

Thuram admits frustration

INTERNET, undated

Lilium Thuram has admitted to his growing frustration at his lack of games at Barcelona.

Despite his versatility at the back and experience, the 35 year-old has been unable to secure a position in the team with boss Frank Rijkaard preferring Rafael Marquez and captain Carlos Puyol as his central defensive partnership.

"I didn't come to Barcelona as a tourist. I have never known such a situation long term, it is destabilising to me," he told L'Equipe. "If you accept to be a substitute that means there is a problem."

"I believe the coach builds the best team possible. If he doesn't play you, that means you are not outstanding. I am very happy to be at Barcelona, but I have experienced a bad situation."

"It reminds me of the start of my career. You work every day, and you are waiting for an opportunity. The less you play, the less easily you adapt."

"On Sunday during the match, I am so sad."

Thuram, who has managed only 7 games so far this season for the La Liga Champions, realises his lack of games will affect his place in the French squad. However the former Juventus player is determined to fight on.

"A winter transfer? I am absolutely not in such a state of mind," he added. "Of course I don't like that strange situation. The coach makes his choices and you have to respect them."

"But I didn't set myself any deadline. I told (France coach) Raymond Domenech if my situation would last, maybe he should prepare my substitute."

Owen hopeful of swift return

REUTERS, London

Injured England striker Michael Owen hopes to be back playing for his club Newcastle United before the end of the season.

Owen suffered a cruciate ligament injury during a World Cup match against Sweden in June and has since had two operations on his knee.

"I'm confident that I can play again this season. It'll be great if I could," Owen told BBC radio on Sunday.

"I have a scan at the turn of the year and as long as everything's knitted together quite nicely we'll press on. Hopefully, I can start jogging in early February and then we'll really kick on from that."

"It's been a long slog so far and there's still quite a lot of work to be done till I'm back out playing but I've got other things that are keeping me occupied and I can see the light at the end of the tunnel now," added the 26-year-old former Liverpool and Real Madrid player.



Le Mans midfielder Mathieu Coutadeur (L) holds off Lyon striker Sylvain Wiltord during their French Ligue 1 clash at Le Mans on Saturday.

Lyon pile up records

AFP, Paris



Lyon broke another record in France on Saturday after a 1-0 win at Le Mans gave them their

14th win from the first 16 matches this season.

That win bettered the mark of 13 wins from the opening 16 contests set by Paris St Germain in the 1985/86 season.

And incredibly it was Lyon's coach Gerard Houllier who was in charge of that team as well.

The victory moved Lyon on to 43 points but was due more to industry than flair as former Arsenal forward Sylvain Wiltord headed home a free-kick from

Brazil midfielder Juninho just before the hour mark.

Houllier was not interested in his team's record-breaking feat, preferring to concentrate on improving another record they broke last season.

That was when Lyon won a record fifth title in a row and they now look almost certain to add a sixth to that run with nearest challengers Lens already 14 points off the pace.

"We have taken a giant step towards the title," said a beaming Houllier when interviewed by Canal Plus.

"What pleased me was that we cleared the ball when we had to, when you're under the cosh, you're under the cosh. Today we controlled the game. This was a victory for hard work. Solidarity and control paid off."

Houllier may have been letting himself get carried away by a narrow victory at one of the league's minnows, but Le Mans coach Frederic Hantz had a more sober assessment of the situation.

"Football is a game played by 11 players and at the end, Lyon win," Hantz said.

Lyon's next league game is away to PSG next Sunday and president Jean-Michel Aulas is remaining cautious given the violence and racism problems suffered by their great rivals recently.

PSG's match at home to Toulouse on Sunday had to be postponed over security concerns and Aulas is not sure that next week's match will definitely go ahead either.

"The role of managers is to anticipate difficulties. I will call my counterpart (at PSG) Alain Cayzac to find out the situation," said Aulas.

"We are going to try to do everything possible to make sure all precautions are taken. We will not hesitate to ensure no risks are taken."

Lens took sole possession of second place in the table with a 3-

0 home win over last seasons runners-up Bordeaux.

Vitorino Hilton opened the scoring on 40 minutes and Daniel Cousin made the points safe on 57 minutes before Issam Jemaa's late cherry on the cake.

Lille, who travel to Nancy on Sunday, could take back second place with a victory, while Sochaux, who host Marseille on Sunday, could also claim second spot but they would need a victory by at least five goals.

