

## Tragic!

AFP, Monrovia

Eight people died of heat suffocation before Liberia's match against Gambia after too many people crammed into the stadium, the chief mortician at Monrovia's JFK government hospital said Monday.

"They all suffered from heat suffocation," Dominic Worlu told AFP Friday.

More than 50,000 people crammed into a stadium built for 35,000 spectators, he said. In all, 16 people had to be taken to JFK hospital before Sunday night's match, he added.

Eyewitnesses said the football stadium was already packed at noon local time Sunday with many people coming early to find a seat for the match, a World Cup qualifier.

It is thought that illegal ticket sales led to many more people being crammed into the stadium than the seating capacity allowed.

Most victims were taken away in ambulances before the match even started, said an AFP journalist at the scene.

The game eventually finished in a one-all draw.

## WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

## Big win for Uzbekistan

AFP, Singapore

Uzbekistan smashed seven goals past Singapore and Bahrain won in Thailand as they remained the only teams with 100 percent records after three rounds of Asian World Cup qualifying.

Japan also took another step along the road to South Africa in 2010 by trouncing Oman 3-0 in Yokohama, with Celtic midfielder Shunsuke Nakamura scoring one goal and setting up another.

But it was not enough to put them on top of their group, with the Bahrain eking out a 2-2 in Bangkok, which moved them three points clear of Japan with three games left to play.

Milan Macala's side did not have it all their own way, with Thailand going to the break level at 2-2 before Sayed Mohamed Adnan scored the winner in the 57th minute.

Uzbekistan won 7-3 in Singapore in an edge-of-the-seat thriller to establish a six-point cushion on top of Group 4, although Saudi Arabia can cut that lead to three points if they beat Lebanon later in the day.

The hosts twice equalised after Timur Kapadze and then Victor Karpenko gave Rauf Inileev's side the lead, but a Server Djeparov double and another from Vitaly Denisov sent the visitors in at half-time 5-2 ahead.

Aziz Ibragimov and Maksim Shatskhikv completed the Uzbeks' scoring spree after the restart.

It was an impressive return to form for Japan after their shock 1-0 loss to Bahrain in March, and coach Takeshi Okada was happy to see his side bounce back.

"We got pretty good rhythm from the beginning. The early first goal made it a bit easier for us, but my players slowed down afterwards," he said.

"However, Oman were not the real Oman today. I don't think we have got past the mountain yet. I think we just made one step forward."

Thailand's hopes of progressing to the final phase of qualifying are all but over after three losses out of three.

## Burkina Faso stun Tunisia

AFP, Johannesburg

Late substitute Issouf Kone scored twice in four minutes to give Burkina Faso a sensational 2-1 away win over Tunisia Sunday in a 2010 World Cup-African Nations Cup qualifier.

The Carthage Eagles of Tunisia competed at the previous three World Cup tournaments and are ranked 10 in Africa, 20 places above the Stallions of Burkina Faso.

Tijani Belaid put Tunisia ahead on 38 minutes in the Group 9 Rades showdown and they appeared set for a narrow victory until Norway-based Kone burst on the scene.

He replaced Soumaila Tassemedo with 10 minutes left and beat goalkeeper Hamdi Kasraoui on 84 and 87 minutes to turn the match on its head and give Portuguese coach Paulo Duarte a dream competitive debut.

Burkina Faso have won only one of 16 other World Cup qualifiers and that was 32 years ago in Mauritania while Tunisia were suffering only their third home loss in 37 qualifying matches.

The result puts unexpected early pressure on Tunisia coach Roger Lemerre ahead of a June 30 departure when his contract ends and he succeeds fellow Frenchman Henri Michel in charge of Morocco.

Former African champions Tunisia are away next weekend to the Seychelles and the Indian Ocean islands also upset the form book by forcing a 0-0 away draw against Burundi in the other group encounter.

Egypt, who lifted the Nations Cup a record sixth time this year, had to come from behind in Group 12 to defeat the Democratic Republic of Congo 2-1 with Ahmed Abdelmalek snatching the 80th-minute winner.



Italian national football team players descend from a plane on their arrival at Vienna's international airport on Monday.

## Donadoni going gung-ho

AFP, Rome



In a typical Italian fashion, national team coach Roberto Donadoni has decided to tackle June's European Championships in Austria and Switzerland with all guns blazing.

Not only did Donadoni pick an impressive six forwards in his squad of 23 players but among them were two proven match-winners who had been missing from recent squads.

