



Ivory Coast striker Didier Drogba is escorted by Ivorian rebels soldiers from the New forces after the African Nations Cup 2008 qualifying match against Madagascar in Bouake on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Ivory Coast thrash Madagascar

INTERNET, undated

Ivory Coast thrashed Madagascar 5-0 to maintain their 100 percent record in Group One of qualifiers for the African Nations Cup in Bouake.

Goals from the Chelsea duo of Salamon Kalou and Didier Drogba, together with one from Yaya Toure and a brace from Arouna Kone, kept the Elephants comfortably top of a group in which they are yet to concede a goal.

The Madagascan defence - which had already let in seven goals in two games - held out for only 18 minutes before Kalou pounced.

Kone then netted his first of the day on 37 minutes, and Yaya Toure effectively killed the game just after half time with his 47th-minute goal.

And two more in the last eight minutes - Kone's second before Drogba got his name on the score-sheet with three minutes to go - gave an emphatic edge the scoreline.

The match was being played in the northern city of Bouake, rather than Abidjan, as part of the peace process in the country.

Ivory Coast will not now play another qualifier until September - their next game would have been against Djibouti, who have already withdrawn from the group without explanation.

Ramdin in the runs

AFP, Durham

Denesh Ramdin made his highest first-class score of 131 as West Indies settled for a draw on the third and final day of their tour match against MCC at the Racecourse Ground here Sunday. Wicketkeeper Ramdin's innings followed up Runako Morton's career-best 201 as West Indies piled up 534 for eight declared in reply to MCC's first innings 260, in what was the tourists lone practice match ahead of the third Test against England, starting at Old Trafford on Thursday.

West Indies then reduced MCC to 64 for five in their second innings, the largely student side effectively six down after captain Sanath Jayasuriya had left for an early flight back to Sri Lanka, when a draw was agreed with 15 overs remaining -- time enough for the West Indies to force a win.

Ramdin faced 163 balls with three sixes and 16 fours in the run-up to the clash at Old Trafford where West Indies, 1-0 down after suffering a record innings defeat at Headingley, must avoid another loss to keep the series alive.

3rd pathology

FROM PAGE 17 Seshaiha, the pathologist employed by the Jamaican government, and Mark Shields, the high-profile deputy commissioner of the Jamaican police force. Seshaiha produced the autopsy which suggested that Woolmer had been murdered. Subsequent reports said that toxicology tests were said to have revealed that Woolmer had been poisoned.

Shields travelled to Cape Town last month where it is reported he warned Gill Woolmer that it had become "uncertain" how her husband had died and that there could have been a "misinterpretation" of the post-mortem examination results.

Parisians feel for Federer

AFP, Paris



Open victory.

The world number one has won a legion of admirers at Roland Garros in the last three years just as much for his valiant, but thwarted attempts to win the title and complete the fabled Grand Slam, as he has for his on-court powers.

Now the world number one hopes to turn the support to his advantage as he targets next Sunday's final and another likely match-up with double defending champion Rafael Nadal, who ended his French Open hopes in 2005 and 2006.

Federer, helped by his ability to speak the language, has been adopted as a native son by a local crowd in despair at seeing all of their

own players knocked out of the tournament in the first week.

"It started when I played the first semifinal against Nadal (2005). At the end of the match, people chanted my name and I was really moved because it was late and I had a break in the fourth set," said Federer.

"All of a sudden I felt that the public was with me and I was a little bit surprised."

Federer, who made the last eight on Sunday with a 7-6 (7/3), 6-4, 6-4 victory over Russia's Mikhail Youzhny, also came up short against Nadal in last year's final despite winning the first set.

The sympathy for him grew as once again an elusive French Open title went slipping by.

"I think this year the crowd would like me to win because I've been trying hard. I also speak French so the fans are with me and I enjoy it."

Federer faces Tommy Robredo in his quarterfinal on Tuesday buoyed by having defeated the Spanish ninth seed seven times in

seven meetings including the quarterfinals at the Australian Open in January.

The world number one has also comfortably seen off Robredo on the only two occasions they've played on clay while the Spaniard has managed to take just one set off the Swiss over their five-year rivalry.

With that record of dominance, it would be tempting for Federer to look further ahead to the semifinals and even the final where once again Nadal, who has never lost at Roland Garros, is expected to be waiting.

But he will not be distracted.

"Winning Roland Garros doesn't boil down to beating Nadal. It's totally different," said the top seed who is bidding to become only the third man in history to hold all four Grand Slam titles at the same time.

BFF meeting today

SPORTS REPORTER

An emergency meeting of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) will be held this afternoon to discuss FIFA's ruling on the election of the executive committee.

BFF president SA Sultan and general secretary Anwarul Hoque Helal returned to Dhaka yesterday from Zurich where they met FIFA and AFC officials.

