

Terry will lead England

Football

AFP, London

John Terry has been restored as England captain for Wednesday's friendly against the United States at Wembley.

England coach Fabio Capello confirmed Terry will lead the team for the first time since the Italian took charge.

Rio Ferdinand captained England in their last match against France in Paris and Steven Gerrard skippered the side in Capello's first match with Switzerland when Terry was injured.

Now Terry, who was captain under Steve McClaren, finally has the chance to earn the armband on a permanent basis ahead of next season's World Cup qualifiers.

Capello wouldn't confirm if Terry will also lead his country in Sunday's friendly against Trinidad and Tobago in Port of Spain.

But it is a much-needed boost for Terry, whose missed penalty cost Chelsea the chance to win the Champions League against Manchester United last week.

The captain is John Terry. I decided before the Champions League final. We have had Steven Gerrard, Rio Ferdinand and now John as captain, Capello said.

At this moment it is a good decision for John after a not nice experience on Wednesday.

"I told him he would be the captain and he was very happy. It is very important to be a leader and John is a leader."

After the agony of losing the Champions League to United on penalties, Terry, Ashley Cole, Frank Lampard, Joe Cole and Wayne Bridge arrived at England's training camp in Hertfordshire at a low ebb.

Capello will try to lift the spirits of the Chelsea stars and is keen to use Lampard for the first time after the midfielder missed England's last two matches through injury.

It is very important that the Chelsea players play with the national team so they can forget the last game in Moscow. I plan to use all the Chelsea players in these two games, he said.

Los Angeles Galaxy star David Beckham is also in the squad after winning his 100th cap against France and Capello praised the midfielder's fitness following the start of the Major League Soccer season.

"He's very fresh, like USA's players," Capello said. "They've just started the season. The future is good for him, there's no problem. He's very fit."

However Capello, who was speaking to the media in English for the first time at his pre-match briefing, has no intention of taking it easy on his troops, even at the end of a draining campaign.

He has been working them hard with double training sessions and

Kahn's final appearance

Football

AFP, Kolkata

Some 100,000 Indians came together to bid legendary German goalkeeper Oliver Kahn a fond farewell when he began his last match as a professional for Bayern Munich on Tuesday.

Fans in this football-mad city packed the Salt Lake stadium to watch Kahn's Bundesliga champions side play the local Mohun Bagan club in a friendly match that began at 6.15 pm (1245 GMT).

It is the last leg of Bayern Munich's nine-day tour of Asia that also had stop-overs in Jakarta and

Bali in Indonesia.

The 38-year-old Kahn, a three-time world goalkeeper of the year, will retire to become a television expert after claiming a record eight Bundesliga titles and featuring in a league record 557 matches.

Kahn, who also played 86 matches for Germany during his sparkling 20-year career, was adjudged the best player of the 2002 World Cup held in Japan and South Korea when he led the team to the final.

Tuesday's friendly also marks the last game for Bayern's coach Ottmar Hitzfeld, who is due to take over the Switzerland national team in July.

Former German captain Jürgen Klinsmann will replace Hitzfeld at Bayern.

'It is up to C'Ron'

Football

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid is awaiting a decision by Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo on his possible transfer to the Spanish champions, but are hopeful of signing him, Spanish newspapers said Tuesday.

Real president Ramon Calderon told a meeting of the club's board on Monday that "it is up to the player to commit himself publicly," the newspaper Marca said.

Real is ready to pay at least 80 millions euros (126 million dollars) for Ronaldo and has offered him a

five-year contract worth nine million euros a year, Spanish media said.

Coach Bernd Schuster told the AS newspaper that Ronaldo is "big property" for the club and that the Portuguese striker will blend in well at the team.

"If he comes here and he scores 30 goals, we can be assured of at least another title," he said.

Since Manchester United beat Chelsea in Moscow last week to claim their third European Champions League title, media in England and Spain have been constantly linking the 23-year star player, who scored 42 times for Manchester in all competitions last

season, with Real.

Spanish newspapers said Real is hopeful of landing Ronaldo as he has not ruled out a transfer to the Spanish champions, even if Manchester United wants to keep him.

Ronaldo, who has now joined up with the rest of the Portugal squad at their training camp where they are preparing for Euro 2008, has said there will be news on any move "in two or three weeks."

The newspaper El Mundo said however that some directors at the club are concerned about the price they would have to pay for Ronaldo, as Real already has debts of 250 million euros.

Ballack fired up

APP, Berlin

German captain Michael Ballack shrugged off his disappointment at losing out to Manchester United in last Wednesday's Champions League by saying on Monday he couldn't wait for Euro 2008 to begin.

The 31-year-old Chelsea playmaker had watched disbelievingly as first club captain John Terry missed what would have been the winning penalty and then Nicolas Anelka -- who had refused to take one of the first five penalties -- have his sudden death effort saved by Edwin van der Sar to give United victory.