Struggling Monaco gave their beleaguered fans something to cheer about with a 3-0 coasting against Valenciennes.

Yaya Toure opened the scoring on 37 minutes before second half goals from Serge Gakpe and Jan Koller sealed a comfortable win.

Meanwhile in St Etienne, where the hosts beat Lorient 2-0 through second half strikes from Marek Heinz and Frederic Piquionne, supporters demonstrated their support for the hard-core PSG fans whose behaviour forced the abandonment of the PSG-Toulouse match.

Even the small contingent of travelling Lorient fans pledged their support to their fellow 'ultras' while one St Etienne banner denounced misinformation. St Etienne's victory moved them up to third in the table.

Referee attacked

REUTERS, Sousse

South African referee David Bennett was attacked after Royal Armed Forces of Morocco were denied a stoppage time goal in the African Confederation Cup second leg against Etoile Sahel of Tunisia on Saturday.

Etoile Sahel, runners-up in the African Champions League in 2004 and 2005, won on away goals after drawing the first leg 1-1 in Rabat last month.

Bennett and his linesman Toko Malebo were attacked by the furious visitors after a close-in effort from Brahim El Bahri was disallowed for offside.

Several Royal Armed Forces players rushed at Malebo as he flagged the goal offside, pushing and shoving him before security officials came to his rescue.

Fighting erupted between both benches and policemen on the side of the pitch before Bennett was also set upon by the Moroccan team.

Security was quickly resorted as a cordon was created around the officials but the game stopped for five minutes before calm was restored.

During that time Royal Armed Forces players continued their protestations at the officials and one was kicked by a security official.

Television replays showed the decision of the lineman was correct.

The game restarted for just 60 seconds before Bennett blew the final whistle and was quickly surrounded by security officials as the Moroccans sought to set upon him again.

An un-gamely death

REUTERS, Madrid

A player with second division Tenerife was substituted on Saturday after his coach heard the defender's father had died of a heart attack in the stands.

Manuel Castineiras' father collapsed during the league match at Ponferradina and medical services at the ground were unable to revive him, reported sports daily Marca's Web site (www.marca.com).

"I can't talk much about the game," said Tenerife coach Bernd Krauss after his side's 1-0 defeat.

"My thoughts are with Manuel and his family. It's a blow for all of us."

Krauss withdrew Castineiras in the 58th minute and the player was told the news about his father in the dressing room.

Wenger plans Henry showdown

AFP, London



Arsene Wenger will hold clear-the-air talks with Thierry Henry after admitting rumours of a training-ground argument between the pair had overshadowed Arsenal's 3-0 victory over Tottenham on Saturday.

Henry was reported to have walked out of the club's Hertfordshire training base on Friday after being told by Wenger that his neck injury had not healed sufficiently for him to be included in the squad to face Spurs.

The French striker attempted to downplay the significance of the incident in a series of media interviews on Saturday morning, and made conspicuous efforts to show his support for his team-mates during the Gunners' victory over their north London rivals.

Henry celebrated the opening

goal with the scorer Emmanuel Adebayor and joined his teammates in the post-match huddle, but those gestures of reconciliation do not appear to have appeased Wenger, who will meet Henry on Monday to discuss the incident.

"I don't know exactly what my take on it is yet," he said. "It is difficult for me to sit down with Thierry, tell him what I expect from him and see where we go from there."

"In terms of preparation and in physical terms, he is not ready to play yet. He will need some time to prepare because he is tired and needs to recover. When you do not play for a while, you need a few days to prepare and get fit."

"I am not happy or unhappy with him. I would first and foremost like to give credit to the team, who played marvellously. It is more important to talk about that than anything else."

"This team is not a one-player team, it would be disrespectful to Thierry to think that. We have 22

players and it's down to me to make a very good team out of them."

Wenger also visibly bristled when asked to comment on Henry's observation - made in a national newspaper on Saturday morning - that Arsenal should seek to strengthen their squad in the January transfer window, preferably with the out-of-favour Chelsea winger Shaun Wright-Phillips.

"I won't sign any players in January," Wenger declared. "We will go until the end of the season with the players that we have here and today they showed they have the quality to go on and do well."

Wenger's mood was at least brightened by his side's performance, which ranked as one of their most fluent at the Emirates Stadium this season.

"It was vital for us to win because our backs were against the wall," he admitted. "It was the right response and also the perfect preparation for Porto."

