



(From L-R) Italy striker Filippo Inzaghi celebrates one of the two goals that he scored on his return to the national side in their Euro 2008 qualifier against Faroe Islands in Torshavn. Germany youngsters Marcell Jansen and Mario Gomez celebrate the latter's two-goal haul against San Marino in Berlin while France striker Nicolas Anelka points to the bench after scoring a stunning goal against Ukraine in Paris on Saturday.

Pippo saves face

INTERNET, undated



Filippo Inzaghi's brace secured the three points for Italy, but a 2-1 win in the Faroe Islands with some disastrous finishing feels like a defeat.

The Azzurri needed six points from their two June away games in the Faroe Islands and Lithuania if they were to maintain their hopes of qualifying for the European Championships. A cold and soaking wet day welcomed Italy to Torshavn and Roberto Donadoni surprised many by fielding Aimo Diana for his first international since November 2005. Old hands Alessandro Del Piero and Filippo Inzaghi completed the trident attack with Lazio's Tommaso Rocchi.

The Faroe Islands were entirely made up of non-professionals and so far in qualifying they had lost all six games by scoring one goal and conceding 23. Rocchi threaded through for Inzaghi to hit the side-netting in the opening three minutes, but the home side had an extra two men in midfield and over-crowded Gennaro Gattuso, so could be dangerous on the break with Thomassen firing well wide.

Diana had a shot deflected over, but the deadlock was finally broken on 12 minutes. Andrea Piro's long ball over the top was not hooked down by Jacobsen and Inzaghi was quick to toe-poke it past the goalkeeper from seven yards.

Del Piero cut back past a defender and saw his shot parried towards Rocchi, but that too was deflected over the bar. Inzaghi's

diving header from a Massimo Oddo cross skimmed the near post, but Marco Materazzi had a nervy moment on R. Jacobsen.

Diana really should have marked his comeback with a goal when he went clear on Del Piero's slide-rule pass, but opted to roll across for the offside Inzaghi rather than shoot.

Del Piero curled a free-kick inches wide of the far post and a Piro set-piece found Materazzi's header off target.

Inzaghi hooked down a long cross at the back post, but was charged down by a combination of defender and goalkeeper.

Straight after the restart, Champions League Final hero Inzaghi hit the back of the net again to complete his brace. Piro spread the play for Oddo and Diana's floated cross found SuperPippo with a cushioned header at the back post.

Gennaro Gattuso was the first player booked for a late tackle, but Piro's free kick was pushed on to the base of the upright by goalkeeper Mikkelson -- a teacher.

Inzaghi made way for Livorno's Cristiano Lucarelli, who had not received an international call since August 2006, and Andrea Barzagli replaced Materazzi. Gattuso risked a red card for a second late challenge and was warned by the Polish referee.

Lucarelli's first contribution was a wayward and selfish strike from distance when teammates were in a better position.

The Livorno hitman wasted an even more glorious opportunity. He had his back to goal and the defender slipped, but he spun round and drilled well wide with only the

'keeper to beat. Donadoni did not hide his frustration from the sidelines.

The Faroe Islands earned their first corner -- and first attacking move of any note -- after 75 minutes of play and very nearly scored, as Jon Roi Jacobsen's header landed on the roof of the net.

It was a warning that was not heeded, as moments later they got on the scoresheet. Gianluigi Buffon was furious with his defenders, who were caught napping on a cross into the centre for Rogvi Jacobsen's header at the near post. It was only the second goal that the Faroe Islands had scored in their qualifying campaign and was welcomed by the fans as a triumph.

Italy were stunned and introduced Fabio Quagliarella for Rocchi, who had been used throughout basically as a midfielder more than a striker.

Piro set up a chance for Del Piero, who swung wildly at the ball to fire wide of the open goal from eight yards.

Only Buffon managed to keep the point safe in stoppages with a fine save to deny Holst after another defensive error!

Italy's finishing on the day was abysmal and Oddo set up another easy chance that Del Piero ballooned over from close range. Lucarelli then failed to get his head on to an Oddo cross with the goalkeeper already stranded.

Gomez stars in rout

AFP, Nuremberg



VfB Stuttgart striker Mario Gomez scored twice as Germany went back to the top of their Euro 2008 qualifying group with a 6-0 win over minnows San Marino in Nuremberg on Saturday night.

The 21-year-old had only made a handful of appearances off the bench for his club after an eight-week lay-off with a knee injury at the end of the season, but he made an immediate impact with two goals in as many second-half minutes.

The Czech Republic had briefly topped Group D after they drew 0-0 with Wales in Cardiff earlier on Saturday, but Germany went back to the top of the table for next summer's European Championships as the goals flowed.

