

Loew praises Frings

INTERNET, undated

Germany coach Joachim Loew has revealed Torsten Frings was another player to express his disappointment at being relegated to the bench for Saturday's World Cup qualifier against Russia.

But while striker Kevin Kuranyi drew criticism for walking out on the squad at the weekend, Loew praised Frings for his reaction to not being included in the starting XI.

The Werder Bremen midfielder played only the last six minutes of Germany's 2-1 win after Loew instead kept faith with Thomas Hitzlsperger and Piotr Trochowski, who have impressed during Frings' injury-enforced absence recently.

"I told Torsten on Friday evening and I had the impression he was very, very disappointed, and he told me so," explained Loew in the Bild newspaper.

"But it was excellent how he behaved, it was exemplary."

More disappointment may be on the way for the 31-year-old as Loew has another tough team selection to make for Wednesday's qualifier with Wales.

"There are no guaranteed places," Loew added. "I will now try and talk to Torsten again."

But Loew is confident Frings will not follow in the footsteps of Kuranyi by cutting ties with the national team.

"I hope not - we are counting on him," Loew added.

Schalke striker Kuranyi is unlikely to play for the national team again after he walked out during the interval against Russia having been left out of the 18-man squad for the match.



BACK WITH A BANG! Brazil star Kaka (L) evades a sliding tackle from Venezuela's Pedro Boada during their 2010 World Cup qualifying match at the Pueblo Nuevo Stadium in San Cristobal on Sunday. World player of the year Kaka played after an 11-month international absence to score the opening goal and create another during a remarkable performance as Brazil routed Venezuela 4-0.

PHOTO: AFP

Kaka inspires Brazil

AFP, San Cristobal



World player of the year Kaka returned after an 11-month international absence to inspire five-time champions Brazil to a 4-0 World Cup qualifying victory over Venezuela here on Sunday.

The 26-year-old AC Milan star was on target after just five minutes and set up the third goal as Brazil moved back into the second place in the South American standings with 16 points, four behind leaders Paraguay.

Manchester City ace Robinho also grabbed a share of the headlines with two sublime goals.

Venezuela came into the match buoyed by having won 2-0 in a friendly between the two nations in Boston last year, their first ever victory ending a run of 17 successive defeats against their illustrious

rivals.

However, within 20 minutes, any hopes Venezuela coach Cesar Farias had off overseeing another shock were extinguished.

With just six minutes gone, Kaka beat goalkeeper Renny Vega with a shot from a difficult angle which went in off the post. It was the AC Milan star's 23rd international goal in his 60th appearance.

Four minutes later, Robinho made it 2-0 when he cut inside from the left and drove the ball into the back of the net from 30 yards.

By the 20th minute, it was 3-0 with troubled striker Adriano, recalled this year after a series of fitness and disciplinary problems, finding the net from closer range.

Kaka had broken from midfield and sent Elano, another Manchester City player on the pitch, free down the left-hand side.

His shot fell invitingly for Adriano to beat Vega and to justify his selection by coach Dunga who

was deprived of the injured Luis Fabiano.

Venezuela had chances to hit back before half-time as Brazil's defensive frailties looked in danger of being exposed, but Alejandro Guerra, Jorge Rojas, Juan Arango and Giancarlo Maldonado all wasted opportunities.

Adriano was booked on the stroke of half-time which means he will be suspended for Wednesday's visit of Colombia.

Brazil keeper Julio Cesar was twice called on early in the second half to save from Maldonado at closer range.

Venezuela, the only South American team never to have played in a World Cup, paid for their wastefulness after 69 minutes when Robinho added his second goal of the night being put through by Kleber.

Robinho controlled the ball superbly, steadied himself and slotted the ball into the corner of the net.

Rooney ready to sacrifice

AFP, London



Wayne Rooney has told Fabio Capello he is prepared to sacrifice his attacking ambitions to be the England's

coach utility man.

Capello put Rooney on the left of a three-man attack in the first half of Saturday's World Cup qualifier against Kazakhstan before moving the Manchester United star alongside Emile Heskey after the break.

Rooney had struggled to make any impact on the left but responded to the switch by scoring twice as England finally found some rhythm to run out 5-1 winners.

Capello will have to decide whether to restore Rooney to his favoured role behind Emile Heskey for Wednesday's clash against Belarus or keep the striker out of position on the wing.

It is a familiar predicament for Rooney, who has often been shunted wide by Sir Alex Ferguson at United, and the 22-year-old insists he is ready to play wherever Capello wants if it helps the team.

"In the first half I played more towards the left and the second half I was just off Emile," Rooney said. "I played there (on the left) many times for United so I'm not bothered."

"I'm a lot more on the ball in the centre and it's better to get involved in the play but it's up to the manager."

