

# Bielsa wants Beck to play



AFP, Buenos Aires

Argentina coach Marcelo Bielsa said Friday he hoped England captain David Beckham recovers from his broken foot in time to play against Argentina at this year's World Cup finals.

The Manchester United midfielder broke a bone in his left foot after a lunging two-footed tackle from Deportivo La Coruna's Argentinian defender Pedro Duscher in their European Champions League quarterfinal, second leg match on Wednesday.

Beckham has a chance of making a full recovery within six weeks, but he faces a race against time to

play a part in England's World Cup campaign and their Group F clash with Argentina in Sapporo, Japan, on June 7.

But Bielsa said it would be a better match if Beckham played.

"I am against getting any sporting advantage from the misfortune of others. I'd rather not have them," said Bielsa shortly before flying to Stuttgart for Argentina's World Cup warm-up match against Germany on Wednesday.

Bielsa said 26-year-old midfielder Beckham was a great player whose presence would make it a better match.

"He's a great player, I'd be sorry if he couldn't play," said Bielsa. "Rivalry is good and it is even better if your opponents are as strong as you. That's what we're looking for. It would be better with Beckham than without him. I hope's he's there."

Beckham's injury and Duscher's tackle dominated the newspapers in football-mad Argentina here on Friday.

Duscher told some newspapers



MARCELO BIELSA

that the British press had tried to inflate the story because of his nationality and insisted that he had not deliberately injured the English player.

"They are blowing it up because I'm Argentinian," he said. "They are trying to make out that it was pre-meditated. But that would mean I'm a bad person, which I'm not."

"I'm sorry for what happened to Beckham but my conscience is clear because I didn't mean him any harm," Duscher added.

England manager Sven-Goran Eriksson said Friday that he was prepared to take a risk on Beckham to give him every chance of making the World Cup finals.

Eriksson said Beckham would travel to Japan if there was the slightest chance of him being fit to play.

# Erik to take a chance



REUTERS, London

Injuries have dominated the build-up to the World Cup again as England coach Sven-Goran Eriksson said he was prepared to gamble on captain David Beckham by taking him to the World Cup even if he is not fully fit.

Beckham faces at least six weeks out after breaking a bone in his left foot playing for Manchester United on Wednesday. Eriksson said the injury was a major cause for concern with the finals in South Korea and Japan exactly seven weeks away.

"Of course I'm willing to take a chance," he told reporters. "It's extremely important. He's the captain, he's one of the best footballers in the world today, so of course if there's a small chance that he can play we will take him with us."

"It's not just that we could lose the captain, we have to have someone kicking corners, free kicks, we have to have someone playing outside right of the midfield, so there are a lot of things to think about."

"But I am optimistic, I think he will come."

England name their final 23-man squad on May 21 but FIFA regulations state that a country can replace an injured player up to 24 hours before their first match, which for England is the June 2 group F game against Sweden.

England left-back Ashley Cole is also out of action at present recovering from a bruised knee and will miss next week's friendly against fellow World Cup finalists Paraguay.

"He is getting closer but he will not be in the England squad...it's too early," said Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger.

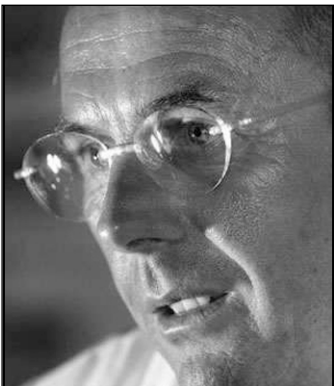
However, the 21-year-old should have enough time to cement his place in Eriksson's squad for the finals.

There was better news for Lazio's out of favour midfielder Gaizka Mendietta, who was recalled to Spain's squad for their final World Cup warm-up against Northern Ireland next week.

But there was no room for fellow midfielder Pep Guardiola who recently returned to action for Brescia after a four-month ban for testing positive for the steroid nandrolone.

Brazil midfielder Assuncao, who has eight caps, has given up on his dream of going to the World Cup despite being one of Roma's stars this season after scoring some notable free kicks.

"I don't think it will be possible for me to go to the World Cup after (coach Luiz Felipe) Scolari didn't call me up for the next friendly against Portugal," he was quoted



SVEN-GORAN ERIKSSON

as saying on the Gazzetta Dello Sport website.

