

# Germans eke out win

## Italy, France, Portugal toil

AFP, Paris

Former champions France and 2006 semi-finalists Portugal were struggling to keep their 2010 World Cup dreams on track on Saturday as Europe's major powers toiled on the rocky road to South Africa.

France, the 1998 winners and runners-up just two years ago, came back from two goals down to draw 2-2 with Romania to leave them in fourth place in Group Seven.

Portugal, who lost to Denmark at home in their last qualifier, could only draw 0-0 in Sweden, a result which put them third in Group One, three points behind the Danes.

Defending champions Italy were held to a 0-0 draw in Bulgaria as they stayed top of Group Eight while Germany edged Russia 2-1 to remain in charge of Group Four.

England clinched a flattering 5-1 win over hapless Kazakhstan to keep up their 100-percent record in Group Six; Euro 2008 winners Spain also made it three wins in three as a 3-0 victory in Estonia kept them clear in Group Five.

Greece, the European champions in 2004, beat Moldova 3-0 to also stay perfect at the top of Group Two while the Netherlands are the only other nation with maximum points after a 2-0 home win against Iceland.

The future of France coach Raymond Domenech was left hanging in the balance after his team's 2-2 draw in Constanta.

Florentin Petre and Dorin Goian scored a goal apiece in a dominant first half to leave the hosts with the advantage before Franck Ribery pulled one back for 'Les Bleus' in the 36th minute.

It took until the 69th minute for France to draw level thanks to a stunning drive from Yoann Gourouff.

"I was worried in the first 15 minutes," admitted Domenech who had to shuffle his team when skipper Patrick Vieira was injured in the warm-up.

"But I liked the spirit we showed in the second half and we proved that we have a future in qualifying."

Only the nine group winners are assured of places in the finals with the eight best runners-up facing a play-off.

Manchester United star Cristiano Ronaldo, who missed Portugal's defeat to Denmark last month because of a knee injury, returned in Stockholm but was unable to inspire victory in a 0-0 draw.

"This wasn't an easy match. But it was a good result and I feel fine after my injury," he said.

Italy put their injury concerns to one side to carve out a 0-0 draw against Bulgaria.

The point gave Marcello Lippi's team seven points from their three games in Group Eight.

"The boys played with authority and they tried to win it," said Lippi. Italy led by three points from Ireland who have played a game less.

At Wembley, Wayne Rooney scored twice as England stayed on top of Group Six but the level of performance never matched the highs of last month's 4-1 win in Croatia.

Fabio Capello's side had to wait until seven minutes into the second half to take the lead through a Rio Ferdinand header before defender Alexandr Kuchma put through his own goal to double their advantage.

Zhambyl Kukevych's well-taken strike briefly gave the visitors hope before Rooney's double and a late

goal from substitute Jermain Defoe calmed Wembley nerves.

"In the first half we had couple of chances and could have gone in one or two goals up. But we knew we had to be patient," said Rooney.

"We knew the chances would come and we would take them."

In the same group, Ukraine were held to a goalless draw by Croatia, which means England lead the table by two points from Ukraine and five from Croatia.

In Dortmund, Chelsea midfielder Michael Ballack and Bayern Munich striker Lukas Podolski, with his 31st international strike, fired first-half goals to give Germany a 2-1 win over Russia.

Germany remain a point clear at the top of Group Four on seven points with two wins and a draw after their win over Russia who are fourth with three points.

Andrei Arshavin grabbed Russia's consolation.

Germany face second placed Wales, who saw off Liechtenstein 2-0 in Cardiff, next on Wednesday.

Spain cruised to a 3-0 win over Estonia to maintain their 100-percent record after three matches in Group 5 as Juanito, David Villa, with a penalty, and Carlos Puyol found the net.

Scotland's qualification from Group Nine hangs in the balance after a goalless draw against Norway at Hampden.

The Dutch top the section, and have a two-point lead, after a 2-0 win over Iceland with Joris Mathijsen and Klaas-Jan Huntelaar on target.

In Group Three, Poland, put their political problems behind them with a 2-1 win over the Czech Republic while Slovenia are tied for the lead after a 2-0 win over Northern Ireland.



Germany captain Michael Ballack (3rd from R) stabs the ball home past the despairing dive of Russia goalkeeper Igor Akinfeev during their 2010 World Cup qualifying match in Dortmund on Saturday. Ballack scored the winner, but Germany had debutant goalkeeper Rene Adler to thank for a string of fine saves.

