

Jarque dies tragically

Football

AFP, Madrid

The skipper of Spanish top flight side Espanyol, Dani Jarque, has died from a heart attack while on a pre-season training camp in Italy.

The 26-year-old Jarque died at the hotel where the team were staying in the town of Coviciano.

He was discovered in his room after teammates realised he had not appeared for a meal.

The club said that team doctors as well as Italian paramedics tried to revive the midfielder but without success.

The tragedy comes just two years after the death, also from heart failure, of Sevilla defender Antonio Puerta, who died aged 22 after having collapsed during the opening game of the Spanish La Liga season.

Espanyol confirmed the diagnosis of heart failure and said the club doctor's attempts to revive the player

had failed.

"It was a heart attack," said club official German de la Cruz.

"He was talking to his girlfriend when he suddenly began to feel unwell. He told her and then stopped talking.



DANI JARQUE

His partner got in touch with the hotel and explained what had happened but it was too late to do anything," de la Cruz told La Sexta television.

Jarque had played for Espanyol since the 2002-2003 season.

In the last campaign, he featured in 36 league matches

and scored two goals. He was also a member of the team which won the Spanish Cup in 2006 and who were UEFA Cup runners-up in 2007.

European champions Barcelona, who are Espanyol's city rivals, sent their condolences to the Jarque's family from their American tour base in San Francisco.

Barca president Joan Laporta told www.fcbarcelona.com: "We are filled with extreme sadness at this tragic event and tonight we are in mourning.

"On behalf of Barcelona, we want to send our deepest sympathies to Espanyol for the painful loss of their captain Dani Jarque, and to his family."

A minute's silence was observed at the start of the second half of a pre-season friendly at the Mestalla Stadium where Valencia were taking on English side Arsenal.

Players from both sides also wore black armbands.

Real Madrid as well as the Spanish football federation sent their condolences to Jarque's family.



Lazio striker Tommaso Rocchi (C) gets in between Inter Milan defenders Javier Zanetti (L) and Cristian Chivu to poke home their second goal in the Italian Super Cup match held at the fantastic Birds Nest Stadium in Beijing on Saturday.

Early smiles for Magath

AFP, Berlin



Felix Magath, looking for glory with a fourth Bundesliga club, got off to the perfect start as coach of Schalke as German international Kevin Kuranyi struck twice to earn a 2-1 opening win at Nuremberg.

Kuranyi was on target either side of half-time to give the Royal Blues from the industrial Ruhr valley the points with Slovakian Marek Mintal netting a late consolation for their southern opponents.

Magath led unfashionable Wolfsburg to the title last season and then switched to take on a new challenge having already lifted two championships - and German Cups - with Bayern Munich after an earlier league cup success with Stuttgart.

As a player, the son of a Puerto Rican soldier in the US army, won the European Cup with Hamburg.

But he was not happy with his side's showing despite the win.

"What we showed late on after the Nuremberg goal was not worthy of the Bundesliga," he raged after the hosts threatened to overhaul the deficit in the closing stages.

"I don't know if you were watching the game or playing cards during it," Magath sniped at a reporter afterwards who unwisely questioned his bad mood.

His former Bayern side are already two points adrift following their 1-1 draw at

Hoffenheim.

The Bavarians, coached by experienced Dutchman Louis Van Gaal, had to soak up ferocious early pressure from a Hoffenheim which spent the first half of last season; their debut year in the top flight, in the title race before falling away.

Missing the unfit quartet of Franck Ribery, Luca Toni, Miroslav Klose and Martin Demichelis, Bayern did not make it a 58th birthday to remember for Van Gaal as they came off worst in the opening stages.

Josip Simunic thought he had headed Hoffenheim in front on ten minutes but the referee ruled his effort had not crossed the line.

Instead, against the run of play, Bayern went in front on 25 minutes when Danijel Pranjić fed Ivica Olic for a neat close range finish.

Hoffenheim got back on terms four minutes before the break when Nigerian Chinedu Obasi fired a sweeping left-footer past keeper Michael Rensing.

Van Gaal said: "We forgot how to play in the first half. We had chances but didn't bury them," noting that last year's title went begging by two points.

Club president Franz Beckenbauer remarked during the encounter that "we're missing Ribery".

Elsewhere, Werder Bremen, who have lost last season's star man Diego to Juventus, slid to a demoralising 3-2 home loss to Eintracht Frankfurt while Bayer Leverkusen had to settle for a 2-2 draw at promoted Mainz.

Former European champions Borussia Dortmund needed an own goal to defeat Cologne 1-0.



