



Chelsea's Brazilian midfielder Juliano Belletti (L) unleashes a 30-yard rocket into the top right corner of the net to score his team's third goal in their 5-0 rout of Middlesbrough at the Riverside on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

## SATURDAY SCORES

### ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Arsenal 3 (Nasri 48, Van Persie 70, Walcott 90) Everton 1 (Osman 9)  
Aston Villa 0 Portsmouth 0  
Bolton 0 Blackburn 0  
Fulham 0 Sunderland 0  
Liverpool 3 (Kuyt 37, 85, Riera 80) Wigan 2 (Zaki 29, 45)  
Middlesbrough 0 Chelsea 5 (Kalou 14, 53, Belletti 51, Lampard 63, Malouda 67)

### BUNDESLIGA

Werder Bremen 3 (Baumann 68, Pizarro 88, 90+1) Borussia Dortmund 3 (Frei 59-pen, Hummels 72, Zidan 90+3)  
VfL Wolfsburg 4 (Misimovic 5, 34, Madlung 54, Grafite 64) Arminia Bielefeld 1 (Laas 60)  
Hanover 96 2 (Schulz 48, Stajner 63) Hoffenheim 5 (Ibisevic 35, 83, Obasi 70, Salihovic 72, Ba 80)  
Eintracht Frankfurt 0 Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Helmes 6, Vidal 61)  
Hertha Berlin 2 (Nicu 29, Kacar 87) VfB Stuttgart 1 (Cacau 51)  
Karlsruhe 0 Bayern Munich 1 (Klose 86)  
Cologne 1 (Novakovic 39) Energie Cottbus 0

## Ballack has foot op

AFP, Berlin

Germany skipper Michael Ballack underwent surgery on his feet on Friday and could be out of action for around two weeks.

The 32-year-old Chelsea star needed the operation to cure an infection after complaining of pain in his feet in the World Cup qualifying win over Wales, said a statement released by the German football federation (DFB).

The DFB said the surgery, carried out with the agreement of Chelsea, was successful and the midfielder should be back in training in two weeks' time.

## Milan open door for Beckham

THE GUARDIAN

AC Milan have opened the door to a possible January move for David Beckham by revealing that they would have no problem if the midfielder wished to train with them once his season with Los Angeles Galaxy comes to an end. Newspaper reports in Italy, however, have claimed the training invitation by Milan could precede a formal transfer bid.

Milan president Adriano Galliani denied any knowledge of a deal, but said that if the 33-year-old wished to train with them in order to keep fit he would be more than welcome. "I don't know anything about Beckham training with us but if he wanted to there really wouldn't be a problem," Galliani said. "In the past he was close to signing for Milan but I haven't spoken to him since the night before he signed for LA Galaxy."

The MLS season ends next month and doesn't resume until April. Last winter Beckham trained with Arsenal in a bid to keep his fitness up with a view to remaining in Fabio Capello's England plans. As England have no competitive fixture until April 1, it's unknown whether Beckham will wish to pursue a similar course of action this winter.

## Jol won't blame anyone

AFP, London

Former Tottenham manager Martin Jol insists no one's to blame for the Premier League side's worst start in almost a century under his successor, Juande Ramos.

Jol, whose new club Hamburg are top of the Bundesliga, was sacked by the Spurs hierarchy last October, despite guiding the team to two fifth-place finishes in the Premier League and the UEFA Cup quarterfinals.

The Dutchman was then replaced by Ramos, who had led Sevilla to two UEFA Cups, and he then guided Spurs to the League Cup.

However, this season has seen the tables turned - with Jol taking Hamburg to the top of the Bundesliga, while Spurs languish at the bottom of the Premier League with just two points.

Tottenham travel to Stoke on Sunday looking for their first league win of the season.

There have been suggestions both Spurs sporting director Damien Comolli and Ramos could find themselves going the same way as Jol, but the Dutchman has refused to point the finger at anyone for Spurs' predicament.

Jol told BBC Radio 5 Live on Friday: "I don't want to put blame

on anybody. They try to do their best, and that is not easy in football.

"You need a lot of experience to manage to be at the top.

"I was fifth twice and they said 'but if you are fifth twice, you have to be fourth or third.

"You can't talk about top four' they told me' and then be in 17th in the league'.

"But I played with (Younes) Kaboul, who never played in the Premier League; I had (Pascal) Chimbonda at left-back; Teemu Tainio had to play at right-back.

"That was totally different. You see the players they have now: (Vedrun) Corluka, (Jonathan) Woodgate.

"If we'd had Woodgate with (Michael) Dawson that would have been a different kettle of fish - but it wasn't to be.

"We had to move on and we hope they can improve things, because everyone is waiting for it. They are the best fans in England."

The 52-year-old admits he is benefiting from the support of his sporting director in Germany.

"They treat me very well over here," Jol continued.

"They are happy with me - that's important if you have bought.

"We have a sporting director as well, and he was delighted I came over and he tells everyone every day he is delighted I am here.

"That is what you need - that is a different situation than over there

at Spurs."

Jol nonetheless denies he had a poor relationship with Comolli, adding: "I respect everybody, so for me there was no problem.

"The only thing is there is just a different structure over there.

"So if you have four or five players from France and they are as good as Michael Carrick and people tell you they are, you have to believe them.

"Some were good; some weren't good. But I will never blame someone else, because I am there as well - so you have to take part of the blame."

Jol also refused to get involved in the Spurs crisis, adding: "I honestly have to say it is none of my business.

"It's a year ago I left and I wasn't happy to leave. But that is one of those things that will happen in football, and I focus on my time here now.

"The only thing I didn't like was the things he said after we left - because in England, it is not done to criticise the former manager.

"I thought maybe it will get better.

"Of course, they won the Carling Cup. But I think that was still the team we had with Ledley King, and everybody knows every time we had Ledley King we won games - and that is the big difference.

"They changed the team but they do it with good intentions."

## Messi votes for Batista

INTERNET, undated

According to Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi, the resignation of Alfio Basile could help improve the Argentine national team in the long run.

Lionel Messi supported the decision made by Alfio Basile to abandon his Argentina post, and the Barcelona striker gave his approval for Olympic coach Sergio Batista to take over the position.

"When things don't work out, it is better to make changes. It has been ages that the national team haven't been playing well, and maybe it will be a change for the better," stated Messi, on his arrival to Barcelona after taking part in two World Cup qualifiers with Argentina.

As well as this, Messi supported the idea for Batista to become the new coach. With Batista at the helm, Messi and Argentina claimed the Olympic gold medal in Beijing earlier in the year. Messi affirmed that it would be "very good" for Batista to fill the vacancy.

"I know him well, and I like his way of working, and I have confidence in him and in his coaching team. It would be 'great', stated the player, who this afternoon will return to training with Barcelona at the Miniestad, after a long flight from South America.

Despite Messi's preference for Batista, the main candidate to take over the role is San Lorenzo coach Miguel Angel Russo. Russo has a good track record in the Argentine league, and his San Lorenzo side currently lead the league standings. Another possible candidate is Diego Simeone, who guided River Plate to the Clausura Championship last season.

## Frings undecided on int'l future

SOCCERNET

Germany midfielder Torsten Frings is in no rush to make a decision over whether to continue his international career.

In an interview on Friday, the Werder Bremen player revealed he was considering quitting the Germany set-up after being left on the bench for the last two internationals.

National team coach Joachim Low later reaffirmed that Frings plays "a major part" in his squad, although he admitted he could not guarantee him a place in upcoming matches.

And the 31-year-old Frings is in no hurry to decide his future with Werder preparing for a busy time on the pitch.

"There is nothing new to add," he said after training on Friday.

"I have declared I will be considering whether I still see any chances (with the national team), but I am now putting the national team to the back of my mind and concentrating fully on Werder.

"We have some important games over the coming weeks."

Werder's future in the Champions League could be decided over the next few weeks while they have four Bundesliga matches to pack into the same period.

Frings has received support from his club with their director of football, Klaus Allofs, saying the fact he is considering a future is "understandable", given the circumstances.

"In our eyes, he deserves to be in the national team based on his performances," Allofs said.

"He now wants to take time to consider his future with the national team - nothing more and nothing less.

"It is not about demanding a guaranteed place in the side."

## Five-star Chelsea

AFP, Middlesbrough



Unbeaten Premier League leaders Chelsea defied the absence of 100 million pound of talent to run riot with a stunning 5-0 victory at Middlesbrough on Saturday.

Luiz Felipe Scolari's in-form side strolled past Boro with four goals in 16 second-half minutes in an embarrassingly easy victory at the Riverside Stadium.

It was a result and a performance which piled the pressure on the chasing pack as Chelsea chalked up their latest win without seven injured first-team players for the day's early kick-off.

Despite the absence of Didier Drogba, Joe Cole, Michael Essien, Ashley Cole, Petr Cech, Ricardo Carvalho, Michael Ballack, with the returning Deco on the bench, Chelsea's 10-month unbeaten league run never looked under serious threat from a hugely disappointing Middlesbrough.