### WORLD CUP 2010 QUALIFYING RESULTS

#### EUROPEAN ZONE QUALIFIERS

- Group 1**  
At Copenhagen  
Denmark 3 (Larsen 10, 47, Agger 29-pen) Malta 0  
At Budapest  
Hungary 2 (Torgheille 48, Juhasz 82) Albania 0  
At Stockholm  
Sweden 0 Portugal 0
- Group 2**  
At Piraeus  
Greece 3 (Charisteas 31, 51, Katsouranis 40) Moldova 0  
At Luxembourg  
Luxembourg 1 (Petrs 14) Israel 3 (Benayoun 2-pen, Golan 53, Toama 8 2)  
At Zurich  
Switzerland 2 (Frei 63, Nkufo 73) Latvia 1 (Ivanovs 71)
- Group 3**  
At Chorzow  
Poland 2 (Brozek 27, Blaszczykowski 53) Czech Republic 1 (Fenin 87)  
At Serravalle  
San Marino 1 (Selva 45) Slovakia 3 (Sestak 33, Kozak 39, Karhan 50)  
At Maribor  
Slovenia 2 (Novakovic 84, Ljubijankic 85) Northern Ireland 0
- Group 4**  
At Helsinki  
Finland 1 (Forsell 62-pen) Azerbaijan 0  
At Dortmund  
Germany 2 (Podolski 9, Ballack 28) Russia 1 (Arshavin 51)  
At Cardiff  
Wales 2 (D Edwards 42, C Evans 80) Liechtenstein 0
- Group 5**  
At Brussels  
Belgium 2 (Sonck 22, Fellaini 38) Armenia 0  
At Tallinn  
Estonia 0 Spain 3 (Juanito 34, Villa 38-pen, Puyol 69)  
At Istanbul  
Turkey 2 (Sabri 51, Erding 66) Bosnia-Herzegovina 1 (Dzeko 26)
- Group 6**  
At London  
England 5 (Ferdinand 52, Kuchma 65-og, Rooney 76, 86, Defoe 90) Kazakhstan 1 (Kukevych 68)
- Group 7**  
At Kharkov  
Ukraine 0 Croatia 0
- Group 8**  
At Torshavn  
Faroe Islands 1 (Lokin 47) Austria 1 (Stranzl 49)  
At Constanta  
Romania 2 (Petre 6, Goian 17) France 2 (Ribery 37, Gourouff 69)  
At Belgrade  
Serbia 3 (Ivanovic 6, Krasic 34, Zigic 82) Lithuania 0
- Group 9**  
At Sofia  
Bulgaria 0 Italy 0
- At Tbilisi**  
Georgia 1 (Kobiashvili 73) Cyprus 1 (M. Konstantinou 67)
- Group 10**  
At Rotterdam  
Netherlands 2 (Mathysen 15, Huntelaar 65) Iceland 0
- At Glasgow**  
Scotland 0 Norway 0

#### SOUTH AMERICAN ZONE QUALIFIERS

- Colombia 0 Paraguay 1 (Cabanas 9)  
Argentina 2 (Messi 6, Agüero 13)  
Uruguay 1 (Lugano 40)  
Bolivia 3 (Botero 4, 16, Garcia 81)  
Peru 0

#### SELECT AFRICAN ZONE RESULTS

- Cameroun 5 (Samuel Eto'o 26, 47-pen, Albert Meyong Ze 57, 73, Jean Makoum 71) Mauritius 0  
Nigeria 4 (Christian Obodo 19, Obinna Nsofor 35, Osaze Odenmwangie 45, Chidi Odiah 55) Sierra Leone 1 (Joseph Yobo 33-og)  
Ghana 3 (Sulley Muntari 19, Junior Agoro 24, Matthew Amoah 67)  
Lesotho 0  
Ivory Coast 3 (Boubacar Sanogo 41, 56, Salomon Kalou 66-pen)  
Madagascar 0  
Tunisia 5 (Hichem Essafi 5, 68, Yassin Mikari 18, Sabeur Ben Frej 20, Fahid Ben Khalifallah 43) Seychelles 0  
Togo 6 (Salifou Moustapha 18, Emmanuel Adebayor 29, 46, 72, 85, Olufade Adekami 54) Swaziland 0

# Players defend Domenech

AFP, Clairefontaine

French veteran Thierry Henry led the way on Sunday as the France squad spoke up for embattled coach Raymond Domenech, under pressure after a poor Euro 2008 and less than scintillating start to the World Cup qualifiers.