However, Ballack insisted on Monday after joining up with his national teammates as they prepare for a pre-Euro friendly against Belarus on Tuesday that four days with his family had allowed him to relax and dull somewhat the disappointing result.

"I am delighted to be back among the squad, I am really impatient for the tournament to begin," said Ballack, who has scored 35 goals in 79 matches for Germany.

"I have had several days to get it (the Champions League defeat) out of my system."

"But now, I begin again and its full steam ahead," added Ballack.

Ballack is expected to play for between half-an-hour and 45 minutes against Belarus, the penultimate warm-up match for the Germans ahead of the beginning of Euro, which is being co-hosted by Austria and Switzerland and runs

from June 7-29.

Six players, though, will take no part in the match in Kaiserslautern having stayed behind at the Germans training camp in Mallorca.

They include the injury-plagued Tim Borowski, who is suffering

from 'flu, Mario Gomez has a calf worry, Rene Adler has a bruised hip and Kevin Kuranyi has been rested.

Germany are in Group B along with Austria, Croatia and debutants Poland, who begin their campaign against the Germans in Klagenfurt on June 8.

from June 7-29.

German captain Michael Ballack shrugged off his disappointment at losing out to Manchester United in last Wednesday's Champions League by saying on Monday he couldn't wait for Euro 2008 to begin.

The 31-year-old Chelsea playmaker had watched disbelievingly as first club captain John Terry missed what would have been the winning penalty and then Nicolas Anelka -- who had refused to take one of the first five penalties -- have his sudden death effort saved by Edwin van der Sar to give United victory.

However, Ballack insisted on Monday after joining up with his national teammates as they prepare for a pre-Euro friendly against Belarus on Tuesday that four days with his family had allowed him to relax and dull somewhat the disappointing result.

"I am delighted to be back among the squad, I am really impatient for the tournament to begin," said Ballack, who has scored 35 goals in 79 matches for Germany.

"I have had several days to get it (the Champions League defeat) out of my system."

"But now, I begin again and its full steam ahead," added Ballack.

Ballack is expected to play for between half-an-hour and 45 minutes against Belarus, the penultimate warm-up match for the Germans ahead of the beginning of Euro, which is being co-hosted by Austria and Switzerland and runs

from June 7-29.

Germany captain Michael Ballack (L) jokes with teammate Oliver Neuville during a training session in Homburg on Monday.

Sweden edge Slovenia

APP, Stockholm

Tobias Linderoth's first goal in more than seven years for Sweden saw the Euro 2008 finalists beat Slovenia 1-0 in a warm-up match for the finals on Monday, though, worryingly star striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic sat out the match with his knee bandaged.

While players and fans may be planning their holidays, Capello sees the 10-day get-together as an invaluable chance to get his team across to the squad.

After these games the Italian believes he will have a good idea of the team he will use to start next season's first World Cup qualifier against Andorra.

The two friendlies are very important because I will know what I think about every position after these games, he said.

"It will be a strong game. I saw their three games and the United States scored seven goals, with only two conceded.

They have good organisation and are very fast on the counter-attack. They are scoring a lot of goals from free-kicks and corners because they jump very well.

"I think it is very important test for us. They are very fresh. For us it will be important to play at a high level.

"I am happy and afraid because nine players were not with me at the start of the camp because they played in the Champions League final. I was happy for the players but not for me.

Deschamps on Blues shortlist

INTERNET, undated

Former Chelsea midfielder Didier Deschamps claims he is on the shortlist to become the new Blues manager following the sacking of Avram Grant.

The 39-year-old played for the club for the 1999/2000 season when they won the FA Cup and was part of the France team that claimed both the World Cup and the European Championship.

As a manager he then led Monaco to the 2004 Champions League final before guiding Juventus back to Serie A after they had been relegated following the match-fixing scandal.

However, he resigned in May 2007 and has been out of management since but now he believes he is in the frame to become the new boss at Stamford Bridge.

Deschamps told Monaco-based radio station RMC: "Three or four managers are on the list and I am one of them."

It would be hard to refuse Chelsea. I want to return to coaching.

"I need to rest, but I feel capable of achieving good things now."

"Breaking back into management is complicated because there are not always the opportunities, but the Chelsea position is now free."

"I am flattered to be considered a possible candidate for the role."

"They sacked their manager not because of the results they achieved, but because of their wish to play a more attacking, attractive style of football in the next few years."

"They are a very big club, that I know well."

"We will see over the next few days how it goes but any big-name manager who is available would interest them."

Season, with Real.

Spanish newspapers said Real is hopeful of landing Ronaldo as he has not ruled out a transfer to the Spanish champions, even if Manchester United wants to keep him.