Salomon Kalou opened the floodgates with a calm close-range finish on 14 minutes after a make-shift Middlesbrough defence missing three regulars failed to deal with a searching Wayne Bridge cross.

But it was early in the second-half when Chelsea really hit top

gear to rip Middlesbrough to shreds with some stunning football.

Juliano Belletti put the result beyond doubt by doubling the lead on 51 minutes with a spectacular 30-yard strike into the top corner beyond Ross Turnbull. If Middlesbrough thought their visitors would then step off the gas to save themselves for their upcoming Champions League meeting with AS Roma, they were wrong.

Kalou struck his second with the aid of a hefty deflection off David Wheeler after latching onto Florent Malouda's inviting 53rd-minute cut-back, before Frank Lampard weighed in with the fourth 10 minutes later thanks to a diving header from Kalou's cross.

It wasn't long before the fifth arrived, Turnbull spilling a Nicolas Anelka shot against a post to allow the alert Malouda in to knock the loose ball into an empty net from closer range.

It proved to be a gentle re-introduction for skipper John Terry, who did his bit to ease the Stamford Bridge casualty list by recovering from the back injury that kept him out of England's last two games to retain his ever-present record in the Premier League this season.

But defender Cole and keeper Cech failed fitness tests to join the London club's lengthy injury list,

although Chelsea's 29-game unbeaten Premier League record rarely looked in doubt once Kalou had broken the deadlock against a Middlesbrough with just one victory in their last 17 meetings with the top flight's 'big four'.

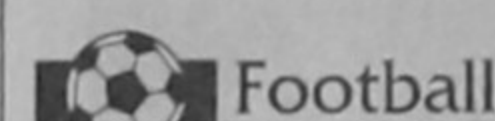
Boro quickly scrapped their attacking 4-4-2 to adopt a more cautious five-man midfield after falling behind, but despite the tactical switch it appeared only a matter of time before Chelsea added a nerve-soothing second to their tally.

Malouda looked like doubling the advantage after half an hour, and the midfielder should have done better when dragging a shot across the face of goal after exploiting the alarming gaps in the Middlesbrough area.

The interval failed to stem the one-way traffic, and immediately after the re-start, only a fine save from Turnbull prevented Malouda adding his name to the score-sheet after the midfielder made the most of hesitancy from Jonathan Grounds to burst through.

It wasn't long before Chelsea's class told, and even after their stunning four-goal burst, they came close to adding a sixth as Anelka saw an effort ruled out for offside, before Turnbull brilliantly blocked his low shot to save further embarrassment.

## Diego eyes Argentina job



AFP, Buenos Aires

Argentina superstar Diego Maradona said on Friday he wants to succeed Alfio Basile as the national team coach and take them to the World Cup finals.

However, Maradona is likely to lose out to Sergio Batista, who led Argentina to the Beijing Olympics gold medal, in the race to take over the reins from Basile who resigned in the aftermath of the 1-0 qualifying defeat to Chile on Wednesday.

"Perhaps I am behind in the betting but I am without doubt the number one in the hearts of Argentinians," said the 47-year-old Maradona who skippered Argentina to 1986 World Cup victory.

"I couldn't ask for anything better. I would be in seventh heaven."

Batista said he was ready to take

charge.

"I feel as if I am capable and I'm convinced that I could do the job," he told La Red radio.

Other candidates are believed to be Miguel Angel Russo, currently in charge of Argentine club side San Lorenzo, and former international midfielder Diego Simeone, the coach of River Plate.



DIEGO MARADONA

A spokesman for the Argentine Football Association (AFA) said on Friday that the new coach will be named on October 27.

Basile, 64, had been under fire since his team's lacklustre showing in the World Cup qualifier against Chile, a defeat which left them third in the group.

It was Chile's first ever qualifying success over the albiceleste and first of any description since 1973.

Argentina's poor form stretches back over seven games, however, with only one win notched up in that time - a 2-1 victory over Uruguay last week.

Basile signed up in his latest stint as Argentina coach in July 2006 from Boca Juniors. He had previously been national coach from 1991 through to the 1994 World Cup in the United States.

Basile took over from Jose Pekerman, who quit following Argentina's quarterfinal elimination at the hands of hosts Germany on penalties in the World Cup.

## Hamilton snatches pole

AFP, Shanghai



Britain's Lewis Hamilton snatched pole position in the dying seconds of qualifying on Saturday to boost his chances of sealing the Formula One world title at the Chinese Grand Prix.

