

WC 2002 qualifier Chiesa to fill in for Delvecchio

AFP, Rome

Italy national team coach Giovanni Trapattoni Monday called up Fiorentina striker Enrico Chiesa to replace injured AS Roma forward Marco Delvecchio in his squad for forthcoming World Cup qualifiers with Romania (March 24, Bucharest) and Lithuania (March 28, Trieste, Italy).

REVISED SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Gianluigi Buffon (Parma), Francesco Toldo (Fiorentina)

Defenders: Valerio Bertotto (Udinese), Fabio Cannavaro (Parma), Francesco Coco (AC Milan), Paolo Maldini (AC Milan), Alessandro Nesta (Lazio), Alessandro Pierini (Fiorentina), Giuseppe Pancaro (Lazio)

Midfielders: Demetrio Albertini (AC Milan), Luigi Di Biagio (Inter Milan), Angelo Di Livio (Fiorentina), Stefano Fiore (Udinese), Gennaro Gattuso (AC Milan), Gianluca Pessotto (Juventus), Alessio Tacchinardi (Juventus), Damiano Tommasi (AS Roma), Gianluca Zambrotta (Juventus)

Forwards: Alessandro Del Piero (Juventus), Enrico Chiesa (Fiorentina), Filippo Inzaghi (Juventus), Vincenzo Montella (AS Roma), Francesco Totti (AS Roma)

Dutch squad for WC 2002 qualifier

AFP, Zeist, Netherlands

The Dutch squad for the World Cup qualifiers against Andorra and Portugal on Saturday and on March 28.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Edwin van der Sar (Juventus Turin/Ita), Sander Westerveld (Liverpool/Eng)

Defenders: Michael Reiziger (Barcelona/Spa), Frank de Boer (Barcelona/Spa), Jaap Stam (Manchester United/Eng), Kevin Hofland (PSV Eindhoven), Wilfred Bouma (PSV Eindhoven), Phillip Cocu (Barcelona/Spa)

Midfield: Paul Bosvelt (Feyenoord), Mark van Bommel (PSV Eindhoven), Edgar Davids (Juventus Turin/Ita), Patrick Paauwe (Feyenoord), Roy Makaay (Deportivo la Coruna/Spa), Patrick Kluivert (Barcelona/Spa), Jerrel Hasselbaink (Chelsea/Eng), Pierre van Hooijdonk (Benfica Lisbon/Port)

Strikers: Marc Overmars (Barcelona/Spa), Boudewijn Zenden (Barcelona/Spa), Victor Sikora (Vitesse Arnhem), Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink (FC Twente), Arnold Bruggink (PSV Eindhoven).

PSG's Letizi to replace Barthez

AFP, Clairefontaine

Paris Saint-Germain goalkeeper Lionel Letizi should add to his two caps after he was called up to the French squad on Tuesday.

France play friendlies against Japan at the Stade de France on March 24 and Spain on March 28 in Valencia.

National coach Roger Lemerle called upon Letizi after first choice goalkeeper Manchester United's Fabien Barthez strained a muscle in the warm up for his club's League match on Saturday.

The in-form 27-year-old has been the one redeeming feature of his club's miserable league campaign this year after joining the troubled side from Metz in the close season.

He will join the rest of the squad, including Bordeaux 'keeper Ulrich Rame, at the Clairefontaine training centre on Wednesday.

Barcelona goalkeeper Richard Dutruel replaces Letizi in the "A" side due to play Germany "A" on March 22.

Tragic

AFP, Lagos

Nine players of a Nigerian amateur football club died late Sunday when the team bus returning from a match somersaulted off the road, the Nigeria Football Association (NFA) said Tuesday.

Three other players were in a critical condition after the accident involving the team Zagbai, which plays in the First Division of the amateur league, the NFAsaid.

Nigeria also has a two-division professional league.

NFA official Emmanuel Adesanya told reporters the driver of the bus had lost control of the vehicle on the road back to their base in Bauchi, northern Nigeria, from a league game away to another northern side - Idah United. Zagbai won the match Sunday 3-2.