Saturday's come-from-behind 2-2 draw in Romania left the 1998 world champions fourth in Group Seven - two points adrift of both Serbia and Lithuania and behind Austria on goal difference with only one country guaranteed to reach the finals in South Africa.

The storm clouds surrounding Domenech's future have steadfastly refused to lift but Henry said that "things would be easier" if the French Federation gave the coach a clear sign of their unequivocal support.

"We played for him, for ourselves, for French football. We are with the coach," said Henry, who admitted that "all the hullabaloo around the coach is not easy for us."

"When you have to prepare a match like that you try to put it out of your mind but there's always someone who brings it up. It weighs you down in time," said the Barcelona veteran of the constant speculation on whether Domenech will survive.

"People forget the coach is a human being who has a family, friends. I don't think anyone would like it. We certainly were pulling for him. He is in charge of this team and seeing what he has to go through is not easy to accept," the former Arsenal star said.

Franck Ribery and Yoann Gourouff earned the French, who began their campaign with an abysmal loss in Austria before edging the Serbs at home, a draw.

Lamenting the constant speculation, Henry said that the French had to get behind Domenech and "see if we can qualify before stirring things up before important matches."

"The coach is a tough cookie - but it's never easy to deal with all this. He doesn't show it - he tries to focus on the positive side."

The French Football Federation has indicated Domenech is living

on borrowed time if results do not improve but Henry said it was time to offer clear support as long as the team is in with a fighting chance of making the finals.

"If things are clear it's easier - but I never understood this business of (a target of) five points, or not five points."

The federation is understood to have demanded Domenech deliver a minimum five points from the opening three games - which they would have done had they only drawn in Austria.

"We are with the coach - he is our coach and he is not hiding," said Henry, who meanwhile scotched rumours of a move to English side Manchester City.

Ribery also backed Domenech after the Romanian game. "We played for ourselves but we also played for him. We hope he will stay with us," said the Bayern Munich midfielder.

"He came up with the right words at half-time to get us back on track. I think the majority of the team share that view," said Ribery, whom Domenech gave his debut shortly before the 2006 World Cup where Les Bleus reached the final.

# AWOL Kuranyi gets the sack

AFP, Dortmund

Germany coach Joachim Low said on Sunday he would no longer select striker Kevin Kuranyi after he went absent without leave, disappearing from the stadium following Saturday's 2-1 win over Russia in a World Cup qualifier.

The Schalke 04 forward watched from the grandstand as Lukas Podolski and Michael Ballack hit first-half goals to seal the win on Saturday.

According to German sports agency SID, the 26-year-old did not show up for the team bus on their journey from the stadium here to their base in Dusseldorf and up until Sunday morning had no contact with the team.

Low immediately reacted by discarding him.

"I cannot accept a reaction such as that shown by Kevin, and therefore I will no longer select him in future for the national side," Low said in a statement on the German Football Federation (DFB) website.

SID reported that two friends of the 52-times capped striker went to the Dusseldorf Hilton hotel, where the German team are based, to collect Kuranyi's possessions on Saturday.

The DFB confirmed the player's absence to SID, but could not explain the reason why Kuranyi left the squad abruptly or what action will be taken.

The Brazilian-born player watched the first-half of the game with the other non-playing members of the squad and asked permission at half-time to change clothes and be able to meet friends.

But after his request was granted, Kuranyi, who fell out with former coach Juregen Klinsmann after being left off the 2006 World Cup squad, was not seen again and failed to meet the team bus.

More than an hour after the final whistle, DFB officials searched the stadium unsuccessfully for their missing player before the team left the stadium without Kuranyi.

Team manager Oliver Bierhoff made several attempts in vain to reach the striker on his mobile phone.

# Winning start for Barnes

AFP, Kingston

Richard Fuller scored in the 14th minute and Jamaica defeated Mexico 1-0 Saturday in a World Cup 2010 regional qualifying match, denying the Mexicans a chance to advance to next year's final phase.

Former Liverpool and England star John Barnes, who was born and raised in Kingston, made a triumphant debut as manager of the Jamaican team after Rene Simoes was fired last month after two World Cup qualifying losses.

The victory lifted Jamaica to 1-2 with a draw for four points in Group B of North American qualifying for next year's six-team tournament to decide three spots in South Africa.

The Mexicans suffered a defeat after three triumphs to stay on nine points.