Off the pitch, British fans raised their glasses to a court ruling on Friday that lets pubs serve beer

over breakfast during the World Cup, rather than abide by anti-quoted opening hours.

"We are absolutely delighted with the decision," publican Martin Gough told reporters outside the High Court. "It's what the British public wanted. It's what the licencees wanted."

Due to the time difference with Korea and Japan, games will be on television during the morning in Britain, with England playing first round matches between 7 a.m. and 12.30 local time.

Security was on the agenda in South Korea as maritime police used helicopters, ships and rafts to rescue passengers from the sea in a drill involving a mock emergency landing by a plane.

Meanwhile, co-hosts Japan announced that foreigners will be allowed into national museums for free as part of a move to showcase Japanese culture, the Education Ministry said.

Admission to the facilities, which include Tokyo's noted National Museum of Modern Art as well as museums in the ancient capitals of Kyoto and Nara, will be free from May 27 to June 7 for overseas visitors who show their passports.

# FIFA to meet urgently



REUTERS, London

FIFA, world soccer's ruling body, has called an emergency meeting of its executive committee after president Sepp Blatter stopped an audit of the organisation's finances.

Blatter's decision on Thursday to halt the investigation, which was started against his wishes, was labelled "unacceptable" by Lennart Johansson, president of Europe's controlling body UEFA.

Blatter, under pressure for months over his running of the world's most popular sport, said it was necessary because of a possible break of confidentiality involving a member or members of the executive committee.

"In order to guarantee and to protect the interests of FIFA and the FIFA executive committee, I have to suspend the work of the FIFA ad hoc Internal Audit Committee pending an investigation into a breach of confidentiality and the way documents, which have been given to the members of the Committee, have been handled."

"Therefore today's meeting has been postponed. No further documents will be disseminated until the security of all documents is certain and confidentiality re-installed."

Blatter's letter to David Will, chairman of the Internal Audit Committee, was dated April 11 and posted on the FIFA website on Friday as Johansson demanded an emergency meeting of FIFA's executive committee be called.

Johansson, like Will a FIFA vice-president and a member of the executive committee, told Reuters: "The action of the FIFA president is unacceptable. The audit committee must be allowed to complete its work as a matter of urgency."

Blatter, a 66-year-old Swiss, suspended the work of the Internal Audit Committee on Thursday afternoon shortly before it was due to question FIFA's finance director Urs Linzi.

In a Friday statement announcing the emergency meeting, FIFA said: "In a series of hearings, the FIFA ad hoc Internal Audit Committee has already interviewed senior FIFA management staff, including members of the Finance Division."

The Audit Committee was set up three weeks ago to study the finances following the collapse of FIFA's long-term marketing partner ISL-ISMM last May with debts of around 300 million dollars.

Johansson and other members of the executive committee have signed a letter of protest to Blatter, the latest move in a crisis which has plunged FIFA into disarray just seven weeks before its four-yearly showpiece, the World Cup, opens.

"Myself and many of my colleagues on the executive committee are very concerned at recent developments and steps must now be taken to ensure our calls for a clear picture of FIFA's finances are met," Johansson said.

Blatter, who beat Johansson to win the presidency in 1998, is being challenged for his position by Cameroon's Issa Hayatou, the boss of African soccer, in a vote at a FIFA congress two days before the World Cup starts on May 31.

A spokesman for Hayatou said he would be analysing the latest developments in FIFA over the next few days and would give his reaction at an already-arranged news conference in Paris next Thursday.

Executive committee member Per Ravn Omdal joined Johansson in condemning Blatter's suspension decision.

"The action the FIFA president took on Thursday is totally unacceptable. Once again he is trying to ride roughshod over the FIFA executive committee," he told Reuters.

"The decision to establish an audit committee was taken by a clear majority of the executive committee so that it should complete its work by April 30."

"We would expect that it can continue to work in order to fulfil the mandate of the executive committee. The actions of the FIFA president yesterday are without precedent."

Blatter's suspension came in the same week that Jack Warner and Chuck Blazer, the president and general secretary of CONCACAF, ruling body of soccer in the Caribbean, and central and north America, called for the resignation of FIFA general secretary Michel Zen-Ruffinen.

He responded by threatening legal action against Warner and Blazer.

# Nigeria warm up against Jamaica

AFP, Lagos

Nigeria will face Jamaica in London on May 18 as part of their build-up for the World Cup finals, officials told AFP Friday.

