

Lippi to return in 2007

AFP, Rome

Marcello Lippi, who resigned as Italy coach shortly after their triumphant World Cup campaign this year, says he will look for another job in 2007.

"I will return to coaching next year," he was quoted as saying by Gazzetta dello Sport's website on Tuesday.

"Come February or March I will have a look at my options for a new adventure with a serious club, one that excites me. It's not important whether the club is in Italy or abroad."

Lippi began his managerial career in 1985 with Pontedera before spells at Siena, Pistoiese, Carrarese and Lucchese.

He then spent one season at Atalanta and one at Napoli before his big break in 1994, when he was appointed coach of Juventus.

Lippi led Juventus to the Serie A title in his first season and helped them become European champions in 1996.

Lippi resigned from Juventus in February 1999 after a poor start to the season and took charge at Inter Milan, where he stayed for a short and unhappy spell.

He rejoined Juventus in 2001 and enjoyed considerable success before accepting the Italy job shortly after the 2004 European championships.

FIFA ban Kenya

AFP, Zurich

FIFA confirmed Wednesday that Kenya has been thrown out of international football until a 28-point plan agreed earlier this year to tackle alleged government interference and other problems is fully implemented.

The decision by the world governing body's emergency committee to suspend the Kenya Football Federation was officially notified Wednesday in a letter sent to the KFF, FIFA said in a statement.

Sporting rules, the integrity of competitions, and FIFA's decisions were "regularly violated or ignored by members of the Kenyan football family", it added.

The latest move came a month after FIFA President Sepp Blatter complained that the situation in Kenyan football had deteriorated with disagreements between the top clubs and the prospect of two parallel leagues in Kenya.

Blatter gave Kenyan authorities a final deadline of October 18 to provide urgent confirmation, "not only in writing but in acts, that the KFF would fully implement the agreement signed in Cairo," FIFA said.

KFF general secretary Dan Omino, who believes that both he and his chairman, Alfred Sambu, have been unfairly targeted, last week claimed they had fulfilled all recommendations set by FIFA.

Omino said the problems affecting Kenyan football would continue. He said FIFA was applying double standards by relying on misinformation from some local football officials.

FIFA first suspended Kenya for three months in 2004 for government interference but the situation was reversed after the country accepted to draw up new statutes.

Best on bank notes

AFP, London

Former Northern Ireland and Manchester United footballer George Best is to be immortalised on one million limited edition bank notes, the Ulster Bank announced Thursday.

The five-pound notes featuring the legendary winger, who died aged 59 last November 25 from health problems linked to alcoholism, will be issued next month to mark the first anniversary of his death.

He will be featured in both his Northern Ireland and Manchester United strips.

Ulster Bank chief executive Cormac McCarthy said the initiative was a fitting tribute to the British-run province's most famous son and would be an affordable piece of memorabilia for fans.

"This is the first time that Ulster Bank has commissioned a commemorative bank note and by limiting the print run to a million notes, we feel this makes the initiative even more significant," he added.

Advance orders are being taken from November 13 with notes available for purchase from November 27.

Belfast City Airport was renamed George Best Airport earlier this year in another tribute to the footballer, who won the European Cup with Manchester United in 1968, the same he was voted European player of the year.



PHOTO: AFP

Diego Maradona fights for the ball with Milton Tyson Nunez during an exhibition match at the Olympic Stadium in San Pedro Sula on Wednesday. Maradona travelled to Honduras with a team of selected former Argentinian players to perform a 'showbol' show.

Big games, big results



REUTERS, London

It was a big-game weekend in Europe's top leagues and when the dust settled Manchester United, Real Madrid, Werder Bremen, Olympique Lyon and Ajax Amsterdam were able to celebrate wins over fierce rivals.

SPAIN

Barcelona lost their unbeaten league record in the worst possible way, a 2-0 defeat by Real Madrid in the Bernabeu.

Goals from Raul and Ruud van Nistelrooy hoisted Real to 14 points, alongside Deportivo Coruna, 1-0 home winners over Atletico Madrid with a header by Angel Arizmendi.

Barcelona, who missed a host of chances, are joint top on 16 points with Valencia, who overcame Osasuna 1-0. Sevilla are third on 15 points after defeating Gimnastica 2-1.

ENGLAND

Manchester United and Chelsea continue to set the pace in the Premier League but Liverpool's chances of their first title since 1990 already look to have disappeared.

Chelsea's two big close-season buys Andriy Shevchenko and Michael Ballack were on target in a 2-1 home win over Portsmouth while Paul Scholes marked his 500th game for Manchester United with a goal in a 2-0 home victory over Liverpool.

The top two have 22 points, two clear of Bolton Wanderers, who won 1-0 at Blackburn Rovers but needed two penalty saves in the last four minutes by Jussi Jaaskelainen to earn the points.

