



Tottenham Hotspur's Tom Huddlestone (R) competes for the ball with Inter Milan's Cesar Rodriguez (L) as Robbie Keane watches during a pre-season friendly at White Hart Lane on Sunday.

PRE-SEASON FRIENDLIES

Inter, Roma & Liverpool lose

Football

INTERNET, undated

Spurs 2-1 Inter

Inter were beaten 2-1 by Tottenham Hotspur at White Hart Lane this afternoon thanks to a Teemu Tainio brace.

The Nerazzurri fielded a strong side for this pre-season clash but were without Adriano, Luis Figo, Esteban Cambiasso and Azzurri stars Marco Materazzi and Fabio Grosso who were still on holiday.

New signings Olivier Dacourt and Brazilian Maicon started, while youngsters Leonardo Bonucci and Goran Slavkovski had to settle for seats on the bench.

Spurs handed a home debut to Bulgarian striker Dimitar Berbatov and Edgar Davids (pictured) played against the side he represented in the 2004-05 season.

The home side took the lead after 36 minutes of an open first half as Tainio's long range shot deflected past Francesco Toldo.

Obafemi Martins looked to be the Nerazzurri's main threat and he equalised on the stroke of half-time.

A Maicon shot was parried and the Nigerian marksman reacted first to slot the ball home.

The game went off the boil somewhat after the interval as both sides lacked a cutting edge.

However, a superb solo effort from Finnish midfielder Tainio clinched the game for the home side.

Having picked up the ball in

defence, the ex-Auxerre man ran 50 yards before curling a left-footed shot past the helpless Toldo.

L'pool 2-3 K'lautern

Jermaine Pennant gave Liverpool supporters a glimpse of things to come after marking his first appearance for the club, as a second-half substitute, by setting up both goals in Saturday's 3-2 friendly defeat to the German club Kaiserslautern in Liechtenstein.

Anfield's new 6.7million-pound signing is not known as a prolific scorer and he does not expect to turn into one now he is at Liverpool. But Pennant was delighted with his debut for Rafael Benitez's side after teeing up Craig Bellamy and Luis Garcia -- later forced off the pitch with a neck injury -- to score.

"It's always nice to score, but I get just as much pleasure setting up goals for others," said Pennant, who came on at half-time. "Hopefully they will be the first of many assists credited to my name while I'm at Liverpool. I'm pleased with the way my debut went. It's just nice to get the nerves out of the way."

Pennant says he has nothing to prove at Anfield and insists his wild days -- which saw him sent to prison for driving while intoxicated, banned and uninsured -- are a thing of the past. "Since all that happened I've had a full season at Birmingham," added Pennant. "I wouldn't be here at Liverpool if I hadn't played well for Birmingham."

Benitez expressed his satisfaction at Pennant's efforts although his

performance was overshadowed by injuries including a calf problem suffered by the new signing Fabio Aurelio. "I thought Jermaine did a good job and played well," the Spaniard said. "He showed the quality that he has. It was a difficult game for us with the two injuries to Luis and Fabio." Though Aurelio's injury caused the greater concern -- "I think it's a more serious problem than Luis," said Benitez -- it was when Garcia complained of pain in his neck shortly after scoring that his manager was given a real headache: Benitez had already used all his outfield substitutes and was left with no choice but to throw first-choice goalkeeper Jose Reina into midfield for the last 15 minutes.

The penalty shoot-out hero of Liverpool's FA Cup final triumph over West Ham in May said the experience had been an eye-opener. "I had one really good chance to score," said Reina. "But now I know how difficult it is to score. Playing in midfield was the last solution because we had used all our substitutes. It's not normal for things like that to happen but I had to do it."

The 17-year-old defender Jack Hobbs was blamed by many for the defeat but was consoled by Benitez: "He is a young boy who will learn from this," he said. Bellamy's second goal in three games since his 6million-pound move from Blackburn Rovers cancelled out Ricardo Villar's opener for Kaiserslautern before Garcia put Liverpool ahead. But two late efforts

by Marcel Ziemer sealed Liverpool's fate in the first of three friendlies against continental opposition before next week's Champions League qualifying round tie with Maccabi Haifa of Israel.