The FIFA has directed the expired executive committee of the BFF not to hold the polls for one year in which time the governing body of Bangladesh football will have to make necessary amendments to the constitution according to FIFA statutes, BFF officials have claimed.

No Tushar

FROM PAGE 17 fielding also can boost the side," he added.

Faruque said that he talked with new captain Mohammad Ashraful, who left Dhaka yesterday morning to play the Afro-Asia Cup in India, about the team combination.

"What we believe that the captain should have the voting rights in selection. Only the board can allow that."

Abahani's date

FROM PAGE 17 the second leg after upsetting the title contenders from Dhaka 1-0 at home early in the competition.

WEEK 13 FIXTURES

June 4: Chittagong Mohammedan v Abahani (MA Aziz Stadium, Chittagong); Farashganj v Khulna Abahani (BNS).

June 6: Chittagong Abahani v Arambagh (MA Aziz Stadium) June 7: Mohammedan v Muktiuddha (BNS) June 8: Rahmatganj v Russel (BNS).

Iranian GM

FROM PAGE 17 Reefeet beat India's GN Gopal while Nguyen was held by Nasir Ahmed, the Bangladeshi performer whose impressive show helped him finish fifth with six points and also win his first IM norm.

IM Abdullah Al Rakib also won six points but ended fourth while sixth and seventh places went to IM Enamul Hossain Rajib and Pakistani IM Mahmood Lodhi respectively, also with six points.

Girinath, Abu Sufian Shakil and Lalith Babu (India) clinched the eighth to ten places respectively.

A total of 26 players including five GMs four IMs and seven FMs from five countries took part in the 10-round Swiss league competition.

Jose still

FROM PAGE 20 African players because we compound our own problems."

However, Mourinho was keen to underline that he will not prevent any of his African players from playing in the Nations Cup. "It is the pride of my African players to play for their countries and I will not prevent them. This tournament is important for the players and the people of Africa and I respect that."

Barca rejects

FROM PAGE 20 for in that department.

"We have got players like Deco, Xavi and Iniesta who have similar characteristics as well as amazing control of the ball.

"At the moment we are really happy with our trio of midfielders. So as things stand there really isn't space for another player of this type."

Milan hunting

FROM PAGE 20 are playing for big teams.

"Henry is a great player and he could be of interest to us."

Ancelotti's reported midfielder of choice is Emerson, who has had an underwhelming first-season at Real Madrid, and has received a cool reception from the Bernabeu crowd.

Without directly admitting he wanted to sign the Brazilian, Ancelotti hinted he was indeed high on his agenda of summer transfer deals.

"I don't want to talk about names, but the club have the idea who I want to sign," he said.

"And if you ask me if Emerson has the characteristics of the player I want, I would answer by saying the player we are looking for has Emerson's characteristics."

Liverpool

FROM PAGE 20 as joint Supporters of the Years with Alaves after the UEFA Cup final."

Sports minister Caborn, who is meeting Platini on Tuesday, said: "I have a lot of sympathy with the Liverpool fans who paid their hard-earned money for genuine tickets but couldn't get into the ground. "The reasons for this need an urgent explanation. We have already raised the matter with the Greek authorities through our embassy in Athens and Government officials are also talking with UEFA.

"I will be putting this issue high on the agenda at a meeting I am to have with Michel Platini."

Totti hints at int'l return



Football

AFP, Rome

Francesco Totti could end his sabbatical from international duty in time for Italy's potentially crucial Euro 2008 qualifiers against France and Ukraine in September.

The Roma captain has not played for the Azzurri since their triumphant World Cup campaign last year, citing fitness problems and an unwillingness to spend more time away from his family.

"I am going on holiday and then I will call (Italy's team manager Gigi) Riva; I am ready to play in the important matches," Totti, who fractured his left ankle a few months before the World Cup, told Italian newspaper 'Il Messaggero'.

"Now I am going on holiday and all that I am thinking about is my family and having a rest.

"This season I have played more than 50 matches and that takes its

toll. I have to take a break. In July I will telephone Riva and I will tell him how I am and what I am thinking. Then we will see."

Totti's offer to come back for the Azzurri just for the important fixtures is unlikely to improve relations between him and Italy coach Roberto Donadoni.

Donadoni has already expressed his concerns about Totti's sabbatical, fearing it could set a worrying precedent.

Italy visit Lithuania for their seventh Group B qualifier on Wednesday.

The Italians have won their last four matches in Group B, but Lithuania proved difficult opponents for the Azzurri in a 1-1 draw in Naples last September.

After six matches France, who Italy beat in last year's World Cup final, top the group on 15 points, followed by the Italians on 13. Scotland are tied with Ukraine on 12 points while Lithuania are fifth on seven points.

Hoddle boost for Beckham



Football

AFP, London

Glenn Hoddle believes David Beckham can play for England for at least six more years despite moving to US Major League Soccer side Los Angeles Galaxy.