Klose fires Bremen atop

AFP, Berlin



Werder Bremen warmed up for Tuesday's titanic Champions League tussle with Borussia Dortmund by moving to the top of the Bundesliga with a 3-1 win over Hertha Berlin on Saturday.

Bremen need a point against Schalke on Tuesday but three were required against Hertha and the title hopefuls delivered thanks to a stellar display from German international Miroslav Klose.

Klose, top-scorer at the World Cup, scored twice (32, 40) to take his season's tally to 10 and show Barca he is in top form.

Brazilian playmaker Diego had opened the scoring with a penalty after Josip Simunic, who also

scored Hertha's goal, had handled in the area.

"It is a dream for every footballer to play in a game like the one we have with Borussia," said Diego.

"Two great teams are playing one another at the highest level and neither is the favourite. Borussia are at home but we only need a point. It will be terrific."

Bremen replaced Schalke 04 at the summit but the latter, now one point behind, can reclaim top spot with victory over FC Nuremberg on Sunday.

Champions Bayern Munich lost ground on Bremen after a 1-1 home draw with lowly Borussia Monchengladbach and now trail the leaders by three points.

"We put a lot of pressure on Gladbach and had lots of chances but the ball did not want to go in," explained Bayern coach Felix Magath. "We have dropped two

points and now it will be tough to be top of the table at Christmas."

Argentine Martin Demichelis headed Bayern ahead on 23 minutes but Michael Delura equalised 10 minutes later.

Gladbach held on for the point to delight manager Juup Henkies, who won the German title as Bayern coach in 1989 and 1990.

Bayern now turn their attention to Tuesday's match with Inter Milan in the Champions League where they aim to secure top spot in the group.

But most neutral fans in Germany will be tuning in to the Bremen match with the 2004 champions needing a point at Borussia's intimidating Nou Camp stadium to eliminate the holders and join Chelsea in the last 16 phase of the competition.

As it stands four teams - Bremen, Schalke, Bayern and Stuttgart, who drew 0-0 with Mainz 05 on Friday, all have the chance to go into the six-week winter break as league leaders.

In 10 of the last 12 seasons the 'winter champions' have gone on to win the Bundesliga with the two exceptions being Schalke in 2001 and Bayer Leverkusen in 2002.

Elsewhere Borussia Dortmund recorded a 1-0 win over VfL Wolfsburg with Ebi Smolarek scoring the winner in the 90th minute.

After the match under-pressure Dortmund coach Bert van Marwijk confirmed that he would be leaving the German giants by mutual consent at the end of the season, despite having a contract until June 2008.

"We have decided to go our separate ways at the end of the season," said van Marwijk.

SV Hamburg boss Thomas Doll is another manager feeling the heat after a 2-1 defeat to fellow strugglers VfL Bochum on Saturday that keeps the club second from bottom.

"I think I have talked about my future over the past few weeks so there is nothing more to say," declared Doll. "We are in a difficult situation but we can come through it." Zvezdan Misimovic produced a magical free-kick on 70 minutes to down Hamburg, who had Dutch international Rafael van der Vaart sent off for a brutal tackle from behind.

"Van der Vaart's tackle is not acceptable. He is our captain and must lead by example," added Doll. "I will have a chat with him about it."

Hamburg are the only founding club never to have been relegated from the Bundesliga but need to turn things around soon to preserve that record.



Werder Bremen striker Miroslav Klose pumps his fists in celebration after scoring the first of his two goals in their Bundesliga match against Hertha Berlin at Bremen on Saturday.

Bellamy pleases Benitez

AFP, Wigan



Rafa Benitez believes Craig Bellamy can inspire Liverpool to new heights

after the striker put his off-field problems behind him at Wigan on Saturday.

The Welsh international was in scintillating form against the Latics, three days after he was found not guilty at Cardiff magistrates court of a double assault charge - an incident that had been hanging over Bellamy for the previous nine months.

Bellamy scored the opening two goals, laid on a third for Dirk Kuyt and the equally brilliant Steven Gerrard saw his cross turned into his own goal by Lee McCulloch for a fourth as Liverpool won away for the first time this season, ending a wait of over ten hours for an away goal in open play.

"I was saying before the game that maybe after the problems he (Bellamy) had, he could be a new player and he was fantastic for us," said Liverpool boss Benitez. "He was always creating problems with his pace and for us, having a player with his different qualities, gives us other options."