Roma 0-1 Porto

Roma were beaten 1-0 by Portuguese champions Porto in their first major pre-season friendly on Sunday evening, thanks an own goal by Philippe Mexes.

Coach Luciano Spalletti fielded the usual 4-2-3-1 system, but could not count on his internationals Francesco Totti, Daniele De Rossi and Simone Perrotta, who were still on holiday, as well as Leandro Cufre and Samuel Kuffour.

Vincenzo Montella and Rodrigo Tadei stayed in Trigoria, to recover from their injuries.

Spalletti alternated Marco Cassetti and Christian Panucci on the flanks, leaving Ricardo Faty in the middle next to Alberto Aquilani, who distinguished himself.

After 35 minutes Edgar Alvarez missed a great chance for Roma and three minutes after that Porto took the lead, with Mexes trying to anticipate Adriano but unfortunately sending the ball past Gianluca Curci.

Alvarez tried to equalise 9 minutes into the second half, but Helton was ready to stop him.

The Giallorossi looked in fairly good physical condition against a team who may be one of their opponents in the next Champions League.

Cole may make Real u-turn

AFP, Madrid

Arsenal's England defender Ashley Cole could yet move to Real Madrid despite the Gunners admitting to talks with Chelsea over the 25-year-old, Marca sports daily reported Sunday.

Cole is a long-term target for Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho, who is keen to land a left-back after selling Asier Del Horno to Valencia last week.

But Marca say Real could get the man for whom Premiership champions Chelsea recently had a reported 16 million pounds (23 million dollars) offer rejected.

With veteran Real star Roberto Carlos poised to sign for Turkish club Fenerbahce on a three-year deal after previously being linked with Chelsea himself, Real are bidding to replace him either with Lyon's French international Eric Abidal or Cole.

According to Marca, Arsenal could talk business with Real for upwards of 18 million euros with the Spaniards having an eye on both striker Jose Antonio Reyes -- who earlier denied he was looking to go back to his homeland -- and also Brazilian Julio Baptista.

Becks keeping fingers crossed

REUTERS, Madrid

David Beckham has said he hopes to recover from his knee and tendon injuries in time for Real Madrid's pre-season tour of the United States next month.

"Hopefully I'll be fit for the games in the USA. We'll have to wait and see because I only started running on Sunday without any pain," Beckham told the Real website on Monday.

He suffered the injuries and had to be replaced during England's World Cup quarterfinal clash with Portugal, which they lost on penalties at the beginning of July.

The midfielder has been training separately from the rest of the Real squad since joining up at their pre-season training camp in Austria last week.

Beckham is looking forward to playing alongside his former Manchester United teammate Ruud van Nistelrooy, who completed his move to the Spanish capital on Friday.

"He is one of the best goalscorers I have ever played with," said Beckham. "He runs for the team and he works hard."

Real are scheduled to play DC United in Seattle on Aug. 9 and Real Salt Lake in Salt Lake City on Aug. 12.

Odonkor wants guarantees

INTERNET, undated

David Odonkor has arrived back at Dortmund after his World Cup adventure with his sights firmly set on cementing a place in the Dortmund starting eleven.

Odonkor was a firm fans' favourite throughout the World Cup and he made an impact coming from the bench for Jurgen Klinsmann's side, but is not prepared to do the same at club level.

He told Bild: "If I am forced to sit on the bench, I will call my agent and consider a transfer."

With the arrivals of Alexander Frei and Nelson Valdez, Dortmund have strengthened in attack and put Odonkor's place under threat.

And after returning from his holidays after the World Cup, Odonkor fears he may have lost ground on the new signings and, with just 10 days to prepare for the start of the new season, he may also have lost his place in Bert van Marwijk's starting XI.

A friendly brawl

REUTERS, Buenos Aires

Four players were sent off and a brawl in the tunnel delayed play for eight minutes during a match in Argentina's so-called Friendship Cup at the weekend.

Trouble broke out in the second half on Saturday evening after Gimnasia-La Plata striker Martin Cardetti and San Lorenzo defender Pablo Quatroocchi were red-carded for fighting.

The pair insulted each other as they entered the tunnel with players and officials from both benches then joining in along with Gimnasia security officials, leading to a brawl.

