

Deschamps has no regrets

AFP, Rome

Juventus coach Didier Deschamps said Friday that he has no regrets about joining the troubled and disgraced Italian giants.

Deschamps turned down the opportunity to coach Marseille in the close season, preferring to head to his former club Juventus instead.

But no sooner did he sign on the dotted line than Juve were hit with a hefty punishment - relegation to Serie B, stripped of their last two titles and docked 30 (later reduced to 17) points for the coming season - for their role in a match-fixing scandal.

Meanwhile, Marseille are flying high in France as the early-season pace-setters.

Speaking on the eve of Juve's opening Serie B match this season at the modest home of Rimini, Deschamps said: "I have never thought that I made the wrong choice."

"This situation is not the best, but anyhow, Juve will always be Juve and I am here to win."

Juventus face an uphill task to earn promotion in their first ever season in Serie B and have not given up hope of having their points penalty reduced, taking their latest appeal to the Italian Olympic Committee.

"The situation is very difficult and for that reason we have to start winning immediately."

Reverse psychology works for Stoichkov

AFP, Sofia

National football coach Hristo Stoichkov lost a 15,000-euro (19,000 dollars) bet in a move to spur his players to the 3-0 win over Slovenia in a Euro 2008 Group G qualifier, 7 Dni Sport newspaper reported Friday.

"The 3-0 win over Slovenia cost Stoichkov 15,000 euros," 7 Dni Sport said. "In order to buy his players, the coach bet on a draw or a victory for Slovenia."

According to the newspaper Stoichkov took bets with Juventus striker Valeri Bojinov, and midfielders Chavdar Yankov (Hanover) and Blagoi Georgiev (Red Star Belgrade) saying he would pay them 5,000 euros each if the team won.

Another player from the team confirmed to 7 Dni Sport that there was such a bet. "Stoichkov did it to us to buy the boys," he said, refusing to be named.

Bulgaria posted a 3-0 win over Slovenia with second half goals from Bojinov, Atletico Madrid's Martin Petrov and Levski Sofia's Dimitar Telykyski.

Stoichkov, the leading scorer in the 1994 World Cup who netted a total of 35 goals in 83 internationals for Bulgaria, watched the match from the stands due to a four-match touch-line ban imposed by UEFA for misconduct.

He was reported to have announced in the changing-room that he would pay up should he lose the bet.



(From L) Real Betis' new signings Brazilian Rafael Sobis, Swiss Johann Vogel and German David Odonkor pose at their press introduction at Ruiz de Lopera Stadium in Sevilla on Saturday.

Hoddle for Jamaica?

AFP, London

Glenn Hoddle is being tipped as the man who will spearhead Jamaica's bid to reach the 2010 World Cup finals in South Africa.

According to English media reports, Hoddle, 49, has become the front runner for the vacancy after Sven-Goran Eriksson failed to follow up an approach from the Jamaican FA.

Jose Pekerman, the manager of Argentina during this summer's World Cup, is also in the running but Hoddle was reported to be the favoured candidate as a English speaker based in Europe, where most Jamaican professionals play.

Jamaica missed out on the last two World Cups after reaching the finals in France in 1998.

Former England boss Hoddle stepped down as manager of Wolves in July after one season in charge of the Championship club. He has also previously managed Swindon, Chelsea, Southampton and Tottenham.

The new stadium, which is to be built on Stanley Park close to the club's current home at Anfield, will receive a definitive green light by the end of this month provided Liverpool FC can prove it can come up with around 180 million pounds (\$340 million dollars) of funding.

That will trigger the release of

public funds for regeneration work linked to the project, which the council hopes will revitalise one of the most run-down areas of the city.

Provided that there are no last-minute hiccups, work on the new stadium could begin early next year with Liverpool moving into the new ground at the start of the 2009-10 season.

The move to a bigger stadium will strengthen Liverpool's ability to compete more effectively with rivals such as Arsenal and Manchester United, whose grounds hold 60,000 and 75,800 respectively.

But the fans will inevitably miss Anfield, the club's home since

1892 which is widely regarded as the most atmospheric of all English grounds.

Reds boss Rafael Benitez said the new stadium would be a major boost for the club.

"It is very important that we have this new stadium to have more room for our fans," he said.

"It will help us provide very important extra funds for our future, and it will help us to compete with clubs like Manchester United, Chelsea and Arsenal."

"We have fantastic support at Liverpool and the Kop is a very special place, but our capacity is just 45,000. It would be even better for everyone if we had 60,000 fans in the ground."

New stadium a reality for L'pool

Football

AFP, Liverpool

Liverpool's plan to build a new 60,000-seat stadium moved a step closer to becoming reality on Friday when the local city council approved the lease of land for the project.

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Fergie backs Carrick

AFP, Manchester



Alex Ferguson insisted Friday that Michael Carrick has already shrugged off the pressure of his 18.6-million-pound price tag as the England midfielder prepares for his Old Trafford debut against former club Spurs on Saturday.

Carrick, 25, became United's solitary big-money summer signing when he quit White Hart Lane for Old Trafford in the wake of the World Cup.

