

Domenech all praise for Henry

AFP, Paris

France coach Raymond Domenech paid tribute to Thierry Henry on Thursday following the Barcelona forward's record-breaking feat the night before.

Henry grabbed a brace of goals in the 2-0 Euro 2008 qualifying victory over Lithuania in Nantes, taking his tally of international strikes to 43 and surpassing the record of 41 that he had shared with Michel Platini - now the UEFA president.

"For Titi (Henry), its numbers and decisive goals, that's the mark of the greats," said Domenech.

"Titi's smile after the first goal, the joy of the substitutes who jumped all over him, a moment of pleasure, of joy, a real atmosphere, something special happened," added the France coach waxing lyrical over his star striker.

"The record doesn't mean much to me but that places him in the history of French football, he's someone who beat Platini's record, it's not happened just like that, it's due to his consistency. He deserves his status as a star of world football."

"I've always admired those that score goals; it's difficult mentally, physically. I've a lot of admiration for those that last in this exercise (scoring goals) because we have lots of meteorites, but those that last..."

"Thierry was injured last season but there, at Barca, (Samuel) Eto'o was injured which forced him to speed up his return to match-fitness."

"It's a plus for everyone but he's possibly even better than ever."

Domenech also had a word of caution over the future surrounding the emergence of Hatem Ben Arfa, the young Lyon playmaker who came on as a substitute and had a hand in Henry's opener against Lithuania.

Ben Arfa, who could have chosen to represent Tunisia, has been quoted in the press pleading for a starting role but Domenech said he expects a lot more from the youngster, claiming he is nothing more than a "joker".

"For the moment he is nothing more than a joker (a player to throw on to change the game)," said Domenech.

"But at 20 you can't be satisfied being a joker because all the great players at 20 are automatic first choices at the biggest clubs in the Champions League."

BUNDESLIGA FIXTURES

Saturday
(all times 1330 GMT unless stated)
Nuremberg v Eintracht Frankfurt
Bayer Leverkusen v Borussia Dortmund
Hamburg SV v VfB Stuttgart
Hansa Rostock v Schalke 04
VfL Bochum v Bayern Munich
Werder Bremen v Hertha Berlin

Sunday
Hanover 96 v VfL Wolfsburg (1500)
Karlsruhe SC v Arminia Bielefeld (1500)

Khulna's amazing

FROM PAGE 12
CHITTAGONG: First innings 176 all out in 62.4 overs (Tamim 9, Salahuddin 11, Nafis 3, Aftab 61, Nazimuddin 47, Ehsanul 0, Dhiman 8, Sabbir 5, Ashiqur 1, Tareq 1, Sajid 0, Talha 3-57, Sajidul 4-42, Arafat 1-30, Tariqul 1-30).
BARISAL: First innings 61-2 in 20.2 overs (Shahriar 37*, Rokibul 3*, Tarek 1-26, Ashiqur 1-26).
SYLHET: First innings 141 all out in 77.3 overs (Imtiaz 35, Rahman 14, Mabud 9, Saleh 13, Kapali 5, Rahim 32, Rezaul 5, Tapash 6, Enamul 3, Nazmul 9*, Nabil 0, Shahjada 2-16, Delwar 2-31, Forhad 3-33, Shuvo 1-42, Rahman 1-12).

A bright start

FROM PAGE 12
took the pleasure of spending a Friday morning at the home of Bangladesh cricket.

But it shows how our crowds are brought up to believe entirely on the shorter versions. But with television coverage through five BTV cameras and extensive marketing of the competition, it is expected that there will be more awareness, if not enthusiasm, for the longer version.

It was assumed that a local game had to be free but there was timidity on both sides as normally, certain sections of stadiums in Bangladesh are 'banned' for normal souls. But the heavy security's weary faces, as they saw pesky kids pouring into the western galleries, were quite comical. Normally, such exuberance is tempered.

And once they were let in, they took full toll of the superb stadium. Some even climbed on top of the large scoreboard, next to the press box. Their adventure was cut short when they were calmly told to come down from that precarious state.

The day reflected what is expected of the season: good, hard cricket and with a schedule in mind. Had it been a club-based affair, this inaugural match would have been held some time in mid-January after all their demands had been met!

Drogba bares his soul

Football

THE GUARDIAN

For a man who has a reputation for diving, Didier Drogba is remarkably honest off the pitch. Not only does he openly admit to France Football, in an interview published today, that he wants to leave Chelsea, but he explains that he will not do so in the course of this season because "it would be a little cowardly to leave at a time when the boat is rocking".

He admits, however, that his initial intention after Jose Mourinho's departure was to leave the club as soon as possible and that he originally planned to refuse to play against Valencia last month so that he would be eligible to play in the Champions League for another team later in the season. After reflection, Drogba eventually declared himself available for that game and now says he is determined to stay at Chelsea until June.

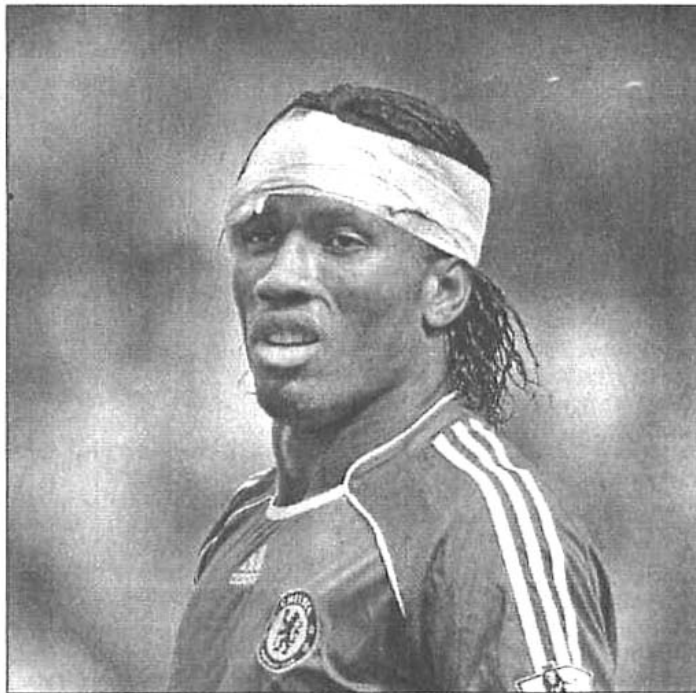
"When you're disappointed you sometimes take stances that you haven't thought about properly," he explained. "That was my way of showing how angry I was. But I wouldn't have been able to look my teammates in the eye afterwards. I am someone who has always campaigned for solidarity, so I've decided to stay until next summer."

Chelsea have already pointed out that Drogba committed himself to the club until 2010 when he signed an improved contract last year, but the player said he hoped the club would realise it will be in everybody's interests to let him go next June. "Experience shows that there's no point holding on to a player against his wishes," he said. "I hope we'll be able to find a tidy way of leaving Chelsea."

Drogba also revealed that he has been taking Spanish and Italian lessons for "a little while" and would relish the opportunity to play for one of the giants of Serie A or La Liga. "I want to get back to playing with butterflies in my stomach for a club who make me dream," he said. "For me, there aren't 50 clubs who could stimulate this sort of passion, just four: AC Milan, Inter, Barca and Real."

Aware that Chelsea fans may accuse him of disloyalty or money-grabbing, Drogba said: "Since my first day at Chelsea, I've always thought collectively. I don't think anyone can complain if I decide to think a little about myself towards the end."

Though he admitted that this is not the first time he has considered leaving Stamford Bridge and that he has always had "a bizarre relationship" with Chelsea, he said that Mourinho's departure convinced him it was time to move on. Indeed, he revealed that he would almost



DIDIER DROGBA

certainly have left last summer if he'd known that the manager would be gone within a month of the season's start. Asked if he thought the club waited until after the closure of the transfer window to shed Mourinho precisely because they wanted to prevent a player exodus, Drogba reportedly feigned shock before explaining: "That would be Machiavellian thinking!"

"All I know is that the decision has done a lot of damage to the team," he continued, seriously. "There are many casualties in the dressing room because now we know what happened and whose fault it is that Jose Mourinho is gone. In the days after his departure, I had trouble looking at certain people without feeling angry."

"Some things that were done and said did not conform to the mentality of a squad that until that point had always been tight and had shown solidarity for each other. I understand that some people might not have wanted the coach to stay and hoped that his successor might give them more games, but what happened went beyond that. It went far too far. Maybe it would be an exaggeration to talk about treachery but certainly some people were very disappointing. I understand why the coach, despite being very attached to most of the players, announced as he was going, 'I am very happy to be leaving here.'"

Drogba described the atmosphere in the dressing room after Mourinho's departure. "There were fireworks ... Things went a little haywire and there was quite a rumour within the group. Several players weren't far off professional

misconduct, ignoring basic principles. Fortunately all that didn't last too long."

He refused to elaborate further and denied that there were now warring factions within the dressing room. Asked whether Andriy Shevchenko and John Terry had played any role in Mourinho's departure, he replied - sarcastically, according to France Football - "No, I don't want to believe that ... if that was the case, it would be really shocking."

He made little effort, however, to disguise his displeasure with Roman Abramovich's role in Mourinho's departure. "Everything was halted at the whim of the president," he said. "We are mere employees. I don't hide the fact that I took the whole episode very badly."

"When you stick with a manager through the summer, you have to at least give him until December unless some catastrophe takes place. But apparently president Abramovich has changed philosophy. We feel that the shared story was ended too quickly. We're left with a feeling of incompleteness, and impotence."

Despite all that, Drogba maintains that he is determined to do his best for Chelsea until he leaves. "I think Henk ten Cate will do us good. We're not out of the title race and we're still on track in the Champions League. I believe we can succeed. We wouldn't be the first team to pull off a great season after encountering some problems along the way. We've all developed such a hunger for victory that I can't see us settling for second place. We've got what it takes to surprise some people. The trauma is behind us now."

Atapattu recalled for Australia tour

Cricket

AFP, Colombo

Former captain Marvan Atapattu on Friday resumed training with the Sri Lankan squad after six months, a day after being dramatically picked for the upcoming Australian tour.

Atapattu, who was not picked in the original touring squad, was brought in as the 17th member on Thursday following the intervention of the country's sports minister Gamini Lokuge.

"Marvan attended practice this morning," team manager Sriyan Samararatne told AFP.

The 36-year-old will be the fourth opening batsman in the touring party alongside Sanath Jayasuriya, Upul Tharanga and Michael Vandort for the two Test matches next month.

Atapattu, who snubbed the national selectors after the World Cup earlier this year, had asked to be

released from his annual contract with Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) during the tour.

Even though SLC had granted his wish, Lokuge stepped in to defuse the crisis following talks with officials and the selectors headed by former Test fast bowler Asantha de Mel.

Atapattu met SLC chief executive Duleep Mendis on Thursday and agreed to rejoin the national team as Sri Lanka bid for their first Test win in Australia.

"I met Duleep and we spoke about the terms and conditions under which I will be playing," said Atapattu. "I was satisfied with them and I told him that I was available for Australia."

Sri Lankan captain Mahela Jayawardene said he welcomed Atapattu's selection.

"We welcome Marvan into the team," said Jayawardene. "He is experienced and has done so well for Sri Lanka that you always welcome a guy like that."

India, Aus renew rivalry

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promised stricter crowd-control measures for the game in the wake of the incidents in the last one-dayer where a photograph captured some fans making monkey gestures at Symonds.

Ponting also said that opener Matthew Hayden would most likely play after missing out on the last two matches because of a hip injury.

The Indians are without three celebrated seniors - Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly and Rahul Dravid - who were also not part of the winning squad at the world championship.

Left-arm spinner Murali Kartik and paceman Zaheer Khan, the two bowlers who impressed against Australia in the one-dayers, are also not part of the Twenty20 side.

Coming into the squad are aggressive openers Virender Sehwag and Gautam Gambhir, who was the top scorer for India with 227 runs in seven matches in South Africa.