Arsenal thrashed Reading 4-0 to move up to fourth on 17 points with

a game in hand. Liverpool are 11th, already 11 points off the pace.

ITALY

Inter Milan were held to a 0-0 draw at Udinese and the champions were joined at the top by Palermo, shock 2-0 winners at AC Milan thanks to goals from Marco Bresciano and Amari.

Third-placed AS Roma needed a late equaliser from Francesco Totti to earn a 1-1 home draw with Chievo Verona.

Inter and Palermo lead on 15 points with Roma on 13 and Udinese, Atalanta and Livorno all on 12.

Atalanta produced the comeback of the weekend, recovering from 2-0 down to beat Sampdoria 3-2.

LIGA TOP SIX

Teams	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Barcelona	7	5	1	1	16	7	16
Valencia	7	5	1	1	13	5	16
Sevilla	7	5	0	2	15	9	15
Real Madrid	7	4	2	1	10	3	14
Deportivo	7	4	2	1	9	5	14
Zaragoza	7	4	1	2	16	10	13

SERIE TOP SIX

Teams	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Chelsea	9	7	1	1	15	5	22
Man United	8	6	1	1	17	5	19
Bolton	8	5	2	1	9	4	17
Portsmouth	9	5	1	3	13	5	16
Everton	9	4	4	1	15	8	16
Aston Villa	9	3	6	0	11	6	15

PREMIERSHIP TOP SIX

Teams	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Inter Milan	8	5	3	0	16	9	18
Palermo	8	6	0	2	18	13	18
Roma	8	4	2	2	13	6	14
Udinese	8	3	4	1	10	5	13
Atalanta	8	3	4	1	13	10	13
Siena	8	3	4	1	9	7	12

In Serie B, Juventus moved off the bottom when their sixth successive win, 1-0 at Triestina, put them on two points after they began the season on -17.

GERMANY

Werder Bremen proved themselves worthy of the Bundesliga lead when they beat champions Bayern Munich 3-1.

In an action-packed first half Diego and Pierre Wome put Werder ahead before visiting Bayern hit back through Roy Makaay. A 62nd-minute own goal by Lucio ensured Werder's win.

Werder have 16 points, as do Schalke 04 after their 2-1 home victory over Hanover 96. Hertha Berlin moved up to third, ahead of Bayern on goal difference on 13 points, after beating Borussia Moenchengladbach 2-1.

FRANCE

The title race could be over already after champions Olympique Lyon thumped second-placed Olympique Marseille 4-1 away to open an eight-point gap after 10 matches.

Juninho put Lyon ahead after 20 minutes and Karim Benzema doubled the lead in the 49th.

Marseille's hopes of a comeback disappeared with a 56th-minute red card for Taye Taiwo. Although they pulled a goal back through Habib Bmogo, Juninho's second seven minutes later and a late effort by Kim Kallstrom settled the issue.

Lyon, seeking a sixth successive title, have 28 points. AS Nancy are third on 19 after beating Nantes 1-0.

Pole position up for grabs

AFP, London



Any one of three sides could find themselves top of the Premiership come full-time

on Saturday.

Leaders Manchester United will be knocked off the top of the table by third-placed Bolton, two points behind, if the hosts win their encounter against the Red Devils at the Reebok Stadium.

But a draw could also see Sir Alex Ferguson's side lose first place if reigning champions Chelsea, level with United on points but behind on goal difference, have a successful away day against newcomers Sheffield United.

Bottom-of-the-table Charlton, buoyed by their midweek League Cup win against Bolton are away to Newcastle, who themselves enjoyed a Cup victory over Premiership high-flyers Portsmouth on Wednesday.

Wayne Rooney will hope to end his 10-game goal drought against Bolton and United's experienced goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar is convinced the England striker will soon be hitting the back of the net again.

"Nobody here has any doubts about Wayne. People regard him very highly and expect a lot of him but even if he was to play 55 games a season, as soon as he goes through a spell where he is not scoring or makes a couple of wrong decisions,

people get on his back."

Cristiano Ronaldo may return in place of Darren Fletcher in United's midfield.

Despite United being 11 points clear of arch-rivals Liverpool, following their 2-0 win against the Merseysiders at Old Trafford last weekend, Ferguson has refused to write off their foes' title hopes.

And the Scot insisted that Liverpool boss Rafael Benitez's controversial rotation policy was not the reason for the Anfield club's inconsistent start to the season.

"I will not dismiss a Liverpool team because of the manager and the way here-arranges things."

That will come as some consolation to Benitez, with the Spaniard set to change his side for the 99th consecutive match when unbeaten Aston Villa arrive at Anfield on Saturday.

"There are other ways to be successful, sure, but this is working. We have won four finals in two years so I'm happy with it," said Benitez.