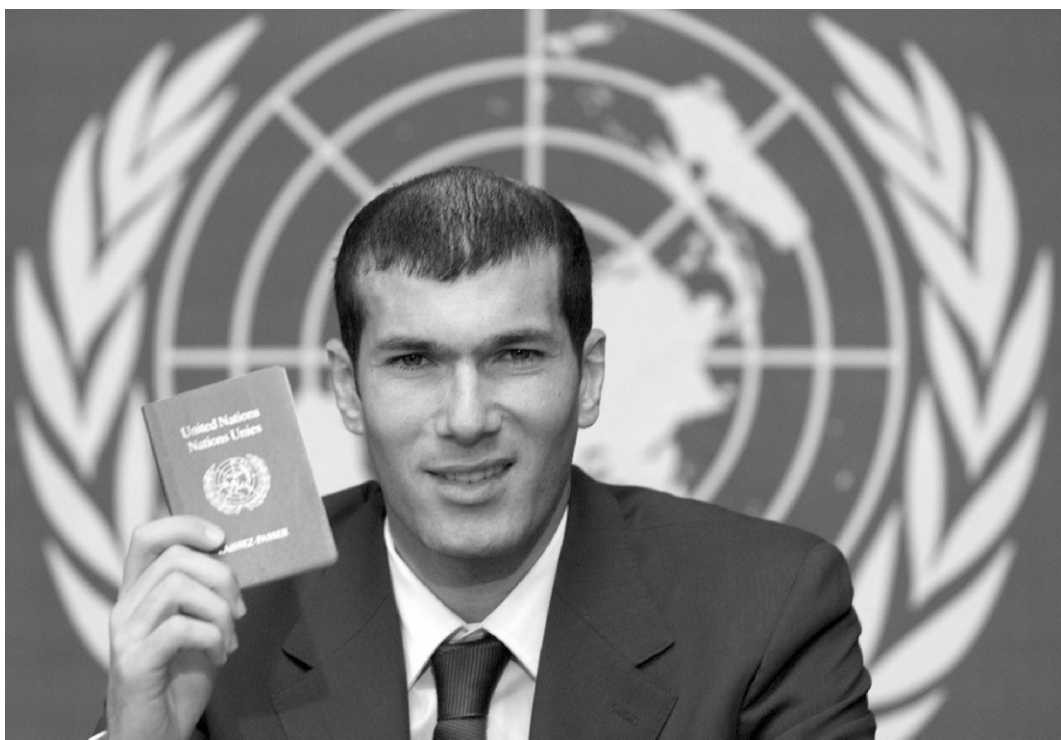


PHOTO: AFP

French super star Zinedine Zidane shows his new UN passport at a press conference in Geneva on March 19.

UN job for Zidane

Football

AP, Geneva

French superstar Zinedine Zidane one of the world's highest paid soccer players was appointed goodwill ambassador for the United Nations Development Program Monday, with the aim of cutting poverty.

"I've known hard times, too," said Zidane, who had a modest, often difficult, upbringing. "I know what (poverty) is. I, too, lived in difficult places where we didn't have everything. And today I want to help.

"I will push myself to work hard, to make sure I'm present and to do some good with my image and what I represent."

Nearly one in five people some 1.2 billion men, women and children lives in extreme poverty, subsisting on less than a dollar a day, according to UNDP. Half the world struggles on less than two dollars a day.

The agency estimates that 800 million people do not have access to health services, and 500 million are chronically malnourished. Some 90 million children are unable to attend primary school and 230 million have no access to secondary school.

"Competition behind a football is much easier for me," the Juventus player said. "Today's battle is very difficult. It's not yet won. It won't be easy for me or anyone else.

"But we should not be deterred by the magnitude of remaining problems because the good news is that each of us can do something to help reduce poverty."

The son of an Algerian immigrant born and raised in a tough suburb of Marseille, Zizou as he is popularly known in France has since risen to dizzying heights of stardom.