"I enjoyed the game, we could have been ahead at half time and we got the goals after. To be back scoring is nice but the win was more important."

Rooney's late double-strike on Saturday took his international goal tally to 17, but it was the first time he has scored twice in a match for England in four years.

Rather than dwell on the past, Rooney defended his goal record and insisted his England form is getting better with every game.

"I've always said my game is not all about goals and I'm pleased with my record," he said.

"I wouldn't really say my record is too bad. It's just outside one goal in every two games. It's not one in four or five," Rooney added.

"It's about performances as well as goals. I'm been pleased with my performances recently."

"When I play for United it's always been like that - the goals have all come at once and then a little break."

"I'd like to do it a bit more consistently and keep scoring throughout but that is just the way it has happened."

David Beckham made an impressive contribution after coming on as a late substitute but the LA Galaxy star is adamant he will have no complaints if he is consigned to the bench again in Minsk.

Beckham has been as impressed as the rest of the England squad with Theo Walcott's improvement this season and he believes the Arsenal winger deserves to keep his place on the right.

"I don't think it matters about individuals. Theo has been great and he played well again," Beckham said. "You can see what a threat he is every time he gets the ball and runs at players."

"There is no-one that can get near him. He deserves to be where he is and hopefully he carries on because he is an exceptional talent."

"I've definitely not worked on my pace. I've never had it so I never had to work on it! One of the lads just said that."

Socceroos eye top spot

AFP, Singapore

Australia and Japan are looking to top their group with maximum points as they take on Qatar and Uzbekistan in Asian World Cup qualifying on Wednesday.

In Group 2, United Arab Emirates, under new French coach Dominique Batheney, know they must beat South Korea in Seoul to haul themselves back into contention, while North Korea have their work cut out against Iran in Tehran.

Australia, who beat Uzbekistan 1-0 in their opening qualifying match, have a pumped-up Tim Cahill back in the frame and desperate to cap his comeback with a goal at Brisbane's Suncorp Stadium.

The Everton star will be playing his first international in eight months and coach Pim Verbeek needs him to be at his best, with the experienced Harry Kewell, Vince Grella and Mark Bresciano all missing through injury.

"I feel good. I'm training well and working hard," said Cahill, who along with captain Lucas Neill and goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer forms the core of the Australian side.

"I'll definitely be hounding for a

goal on Wednesday night. This is what we live for. It gives me goosebumps."

Australia have already beaten Qatar twice this year but the Gulf side, who have beaten the Uzbeks and drawn with Bahrain so far, now have Bruno Metsu at the helm after the Frenchman quit UAE earlier this month.

The experienced Metsu, who took Senegal to the 2002 World Cup quarterfinals, believes his team can shock favourites Australia as long as they stay cool.

"I promise you that we will play differently this time around," he said, referring to the team's 3-0 and 3-1 defeats to the Socceroos.

"We know Australia will have a lot of the ball. We must know in our minds that even though we might be under pressure for large parts of the game, we will get our chances if we keep calm and keep working hard."

"But football is full of uncertainties and anything can happen." Celtic's Shunsuke Nakamura and Eintracht Frankfurt's Junichi Inamoto spearhead Japan in their crucial game at Saitama against Uzbekistan.

Takeshi Okada's men beat Bahrain 3-2 away in their opener

and are keen to maintain the momentum to keep the pressure on Australia and Qatar.

"Whatever we do we have to beat Uzbekistan at home and that is why I have picked these players," said Okada.

"The Uzbekistan game is our second match but it doesn't matter whether we won or lost the game before it. We will just focus on the match in front of us and do whatever we have to do to win it."

The Uzbeks are in trouble after losing their first two qualifying games and consequently their coach, Rauf Inliyev. They are hoping that new boss Mirjalol Kasymov can restore some order.

FIXTURES

Asian World Cup qualifying fixtures on Wednesday:
Group 1
At Brisbane
Australia v Qatar
At Saitama
Japan v Uzbekistan
Group 2
At Seoul
South Korea v UAE
At Tehran
Iran v North Korea

In Seoul, South Korea are likely to be without West Brom midfielder Kim Do-heon, who has a knee injury.

His loss is a blow for coach Huh Jung-Moo, with Kim playing an influential role in their 1-1 draw with North Korea in last month's opening qualifier.

Like Uzbekistan, UAE have lost two out of two and are desperate to get some points on the board to put themselves back in the competition.

New coach Batheney has left the core of the squad unchanged but will be without the suspended duo of Hilal Saeed and Subait Khater, while Adel Abdulaziz and Ahmed Mubarak are injury doubts.

Iran drew with Saudi Arabia in their only game so far and with North Korea on four points a home win for Ali Daei's side is seen as vital.

