

"Ghana proved to be a strong team as expected," said Japan coach Ivica Osim, a 65-year-old Bosnian who took over the team from Brazilian legend Zico after Germany 2006.

"Japan played better in terms of details. It is disappointing that we lost the match this way," he added.

It was the second loss against

three wins for Osim's charges who are aiming to rebuild the Asian side after their dismal World Cup campaign which ended with two losses and one draw in the first round.

After a goalless equilibrium in the first half, Udinese midfielder Sulley Ali Muntari's sharp long-range left-foot shot was stopped by Japanese World Cup goalkeeper Yoshikatsu Kawaguchi in the 53rd minute.

Three minutes later, Japanese midfielder Satoru Yamagishi slid the pitch to catch a left cross in front of the net but his shot bounced off the left post.

In the 58th minute, World Cup player Stephen Appiah dribbled past a defender for a one-on-one shot which was saved by Kawaguchi.

Appiah's free-kick from just outside the box three minutes later was also punched away by the intrepid Japanese keeper.

After Ghana's goal, Japan struggled to fight back but Brazilian-born right winger Alessandro Santos's 84th-minute free-kick, which flew over the bar after hitting a Ghana wall, was the closest they could get to scoring.

The Africans will now travel to Seoul for another international friendly on Sunday against South Korea, who also failed to make the second round in Germany.

Japan will head to Bangalore for an Asian Cup qualifier against India on October 11.

# Becks denies quit claim

Football

AFP, London

David Beckham's spokesman on Wednesday dismissed a claim made by Real Madrid president Ramon Calderon that the former England captain will quit in two years.

And Calderon said that he was confident the 31-year-old would extend his contract with the Spanish side which expires next year, despite not holding down a regular place on the team this season.

"As far as I know he has decided to retire in two years' time," Calderon told BBC Radio Five Live.

"It would be fantastic if he would stay with us for the next two years."

But a spokesman for Beckham said: "This is a complete surprise to us. No one has ever discussed a retirement date."

Calderon insisted that Beckham is still in the frame for Real coach Fabio Capello

despite being restricted in the past few weeks to the substitutes' bench.

"We need him. He's playing very well. The coach trusts him. We hope everything will be arrived at in the next 15 to 20 days to sign the new contract."

he said.

Calderon hinted that Beckham may head to the United States after leaving Madrid.

"I read somewhere that perhaps he's going to the States for a golden retirement," he said.

"I'm quite sure that nowadays

a player at 34 or 35 can play easily. Especially him, who's a great professional, he's been training all his life."

"He does things in the right way. I imagine that if he wants, when he leaves Real Madrid, he can be anywhere in the world -- in the States perhaps, why not back in England?"

Beckham moved to Real from Manchester United in 2003 in a deal worth 25 million pounds (46.8 million dollars, 36.7 million euros).

He would be free to negotiate with other clubs in January if he failed to agree a new contract with Real, who have failed to win a major trophy in his three seasons in Spain.

Beckham was axed from the England team by new manager Steve McClaren following its World Cup flop.

But the midfielder says he is determined to force his way back into the squad, even if he doubts McClaren's public declaration that "the door is still open."



DAVID BECKHAM