The UN's newest ambassador against poverty is now ranked among the world's highest paid soccer players, in an era of rampant commercialization and spiraling professional salaries.

"I think if we have those salaries it's because we deserve it," said Zidane, the star of France's winning team at the 1998 World Cup, twice elected FIFA Player of the Year. "I have known difficulty and now I'm taking advantage of what is happening to me.

But it's up to the haves to help the have nots.

"Everyone who has money and who has a heart must do something, it's undeniable," he said.

Zidane has been involved privately in a number of humanitarian projects and teamed up with Ronaldo for a UNDP advertising campaign last year.

Zidane is the second soccer player after Brazil's Ronaldo to be appointed a UNDP goodwill ambassador. Other ambassadors are US actor Danny Glover, Egyptian-born actor Omar Sharif, South African novelist Nadine Gordimer and Japanese actress Misako Kono.

Vialli's no to Spurs

Football

AFP, London

Gianluca Vialli does not want to step into the breach at managerless Tottenham this season, his agent Athole Still said Monday.

Although the Italian is the book-makers' second favourite behind Tottenham idol and Southampton boss Glenn Hoddle to take over from the sacked George Graham at White Hart Lane, his representative Still has ruled out a return to football at the moment.

Still, who includes five-time Olympic champion Steve Redgrave among his clients, said: "Gianluca is a type who has already had offers from all over Europe to take over during this season.

"But he won't take over midseason. If he wants a return to football as a manager, which he will, it will be with a clean sheet of paper," he told the Press Association.

"It will be at the start of the sea-

son, he will want to be the new man where it is his decision and it is all down to him."

Vialli, whose own shock sacking from Chelsea has left him among the hottest properties in Europe, is

nation, even though they are in the semi-finals of the FA Cup.

Still's own opinion is that Tottenham hardly live up to their reputation for being one of the 'big five' clubs in Britain.

He added: "There have been many discussions about traditionally whether Tottenham are one of the top clubs and there are those who believe they have never been one of them.

"Apart from the time when Bill Nicholson was there (Tottenham's manager in the 1960s and early 1970s), which many still remember as being typical of Spurs, I think if you examine the statistics they are not."

Tottenham have not claimed England's senior league title since the 1960/61 season when they topped the old First Division, the forerunner of the Premiership, as well as winning the FA Cup.

Still added that Tottenham "would be a nice place for someone to take over as caretaker, with an FA Cup final around the corner".

Three-match ban for Sutton

AFP, Glasgow

Celtic striker Chris Sutton has been rocked by the news that he could miss out on his side's league championship party after being banned for three games.

The six million pounds (nine million dollars) summer signing was red-carded for a petulant lunge at Gary Holt during Sunday's League Cup final victory over Kilmarnock.

Celtic fortunately overcame that scare courtesy of the heroics of Sutton's strike partner Henrik Larsson, who fired a stunning hat-trick.

But Sutton has paid the price for the moment of madness and while Celtic need just 12 points to clinch the championship they will be without him for the next three Premier League matches against Aberdeen, Dundee and St Mirren.

A Scotland Football Association spokesman confirmed: "Chris Sutton will miss three matches in the Premier League for Celtic.

"Unfortunately the points he got for his sending-off on Sunday took him through the threshold.

"Chris Sutton will miss one match immediately and then two six-point suspensions which means he will miss two more games from April 1.

"So he now misses Celtic's next match at Aberdeen on April 1 and then the following games at home to Dundee on April 4 and St Mirren three days later.

If Rangers win all their matches then Sutton could return for the title celebrations after the league splits in two for the remainder of the season.

Ironically Sutton, who has now collected two red and six yellow cards since his arrival at Parkhead, will next pull on the Hoops at Hampden Park in the Scottish Cup semi-final against Dundee United on April 15.

Farina's Dilemma

AFP, Melbourne

Australian national team coach Frank Farina faces the dilemma of whether to pick Con Boutsianis the night before the in-form striker faces court here on a theft charge.

