

Elber becomes a Bayern scout

AFP, Munich

Former Bayern Munich striker Giovane Elber has been recruited by the German giants to work as their South American scout, it was revealed on Sunday.

The 35-year-old Brazilian scored 133 goals in 260 matches, for both Bayern and VfB Stuttgart, to become the most prolific foreigner in Bundesliga history and retired last year having spent seven seasons in Munich.

He told German daily newspaper Bild about his latest role.

"I have a new job, on Thursday I met (Bayern bosses) Uli Hoeness and Karl-Heinz Rummenigge who asked me if I could do some scouting work for them," said the former Brazil international, who now lives back in his native country.

"I am very happy they have trusted me with this job, I will be on the look out for young players in South America who could interest Bayern."



PHOTO: AFP

England striker Michael Owen is in full flight during their Euro 2008 qualifying encounter against Israel at Wembley on Saturday.

'This is the turning point'

AFP, London

John Terry believes England's convincing win against Israel will prove to be the turning point in his side's struggle to reach the Euro 2008 finals.

A previously lacklustre qualifying campaign by Steve McClaren's team finally showed signs of life at Wembley on Saturday and Terry is confident the momentum of that 3-0 victory will carry England through to next year's finals.

The England captain was well aware that anything less than three points would have left his country's Euro hopes in tatters and McClaren facing the sack.

Now Terry and company must build on what was only their third win in 10 matches. A success against Russia, who are one point ahead of England in Group E, on Wednesday would take McClaren's

men into the second automatic qualifying place.

"There was a lot of pressure on Steve but it was a good performance," Terry said. "It's a good confidence boost. It's a good start and we've got to keep on from here.

"Russia is going to be an even tougher game because they are a good side.

"But things are looking a bit better. It's important we keep winning and keep our momentum going.

"After the Russia game we will have a better idea of where we stand. Hopefully we will pick up the three points and then we can go on in the later stages of this group in good form."

Chelsea defender Terry was delighted with the way England's stand-ins made the most of their time in the limelight.

With David Beckham, Wayne Rooney, Frank Lampard and Gary

Neville injured, McClaren turned to his understudies and they didn't fluff their lines.

Shaun Wright-Phillips was a constant threat on the right and scored England's opening goal, while Emile Heskey showed he is the ideal partner for Michael Owen.

In midfield, Gareth Barry played with an authority that belied the fact it was his first England start for seven years. Right-back Micah Richards got his first England goal to cap a dynamic display.

Terry said: "So many good things came out of the game. Shaun was different class and I thought Emile Heskey was as well. I know personally playing against him he is an absolute nightmare."

"Gareth Barry in the middle of the park was excellent and Micah Richards at right back. It was a great header from Micah. He rises so well and is always a threat."

The only sour note was the

Wembley crowd's jeering of debutant David Bentley, who had angered the England fans by refusing to play for his country's Under-21 team at the European Championships.

Rio Ferdinand insisted the supporters should give Bentley a break.

"We had such a good performance and everyone was quite happy, but what happened with David left a bad taste in the mouth," he said.

"The lad is on England duty and you don't expect him to get booed, no matter what has happened in the past.

"In some quarters, people might say what he did in the summer was a wrong decision but in hindsight, it is easy to say that.

"He is a young lad, on a learning curve, making his seniors debut for England and he did not deserve to be booed."

Women's WC kicks-off today

Football

AFP, Shanghai

The women's World Cup starts here Monday with the United States clear favourites but reigning champions Germany looking to launch a new title bid in the opening match with a big win against Argentina.

The Germans have been depicted as over the hill and short of form in the build-up to the tournament and even the United States, gunning for a third World Cup title, believe the Germans may no longer be their most dangerous rivals.

German coach Silvia Neid admitted self-belief was an issue in the German camp following their 2-2 draw with Norway last month in a crucial build-up match they had expected to win against the lower-ranked Scandinavians.

But she said her side just needed a strong start against the South Americans in the World Cup opener to shake off pre-tournament jitters and insisted the Germans were just reaching their peak and the top

players were in their prime.

"What is important is that we get into the swing of things as quickly as possible, put some moves together and build up our confidence," the coach said.

The Germans beat the United States 3-0 in the semifinals on their way to their 2003 World Cup triumph. Since then the US have gone from strength to strength and have not been beaten for over 30 months. But that last defeat was also at the hands of the Germans.

And while the draw has been kind to Germany -- Group A rivals England, Argentina and Japan are not expected to stretch the champions -- the US, which won the tournament in 1991 and 1999, have drawn the short straw in the "Group of Death," Group B, along with North Korea and Sweden.

All three teams are top five in the world along with Germany and African champions Nigeria.

US coach Greg Ryan has tipped group rivals Sweden as their major threat to their title ambitions, rather than Germany.

He also knows he has a major

task in getting past North Korea in their opening match in Chengdu on September 11, with political overtones adding to the mix.

"We start in Chengdu against North Korea, and I have the highest respect for them," he said. "Sweden are one of the favourites in my opinion, and I believe Australia and Canada could spring a surprise."

The United States' opening match could be crucial to the line-up of the quarterfinals, with the group runner-up facing the winner of Group B which is expected to be Germany.

The Germans hoisted the trophy for the first time in 2003 after beating Argentina 6-1 in the group stage. But this is unlikely to happen again on Monday, said Argentine central defender Celeste Barbitta.

"Last time around we went there (US 2003) as a learning experience, but this time we're going there to be a competitive force. We want to get our revenge," she said.

European Championship runners-up Norway are considered favourites to top Group C and are rated as realistic trophy contenders.