Former England manager Hoddle, one of the most accomplished midfielders of his generation, was impressed by playmaker Beckham's return to international football during England's 1-1 friendly draw with Brazil on Friday.

Hoddle, who gave Beckham his England debut in the 1996 victory over Moldova, believes the former Manchester United's midfielder move to Los Angeles - he has signed a five-year deal worth 125 million pounds - won't detract from his ability to play international football.

And he praised current England boss Steve McClaren for recalling the 32-year-old Beckham, having dropped him in his first major move

since replacing Sven-Goran Eriksson after the 2006 World Cup in Germany.

"In my day when you hit the 30 mark people started saying your international career may be over but the way they train now their fitness levels are so much better," Hoddle told BBC Radio Five Live's Sportsweek programme.

"David is a fit young man and one thing he has never relied upon is blistering pace, so he will be able to play until he is 38 or 39 if he wants to," Hoddle added.

Beckham is now set to play a major role in Wednesday's match away to Estonia where England will look to revive their Euro 2008 qualifying hopes.

Defeat could signal the end of McClaren's time as England coach and Hoddle said: "If we win we will have the momentum going into four games at home. If we draw it is going to be very difficult for us because the pressure will build."

Beckham will join Galaxy in the middle of July - his contract with Spain's Real Madrid ends on June 30.

Flintoff to stay an all-rounder



Cricket

AFP, London

Andrew Flintoff will return for England as a fully-fledged all-rounder and not a specialist batsman after his latest bout of ankle surgery, according to chairman of selectors David Graveney.

Flintoff, who didn't play in the first two Tests against the West Indies, was ruled out of the third match of the series, starting at his Old Trafford home ground on Thursday, after a third operation on his left ankle in as many years last week.

Pace bowler Flintoff, whose heroics with both bat and ball played a major part in England's Ashes series triumph of 2005, puts plenty of strain on the ankle in his

delivery stride.

And with the international programme showing no sign of being reduced any time soon, many have questioned whether Flintoff, England's captain during their 5-0 Ashes hammering in Australia, can regularly appear in both Test and one-day cricket as an all-rounder.

One suggestion to reduce his workload is that the 29-year-old play as a specialist batsman in the shorter form of the game.

"It's an interesting theory," said Graveney. "But as far as we're concerned Freddie is injured and has a number of weeks to get over this operation but when he comes back we would anticipate him taking part in all forms of cricket whether it is one-day or Test matches."

"There has been a lot of specu-

Barmy Army to boost SL tourism

AFP, Colombo

Advance bookings for England's winter cricket tour of Sri Lanka has been rising steadily even as fighting between troops and Tamil Tiger rebels escalates, officials said on Monday.

A tour organising official at Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) said at least 4,000 bookings by British cricket fans have been almost finalised and more were in the pipeline.

"We are very happy with the response," the SLC official told AFP.

The cricket board is teaming up with the island's tourism authority to have special counters at London's Heathrow and Gatwick airports, and at Colombo airport here, to handle the "Barmy Army", as English supporters are called.

England will tour Sri Lanka in two stages, with the one-day internationals being played in October and the three-Test series in December.

Sri Lanka's tourism officials expect the tour to lift sagging arrival figures, which have suffered from the violence with nearly 5,000 people killed in the past 18 months.

The SLC official said British fans seemed undeterred.

"You must remember that England tour in 2001-02 attracted a huge contingent of fans despite the (rebel) attack on the airport just six months before the tour," he said.

Arrivals from Britain, a major market for Sri Lanka tourism, had fallen 13.7 in April over the same month a year earlier, according to tourist board figures.

But the English tour could swell numbers if the current promotional work became a success, the SLC official said.

England will play the one-day leg mostly in the north-central town of Dambulla, which is a major cultural heritage site with the famous rock fortress of Sigiriya in the backdrop.

The Tests are to be played in Colombo, the southern sea port city of Galle and the popular hill resort of Kandy.

"The Galle Test is likely to be well patronised by British tourists given the work of British charities there in the post-tsunami era," the official said.

It will be the first Test match in Galle since the town was devastated by the December 2004 tsunami.

lation about whether Freddie will continue in the role he has been as one of the leading all-rounders in world cricket, but we believe he'll be playing a full part for England before the end of the (northern) summer."

"Freddie had his operation on Friday and there is nothing they found there which they weren't expecting, although there's some debris in his ankle," Graveney added.

England are set to field an unchanged XI from the one that beat West Indies by an innings and 283 runs -- the tourists heaviest Test innings defeat -- at Headingley that saw them go 1-0 up after the drawn Lord's opener.

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CRYPTOQUIP

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K Q S L N A T Z M T W Z O P T T W T O . Saturday's Cryptquip: SOME YOGURT GOT BANNED FROM THE HIGH-CLASS COUNTRY CLUB FOR NOT BEING CULTURED ENOUGH. Today's Cryptquip Clue: D equals U