



Rennes forward Jimmy Briand (R) tries to get the better of Nice defender Onyekachi Apam during their Ligue 1 clash at the Ray Stadium in Nice on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Cahill targets swift return

AFP, Liverpool

Everton's Australian midfielder Tim Cahill could be back to full training by the end of September, the Premier League club said on Sunday.

Cahill fell awkwardly on his left foot during his return to Everton action earlier this month in the friendly with Werder Bremen.

He aggravated the same area of his foot that was broken last season at Sheffield United and which ruled him out for the last three months of the campaign.

He returned to fitness in July, figuring in three games for the Socceros during their Asia Cup campaign. But his return to Premier League action has been put on hold by the latest injury.

Club head physio Mick Rathbone told Everton TV that the player could return to full training by the end of next month.

"Tim unfortunately sustained a disturbance of his fracture site, when he landed awkwardly against Werder Bremen," said Rathbone.

"It's not so bad, he's walking round with no symptoms at all now. It's so frustrating. We're looking for 6-12 weeks on that. I know Tim will be banging the door down to start running in a jiffy."

"Getting him back into training isn't so bad, getting him back running round isn't a problem, but getting him jumping like he does, and landing full force on the outside of his left foot, it's going to be a while before it's going to be strong enough to be able to do that."

"But again the time goes by, he gets stronger everyday."

Makelele pens new deal

INTERNET, undated

Claude Makelele has signed a one-year extension to his Chelsea contract to keep him at Stamford Bridge until 2009.

The 34-year-old's current deal had been set to expire at the end of the current season and he would have been able to negotiate a move away from January.

However, the World Cup finalist has extended his stay in West London by 12 months, by which time he will be 36.

The veteran holding midfielder has won league titles in France and Spain with Nantes and Real Madrid respectively as well as the Champions League with the latter.

Chelsea splashed out £13.9million to sign the player from Madrid shortly after Roman Abramovich bought the club in 2003.

Since arriving in England Makelele has been an integral member of Chelsea's success.

He adapted seamlessly to the pace of the Premier League and helped Jose Mourinho's side win the English title in 2004 and 2005, as well as two Carling Cup triumphs and the FA Cup last May.

Despite having retired from international football, he agreed to return for France as they struggled to qualify for last year's World Cup and along with several fellow veterans booked a place in Germany, where Les Bleus reached the final only to lose to Italy last July.

Meanwhile, 18-year-old defender Sam Hutchinson has signed a new four-year contract at Stamford Bridge, following Scott Sinclair's commitment to a long-term deal last week.

Heavyweights falter

AFP, Paris



Marseille surrendered a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 with Nancy on Sunday as France's leading clubs continued their early season struggles.

The result gave Nancy a share of top spot with Le Mans and Lorient while Marseille remain rooted in the bottom half of the table along with fellow heavyweights Lyon, the defending champions, and Paris Saint Germain.

The struggling trio only have three points each while Marseille and PSG are still without a win.

Mamadou Niang gave Marseille a 22nd-minute lead with Djibril Cisse adding a second four minutes after the break.

But Benjamin Gavanon pulled a goal back from the penalty spot in the 63rd minute after Lorik Cana fouled Gaston Curbelo.

Nancy then guaranteed themselves a point when Youssouf Hadji scored from a pass by Marc-Antoine Fortune.

But Marseille had a chance to take all three points in injury time but Cana

was unlucky to see a header come back off the bar.

On Saturday, unheralded Lorient moved into a share of top spot with a 2-1 defeat of champions Lyon.

Lorient, who defeated PSG 3-1 in midweek, showed that win was no fluke with their victory over the champions who have now suffered two defeats in their three games.

Lorient, like Le Mans, who drew 1-1 with Lille, and Nancy, have 10 points from four games with identical goal records.

Toulouse, who were beaten 1-0 by Liverpool in their Champions League qualifier in midweek, were losers again on Saturday slumping to a 3-1 loss to Strasbourg.

Marama Vahirua scored both of Lorient's goals, the first a spectacular volley after 14 minutes to put Lyon on the back foot but Karim Benzema levelled for the champions on the half-hour mark.

Tahiti-born Vahirua popped up again to score the winner in the 64th minute to send his side top.

"It's very annoying to lose two games in succession especially for a team playing for the title," said Lyon coach Alain Perrin whose squad has been hit by a series of injuries to key players.

"But it's the start of the season so

I'm not alarmed. We will concentrate on the positives and keep working."

Nicolas Fauvergue gave Lille a 33rd-minute lead at Le Mans with a fine header and was then unlucky not to add a second in stoppage-time at the end of the first half when a fierce drive came back off the post.

Le Mans made the most of the let-off when Brazilian striker Grafite levelled in the 56th minute to give his side a point.

PSG coach Paul Le Guen saw his problems pile up with a dull 0-0 draw at rock bottom Metz.

Top scorer Pauleta was controversially dropped to the bench but the Portuguese striker had to be introduced into the action in the second half to replace Peguy Luyindula.