Canada's Norwegian coach Even Pellerud will have no qualms about spoiling the potential party in their opening match on September 12, with the increasingly powerful Australians also shaping as tricky opponents.

Ghana could prove to be the jokers in the pack.

While stadiums may not be full for some matches, China's passionate fans are expected to stream to the ground when the home team is in action, with striking sensation Ma Xiaoxu spearheading their hopes.

China has hired experienced coach Marika Domanski-Lyfors to raise their game and they will need the extra lift to get past world number six Denmark in Group D.

Brazil rate as dangerous floaters, while New Zealand will be looking to accumulate valuable experience.

The 16-team tournament is staged in five cities -- Shanghai, Wuhan, Chengdu, Hangzhou and Tianjin -- with the final on September 30 as well as the opener staged in Shanghai.

CAPTAIN KLOSE STRIKES BRACE

Germans cruise past Wales

AFP, Cardiff

Germany coach Joachim Loew was in a relaxed mood Sunday after watching his side reinforce their bid to qualify for Euro 2008 with a comfortable 2-0 win over Wales.

On his debut as Germany captain, Bayern Munich striker Miroslav Klose scored after just five minutes of Saturday's qualifier at Cardiff's Millennium Stadium as the guests ripped open the host's defence.

Klose, who was winning his 70th cap, added a second by scoring his 35th goal for his country with a bullet-header on the hour mark as Germany outclassed a limited Welsh side.

The Germans have now won seven of their eight qualifying games and are five points clear at the top of Group D, with a win over rivals the Czech Republic on October 17 in Munich their main obstacle on the path to Euro 2008.

"The pressure we have been feeling is now gone and I feel we have everything in hand," said Loew.

"We took a big step towards qualification and I am delighted with the result. We began strongly and played some class football."

"There were a lot of positives from the game, but we still have a lot to work on. But this is a strong group of players who work hard."

With just seven points from seven games, Wales coach John Toshack had no complaints. The gulf in class between the sides on the pitch looked every one of the 69 places, according to FIFA's world rankings.

Loew admitted his side took

their foot off the gas in the second half, with Klose squandering several chances to complete his hat-trick and the result could have been much higher.

Toshack, who lost captain and West Ham striker Craig Bellamy the night before the game after complications with his newly-born baby, said his side had been carved up by the German attack.

"I could see from the beginning we weren't as I wanted us to be and right the way through the game I could see the difficulties we were having," he said.

"We've not been cut open as easily as that before in the centre of

midfield.

"Apart from quality players, the Germans are a very physical and strong team and their work ethic was superb."

"We can have no complaints with the result."

Germany now entertain Romania in a friendly in Cologne on Wednesday night, but if they beat their two main rivals, the Republic of Ireland in Dublin and the Czech Republic in Munich, next month they will be virtually guaranteed qualification.

"We are the group leaders and we have to keep playing like that,"

said two-goal hero Klose, the top scorer at last year's World Cup.

"We have some good players in the squad who are well established and we are on the right path."

Germany were missing midfielders Michael Ballack and Torsten Frings through injury, while Bernd Schneider was serving a one-match ban, but Bayern Munich's Bastian Schweinsteiger produced a man-of-the-match performance in midfield.

"It was a good performance by us, but we squandered a few chances and we could have scored more goals," said Schweinsteiger.



PHOTO: AFP

Germany striker Miroslav Klose celebrates in trademark fashion the first of his two strikes in their Euro 2008 qualifying match against Wales at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff on Saturday.

Nigeria win U-17 crown

Football

AFP, Seoul

Nigeria won the FIFA Under-17 World Cup Sunday, beating Spain 3-0 in a penalty shoot-out at the Seoul World Cup Stadium.

The match went to 30 minutes of extra time, but ended in a scoreless draw, despite a near miss by Nigerian skipper Kingsley Udoh in the 14th minute of extra time.

None of Spain's first three penalty shots found the net, while Matthew Edile, Daniel Joshua, and Ganiyu Oseni all scored for Nigeria in the shootout.

Spain's Asier Illarramendi missed on the low left side of the

net, while Fran Merida's shot toward bottom right corner was saved by Oladele Ajiboye.

Then the 1.78-metre-tall keeper punched out a shot by Spain Iago shot for Nigeria's third Under-17 World Cup title, tying them with Brazil for the most championships.

There were no real scoring chances for either side until the second-half injury time, when Spain's Daniel Aquino struck a loose ball in the air inside the box but the ball ended right at Ajiboye.

Nigeria's substitute Sheriff Isa answered back with a right-foot strike between two Spanish players, Alex and Sergio, but keeper David De Gea got a piece of the ball to tip it over the cross-

bar.

In the play-off match for third place earlier Sunday, Germany edged Ghana 2-1 with a last-minute goal by substitute Alexander Esswein.

German skipper Toni Kroos opened the scoring in the 17th minute, picking up his team-leading fifth goal of the tournament. Ransford Osei scored his sixth goal of the tournament for Ghana.

Kroos was voted the Golden Ball winner as the tournament's best player, while Nigerian forward Macauley Chrisantus was the top marksman with seven goals.

Ballack in Real deal?

INTERNET, undated

Michael Ballack was omitted from Chelsea's Champions League squad because he has agreed a switch to Real Madrid, according to The People.

The Germany international was officially left out of Jose Mourinho's 23-man squad because of an ankle injury, but the Sunday tabloid reports Ballack has agreed a whopping £135,000-a-week deal with the Galacticos.

The 30-year-old was linked with a move to Real just before the transfer window closed at the end of August, with Bernd Schuster confirming earlier this week that a deal had been close.