Argentine media reports said San Lorenzo coach Oscar Ruggeri was punched by a Gimnasia official during the fighting.

The teams, who play in first division, returned to the field to complete the game, which ended 0-0.

San Lorenzo finished with eight men as Diego Rivero had been sent off before halftime for a second bookable offence followed by Sebastian Mendez early in the second half.

The Friendship Cup is a warm-up for the Argentine season which starts next weekend.

"It was madness," Gimnasia coach Pedro Troglio told La Nacion newspaper. "I didn't expect anything like this. It was a bad way for a friendly to end."

Balla and Lamps will click: Elliot

Football

INTERNET, undated

Former Chelsea skipper Paul Elliott is convinced Michael Ballack and Frank Lampard can forge a deadly midfield partnership.

Jose Mourinho has stated he will deploy Ballack and Lampard together despite concerns there may not be room in the team for both players because of their similarity.

But Elliott, who enjoyed a successful three-year spell at Stamford Bridge, believes their styles will compliment each other with Ballack supplying the creative spark missing from Chelsea's midfield.

"It's all about quality and they give different things to the team. Lampard brings so much energy, particularly in the final third of the pitch," he said.

"If you look at their goalscoring records, Lampard will probably just about edge it, although Ballack has scored a few for Bayern.

"Ballack is more creative on the ball. He has the ability to thread a ball through and make the killer pass."

"They are different types of midfielder and I don't see a problem with them playing together - their styles will suite each other."

"The fact is they are two world-class players so you have to try and fit

them in the same."

He continued: "In Claude Makelele Chelsea have the best holding player in the world. Michael Essien has great power, can break up attacks and can get forward."

"Lampard is a class act as well but what Mourinho has lacked is a very creative midfield player. In terms of creativity on the ball, Ballack provides what was missing."

Lampard has rarely gelled with Liverpool's Steven Gerrard in England's midfield with observers pointing to their similarity as the reason, but Elliott insists that has little relevance to Chelsea.

"There are reasons why Gerard and Lampard don't play well together. For a start Premiership football is totally different to international football, and they could be better used," he said.

"Mourinho is an astute manager. He will know how to play them. Just because Gerrard and Lampard can't do it for England doesn't mean there's a question mark over Ballack."

Chelsea may start the season with a new formation with Mourinho abandoning his traditional 4-3-3 line-up in order to field Andriy Shevchenko and Didier Drogba in a two-pronged attack.

But using a midfield diamond would prove a real test of his man-management skills with Arjen Robben,

Joe Cole, Shaun Wright-Phillips and Essien the likely victims.

However, former defensive hardman Elliott believes the formation is of minor importance when the team has so many match-winners with Mourinho taking a pragmatic approach.

"Mourinho is very flexible in his tactics with much depending on the opposition," he said.

"I think there will be variations of gameplan because Shevchenko is top class, so he might play two up-top with Didier Drogba there as well."

"There's an option for the diamond, for 4-3-3 and 4-5-1. But it's players who win games. Formations are just a basis of organisation."

"Mourinho has top class players so it's just about getting the right shape to compliment that."

Elliott is unconcerned that Mourinho will have trouble keeping all of his stars happy.

"Mourinho will have told the players they're at the best club, they're on the best wages, they have the best facilities and that they'll win things," he said.

"Football has changed - gone are the days when it's about 12 players winning things. It's 22 players and everyone shares in the success."

"That's the demand of the modern game and sensible players will realise that."

Lyon edge PSG

Football

AFP, Lyon

Champions Lyon snatched a dramatic penalty shoot-out victory over cup-winners Paris St Germain at the Stade Gerland here on Sunday to claim the French Champions Trophy.

The teams were deadlocked at 1-1 after 90 minutes in the season's traditional curtain-raiser between the champions and cup winners from last season.

The shoot-out went right to the wire until PSG's Ivory Coast striker Bonaventure Kalou saw his spot-kick saved by Lyon reserve goalkeeper Remy Vercoutre, before Lyon's Mali international midfielder Mahamadou Diarra sealed the victory with a successful strike from 12 yards (11 metres).

Lyon's victory was all the more impressive as they were missing nine World Cup players who are still recovering from the finals.