Villa, under new manager Martin O'Neill, have been a side transformed this term but a run of three successive draws has seen them drop down to seventh place and now the Birmingham club's Colombian striker Juan Pablo Angel has called for a return to winning ways.

"We have to start picking up points and winning games if we want to be well up the table. It's all right to remain unbeaten but we need to get results."

Chelsea midfielder Joe Cole will look to strengthen his claim for an

England recall after marking his first start of the season following a knee injury at the World Cup by scoring the Blues' opener in their 2-0 League Cup win against Blackburn Rovers.

England play the Netherlands on November 15 and Cole said: "The next England game would not be too soon for me."

"I am fit for selection and will be ready for it. It is good to be back. It was such a long time out and was probably the biggest injury of my career, but the knee was fine."

Watford, still searching for their first Premiership victory since last season's promotion, face Tottenham side at Vicarage Road on Saturday after both clubs enjoyed midweek League Cup victories.

Hornets fans hoping for that elusive first league win know their side face another tricky Test against a Spurs side unbeaten in six matches.

Fifth-placed Portsmouth welcome Reading to Fratton Park on Saturday with wing-back Matt Taylor saying striker Benjani Mwarurwa's work-rate has been an inspiration to his team-mates at the south coast club.

"He gives 110 per cent every game and you can't ask for anything more. The fans are seeing that now," said Taylor. "I don't think I've played with a striker who works so hard."

Reading first-team coach manager Kevin Dillon, a Portsmouth player in the 1980s, insisted he wasn't too downhearted by the Royals' failure to force extra-time against Liverpool.

"We've got a big game on

Saturday, and if we had had extra-time or penalties we might still have lost."

Victory for Fulham over Wigan at Craven Cottage would see the Londoners complete an unbeaten month in the Premiership.

But Wigan are in fine form having thrashed Manchester City 4-0 last week and are now eager for their first away win this season.

In Saturday's other match Arsenal face Everton in a dress rehearsal for their upcoming League Cup clash while Sunday sees second-bottom West Ham, knocked out of the League Cup by minnows Chesterfield, at home to Blackburn.

Manchester City will aim to bounce back from their Wigan thrashing at home to Middlesbrough on Monday.

FIXTURES

<b>Saturday</b> (1400 GMT kick-off unless stated) Arsenal v Everton, Bolton v Manchester United, Fulham v Wigan, Liverpool v Aston Villa, Newcastle v Charlton (1615 GMT), Portsmouth v Reading, Sheffield United v Chelsea (1145 GMT), Watford v Tottenham
<b>Sunday</b> West Ham v Blackburn (1600 GMT) Monday Manchester City v Middlesbrough (2000 GMT)

Mascherano shocked at 'bite' leniency



REUTERS, London

Argentina's Javier Mascherano was surprised that Tottenham Hotspur striker Jermain Defoe was not more severely punished for biting his arm in a Premier League match at the weekend, British media said on Tuesday.

"To receive a bite was the worst thing that has happened to me since I came to England," the West Ham United midfielder was quoted as saying.

"Things weren't going well for me but this was unexpected and outrageous," he said of the incident at White Hart Lane during West Ham's 1-0 defeat on Sunday.

"The strangest thing of the match

was that the referee didn't send him off."

A Football Association spokesman, however, was quoted as saying: "FIFA regulations prevent us from taking retrospective action."

The FA claim their hands are tied because Defoe was booked when he bit Mascherano on the arm after the Argentine brought him down from behind. Mascherano was also booked.

Football pundits in Britain were also shocked that the England striker should get away with no more than a booking.

Former Ireland striker Tony Cascarino said: "I thought that I could never be shocked by anything in football but, once again, the sport has shown its ability to stun even the most battle-scarred veteran."

"Jermain Defoe's impression of

Count Dracula on Javier Mascherano on Sunday has to fall into that category. It was unbelievable," he wrote in a column in The Times on Tuesday.

Spurs coach Martin Jol played down the incident, saying it was just a nibble, and Defoe apologised on Monday but added that the reaction to his bite, which he described as mischievous, was exaggerated.

West Ham have struggled this season despite the surprise signing of Argentine World Cup duo Mascherano and Carlos Tevez, losing their last seven games and failing to score in any of them.

Manager Alan Pardew is now hoping for a turnaround in the club's fortunes at third division Chesterfield in the League Cup on Tuesday.

Inter hungry for more

AFP, Rome



Saturday.

Inter, who together with Palermo hold a four-point lead at the top of Serie A after eight matches, finished third last season but were awarded the title after Juventus and AC Milan were found guilty of match-fixing.

Several Juve and AC Milan players taunted Inter for celebrating what they felt was a hollow success, saying championships should be won on the pitch and not in the courts.

Their comments riled Inter and now they are ready to bite back.

