

Drogba charged with violent conduct

AFP, London

The English Football Association on Friday charged Chelsea striker Didier Drogba with violent conduct after he threw a coin into the crowd during his club's League Cup defeat by Burnley.

Drogba's reaction to having been hit by a coin that was thrown at him from the stands leaves him liable for a three-match ban.

The incident is also being investigated by London police, who are expected to issue the Ivory Coast forward with a caution.

The Football Association have also written to Burnley seeking further information on the throwing of missiles from the Burnley section at Chelsea's Stamford Bridge stadium.

Spain name team for Chile tie

AFP, Madrid

Spain squad announced Friday for the November 19 friendly against Chile in the southeastern Spanish city of Villarreal.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Iker Casillas (Real Madrid), Pepe Reina (Liverpool/ENG)

Defenders: Raul Albiol (Valencia), Alvaro Arbeloa (Liverpool/ENG), Joan Capdevila (Villarreal), Juanito (Betis), Carlos Marchena (Valencia), Carlos Puyol (Barcelona), Sergio Ramos (Real Madrid)

Midfielders: Xabi Alonso (Liverpool/ENG), Albert Riera (Liverpool/ENG), Santiago Cazorla (Villarreal), Marcos Senna (Villarreal), Cesc Fabregas (Arsenal/ENG), Xavi Hernandez (Barcelona), Juan Manuel Mata (Valencia)

Strikers: Fernando Torres (Liverpool/ENG), David Villa (Valencia), Daniel Guiza (Fenerbahe/TUR), Fernando Llorente (Athletic Bilbao)

Claudio Ranieri's team are now level on 24 points with Inter Milan, but have a worse goal difference and have played one match more.

Two first-half goals made the difference, the first from defender Zoltan Gygera and a second from Amauri, his sixth league goal of the season.

There was a disappointing showing from Genoa's Diego Milito. The Argentine striker is the leading scorer with nine, but was unable to escape from Juventus

Murray knocks out Federer

AFP, Shanghai

British world number four Andy Murray knocked defending champion Roger Federer out of the Tennis Masters Cup with a 4-6, 7-6 (7/3), 7-5 victory on Friday.

The result means Gilles Simon of France also qualifies for the semifinals, while Federer fails to reach the last four for the first time in seven visits.

Gilles Simon swept aside Czech alternate Radek Stepanek 6-1, 6-4 on Friday.

Simon broke twice in a dominant first set up and again in the first game of the second, and weathered growing resistance from the Czech to finish it in one hour and 11 minutes.

It was Simon's first win in two matches against Stepanek after their first meeting at this year's French Open.

Simon qualified for the eight-man season finale after top-ranked Rafael Nadal withdrew, while Stepanek was called up during the group phase when Andy Roddick pulled out with an ankle injury.

Becks may not play: Seedorf

AFP, London

AC Milan's Clarence Seedorf believes it's quite possible that new loan signing David Beckham won't play a single match for the Italian giants.

Beckham, 33, is due to arrive at the San Siro in January after agreeing a temporary move from LA Galaxy during Major League Soccer's close season.

The former Manchester United and Real Madrid midfielder hopes this will keep him in the thoughts of England manager Fabio Capello, who has made it clear he won't pick players for February's friendly against Spain unless they are actively involved with a club team.

However, Seedorf told Sky Sports here Thursday: "I don't even know if he'll be able to play for us. I mean the first goal is for him to get fit and in the best shape possible."

"Training with a club like AC Milan will definitely improve his game even if it's only from a training point of view," the Dutch midfielder added.

"But I don't know if he'll play, that's another thing completely. 2010 (when the next World Cup takes place in South Africa) is not that far away so he has to work hard and show Capello he's still here."

Nevertheless Seedorf, said he was looking forward to welcoming Beckham, now just one short of 1966 World Cup-winning captain Bobby Moore's England record of 108 caps for an outfield player, to Milan.

"Everyone is excited of course, we're looking forward to it. Personally I will help him out to achieve his goals, knowing that he's a great professional and he'll help us to do the same thing."



Genoa defender Domenico Criscito (R) clears the ball off the line as Juventus defender Cristian Molinaro (L) and Genoa goalkeeper Rubinho (lying on the ground) look on during their Serie A encounter at Olympic Stadium in Turin on Thursday.

Juventus thrash Genoa

AFP, Rome

Juventus moved into second place in Italy's Serie A with a 4-1 win over Genoa on Thursday at Turin's Stadio Olimpico.

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and Italy defender Giorgio Chiellini. Genoa had been completely nullified by the time Juventus scored their third. Alessandro Del Piero flicked the ball over the defence and substitute Vincenzo Iaquinta used his pace to race away from the defence and slot the ball past Rubinho.

