



Germany striker Birgit Prinz heads the ball past Argentina goalkeeper Vanina Correa to score during the opening match of the Women's World Cup at the Hongkou Stadium in Shanghai on Monday.

## Germany rain down goals

### Football

AFP, Shanghai

Defending champions Germany kicked off the fifth women's World Cup on Monday with a stunning 11-0 demolition of Argentina – the biggest rout in the tournament's history.

Prior to the match the United States, ranked number one in the world who play their first game against North Korea on Tuesday, were standout favourites to win the title, but Germany served up an ominous warning.

They turned the opening Group A match into a one-way procession of goals that astonished the hapless Argentines, and indicated that they will be a serious contender to hold on to the trophy they won in 2003.

"The message to the other teams is that they know we are in good shape now," said German coach Silvia Neid.

The opening World Cup game became an embarrassment for Argentina inside the first 30 minutes when Germany went 4-0 up. Within the hour, the score was 8-0 and the Argentines had buckled for good.

### 'Hiddink my influence'

AFP, Seoul

Manchester United's Korean star Park Ji-sung has highlighted Guus Hiddink as the biggest influence on his career rather than Sir Alex Ferguson, but sees similarities between the two.

The midfield dynamo, who is out of action until at least January with an injured right knee, said he owed a lot to Hiddink, the former coach of South Korea now managing Russia.

After being rejected by a host of clubs in Korea, Park attended Myung-Ji University to continue his footballing career.

Yet it was not until Dutchman Hiddink was appointed coach of Korean team Taeguk Warriors in 2000 that his career began to blossom.

"When I was young, I always tried to play at a club that was more advanced than my level, so I was continually challenging myself to attain higher goals," he told *Fifa.com*.

"Fortunately for me, I was selected by the national team while I was still at university. Then I went to Eindhoven and gained European experience."

"But it was Guus Hiddink who turned my career around. By believing in me, he made me believe in myself. That is such an important thing for a young footballer."

Park went on to become an integral part of the Korean team at the 2002 World Cup before moving to PSV Eindhoven in 2003 and then Manchester United in 2005.

He said he saw similarities between Hiddink and Ferguson.

"Both are excellent coaches and they always encourage me and my teammates to show our abilities. I find that players who play under their management always give 100 percent in every game."

The 26-year-old has pencilled in a comeback date for early 2008 and believes United have what it takes to retain the Premiership title.

"We've got a good squad and the manager has brought some good players into the team to improve it even further."

"The new signings have all impressed me in different ways. Nani is very quick, Owen (Hargreaves) works hard and Carlos (Tevez) has great vision."

"Anderson hasn't played much, but I am looking forward to seeing more of him. Hopefully, I'll be playing again early in the New Year. My knee is getting better. It's a case of so far, so good."

## 'England can't be complacent'

### Football

AFP, London

Steven Gerrard has warned England they can't afford to let their convincing win over Israel lull them into a false sense of security ahead of a vital Euro 2008 clash against Russia.

Gerrard has passed himself fit to feature at Wembley on Wednesday despite the broken toe that has troubled him for several weeks because he knows how important the match will be to England's Euro 2008 fate.

It would be easy for Steve McClaren's players to get caught up in the wave of optimism that swept around Wembley after the 3-0 win, but Gerrard believes Guus Hiddink's Russians will pose a much sternest test.

A win would take England into the second automatic qualifying spot in Group E and the Liverpool midfielder told *Sky Sports News*: "It

was a positive good performance from the team on Saturday. We want to enjoy that and take the boost and confidence into the next game."

"But we can't be complacent. Russia are a fantastic team. If we don't play at the same level as we did against Israel it will be very difficult."

"It's going to be a tougher match with all respect to Israel, the opposition are stronger and more organised and have that little bit more quality."

Gerrard admits McClaren faces a selection headache after Emile Heskey, Shaun Wright-Phillips and Gareth Barry all staked claims to stay in the team with impressive displays against Israel.

Peter Crouch is back from suspension and could replace Heskey, while Owen Hargreaves could come in for Barry if the midfielder recovers from a thigh end, but he coped really well."

"The manager has a difficult decision to make," Gerrard said.

"Quite a few players came in and did well."

"There is competition for places all over the pitch but as a manager those are the problems you want to have."

"Emile is the sort of player you want in the team. He's been out of the picture for a long time, but he worked really hard."

"He and Peter Crouch are both capable of doing a terrific job on Wednesday."

Gerrard enjoyed being reunited with his long-time friend Barry at the heart of England's midfield. The pair combined perfectly in stark contrast to the spluttering partnership between Gerrard and Frank Lampard.

"I think the partnership with Gareth was really effective considering we only trained together twice before the game," Gerrard said. "Gareth was thrown in at the deep end, but he coped really well."

"We've been good friends off the pitch for a long time and we were really pleased with how it went."

## Donadoni defends Del Piero

### Football

INTERNET, undated

Alessandro Del Piero could still pull on an Italy shirt against Ukraine on Wednesday despite the whistles from his own fans on Saturday.

The Juventus striker was jeered off the field when Italy coach Roberto Donadoni decided to remove him late on in the goalless draw against France.

Perhaps many of the boos came from ardent AC Milan fans who, at the own San Siro, would not offer the warmest of receptions to the players of rivals Juventus even in better circumstances.

But there can be no hiding that Del Piero was not at his best.

Nevertheless, Donadoni has sprung from his defence and left the door open for another chance in Kiev on Wednesday.

"He did everything he could," he said. "The whole squad gave their maximum given the condition we are in, and I am fully satisfied."

"People expect too much of him (Del Piero). He is expected to dribble round three players and score."

Meanwhile, Donadoni blamed Bayern Munich for the state of

striker Luca Toni, who sat out Saturday's match and will again be a spectator on Wednesday.

Although the Bavarians did not even wish to release the frontman due to a thigh injury, Donadoni selected him and tried to get him ready for the 0-0 draw with Les Bleus.

As that was not possible, and since the injury is not clearing up, the Italy coach has pointed the finger at the Bundesliga side and



DEL PIERO

## Boos don't worry Bentley

AFP, London

David Bentley insists he loved every minute of his England debut despite his torrid reception from the Wembley crowd.

Bentley was booed when he came on for the last seven minutes of England's Euro 2008 qualifier against Israel on Saturday and his every touch received an equally hostile reception from fans angry at his decision not to play for the country's Under-21 team.

The Blackburn winger opted out of the Under-21s' recent European Championship campaign because he wanted to recharge his batteries after a tough Premier League campaign.

But Bentley has no regrets and is adamant his debut proved he made the right decision.

"I've made a lot of strong decisions in my career, like whether to leave Arsenal and also with the decision not to go to the Under-21s," he told *The Sun* on Monday.

"I've never, ever regretted it. A lot of people had a go at me but I knew I was doing the right thing for my career, for Blackburn and for my England career. I think Saturday proved that."

"I reckon you have to be a strong person, a strong character to make it as an international. We need strong characters in the England team."

"Those decisions make you stronger as a person and as a player and what happened at Wembley will only make me stronger. But I loved it. It was brilliant and I'm still buzzing."

Bentley sensed he was in for a rough ride but he can't wait to get back in front of the Wembley crowd in Wednesday's crucial clash against Russia.

"I thought it was coming," he said. "To be honest, it was probably good entertainment if you're not on the receiving end."

"But I was there making my England debut so I'm not worried about anyone else."

### FORMULA 1

## Hamilton fears for job

INTERNET, undated

Lewis Hamilton fears he could be out of a job next weekend due to the politics within Formula One that are also threatening to hound embattled McLaren boss Ron Dennis from the sport.

Hamilton's championship lead has been cut again, with the 22-year-old just three points clear of team-mate Fernando Alonso following the Spaniard's victory in the Italian Grand Prix.

The young Briton clinched second - his 11th podium finish in 13 races in his rookie season - courtesy of two stunning overtaking manoeuvres for McLaren's first one-two at Monza.

The triumph was a particularly significant one for Dennis given the furore that rages in the background, and yesterday's attempt by the Italian authorities to disrupt team affairs, with the 60-year-old in tears at the end.

Dennis concedes to "riding an emotional rollercoaster" these days, not helped by the latest rumour that should he resign at the end of the year then all the behind-the-scenes problems will disappear.

