

France recall Henry

AFP, Paris

Striker Thierry Henry and midfielder Patrick Vieira will return to France duty for an international football friendly against Slovakia on August 22, coach Raymond Domenech confirmed Thursday.

The duo were named by Domenech along with David Trezeguet and Philippe Mexes in a 35-man squad which also includes players who will compete in a B-team friendly against the Slovaks on August 21.

Hit by injuries, France's top scorer Henry (leg) and captain Vieira (hamstring) last played in a 1-0 friendly loss to Argentina on February 7 at Stade de France.

Since then Henry has transferred to Barcelona where he completed all his pre-season training and Vieira has also returned to training at Inter Milan.

The return of Trezeguet and Mexes comes as a surprise, however.

Juventus striker Trezeguet has not featured since the Argentina match and Roma defender Mexes, has been overlooked for the last two Euro 2008 qualifiers against the Ukraine (2-0) and Georgia (1-0).

Both have been very vocal over the past week in the criticism of Domenech for his allegations of match-fixing in Italian football.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Mickael Landreau (Paris SG), Sebastien Frey (Fiorentina/ITA), Ulrich Rame (Bordeaux), Teddy Richert (Sochaux)

Defenders: Eric Abidal (FC Barcelona/ESP), Jean-Alain Bounsumbu (Juventus/ITA), Francois Clerc (Lyon), Patrice Evra (Manchester United/ENG), William Gallas (Arsenal/ENG), Bakary Sagna (Arsenal/ENG), Sebastien Squillaci (Lyon), Lilian Thuram (FC Barcelona/ESP), Gael Givet (Marseille), Philippe Mexes (AS Rome/ITA), Anthony Revellere (Lyon), Jonathan Zebina (Juventus/ITA)

Midfielders: Abou Diaby (Arsenal/ENG), Alou Diarra (Bordeaux), Lassana Diarra (Chelsea/ENG), Mathieu Flamini (Arsenal/ENG), Claude Makelele (Chelsea/ENG), Rio Mavuba (Villarreal/ESP), Samir Nasri (Marseille), Jeremy Toulalan (Lyon), Jerome Rothen (Paris SG), Patrick Vieira (Inter Milan/ITA)

Strikers: Nicolas Anelka (Bolton/ENG), Karim Benzema (Lyon), Jimmy Briand (Rennes), Djibril Cisse (Marseille), Thierry Henry (FC Barcelona/ESP), Florent Malouda (Chelsea/ENG), Frederic Piquionne (Monaco), Franck Ribery (Bayern Munich/GER), David Trezeguet (Juventus Turin/ITA)

Gerrard breaks toe

AFP, Liverpool

Steven Gerrard has suffered a hairline fracture in a toe bone but will play in Sunday's crunch match against Chelsea, Liverpool manager Rafael Benitez said.

A scan on Thursday revealed the Reds captain sustained the minor fracture during Wednesday's 1-0 win at Toulouse in the Champions League third qualifying round first leg.

"Though he will be fit enough to play, the midfielder will probably have to sit out England's friendly with visitors Germany at Wembley next Wednesday.

"He has a hairline fracture in his toe," Benitez said.

"I think he will be available for the weekend. The only problem is, if we push him now, he might need a little bit of a rest afterwards.

"I was talking to the doctor and he said it is not a big risk for him to play, though there is always some risk."

The Reds boss said England's vice-captain might need a week or two of rest if he plays against Chelsea -- meaning he will likely not feature against Germany.

"If we want to push him for this

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Injury blow for Spurs

AFP, London

A double injury blow to Dimitar Berbatov and Younes Kaboul has rocked Tottenham manager Martin Jol.

Bulgaria striker Berbatov will be out for two weeks after suffering a recurrence of an old groin injury, while French defender Kaboul faces a month on the sidelines with a hamstring problem.

"We've had a couple more blows," Jol said. "Younes Kaboul will be out for the next three or four weeks with the hamstring injury he suffered against Everton, that's a real kick in the teeth and Dimitar Berbatov has a groin problem. It's an old problem and he will now visit a specialist in Germany. He will be out for a couple of weeks."

Losing his star forward and one of his few remaining fit defenders is another headache for Jol, who has endured a miserable start to the season.

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Chelsea midfielder Frank Lampard (C) stabs the ball past Reading goalkeeper Marcus Hahnemann (R) to score during their Premiership mid-week tie at the Madejski Stadium on Wednesday.

Jose can't wait for L'pool

AFP, Reading



The Blues manager was in upbeat mood after his side beat hosts Reading 2-1 at the Madejski Stadium on Wednesday, a game in which Mourinho was forced to make wholesale changes following an inept first 45 minutes.

