

## Portugal to miss Deco

AFP, Lisbon

Barcelona midfielder Deco has withdrawn from Portugal's squad for their Euro 2008 qualifiers against Belgium and Serbia in order to have surgery on his right hand.

The 29-year-old underwent surgery on Monday on the third finger on his right hand after he twisted it during Barcelona's 4-0 win over Recreativo Huelva in the Spanish League over the weekend.

Deco said he wanted to put off the surgery so as to play for Portugal during the two matches but was advised against it by Barcelona's medical department.

"I spoke to (Portugal coach Luiz Felipe) Scolari and told him I would really like to be with the team during these matches," he told reporters before entering the hospital in Barcelona where the surgery was held.

"But I also talked to Barcelona's doctor and he felt we couldn't wait. We made the decision to go ahead with the operation now," the Lusa news agency quoted him as saying.

Deco is expected be out for 10 to 15 days after the surgery. The Portuguese international had an operation on the same finger one year ago after he fell heavily on it.

Portugal face Belgium in Lisbon on Saturday and Serbia in Belgrade four days later. The squad lies in fourth place in Group A after Finland, Serbia and Poland.

## FA will probe pitch invasion

AFP, London

The Football Association confirmed Tuesday they are investigating incidents at the end of Chelsea's FA Cup quarterfinal win at Tottenham.

Spurs officials will be contacted by the FA after two supporters ran onto the pitch after the final whistle of the replay at White Hart Lane on Monday night.

One of the fans threw a punch at England midfielder Frank Lampard as he celebrated Chelsea's 2-1 FA Cup quarter-final replay win.

An FA spokesman said: "These scenes were totally unacceptable and we will be contacting Spurs as a matter of priority.

"We want to establish what safety and security provisions were in place for the game and to confirm what action was taken against the fans who ran onto the pitch.

"We understand that both individuals were arrested and we would expect them to be given football banning orders."

## Juventus enjoy handsome lead

AFP, Rome

Juventus cruised six points clear of Napoli at the top of the Serie B on Monday after a 5-1 drubbing of Triestina.

The 22-year-old Raffaele Palladino, who was standing in for the suspended French striker David Trezeguet, was in blistering form for the promotion hopefuls, netting a hat-trick.

However it was the visitors that got off the mark first seven minutes into the game with Frederico Piovaccari finding the back of the net.

The response was immediate with veteran midfielder Mauro Camoranesi heading the home side level one minute later.

Palladino scored the next three for Juventus in what became a one-sided affair and 21-year-old Bulgarian international Valeri Bojinov wrapped up the game nine minutes from time.

## Zyryanov, Borodin in Russian squad

AFP, Moscow

Russia coach Guus Hiddink on Tuesday called up Saint Petersburg midfielder Konstantin Zyryanov and Torpedo Moscow goalkeeper Dmitry Borodin for next weekend's Euro 2008 qualifier against Estonia after four players were sidelined with injuries.

CSKA full back Alexei Berezutsky, Dynamo defender Denis Kolodin and midfielder Igor Semshov were all injured during Saturday's Moscow derby.

Saint Petersburg goalie Vyacheslav Malafeev will also miss Saturday's Group E match at



PHOTO: AFP

Football's megastars and former Real Madrid teammates, Brazilian Ronaldo (R) and French Zinedine Zidane, arrive on the pitch on Monday in Marseille, southern France, prior an exhibition soccer match in which all profits will go to charity.

## United in semifinals

AFP, Manchester



Cristiano Ronaldo's second half penalty was enough to secure Manchester United a single-goal victory over Middlesbrough in their FA Cup quarterfinal replay.

Alex Ferguson's side now face a semifinal clash with Watford after the Portuguese winger claimed his 18th goal of an outstanding season.

Ronaldo has been United's standout player in recent weeks and it was his late penalty that had kept his side in the competition when the two sides played out a 2-2 draw nine days previously.

Then with Ferguson's side struggling to match their recent form against a determined Boro, the 22-year-old forced a careless lunge from Jonathan Woodgate to earn the 76th minute spotkick he duly placed beyond keeper Mark Schwarzer.

Then in the dying seconds of the game, Ronaldo's torment of the frustrated visitors was complete when he was hacked down by James Morrison earning the Boro substitute a straight red card.

Morrison's ugly lunge sparked a confrontation between both sets of players and assistant managers Carlos Queiroz and Malcolm Crosby exchanged angry words after the final whistle.

Prior to Ronaldo's match-winning intervention, United had looked a pale shadow of the side that harbours hopes of repeating their treble of 1999.

Surprisingly it was England striker Wayne Rooney who was responsible for ensuring Ferguson's side endured an uncomfortable night with two glaring misses after being sent clear on Schwarzer's goal.

Gareth Southgate's move to rest three key players – Mark Viduka, Julio Arca and Jonathan Woodgate – for the weekend defeat to Manchester City had provoked an angry response from Neil Warnock, manager of City's relegation rivals Sheffield United.

Southgate admitted the decision had been taken with this fixture in mind and initially appeared to be justified as Boro's energetic approach unsettled the home side. And the sense that United were not at their ruthless best when Rooney wasted the first of two good chances when he allowed Schwarzer to snuff out the opportunity.

But fears that the home side would pay for their sloppy finishing were eased when Boro's Stewart Downing missed a good 55th minute chance before Ronaldo's late intervention eased home nerves.

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