However, there was still time for Milito to move into double figures by firing in a late penalty after Nicola Legrottolle was penalised for handball.

There was more good news for Ranieri with the return to action of midfielder Mauro Camoranesi. It was with his cross that Sokratis Papastathopoulos turned the ball into his own net for the home team's fourth.

For coach Ranieri the return of Camoranesi was very pleasing, though he said he felt that it

showed Juventus' strength in depth. He told Sky Italia: "I like to make everyone feel that they are part of Juventus. Everyone prepares the same way and on the pitch you are with your teammates and everyone wants to do well."

"I played a lot of the big names early on in the Champions League preliminaries, but to play matches every two or three days, in the league or the Champions League, you need to revolve your players."

It didn't take Juventus long to take the lead, when Zoltan Gygera found the net from the right of the penalty area, after being teed up by Alessandro Del Piero.

On 25 minutes Amauri made it two when he rose above the defence to head home Marco Marchionni's first time cross, not long after Milito had wasted Genoa's best chance of the night.

Second-placed Hoffenheim have plenty to celebrate with defender Marvin Compper and midfielder Tobias Weis called into the Germany team to play England, but they will want three points against Wolfsburg.

Hoffenheim will want to bounce back from Sunday's 1-0 defeat at Hertha Berlin and hoping the league's top scorer Vedad Ibisevic can add to his 13 goals in 12 games so far this season.

At the other end of the table, Energie Cottbus are already four points off survival at the bottom of the table.

But they are at home to Karlsruhe who picked up only their first point in five games against Leverkusen last weekend.

Having upset Hoffenheim last weekend, Hertha Berlin will be hoping to build on their success when they host Hamburg at the Olympic Stadium.

But Hertha are waiting on the fitness of striker Marko Pantelic and defender Sofian Chahed.

In the weekend's other games, mid-table Hannover are at home to VfL Bochum on Friday and on Sunday Werder Bremen host Cologne.

FIXTURES

Saturday
VfB Stuttgart v Arminia Bielefeld, Bayer Leverkusen v Schalke 04, Hertha Berlin v Hamburg, Borussia Dortmund v Eintracht Frankfurt, Energie Cottbus v Karlsruhe, Borussia M'gladbach v Bayern Munich, Hoffenheim v VfL Wolfsburg

Sunday
Werder Bremen v Cologne

Los Angeles Galaxy forward Landon Donovan has taken a step closer to a move to German giants Bayern Munich after impressing coach Jurgen Klinsmann on his 10-day trial in the south German city.

"Landon is a player who brings all sorts of qualities, he has developed into one of the top players in North America and Mexico," said Klinsmann, who was a technical advisor at Galaxy before he took over as Bayern coach on July 1.

On Tuesday, Donovan was named US football's Player of the Year for the fifth time, the same day he started a ten-day trial with Bayern while his United States club Galaxy are on their annual winter break.

Having struggled to impress on his last sojourn to the Bundesliga when he had a brief spell at Bayer Leverkusen, Donovan said he is enjoying his time in Munich and is keen to stay.

"As a person and a player, I am completely different now to how I was then, I have matured. I am ready," said the attacking midfielder who played in Bayern's 6-1 win over their second team on Wednesday.

Donovan has a contract with Galaxy which runs until 2012 and with 105-caps to his name, his market value is around 2.5 million euros (3.1 million US dollars).

Just like Galaxy's other star, former England captain David Beckham who will join AC Milan for three months later this winter, Donovan may also sign only a short-term contract with Bayern.

Donovan has an impressive CV. He was the top-scorer in Major League Soccer last season with a career-high 20 goals in 25 matches, although the Galaxy failed to qualify for the eight-team MLS playoffs.

And the 26-year-old is the top scorer leader for the United States with a total of 37 goals in 105 international appearances.

His 2008 Player of the Year award, voted on by the US media, was his fifth and he is the only player to earn the accolade more than twice.

Brazil set Italy date

AFP, London

Brazil are to play a friendly against World Cup holders Italy at Arsenal's Emirates Stadium on February 10, the Premier League club announced here Thursday.

It will be the fourth time that Brazil have used the Gunners' north London home, which seats 60,000, for a friendly match having played Argentina, Portugal and Sweden there since the stadium opened in 2006 following Arsenal's move from Highbury.

"Everyone at Arsenal Football Club is delighted and honoured to be hosting this international match between two of the world's greatest national teams," said Arsenal chairman Peter Hill-Wood.

"Brazil and Italy both have proud and very successful football histories and we are looking forward to welcoming the teams and many Brazilian and Italian supporters to Emirates Stadium in February."

"Some of the world's finest footballers will be on display and we are all very excited at what is sure to be a thrilling contest."

