



Manchester City defender Wayne Bridge (L) is tackled by Middlesbrough counterpart Matthew Bates during their English Premier League encounter at the City of Manchester Stadium on Saturday.

Kinnear in hospital

AFP, Newcastle
Newcastle boss Joe Kinnear was admitted to hospital on Saturday after complaining of feeling unwell.

The 62-year-old, who has a history of ill health, was examined by medical staff "as a precautionary measure" and was being kept in for observation, the club reported.

He was examined by the club's medical staff before going to hospital, a Newcastle spokesman added.

Newcastle assistant manager Chris Hughton will take charge for the game against West Brom at The Hawthorns later Saturday.

Kinnear suffered a mild heart attack when in charge of Wimbledon in 1999, later resigning from that post due to poor health.

Tevez faces fine

INTERNET, undated

Manchester United star Carlos Tevez has had his £140,000 Bentley impounded by police after he was pulled over and found to not possess a UK driving licence.

Greater Manchester Police stopped Argentina forward Tevez on the M60 near Stretford, believing the tint on the windows of his white Bentley Continental GT Speed to be illegal.

Tests subsequently conducted by police showed that they were too dark.

A GMP spokesman said: "Shortly after 9.20am on Friday 6 February 2009, traffic officers pulled over a Bentley close to junction 7 of the M60."

The officers were concerned certain windows were illegally tinted. They were tested and found to be too dark so a prohibition notice was issued to the driver.

"When asked to provide his documentation, it was discovered the driver did not have a full UK driving licence and was advised to arrange removal of the car."

Tevez, 25, could therefore face prosecution, with a maximum fine of £1,000 as well as six penalty points.

In 2007 Tevez's United teammate Cristiano Ronaldo was fined for having too-dark windows on his Bentley convertible, while the Portuguese was stopped by police again as recently as Thursday and warned over his speed.

Del Bosque concerned

AFP, Madrid

Spain coach Vicente del Bosque is concerned with speculation in England that racism could mar next week's friendly in Seville.

"It worries me, we don't like it at all, because if there is an integrated country that has nothing to do with racism, it is Spain," he told a news conference called to announce his squad for Wednesday's match.

Del Bosque added that "like in all other places" there could be "isolated groups who can disrupt a good match, but Spain is not at all xenophobic".

Bellamy fires City

AFP, Manchester



Shay Given enjoyed a debut to remember as Manchester City piled more misery on Middlesbrough with a 1-0 win at Eastlands on Saturday.

Given was making his City bow after finally getting his wish to leave Newcastle in a seven million pounds move just before the transfer deadline and the Irish goalkeeper showed why Mark Hughes was willing to pay such a big fee with a string of fine saves.

He denied Middlesbrough forward Afonso Alves four times and his heroics meant Craig Bellamy's strike early in the second half was enough to give City their third win in four matches.

Bellamy's second goal in three matches for his new club condemned Middlesbrough to a 13th consecutive game without a win - equalling their worst run in the Premier League - and left Gareth Southgate's team marooned in the relegation zone.

Middlesbrough started with

a clear lack of confidence and Didier Digard's poor pass fell straight to Stephen Ireland.

The City midfielder curled a pass to Bellamy and only a brave block from Brad Jones denied the Wales star.

Ireland created more problems with a corner which Micah Richards powered forward to Vincent Kompany. His first touch was good but the volley on the turn went wide.

After a slow start Middlesbrough came to life when Johnson set up Afonso Alves and the Brazilian lashed in a shot that Given instinctively blocked.

Jones matched Given's efforts when Bellamy drove goalwards and the Australian keeper wasn't finished there as he plunged to his left to push away a Robinho shot.

Given took centre stage after that with a sensational one-handed stop to deny Alves.

City were back on the attack when Wayne Bridge crossed to Ireland, who threw himself into a diving header that crashed back off the bar.

Boro's response was another Alves' effort, which again Given proved equal to, turning the shot away with his

legs after he escaped City's slack marking.

City finally broke the deadlock in the 51st minute as the visitors were punished for more sloppy defending.

Nigel de Jong's pass picked out Bellamy on the edge of the box and when Emanuel Pogatzet did not close down the space quickly enough, Bellamy jinked clear and drove a low shot into the far corner.

City went for the kill and Ireland's superb pass found Bellamy but the Middlesbrough defence snuffed out the danger for once.

Robinho should have sealed the win when he beat the offside trap to meet Wright-Phillips' pass. However, the Brazilian tried to round Jones when a shot would have been better and the keeper was able to save.

Alves had one more chance to beat Given midway through the second half but the keeper came out on top again with another fine stop.