"I'm damned if I do and damned if I don't," Farina said ahead of naming the squad that will open Australia's World Cup campaign in Coffs Harbour in northern New South Wales next month.

Boutsianis, who trialled with First Division Bolton Wanderers in England last season, has been waiting to go to court for three years for his alleged involvement in an armed robbery in a Melbourne Chinese restaurant.

He appears in court on Friday on the eve of Farina's selection of an expected largely-domestic squad for the Oceania qualifiers.

The 29-year-old free-kick specialist, who is on bail, has been in top form for National Soccer League leaders South Melbourne and is a strong candidate to make the squad.

"He's still in contention," Farina said Tuesday.

Two days after being charged with armed robbery, Boutsianis scored the winning goal for South Melbourne against Carlton in the 1998 NSL grand final.

Farina said there would be changes from the side that lost 3-2 to Colombia earlier this month, a scoreline that flattered the Socceros.

Australia has drawn Tonga, Fiji, American Samoa and Samoa in the opening round of the Oceania qualifiers next month.

Blomqvist fears for career

AFP, London

Manchester United's Swedish winger Jesper Blomqvist fears for his career after suffering another setback in his battle to recover from a knee injury.

Blomqvist has been troubled for the last 20 months with the problem and returned to Gothenburg to continue his rehabilitation.

But he is now resting up for a couple of days after suffering a relapse in training.

"I seem to take two steps forward and one step back. I am beginning to feel very down about the situation," he told Manutd.com Monday.

"I am beginning to consider quitting the game if the injury doesn't get better soon.

"I felt a twitch in my knee, and it immediately felt sore and tender. I will rest for a day or two and see how it feels next week. But I am still determined to play again in the future."

Blomqvist, 27, moved to Old Trafford from Parma for 4.4million pounds (6.47million dollars) in 1998. But he broke down in the summer of the following year.

Serie A

Atalanta in fifth

Football

AFP, Reggio Emilia, Italy

A double strike from veteran striker Maurizio Ganz inspired Atalanta to

genuine contenders for a place in next season's Champions League, moving up to fifth.

Ganz gave the side from Bergamo the lead after 11 minutes, finishing off a superb four-man move.

striker Dario Hubner, wrongfooting goalkeeper Pavel Srnicek before lodging in the net.

The third goal after the interval came from Ganz who had strike partner Nicola Ventola to thank for setting the chance up on a plate.

Atalanta president Ivan Ruggeri finally broke his usual reserve to say what most people in Italy have known since Christmas - that his side would not be relegated to the Second Division.

"We have reached the quota of points to stay up," said Rugegri whose all-Italian side has defied all the pundits all season.

"Now we can think of something else," he added.

Supporters of both clubs - traditionally fierce rivals - united in making derogatory chants about Brescia coach Carlo Mazzone, at 64 the oldest coach in the Italian First Division.

Much of the chanting was directed at the Roman background of Mazzone.

However, with the match played on neutral territory only five thousand turned up for a game which would probably have been played in front of a full house at Brescia.

ETA admit extortion letter

Football

AFP, Bilbao

The Basque separatist movement ETA confirmed having demanded revolutionary tax from French footballer Bixente Lizarazu, Basque radio station Euskadi Irratia reported on Tuesday.

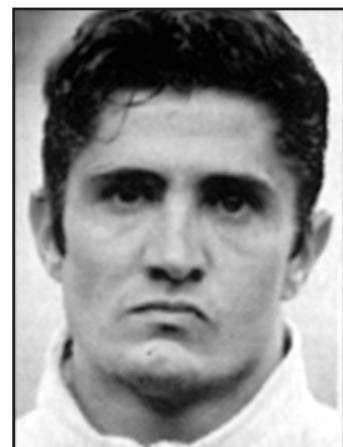
The report came after police seized a copy of the organisation's February internal bulletin "Zutabe" in which an article explained ETA's attitude towards Basque sports personalities who publicly represent France or Spain.