But the match will not see the return of the legendary Ali Karimi, who was suspended from the national team in May after criticising the Iranian Football Federation.

Daei called Karimi up for the Korea game but the Persepolis striker, who has 109 caps, declined the invitation.

2010 WC-ANC third round qualifiers

AFP, Johannesburg

Collated list of countries who have reached final qualifying round for 2010 World Cup-African Nations Cup competitions (in alphabetical order):

Algeria (Group 6 winners)
Benin (Group 3 winners)
Burkina Faso (Group 9 winners)
Cameroon (Group 1 winners)
Egypt (Group 12 winners or runners-up)
Gabon (Group 5 runners-up)
Ghana (Group 5 winners)
Guinea (Group 2 winners)
Ivory Coast (Group 7 winners)
Kenya (Group 2 runners-up)
Malawi (Group 12 winners or runners-up)
Mali (Group 10 winners)
Morocco (Group 8 winners)
Mozambique (Group 7 runners-up)
Nigeria (Group 4 winners)
Rwanda (Group 8 runners-up)
Togo (Group 11 runners-up)
Tunisia (Group 9 runners-up)
Sudan (Group 10 runners-up)
Zambia (Group 11 winners)

Note: Adrain Zurich on Oct 24 will divide 20 teams into five groups with winners qualifying for World Cup with hosts South Africa and top three for Nations Cup with hosts Angola

Lippi calls up Quagliarella

INTERNET, undated

Italy coach Marcello Lippi has called up Fabio Quagliarella to replace the suspended Luca Toni in his squad for Wednesday's World Cup qualifier against Montenegro.

Toni picked up a yellow card after coming on as a substitute in Saturday's 0-0 draw with Bulgaria, which rules him out of the midweek fixture in Lecce.

Quagliarella, 25, has scored three goals in six appearances for Udinese this season and has made nine appearances for the Azzurri, scoring three times.

The former Sampdoria striker is unlikely to start against Montenegro, however, with Alberto Gilardino set to get the nod.

Lippi also has injury concerns, with midfielder Daniele De Rossi suffering from a bruised thigh and Gennaro Gattuso struggling with a knee problem.

The coach is already without Gianluigi Buffon, Andrea Pirlo, Mauro Camoranesi, Fabio Grosso, Marco Materazzi and Vincenzo Iaquinta as Italy look to extend their unbeaten start in Group Eight.

Cech doubtful for Slovenia tie

AFP, Prague

Czech keeper Petr Cech strained his thigh muscle in the 2010 World Cup qualifier against Poland on Saturday and may not appear in Wednesday's clash with Slovenia, a national team spokesman said.

"He is undergoing rehabilitation," said spokesman Lukas Tucek, adding today's check had ruled out a rupture or hematoma.

Anderslecht's Daniel Zitka and Hertha Berlin's Jaroslav Drobný are ready to replace the Chelsea keeper if necessary.