"Jamaica were not originally listed for our warm-up matches but because of the need to try as many players as possible before the World Cup, we have now agreed to play them," said Edozie Enemuo, the marketing chief of the Nigeria Football Association (NFA).

Jamaica drew 2-2 with Nigeria in a friendly on the road to the 1998 World Cup.

The official told AFP that three days after the Jamaica friendly, Nigeria will travel to Dublin to tackle fellow World Cup finalists Republic of Ireland in another tune-up game.

He said the NFA is still waiting for a "reconfirmation" for the warm-up match against Yugoslavia on May 8 in Belgrade.

Yugoslavia had earlier called off the match but have since informed Nigeria they are willing for the game to go ahead.

Nigeria's 'Super Eagles' are drawn in a tough first round group in the finals in Japan and South Korea along with tournament favourites Argentina, England and Sweden.

They face Argentina on June 2 in their opening game.



PHOTO: AFP

Kuwait forward Faraj Lahib (L) is under pressure from Iran defender Said Lutfi during the last match of the Second West Asian Games football tournament in Kuwait City on Friday. Although the game ended 0-0, Kuwait won the gold medal. Syria collected the bronze medal.

# Lippi's dream

REUTERS, Rome

Juventus coach Marcello Lippi says he wants to become the Italy national coach one day.

Lippi, whose third-placed Juventus side face AC Milan on Sunday, has been under pressure in recent weeks after his expensively assembled side struggled to keep up with leaders Inter Milan.

But a 4-0 victory over Perugia last weekend coupled with Inter Milan's 2-1 home defeat against Atalanta put Juventus firmly back in the championship race.

"I would like to coach at Juventus for another three or four seasons then I won't coach another Italian team," said Lippi, quoted in Saturday's Corriere dello Sport. "I would really like to coach the national side."

Lippi celebrated his 54th birthday on Friday.

# Oh!

AFP, Tokyo

South Korean midfielder Oh Jung-Eun of FC Tokyo became the youngest player of the league to make a professional debut, although his side crashed to a 5-0 defeat to Gamba Osaka on Saturday.

Oh replaced Yukihiko Sato in the 54th minute and despite a run in with Masao Kiba that left him with an injury needing two stitches, played until the end. At 16-years and eight-months, Sato set a new J-League record.

"I wanted to learn football playing overseas. My dream is to join the South Korean national team in the future," said Oh.

The lead was kept by 1999 Asian club champions Jubilo Iwata, who stretched their match-winning streak to six straight wins with no defeats by beating defending champions Kashima Antlers 2-0.

Iwata collected a total of 17 points, two points ahead of Yokohama Marinos and three ahead of first-division League newcomers Vegalta Sendai, with all remaining unbeaten.

Yokohama defeated Sanfrecce Hiroshima 2-0 with Japan's international Shunsuke Nakamura scoring one goal and assisting for another in the 15th and 89th minutes.

Sandai will take on Urawa Red Diamonds at home Sunday.

Dutch midfielder Tarik Oulida's 37th-minute goal into the right corner was almost enough for Nagoya Grampus Eight, who defeated Kashiwa Reysol 2-0 after missing several scoring chances in the second half.

Kyoto Purple Sanga posted only their second win after returning to the first division by beating Consadole Sapporo 2-1 thanks to Usaku Ueno's goal in the 108th minute which ended sudden death extra time.

Vissel Kobe were held to a 1-1 draw by Tokyo Verdy.

# Both Real & Barca fined

AFP, Paris

Spanish giants Real Madrid and Barcelona, due to meet in the Champions League semifinals, have been fined on Friday after their supporters pelted the pitch with objects during this week's quarterfinals.

Football's European governing body UEFA fined Barcelona 136,400 euros (120,000 dollars) for their fans' behaviour during the victory over Greek side Panathinaikos at the Nou Camp on Tuesday. The match referee was among those hit by objects thrown from the stands.

UEFA's disciplinary committee also fined Real Madrid 81,840 euros after a Bayern Munich player was hit in the back by projectiles thrown by fans at the Bernabeu in Madrid on Wednesday.

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"I was honour bound to comply with this agreement but, as the options on his contract had to be decided by May 1, I thought it was important to sort out this situation as soon as possible."

"There are four games to be played and Peter Enckelman will now come into the side. He has served his apprenticeship under both David James and Peter Schmeichel and deserves his chance."

