



France national team coach Raymond Domenech poses for photographers at the French federation headquarters in Paris on Thursday.

UEFA urges clampdown on cheats

AFP, Geneva

European football's governing body said Friday that referees have been instructed to clamp down on player protests and cheating in the forthcoming knockout rounds of the Champions League and UEFA Cup. "We have to stop this type of behaviour," said UEFA Referees' Committee member Hugh Dallas on the UEFA's website.

"Confrontation now is becoming a bigger problem in our game. It's tactical, it's deliberate."

Dallas told leading referees at a course Thursday that players who mob the referee, and not only the initial offender, should be sanctioned, as well as those who run across the pitch to join an incident.

Excessive physical contact with the referee warranted more than a yellow card, he added.

Dallas also reiterated instructions about booking players who feign being fouled, warning that some players were refining their simulation skills during training.

"Why are they becoming very good at it? Because they are practising on the training ground how to cheat," he said. "We must drive this out of the game."

Tevez frozen out

INTERNET, undated

Carlos Tevez has revealed he barely speaks to West Ham manager Alan Curbishley. The Argentine striker is also forced to read team tactics off a blackboard. Tevez, 22, is yet to score a goal since arriving in the Premiership.

His struggling team take on Watford in a huge relegation clash at Upton Park on Saturday.

Tevez said: "The manager speaks to you very little. They put the set-pieces on a blackboard and you have to go up and read it - it's a much colder way of doing things."

"But I do feel relaxed here. I feel comfortable at the club."

"The people adore me, chant my name and treat me well. My wish is to get the team out of this situation we're in. I am not thinking about leaving."

"I don't want a situation to happen here like the ones that happened at Boca Juniors and Corinthians where, for reasons beyond football, I had to leave and I left in a bad way."

"I don't want people to think I'm a trouble-maker. When I leave, I want to leave on good terms. I do miss my family and friends a lot."

"When I was in Sao Paulo, I used to travel every week to Buenos Aires as it was only a couple of hours away by plane."

"It's quite difficult in England as it's a very different culture."

Tomorrow's clash with Watford is a game the Hammers admit they cannot afford to lose.

Defender Calum Davenport said: "We have to keep believing. We just need a chance to drop for us and then we can take it and spark a turnaround."

"Watford are a very direct side and they do a lot of work on their set-pieces. We have to make sure we're ready for them."

"I've played three games here so far and we've only picked up one point. We left it too late against Liverpool and, even though our second-half performance at Villa was worth a point, we need to start winning."

Fellow defender Christian Dailly insisted: "Watford beat us in the FA Cup a few weeks ago but this is a completely different game."

Back to basics for Bayern

AFP, Berlin



Bayern Munich striker Roy Makaay had a back-to-basics message to teammates as they look to improve on their poor scoring record one week

into Ottmar Hitzfeld's new reign with a Sunday fixture at home to Arminia Bielefeld.

Fourth-placed Bayern Munich, for whom only winning the title is deemed a successful season, are 11 points behind leaders Schalke 04. The arrival last week of Hitzfeld, who took them to the 2001 Champions League title, didn't have the desired immediate effect with defeat to Nuremberg in his first match.

Bayern have found the net 32 times in 20 league matches which statistically is their worst goal-scoring haul since the 1991/92 season, when they had only scored 27 at the same point, before ending the season in 10th spot for their worst final position in the last three decades.

"Sometimes it's good to return to the basics and go through the standard routines," Roy Makaay told the club's internet site.

"Obviously we've not forgotten how to score goals, but nothing's going our way at the present time, and it starts to chip away at your confidence."

Makaay added that simply scoring more often was not enough.

"It's all about recapturing our former strength," the striker said, adding: "We're letting in too many goals. Conceding very few goals was always a strength here at Bayern in the past."

"I'm convinced we'll soon base our attacking efforts on a solid defensive platform."

And on the Arminia Bielefeld game, Makaay continued: "It's an important game and we need to win. We want to close the gap to third place, not see it get bigger."

Bayern have earned just a single point and two goals from three matches in the second half of the campaign.

Hitzfeld has vowed to improve their goal scoring record and has made it a priority in his first few days in

the job.

Schalke 04, who surged three points ahead of Werder Bremen following their 2-0 away victory last weekend, host Hertha Berlin, while Bremen have a trip to VfB Stuttgart.

Schalke coach Mirko Slomka said, though they were buoyed by the Bremen victory, they were not getting carried away.

"Of course we are delighted with this success," Slomka said.

"But we are working in just the same way as before and concentrating even better."