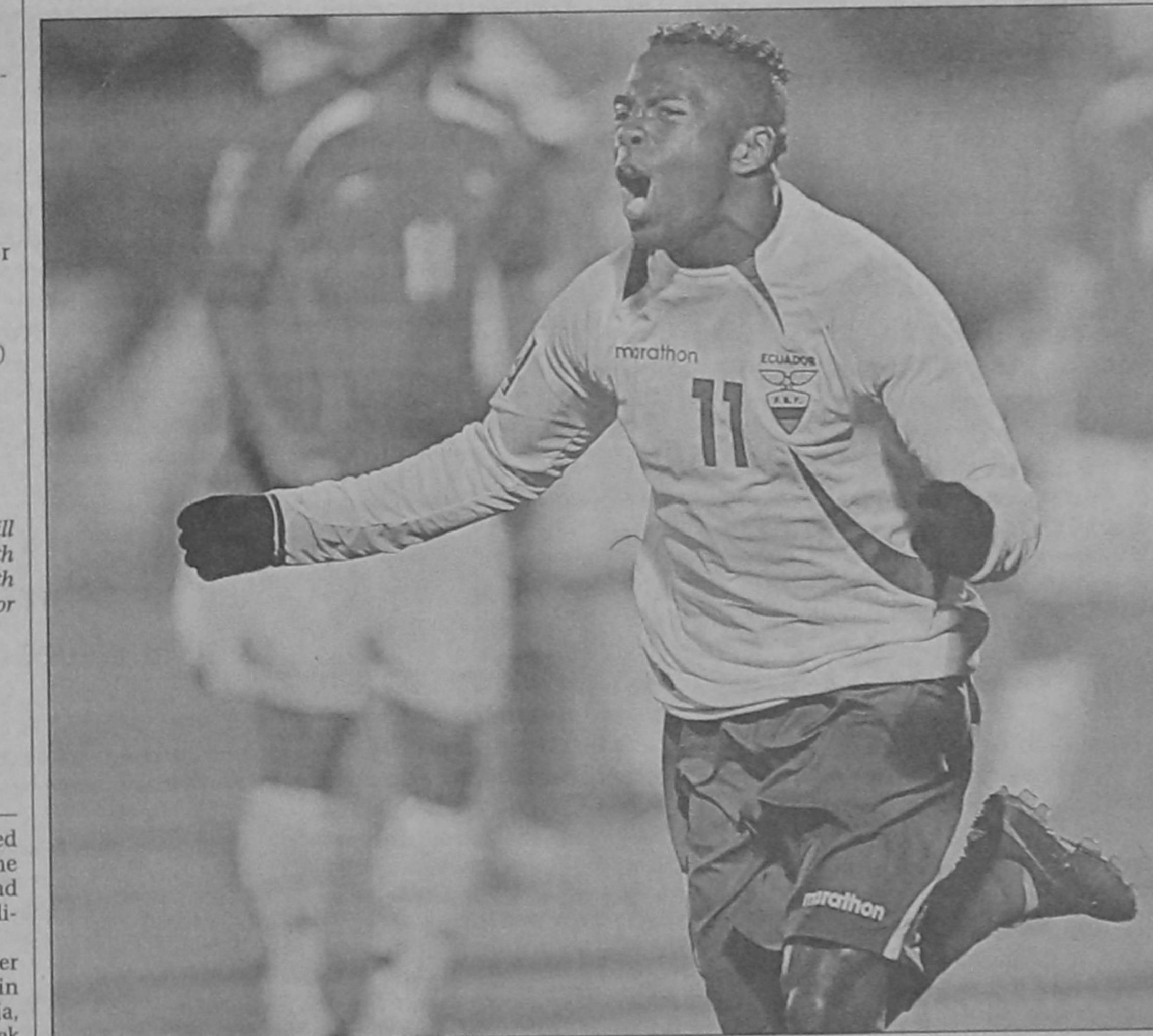


PHOTO: AFP

Ecuador forward Cristian Benitez is ecstatic after scoring the all-important goal against Chile during their 2010 World Cup qualifier at the Atahualpa Olympic Stadium in Quito on Sunday.

Dirty tricks irk Dunga

AFP, Montevideo



Brazil and Argentina put the mediocrity of recent World Cup qualifying performances behind them this week-end with respective wins that have left them second and third respectively in the table.

Brazil's 4-0 rout of Venezuela late on Sunday, however, was all the more impressive given what they are alleged to have endured from the moment they touched down on Venezuelan soil.

According to team manager Dunga and the Brazilian football federation (CBF), the five-time world champions' trip to San Cristobal was tainted from the word go.

In an official federation statement, Dunga complained his team were delayed on the tarmac as soon as the plane touched down, and then he claimed the staff at their hotel took part in a dirty tricks campaign to rob his players of sleep.

Adding to Brazil's list of complaints was the allegation that several top players suffered vomiting before, during and after the match.

A frustrated Dunga did not point any fingers.

Instead, he was quick to highlight his team's determination to put to rest a string of mediocre displays which saw them pick up only five of a possible 12 points in their previous four games.

"Our performance was even more impressive given the difficulties we had before the match," said Dunga in the CBF statement.

"First we spent an hour and a half waiting to get off the plane, then during the night some of the hotel staff did their best, by driving cars and motorbikes around the hotel, to make sure we got as little sleep as possible."

Even worse, according to the CBF, was the fact that several top players - including Lucio, Maicon, Elano and Gilberto Silva - succumbed to vomiting.

Dunga added: "I believe that when other teams face Brazil, the

whole country gets behind them. That's why these matches are always complicated affairs."

"Here we had to overcome quite a few obstacles before getting the win."

World player of the year Kaka returned after an 11-month international absence to inspire Brazil to the win, the 26-year-old AC Milan on target after just five minutes.

Manchester City ace Robinho also grabbed a share of the headlines with two sublime goals while Inter Milan striker Adriano chipped in with one of his own.

Brazil now have 16 points from nine games, with Argentina, also on 16 points, sit in third due to inferior goal difference.

Argentina's win was their first since a 3-0 win over Bolivia almost a year ago.

In their five matches following that win they were defeated once, by Colombia, and drew four times.

Paraguay top the group after maintaining their form with a 1-0 win in Colombia after Salvador Cabanas's ninth minute goal.



PHOTO: AFP

Spain striker Fernando Torres (R) shakes hands with a fan as the Spanish national team arrive at Brussels International Airport on Monday. Spain will play Belgium in a 2010 World Cup qualifying match on Wednesday.

HNZG
P D W G
X X X
C X C X
T X X
Z X X
E