Mexico defeated Jamaica 3-1 last month in a match originally scheduled for Kingston. The sites for scheduled matches were switched because of concerns over severe weather on the Caribbean island.

The Jamaicans visit Honduras on Wednesday and finish at Canada next month while Mexico will host Canada on Wednesday and Honduras in November.



Spanish striker David Villa (L) executes a shot on goal during their World Cup qualifying match against Estonia in Tallinn on Saturday. Villa scored from the spot as Spain ensured a 3-0 triumph over the minnows.

# Irresistible Adebayor

AFP, Johannesburg

Arsenal star Emmanuel Adebayor ended a one-month national team boycott by scoring four goals as Togo sank Swaziland 6-0 Saturday in a 2010 World Cup-African Nations Cup qualifier.

The striker told London newspapers he would shun the key Group 11 clash in neutral Accra to protest poor organisation of a team which defied the odds by reaching the 2006 World Cup in Germany.

But Swazi hopes of not having to contend with the gangling goal poacher were dashed as he had a last-minute change of heart and struck once before half-time and three times in the second half.

Salifou Moustapha and Olufade Akekami also scored for the 'Sparrowhawks' as they spectacularly avenged a 2-1 loss in the tiny southern Africa mountain kingdom last June.

The result confirmed Zambia as winners of a mini-league reduced to three nations when Eritrea withdrew before it kicked off, but six-point Togo are likely to make the final round as one of the best eight runners-up.

Togo were forced to play in Ghana as they are serving a three-match ban imposed by world governing body FIFA because two Mali footballers were violently assaulted in Lome after a 2008 Nations Cup qualifier.

While the Togolese seem set to survive, 2002 World Cup quarter-finalists Senegal are definitely out after visiting Gambia snatched a dramatic 1-1 draw in a Group 6 thriller.

only for Tijan Jaiteh to equalise four minutes from full-time and keep Gambia in second place, one point behind group winners Algeria.

Suspect travellers Algeria forced a 0-0 draw in Liberia to finish with 10 points while Gambia (plus three) edged Senegal (plus two) on goal difference after both garnered nine.

However, the Gambian 'Scorpions' take only five points into the runners-up 'lottery' as results against the bottom team do not count and are not guaranteed to be among those who will go into the third-round draw.

Ghana outclassed Lesotho 3-0 in Sekondi thanks to goals from Sulley Muntari, Junior Agoro and Matthew Amoah to top Group 5 on goal difference from Gabon and Libya after the trio finished with 12 points each.

But the 'Black Stars' joy was diluted by a crowd stampede when supporters forced open the main gate to a 20,000-seat stadium that was already greatly overcrowded.

A stadium official claimed about 15 people had been injured, but denied reports that there had been two deaths at a venue renovated for the African Nations Cup last January.

Gabon finished runners-up after Burno Mbanangoye scored seven minutes from full-time to defeat Libya 1-0 in Libreville and the 'Azingo Nationale' should make the cut.

There was an inevitable conclusion to Group 7 with Boubacar Sanogo scoring twice and Salomon Kalou once as Ivory Coast outclassed Madagascar 3-0 in Abidjan to finish on top.

But Mozambique were surprise runners-up with an early goal from Eugenio 'Genito' Bila giving the Mambas (Snakes) a 1-0 win in

Botswana and revenge for a home loss to the same opposition.

Nigeria finished with the only 100 percent record, brushing aside Sierra Leone 4-1 in Abuja courtesy of goals from Christian Obodo, Obinna Nsofor, Osaze Odenmwangie and Chidi Odiah.

The result allowed South Africa to finish second with a 1-0 win over Equatorial Guinea in Malabo courtesy of a seventh-minute Siphwe Tshabalala strike, but Bafana Bafana (The Boys) cannot reach the third round.

# Robson believes in midfield duo

AFP, London

Former England manager Sir Bobby Robson insists there is room for both Steven Gerrard and Frank Lampard in the England midfield engine room - but wants Fabio Capello to use them in a 4-4-2 formation.

Robson, who led England to the 1990 World Cup semi-finals, said an off-colour showing by the engine room in Saturday's 5-1 qualifying Wembley win over Kazakhstan was the result of the overall shape of the side.

"The problem was not Lampard and Gerrard, who I firmly believe can play together," Robson said in his column in the Mail on Sunday.

"Playing our way means keeping faith with Lampard and Gerrard, and giving them a chance to flourish. Give them the option of looking up and having a choice of two strikers or two wide players to hit with a pass."