FIXTURES

Saturday

VfB Stuttgart v Werder Bremen, Schalke 04 v Hertha Berlin, Hamburg SV v Borussia Dortmund, Bayer Leverkusen v Eintracht Frankfurt, Borussia Monchengladbach v Alemannia Aachen, Mainz 05 v Energie Cottbus

Sunday

VfL Bochum v FC Nuremberg, Bayern Munich v Arminia Bielefeld

Domenech's no to boos

INTERNET, undated

France coach Raymond Domenech has criticised the fans who booed Djibril Cisse when he came on as substitute in the friendly international against Argentina on Wednesday.

Marseille striker Cisse broke Paris St Germain defender Mario Yepes' ankle in a Ligue 1 fixture at the weekend, angering some fans in the Stade de France.

"When you support France, you don't boo Djibril Cisse, because if you attack him, you attack all the team," Domenech said.

"Booing him is wrong. Those who do that have nothing to do in the stadium, or they should wear an Argentine shirt."

"He is not a killer, he has already been injured himself."

"It is hard to be booed, but there are stupid people everywhere."

Heinze happy at United

AFP, London

Argentina defender Gabriel Heinze insists he is still happy at Manchester United despite struggling to fight his way back into the team.

The 28-year-old missed virtually all of last season after rupturing cruciate ligaments in a Champions League tie against Villarreal.

Although the full-back recovered in time for the World Cup, he was not in good shape when he returned for pre-season training.

Since then, Heinze has struggled to oust Patrice Evra, with most of his 19 appearances this term coming from the bench but the tough-tackling defender harbours no immediate desire to quit.

"I don't really take any interest in what is being said," Heinze told MUTV.

"The only two people who matter are myself and the manager. If there is no desire on either of our parts for me to leave, that is great."

After just two substitute appearances in 2007, Heinze will be hopeful of being in Sir Alex Ferguson's line-up for Saturday's encounter with relegation-threatened Charlton.

Oleguer in hot water

REUTERS, Madrid

Spanish sportswear manufacturers Kelme have cancelled their contract with Barcelona defender Oleguer after the player questioned the way in which a Spanish High Court has dealt with an ETA hunger striker.

Oleguer told Spanish media that the court's decision to keep convicted ETA killer Inaki de Juana behind bars despite a life-threatening hunger strike "reeked of hypocrisy" compared to the treatment given to other high-profile prisoners suffering from health problems.

Kelme said the comments had prompted their decision to cancel the contract of the 27-year-old defender who is renowned for his strong political views and support for Catalan independence.

"We believe in the freedom of thought and expression, but the player's relationship with Kelme was based exclusively on sporting criteria and so we have taken the unilateral decision to rescind his contract," Kelme said in a statement on their Web site (www.kelme.es).

De Juana is protesting his 12-year conviction for making terrorist threats in the Basque language newspaper Gara. He has already served a 20-year sentence for the murder of 25 people in ETA attacks.

"I wanted to use the De Juana case as an example to question the independence of the judiciary from political power," Oleguer told a news conference at the Nou Camp earlier this week.

Wenger confirms US talks

INTERNET, undated

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger has confirmed that talks are underway regarding a partnership with MLS side Colorado Rapids.

Rapids' tycoon owner Stan Kroenke is interested in a tie-up with a Premiership club and the Gunners are hoping to promote their brand in the United States.

"We try to develop our plan in the States," asserted Wenger.

"We will have an agreement - to what extent is not set yet but certainly we have plans in coaching areas, to develop football schools and have exchanges."

"It's a normal partnership. We have many clubs (like this) but we will not become Arsenal Colorado, don't worry."

Wenger is unsure as to whether the American buy-outs at Premiership rivals Manchester United, Aston Villa and Liverpool will benefit the league.

Lyon aim to stop rot

AFP, Paris



French champions Lyon will be desperately trying to get their campaign back on track Saturday after a sluggish return from their winter break.

The five-time league champions are winless since their return from the interval.

Their miserable start was compounded last weekend by their third loss of 2007 at the hands of lowly Troyes.

Lyon sporting director Bernard Lacombe insisted that the drop in form was a result of their efforts early in the season and remains confident that they can build on their 11-point margin at the top of the table Saturday as they host Lorient, currently seventh.

"The winter break really harmed us," said Lacombe.

"The internationals didn't have a real break. The players haven't all of a sudden become terrible. We had a 17-point lead at one point which was inhuman and now everyone is saying we're useless. There's a middle ground."

"We'll still be the champions. The players are more than capable of turning the situation around."

"Saturday against Lorient, the stadium will be packed with our fans, who will be behind our players as they have been in easier times."

Despite Lacombe's confidence, Lyon will be missing several key players with Portuguese midfielder

Tiago and central defender Cris suspended, and set to be replaced by Brazilians Fabio Santos and Claudio Cacapa.

Midfielder Jeremy Toulalan returned from training with the French national team with a thigh injury, and he could be replaced by Swede Kim Kallstrom.

Striker Milan Baros is uncertain after picking up a calf injury playing for the Czech Republic against Belgium.