PHOTO: AFP

Bayern Munich's newly recruited striker Ivica Olic shushes the crowd after scoring during their Bundesliga encounter against TSG Hoffenheim in Sinsheim on Saturday.

No room for Owen

Football

AFP, London

England coach Fabio Capello has denied Michael Owen an international recall after leaving the Manchester United striker out of his squad for Wednesday's friendly against Holland.

Owen has not played for his country since the friendly defeat in France nearly 18 months ago, but his close-season move to United was expected to increase his chances of featuring in Capello's team.

But Capello watched Owen miss four good chances during United's friendly win over

Valencia at Old Trafford on Wednesday and opted to snub the former Liverpool star, who is England's fourth highest all-time goalscorer, for the trip to Amsterdam.

Capello believes Owen can thrive at United and has not ruled out a return to the international set-up for the former Liverpool and Real Madrid attacker.

"I think it is a fantastic chance for Owen to play another time with a really important team and in the Champions League," said Capello.

"The door is open. He has to play well and score goals. He has to get back to what he was before last season."

When asked if he believed

Owen could rediscover the form that saw him score 40 goals for England during a career that began in February 1998, Capello replied: "He is young, he is only 29. He is not old, so why not?"

Owen's United teammate Wayne Rooney is joined by Emile Heskey, Jermain Defoe and Carlton Cole to form a four-man English strikeforce.

That means there is also no place for Peter Crouch, even though the Tottenham new boy was part of the England side that overwhelmed Andorra on their last outing at Wembley.

The other surprise absentee is David James.

The Portsmouth star has

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England are like Brazil, says Lampard

AFP, London

England midfielder Frank Lampard believes his international teammates, who have moved confidently to the brink of qualifying for the World Cup finals, would not look out of place playing for Brazil.

The Chelsea man insists that Fabio Capello's team are serving up football with a flair and style which would not look out of place in Brazil or even European champions Spain.

He added that Brazil would be tempted to buy England players if international rules allowed.

"I think they would," Lampard said. "I'm certain they would look at some of the players because we've got top, top players who perform in Champions League and are some of the best in the world."

"You're talking about Wayne Rooney, Steven Gerrard, John Terry, Rio Ferdinand. Those guys could be compared to any player in the world and I'm sure teams like Brazil would want them in their teams."

Aquilani to sit out first two months

SOCCERNET

Liverpool's new signing Alberto Aquilani could be sidelined for the first two months of the new season despite passing a medical to seal his £20m switch from Roma to Anfield.

The Italian international underwent ankle surgery in May and is only expected to be fit in the next "four to eight weeks".

Aquilani agreed a five-year contract with Liverpool after Reds boss Rafael Benitez identified him as his preferred replacement for Xabi Alonso, who joined Real Madrid for around £30m earlier this week.

Liverpool had a bid of around £20m for the 25-year-old accepted by his Italian employers on Wednesday before the player headed to

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'Bring on Schumacher'

INTERNET, undated

Formula One World champion Lewis Hamilton is excited about the prospect of racing against Michael Schumacher but not afraid of the record trophy winner. "Coming in at this part of the season, Michael is at a disadvantage because he hasn't had the same experiences as everyone else," Hamilton told the Mail on Sunday paper.

But he also said: "I am excited by the possibility of Michael's return to Formula One."

"He is one of the sport's greatest competitors - a legend - and it will be an honour.

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ITALIAN SUPER CUP

Lazio upstage Inter

Football

AFP, Beijing

Unfancied Lazio ruffled the feathers of Serie A champions Inter Milan in the Bird's Nest in Beijing Saturday night to win the Italian Super Cup 2-1.

Lazio captain Tommaso Rocchi superbly lobbed Inter keeper Julio Cesar after finding a gap between the Inter defence just after the hour to clinch the winner.

Two minutes earlier, Rocchi's 61st minute freekick found its way through the Inter wall and rebounded off keeper Cesar, bobbling up into the path of Lazio's Brazilian midfielder Matuzalem, who slotted home to the delight of several thousand Chinese Lazio fans.

The quick double stunned Inter's galaxy of stars and their thousands of Chinese fans into a rare silence after they had controlled affairs on and off the pitch for most of the tense final.

Lifting the cup was a sweet moment for Lazio manager Davide Ballardini, who is charged with unifying the Rome club after it finished a disappointing 10th last season.

"To win a cup against Inter gives great satisfaction. We needed to play well, you need to be perfect against Inter, and we

needed a little luck. But I am satisfied with the result. I think Lazio really wanted to win," he said.

