

Salgado sidelined for two weeks

REUTERS, Madrid

Spain defender Michel Salgado is likely to miss his side's first two games in Euro 2004 after tests confirmed that he would be out of action for up to 15 days because of a torn thigh muscle.

"He has a small tear in his thigh muscle," team doctor Genaro Borras told a news conference at the team's training base in Las Rozas on Wednesday.

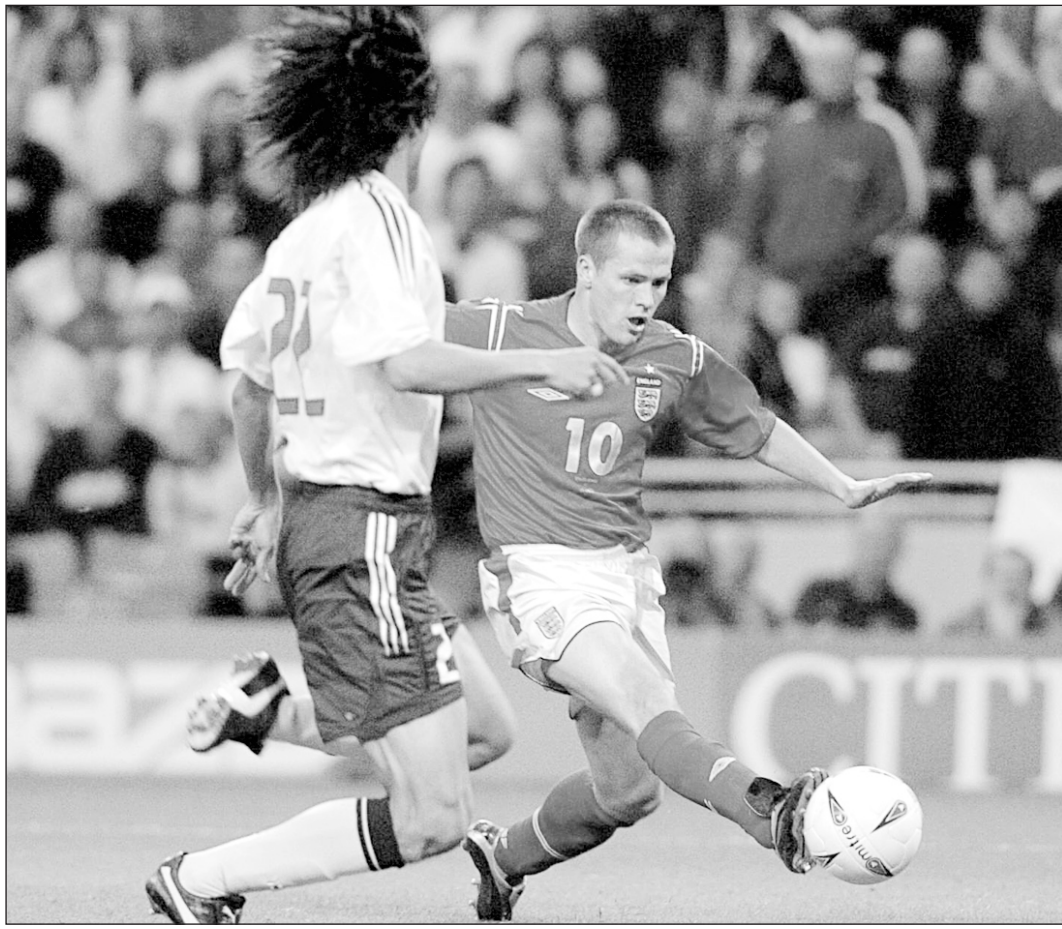
"It is a low level tear that will take between 10 and 15 days to heal and from then on he will be able to continue training full-out with the rest of the team.

"It is good that it is only a small tear, but more worrying is the area it affects which makes it more complicated."

Borras said the Real Madrid defender, who sustained the injury during training on Tuesday, was confident he would make a rapid recovery, but that the final decision as to whether or not he would remain with the squad would be made by coach Inaki Saenz.