Veteran Alessandro Del Piero had been in stunning form for Juventus since fighting his way back into the team despite starting the season on the bench.

He finished the last campaign as top scorer with 21 goals, equalling at the ripe old age of 33 his best ever tally in Serie A.

The clamour for his inclusion gained pace all season long and it was really no surprise to see him picked for the final squad.

More surprising was the inclusion of Antonio Cassano, the mercurially gifted but temperamentally flawed Sampdoria forward, whose team qualify for the UEFA Cup.

His return of 10 goals from 22 matches was less impressive than Del Piero's but he was playing in a less free-scoring or even successful

## Sven leaves City

Football

AFP, Manchester

Sven-Goran Eriksson's year-long reign at Manchester City finally came to an end on Monday when it was announced that the former England boss had left the English Premier League club.

The club, owned by Thai tycoon Thaksin Shinawatra, confirmed the Swede's long-anticipated departure in a statement on its official website, which claimed that the parting of the ways had been "by mutual consent".

Thaksin, however, had made it clear before then end of the just-finished English Premier League season that he intended to replace Eriksson, despite what is widely regarded as a very successful first year in charge.

Eriksson, who has been tipped to become Mexico's next coach, had consistently maintained that his first choice would be to continue his work in Manchester.

But, following the negotiation of a compensation package to cover the three years remaining on his contract, Eriksson said he wished his successor well.

He has enjoyed my time at Manchester City very much indeed and in particular, I would like to thank the fans, players and staff for their amazing support over the season,"

team. His season was also blighted by injury and suspension, something that seemed certain to see him omitted from the Italy squad altogether.

Back in March he copped a five game ban for throwing his shirt at, insulting and threatening a referee that had sent him off.

After that incident Donadoni seemed to suggest that the 25-year-old's temperament rather than his talent would be the deciding factor in the decision as to select him or leave him at home.

However, since selecting him, Donadoni has changed his tune a little.

"He's a very normal person, I've already said it, for me it's getting difficult to give a different reply every time," he said recently at Italy's training camp near Florence.

Despite selecting six forwards, Donadoni is expected to go with the tried and tested - at least from the start in the first match.

He is most likely to play a 4-3-3 formation, meaning a central striker supported by two wide men.

That's the system he played against Belgium in a 3-1 friendly victory on Friday night.

Donadoni started with Bayern Munich's Luca Toni flanked by Juventus's Mauro Camoranesi on the right and Udinese flyer Antonio Di Natale on the left.

However, he gave an indication of his intentions regarding Del Piero

and Cassano by bringing on both in the second period.

Del Piero replaced Di Natale at the break and Cassano came on for Camoranesi just after the hour mark.

The game was already won by then with the Italians 3-0 up in Florence after 49 minutes, but it demonstrated Donadoni's conviction that both players can come on and potentially turn a game from a wide position.

"This victory is in the natural progression of our work," said Donadoni afterwards.

"Going forward I wanted to try other options. These are extra possibilities, we have options."

Donadoni also demonstrated his intention to have a go by selecting the more attack-minded Alberto Aquilani of AS Roma in midfield alongside AC Milan pair Andrea Pirlo and Gennaro Gattuso, instead of picking Aquilani's defensive minded club team-mate Daniele De Rossi.

"I wanted to see him from the start, he played well, I was happy with him," said the coach.

It all points to an Italy side that is determined to go out and win the tournament in Austria and Switzerland, rather than simply avoid being eliminated, as they did in their successful World Cup campaign in Germany two years ago.

If all goes well, there could be some fireworks from a surprisingly attack-minded Italy in just over a week's time.

Eriksson told www.mcfc.co.uk

"I wish the club - and everyone associated with it - much success in the coming years."

City's chief executive, Alistair Mackintosh, added: "The Board of Directors and all at Manchester City would like to thank Sven for his

season challenging for a place in the top four while playing an attractive brand of football.

With results falling off in the second half of the campaign, City finally finished the season in ninth place. That was still five places better than the previous season but, despite the bonus of a place in next season's UEFA Cup via the Fair Play league, Thaksin was not satisfied.

The Thai billionaire is now expected to replace Eriksson from a short-list of high-profile figures that is believed to be topped by Luiz Felipe Scolari, the current manager of Portugal and the man who guided Brazil to World Cup glory in 2002.

