

Tristan joins Hammers

AFP, London

Former Spain international striker Diego Tristan signed for West Ham on Tuesday evening, the English top flight club said.

The 32-year-old former Deportivo La Coruna and Real Mallorca player, who has won 15 caps for his country, had been out-of-contract after leaving Italian side Livorno where he scored just one goal in 20 appearances.

Tristan put pen to paper with Scott Duxbury after the Hammers' chief executive had flown to Rome to finalise negotiations with his representatives.

West Ham boss Gianfranco Zola moved for the player following a two-week trial, with England international striker Dean Ashton sidelined following ankle surgery.

Tristan told his new club's official website, www.whufc.com: "I am really happy to be at West Ham. They are a big club and London is a great city."

"I want to show the fans that I can score goals and help the team to go up the league. I am excited to be here."

On Zola, the player continued: "The manager has spent lots of time working with me. He has helped me a lot and I want to say thanks to him by scoring lots of goals and doing well for the club. I am very grateful to the manager for giving me the opportunity to play here."

The 6ft 1in (1.84m) forward is in contention to make his debut in Sunday's Premier League match at Hull.

Robbery turns fatal in Peru

AFP, Lima

An attempted robbery of a bus carrying a football team in northern Peru turned deadly Wednesday when the vehicle toppled off a cliff, killing nine people on board and injuring 22, police and local officials said.

A gang of youths had stopped the bus near the town of Gelic and forced the driver off at gunpoint.

But "at that moment the brake was released and the bus fell over the edge," a municipal official, Juan de Dios Tello, told reporters.

Three players from the regional San Cayetano team were among those killed. They had just played a match against the Santa Rosa de Morales club in a neighbouring region.

The injured players and club managers from the bus were taken to the nearby hospital of Cajamarca, police said.

Sarkozy upset at anthem booing

AFP, Paris

French President Nicolas Sarkozy and other leading political figures reacted with shock and anger Wednesday after the country's national anthem was booed in Tuesday's friendly win over Tunisia.

Two goals from Thierry Henry gave coach Raymond Domenech a much-needed boost in cementing a 3-1 win at the Stade de France - but the booing and whistling by some in the crowd as the Marseillaise was played infuriated Sarkozy, who demanded an investigation.

The Elysee Palace announced that the president had summoned French Football Federation president Jean-Pierre Escalettes following the "scandalous incidents which occurred at the Stade de France."

Sports Minister Roselyne Bachelot and Bernard Laporte, the ministerial secretary of state, will also be present, Elysee sources said.

Laporte told Radio Monte Carlo that he was suggesting France no longer play friendlies against Maghreb region countries following similar problems in recent years against Algeria and Morocco.

Many of the 60,000 crowd were Tunisian - friendlies against North African sides traditionally attract widespread support from sizeable immigrant communities in and around the French capital.

Some booed when the names of the French players were read out over the PA system before kick off, reaching a crescendo for Hatem Ben Arfa, born in France to Tunisian parents and who opted to play for the country of his birth despite overtures from the Tunisian Federation.

French Prime Minister François Fillon said the booing was "insulting" and that in the event of a repeat it would be necessary "to call off matches."

A sports ministry statement Tuesday read: "Roselyne Bachelot-Narquin and Bernard Laporte declare themselves shocked by the jeering tonight at the Stade de France during the football friendly between France and the Tunisian national team, notably during the playing of the Marseillaise, symbol of the French Republic."

French keep Domenech

Football

AFP, Paris

Raymond Domenech will remain coach of the France team, according to the president of the French Football Federation, Jean-Pierre Escalettes, putting an end to recent speculation over his future after an indifferent start to the World Cup qualifying campaign.

Escalettes revealed that 19 out of 20 members of the FFF's federal council had voted to keep Domenech on board.

Domenech took over the reins of Les Bleus in 2004 and the 56-year-old, who had previously coached the youth side, led the French to the World Cup final in 2006, where they bowed out to Italy on penalties.

However, a dreadful Euro 2008 campaign - the French failed to get out of the group stage - brought calls for his head and an inept loss to Austria at the start of the 2010 World Cup qualifiers only increased the pressure.

The FFF had indicated Domenech's men had garnered five points from the opening three

qualifiers rather than the four they actually managed for him to quell the speculation.

But Tuesday's friendly win over Tunisia and, crucially, the express support of leading players such as Thierry Henry and Franck Ribery, has strengthened the incumbent's hand and he will now continue in the post looking to improve on a record of 33 wins for eight defeats in 59 matches.

A previous meeting of the FFF federal council in July after the Euro debacle had likewise given Domenech the benefit of the doubt in a show of hands rather than via the formal vote held Wednesday.

Although they lost to Austria the French did beat Serbia and then showed battling qualities in coming from two goals down to draw last weekend in Romania.

After Tuesday's friendly win over Tunisia Domenech told TF1 television he was unperturbed about the meeting on his future.

"It's not my problem. My aim is to prepare the team to the best of my ability, and to construct a team which will go to the 2010 World Cup finals."

With the FFF having extinguished the speculation France will

now focus on their next Group Seven World Cup qualifier against Lithuania in March next year.

Domenech, while he has fallen out with some players - striker David Trezeguet quit the national team after being left off the Euro squad - has retained the strong support of the rest of the team, despite criticism of his seemingly frosty public demeanour. He has, however, courted controversy with outbursts such as "fortunately the guillotine no longer exists - otherwise certain of you would take perverse pleasure in sending me to the scaffold," in allusion to his many media detractors constantly sharpening their literary knives at his expense.

Escalettes noted in September that "there is still progress to be made regarding Raymond Domenech's communication" skills.

Having retired from the national side former keeper Gregory Coupet suggested that a "dictatorship" was in place with Domenech's stentorian style.

The coach responded: "I only know one dictatorship - and that's the one based on results."

Death before dishonour

THE GUARDIAN

Bill Shankly once said football was much more than a matter of life and death, but the president of Argentine Primera División side Rosario Central is not convinced. Horacio Usandizaga last week threatened to kill his players if the team are relegated.

Usandizaga, who is also a politician, was unwittingly caught on film earlier this month as he vented his spleen in front of the club's supporters. "Central are going to get out of this situation," he said. "We are going to move forward. We are going to kill the players, coaching staff and anyone else."

The speech has caused outrage across Argentina, a country blighted by football violence in recent years. The Argentina Football Association (AFA) president, Julio Grondona, was quick to condemn Usandizaga's comments.

"If there is anything in the AFA statutes about a punishment for such incidents, I think it would be appropriate," he said in a radio interview. "These are things which one can't understand. The passion and demands present in a soccer tournament have grown out of all proportion."

Rosario's captain, Cristian Gonzalez, said the team were shocked by Usandizaga's rant. "We want to express our pain and our sentiments over this situation. We are as interested and as committed as anyone in trying to make sure that Rosario Central regain their historical place, which we have lost for various reasons."

Nicknamed "The Scoundrels", Rosario Central are one of Argentina's oldest clubs, but have been in steady decline since they last won the Argentine Primera División in 1987. A series of economic problems partly explain why they currently lie 17th out of 20 teams in the relegation standings, which are decided over three seasons.

FA warns Kinnear

AFP, London

Newcastle manager Joe Kinnear, whose recent swearing at a press conference put him in the spotlight, has been warned by the Football Association that a future outburst could bring disciplinary action.

On October 2, Kinnear swore dozens of times at a press conference, believing newspaper journalists had ridiculed him and tried to undermine his position.

The FA said in a statement on Tuesday: "Newcastle United manager Joe Kinnear has been reminded of his responsibilities by the FA in relation to comments made at a press briefing on October 2."

"The FA has received an apology from Kinnear for any offence that his comments may have caused. "The FA has borne into consideration the specific context in which the comments were made and the fact that the comments were made in a closed forum."

"While he will not face any formal disciplinary action on this occasion, he has been advised that in the event of similar public comments, disciplinary proceedings may be brought against him."

Drogba named for award he doesn't want

AGENCIES, Johannesburg

Ivory Coast captain Didier Drogba was shortlisted on Tuesday for this year's African Footballer of the Year award despite saying he did not want to be associated with the prize.

The Chelsea striker was named by the Confederation of African Football (CAF) as one of five candidates for the 2008 award, along with club mate Michael Essien and Arsenal's Togolese international Emmanuel Adebayor.

Egypt striker Amr Zaki (Wigan Athletic) and Mohamed Aboubrika, who scored the winning goal for the Pharaohs in February's African Nations Cup final were also nominated.

Drogba, the winner in 2006, had been expected to take it again in 2007 but it was given to Mali's Frederic Kanoute instead when Drogba refused to travel to Togo for the award ceremony in February.

Drogba said he had been told by CAF officials he would not get the award if he did not attend the gala. He did not attend the ceremony as it was held just two days before the Ivory Coast's quarter-final match in the Nations Cup tournament against Guinea.

"I have therefore decided not to be part of the vote for the next African Footballer of the Year award. I feel that the contest has lost its worth," Drogba said at the time.

This year's finalists were chosen by a panel of members of CAF's media and technical committee. The national team coaches of Africa's member countries will now vote for the winner.



Brazilian superstar Kaka gives the thumbs up to watching journalists while leaving his footprints at the Maracana Stadium Hall of Fame in Rio de Janeiro on Tuesday.

Spanish press slam UEFA

Football

AFP, Madrid

Spanish media voiced outrage Wednesday over penalties imposed by UEFA against Atletico de Madrid for alleged racist insults by its supporters against Marseille players during a Champions League match.

"Unjustified," "disproportionate" and "inexplicable" were some of the terms used in the press and by football commentators to describe the two-match stadium ban imposed on Atletico.

Marseille lodged an official complaint with European football's ruling body after several of their players were targeted by Atletico fans during their match in Madrid on October 1.

It alleged monkey chants were aimed at the French club's players, while the Marseille team bus was attacked after the match.

Atletico were also charged with "a lack of organisation" at the match, which led to "crowd incidents."

UEFA said Atletico must play its next two European matches, the first of which will be against Liverpool on October 22, at a stadium at least 300 kilometres (200 miles) away from Madrid.

Several Spanish newspapers released photo images from a video showing Marseille supporters throwing chairs at Spanish police, whom it said had reacted "correctly."

Some also alleged French UEFA president Michel Platini was behind the decision.

"Platini has scored another goal against us," headlined the sports daily Marca, referring to a goal by the former French international in the final of Euro-1984 in Paris, a match which France won 2-1.

It said Platini acted "with premeditation" against Atletico, while El Pais and ABC alleged a "campaign" against Spain following its recent sporting successes, such a winning Euro 2008.

El Pais alleged an "Anglo-French" axis against Spanish sport and criticised this "unprecedented punishment in which UEFA for the first time has given itself the authority to judge the national police."

In a statement late Tuesday, the club slammed the sanctions as "completely unfair and disproportionate" and said it would appeal the decision.

"At no time were insults of racist or xenophobic character directed at any Olympique Marseille player, as supported by the video of the match and in the record given by the UEFA delegate himself."

It said the so-called monkey chants may in fact have been merely Atletico supporters shouting "Kun, Kun, Kun" to encourage one of their players, Sergio "Kun" Agüero.

With regard to the crowd incidents, it said police had tried to remove a prohibited banner from Marseille supporters, who had reacted violently.

Atletico have also been fined 150,000 euros and their coach, Javier Aguirre, has been banned for both matches with Liverpool for insulting a Marseille player.

Atletico said the alleged incident involving Aguirre "did not take place at any time as is made quite clear in the report of the delegates designated to the match and from the fourth referee, who, at no time, mentioned such circumstances in his report."

Atletico have until October 17 to appeal the ban, which means they will also have to host PSV Eindhoven at a neutral ground on November 26.

Atletico won the Marseille

match 2-1. Liverpool and Atletico are joint leaders in Group D of the Champions League having both won their opening two matches.

Liverpool, whose star striker Fernando Torres had been looking forward to returning to his old Atletico stamping ground, have also complained that UEFA's decision to move the match will unfairly penalise their travelling fans.

'Loew should stay beyond 2010'

INTERNET, Dusseldorf

Joachim Loew should renew his contract as Germany coach beyond the 2010 World Cup, team manager Oliver Bierhoff said. "I would wish for that. Consistency like in the days of Sepp Herberger and Helmut Schoen would be good for the team, and for the DFB (German football federation) as well," Bierhoff told Wednesday's edition of the Express daily.

Bierhoff agreed that a coach depended on success but that a general concept for the team should not be questioned if he loses one or two matches.

Loew was appointed German coach in succession of Jurgen Klinsmann in 2006. His deal runs until 2010 and he has so far not agreed to a longer engagement.

Herberger was Germany coach a total 21 years, 1936-1942 and 1949-1964. Schoen took over from him for 14 years 1964-1978. The last coach since then on a longer term was Bert Vogts, 1990-1998.

Since then, Germany has been trained by Erich Ribbeck (1998-2000), Rudi Voeller (2000-2004), Klinsmann (2004-2006) and Loew.



France captain Thierry Henry goes airborne to celebrate one of his two strikes in their friendly international against Tunisia at the Stade de France in Paris on Tuesday. Henry scored twice to relieve the pressure on the embattled Les Bleus and their coach Raymond Domenech.

Henry fires France

Football

AFP, Paris

Two goals from Thierry Henry gave coach Raymond Domenech a much-needed boost at a packed Stade de France on Tuesday, as France survived an early scare to run out 3-1 winners over Tunisia.

In front of 65,000 expectant fans the game quickly picked up a frantic pace, with strong French challenges indicating there was more at stake here than tactical try-outs.

The first chance fell to Tunisia in the 17th minute when Ben Khalfallah cut inside Rod Fanni to send a tight-angled shot over Steve Mandanda's bar. By this time last weekend Les Bleus were already two down.

Franck Ribery, who scored opener in the Romanian revival,

sent in a rasping shot from outside the penalty box in the 22nd minute, but it drifted wide.

Then, on the half-hour mark, Domenech had his head in his hands after two schoolboy errors afforded Tunisia the opener.

Jean-Alain Bounsang misjudged a pass and allowed Issam Jemaa to ghost past and slot the ball through Mandanda's legs - a comedy of errors neither players will want to remember.

Listen close enough and you could almost hear the scribbling of FFF pens over the jubilant away fans' celebrations.

Much has been said about France's up-and-coming starlets but it was the mature head of Henry that restored some belief in the team 10 minutes later.

The Barcelona star drove into Tunisia's final third, linking smartly with Yoann Gourcuff before firing a

sweet shot into the top corner.

The teams went into the break at 1-1, the final score the last time they met in a friendly in 2002.

Hatem Ben Arfa, whose parents are Tunisian, came on for Ribery at the start of the second period and immediately set up captain Henry with the easiest of tap-ins for his 48th international goal.

The highly rated Karim Benzema, the 20-year-old whom Domenech has been careful to gradually blood into the first team, pounced on a defensive error in the 58th minute to bullet a curling effort into Aymen Mathlouthi's top corner.

That goal took the fire out of the game, and the play returned to what we have come to expect of friendlies - tame and uncommitted.

France play their next Group Seven qualifier against Lithuania in March next year.

Australia, S Korea clinical

AFP, Singapore



Australia and South Korea took maximum points to reinforce their credentials in the race to the World Cup finals but the Ivory Coast clinched a 4-0 win over Qatar in Brisbane with a brace by Blackburn Rovers' star Brett Emerton and goals from Everton's Tim Cahill and another by Josh Kennedy.

It puts Pim Verbeek's men on top of Group A with six points from two

Asian powerhouse Japan struggled to a 1-1 draw with Uzbekistan Wednesday.

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