The team's second string also had to battle searing temperatures and the loss of the first goal of the game.

"It was hot and you have to congratulate the two teams who produced a good match," said Lyon coach Gerard Houllier.

"Not everything was perfect but if that was the case from the first match (of this season), that would be worrying. It will come."

Jerome Rothen fired PSG ahead after Vercoutre had palmed away a Pierre-Alain Frau header from six yards, just passed the hour mark.

But Lyon were level from the spot just nine minutes later as Karim Benzema scored after Sylvain Armand was penalised for pushing new Swedish signing Kim Kallstrom in the box.

"Honestly I think my team



Lyon players pose with the Champions Trophy after winning against PSG in penalties at the Gerland Stadium in Lyon on Sunday.

Aimar flattered at Zaragozaza interest

REUTERS, Madrid

Argentina midfielder Pablo Aimar has said he was flattered by the interest shown by Real Zaragoza in coming to sign him from Valencia.

"I joined Zaragoza because the coach (Victor Fernandez) called me, and because they came looking for me which is not normal in the world of football where the players usually offer themselves," Aimar told a news conference on Monday.

Zaragoza are reported to have paid around 11 million euros (\$14 million) for the 26-year-old, who signed a four-year contract on Saturday.

In announcing the deal the club described Aimar's arrival as the most important signing in their history.

Aimar said: "Although it is a smaller club than Valencia, in a few years hopefully you will be able to say there aren't many clubs bigger than Zaragoza."

Aimar, who has won 43 caps with Argentina, joined Valencia from River Plate in 2001 for 20 million dollars.

He went on to win two Primera Liga titles and the UEFA Cup in 2004 with Valencia, but was considered surplus to requirements for next season by coach Quique Sanchez Flores.

Zaragoza's new coach has already bought in Argentine midfielder Andres D'Alessandro on loan from Wolfsburg, and defenders Sergio Fernandez and Juanfran.

They finished 11th in the league last season and lost to Espanyol in the final of the King's Cup.

Football

INTERNET, undated

Juventus have slapped a prohibitive price tag on want-away striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic, saying prospective buyers will have to stump up 40 million euros (26 million pounds) for the Swedish international.

The Turin giants are set to offer Zlatan an improved financial package worth five million euros per season in order to persuade him to stay with the club in Serie B. Juve will start the season with a 17-point penalty, and face a tough challenge returning to the top flight at the first attempt.

World Cup-winners Fabio Cannavaro and Gianluca Zambrotta have left the club along with Emerson and Lilian Thuram, but the bianconeri have held onto star players Gianluigi Buffon and

Pavel Nedved.

Ibrahimovic also looks set to stay given Juve's sky-high valuation, despite interest from both Milan clubs. AC Milan need a striker and have money to spend following the sale of Andriy Shevchenko to Chelsea for 44 million euros, but they are unlikely to offer more than half the asking price.

Inter start the season as Serie A favourites and would be an attractive destination for the 24-year-old, but have a number of attacking options and would be loath to break the bank for a player who shone only intermittently last term. However, doubts remain over Adriano's ability to cut it at the highest level, while Inter have been in talks with Tottenham Hotspur over the future of Nigerian international Obafemi Martins.



ZLATAN IBRAHIMOVIC

Ribery back with OM

REUTERS, Paris

France midfielder Franck Ribery resumed training with Olympique Marseille on Monday, his club said.

Ribery, who is being chased by French champions Olympique Lyon and several European clubs, is tied with Marseille for another season and the club have said they want him to stay.

The 23-year-old, a member of the France team who reached the World Cup final, was due to meet Marseille chairman Pape Diouf later in the day to clarify his situation.

France's top prospect had been expected to resume training on Saturday but Marseille officials accepted his request to return two days late.

The Ligue 1 season kicks off this weekend.

Simao's Valencia move stalls

AFP, Madrid

Benfica striker Simao Sabrosa will not be signing for top Spanish side Valencia after an apparent disagreement over the financial details of a move, Spanish media reported Sunday.

The clubs had reached agreement on a 15 million euro (19 million dollars) deal but the move fell through according to AS sports daily after the 26-year-old reportedly asked for more than the 1.5 million euros (1.9 million dollars) salary on offer.