Blackburn boss Mark Hughes and ousted Chelsea manager Avram Grant are also seen as a potential candidates for the job of extending the progress made under Eriksson.

It is a task which could be made considerably more difficult if, as has been predicted, the 60-year-old's departure is followed by an exodus of key players.

The overwhelming majority of City fans had wanted Eriksson to stay and his popularity in the dressing room was underlined last month when the players threatened to boycott their end-of-season tour of Thailand and Hong Kong in a show of support for the under-pressure manager.

## Ronaldo scare for Portugal

AFP, Neuchatel

Cristiano Ronaldo cast a pall over Portugal's first training session here ahead of Euro 2008 as he left the field with a bandaged ankle, an AFP photographer on the scene reported.

The Manchester United striker walked off the pitch holding his right boot and with what appeared to be ice packs wrapped around his right ankle, five minutes before the end of the team's first training session at Neuchatel, their base for the competition. The player did not seem in pain and walked off the pitch unaided and without any signs of hobbling, the photographer said.

Portugal will play the second game of the championship this Saturday in a hotly-anticipated clash against Turkey at 10.45 pm (2045 GMT).

## EURO 2008 BRIEFS

AFP, Vienna

Briefs for Euro 2008 finals which are being co-hosted by Austria and Switzerland and run from June 7-29:

## EURO PRIEST

Euro 2008 has its designated beer, its signature T-shirts and now its very own priest. Reverend Christoph Pelzcar from the parish of Weikendorf, near Vienna, has been named the tournament's official spiritual coach and will be on hand to provide guidance or relief to players and fans alike, in the event of a loss or even a win. A team of 500 youngsters will help him assemble his flock of disappointed supporters. And Poland's football team has already requested the services of the Polish-born priest.

## BURNING EMOTIONS

The Austrian Church wants to ignite tensions during the championship. Angry, distraught or triumphant fans will be encouraged to write their emotions on small pieces of paper that will be collected at a kind of walling wall near Vienna's fan mile and set on fire at the end of the tournament. One way to let off steam, or in this case, smoke.

## PEACE

Euro 2008 should be a festival of peace, Swiss Defence and Sports Minister Samuel Schmid exhorted at a mass held by the Swiss bishops' conference and the Swiss Evangelical Alliance. His T-shirt slogan-worthy message: "Drunk on hate and alcohol: no! Drunk on joy: yes!"

## TRASHYFOOD

Some 130 rubbish collectors will be responsible for cleaning Vienna's 100,000 square-metre fan mile every night between 2 a.m. and 9 a.m. to preserve the city's image as one of the cleanest capitals of Europe. Food stalls in the public viewing zone will also have to serve their chicken wings, sausages and fries in edible containers, to limit the amount of rubbish left over by fans. One question: do these containers have any nutritional value?

## THIRSTY?

At least 2.7 million litres of the official Euro 2008 beer are being shipped to Austria to quench the thirst of thousands of dehydrated fans during the championship. No less than 140 train wagons will be needed to transport the precious drink, which will end up in some 1.4 million reusable cups, ready to be served to the awaiting crowds.

## PATRIOTIC POODLE

Forget the face paint, the colourful wigs and the team shirt. Real Austrian fans can now equip their pets with a special "Austria" get-up that will turn any poodle or kitty into a true flag-carrier.

## PREACHING TO THE CHOIR

Christian leaders in Austria are counting on football to spread faith. Team spirit and fair play are important in life as on the pitch, they say. And preaching will be made easier by the Euro, according to bishop Franz Lackner: you can quote football coaches instead of prophets, he noted.

## LEGAL AID

The Democratic Jurists of Switzerland are worried about football fans. Because their rights may be violated under the extreme security precautions surrounding the championship, not because they may be violent. The group has printed a flyer in French, German, English and Turkish to warn supporters of their fundamental rights. They will also set up clinics in the four Swiss host cities and a telephone hotline to provide counsel. Better safe than sorry.

## Mourinho takes Inter Milan reign

Football

AFP, Rome

Jose Mourinho was on Monday named as the new coach of Inter Milan, the Italian club announced.

The 45-year-old Portuguese former Chelsea manager signed a three-year contract.

Inter did not reveal the value of Mourinho's contract, but the Italian press have speculated that the coach would earn almost nine million euros (14 million dollars) a season.

"FC Internazionale announces the arrival of Jose Mourinho," the club said on inter.it.

"The Portuguese coach has signed a three-year contract and will work alongside Rui Farias, Silvino and Andrei Villas Boas."