Ronaldo, who has now joined up with the rest of the Portugal squad at their training camp where they are preparing for Euro 2008, has said there will be news on any move "in two or three weeks."

The newspaper El Mundo said however that some directors at the club are concerned about the price they would have to pay for Ronaldo, as Real already has debts of 250 million euros.

Real Madrid is awaiting a decision by Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo on his possible transfer to the Spanish champions, but are hopeful of signing him, Spanish newspapers said Tuesday.

Real president Ramon Calderon told a meeting of the club's board on Monday that "it is up to the player to commit himself publicly," the newspaper Marca said.

Real is ready to pay at least 80 millions euros (126 million dollars) for Ronaldo and has offered him a

five-year contract worth nine million euros a year, Spanish media said.

Coach Bernd Schuster told the AS newspaper that Ronaldo is "big property" for the club and that the Portuguese striker will blend in well at the team.

"If he comes here and he scores 30 goals, we can be assured of at least another title," he said.

Since Manchester United beat Chelsea in Moscow last week to claim their third European Champions League title, media in England and Spain have been constantly linking the 23-year star player, who scored 42 times for Manchester in all competitions last

season, with Real.

Spanish newspapers said Real is hopeful of landing Ronaldo as he has not ruled out a transfer to the Spanish champions, even if Manchester United wants to keep him.

Ronaldo, who has now joined up with the rest of the Portugal squad at their training camp where they are preparing for Euro 2008, has said there will be news on any move "in two or three weeks."

The newspaper El Mundo said however that some directors at the club are concerned about the price they would have to pay for Ronaldo, as Real already has debts of 250 million euros.

Real Madrid is awaiting a decision by Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo on his possible transfer to the Spanish champions, but are hopeful of signing him, Spanish newspapers said Tuesday.

Real president Ramon Calderon told a meeting of the club's board on Monday that "it is up to the player to commit himself publicly," the newspaper Marca said.

Real is ready to pay at least 80 millions euros (126 million dollars) for Ronaldo and has offered him a

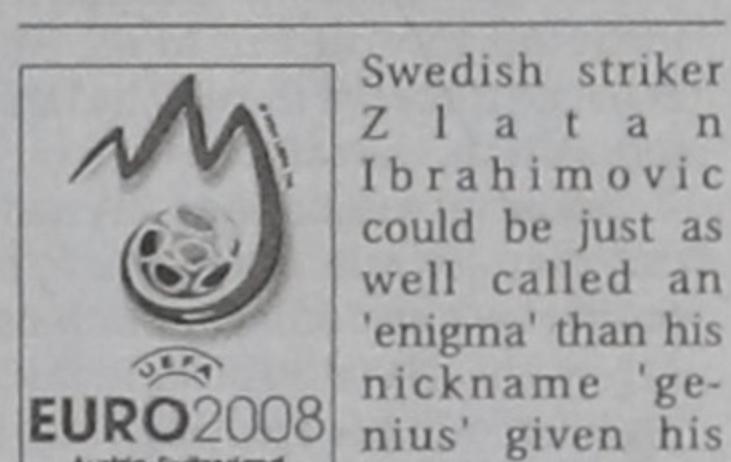


PHOTO: AFP

Sweden's veteran striker Henrik Larsson (L) faces a slide tackle from Slovenia's Mitja Morec during their international friendly at the Ullevi Stadium in Gothenburg on Monday.

Swedes look to Zlatan

APP, Stockholm



Swedish striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic could be just as well called an 'enigma' than his nickname 'genius' given his inconsistent displays for club and country.

Going into Euro 2008 Swedish fans will be hoping that the Ibrahimovic that turns up is the one that came off the bench to score a brace and secure Inter Milan's third successive Serie A title on Sunday than the one who failed to score in their qualifiers and sneak in as the second placed team behind Spain, who they will oppose again in their first round group.

However, till this season in the heated atmosphere of Serie A, Ibrahimovic in spite of his undoubted talent had given the impression that when he was involved in the major matches he lost his bottle or went missing.

Not that he seemed to be the case either for Inter coach Roberto Mancini -- who has described him as 'the phenomenon' -- or assistant coach Sinisa Mihajlovic.

"He (Ibrahimovic) knows everything and is impossible to mark," gasped Mihajlovic, who starred for the former Yugoslavia and for Sampdoria and AS Roma in Serie A.

Despite such plaudits Ibrahimovic has not always gelled well with the placid and stable Swedish people even if he was

not part of the team.

The 26-year-old son of Bosnian immigrants -- has consistently starred for his respective clubs Ajax, Juventus and Inter but intermittently for his country despite rave reviews before major tournaments.

The 26-year-old son of Bosnian immigrants -- has consistently starred for his respective clubs Ajax, Juventus and Inter but intermittently for his country despite rave reviews before major tournaments.

The