TEAMS

INDIA: Mahendra Singh Dhoni

(captain), Yuvraj Singh, Virender Sehwag, Dinesh Karthik, Gautam Gambhir, Robin Uthappa, Joginder Sharma, Yusuf Pathan, Harbhajan Singh, Ajit Agarkar, Shanthakumar Sreesanth, Irfan Pathan, Rudra Pratap Singh, Rohit Sharma.

AUSTRALIA: Ricky Ponting (captain), Adam Gilchrist, Andrew Symonds, Matthew Hayden, Michael Clarke, Nathan Bracken, Stuart Clark, Brad Haddin, Ben Hilfenhaus, Brad Hodge, Brad Hogg, James Hopes, Mitchell Johnson, Brett Lee.

Long journey

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The Bangladeshi footballers will have to travel about 800 miles on bus, which will take almost 22 hours.

The team are expected to reach Dushanbe on October 26 and get just one day's rest before the October 26 match.

Bangladesh need to win or draw at least 2-2 to qualify for the Asian group stage qualifiers.

Federer's revenge on Canas

AFP, Madrid

Roger Federer came down hard on an outsider who embarrassed him last March, crushing Argentine Guillermo Canas 6-0, 6-3 to blow into the quarterfinals of the Madrid Masters.

The Thursday thunder off the Federer racket made amends for back-to-back defeats the Swiss suffered at the hands of nothing-to-loss Canas in the second round at Indian Wells and the fourth round in Miami.

Those two upsets half a year ago are among only six suffered so far by the world number one this season, another raging success for the holder of a dozen Grand Slam titles.

"There was satisfaction in this match; Canas has had a fantastic year. To beat him after two tough losses is nice," said Federer.

"I played aggressive and took my chances."

"I always felt in control. It was a good feeling out there; it's nice to beat him."

Ferguson attacker jailed

AFP, London

A drunken man who attacked Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson outside a London railway station was jailed for 15 months on Thursday.

Homeless Kevin Reynolds, 44, was sentenced at London's Southwark Crown Court after kicking Ferguson in the groin at Euston station.

Ferguson responded to the attack by shouting "What the hell are you doing?" The beggar, whose criminal record boasts a total of 146 convictions, initially apologised, claiming he hadn't recognised the Scot, but he then held out his arms and shouted: "Fergie, Fergie, shut your mouth."

Ferguson admitted in a police statement he had been stunned by the assault.

"He really gave me a whack. At the time my natural instinct was to react and defend myself," Ferguson said.

"However, I decided against it as I did not know if he was carrying any weapon and might come at me again."

SERIE A FIXTURES

Saturday
(all times 1300 GMT unless stated)
AS Roma v Napoli (1600), Reggina v Inter Milan (1830)
Sunday
AC Milan v Empoli, Atalanta Bergamo v Torino, Cagliari v Catania, Fiorentina v Siena, Livorno v Lazio, Sampdoria v Parma, Udinese v Palermo, Juventus v Genoa (1830)

Van Persie out for a month

AFP, London

Arsenal striker Robin van Persie will be sidelined for at least a month after suffering a knee injury playing for the Netherlands.

Van Persie, 24, limped out of his country's match against Slovenia on Wednesday and Gunners manager Arsene Wenger confirmed his leading scorer faces a lengthy spell out of action.

Wenger will also be without Philippe Senderos for two weeks after the Swiss defender was injured on international duty.

But it is the loss of in-form van Persie, who had scored five goals in his last four matches, that is the major blow for the Premier League leaders.

"It looks like a knee injury," Wenger told Arsenal TV. "We will know later today how bad it is but the early signs are that he will not be able to perform for us in the next four weeks."

"It is a big blow. Robin is a striker, a supportive striker and important on set-pieces as well. I hope he will be back soon and we'll do the maximum to get him back."

Wenger can at least welcome back France defender William Gallas, German goalkeeper Jens Lehmann and Czech Republic midfielder Tomas Rosicky for Saturday's visit from Bolton.

Marsh in city

FROM PAGE 12

needs from the academy.

The Academy, part of the Dubai Sports City development, will import soil from the United Kingdom, Asia and Australia as part of its mission to offer attendees the chance to experience as wide a range of conditions as possible.

It opens for business in early 2008.

Meanwhile, former Australian off-spinner Tim May, now chief executive of the Federation of International Players' Associations, is likely to arrive in the capital on October 31 on an invitation from the Bangladesh Cricketers' Welfare Association.

Odoyo's maiden

FROM PAGE 12
half-century from the impressive 36-year-old rookie Arvind Kandappa.

In reply, Kenya at 49-5, appeared to have lost it all before Odoyo turned the game on its head with his now-familiar stroke play, hitting 11 fours for his 111 off 113 balls to clinch victory.

It was the second century for the 32-year-old ICC Associate Player of the Year who also attained his maiden first-class hundred during the four-day.

Odoyo capitalised on two major partnerships with 19-year-old Alex Obanda putting a 86-stand for the sixth wicket and Jimmy Kamande (37 n/o) to achieve the target in the 48th over.

Left-arm pacer Umar Bhatti was the pick of the Canadian bowlers taking three for 19 in his 10 overs.

The second match is scheduled for Saturday.

Benitez urges cool

AGENCIES, Liverpool



Rafa Benitez has told his Liverpool players not to lose their composure in Saturday's potentially explosive Merseyside derby against Everton.

There is no love-lost between Benitez's side and Everton at the best of times, but the 206th meeting between the old enemies will be even more combustible than usual.

Everton defender Alan Stubbs piled pressure on Benitez this week by claiming clubs of Liverpool's size should be challenging for the title every year.

That outburst may have been provoked by Benitez describing Everton a smaller club than Liverpool last season.

The rows will raise the temperature when the teams collide at Goodison Park in a game Liverpool desperately need to win.

After a run of one victory in four league matches left them trailing in the wake of leaders Arsenal, Benitez knows he cannot afford a repeat of last season's 3-0 defeat at Everton, so he needs all his players to keep cool in the derby maelstrom.

"In these kind of games it is more important because everyone is talking about the rivalry between both teams," he said.

"You must be as focused as always with maybe more determination. You must analyse the game with a cool mind because if you think about last year you will lose your concentration and it is important to make the right decisions."

"If you are top of the table or bottom of the table it doesn't matter because this game is different. Collective responsibility is not the key just for this game it is the key for a winning team."

Fernando Torres, Alvaro Arbeloa,

Andriy Voronin, Ryan Babel, Yossi Benayoun and Javier Mascherano are all in line for their first taste of a Merseyside derby.

While Benitez is concerned by his side's recent struggles, he believes Liverpool can reverse that poor run if they don't panic.

He said: "It is a good game for us now because we are not playing well and this one after the international break is important for our confidence."

"In football everything goes so quickly so it is important to be calm, look at the big picture and analyse everything."

"You have to say, 'I have a lot of confidence in my team, I want to win trophies with my club so if I have confidence how can I do this?' By working hard and getting the right selection."

Torres is making good progress from a thigh problem, while midfielder Kabi Alonso is close to a return after recovering from a broken metatarsal.

Meanwhile, league leaders Arsenal will be without leading scorer Robin van Persie for Saturday's home match against struggling Bolton Wanderers at the Emirates Stadium after he hurt a knee playing for the Netherlands on Wednesday.

Arsenal fear the injury could sideline him for a month.

Swiss defender Philippe Senderos, who scored against Sunderland in Arsenal's last match, is out for at least two weeks with a back injury while Manuel Almunia is expected to continue in goal even though Jens Lehmann is now fit.

Bolton travel to Arsenal with coaching co-ordinator Archie Knox in temporary charge of the side following the departure of manager Sammy Lee on Wednesday.

Bolton could be without midfielder Christian Wilhelmsson

who injured an ankle playing for Sweden against Northern Ireland on Wednesday. Former Arsenal striker Nicolas Anelka is also doubtful after injuring a thigh while with France this week.

Champions Manchester United resume their pursuit of Arsenal at the top, with the best record of any club in the first game back after the last eight international breaks dating back to the start of last season.

They travel to Aston Villa having won all eight matches they have played immediately after an international break.

In comparison Villa have won just one.