The Portuguese boss replaced the ineffective defender Paulo Ferreira and midfielder Steve Sidwell, his new signing from Reading, to spark his team into life after the Royals had taken a first-half lead through Cameroonian defender Andre Bikey.

Mourinho's men responded by grabbing two goals in the space of three minutes to move four points ahead of Manchester United after two games so far this season. They are also three points ahead of Liverpool and Arsenal, who were both busy Wednesday securing away wins in Champions League qualifying matches.

"The Blues travel to Liverpool on Sunday. "It is a good start but we know the Premier League can be full of disappointments," Mourinho said. "We have six points and we have to try in our next game against Liverpool to get to seven or nine."

Mourinho threw on Claudio

"As on Sunday against Birmingham we were made to suffer but six points in two games is a good start for us.

"This is a very good place to win as Reading are a very difficult side. "We made changes and the players were brave enough to accept the risk of the way we played. The reaction was amazing. I just feel sorry we did not score a third.

"Making the changes was a big gamble but if one day it doesn't work -- like at Newcastle in my first season -- I am criticised. But I sleep well because I tried. "The worst thing in life is when you don't try. That is the message I give to my kids all the time. I have to try in my job."

Chelsea goalkeeper Petr Cech endured a shaky return to the Madejski Stadium, 10 months after he left the ground with a fractured skull following Reading midfielder Stephen Hunt's accidental challenge in the corresponding fixture last season.

The Czech Republic international gifted the home side an opener when Nicky Shorey's flighted free kick was headed on by Ivar Ingimarsson only for Cech to miss his attempted punch clear completely.

As he rushed off his line the keeper conspired to bundle over team-mates Tal Ben Haim and Sidwell leaving substitute Bikey to tap into an empty net and wheel away, celebrating his first ever goal in a Royals shirt. Mourinho threw on Claudio

Pizarro and John Obi Mikel in an attacking gamble as Chelsea pressed for a much-needed equaliser in a game that was drifting away from them.

It was left for a bullish run from England midfielder Frank Lampard to draw them level as he exchanged passes with Didier Drogba to toe his finish past goalkeeper Marcus Hahnemann.

Drogba produced a moment of real class to seal the three points. The Ivory Coast striker swept home Salomon Kalou's short pass from 20 yards out with an eloquent first-time shot to leave the outstretched US keeper Hahnemann with no chance of preventing a goal.

The Royals were then forced to endure a final 20 minutes with just 10 men as debutant Kalifa Cisse was sent off for a second bookable offence following an innocuous-looking challenge on Pizarro, which the Berkshire club might well appeal against.

Royals boss Steve Coppell felt his side's inability to convert their first-half dominance into goals ultimately cost them the points.

"It was high-tempo first 45 minutes and our downfall was not finishing off the chances we created. At the interval we were disappointed not to be further ahead," he said.

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'Ronaldo must keep cool'



AFP, Portsmouth

Sir Alex Ferguson insisted Cristiano Ronaldo must learn not to react to provocation from inferior players after his senseless dismissal in the champions' 1-1 draw at Portsmouth. Ronaldo was sent off for aiming a head butt at Richard Hughes on Wednesday and faces a three-match ban that will rule him out of United's derby clash with Manchester City on Sunday, as well as home games against Tottenham and Sunderland.

The Portugal winger was dismissed in the 85th minute by referee Steve Bennett following a melee in the Portsmouth penalty area after

Sulley Muntari a minute earlier.

United boss Ferguson believes Ronaldo was provoked but claimed he must keep his head rather than trying to head butt other players.

"He was provoked but you can't raise your arms at another player," Ferguson said. "He has got to realise he is better than these other players and not to rise to their bait. He has got to rise above it.

"He got no protection from the referee but that is not to excuse his sending off.

"Steve Bennett has sent him off before as has the linesman and we missed a great opportunity for us to win the game."

Ronaldo was last sent off two years ago against local rivals City and will be a massive loss to a United

team already without injured England striker Wayne Rooney.

Harry Redknapp claimed not to have seen the incident but felt his team deserved a draw anyway.

Redknapp also reckons his seven million pounds signing Muntari must calm down or he will continue to be sent off.

"Ronaldo is a fantastic player and I'm sure he wouldn't try to deliberately hurt someone.

"He is a good lad and not malicious but I missed the incident because there were so many players involved in it. Muntari just needs to calm down a bit."

Paul Scholes smashed United into the lead in the 15th minute with a trademark thunderbolt.

New boys Nani and Carlos Tevez combined to set up Scholes who drilled the ball home right-footed from 20 yards.