"Peter Enckelman will play against Leeds on Saturday, with Boaz Myhill on the bench."

Peter Schmeichel is to leave English Premiership side Aston Villa at the end of the season after the Birmingham club decided not to take up an option to extend his contract.

Villa manager Graham Taylor held talks with Denmark great Schmeichel, who made his name in England with Manchester United, and told him the club did not wish to extend his stay at Villa Park.

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PHOTO: AFP

Marseilles' Moreira Andre Luiz (R) tries to evade PSG's Mauricio Pochettino during their French First Division fixture at Marseilles on Friday.

# PSG's hopes dashed



AFP, Marseille

Marseille dealt a blow to eternal rivals Paris Saint Germain's chances of qualifying for next season's Champions League when they won 1-0 here on Friday.

A 65th-minute goal from Belgian defender Daniel Van Buyten leaves Auxerre just one point behind the Parisians and will leapfrog them into third place if they beat Sochaux on Saturday.

Marseille's victory in front of 57,500 fans at a rain-soaked Velodrome stadium meanwhile moves them up to ninth position.

But the match lived up to its reputation for violence off the pitch. Fifty-two people including a policeman suffered minor injuries as fights broke out in the stands,

police said.

After a first half of few chances, the match caught fire in the second half when the powerful Van Buyten met a corner with a header which rebounded off a group of players.

The ball fell back to Van Buyten, who slotted the ball into the net past PSG keeper Lionel Letizi, provoking an impromptu fireworks display set off by Marseille fans.

PSG's Nigerian international Jay Jay Okocha had lit up the first half hour of the match as the rain got heavier.

Marseille poured forward as they tried to find a way past the meanest defence in the French first division but the match was goalless at half-time.

PSG introduced Brazilian youngster Ronaldinho on the hour in place of Bartholemew Ogbeche, while Marseille brought on Wilfried Dalmat.

But PSG's attacks were repelled by veteran Marseille

defender Frank Leboeuf who had an outstanding game in central defence, thwarting PSG's Brazilian striker Jose Aloisio as he powered towards goal in the second half.

Former Everton striker Ibrahima Bakayoko wasted a good Marseille chance to score just before Van Buyten's winner when he completely missed his kick after being played in in front of the PSG goal.

Dalmat produced a save from Letizi when his powerful shot was pushed away in stoppage time.

Marseille keeper Vedran Runje had to push away an inswinging corner in the dying seconds.

The south coast club's president Robert Louis Dreyfus told French television before the match that he was disappointed in the season for the 1993 European champions but he believed the foundations had been laid for a good team next season.

# Boro the odd side



AFP, London

Only Middlesbrough stand in the way of the first all-London FA Cup final for 20 years when they play Arsenal on Sunday.

In Sunday's other semifinal, another all-Premiership clash sees traditional London rivals Chelsea and Fulham, whose stadiums are a short walk apart, travel to Birmingham for a semifinal at Villa Park.

But it is Arsenal, last year's beaten finalists, who are favourites to go one better this time around.

Arsene Wenger's team are also leading the Premiership as they bid to complete the second 'double' of the Frenchman's Highbury reign following their 1997-98 dual triumph.

Arsenal are expected to win the Cup but Wenger said dealing with the pressure of expectation was nothing new for his side.

"We are good enough to know that being favourites means the situation can be difficult. I think we can handle that," he said.

Swedish international midfielder Freddie Ljungberg said he relished the pressure.

"I love this part of the season," explained Ljungberg, who scored the opening goal in Arsenal's 2-1 FA Cup Final defeat by Liverpool last season.

"I like pressure and there is pressure on the games now," he said.

"Now you can see what it is possible to win and that is the real enjoyment of football."

Despite all the pre-match predictions of an Arsenal win, Ljungberg knows enough about a competition famed for upsets not to be taking the result for granted.

"If there is one thing I've learned about the FA Cup, it is that any result is possible. Middlesbrough are a big hurdle to us and we have to concentrate on getting over that obstacle before we can think about the Final."

Arsenal will be without England full-back Ashley Cole whose knee injury has also ruled him out of next week's international friendly against Paraguay.

They will also be missing midfielders Robert Pires and Giovanni van Bronckhorst, who are both suffering from cruciate ligament damage, and defender Matthew Upson who has a broken fibula.