Lille, who dropped to third last week a point behind Lens, will be looking to make up ground when they travel to midtable Toulouse.

Lens face a trickier task Sunday when they host Sochaux, sitting fifth and just four points behind them.

Resurgent Marseille, in fourth despite being held last week by PSG, travel to ninth-placed Bordeaux Sunday, where they haven't won since 1977.

"Half of my players weren't even born then," said Marseille coach Albert Emon, who remains wary despite the fact that Bordeaux, last year's runners-up, have blown hot and cold this season.

"Bordeaux used the winter break to bring in South American players to reinforce the team. This team will

FIXTURES

Saturday

PSG v Monaco, Auxerre v St Etienne, Le Mans v Sedan, Lyon v Lorient, Nantes v Valenciennes, Nice v Troyes, Rennes v AS Nancy, Toulouse v Lille

Sunday

Lens v Sochaux, Bordeaux v Marseille

finish well in the championships," predicted Emon.

Marseille striker Mickael Pagis is expecting a classic.

"This is an important match for both our teams. It's true that if we could win there it would be a great coup for us," said Pagis.

At the other end of the table, PSG, fourth from bottom, and Nantes, one point behind, are both looking to avoid the drop and host Monaco and Valenciennes respectively.

Troyes, fifth from bottom after their heroics against Lyon, travel to second-from-bottom Nice, while Auxerre host St Etienne, Nancy travel to Rennes and Le Mans host bottom-side Sedan.

Bayern bid for Altintop

AFP, Berlin

Turkish international midfielder Hamit Altintop has received an official offer from Bundesliga club Bayern Munich, his coach at Schalke 04 Mirko Slomka confirmed Thursday.

Altintop, 24, who joined Schalke 04 in 2003, has however denied signing a contract with the Bavarian club.

His contact at the Gelsenkirchen club runs out at the end of the season.

Bayern are fourth in the Bundesliga 11 points behind leaders Schalke 04.

Mascherano's costly bungle

INTERNET, undated



Liverpool by insisting he cannot wait to become a Red Devil.

Javier Mascherano has put his foot in it before he has even

kicked a ball for

The Argentine midfielder is still seeking clearance to make his Anfield debut, having ended his nightmare stay at West Ham on deadline day last week.

But while Mascherano is kicking his heels, perhaps he should swot up on his new club as he referred to the Kop kings as the Red Devils, the nickname of bitter



JAVIER MASCHERANO

Faria's indecent turn

INTERNET, undated

Learning that one of his numerous secret lovers has been working as an 8,000 pound a night prostitute, must have been bad enough for Sven Goran Eriksson.

But perhaps even more mortifying will have been the revelation that Faria Alam, the disgraced ex-Football Association secretary made famous by her fling with him, now earns more than the famously greedy Swede.

Miss Alam, whose sordid affair with both 58-year-old Eriksson and FA chief Mark Palios hit the headlines three years ago, has been caught out charging for sex.

But her latest business venture - in which she charges 4,000 pounds an hour for her services - nets her 14 times as much per hour as the retainer being paid to Eriksson by the FA.

The 40-year-old Bangladeshi has denied the allegations, telling the News of the World that claims she is a vice girl are "nonsense".

Her denial, however, comes despite the fact that the newspaper printed lewd photographs of her cavorting around in her underwear, after allegedly agreeing to sleep with an undercover reporter in return for cash.

The full extent of her sexual antics, meanwhile, have been posted up on the internet, and clearly show Miss Alam stripping off and sprawling across a double bed in a luxury Mayfair apartment.

While such allegations have provided yet more embarrassment for Eriksson, his misery is compounded by the realisation that he now earns less than the woman he indirectly made famous.

The former Celebrity Big Brother contestant, who has appeared on recent television programmes giving her verdict on Jade Goody's alleged racist attacks on Shilpa Shetty in this year's show, was duped into revealing her shameful pastime by a reporter posing as a "fixer" looking for sex on behalf of a client.

Bizarrely, Miss Alam justified her behaviour by claiming that all women secretly wanted to be prostitutes.

"If they could get a way around it where nobody could find out, they

wouldn't say anything," she said. "It's trusting, that's the thing."

"Let me tell you something - most women, if they could get away with it, they would do it. I know most people would."

Of course, this is by no means the first time that Miss Alam has faced public humiliation.

Her flings with Eriksson and divorced father of five Palios came to light after a series of explicit emails that she wrote became

public. She also speculated that her would-be notoriety would make her "very, very rich".

News of the affairs forced Palios to resign while Miss Alam, who earned a reported 300,000 pounds for selling her story, also left her job.

Last night, when confronted with the allegations, Miss Alam said: "That's ridiculous. I'm insulted. I've not met anyone this week."



FARIA ALAM