Giant Czech striker Jan Koller scored twice as Monaco beat Sochaux 3-0 to register their second win in three days and move into fourth place.

Eric Mouloungui, James Fanchone and Kevin Gameiro scored the goals which gave Strasbourg the three points at Toulouse for whom Andre-Pierre Gignac grabbed a consolation goal.

Wenger blasts Rovers

AFP, Blackburn



Arsene Wenger bitterly accused Blackburn of displaying a 'desire of violence' after seeing Jens Lehmann's second-half blunder cost Arsenal victory in a 1-1 draw at Ewood Park on Sunday.

A game which saw referee Alan Wiley brandish nine yellow cards - two of them to Blackburn captain Ryan Nelsen - ended all square with David Dunn's long-range effort cancelling out Robin van Persie's first-half opener for Arsenal.

But although both teams appeared to play in the same committed manner, Arsenal manager Wenger angrily hit out at the home side at the end of the game.

"I am pleased with the attitude of my players and the resilience that they showed," said Wenger.

"They battled very hard and they are obviously frustrated because we should have come away with the three points."

"But we were very resilient against a team that were over-physical. I felt sometimes that there was a desire of

violence rather than commitment in some of the challenges."

"We did well, though, and we wanted to play. We had to cope with a lot of long balls and set pieces from Blackburn. This is a difficult place to come to and you can be happy if you come here and get a point."

Having fought to rid his team of their 'bully-boy' tag, Blackburn manager Hughes hit back at Wenger's comments by suggesting that Arsenal's players were just as culpable.

"That actually surprises me because I felt that the worst challenge of the game was van Persie's on Ryan Nelsen," said Hughes.

"I saw Reading's Dave Kitson sent off for the same challenge against Manchester United last week. But there are two teams involved and I'm sure there are two views of the game."

"I felt that Arsenal competed well. The only issue for me was the amount of time the referee gave for stoppages following injuries."

Lehmann's error came just a week after a similar gaffe allowed Fulham's David Healy to score against Arsenal at the Emirates, but Wenger insisted that the German will not be held to

account for the mistake.

"Of course, Jens is really unhappy with it and he is really down in the dressing room," said Wenger.

"I don't need to tell him because he is an intelligent boy, but we don't want to blame him. I would rather keep the positives from our performance."

Arsenal, who lost defender William Gallas to a groin strain that will sideline him for two weeks, were fortunate to avoid a defeat and Blackburn boss Hughes admitted that he was delighted with the performance of his team.

He said: "I thought it was an excellent performance by my players from start to finish. We were very much on the front foot and we really pressured Arsenal from start to finish."

"I felt we could go on to win the game because we were in the ascendancy to such an extent, but they had to make a change in order to curb our possession."

Injuries ravage old rivals

THE GUARDIAN

Steve McClaren will be forced to field a makeshift midfield for England's friendly against Germany on Wednesday after Owen Hargreaves became his latest injury casualty. The midfielder made his Manchester United debut yesterday and afterwards Sir Alex Ferguson said he is still suffering the effects of tendinitis.

"Owen Hargreaves is painful in his knees; I don't think he'll be available," Ferguson said. "He'll probably report for the game but I don't think he'll be near fit enough to play. He'll need a few days to recover and hopefully we can get him fit for the Tottenham game [on Sunday]."

Steven Gerrard also ruled himself out after Liverpool's draw with Chelsea. "I looked fit today because I had a pain-killing injection to play," he said. "I need to rest to be ready for the England qualifiers. If the x-ray tomorrow shows the crack has healed, I'll be playing for England. But I can't see it because three days ago I had an x-ray and I'd broken a toe."

David Beckham is uncertain if he will be fit either after making his first MLS start on Saturday, playing 90 minutes as Los Angeles Galaxy lost 5-4 at the New York Red Bulls ground. LA scored two in five minutes early in the game - both assists from the former England captain - but lost to a last-minute goal from the former Aston Villa striker Juan Pablo Angel.

Beckham could be seen limping on his left ankle at times and afterwards he admitted he would wait and see. "Only time will tell," he said. "It's swollen up at the moment but that was always going to happen. I'm travelling to London to meet up with the team and hopefully I'll be playing some sort of role on Wednesday."

Miroslav Klose, Bastian Schweinsteiger and Sami Khedira have withdrawn from Germany's squad. Klose, the top scorer at the 2006 World Cup with five goals, misses out after being forced off with a knee injury incurred during Bayern Munich's 4-0 win over his former club Werder Bremen.

Schweinsteiger has a back problem and the 20-year-old Khedira, who plays for the champions Stuttgart, has injured his right foot. David Odonkor of Real Betis and Gonzalo Castro of Bayer Leverkusen have been called up as cover.

I won't hide: Lampard

INTERNET, undated

Frank Lampard says he will play through the pain barrier to represent England against Germany on Wednesday.