Key midfielder Patrick Vieira missed training Thursday because of a stomach problem but the French international is still expected to start.

Arsenal have lifted the FA Cup seven times but Middlesbrough, beaten finalists in 1997, have yet to get their hands on the famous old trophy.

And Middlesbrough veteran Robbie Mustoe admitted the odds are against his side. "They have so much attacking quality and it's going to be very, very difficult," he said.

"But we know what it's about - we beat them 3-0 at their place last year so we can do it."

History of a different sort is against Middlesbrough.

Their manager, Steve McClaren, is the only Englishman in charge of one of this season's semi-finalists and no homegrown boss has been in charge of an FA Cup-winning team since Joe Royle steered Everton to victory in 1995.

More worrying for the Riverside-based club, who are sitting mid-table in the Premiership, is that veteran midfield dynamo Paul Ince is suspended while strikers Benito Carbone (cup-tied) and Noel Whelan (injured) will also miss the match.

Midfielder Jonathan Greening, formerly with United, has a leg injury which makes him doubtful for the match.

Fulham, newly promoted to the Premiership this season have not been to this stage of the competition since 1975 when, with the late Bobby Moore in their side, they lost in the final to the England legend's former club West Ham.

Bankrolled by Egyptian tycoon and Harrods department store owner Mohamed Al Fayed, Fulham have not won in their last five matches but did come from behind to draw against Newcastle last weekend.

"This is as close as I've ever got to an FA Cup-Final," Fulham veteran John Collins told the club's official website.

"I might not ever get another opportunity like this again," the 34-year-old former Scotland international added, "so I'm going to make sure I make the most of it and give it every last drop of energy I've got to get us through to the Final."

Chelsea striker Gianfranco Zola is another old man in a hurry despite twice being an FA Cup winner with the club in 1997 and 2000.

"I never want to play because I am Gianfranco Zola. I want to play because I am good enough," said the 35-year-old Italy forward.

Fulham boss Jean Tigana is set to pick Sean Davis while the midfielder waits on a drink-driving charge.

He has no recent injury worries but Chelsea, fresh from Wednesday's goalless Premiership draw away to Blackburn, are set to give late fitness tests to Mikael Forssell, Celestine Babayaro, William Gallas, Jesper Gronkjaer and Graeme Le Saux.

# CUP CORNER



AFP, Moscow

Russia will not to select goalkeeper Sergei Ovchinnikov for their 2002 World Cup campaign because the Lokomotiv Moscow player can not be guaranteed the number one slot, Russia's assistant coach Mikhail Gershkovich said Friday.

Gershkovich said Ovchinnikov had earlier refused to appear at the squad's training camp ahead of several friendly matches unless he was guaranteed a place in the starting line-up.

"We decided not to select Ovchinnikov for the squad," Gershkovich told the Russian press.

**BELGIAN SIDE FOR SLOVAKIA**  
*Brussels*  
Belgium coach Robert Waseige on Friday named a 30-man squad for his country's friendly international match against Slovakia here on April 17 as the side continue their build-up to the World Cup finals.

**SQUAD**  
Goalkeepers: Geert De Vlieger, Frederic Herpoel, Francky Vandendriessche  
Defenders: Philippe Clement, Glen De Boeck, Eric Deflandre, Nico van Kerckhoven, Daniel Van Buyten, Marc Hendrickx, Peter Van Der Heyden, Eric Van Meir, Jacky Peeters  
Midfielders: Bart Goor, Timmy Simons, Walter Baseggio, Danny Boffin, Stefaan Tanghe, Yves Vanderhaeghe, Gaetan Englebert, Bernd Thijs, Sven Vermant, Johan Walem

Attackers: Marc Wilmots, Wesley Sonck, Gert Verheyen, Mbo Mpenza, Emile Mpenza, Branko Strupar, Michael Goossens, Peter Van Houdt

**ECUADOR KEEPER WITHDRAWALS**  
*Quito*  
Ecuador's first-choice goalkeeper Jose Cevallos and centre forward Ivan Kaviedes have dropped out of their country's squad to face South Africa in a friendly match in Murcia, Spain, on Wednesday.

Cevallos has a thigh muscle injury and Kaviedes has a knee problem, the team doctor said on Friday.

Ecuador and South Africa are using the match as part of their build-up for the World Cup finals in which Ecuador are making their first appearance: