

Scalari's squad for Brazil friendly

AFP, Lisbon

Portugal coach Luiz Felipe Scalari named PSV Eindhoven's uncapped defender Manuel Costa on Thursday in the squad which will face his native Brazil in a friendly in London on February 6.

The 20-year-old was born in France but as both his parents are from Portugal he opted to play for the Portuguese under 21 side.

Scalari also called up Valencia midfielder Hugo Viana for the first time since the 2006 World Cup in Germany but he once again left out Atletico Madrid midfielders Costinha and Maniche.

"We have called on the players who we feel are in the best shape for the match," he said.

"This is a normal game, it is like any match against any other national team. Brazil is strong so we expect the normal difficulties that arise when we face squads of this level."

Scalari led Brazil to its fifth World Cup title in 2002. The match at Arsenal's Emirates Stadium will be the second between Portugal and Brazil since Scalari took the helm of the Portuguese national team in December 2002.

Portugal beat Brazil 2-1 when the two sides last met in a friendly in March 2003 in Oporto.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Ricardo (Sporting Lisbon), Quim (Benfica)

Defenders: Miguel (Valencia/ESP), Paulo Ferreira (Chelsea/ENG), Ricardo Carvalho (Chelsea/ENG), Jorge Andrade (Deportivo/ESP), Fernando Meira (Stuttgart/GER), Manuel da Costa (PSV Eindhoven/NED), Caneira (Sporting Lisbon)

Midfielders: Petri (Benfica), Raul Meireles (FC Porto), Tiago (Lyon/FRA), Joao Moutinho (Sporting Lisbon), Deco (FC Barcelona/ESP), Hugo Viana (Valencia/ESP)

Forwards: Cristiano Ronaldo (Manchester United/ENG), Simao Sabrosa (Benfica), Ricardo Quaresma (FC Porto), Nuno Gomes (Benfica), Helder Postiga (FC Porto)

Magath snubs Hamburg

REUTERS, Berlin

Felix Magath has ruled out a return to coaching at Hamburg SV for ethical reasons, saying the club should stick with their original choice of Dutchman Huub Stevens.

Bayern Munich fired Magath on Wednesday and later the same evening Hamburg sacked Thomas Doll after falling to the bottom of the table.

Magath looked a logical choice to go back to the club where he won the European Cup as a player, and also later coached, but the 53-year-old believes Hamburg already had a deal with Stevens and he does not want to see that broken.

"Before Hamburg started talking to me on Thursday they had an agreement with another coach," Magath told the Hamburg Abendblatt newspaper in an interview to be published on Saturday.

"My professional ethics mean I could never take away a colleague's job. Stevens is the right man for the job and will save Hamburg from relegation."

Hamburg have yet to make an announcement on who will take over from Doll.

Stevens, who led Schalke 04 to their UEFA Cup victory in 1997, is the current coach of Roda JC Kerkrade in the Dutch championship.

Costacurta quitting

INTERNET, undated

Milan defender Alessandro Costacurta has announced that he will retire from football at the end of the season.

The player, who will turn 41 in April, is in his 20th campaign with the club and has confirmed that he is preparing to say goodbye to the game and the club he loves.

"This will be my last year as a player, in five months I will definitely hang up my boots," declared the stopper on Thursday.

The former Italian international had already been close to retiring two years ago, but Vice-President Adriano Galliani convinced him to extend his contract with the Via Turati outfit.

In his long career with Milan, Costacurta has won seven Scudetti and four Champions League titles in 1989, 1990, 1994, 2003. He has also won one Coppa Italia and five Italian Super Cups.

In the AEK Athens game on November 21, he became the oldest man ever to play in the Champions League, breaking the record previously set by Belgian goalkeeper Danny Verlinden.

Costacurta was capped 59 times by the Nazionale between 1991 and 1998, appearing in the 1994 and 1998 World Cups – although he was forced to miss the Pasadena Final because of injury.



PHOTO: INTERNET
Inter Milan's Argentine forward Julio Cruz (R) tries to wriggle past Sampdoria's Pietro Accardi during their Italian Cup semifinal match at the San Siro in Milan on Thursday.

COPPA ITALIA

Inter ease into final



INTERNET, undated

Inter go to their third consecutive Coppa Italia Final, but their winning streak was halted by a goalless draw with Sampdoria at the San Siro on Thursday night.

Curiously, the last team to hold Roberto Mancini's men at San Siro were Sampdoria in a 1-1 Serie A result on September 16, followed by one defeat and 13 wins.

They had also won 21 out of their last 22 games in all competition, drawing 1-1 at Bayern Munich in the Champions League on December 5.

The Nerazzurri could relax in this match, having already won the first leg 3-0 away from home. It was the third time in less than a fortnight they had met, with Sunday's 2-0 Serie A

victory also dampening Blucerchiati spirits.

Mariano Gonzalez drilled just wide and Francesco Toldo held a Christian Maggio cross in a disappointing first half.

On the half-hour mark Julio Cruz, returning from injury, fired inches over the bar in an opportunity set up for him by fellow Argentine Santiago Solari.

Il Jardinerio was in the thick of the action and Luca Castellazzi smothered his powerful strike from a Gonzalez assist, although perhaps he could've done better, as Cruz was totally unmarked.

When Cruz did hit the back of the net, the goal was disallowed because Fabio Grosso's cross had already gone out of play.

The Inter striker also wasted a similar good chance after the break, hesitating on the edge of the area under no pressure.

Sampdoria's first real shot on goal arrived after 55 minutes, when Maggio nodded off target, then Emilio Bonazzoli failed to make the most of Mirko Pieri's cross.

Solari hasn't had much space at Inter this season, but was lively and eager to make his mark with a cross-shot beaten away by Castellazzi.

Alvaro Recoba made his comeback, although he was jeered by the crowd for a dreadful first touch to ruin a good scoring opportunity. Il Chino tried to make up for it with a lob from a difficult angle that did not find the target.

Both sides could've won it in stoppages, as Castellazzi rushed out to close down Cruz after combining with Recoba, then substitute Fabio Quagliarella forced a fine save out of Toldo.

Inter will play Roma in the final, the same side they beat to the trophy in 2005 and 2006.

Kuyt eyeing derby revenge

AFP, Liverpool



Dirk Kuyt insists the pain he felt after Liverpool's mauling at the hands of Everton five months ago has given him an extra incentive ahead of Saturday's Merseyside derby at Anfield.

Kuyt said he never wanted to experience the same hurt he endured after Rafael Benitez's side crashed to a 3-0 defeat at the hands of their bitter rivals in September.

Liverpool have bounced back to win 14 out of 22 Premiership games since that Goodison Park drubbing, including nine of the last 10.

That kind of form has revived talk of catching Manchester United although Sir Alex Ferguson's leaders, 11 points clear of third-placed Liverpool with 13 games remaining, would need to suffer a dramatic loss of form for that to become a reality.

But Kuyt, who has bagged 10 goals since joining from Feyenoord last August, insists Liverpool owe it to their supporters to extend that winning run after a humiliating experience in the last Merseyside showdown.

"It was a really bad day for us and it's an experience I hope I never have to go through again," said the 26-year-old Holland striker.

"I've spoken to a lot of people from Liverpool since I moved to the city, including a lot of Evertonians, and obviously they mention what happened."

"The Everton fans were really happy and the Liverpool fans really want us to play well and win this time."

"I know it was the first time in a while Everton had enjoyed such a big win over Liverpool, and I hope it will be the last, particularly while I'm here."

"Maybe the game being at Anfield will be a difference for us this time, but no matter who we play at home we always feel it's up to us to show our quality and prove we are a better team."

"We have a really good home record this season, and we don't want to ruin it now, particularly on Saturday."

It is eight years since Everton last won at Anfield and with Benitez's troops unbeaten in Premiership action at home since October 2005, Liverpool start as clear favourites.

Yet Everton supporters hope the

takeover saga which has overshadowed Liverpool's preparations will prove a disruptive influence.

Liverpool fans have questioned their club's board following the sudden collapse of talks involving Dubai International Capital.

American billionaire George Gillett Jr is now in negotiations although Liverpool fans have questioned whether he has the best interests of the club at heart.

When pressed by journalists about the takeover matter on Thursday, Benitez backed the board to make the right decision for the future of the club.

The Liverpool boss is still without one-time Everton target Momo Sissoko, who has a damaged shoulder, but he does have Spanish right-back Alvaro Arbeloa available after his 2.5 million pounds (five million dollars) move from Deportivo La Coruna this week.

Everton could also parade a new signing in the shape of Manuel Fernandes as they look to record their first league double over Liverpool since 1984-85 season.



PHOTO: AFP
Liverpool manager Rafael Benitez (R) stares gleefully past new signing Alvaro Arbeloa at a training session at Liverpool's Melwood training ground on Thursday.

Riquelme out in the cold

AFP, Madrid

Argentinian international Juan Roman Riquelme risks not playing at club level till the summer if his Spanish first division club Villarreal continue not to pick him.

Villarreal's Chilean coach Manuel Pellegrini has not played the 28-year-old midfielder since the beginning of last month, and the player has refused, according to sports newspaper Marca, all bids though some have come from major European clubs.

Riquelme, under contract till the summer of 2008, has been criticised by club president Fernando Roig for being a prima donna.

Riquelme trained normally on Thursday but has refused to speak to the Spanish media.

"He is part of the team and he is training. If the time is right he could be called up this month" by Pellegrini, a club spokesman told AFP on Thursday without further comment.

However, the Chilean coach looks unlikely to give Riquelme a start, particularly as he seems to have found a good replacement in talented young Chilean player Matias Fernandez.

Gattuso extends Milan contract

INTERNET, undated

Gennaro Gattuso has put transfer rumours to bed by signing a new Milan contract until 2011.

"AC Milan announce they have extended Rino Gattuso's contract until June 30, 2011," read a Press statement on the club's official website.

The midfielder had been linked with a Premiership move to Manchester United or Chelsea, but pledged his future to the Rossoneri with this deal.

The World Cup winner started his career at Perugia in 1994 before spells at Glasgow Rangers, Salernitana and Milan in 1999-00.

This is his eighth campaign at San Siro, in which he has scored five goals in 218 Serie A appearances.

Gattuso joins the list of Milan players who have recently tied themselves to the side until 2011, along with Clarence Seedorf, Kakha Kaladze, Andrea Pirlo, Ricardo Oliveira, Yoann Gourcuff and Kaka.

Dida out for a month

AFP, Rome

AC Milan keeper Nelson Dida, who has only recently returned from injury, has been ruled out for a month after damaging ligaments in his right shoulder, Italian news agency ANSA reported on Thursday.

The 33-year-old Brazil international suffered the injury in Wednesday's Italian Cup defeat to Roma.

He had only just returned from a three-month lay-off after damaging the quadricep tendon in his left knee.

Dida made his comeback on January 18 in an Italian Cup match against Arezzo.

His place in the AC Milan goal for Sunday's league match at Ascoli will go to either Australian-born Zeljko Kalac or Marco Storari, who signed from Messina during the January transfer window.

Calderon remains Real president

REUTERS, Madrid

Ramon Calderon will remain Real Madrid president for the time being after a Spanish judge decided the postal votes in last July's presidential election were null and void.

Judge Milagros Aparicio rejected calls from rival candidate Juan Miguel Villar Mir for the 10,511 postal votes to be included in the results and agreed with Calderon's view that there were insufficient controls to guarantee their legitimacy.

"I declare that electoral rule number 15 which regulates the postal vote is ineffective and therefore the votes themselves are null," the judge said in her ruling.

Villar Mir and the other defeated candidates can appeal against the decision.

Two days before the July 2 poll a judge backed complaints from Calderon and fellow candidate Arturo Baldasano that the postal vote should be temporarily suspended because of possible irregularities.

Calderon was declared the winner following a controversial and bitter election campaign after receiving 8,344 votes, just 246 more than Juan Palacios and 1,642 more than Villar Mir.

Spanish media have reported that a large number of the postal votes had been for Villar Mir.

Test of metal for Lyon

AFP, Paris

Champions Lyon travel to lowly Troyes on Sunday with something of a mini-crisis on their hands.

Despite being 13 points

clear of their rivals at the top of the French league and through to the knock-out phase of the Champions League, Lyon are struggling.

Wednesday night saw the five-in-a-row champions suffer a late collapse against Marseille in the French Cup, conceding two goals in the last three minutes to lose 2-1 and crash out of the competition.

They have also not won in the league in their last four games.

When the French league took a three-week winter break, Lyon looked unstoppable, 15 points clear and having only failed to win three times in 19 league matches.

But since the turn of the year, Lyon are far from their suffocating best and the new addition of Czech forward Milan Baros has done little to stem the slide.

Defeats at Toulouse and at home to Bordeaux and a draw at Nice – adding to a draw with Monaco in their final game of 2006 – has seen Lyon's confidence badly hit.

The defeat to Marseille confirmed that this is not the same Lyon of

earlier in the season – a team that looked head and shoulders above all others in Europe, including Barcelona.

Coach Gerard Houllier is convinced that Lyon's plight fits with the old adage that form is temporary while class is permanent.

"You can count on us to bounce back," he told L'Equipe newspaper after the Marseille defeat.