



Argentina sensation Lionel Messi is about to curl a free-kick over the Venezuela wall during their World Cup 2010 qualifying clash at the Pachenco Romero Stadium in Venezuela on Tuesday.

## Kanoute's worst experience

AFP, Paris

The Mali international and Seville striker Frederic Kanoute said Tuesday that the recent pitch attack by angry Togo supporters armed with knives was the "worst moment of my life."

Kanoute had stitches in his back after being struck with a belt while teammate Mahamadou Sidibe, who plays for English club Stoke, had surgery for a knife wound to his arm.

The Togo supporters invaded the pitch at the Kegue Stadium in the Togolese capital of Lome after their side lost 2-0 last Friday in a qualifying match for next year's African Nations Cup tournament in Ghana.

"Frankly it was the worst moment of my life," said Kanoute. "I have never known this type of problem on a football field."

"After the match I was sad more than anything else. I couldn't enjoy the victory. It was really really bad."

Kanoute called for the world football governing body, FIFA, to take action over the incident while the Confederation of African Football (CAF) have opened an

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WC 2010

## FIFA happy at progress

AFP, Soweto

A senior FIFA official gave his seal of approval Tuesday to South Africa's preparations for the 2010 World Cup, playing down concerns about stadium construction after a recent strike.

"I am satisfied with the general preparations," FIFA general secretary Jerome Valcke told AFP.

"We have an attentive ear on the stadia. There are places where we pay more attention on stadia. We have a technical team and a sense of system that allows us to be assured that things will go on as wished," he added.

Valcke's comments come after a recent stoppage by construction workers building the new Green Point stadium in Cape Town, who downed tools for nearly a week in a dispute over travel allowances.

The chairman of FIFA local organising committee, Irvin Khoa, told reporters he was also satisfied that all building work was on schedule to be completed by a FIFA-set 2009 deadline.

"Generally, good progress is being made and the organising committee is confident the 2010 FIFA World Cup construction deadlines will be met," said Khoa.

Khoa meanwhile said around 3,000 people, including FIFA officials and journalists were expected to attend the draw for the World Cup qualifying rounds in the eastern South African city of Durban on November 25.

Ten venues will host the 2010 tournament which will be the first time that the world's most popular sporting event has been staged on African soil.

## Berlusconi forgives Dida

Football

INTERNET, undated

Berlusconi told [www.acmilan.com](http://www.acmilan.com): "It's hard to understand what goes through the mind of a player when those things happen."

"It can also happen to a great champion, to make a mistake."

The Milan supremo is nevertheless sticking by the Brazil international, with Berlusconi adamant that the Italian club - who lost 2-1 at Celtic - owe him a debt of gratitude for past heroics.

UEFA have since banned the Brazilian for two matches for breaching their "principles of loyalty, integrity and sportsmanship", meaning he will miss back-to-back games against Shakhtar Donetsk.

"I consider Dida a great goalkeeper," he continued. "Let's not forget he insisted on playing in Glasgow despite a problem to his shoulder."

"We owe Dida one of our

Champions League victories, the one in 2003 in Manchester against Juventus (which was decided on penalties).

"It was him against (Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi) Buffon - he made the saves while Buffon didn't. Dida made us win the trophy."

Milan are awaiting a full explanation of the punishment handed down to Dida by UEFA before deciding whether to appeal the ruling.

The Celtic fan who ran onto the field was banned for life by the Scottish champions, who were also fined 12,500 pounds over the incident.

## No get-out clause for Owen

Football

THE GUARDIAN

that sort of clause does not exist any longer."

Manchester United's Ryan Giggs has signed a deal that extends his contract until the end of June 2009. The 33-year-old has played 727 matches for the club. Only Sir Bobby Charlton (759) has played more games for United.

"I am delighted to have signed for a further season. I am enjoying football more than ever and I hope to carry on playing football for Manchester United for as long as I can. I would like to thank Sir Alex Ferguson, the fans and everyone at the club for the great support I have received over the years."

Chelsea's midfielder Michael Ballack is still "a few weeks" away from returning to training, according to the German team doctor Hans-Wilhelm Müller-Wohlfahrt. Ballack has been out of action since April with a persistent ankle problem but Müller-Wohlfahrt said: "In close agreement with the English doctors, I think he will be training again in a few weeks."

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Pascal Chimbonda could sign a new contract at Tottenham Hotspur next week. "We are in talks over a new deal," Chimbonda's agent, Willie McKay, said. "I have spoken to [Tottenham's sporting director] Damien Comolli about an extension for Pascal. Talks are going well and we are waiting until after the next match to try and conclude things."

Mikel Arteta's agent is not surprised by reports that Real Madrid are interested in the Everton midfielder. The Spanish club, along with Chelsea and Real Zaragoza have been linked with a January move for the player. "No one from Real Madrid has come to us. But it is normal that a great club is interested in Arteta because he is doing very well," said Inaki Ibanez.

Portsmouth's 3 million pound midfielder Papa Bouba Diop has put club before country by opting out of an international friendly against Guinea and a Senegal training camp to rest a damaged hamstring.

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## Bolton boot out Lee

Football

AFP, London

Sammy has played an important role in the club's recent history. We wish Sammy and Frank well for the future.

"Our efforts will now be to look for a replacement manager and to concentrate on the future."

The Lancashire club have taken just five points from their first nine games and only goal difference is keeping them off the bottom of the table.

Lee took over from Sam Allardyce as manager at the Reebok Stadium near the end of last season before Allardyce took over as coach at Newcastle.

General manager Frank McParland has also left the club.

Chairman Phil Gartside told the club's official website, [www.bwfc.co.uk](http://www.bwfc.co.uk): "This has been a difficult decision for all parties but we have agreed that the time is

right. Lee had been a longtime assistant to the popular Allardyce at Bolton and he has succeeded in taking his side into the group stages of the UEFA Cup but Bolton's league form has been disappointing.

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