



Winners of the 24th Lancer Cup Golf Tournament-2007 pose for a photograph at the concluding ceremony of the annual event on Saturday at the Kurmitola Golf Club at Dhaka Cantonment. Lieutenant General Moeen U. Ahmed, Chief of the Army Staff, was present at the ceremony.

Arsenal face bogey team

AFP, London



Bolton Wanderers have the opportunity to cause more agony for Arsenal on Wednesday when they welcome the Gunners to their Reebok Stadium home for an FA Cup fourth round replay.

In recent years Bolton manager Sam Allardyce has built a fantastic record against the north London side, particularly in home fixtures.

Bolton have won four of the last five matches against Arsenal on home turf, and the prize of a fifth round fixture this weekend against local rivals Blackburn awaits if they can inflict more of the same on Arsene Wenger's men.

Ballack unfazed

INTERNET, undated

Michael Ballack says it's no 'drama' that Chelsea trail Manchester United by six points with 11 games left.

United have led the way for much of the season and Chelsea's resolve has been tested by injuries to key players.

Ballack now feels that with the return of inspirational captain John Terry, Chelsea are ready to mount a serious push to close the six-point gap and regain their Premiership crown.

"We are six points behind Man U, but it is not a drama," the Germany midfielder said.

"We had a little bit of a problem with injuries and so on, but if our players come back we will have a

A Beckham dream

AFP, Los Angeles

David Beckham's future Los Angeles Galaxy teammates began their pre-season workouts for the Major League Soccer season here Monday with two survivors from an open tryout among those taking training.

Laurent Merlin, a 22-year-old Frenchman who showed his wizardry, and Rui Fortes, 24, of Portugal, were the two prospects who were given the opportunity from among 800 men from around the world who began a open tryout camp Saturday.

The field was trimmed to 133 players who were invited back Sunday and those players were placed onto eight teams for 60-minute morning matches before a cut to 30 men for one final Sunday afternoon match.

Merlin and Fortes made the final cut for a one-week trial. Now each has a chance to make the roster for the team's April season opener and could become a teammate of Beckham when the England star joins the Galaxy in July.

"Merlin and Fortes are raw but they showed some potential and therefore their adventure will continue," Galaxy president and general manager Alexi Lalas said.

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Fashionista Dunga

Football

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Brazil coach Dunga said the row over the unusual shirt he wore during last week's game against Portugal showed that football was a sport averse to change.

The beleaguered coach, who also repeated that he had no grudge with Ronaldinho, added that his unorthodox choice of touchline attire was partly an attempt to help his daughter, who is a fashion student and designed the shirt.

"If parents don't help their children or give them incentives in their work, then it's more likely that they will get involved in drugs and that sort of thing," he said in an interview on Brazilian television.

"But it just shows how difficult it is to change things in football. They expect you either to wear the team tracksuit or a traditional jacket and tie and that's it."



PHOTO: INTERNET

Brazil coach Carlos Dunga seen here on the touchline against Portugal last Wednesday wearing the shirt that has created waves.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Lancer Cup golf ends

SPORTS REPORTER

The 24th Lancer Cup Golf Tournament-2007 concluded on Saturday with the handing over of prizes to the winners at a gala ceremony held at the Kurmitola Club at Dhaka Cantonment.

Lieutenant General Moeen U. Ahmed, Chief of the Army Staff, attended the closing ceremony as chief guest and handed prizes to the winners. A. Rouf Chowdhury, Chairman of Rangs Group, sponsors of the tournament and Romo Rouf Chowdhury, Managing Director of Rangs Ltd, spoke on the occasion.

Twenty winners out of a total of 501 participants received prizes, crests and Taka 1.5 lakh in prize money.

The chief guest, in his speech, praised Rangs Group for continuing the tournament for last 24 years and welcomed the silver jubilee of the tournament in advance.

A raffle draw was also arranged through which 16 guests were awarded prizes sponsored by different sister concerns of Rangs Group. The event ended through an eventful cultural programme and dinner.

Livorno to play in empty stadia

AFP, Rome

Livorno are almost certain to play Wednesday's UEFA Cup tie against Spanish side Espanyol behind closed doors.

Security at the club's Armando Picchi stadium is not yet in line with government regulations under new measures introduced last week to combat hooliganism.

Livorno had hoped to open their doors with a reduced capacity, but a government-backed security watchdog that specializes in sports events has turned down their request.

Livorno coach Daniele Arrigoni said he was hoping the club could still win a last-minute reprieve but admitted he feared the worst.

"It's an injustice for the fans," he said.

"It was supposed to be a historic occasion for this city and instead our fans cannot be part of it. It's a defeat for football."

"We are hoping something will change at the last minute, but it doesn't look good."

Under a government crackdown on football violence after the riot in Sicily earlier this month which claimed the life of a policeman, clubs whose grounds are deemed unsafe are being forced to play their matches without spectators.

Livorno need more turnstiles, a crowd-filtering area and a police watchtower.

Wednesday's match is a round of 32, first leg tie.

'United on track'

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United's Gary Neville believes the club is on the brink of ending its three seasons without the Premiership title and being crowned champions of England once again.

First Arsenal and then Chelsea (twice) have ensured the Premiership trophy has moved south to London.

But with United, on top since mid-October, six points clear of Chelsea at the head of the table with 11 games left, United captain Neville said: "Teams are struggling to live with us. We are playing some of the best level of football seen for a few years and we have to maintain that."

"People talk about the pressure at the top but we are just enjoying our football. I think the squad is ready to win it again. We've had three years where we've really suffered and not really performed to our capabilities."

"We've suffered with injuries in the last three years at important moments in the season," the England full-back also told United's official website here Monday. "It's meant we've been so far behind and at times we've just not performed well."