Despite Hamilton and Alonso now being close to turning the title race into a two-horse affair, and with McLaren 23 points ahead of Ferrari in the constructors' standings, all that could yet be wiped away on Thursday.

The threat of expulsion from the championship hangs over McLaren in light of "new evidence" in the spy scandal that will see the World Motor Sport Council reconvene in Paris to discuss the issue.

"If you sit down and think about it, I could have what I've worked for and what all the team have worked for, taken away," assessed Hamilton.

"And when you really think about that, you think 'wow' I could be out of a job next weekend and then what happens."

"It was going so well, and then you just get this big knife that cuts off your blood line."

"It is a bit disappointing when you read things about it - I won't go into it because I'll get emotional - but I really do have such a great belief in my team."

"I have 100% confidence in them, so that's why it is easy for me just to relax."

Hamilton also has total confidence in Dennis, who he feels sorry for given the maelstrom that has enveloped him this season.

In his debut season, which on track has been a dream, he concedes the political machinations behind the scenes have sickened him.

"I never actually thought I'd be sitting here saying I hate something about Formula One," Hamilton told *ITV Sport*.

"But the politics and people wanting to be bigger than others is just incredible."

"I would say to you all that Ron has always been very, very loyal to me, has always given me the opportunity and he has always been such a great man to me."

## An important test: Zanetti

### Football

AFP, Melbourne

Argentina midfielder Javier Zanetti believes their friendly against Australia here on Tuesday will play an important role in the build-up to the South Americans' 2010 World Cup qualifying campaign.

Zanetti said the whole Argentine squad was approaching the match, to be played at the Melbourne Cricket Ground in front of a crowd predicted to reach 80,000, with next month's qualifying campaign very much in their minds.

"It's an important preparation for the upcoming qualifiers and we're working very hard towards getting to the next World Cup," Zanetti said.

The Inter Milan player said he knew some of the Australians through the Italy's Serie A and said

he expected a tough match, despite the home side missing key players Mark Viduka, Harry Kewell and Tim Cahill.

"We respect the team as a whole, we don't expect Australia to be a team of individuals," he said.

"Because I play against players like (Vince) Grella and (Mark) Bresciano, I know and the team knows a fair amount about the Australian boys, and I expect it's going to be a good game and a hard opposition."

Zanetti said he had no hesitation coming all the way to Australia from Europe to play a friendly.

"It's an honour for us to play for Argentina and we don't mind how far we have to go to play," he said.

"We know it's not for any (competition) in particular, but with the upcoming World Cup qualifiers we know we have to start getting ready soon so we don't mind travelling."

Barcelona striker Lionel Messi

agreed he and his teammates were happy to come even though there had been some pressure not to travel so far.

"We do get a bit of pressure from clubs but all the players put their hands up to be selected for the national team," Messi said.

"We want to work towards getting better results and working as a unit for the qualifiers."

Australian manager Graham Arnold said he expected an intense match with neither side backing off.

"They wouldn't have brought all those players out just to have them sit on an aeroplane - they brought them out because they're preparing for something," Arnold said.

"They are a very proud nation.

They don't play friendly games and thankfully for Australia we don't play friendly games either -- we don't have that mentality, so I expect it to be a very competitive game."

## Ballack left disappointed

### Football

AFP, Berlin

Injured German captain Michael Ballack admitted on Sunday he was disappointed to be left out of Chelsea's Champions League squad, while reports from Britain have linked him to Real Madrid.

The 30-year-old Chelsea midfielder was unhappy after being left out when Chelsea's 23-man squad was named last week, but there is speculation in the British press he has been offered a deal to join the Spanish giants.

Ballack is still recovering from the ankle operation he had last April and the injury kept him out of Germany's 2-0 Euro 2008 qualifier win over Wales in Cardiff on Saturday.

"Of course, I am disappointed to be left out, it is clear the deci-

sion was based on how long the doctors think I will be out for," Ballack told the German Football Federation's website.

"But I want to be back playing as quickly as possible. I need time to recover from the ankle injury. I have had two ankle operations and I still get a bit of pain, but I can't train or play at the moment," he said.

This is the first time Ballack has expressed his disappointment at Chelsea head coach Jose Mourinho leaving him out of his squad for the Champions League group stage games.

"I don't really understand why Chelsea took this decision which has led to speculation," said Ballack.