Mourinho's assistant coach will be former Inter and Italy midfielder Giuseppe Baresi, previously in charge of the club's youth teams, it added.

Mourinho replaces Roberto Mancini who was sacked as coach of the Serie A champions on Thursday, despite having just led them to a third successive league title.

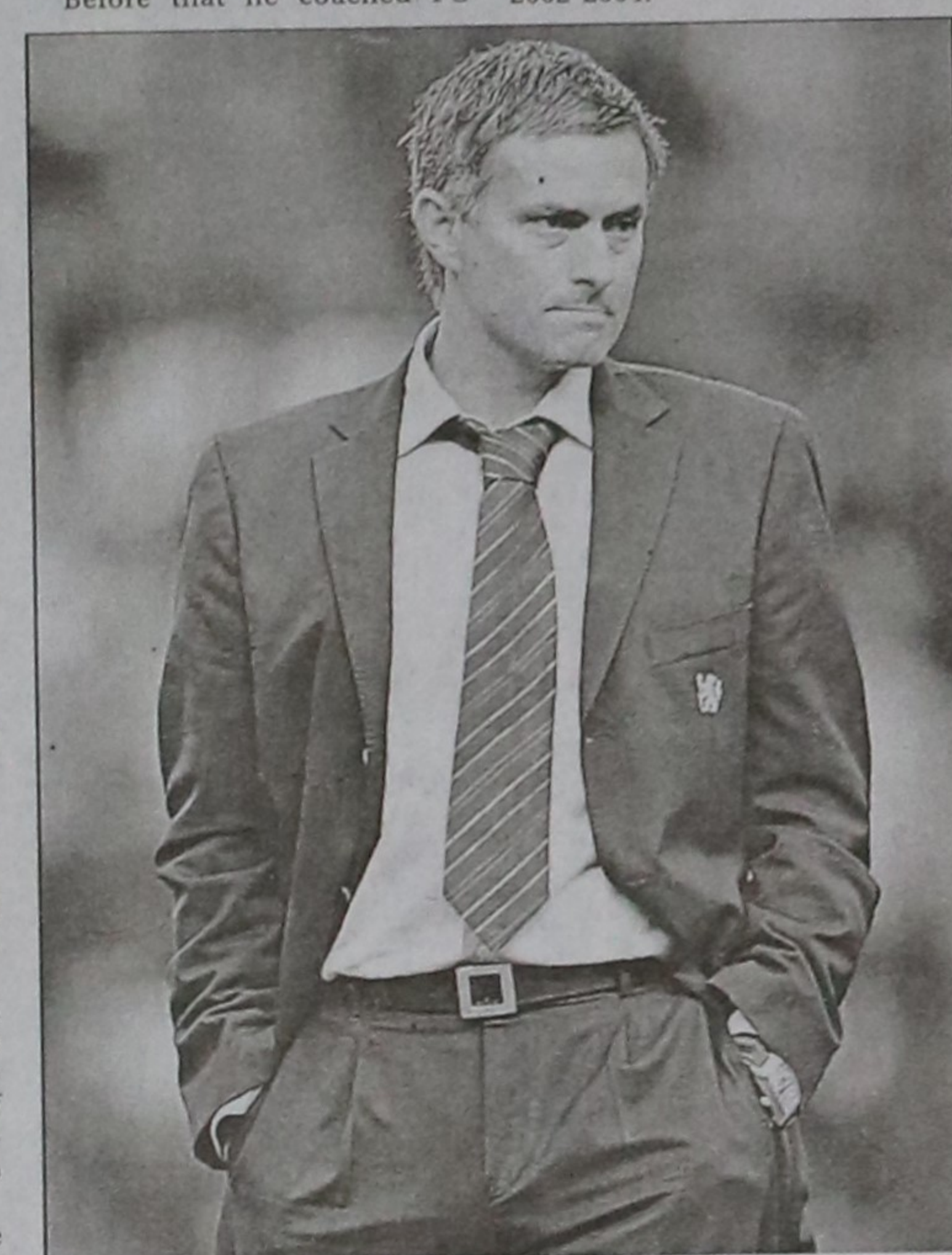
"Thanking Roberto Mancini and his staff for the success obtained in four seasons as the leader of the team, all of Internazionale has the great pleasure to welcome Jose Mourinho and his coaches," the club said.

Mourinho has been out of the game since leaving Chelsea by mutual consent early last season.