According to Zutabe, the ETA demanded that Lizarazu help the Basque cause by financing the Basque municipal assembly, educational centres or their media.

ETA justify their demand with the claim that Lizarazu had become rich playing under the colours of an oppressor state.

The Basque people live mainly in northwest Spain but also in neighbouring southwest France.

Lizarazu, currently at German



BIXENTE LIZARAZU

side Bayern Munich, received the demand in a letter on December 12,

2000 at his parents home in Hendaye in the French Basque country.

Written in Basque the letter threatened reprisals against him and his loved ones if he failed to collaborate financially.

However, the organisation had until the Zutabe article failed to claim responsibility for the demand.

Since that time the player has been accompanied by two bodyguards and anti-terrorist authorities in Paris opened a judicial proceeding into the matter last December 22.

Euskadi Irratia, also revealed that ETA had made similar demands of other Basque sports personalities but didn't name them.

Lizarazu, 31, launched his career at French club Bordeaux before moving to Athletic Bilbao for the 1996-97 season before moving on to Bayern Munich. He was a senior member of the French international side that won the World Cup in 1998 and the Euro 2000 Cup last year.

Eriksson's faith in Beck



AFP, Liverpool

England coach Sven-Goran Eriksson reported Monday a clean bill of health and a captain's berth for David Beckham as he continued the build-up to Saturday's World Cup qualifier with Finland here at Anfield.

Eriksson said he had no qualms about Beckham retaining the captain's armband despite the Manchester United midfielder's recent poor form.

The Swede has not been taken in by critics' claims that Beckham has been below par in recent weeks and insists his only concern is the player's well-being.

"If (Sir Alex) Ferguson feels it is right for him to rest I am pleased it has happened because it must be important for him," he said.

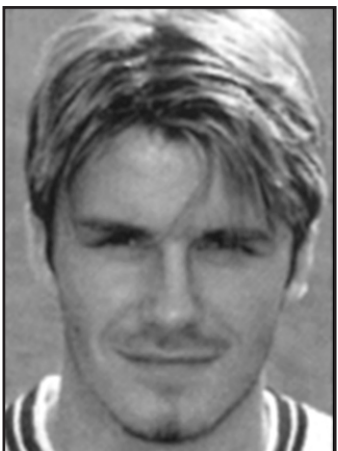
"I don't think he has been below

par. David did very well against Spain, and I am sure he will on Saturday.

"He will still be my captain because I can't see any reason to change it.

"I spoke to him after the Spain game and got him to sign a shirt for my daughter but I have not spoken to him since that."

David Seaman and Steven Gerrard are Eriksson's only real concerns, with the coach having



DAVID BECKHAM

spoken to the Arsenal goalkeeper as well as his manager Arsene Wenger yesterday about his back injury.

"I talked to Wenger yesterday (Sunday) and his physio, and also to David," he explained.

"He has a back problem, but we have to decide to pick him (in the

squad) anyhow. I don't know if he will be fit for the game."

Liverpool midfielder Gerrard, who has been forced to withdraw from international duty on several occasions, will not take part in tomorrow's (Tuesday's) first training session.

But Eriksson remains optimistic the youngster will feature against the Finns at his home ground.

"I saw him play last Thursday, and he seemed very fit - extremely fit and he played a marvellous game.

Eriksson admitted he was faced with some difficult choices in his 26-man squad but refused to single out Sunderland striker Kevin Phillips as the most unlucky player to be omitted.

After having just two days to prepare his team in the build-up to the Spanish encounter, Eriksson now has the luxury of having his squad together for over a week for the vital double-header which includes a trip to Albania on March 28.

"It is better to have the whole week," he said.

"We can do more in practice than we did last time.

"Finland have seven or eight players from England and have improved so much in recent times.

"Fifteen years ago Sweden against Finland wasn't a game - Sweden always won very easily. It was the same with Norway.

"Now Finland are physically strong and tactically good. I have a lot of respect for them."

The former Lazio boss insisted he had not settled on a starting XI.