Middlesbrough had a late penalty appeal turned down when Marlon King's cross struck Bridge, but referee Andre Marriner waved away the penalty appeals.

Arshavin set for debut

AFP, London



Even the wordiest of Russia's great novelists would have struggled to match the epic length of Arsenal's pursuit of Andrey Arshavin.

But now the chase has been brought to a successful conclusion, English football will discover whether the wait has been worthwhile.

Arshavin, having finally completed his protracted move from Zenit St Petersburg on Tuesday, is being considered for a potentially explosive debut in Sunday's north London derby with Tottenham Hotspur.

Arsene Wenger would doubtless have preferred to ease in his new playmaker via a less volatile fixture, given both his lack of recent match practice - the Russian season ended in November - and the

unique physical challenge posed by the harum-scarum Premier League.

But Arsenal's situation is so precarious, he simply has no room for niceties. Having fallen five points behind the top four courtesy of some wildly inconsistent form this season, Arshavin will be expected to make an immediate impact, especially as a smattering of the club's more creative forces - Cesc Fabregas, Tomas Rosicky and Theo Walcott - remain out with long-term injuries.

"I believe he is talented, intelligent and motivated," Wenger said. "When you have these things together, you always have a chance to make an impact, but you have to give him time as well."

"I will have reservations (about playing him), because the worst thing for a player is not being ready to play in a game of that intensity, or getting injured before having kicked a ball

for the team. But we will see what shape he is in."

Wenger sought to ease some of the pressure on his new arrival by stressing the strengths of the players around him, and the fact that Arsenal are currently in the midst of their longest unbeaten run of the season.

"We have what it takes, without Arshavin," he insisted. "The team is maturing - we have shown that against Manchester United, Liverpool and Chelsea. This team can compete with anybody."

But the fact remains that Arshavin has come to be seen as the saviour of Arsenal's season - the conjurer capable of transforming frustrating draws into precious victories with a canny pass, quicksilver run or clinical finish. In short, delivering the same kind of footballing alchemy he regularly produces for his national side.

Keane has no regrets

AFP, London

Tottenham's Robbie Keane looked forward to Sunday's clash against rivals Arsenal with no regrets about his time at Liverpool, saying: "Sometimes the manager just doesn't fancy you".

Irishman Keane, sold for 20 million pounds to Liverpool in the summer then bought back for 12 million by Tottenham this week under new manager Harry Redknapp, had been cast aside by Reds boss Rafael Benitez who made it clear he never really wanted Keane in the first place.

Keane brought to an end a disappointingly brief spell at Liverpool on transfer deadline day when he re-signed for his

former club, just months after realising his boyhood dream of becoming Anfield's number seven.

But he admits that dream soon turned sour when he failed to establish himself in Benitez's squad and scored just seven goals on Merseyside.

The final straw appeared to come when he was left out of the squad for the crucial clash against Chelsea, a match the Reds won 2-0 as the Irishman shivered in the stands.

Since then his fortunes have taken a remarkably swift upturn and he will lead Spurs out in the north London derby as the club's new captain.

Keane can already feel the difference. "Things happen for a reason. It didn't work out for me and now I'm back with a fan-

tastic club and a fantastic manager who believes in his players," Keane said.

"I'm training with a smile on my face again. I did everything I had to do (at Liverpool), did everything possible to play but sometimes the manager just doesn't fancy you, simple as that."

"But not playing is difficult. It's difficult to take being left out of a squad. That hasn't happened to me since I started playing when I was 17."

"But I don't regret anything I do in football and I'm a Tottenham player now. Tottenham is a club that's close to my heart and I'm really looking forward to going out there and putting that jersey on."

"Liverpool is the past and I'm concentrating on the future."

Buffon, Pirlo back for Italy

AFP, Rome

Italy coach Marcello Lippi has recalled Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon and AC Milan midfielder Andrea Pirlo to his squad for Tuesday's friendly against Brazil at London's Emirates Stadium.

Both players missed Italy's last friendly match in Greece, a 1-1 draw in November, due to injury.

However, there has been no recall for veteran Juventus forward Alessandro Del Piero despite fine form for his club this season and a remarkable success rate from direct freekicks.

Sampdoria's Antonio Cassano has also been overlooked despite his strong performances for his club this season.

It will be the first time as player or coach that Lippi comes up against Brazil.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Gianluigi Buffon (Juventus), Marco Amelia (Palermo), Morgan De Sanctis (Galatasaray/TUR)

Defenders: Daniele Bonera (AC Milan), Fabio Cannavaro (Real Madrid/ESP), Andrea Dossena (Liverpool/ENG), Alessandro Gamberini (Fiorentina), Fabio Grosso (Lyon/FRA), Nicola Legrottaglie (Juventus), Gianluca Zambrotta (AC Milan)

Midfielders: Alberto Aquilani (AS Roma), Mauro Camoranesi (Juventus), Daniele De Rossi (AS Roma), Riccardo Montolivo (Fiorentina), Simone Pepe (Udinese), Simone Perrotta (AS Roma), Andrea Pirlo (AC Milan)

Forwards: Antonio Di Natale (Udinese), Alberto Gilardino (Fiorentina), Vincenzo Iaquinta (Juventus), Fabio Quagliarella (Udinese), Giuseppe Rossi (Villareal/ESP), Luca Toni (Bayern Munich/GER)

Friedrich out of friendly

AFP, Berlin

Experienced Germany defender Arne Friedrich has been forced out of next Wednesday's friendly international against Norway with a back injury, it was announced on Friday.

The 29-year-old has had several injections to try and ease the back problem, but has been unable to train this week and sat out Friday's Bundesliga game for his club Hertha Berlin against Arminia Bielefeld.

Having won 64 caps for Germany, Friedrich informed national coach Joachim Loew on Friday, but it is unclear whether a replacement will now be called up.

'Phelps was lucky'

AFP, Sydney

Michael Phelps was "extremely lucky" to escape with only a three-month ban from competition after a photograph was published appearing to show him smoking marijuana, Australian Olympic champion Libby Trickett told a newspaper here on Saturday.

USA Swimming announced the suspension after the picture of the multi-Olympic champion appeared in a British newspaper.

The organisation said it wanted to send a "strong message" to the swimmer about his status as a role model for young people.

But Trickett said the penalty was too lenient considering the three-month suspension won't lead to the Olympic star missing any major competition and he would remain eligible to compete at the world championships in Rome in July.

"Personally, I think he's extremely lucky and if it had fallen under anti-doping laws, the penalty could have been double and that would have cost him a spot at the worlds," Trickett told the Daily Telegraph.

"He's got to face up to the responsibilities that come with being a role model and this is simply unacceptable behaviour from someone with his stature and profile in sport."

"Hopefully, he can learn from the mistake and it's a pretty big fall from grace after what he achieved in Beijing" at the 2008 Olympics, where the American won an unprecedented eight gold medals.

"It takes some of the shine off his spectacular performances in Beijing and this behaviour simply isn't okay."

'MU better than Inter'

AFP, Rome



World Footballer of the Year Cristiano Ronaldo has laid down the gauntlet to Inter Milan ahead of Manchester United's Champions League clash against the Italian champions at the end of the month.

Speaking to Italian media, Ronaldo claimed the reigning English and European champions are simply better than the Italians and are favourites to progress.

And he told Inter's Portuguese coach Jose Mourinho that he has the trophies to prove that he is better than Inter's star Sweden forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic.

"Inter are a good team with

great players but we're better than them and I'm sure we'll beat them," he told Rai Sport.

"If we beat them we'll feel like we're just one step away from the final."

And Ronaldo turned his attentions to Mourinho, with whom he once had a spat during the coach's time at Chelsea in the English Premier League.

Ronaldo had claimed that Mourinho needed to take responsibility for Chelsea's defeats rather than complaining about referees while Mourinho responded that Ronaldo was immature and lacked respect, possibly due to a troubled childhood.

Mourinho further irked Ronaldo by claiming after the latter's World Player of the Year award that he thinks Ibrahimovic is better.

"I respect everyone's opinions but the trophies that count are in my home," said Ronaldo, who then went on to criticise Mourinho's treatment of compatriot Ricardo Quaresma, who on Monday moved on loan to Chelsea after a difficult first six months in Italy.

"Ricardo has some great qualities and it's a shame that he wasn't given the time to prove his true worth," he said.

"He was great for Porto and Portugal and he can't be judged on a few matches where he hasn't been at his best."

"Probably the fact that he was transferred for such a large sum of money (19 million euros) put too much pressure on him and in Italy it's not easy to do well straight away."

Quaresma to help Scolari

Football

AFP, Cobham

Ricardo Quaresma believes he can help Luiz Felipe Scolari get Chelsea back on track now the Blues boss has given him the chance to kickstart his career.

Quaresma arrives at Chelsea with plenty to prove after being discarded by Jose Mourinho just six months after joining Inter Milan from Porto for 20 million pounds.

The 25-year-old had already flopped at Barcelona so his career at the highest level was in danger of remaining unfulfilled until Scolari came along to rescue him with the offer of a loan move to Stamford Bridge until the end of the season.

The chance to link up with Scolari again after their successful spell together with the Portugal national team persuaded Quaresma to snub Tottenham when talks over a deal to take him to north London were well underway.

"I was aware of Totten-

ham's interest and I am always happy to find that other clubs are interested in my services. But coming to Chelsea was the best option for me," Quaresma said.

"For me having Mr Scolari here gives me more confidence because he has confidence in my abilities."

"As soon as I heard from Chelsea I didn't think twice because it is a great club and I knew Mr Scolari would help me out."

Escaping his unhappy spell at the San Siro has already allowed Quaresma to rediscover his enjoyment of the game. Now he intends to lift the gloom around Chelsea by firing Scolari's team get back in the Premier League title race.

"I'm going to use this opportunity to show that I fight to achieve my goals and to show everybody my qualities," Quaresma said. "When you fight you take the opportunities to prove yourself."

"I got my joy back. I wasn't playing very happily (at Inter).

Footballers need to play with joy and need to enjoy their game to show their quality. I believe you take risks in life and I like to take risks."

"Chelsea is a team that plays to win. It is used to winning games and in football everything is possible."

"There are so many games to play still. We have to continue to improve our qualities, so we can win the Premier League and other titles."

Scolari has been desperate to land a flair player since missing out on Robinho to Manchester City in August but it took Joe Cole's season-ending injury to finally persuade the Chelsea board to give their manager what he wanted.

It could prove a fortunate sequence of events for both men.

Unlike Quaresma's stormy relationship with Mourinho, it seems the Portuguese playmaker and his new Brazilian coach should have plenty in common as they try to prove their detractors wrong.



Chelsea's new signing Ricardo Quaresma (L) and manager Luiz Felipe Scolari pose during a press conference at their training ground in Cobham on Friday.

Fergie warns rivals

AFP, London



Sir Alex Ferguson has warned Manchester United's Premier League rivals that his side are mentally tough enough to survive any test on the road to a third successive title.

Ferguson's team are in pole position to retain the English crown after a run of seven successive victories, but the champions face a fixture that has often proved uncomfortable for them on Sunday when they travel to West Ham.

Something about United has become a red rag to the Upton Park faithful and Ferguson knows only too well that his players can expect another fire and brimstone reception in London's East End this weekend.

It is the sort of tricky fixture that can trip up even a team with United's pedigree and experience.

The Hammers have sent United home empty-handed from their last two meetings at Upton Park, while Ferguson can still barely bring himself to recall the occasions in 1992 and 1995 when bad results at West Ham cost his side the title.

Yet Ferguson is convinced United's resilience is such that they can cope with anything

West Ham or anyone else can throw at them.

"I don't know why there is an extra intensity to the West Ham games when we go down there," Ferguson said.

"I was talking to (former West Ham manager) Alan Pardew and he said it was the one game the West Ham fans really get revved up for, even more than Arsenal and Tottenham."

"It doesn't bother me. It is a part of life. You go to Anfield and Everton and passionate clubs like Newcastle and Sunderland and there is nothing wrong with passion."

"It doesn't affect the result. You need mental strength to be successful at this club."

"You can see that in a lot of the players. They know how to deal with most things."

Despite the hostile reception lying in wait for them, United's remarkable defensive record of 12 consecutive clean sheets guarantees they will travel to London in confidence.

There could be another landmark for United keeper Edwin van der Sar, who broke the English record for minutes without conceding a goal against Everton last weekend.

The Dutchman, with 1,122 minutes unbeaten to his name, now has the 1,196-minute British record held by Chris Woods in his sights.

If United carry on like that there is little chance they will need to emulate last season's final day title-winning heroics, but Ferguson insists there is every chance Liverpool or Chelsea will push his side all the way again.

"You have to put your mind to the possibility that the title could go down to the last few games," Ferguson said. "I expect the worst and hope for the best."

England striker Wayne Rooney is likely to be on the bench on Sunday after a hamstring injury. As if that wasn't daunting enough for West Ham, United's record-breaking defence will be bolstered with Patrice Evra and Wes Brown back from injury.

That won't discourage Hammers boss Gianfranco Zola, who could hand a debut to midfielder Radoslav Kovac following his loan move from Spartak Moscow, and the Italian believes he has spotted chinks in United's armour.

"I watched some videos of United and spotted some things that can be good for us," Zola said.

"We give them a lot of respect but we can cause them problems. Everyone has weaknesses and it's up to us to exploit that. We are very confident right now."