The 23-year-old McLaren Mercedes star made light of immense pressure with a near-perfect final lap to close a hard-fought session ahead of Ferrari's outgoing champion Kimi Raikkonen and title rival Felipe Massa.

It was Hamilton's seventh pole this season and the 13th of his career as he targets his first drivers' championship, which he allowed to slip through his fingers last year.

With just the Chinese and Brazilian legs to go, Hamilton needs to beat Massa by six points here to become the sport's youngest champion provided BMW Sauber's Robert Kubica, the only other title contender, does not win.

Hamilton was up against it after slipping to fifth in the opening run of the final qualifying session, but he drove nearly faultlessly to take pole.

"That was as near to a perfect lap as I could have driven," said Hamilton afterwards. "I knew there was a job to do and I was just totally focused on my lap."

Hamilton said he was able to clear his mind of a simmering controversy after several rivals

accused him of driving too aggressively. Renault boss Flavio Briatore also said Hamilton would "throw away" the title again.

"I did not feel under any extra pressure at all," Hamilton said. "To be honest, I had nothing else on my mind but the lap and the job."

Massa admitted it had been a tough qualifying session for Ferrari but remained confident for Sunday's race.

"We have been struggling a little bit to put together a perfect lap and this qualifying was a little difficult. But we have been here before and had very good pace for the race," he said.

"It looks like the McLaren guys have got an easier car to drive for the lap."

Two-time world champion Fernando Alonso, who is seeking a hat-trick of consecutive wins and has said he is supporting Massa's bid to overhaul Hamilton, will start fourth behind the Briton and the two Ferraris.

"I can't beat Ferrari or McLaren," admitted the Spaniard.

"I don't think we can fight wheel to wheel with them, but we are going to try to secure fourth place in the constructors' championship and finish ahead of Toyota, which is enough," he said.

Hamilton's McLaren teammate Heikki Kovalainen was only fifth ahead of Australian Mark Webber in a Red Bull. Webber has to drop 10 places because of an engine change on his car in the morning.

On a clear, dry afternoon, the first

part of qualifying was dominated by the McLarens with Hamilton fastest ahead of Kovalainen with German tyro Sebastian Vettel third for Toro Rosso.

Red Bull's British veteran David Coulthard was livid that his final flying lap was spoiled by German Nick Heidfeld of BMW Sauber.

"It was unsporting behaviour by Heidfeld. He had no intention of a faster lap. I have given him the benefit of the doubt, but this shows what sort of person he is," Coulthard fumed.