"On Thursday he was in training and shooting and his accuracy was really good, he was always on target, always scoring. I said to him, 'Keep doing the same and you will score lots of goals.'"

"I think he knew he needed to show people he is a good player and maybe his mind is clear now and it's easier for him."

"I know it's easy now but I was saying this before - if you analyse our away games, we were creating 21, 18, 16 chances a game."

"The difference now is if you have players who can finish, you'll be scoring goals and talking about winning games. That's a big difference."

The victory moved Liverpool up to

fifth in the Premiership table but Benitez believes a testing December could determine what sort of season his team will enjoy.

"I don't look at the table too much," he said. "We have a very difficult month and we know we have to keep winning. If all players stay fit these next eight or nine games could make a big difference."

Bellamy, who joined Liverpool in a six million pounds transfer from Blackburn this summer, was a relieved man.

"I have tried to convince myself that I couldn't lose it overnight and maybe I have put too much pressure on myself," he said.

"Signing for Liverpool has been a dream for me and perhaps that has added to it. But I don't want to look for excuses. Sometimes you can have too many excuses and it's harder to turn things around."

"We needed to win today because our record away from home has not been good enough for a team like Liverpool."

"It gets noticed more when you're at a club like this. But I had a similar spell at Blackburn before going on a scoring run and I ended up being player of the year."

Wigan manager Paul Jewell appeared dumbfounded after seeing his team fall to such a demoralising defeat. "At least I'll be watching the cricket tonight," he joked, with reference to the Ashes series in Australia.

"It was a surreal first half, Liverpool had four or five attempts on goal and we were 4-0 down! But if we defend like that we won't win any more games between now and the end of the season, that's for certain."

"We're all a bit shell-shocked. Liverpool were getting it so easy. We were attacking one minute and the next thing there was a long ball out of defence and Gerrard was in or Bellamy was in."

"The fourth goal was ridiculous, how much time did we give Steve Gerrard, one of the best players in the world?"

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Jewel together
6 Haut one's mind
12 Fame
13 Astronomers' Muse
14 Country music?
15 Wall, to a muralist
16 Night light
17 Needing liniment
19 German river
20 Obi
22 Scale member
24 Performance
27 Gear for Picabo Street
29 Neither fish nor —
32 Stew with a crust
35 Apiece
36 Bambal's ilk
37 Early bird
38 Half-ton measure
40 High-lander

DOWN

1 Part of N.B.
2 Grooving on
3 —
4 Hopkins University
5 Revealed at Halloween, maybe
6 "That smarts!"
7 Donkey's noises
8 Diego preceder
9 Item that gets pushed?
10 "The King and I"
11 Lip locale
12 Operated on
18 Popular takeout cuisine
21 Request
23 Frequently

42 Come
44 Stink
46 Vacationing
50 Scolded harshly
52 Wolflike
54 St. Francis' home
55 Puts up
56 Command
57 Straight-bladed daggers

4 Didn't pay yet
5 Revealed at Halloween, maybe
6 "That smarts!"
7 Donkey's noises
8 Diego preceder
9 Item that gets pushed?
10 "The King and I"
11 Lip locale
12 Operated on
18 Popular takeout cuisine
21 Request
23 Frequently

24 Unreturned serve
25 Half a dance
26 Over-sensitive
28 Having tiny dots of color
30 False hood?
31 "The Amazing Race" episode
33 Actor McBride
34 Acapulco gold
39 Fourth estate
41 Gradually diminish
42 Snatch
43 Relaxation
45 Tend texts
47 Kerosene-lamp part
48 Picnic invaders
49 "OI course"
51 Whopper
53 Swiss canton

Solution time: 27 mins.

BOP USPS PITY
APE SPAT ROAD
MESQUITE OURS
ACTUAL ARM
ITIL MESSRS
SPECS WED WITE
PARK CAD KITE
AGO BOX ALTER
MESCAL FLU
OSU ULTIMA
FUZZ MESOZOTIC
AGUE BLEW TEE
THEIN OLDS AND

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
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CRYPTOQUIP
VSGX OVI FDBGC KHFZHKGEGX
ZHC-EIWOS GHMS IOSGF,
CIRIW FGMPIX OSGR
HFG OHBPDXX OFHQS?
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHY DID THE SOAP-PRODUCING FACTORY FIRE GEORGE WASHINGTON? HE COULD NOT TELL A LYE.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: V equals W

The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.