The Chelsea midfielder has a ruptured tendon in his toe and needs reconstructive surgery, having been advised by club doctors he needs to rest or he could face months out on the sidelines.

But with England boss Steve McClaren already expected to be without Steven Gerrard and Owen Hargreaves against Germany, Lampard says he will ignore doctor's orders in an effort to win his 55th cap for the Wembley friendly.

"The physio and the doctor have warned me that if I don't rest it will take three or four months to get better and I'll have pain and they said it would be better if I didn't go with England," Lampard told The Times.

"I thought about that. But, number one, I want to play for England, and number two, what's the point in resting it for a few days? It needs weeks and I don't have that."

Lampard has come in for some stick after recent displays for the national side, but is determined to prove his critics wrong.

"Playing for England can be tough. I've worked bloody hard to get here, so of course criticism hurts but you can't be weak enough to let it bother you," he explained.

"I could pull out of this game if I wanted, say I've got a dodgy toe. But I will never hide. I can suffer getting booed. I'm not stupid. If we play crap I don't go asking: 'Why are they booing us?'"

The 29-year-old also believes he still warrants a berth in McClaren's midfield despite the re-emergence of David Beckham and has no thoughts of retiring from international football just yet.

"I want to play and I believe I should play. But if I don't get picked I'm not going to act the superstar," he added.

"I respect the manager has to make the decision and if it gets to the stage where I'm not playing, I might ask about it, but I won't cause a problem."

Lampard also dismissed suggestions that players do not give their all when wearing the England shirt.

"People say England players don't care - believe me we care."

"We hate the fact that we look around the dressing room and see all these great players - Steven Gerrard, John Terry, Wayne Rooney - and we're not winning or playing as fluently as we should."

"But with England there is always light at the end of the tunnel because if you win something that is you for life - part of history. That is what drives you on."

Rafa disgusted at ref



Football

AFP, Liverpool

Liverpool manager Rafa Benitez could not conceal his fury at referee Rob Styles and his bitter rivals Chelsea after a controversial second half penalty decision earned the visitors a 1-1 draw in a keenly fought Premiership encounter at Anfield on Sunday.

A goal for 26.5 million pound buy Fernando Torres on his home debut had put Liverpool in control of an excellent game only for Styles to judge that Steve Finnan had fouled Florent Malouda just after the hour, a blatantly incorrect decision that gifted Frank Lampard an equaliser from the penalty spot.

To add to Styles' unpopularity at Anfield, he also was clearly seen to brandish a second yellow card at Chelsea midfielder Michael Essien in the 73rd minute, without adding the required red, although the official later claimed he had only been showing

yellow to Essien's team mate John Terry.

Liverpool management and players were also furious at what they saw as intimidation by Chelsea players of the match official although Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho refuted such a charge.

"I think I have a naive team," said Mourinho.

"Because they are pure, they are clean. We don't have divers, we don't have violent people. We don't make nasty tackles, we don't have players diving in the swimming pool. Chelsea is a naive team, a pure team."

Benitez, however, could not conceal his disgust at his opposite number's claims.

"If Chelsea are naive and pure, then I am Little Red Riding Hood," said Benitez.

"I won't say any names but you can check the team sheet and think how many times they do the things they say they don't do. Their players are talking to the referee all the time."

It was hard not to imagine that Styles had been pressured into his

penalty decision, so bad was the call.

"What penalty?" said Benitez when quizzed about it.

"Jose Mourinho said that he couldn't see the penalty but that's normal - 45,000 people couldn't see it!"

The notion of Styles being placed under pressure by Chelsea players was shared by Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard.

"I think a very, very unfair decision got Chelsea a point," said Gerrard.

"I felt as if the ref didn't do well today. There was a lot of pressure from the Chelsea players and eventually he cracked. I hope he comes out and says that because we as players, when we make mistakes, we come out and say so."

While the latest meeting between two bitter rivals will have done little to improve strained relations, the consolation for both teams is that Manchester United's worst start to a season in 15 years has fuelled the title ambitions of both Chelsea and Liverpool.

And Mourinho claimed his team's style of play also indicated a new, attacking intent that he has brought to bear at Stamford Bridge this season.

"I think it is too early to look at opponents," said Mourinho.

"Manchester United have two points but even if they had zero points I would say they are serious contenders for the title. That doesn't influence me. We came here to win the game and I think we showed that with the team we started."

"A lot of people would think today was a game we would come to look for a point but we gave the answer and came here with a clear attacking team."

"I think we are showing we are playing for results, we want to win things, we want to bring a different style, a different smell."

Meanwhile, Gerrard confirmed that he is highly unlikely to play for England in the midweek friendly against Germany as he only managed to put in a commanding display against Chelsea thanks to a pre-match pain-killing injection.

"It will be assessed in the morning," said Gerrard.

"I have spoken a couple of times with Steve McClaren (who was at the match) and will speak again in the morning. The reality is I have had an x-ray and I need a rest to heal the crack. I looked fit out there because I had a pain-killing injection before the match."



RAFA BENITEZ