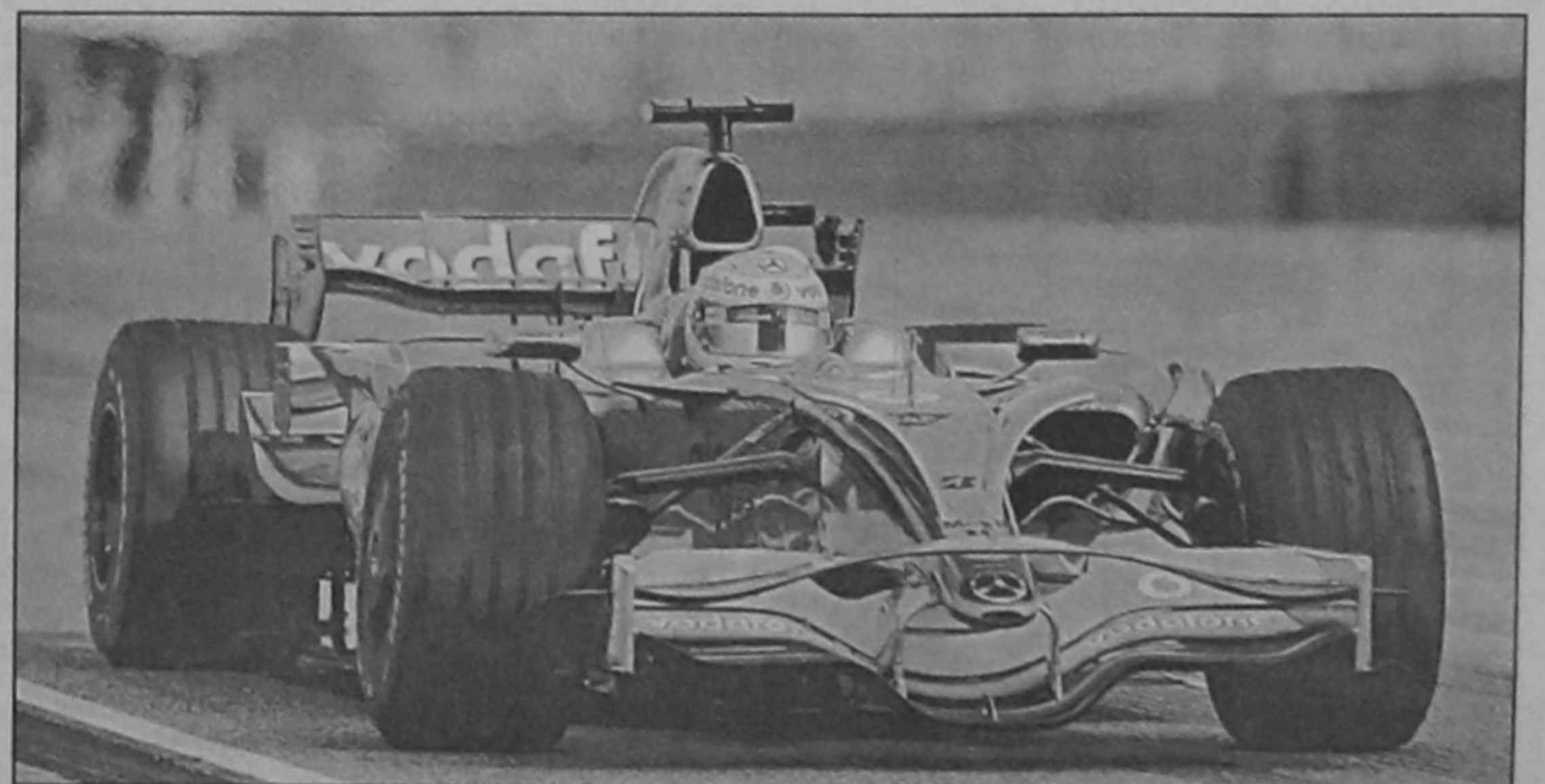
Ferrari's Massa improved from fifth to second in the second session but he was again eclipsed by Hamilton, who had dominated Friday's practice and again ran in fastest after a switch to soft tyres.

Kubica saw his slim title hopes take a knock when he could not find the balance in his car and missed the top-10 cut for the final qualifying session.

"The car was so difficult to drive for me, it just did not respond how I wanted it to. I could not push at all, no hard," he said.

Meanwhile, Formula One supremo Bernie Ecclestone played down fears that big car manufacturers would desert the sport over plans to introduce a single, standard engine for all teams.

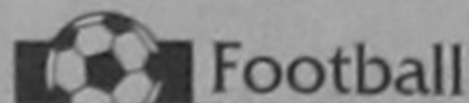
The International Motoring Federation (FIA) ruling body this week announced plans to cut costs and standardise engines, following warnings from president Max Mosley that the sport would go bust in a year without drastic change.



Lewis Hamilton of Britain drives his McLaren Mercedes to pole position in the Chinese Grand Prix at the Shanghai International Circuit on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Blues to be reinforced



INTERNET, undated

Luiz Felipe Scolari is facing the toughest week of his Chelsea tenure with Roma and Liverpool expected to test his injury-ravaged squad to its limit.

Chelsea face Roma on Wednesday in their Champions League Group A fixture before playing Premier League title rivals Liverpool on Sunday.

Scolari is already reeling from an injury crisis that threatens to disrupt their admirable progress on both European and domestic fronts.

Goalkeeper Petr Cech and influential midfielder Deco are almost certain to return for the Roma clash

at Stamford Bridge but they will still be without many of their big-name players including Didier Drogba and Michael Ballack.

However, Ashley and Joe Cole are also expected to return to action and there is increasing hope centre-half Ricardo Carvalho will be fit enough to rejoin the squad after his knee problem.

"I have been thinking about Roma and Liverpool and yes, this is the toughest week so far," admitted Scolari.

"All weeks are tough but I make them easy because if I thought about things any differently, I would be dead in one week.

Chelsea play Roma at home and away in their next two Champions League matches and England midfielder Frank Lampard believes

the results will define the outcome of the group.

The Italian side and CFR Cluj will battle it out for the two knock-out stage places with Chelsea and the Italians are the team Lampard feels will offer the most problems.

"For Bordeaux it is going to be very difficult but for Roma, ourselves and Cluj, the next two games are very important.

"Whoever can get positive results has a very good chance of going through," admitted Lampard.

"It was no surprise that Cluj played well against us. Their result against Roma proved they were a good team.

"Their team played very well against us. They defended cleverly and they counter-attacked very fast."