"He (Salgado) has a tremendous desire to play and is sure he will be able to, but it's not my decision as to whether he remains with the squad, that is down to the coaching staff."

Spain play their opening match in Group A against Russia on June 12, they face Greece four days later and then meet hosts Portugal on June 20.



England's Michael Owen is under pressure from Japan's Yuji Nakazawa during their friendly match at the City of Manchester Stadium in Manchester on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Queiroz eyes Old Trafford return

AFP, London

Sacked Real Madrid coach Carlos Queiroz looks set to turn his back on the manager's job at Tottenham in favour of a return to Manchester United.

Queiroz, who was sacked after a disappointing first season as Real coach, was linked with the Spurs post.

But reports said Wednesday the Portuguese coach was keen to return to Old Trafford as Sir Alex Ferguson's assistant.

The 51-year-old will take over as Ferguson's right-hand man from Walter Smith, who left the club last month.

Queiroz left Manchester United for the Bernabeu last summer on a two-year deal to become Real head coach.

But his failure to win a trophy saw him relieved of his duties after just one season.

He was linked with the vacant managerial post at White Hart Lane although Spurs director of football Frank Arnesen said they were still running the rule over different possibilities.

Spurs have been linked with Italy coach Giovanni Trapattoni, Celtic manager Martin O'Neill and sacked Chelsea boss Claudio Ranieri since Glenn Hoddle was sacked in September.

Ferguson was keen to have Queiroz back in his bid to reclaim the Premiership title from Arsenal.

Lacklustre Dutch

REUTERS, Amsterdam

Three days after a 1-0 home defeat against Belgium, the Netherlands disappointed again on Tuesday by failing to impress in a 3-0 victory over the Faroe Islands in a Euro 2004 warm up match in Lausanne.

Coach Dick Advocaat paired strikers Ruud Van Nistelrooy and Patrick Kluivert up front together for the first time since the 1-0 play off first-leg defeat against Scotland in November, with Rafael van der Vaart supporting as an attacking midfielder.

The front two failed to click, with an out-of-sorts Kluivert producing a performance that could persuade coach Dick Advocaat to leave him out for the Netherlands' first Group D game against Germany on June 15.

Vaart opened the scoring after half an hour with a shot from just outside the box.

Advocaat made 10 substitutions at halftime and his new-look side carried a greater threat after the break with wingers Marc Overmars and Andy van der Meerd providing much-needed width.

Overmars played a major part in the second goal and scored the third.

His cross on 51 minutes was converted by Roy Makaay and eight minutes later his shot was deflected in to seal victory.

Advocaat said he was happy enough with his side's performance.

"We had a serious training session this morning and I consider this match as instructive," he told reporters.

"The Faroes played with a tight defence but my players kept concentrating, even though we didn't play well."

The Dutch squad will return to the Netherlands on Friday and host Ireland a day later.

Japan frustrate England

AFP, Manchester

But that was cancelled out by Shinji Ono eight minutes after the break and, with a few more breaks and a little better finishing, Japan might easily have claimed a memorable victory.

"We got a little tired, especially in the second half but I think that is normal. We had a hard session yesterday and we practised rather long this morning," said Eriksson.

"Of course the reason we practised is because we want to be as fit as possible (for the Euro 2004 match against France) on the 13th of June."

"I'm sure then we will be much better physically than we were today."

In reality England's shortcomings were as much tactical as they were physical. Eriksson's experiment with Frank Lampard playing in the holding midfield role normally occupied by Nicky Butt proving distinctly unsuccessful.

England has a final chance to get their preparations for France back on track when they face Iceland here on Saturday.

England captain David Beckham, who emerged from the dressing room with his ankle in ice, said, "I cut my ankle a few weeks ago and got an infection in it so I've been taking it easy and I hardly trained last week."

A boost for Haan

AFP, Beijing

Arie Haan hailed his players after China's controversial 2-1 win over Hungary, which gave the under-fire coach a well-timed boost ahead of a crucial World Cup qualifier against Malaysia.

"We needed this win as a boost before the match against Malaysia," he told reporters in Tianjin, some 100 kilometers (60 miles) east of Beijing.

The win also proved a shot in the arm for the build up towards China hosting of the Asian Cup, which they kick off against Bahrain in Beijing on July 17.

China have been far from impressive so far this year, losing 6-0 to Barcelona and being held to a goalless draw by minnows Andorra on a recent European tour.

But they appear to be finding their groove, with the Hungary victory following a narrow 1-0 win over Algeria. They take on Malaysia in Tianjin on June 9.

Hungary took the lead after just four minutes when Beijing forward Krisztian Kenesei struck home from the penalty spot to punish a foul inside the area by Li Weifeng.

China levelled on the stroke of half time when Zhou Haibin's superb header from Zheng Zhi's curled cross found the top left-hand corner of the net.

They scrapped the win courtesy of an 88th minute penalty after striker Li Jinyu was brought down in the Hungarian box.

Shenzhen's Zheng Zhi thumped the ball home but Hungarian coach Lothar Matthaus, the German legend who won a record 150 caps for his country, was far from happy.

"Games should be played fairly otherwise Chinese football won't make progress," he said referring to the Hong Kong referee.

"Although China won the game, my players worked hard today. China still have a lot of things to improve."

Haan felt Matthaus, who has been linked with a job at Turkish club Besiktas, was over-reacting.

Hungary next play Germany, on June 6.

Bad luck Onopko

REUTERS, Moscow

Russia captain Viktor Onopko has been ruled out of the Euro 2004 finals starting in Portugal on June 12 with a knee injury.

"Onopko is out, he has already left the squad and has gone home," Russia's general manager Alexander Chernov told Reuters on Wednesday.

The 34-year-old central defender suffered the injury playing for his club Saturn Ramenskoye in last month's Russian premier league match against Rubin Kazan.

"We tried everything possible to help Onopko overcome his injury but just ran out of time," Chernov added.

Onopko's withdrawal means that the Russians have now lost both of their starting central defenders.

CSKA Moscow's Sergei Ignashkevich, who also has a knee problem, left the squad on Tuesday and is due to undergo key-hole surgery next week.

Meanwhile, Onopko will now have to wait for a chance to break Russia's all-time appearance record.

ZZ in a hurry



June 13 - England.

"My end of season was terrible. I've had two really hard months," said Zidane.

"The thing that takes the hardest knock is your morale.

"But now I'm feeling great. I've had an easier time of it physically than in the past few years. The difficult times are behind me."

His club career took off under Luis Fernandez' Cannes before his 17th birthday, two years later he was on the international stage.

After a spell at Bordeaux Zidane moved to Juventus who splashed out four million dollars to secure hisistry.

In Italy Zidane's stock rose sharply as he won the European Super Cup, two Intercontinental Cups and two Italian championships.

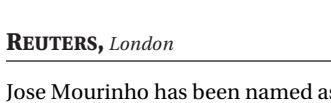
After helping France win Euro 2000 Real Madrid got out a cheque and wrote the figure 63.6 million dollars on it - then the highest transfer ever.

Two years later he scored a superb left-footed volley in Real's win over Bayer Leverkusen in the Champions League final.

After earning the dubious distinction of becoming the first reigning World Cup champions not to even score a goal in the next edition France and their inspirational midfielder will be hungry to atone for that debacle.

And a hungry Zidane is a dangerous species - England beware.

Mourinho Chelsea coach



ambitions for Chelsea excite me and I am sure they will do the same for the fans whose incredible support I have already witnessed.

"The English Premiership is recognised as the best league in the world and I'm really excited about the prospect of competing week in and week out at the highest level in England as well as in Europe."

Chelsea chief executive Peter Kenyon welcomed Mourinho to Stamford Bridge.

"The appointment of Jose Mourinho is all about building on the foundations which we have already established at Chelsea," Kenyon said.

"He represents the new generation of football coaches and we are convinced he can take us up to the next level, both in England and Europe.



Dutch midfielder Edgar Davids (R) tries to keep possession against Atil Danielsen of Faroe Islands in Tuesday's friendly in Lausanne.

PHOTO: AFP

Peru shock Uruguay

AFP, Montevideo



team goes into a two-leg playoff against the winner of the Oceania Zone, likely to be either Australia or New Zealand.

Nolberto Solano and Claudio Pizarro gave Peru the best of possible starts in Montevideo scoring in the 14th and 19th minutes before Uruguay had defender Gonzalo Sorondo sent off in the 32nd minute.

Reduced to 10-men, Uruguay had a mountain to climb and they fell further behind when Jefferson Fanfan netted after 62 minutes.

Substitute Diego Forlan scored a consolation goal heading in a free-kick for the hosts after 71 minutes, but the Sky Blues were fortunate not concede more goals with Peru missing several gilt-edged chances.

The Peruvians are attempting to reach the World Cup finals for the first time since 1982 when Teofilio Cubillas was rated one of the best players in the world and the side rivalled Argentina and

Tuesday in South American zone qualifiers for the 2006 World Cup.

The win hoists Chile into second place overall in the 10-team zonal league with 10 points from six games, one point behind leaders Argentina, who take on arch-rivals Brazil on Wednesday.

In Tuesday's other games, Bolivia denied Paraguay's hopes with a 2-1 win in La Paz, while Uruguay slumped to a shock 3-1 home defeat against Peru which leaves them struggling to qualify for the finals in Germany.

The top four teams at the end of the league competition qualify for the finals, while the fifth placed



PHOTO: AFP

Jefferson Fanfan of Peru celebrates after scoring against Uruguay during their South American qualifier at the Centenario stadium in Montevideo on Tuesday.

Socceroos maul Fiji

AFP, Adelaide



hard for most of the first half.

Madaschi scored in the sixth minute when Fiji's goalkeeper Laisenia Tuba fumbled a Brett Emerton free kick, allowing Madaschi to toe-poke home.

But Fiji's Laisiasa Gataurua shocked Australia in the 19th minute equalling Madaschi's goal with a brilliant strike on the counter-attack.

Gataurua sprinted past Hearts defender Patrick Kisnorbo to get on the end of a long ball out of defence, then weaved past another defender and into the penalty box, before rolling a low shot past goalkeeper Zeljko Kalac.

Australia swept to victory after leading 2-1 at halftime and scored four times in the second half.

The first- and second-placed nations -- expected to be Australia and New Zealand -- will meet next year with the winner advancing to the 2006 World Cup finals playoff against the fifth-placed South American team.

Oceania's top two will also meet later this year for the right to represent the region at the 2005 FIFA Confederations Cup.

Football qualifier here on Wednesday.

Defender Adrian Madaschi scored twice and home-based wide player Ahmad Elrich scored in the final minute as the Socceroos remained unbeaten at the top of the tournament standings after three matches.

Cahill, who played for Millwall in last month's FA Cup final loss to Manchester United, has now scored five goals in three appearances for Australia after scoring twice in Australia's 9-0 win over Tahiti on Monday.

Fiji, second on the table heading into the match, were under-strength preferring to rest their top players for their remaining two matches but made Australia work

Injection saves Monaco

AFP, Paris

A 50 million euro cash injection by new backers has wiped out Monaco's debts and cleared the way for the Champions League finalists to keep star players Ludovic Giuly and Jerome Rothen.

Club sources told l'Equipe sports daily the side had convinced the French league's financial watchdog it was debt-free and able to continue in the first division.

Last year the club was initially relegated to the second division because of its debt mountain and only stayed in the top flight after an appeal.

"We're going to keep the core of the side," Monaco club president Pierre Sava said.

"We don't need to sell anybody to balance the books."

Last week Giuly was said to be on the verge of signing a three-year contract for Barcelona, while Rothen was on his way to Paris St Germain.

And Sava said it was 99 per cent certain Didier Deschamps would stay as coach.