He had won two Premier League titles with the London club, the FA Cup and two League Cups in just over three seasons.

Before that he coached FC

Porto to the Champions League crown, UEFA Cup, two league titles and a Portuguese Cup in an incredible two-year period from 2002-2004.



JOSE MOURINHO: Back in the big league

## Bolt eyeing Beijing

Athletics

AFP, Kingston

New 100m world record-holder Usain Bolt made it clear Sunday that he'll be seeking a sprint double at the Beijing Olympics in August.

"I will be definitely going for the double," Bolt said on his arrival at the Norman Manley International Airport in Kingston, just a day after he raced to a world record of 9.72sec in the 100m.

The 21-year-old defied dismal weather to eclipse the mark of 9.74 held by compatriot Asafa Powell at the Reebok Grand Prix meeting in New York on Saturday night.

Even after his stellar performance, the lanky Jamaican had

insisted the 200m was still his favorite event, leaving some room for speculation as to whether he would pursue both in Beijing.

After sleeping on it, he appeared to have made up his mind.

"I broke the record, so I guess, that's the decision," he said Sunday. "You just tell yourself that you have to do it," he added.

Bolt's coach Glen Mills had said minutes earlier that Bolt would double at the Jamaican Olympic trials June 27-29, but said his runner still was certain to go for both in Beijing.

But Bolt said the world record brought a responsibility to go for gold in the 100m. "I am now the fastest man in the world, so I have to run it," he said.

Powell sent congratulatory remarks to Bolt, but indicated he planned to recapture the record.

"I am very happy for Bolt, he's a big guy and he trains very hard, he deserves the record," Powell said in a statement issued through his manager Paul Doyle. "I know that I can run in the 9.6's."

Powell also looked forward to potential clashes with Bolt, including at the Olympic trials.

"It will be a very exciting summer," he said.

Bolt, however, downplayed the idea of a duel with his countryman at the Olympic trials.

"I don't think it will be a showdown," he said. "I just think Asafa and I will just be going out there to make the team to Beijing."

"I don't think we're going out there to prove anything. That's how I will be looking at it - I don't know how Asafa will be looking at it," Bolt said.



PHOTO: AFP

Usain Bolt poses next to the clock that read his world record timing which the Jamaican scored in the men's 100m sprint at the Reebok Grand Prix in New York City on Sunday.

## 'I'm no Zidane'

REUTERS, Clairefontaine



Newcomer Bafetimbi Gomis, who has just emulated Zinedine Zidane with a spectacular France debut, warned he was not yet in the same league as the retired maestro.

The 22-year-old Gomis struck twice in a 2-0 Euro 2008 warm-up win over Ecuador last week, becoming the first player to score two goals on his first appearance for France since Zidane in a 2-2 draw with the Czech Republic in 1994.

The feat earned him a surprise place in France's 23-man squad for the June 7-29 tournament in Austria and Switzerland.

The dreadlocked St Etienne forward realises, however, that he has some way to go before he can be seriously likened to Zidane, one of the sport's all-

time greats.

"You should not compare me with Zidane," he told reporters at France's training camp outside Paris.

"I need to work to keep improving," added Gomis, who extended his St Etienne contract until 2012 on Monday.

"Those two goals are behind me now."

Gomis, who scored 16 Ligue 1 goals this season, is of Senegalese descent and had been approached by Senegal but declined the offer.

"I'm happy and proud to be able to defend France's colours," he said. "I had a choice and I chose France."

An energetic forward whose two goals against Ecuador were superb, Gomis realises he is fourth in the pecking order for a place up front behind Thierry Henry, Karim Benzema and Nicolas Anelka.

"I'm here to make a contribution," he said. "I'll accept the coach's decisions and I'll take

whatever he gives me. Even if I don't play a single minute at Euro 2008, I'll keep supporting the team."

When Gomis was named by Domenech on a provisional 30-man list, many, including the player himself, expected he would be among the seven to be dropped.

"I was ready for that and I would have accepted it," he said.

His performance against Ecuador changed everything and Domenech decided to take Gomis along and leave behind the far more experienced Djibril Cisse.

"If I'm here, it's because I deserve to be," Gomis added. "Now I must show Domenech that he was right to pick me."

"I'm young, I feel fresh and I don't put myself under any kind of pressure. We'll just see what happens next."

France are in Group C at Euro 2008 with world champions Italy, the Netherlands and Romania.