Moustapha Salifou of Togo could make his debut for Villa after finally receiving his international clearance after signing for the club in the summer.

Chelsea travel to struggling Middlesbrough looking for their second successive away win after beating Bolton 1-0 two weeks ago.

Michael Essien has said he has been impressed by new coach Avram Grant, in contrast to the view of Didier Drogba who says the club is "broken", adding: "I can't wait to leave."

FIXTURES

Saturday
(all times 1400 GMT unless stated)
Everton v Liverpool (1145), Arsenal v Bolton Wanderers, Blackburn Rovers v Reading, Fulham v Derby County, Manchester City v Birmingham City, Middlesbrough v Chelsea, Wigan Athletic v Portsmouth, Aston Villa v Manchester United (1615)
Sunday
West Ham v Sunderland (1500)
Monday
Newcastle United v Tottenham Hotspur (1900)

Barca's battle at Madrigal

INTERNET, undated



Barcelona will resume Spanish league action looking to recapture the blistering form they displayed before the two-week international break.

Frank Rijkaard's team enters Saturday's game at Villarreal seeking a fifth straight league victory - and seventh in all competitions - which could lift them atop the standings if leaders Real Madrid fail to win at Espanyol on the same day.

Barcelona's surge has been led by forward Lionel Messi, who has scored in every match of the winning streak and also netted in Argentina's 2-0 World Cup qualifying win over Venezuela on Tuesday.

Messi is the league's top scorer with six goals and has helped Barcelona make light of Samuel Eto'o leg injury that is expected to keep him sidelined until December.

Barcelona have already found the net 18 times in their six victories, which may presage a busy match for Villarreal goalkeeper Sebastian Viera.

"Barcelona are a team who creates a lot of goal chances. That's their strength," Viera said. "To counteract this, we'll have to really concentrate and keep the ball if possible. I think we can win if we can play our own game and perform well."

Star forward Ronaldinho only returns Friday from international play with Brazil and is set to be

rested for the game at the El Madrigal stadium. Rijkaard may replace him with one of the team's promising teenagers, Bojan Krkic or Giovanni Dos Santos.

As well as Eto'o, defenders Rafael Marquez and Gianluca Zambrotta, together with midfielders Yaya Toure and Edmilson, will also miss the game because of injury.

Villarreal playmaker Juan Roman Riquelme will sit out the match against his former club despite appearing in both Argentina's recent victories in 2010 World Cup qualifiers.

Riquelme hasn't been picked for Villarreal this season after a dispute earlier in the year with coach Manuel Pellegrini and is expected to leave in January.

The midfielder's omission has not prevented Villarreal from rising to third place and producing their best start to a season in the top flight.

Villarreal have 15 points, two less than Barcelona and four behind Madrid. Valencia also have 15, while Espanyol have 13.

Having made their best start since the 1991-92 season, Madrid hope to stay unbeaten in a tough trip to Espanyol, who have won their last three encounters.

Bernd Schuster's side have lost their initial panache recently but have still managed to grind out victories.

"We're getting good results from our matches, sometimes without playing our best soccer. The better play will come," Madrid right back Michel Salgado said.

Madrid central defender Pepe is recovering from a right thigh injury and is unlikely to be fit in time,

while midfielder Jose Maria "Guti" Gutierrez is doubtful with a right calf injury.

Valencia visits underperforming Deportivo La Coruna on Saturday seeking to atone for recent defeats against Espanyol in the league and Chelsea in the Champions League.

The 2002 and 2004 champions could be boosted by the return of David Villa. The striker missed Spain's recent European Championship qualifying win over Denmark and the friendly draw with Finland due to a left ankle sprain.

Sevilla are languishing in 15th place with six points after a run of four straight defeats, although the team still has a game in hand.

The two-time UEFA Cup champion will expect to return to winning ways on Saturday against a team which is in a worse plight - Levante, who have gathered just one point from their opening seven games.

Levante will be under the charge of new coach, Italian Giovanni De Biasi, who replaced the fired Abel Resino on Oct. 11.

FIXTURES

Saturday
(all times 1500 GMT unless stated)
Deportivo Coruna v Valencia (1800)
Levante v Sevilla (