"I already had a lot of confidence going into this game, but I am flying high now," said Gomez. "But San Marino aren't the sort of side we are measuring ourselves against."

San Marino 'keeper Aldo Simoncini was one of the busiest men on the pitch as his defence leaked five second-half goals and Germany now enjoy a two-point lead at the top of the table, but there was still some disappointment in their performance.

"We simply tried a bit too hard out there," said midfielder Torsten Frings, who slotted home a second-half penalty.

"We didn't move the ball around very well in the first half and San Marino closed us down quickly. In the second half, we raised the tempo and they had their chances to

score.

"But whether it was 3-0 or 6-0, the important thing was getting a win."

Although Germany slaughtered San Marino 13-0 last September in the European micro-state, the home side took a long time to hit their stride.

Injury played a part as Germany's coach Joachim Loew was without his injured captain and Chelsea midfielder Michael Ballack, influential midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger and striker Lukas Podolski.

Nevertheless, he still named a strong side with the top-scorer at last year's World Cup, Miroslav Klose partnering Schalke 04's Kevin Kuranyi up front in a strike partnership which boosted more than 100 caps between them.

"It is always difficult to play against a team like San Marino," said Loew. "They defended well and you have to work hard to break down their defence."

"San Marino were a sparring partner for us ahead of the game against Slovakia. It was important that we found some rhythm, which we did in the second-half."

Germany had a low-key first-half and it was only 1-0 at the break after Kuranyi headed home on the stroke of half-time.

But just after the interval, the home side doubled their lead when San Marino left Bayern Munich's latest signing defender Marcell Jensen unmarked at the back post to enjoy a simple tap in on 52 minutes.

And a minute later Germany

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France's flawless showing

AFP, Paris



Second half goals from Franck Ribery and Nicolas Anelka shot France to the top of Euro 2008 qualifying Group B putting them well on course to qualify for the finals in Austria and Switzerland.

France had taken their time to get into the match, but, in terms of possession, they were well on top against a Ukrainian side which clearly lacked the finishing ability of injured Andrei Shevchenko, and they deserved their 2-0 win.

Teenage sensation Samir Nasri was given his second appearance by coach Raymond Domenech in his playmaker's role just behind lone striker Anelka.

Francois Clerc came in at right back in place of injured Willy Sagnol and Lilian Thuram, captain in place of injured Patrick Vieira, put his national appearance record up to 129.

After an uneventful opening

spell, the first real incident of note came two minutes before half-time when the pony-tailed Andriy Voronin caught the French defence, who were expecting an offside whistle, napping.

His cross from the right however brought a good tackle by Clerc on Maxym Kalynychenko to save the day for Domenech's men. Then in first half injury time Ukraine's Oleg Gusev was through but was tackled in the box.

Just after the break, Anelka shot wide of the left hand post as France started brightly and a period of French domination preceded the goal by Ribery in the 57th minute. The 24-year-old, winning his 17th cap, outpaced Ukraine's defence to sidefoot home left-footed into an empty net.

Claude Makelele had shown vision to hit the long ball up to Ribery leaving him set fair to apply a clinical finish.

"I think it was important to win tonight in front of our own fans," Ribery told TF1 television station afterwards.

Domenech said: "Tonight we had the result, the fans, the atmosphere -- it was what we expected but I don't think Georgia will be any easier in a few days time."

Midway through the half Ukraine's Ruslan Rotan came on for Kalynychenko in the first substitution of the match.

With 19 minutes to go, Anelka made the match safe. In an impressive piece of individual skill, he jinked the ball up into the air before firing home from an acute angle on the left.

Anelka went off to applause with a quarter-hour to go, replaced by Djibril Cisse, and Lassana Diarra played the last 10 minutes in place of Nasri.

French president Nicolas Sarkozy savoured France's victory from the presidential tribune though injured striker Shevchenko, also in the VIP section, must have been itching to get on to the pitch to give his side some penetration up front.

The next time these teams meet will be in the last qualifier in Kiev on November 21.

Rossi rules in Mugello again

AFP, Mugello

Italian superstar Valentino Rossi won the Italian MotoGP here on Sunday to maintain his 100per cent record in his home race but only his first win since the second race of the campaign.

The Yamaha rider -- winning here for the sixth time -- beat home Spain's Dani Pedrosa -- recording his third podium finish of the season -- while veteran Alex Barros of Brazil was third.

Australian Casey Stoner finished fourth but maintained his overall lead in the title race, holding a nine point advantage over Rossi.

The lead changed numerous times in the opening eight laps as Loris Capirossi, Stoner and Pedrosa swapped the honours, though Capirossi dropped down the field to seventh on the eighth lap.

Rossi -- known as the 'Doctor' -- became the latest new leader with 15 laps remaining passing Pedrosa with Stoner in third while Barros -- in his 264th race and on a second string Ducati -- was riding a stormer of a race and moved up to fifth.