"We have a great hunger for victory because we want to legitimise the title that we won," said their Argentine striker Hernan Crespo who came on as a substitute in Wednesday's 4-1 win over Livorno after recovering from a hamstring strain.

"We want everyone to see that we're serious and that we want to bring home the Scudetto this year,

too. We have a point to prove.

"Milan have won a lot in recent years and don't often make mistakes in big matches. But at the same time I think Saturday's result depends a lot on us. They are a strong team, but we're just as good."

Crespo insisted the pressure would be felt more by their neighbours, who were docked eight points for their match-fixing crimes and trail Inter by 11 points.

"After the scandal this summer, there is pressure on us to win the league this season. But more pressure will be on Milan in the derby because they simply cannot afford to lose," he said.

Crespo, who played for AC Milan in the 2004-05 season and scored two goals in their Champions League final defeat to Liverpool, believes Milan's points handicap has not weakened their resolve.

"With or without their penalty, they're still the team to beat," said the 31-year-old forward.

"I say that because I know the atmosphere, the players, the personalities, and what they'll be thinking."

AC Milan warmed up for the derby with a hard-fought 1-0 win at Chievo on Wednesday, their first league victory in five matches.

"It allows us to go into the derby in

a much better frame of mind," said Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti.

Tied with Inter on 18 points are Palermo, who play away to Fiorentina on Sunday.

Palermo president Maurizio Zamparini believes the fall-out from the match-fixing scandal has resulted in fairer refereeing and his club's subsequent rise to the top.

"The reason for our success is the refereeing," said the 65-year-old, who became Palermo president in 2002.

"We now have a more open championship. The referees are still making mistakes, but only in good faith. At least the decisions are not all going one way anymore."

Fiorentina were hit with a 19-point penalty for their match-fixing involvement.

FIXTURES

<b>Saturday</b> Udinese v Roma, AC Milan v Inter Milan
<b>Sunday</b> Ascoli v Siena, Cagliari v Torino, Fiorentina v Palermo, Lazio v Reggina, Livorno v Empoli, Messina v Chievo, Parma v Atalanta

AFP, Madrid



Reigning champions Barcelona remain at the top of the Spanish first division, although only by the slimmest of margins, and they will be looking to stay there by beating

Recreativo Huelva on Saturday. "We are leading the league and we are calm but it can't always be a fantastic year," said Barcelona's Ludovic Giuly on Thursday, alluding to their less-than sparkling form in recent weeks.

They lost 2-0 at their bitter rivals Real Madrid last Sunday and they have been noticeably short of fire-power and inspiration up front since the long-term injury to Samuel Eto'o, last season's top scorer in La Liga.

"Although if he (Ronaldinho) is not on top form for one or two matches, or is sometimes a little tired, it's nothing to worry about. He's still the best player in the world," added Giuly, defending the two-time World Player of the Year.

Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard is expected to continue his policy of

rotations ahead of their important Champions League match against Chelsea on Tuesday, and Giuly is likely to start alongside his Brazilian colleague.

Recreativo, last season's second division champions, have surpassed expectations so far and lie ninth after having won two of their three away games this season but they face a tough test in the Nou Camp stadium.

Spain's oldest club have four key players injured and coach Marcelino Garcia has called up defender Iago Bouzon and midfielder Rafael Barber for the first time this season.

Real Madrid's confidence rocketed to sky-high levels after their victory over Barcelona but quickly came crashing down to earth when they were held to a 1-1 draw by third division Ecija in the Spanish Cup on Wednesday.

They will have to avoid a similarly complacent display at Gimnastic Tarragona on Saturday and no doubt coach Fabio Capello will have read his squad the riot act.

David Beckham is likely to be on the bench again, which will be the seventh game out of Real's last nine when he has been left to sit among the substitutes, which will increase

speculation that the former England captain will be soon leaving Real.

Valencia, who are in second place behind Barca on goal difference, visit Racing Santander on Saturday and coach Quique Sanchez Flores will have to change his midfield around.

Club captain David Albelda damaged ligaments in his right knee in Valencia's 1-0 win over Osasuna on Sunday and his replacement Jorge Lopez is banned after getting sent off late in that game.

FIXTURES

<b>Saturday</b> (1600 GMT Kick-off unless stated) Barcelona v Recreativo Huelva (1800), Racing Santander v Valencia (1800), Gimnastic Tarragona v Real Madrid (2000)
<b>Sunday</b> Real Betis v Real Mallorca, Celta Vigo v Sevilla, Getafe v Deportivo La Coruna, Levante v Espanyol, Real Sociedad v Villarreal, Osasuna v Athletic Bilbao (1800), Atletico Madrid v Real Zaragoza (2000)



PHOTO: AFP

Britain's Prince Phillip (L) is introduced to Arsenal captain Thierry Henry (R) and club chairman Peter Hill-Wood at the official opening of Arsenal's new Emirates Stadium in London Thursday.