Having seen expensive midfielders Juan Sebastian Veron and Kleberson fail to live up to the huge expectations in a United shirt in recent seasons, Carrick has been forced to shoulder the dual burden of justifying his fee and also replacing club legend Roy Keane at the heart of United's midfield.

But manager Ferguson insists that the former West Ham youngster has taken the move in his stride as he readies himself for a swift reunion with Martin Jol's Spurs.

Ferguson said: "It's always a big thing to play against your old club and Michael will probably be glad to

get it over and done with.

"But he has not had any problems settling in at the club and I thought he was tremendous in the Amsterdam Tournament before he got injured.

"That ankle injury knocked him back a bit, but his training has been great and it has been easy for him to settle because we have so many English players in the squad. He should be ok here and I've no worries about that.

"But he owes a lot to Tottenham because they took the chance on him when they bought him from West Ham at a time when other clubs weren't prepared to take that chance.

"He left in the right way, however, with everything peaceful and there are no recriminations from either side. Spurs knew that the boy wanted to come here, so we are pleased with that.

"He had his first game against Watford and it's just a shame that he didn't really get involved with England last week because he could have done with more match action.

"But he will start against Spurs and we will hopefully see him take another step up with his fitness."

Ferguson, who revealed that

Alan Smith is still not fit enough to return to first-team duty after his broken leg lay-off, had planned to pair Carrick with England teammate Owen Hargreaves in a new-look midfield at United.

But Bayern Munich's refusal to sell Hargreaves has left Ferguson short on numbers in a key area and he admitted that his desire to land the England star cost him the chance to sign Marcos Senna from Villarreal.

The Scot said: "We tried our best to get Owen Hargreaves and, because we pushed the boat out to get him, we also missed out on the boy Senna.

"He was the alternative, but we couldn't keep him or Villarreal waiting any longer, so we had to withdraw gracefully from that.

"We felt that pursuing Hargreaves was important, but unfortunately we didn't get him. Maybe another time, though, and it's something we will possibly pursue again in the future.

"But the money was there for more players, there's absolutely no doubt about that."

Police probe surprises Pearce

AFP, London



Manchester City boss Stuart Pearce has expressed his surprise at police launching a second investigation into Ben Thacker.

Thacker, already facing a police

inquiry into his brutal challenge on Portsmouth's Pedro Mendes, learned Thursday he was the subject of another investigation.

Thacker, banned for six games and fined 120,000 pounds by City for his August 23 elbow assault on Mendes which left the Portugal international unconscious, is being probed for an incident in a game against Blackburn Rovers' reserves



Celtic's new-signing Danish midfielder Thomas Gravesen jumps to evade a challenge in the Scottish Premier League match against Aberdeen at Pittodrie on Saturday.

in February.

Ralph Welch, a 19-year-old playing for Rovers, has complained that he was elbowed in the face by City's 30-year-old former Wales defender during the game in Morecombe.

Pearce was at the game in question and recalled Thacker actually received a free-kick for the challenge, and he feels the latest move smacks of bandwagon-jumping.

"I find it quite strange given they have waited since February until now," said Pearce.

"It strikes me as someone getting on the back of a bit of publicity."

"I was at the game myself and I remember the linesman giving a free-kick in Ben's favour."

Pearce has previously expressed his distaste for police taking action over events which occur during games, believing the football authorities have enough power to control situations themselves.

And nothing that has happened over the past fortnight has changed his opinion.

"From my point of view, once the players cross the white line they are under the authority of the referee, they are the ones who should deal with things that happen during matches," he said.

"Police forces in this country are overburdened as it is."

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	27	Altar	DOWN	20	Dog .
1	Hot	affirmative	1	Hard	tags, e.g.
4	Pinch	28 Sitcom	2	Experts	21 City
7	Campus	actress	3	Memory	Lot
8	Cretan	quarters	4	loss	evacuated
10	king, son of	30 Support	5	Recess	22 Brick-layer's
11	Zeus	33 Deals a	6	5 Bay	tool
12		crushing blow	7	Indigent	23 Accompanying
13		34	7	Out of play	24 Sticks
14		Deals a	8	Highway stopover	25 Hodges
15		crushing blow	9	Bracket candlestick	of baseball
16		35	10	5 Bay	lore
17		Deals a	11	Indigent	26 Wind-borne
18		blow	12	7 Out of play	toys
19		36 Dennis	13	8 Highway stopover	27 Plant
20		the —	37	9 Bracket candlestick	evidence, maybe
21		38	14	10 To and —	29 Neckwear
22		39	15	12 Eccentrics	30 Attractive, to
23		40 P.I.	16	13 Sauté	31 Liberine
24		41 Bond, e.g.	17	14 Deli salad	32 Pump
25		42	18	15 Parched	up the volume
26		43	19	16 Ida for	33 Writer
27		44	20	17 Ida for	Bagnold
28		45	21	18 Ida for	34 After-dinner
29		46	22	19 Ida for	remark?
30		47	23	20 Ida for	
31		48	24	21 Ida for	
32		49	25	22 Ida for	
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