With seven laps to go Pedrosa had reduced the gap to Rossi from over a second to seven hundredths, though, it mattered little to the passionate Italian fans who had already unfurled their banners and were waving them around with gay abandon.

They had little to fear as Rossi maintained his lead to the finish while Barros proved more than a match for Stoner, who desperately tried to pass him on the final lap but the Brazilian -- winner of the old 500cc category here in 2001 -- used all his experience to deny him.



PHOTO: AFP

Arsenal striker Thierry Henry makes a footprint during a promotional event at a shopping district in Seoul on Sunday.

Bremen's u-turn on Klose

Football

AFP, Berlin

Werder Bremen admitted in the German press on Sunday they are ready to discuss a multi-million euro transfer with Bundesliga giants Bayern Munich for German international striker Miroslav Klose.

Until now, Bremen have insisted they would not let Klose, the top goal-scorer at last year's World Cup, leave for another German club until his contract expires at the end of June 2008.

But Bremen manager Klaus Allofs told German newspaper Bild am Sonntag he is open to the possibility of a deal -- reported in the German press to be between 12 and 15 million euros -- with Bayern Munich for Klose.

"If I get the call, I am not going to hang up, because I want to hear what they have to say to me," said Allofs.

"It is necessary to look at the situation as a whole and to make a final judgement that is in the best interests of the club."

But Allofs pointed out that they will only consider offers for Klose he feels are appropriate.

"At some point, it will be necessary to stop negotiations and move on, even if Bayern again wants to negotiate."

With Klose reported to be set to join Bayern on a free transfer after his

Bremen contract expires next year, it seems just a matter of time before Klose wears the famous red shirt.

"I am convinced Klose will join us on a free transfer in July 2008, perhaps it will be sooner," said Bayern boss Karl-Heinz Rummenigge.

Klose, 28, has had a dip in form this year, only scoring two goals in

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Denmark-Sweden match abandoned

AFP, Copenhagen

The European Championships qualification group F match between Denmark and Sweden here on Saturday was abandoned in the 90th minute with the scores level at 3-3.

The referee had just awarded a penalty to Sweden and sent off Denmark's Christian Poulsen when a supporter ran on to the pitch and appeared to strike the official.

UEFA said: "The result of the contest will be confirmed following an investigation by the UEFA disciplinary committee upon receipt of the referee and delegate reports."

Two goals from Johan Elmander and another from Petter Hansson had put Sweden 3-0 up only for Daniel Agger, Jon Dahl Tomasson and Leon Andreasen to draw the home team level.

Football

AFP, Basel

Euro 2008 joint hosts Switzerland held Argentina to a surprising 1-1 draw in a friendly on Saturday, after a combative performance that stifled the Albiceleste's trial Copa America line-up.

Argentina took the lead in spectacular fashion five minutes after the break when West Ham's Carlos Tevez produced a diving header on a cross from young Barcelona star Lionel Messi, who was trying to fit into a new role as the team's playmaker.

Gabriel Abbondanzieri cleared from the head of a Swiss striker just minutes from the start and the Swiss again came close near the end of the half as Johann Vorlanthen's diving header was thwarted by Gabriel Heinze.

However, Argentina were spurred on by the strength and pace of West Ham's Tevez on the left and always looked dangerous once they found space.

The Swiss were saved by the woodwork in the 28th minute when Messi, who was supporting Tevez and a jaded Hernan Crespo, placed a long curling free-kick onto Gabriel Milito's head.

Switzerland gained a deserved equaliser a quarter of an hour later when striker Marco Streller latched onto a ball that ran clear in the Argentine penalty area to slot home.

Wing-backs Ludovic Magnin and Philipp Degen shone in a goalless first half as the Swiss pressed along the wings and left the Argentinians little space to develop their more languorous passing play.

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"We weren't able to develop our usual game," said Argentine coach Alfio Basile, while underlining that the match was better to watch than England-Brazil.

"I gave Messi a new role as a sort of number nine-and-a-half, he met my expectations. He'll be even better at the forthcoming Copa America," he added.

Argentina's pace picked up in the second half after Messi and Tevez switched sides and prised open the Swiss defence.

But the match lost its shape with a string of substitutions after the goals.

Basile made it clear before the friendly that he was using it as a serious test of his starting line-up for the Copa America starting on June 26 in Venezuela.

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PHOTO: AFP

UNDER ATTACK! Denmark player Michael Gravgaard (C) tries to intervene as a Danish supporter attacks referee Herbert Fandel (L) for giving Sweden a late penalty during their Euro 2008 qualifying match in Copenhagen on Saturday. The referee called off the match and Sweden was awarded a 3-0 win over Denmark.