Donovan close to Bayern move

AFP, Berlin

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Leaders resume tussle

AFP, London

Chelsea and Liverpool will attempt to draw a line under what has been a difficult week for both clubs as they resume their tussle for pole position in the Premier League title race this weekend.

Chelsea, who travel to bottom club West Brom on Saturday evening, currently top the table courtesy of the impressive goal difference that reflects Luiz Felipe Scolari's commitment to an expansive style.

Liverpool, who are at Bolton on Saturday lunchtime, have not set many pulses racing but they have matched Chelsea's haul of points and Rafael Benitez's side appears set for a serious tilt at what would be the club's first English title since 1990.

Both the pacesetters were left smarting by ignominious exits from the League Cup in midweek, Liverpool slumping to a 4-2 defeat at Tottenham while Chelsea's exit on penalties to Championship side Burnley was aggravated by Didier Drogba's ill-judged reaction to being struck by a coin thrown from the stands.

The Ivory Coast striker tossed the missile back into the crowd and treated the visiting supporters to a one-fingered salute, conduct that is likely to earn him a ban at a time when he has only just come back from a knee injury.

Scolari will not have been impressed and Drogba could find himself confined to the bench on Saturday given Nicolas Anelka's rich vein of goalscoring form of late.

Benitez has shrugged off Liverpool's defeat in midweek but acknowledges a response on the pitch is required to prevent a blip in the club's season escalating into something more significant.

Champions Manchester United, out-boxed by Arsenal last weekend in a contest that delighted purists, face an altogether different kind of bout when Stoke visit Old Trafford.

In Rory Delap's laser-guided

what he expects, telling Sky Italia: "I wouldn't settle for a draw. The derby is a truly great match and is important to play in. You give your all to win it, because the taste of victory is fantastic."

However, he added that league positions and current form will count for little when the match starts.

"The fact that we have more points signifies that until now we are playing better. But, when you play a derby I think that only the match counts and not the moment you are in."

One of the main reasons behind Lazio's form is summer loan signing Mauro Zarate. The Argentine, who is on loan from Qatar's Al Saad, has hit seven goals so far and is expected to form part of a three-man attack, alongside captain Tommaso Rocchi and Goran Pandev.

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long throw-ins, the Potters have a weapon capable of perturbing the best of opponents, as Arsenal found to their cost two weeks ago.

Manager Tony Pulis recognises that the trip to Old Trafford will represent the biggest test yet for his top-flight newcomers, but insists it is United who should be concerned about tailoring their approach to the opposition.

Of the top four, Arsenal look to have the toughest day with fifth-placed Aston Villa the visitors to the Emirates Stadium.

Confidence is, however, running high in north London following last weekend's win over the champions and an equally exhilarating display by the next generation of Gunners stars in the League Cup in midweek, while Villa's early season momentum has been checked by back-to-back defeats.

Elsewhere, Tottenham will seek to extend their unbeaten start to life under Harry Redknapp when they travel to London neighbours Fulham.

Newcastle entertain Wigan in the hope that they will be able to claim a win that will lift them out of the relegation zone, which is where the league's richest club, Manchester City, could find themselves if they go down to defeat at Hull on Sunday and other results go against them.

League leaders Inter Milan, meanwhile travel to a potentially tricky away fixture against Palermo, who have won four of their five games at their Stadio Renzo Barbera home so far.

The week has been dominated by the falling out between coach Jose Mourinho and striker Adriano, with the Brazilian expected to be sold in the January transfer window after he missed Tuesday's training citing flu, the latest in a long line of misdemeanours.

Should Inter slip up on the road, cross-city rivals AC Milan who are currently in second will be confident that they can secure all three points when Chievo visit San Siro.

against Manchester United, I insist Cristiano Ronaldo is one thing and Messi is another. There is no comparison. Messi deserves to win the Ballon d'Or this year."

Barcelona's next opponents are Recreativo Huelva on Sunday and they will be hoping Messi and Eto'o have off days.

Villarreal sit a point behind Barcelona in second and are the only unbeaten team in the league although they crashed out of the Kings Cup to minnows Polideportivo Ejido in midweek.

On Sunday, Manuel Pellegrini's team travel to promoted Malaga, who were unfortunate not to beat Real Madrid on their own ground last weekend losing 4-3 against ten men.

Valencia are a point behind Villarreal in third - with Real fourth on the same points - under new coach Unai Emery and host Sporting Gijon on Saturday night.

Atletico are at home to Deportivo La Coruna, one point above them in sixth, on Sunday and Aguirre could do with a win to calm the persistent talk over his future with last season's Champions League qualification seemingly not enough to satisfy the demanding board.

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