"So the team has had enough of that and is ready to stay together and know what we need to do. We've matured in certain areas and some of the younger players are now producing incredible displays."

"Without the injuries we've had in previous seasons, things have come together for us," Neville added.

"After last Christmas, there were games in the last three or four months of last season, where I think we'd had enough," he explained.

"Every time we lost a game there was a huge amount of criticism in those two or three years," said Neville, whose side beat Charlton 2-0 at Old Trafford on Saturday.

"It became a bit of a witch-hunt. I think we'd had enough of that and we've turned it around."

Asked whether he would consider leaving the club at the end of the season, he replied: "I don't know. All I know is that with Capello

Title up for grabs

AFP, Paris



British, Spanish and French sides dominate the field in the UEFA Cup last 32 round which begins on Wednesday.

Thirty teams will do battle in an attempt to join Tottenham

in the next round, the English team benefiting from a bye to Feyenoord's expulsion from the competition following fan violence in their group stage match against Nancy.

Blackburn and Newcastle hold the torch for England with Rangers flying the flag for Scotland; Spain have Espanyol, Osasuna, Celta Vigo and holders Sevilla fighting their corner while France are represented by Nancy, Paris St Germain, Bordeaux and Lens.

Of that bunch Blackburn seemingly have the toughest test with a trip to 2002 Champions League finalists Bayer Leverkusen.

Both sides have had an inconsistent season so far with Leverkusen sitting seventh in the German Bundesliga and Blackburn 10th in the English Premiership.

Rangers face a daunting trip to Israel and Hapoel Tel-Aviv, whose group stage win was a 4-2 success at PSG, after which a French fan was shot dead by an off-duty police officer protecting a Jewish supporter that had been set upon by a mob.

Rangers's UEFA Cup form has been in stark contrast to their league form which eventually saw French coach Paul Le Guen dismissed from Ibrox.

FIXTURES

Wednesday

AEK Athens v Paris St Germain, Bayer Leverkusen v Blackburn, Benfica v Dinamo Bucharest, Bordeaux v Osasuna, CSKA Moscow v Maccabi Haifa, Fenerbahce v AZ Alkmaar, Hapoel Tel-Aviv v Rangers, Livorno v Espanyol, Shakhtar Donetsk v AS Nancy, Werder Bremen v Ajax

Thursday

Braga v Parma, Lens v Panathinaikos, Spartak Moscow v Celta Vigo, Steaua Bucharest v Sevilla, Zulte-Waregem v Newcastle

Rangers trail their domestic rivals Celtic by a mammoth 19 points in the league but had looked composed and assured under Le Guen in Europe.

Le Guen is still in the competition, though, and will guide PSG during their trip to Athens, to face AEK, coming off the back of an impressive 4-2 win over Monaco at the weekend.

PSG struggled badly to reach the knock-out stages and only made it courtesy of a 4-0 victory over AEK's city rivals Panathinaikos in the French team's final group game, although the Greeks had already ensured top spot and played like a team whose foot was firmly off the gas.

The tie of the round is the clash between Germans Werder Bremen and former European Champions Ajax, whose forward Klaas-Jan Huntelaar is among the tournament's top scorers.

Werder, who slipped six points off league leaders Schalke 04 at the weekend after a shocking 4-1 defeat at Stuttgart, may find motivation hard to come by having only narrowly missed out on reaching the Champions League knock-out stages.

A last minute goal from Leonel Messi in Werder's 1-1 draw at home

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Owen elated to be running

Football

AFP, Newcastle

England striker Michael Owen on Tuesday voiced his delight at being able to run for the first time since suffering a serious knee injury during last summer's World Cup finals.

Owen, who is now hoping to make his comeback in April, began running on Monday, said: "The next step is to continue running and to do some ball work before joining in with training."

"I enjoyed the first 10 minutes

and then it started to feel like hard work. But every step you take is a step in the right direction and it is all going great at the moment."

Owen has made just 11 appearances for the Magpies since joining the club in a 17-million-pound move from Real Madrid in August 2005.

He was sidelined for five months last season after fracturing a metatarsal bone in a collision with international team-mate Paul Robinson at Tottenham, and was still regaining match fitness when disaster struck again in Germany.

His importance to his club is



Michael Owen who was injured in last year's World Cup first round game against Sweden has started running again.

Robinho 'unhappy' at Real

REUTERS, Madrid

Brazil forward Robinho has become the latest Real Madrid player to voice his discontent at his lack of opportunities under coach Fabio Capello.

"Right now I'm not happy because I'm not playing, but I'm going to keep working to change that," Robinho told a news conference on Tuesday.

"I know that he (Capello) doesn't have confidence in my football because I'm not playing and the coach didn't want him to stay here. I'm younger, I've still got a lot to learn and I've got a future."

"Robinho is the best striker in the world, but he wasn't happy because the coach didn't want him to stay here. I'm younger, I've still got a lot to learn and I've got a future."

"Robinho has been in the starting line-up for nine of Real's 22 league games this season and has found the net just once."

Last week Capello backtracked on his policy not to select David Beckham again following the midfielder's announcement that he

would be joining MLS side LA Galaxy at the end of the season.

Striker Antonio Cassano continues to be sidelined, however, after a run-in with Capello earlier in the season.

Robinho backed team mate Fabio Cannavaro's call for the Italian international to be return to the squad.

"Cassano is a great player and person," he said. "I don't like it when I see that my team mates are sad."

Robinho was at the centre of controversy earlier this year when sporting director Predrag Mijatovic hinted that the Brazilian had arrived at a training session smelling of alcohol.

"It wasn't true," said Robinho. "I look after myself off the pitch ... Mijatovic hasn't apologised to me or said anything. I don't like what was said, but it's in the past now."