Staring defeat in the face, the normally cool Inter manager Jose Mourinho brought on Patrick Vieira and replaced Serbian captain Dejan Stankovic with Mario Balotelli.

But it was new signing and Cameroon star Samuel Eto'o -- who had threatened several times -- who fired into the roof of the Lazio net in the 75th minute to rally Inter into a frantic search for a dramatic comeback.

Inter had controlled the game but were frustrated numerous times by the excellent Nestor Muslera in the Lazio goal.

Another Inter new arrival, Argentine Diego Milito, rolled the ball past the stranded Muslera in the 81st minute only to be ruled agonisingly offside.

Eto'o then went just wide with a freekick from just outside the box in injury time.

And though Mourinho's men laid siege to the Lazio goal in the dying minutes, it was the team from Rome who lifted the cup for a memorable party spoiler in China's Olympic stadium.

Mourinho said the result highlighted the need to find a playmaker to complement his new star arrivals, but he was pleased with the spirit and aggression of

his side, especially in the final 15 minutes.

"I thought we played fantastically when we were two-nil down. We're sad but I am completely satisfied with the way we played. But I am disappointed about the result."

The Bird's Nest played centre stage to China's highly acclaimed and choreographed opening ceremony for the 2008 Olympics and the final was the first significant competitive sporting event to be played in the iconic stadium since the end of the Games.

The stadium, made of a lattice of cement and steel, has largely served as a tourist attraction since the Games ended, prompting criticism that many costly Olympic venues are sitting idle and not being used for sporting events.

A year ago to the day, however, football chants replaced drummers, acrobatic dancers and singers with many among the 70,000 in the 80,000 seater stadium sporting replica football shirts of their Italian heroes.

The Italian Super Cup is the season curtain raiser contested by the winners of Serie A and the domestic Italian Cup.

It is usually played at the home of the Serie A champions. But in a bid to broaden the appeal of Italian football it has been contested overseas several times before.

Marseille start well

AFP, Paris



There was an early cheer for title hopefuls Marseille on the opening day of the new French league season Saturday, but Lyon and Paris St Germain had to make do with draws.

Lyon were saved at the death by new signing from Porto Lisandro Lopez, who netted a freekick to salvage a 2-2 draw at lowly Le Mans, who were twice ahead, while PSG stuttered to a 1-1 draw at Montpellier.

Former European champions Marseille, who have endured a 17-year wait for a league crown, were ahead after just two minutes at Grenoble as Mamadou Niang put them in front having slalomed through a brittle home defence.

New Marseille coach Didier Deschamps, determined to bring the good times back to the Stade Velodrome, permitted himself a nod of satisfaction on the bench as Benoit Cheyrou secured the points with the second goal ten minutes from time.

Deschamps said: "There were more positives than negatives. We had things pretty much under control though many will say it's logical that Marseille win at Grenoble. I hope we can go on from here."

Marseille finished three points adrift of champions Bordeaux last term and now are bent on going one better.

The Girondins, coached by Deschamps' erstwhile French international teammate Laurent Blanc, will take on

Lens in Sunday's game.

PSG, wholesale under-achievers since their last championship win back in 1994, again showed their flaws in drawing 1-1 at Montpellier.

The hosts from the south were down to 10 men for the last hour after Cyril Jeunechamp was dismissed for a second bookable offence for scything down PSG's Ludovic Giuly from behind in the 27th minute.

Giuly exacted delicious revenge by firing home from close range in the 71st minute after home keeper Geoffrey

Jourdren spilled a shot from veteran Claude Makelele.

But rugged Bosnian new signing Emir Spahic powered in a header from inside the six-yard box on the stroke of time to deny the Parisians all three points.

Lyon had a double fright, meanwhile, at Le Mans, who were ahead on 21 minutes through Malian youngster Modibo Maiga.

Mathieu Bodmer levelled seven minutes later for Lyon, who could only come in third last season after seven league title wins on the trot - when

the run began they had never

lifted the trophy in their history - but Mathieu Coutadeur scored from the penalty spot on the hour to restore the hosts' lead.

Brazilian defender Cris tangled with Maiga to earn Le Mans the spotkick but just as an embarrassing loss loomed up popped Lopez to save Lyon's blushes.

Elsewhere, Saint-Etienne, who just survived last season after months of trials and tribulations which belied their former status of French giants,

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PHOTO: AFP

Marseille midfielder Hatem ben Arfa (L) challenges for the ball with Grenoble's Martial Robin during their Ligue 1 match at the Stade des Alpes in Grenoble on Saturday.