Pedro Mendes and debutant Martin Cranie were dragged off at half time as Redknapp rang the changes. Matthew Taylor and Djimi Traore replaced the ineffective pair.

Benjani put Pompey back in the game with a bullet header in the 53rd minute.

Taylor put over a beautiful cross from the left and Benjani powered in his second goal in as many games from eight yards past the helpless Edwin van Der Sar.

David Nugent missed a sitter to give Pompey the lead in the 60th minute.

Benjani shot, van der Sar saved and Nugent somehow failed to put the ball over the line from six yards.

The England international is still searching for his first Pompey goal since his six million pounds move from Preston and he will not get an easier chance to score.

Ronaldo came to life in the 65th minute before his late sending off when he put over a teasing centre that Ryan Giggs got on the end of, but James tipped over the bar.

C'RON SEES RED

Chelsea edge ahead

AFP, London



Ferguson said the dismissal for a head-butt was all Ronaldo's fault as the champions were held 1-1 by Portsmouth at Fratton Park, United's second draw in their two games so far this season.

But Chelsea, who lost the English Premier League trophy to United last season after two straight titles, were buoyant after they claimed a second straight win in a 2-1 victory at Reading. Meanwhile Wednesday former England boss Sven-Goran Eriksson said life could not get better after his Manchester City side beat Derby County 1-0 in the Swede's first Premier League home match.

Elsewhere, Sunderland snatched a 2-2 draw at Birmingham, Wigan won 1-0 at home to Middlesbrough

and hosts Fulham beat Bolton 2-1.

Everton lead the table after two games, ahead of Manchester City and Chelsea, all on six points.

Ferguson roared Ronaldo after his sending off, which means the skilful Portugal winger will be suspended for three key games.

Ferguson is without a host of injured players and is now woefully short of attacking players, given Ronaldo's ensuing ban.

"My take is that he was provoked, he's fallen into the trap and he's paid the penalty for it and it's his own fault," the Scot told reporters.

"He was surprised with the decision, yes, he said that. But then Steve Bennett's sent him off before and I think he got great delight in sending him off too.

"It's a missed opportunity of staying on the pitch and winning the game for us, which I think we could, in that position against 10 men."

The United boss said the only positive from Fratton Park was Carlos Tevez's debut.

The Argentina striker set up former England midfielder Paul Scholes to score in the 15th minute, before Zimbabwe striker Benjani

Mwaruvari headed a 53rd-minute equaliser.

Then Pompey's Sulley Muntari was sent off in the 83rd minute and Ronaldo was dismissed in a frantic finish.

Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho admitted the Blues had been given a rough ride at Reading.

Down at half time to Cameroonian defender Andre Bikey's 30th-minute tap-in, Mourinho used his two remaining substitutes in an attacking gamble.

"I told them at half-time: 'I need your help because I want to make two changes in the second half if somebody has a problem, don't cry, don't look to me, you have to carry on,'" Mourinho said.

It paid off as England midfielder Frank Lampard scored within two minutes and Ivory Coast striker Didier Drogba hit the winner three minutes later.

Mourinho said of Reading: "They fight with everything and did it until the last second.

"So it was difficult and we are very happy because we know it was not easy to win."

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Germany missing stars

AFP, Frankfurt

Chelsea midfielder and Germany captain Michael Ballack was amongst the top names missing on Thursday when German coach Joachim Loew named his squad to face England next week.

Ballack has failed to recover from the ankle injury he suffered in April and joins German Footballer of the Year Mario Gomez, as well as midfielders Torsten Frings and Tom Borowski on the injured list for the Wembley clash on Wednesday.

With three midfielders missing, Loew has called up VfB Stuttgart pair Sami Khedira and Serdar Tasci to the senior squad for the first time after they helped Stuttgart win last season's Bundesliga title.

Hamburg midfielder Piotr Trochowski has also been called-up, but Loew still has first-choice middle men, Bayern's Bastian Schweinsteiger, Bayer Leverkusen's Bernd Schneider and Stuttgart's Thomas Hitzlsperger, at his disposal.

The squad will assemble in Frankfurt on Sunday and fly to London on Tuesday.

Although Bayern Munich pair Lukas Podolski and Jan Schlaudraff are both recovering from injuries, Loew has no problems in attack with both his first-choice strikers, Schalke 04's Kevin Kuranyi and Bayern's Miroslav Klose, fit and in form.

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SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Timo Hildebrand (Valencia/ESP), Jens Lehmann (Arsenal/ENG)

Defenders: Arne Friedrich (Hertha Berlin), Clemens Fritz (Werder Bremen), Marcell Jansen (Bayern Munich), Philipp Lahm (Bayern Munich), Per Mertesacker (Werder Bremen), Christoph Metzelder (Real Madrid/ESP), Serdar Tasci (VfB Stuttgart)

Midfielders: Robert Hilbert (VfB Stuttgart), Thomas Hitzlsperger (VfB Stuttgart), Sami Khedira (VfB Stuttgart), Bernd Schneider (Bayer Leverkusen), Bastian Schweinsteiger (Bayern Munich), Piotr Trochowski (SV Hamburg)

Forwards: Patrick Bayer (Cologne), Stefan Kiessling (Bayer Leverkusen), Miroslav Klose (Bayern Munich), Kevin Kuranyi (Schalke 04)

Blades to sue Hammers

AFP, London

Sheffield United announced on Thursday they plan to sue West Ham for the cost of their relegation from England's Premier League.

The Yorkshire side have already failed in their High Court bid to force new Premier League disciplinary action against West Ham over the Carlos Tevez affair but now plan to take a new course of action.

Toby Craig, a member of the club's legal team, said: "After consideration and discussion with our legal advisers Sheffield United are today initiating legal proceedings against West Ham United as we seek substantial compensation for our relegation from the Premier League."

The Blades' recent High Court bid came after an arbitration panel rejected their claim against the Premier League for failing to dock West Ham points over the transfers of Tevez and Javier Mascherano.

The league officials instead levied a 5.5million pounds fine on the London club in April. Sheffield have estimated the cost of relegation at between 30-50 million pounds.

INTERNET, undated



Hot weather made conditions tough in the early games where Andriy Voronin gave last season's runners-up Liverpool a 1-0 win at Toulouse and Celtic managed a 1-1 draw at Spartak Moscow.

Sevilla, looking for a first ever place in the group phase, produced a classy 2-0 win at home to AEK Athens in a later clash with young winger Jesus Navas setting up strikers Luis Fabiano and Frederic Kanoute in the second half with blistering runs.

It was a tale of two penalties in Amsterdam with Slavia's David Kalivoda converting a 76th minute spot kick to seal their 1-0 win at Ajax, who missed a penalty on the hour when Klaas Jan Huntelaar's effort was saved by Martin Vaniaik.

Sparta Prague failed to match the performance of their neighbours and went down 2-0 at home to 2006 finalists Arsenal, who scored through Cesc Fabregas and Alexander Hleb's injury time goal.

In the heat of southwest France, Voronin scored his first competitive goal for Liverpool at last season's surprise French package Toulouse.

The former Bayer Leverkusen player, who joined the 2005 champions as a free agent in July, struck

just before halftime with a clinical 25-metre drive.

"He brings different movements, he has a lot of qualities," said Liverpool boss Rafa Benitez, who lost captain Steven Gerrard to a foot injury in their first European tie of the campaign.

"It was a difficult day to play

RESULTS

AFP, Paris

Collated Champions League third qualifying round first leg results on Wednesday:

Toulouse (FRA) 0 Liverpool (ENG) 1 (Voronin 43)
Spartak Moscow (RUS) 1 (Pavlyuchenko 42) Celtic (SCO) 1 (Hartley 21)

Tampere United (FIN) 0 Rosenborg (NOR) 3 (Koppinen 20, Kone 22, 82)
Bate Borisov (BLR) 2 (Radkov 40, Bliznuk 90) Steaua Bucharest (ROM) 2 (Goian 58, Dica 84)
FK Sarajevo (BIH) 0 Dynamo Kiev (UKR) 1 (Shatskikh 12)

Fenerbahce (TUR) 1 (Souza Alex 32) Anderlecht (BEL) 0
Werder Bremen (GER) 2 (Almeida 47, Jensen 85) Dinamo Zagreb (CRO) 1 (Balaban 43)

FC Zurich (SUI) 1 (Alphonse 90) Besiktas (TUR) 1 (Delgado 3)
Ajax (NED) 0 Slavia Prague (CZE) 1 (Kalivoda 76-pen)

Red Bull Salzburg (AUT) 1 (Zickler 10-pen) Shakhtar Donetsk (UKR) 0
Sparta Prague (CZE) 0 Arsenal (ENG) 2 (Fabregas 72, Hleb 90+1)
FC Sevilla (ESP) 2 (Luis Fabiano 48, Kanoute 65) AEK Athens (GRE) 0

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Arsenal midfielder Alexander Hleb (L) is carried by teammate Bacary Sagna after scoring during their Champions League qualifying match against Sparta Prague at the AXA Arena in Prague on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP