# Diego's Russian test

#### Football

AFP, Moscow

Two-time world champions Argentina will test their skills and physical condition ahead of a crucial 2010 World Cup qualifier with Brazil in a friendly match with the hosts Russia here on Wednesday.

Russia, who reached the semifinals at the list. last year's European championships in Austria and Switzerland, have never met Argentina before, but the South Americans have a winning record in their previous matches with the Soviet national side.

Argentina secured three wins, including the teams' only meeting at the World Cup (2-0 in 1990), and suffered two defeats at the hands of the Soviet squad. Six matches ended in draws.

Argentina's coach Diego Maradona said earlier this month that he was not happy with the decision to play a friendly in Moscow, call-

ing the match useless and ill-timed. "We need to concentrate completely on the Wednesday."

preparations for the crucial qualifier with Brazil, while this match would hardly help us to prepare for it the best way," the press quoted Maradona as saying.

"I don't like the idea of playing in Moscow ahead of the match with Brazil.'

In Wednesday's match Argentina will be without three of their stars as defender Martin Demichelis, midfielder Juan Sebastian Veron and striker Carlos Tevez were all on the injured

Russia's Dutch manager Guus Hiddink will also be without Spartak Moscow midfielder Vladimir Bystrov, who was sidelined with a thigh injury and Chelsea winger Yury Zhirkov, who has still failed to overcome his knee injury.

Hiddink said he was happy with a chance to test his team in the match against strong opponents ahead of the 2010 World Cup qualifiers with Liechtenstein and Wales next month.

"For me every match my team plays is very important even if it's a friendly game," Hiddink said. "And I expect an interesting rivalry between two strong opponents on

## Capello starts WC countdown

Cup itself.

## Football

AFP, Amsterdam

Fabio Capello expects final stages of their qualifying England to start their countdown to the World Cup by vindicating his decision to leave Michael Owen out of the squad for Wednesday's friendly against Holland.

With the start of the Premier League campaign coming just three days after next month. England's trip to Amsterdam, it would be understandable if Capello's players weren't fully focused on their international commitments.

But the England coach has just 10 months to prepare for next year's World Cup in South Africa and every minute with best way to allow Manchester his squad is vital.

their World Cup qualifiers, England can clinch their place at the finals with a victory over Croatia at Wembley on September 9, so the Holland match is anything but a meaningless friendly to Capello.

The Italian will use the clash at Ajax's Amsterdam Arena to test his belief that Emile Heskey is the perfect partner for Wayne Rooney, while continuing the development of Steven Gerrard's role star is waning. on the left wing.

rule over his reserve goalkeepers in the absence of injured first choice David James.

Football

France coach Raymond Domenech has warned

that nothing short of victory will suffice against

old foes the Faroe Islands, now managed by

Wednesday's 2010 World Cup qualifier.

Domenech wants to avoid at all costs.

French Football Federation's website.

former Republic of Ireland boss Brian Kerr, in ling.

A glance at the Group 7 standings explains

the French boss's unease ahead of the game in

Torshavn with his men lagging eight points

behind leaders Serbia, albeit with two games in

ically for South Africa with the best runners-up

being forced into a play-off, an eventuality

the man who led France to the 2006 World Cup

finals insisted in a video published on the

The winners of each group qualify automat-

"Anything barring victory is a catastrophe,"

Domenech added: "If the team plays to its

level we know that we can win the match, but if

we under perform, if we ask ourselves ques-

tions, if we think about what happens after-

Africa) or knock us out of World Cup qualifying,

"This is a game that can lead us (to South

AFP, Paris

hand.

wards..

this fixture."

member of Capello's midfield, has no doubt that the fixture can play a significant part in England's preparations for the campaign and also the World

"It's important for us and our manager to see where the players are," Lampard said. "You never know who's fit, so it's nice to have a gathering with the big games coming

"It would be great to have a good performance and to win as well, but the performance is what you want to take into the qualifiers.' Capello has been able to

use England's friendly matches to decide that the United forward Rooney to After winning all seven of thrive is to pair him with a more imposing targetman such as Aston Villa's Heskey.

> Rooney's form over the last year suggests Capello is right and the Italian shows no signs of changing his mind about casting Owen into international exile.

Owen's poor finishing in United's recent friendly against Valencia did little to change Capello's feeling that the former Liverpool player's

Capello will also run the Carlton Cole, the forwards picked ahead of Owen, have done little in an England shirt to suggest they could change

Frank Lampard; a key the course of a World Cup match.

> And even Rooney admits his new Manchester United team-mate would be a useful player to have around. "I do see Michael getting

back into the England side,' Rooney said. "Obviously it is the manager's decision but he has looked really sharp in preseason and I am sure if he maintains that form, it won't be long before he is back in the squad.

Capello expects Rooney to benefit if Gerrard continues to progress in his roving role, which allows the Liverpool midfielder to drift in front the left wing and combine with his fellow Scouser.

The other position that will occupy Capello's mind is between the posts.

Portsmouth keeper James's injury was expected to open up an opportunity for Ben Foster to push his claims to be Capello's number one.

But Manchester United star Foster pulled out of the squad on Monday with a minor injury sustained during his nervous display in Sunday's Community Shield match against Chelsea.

Joe Hart, currently on a season-long loan from Manchester City to Yet Jermain Defoe and Birmingham, has been called up as a replacement, but Capello is likely to take a closer look at Paul Robinson and Robert Green.

48,000 inhabitants halfway between Iceland

and Norway in the North Atlantic, and they will

be praying for a less eventful journey than in

horror flight with Thierry Henry and company

eventually touching down just four hours

before kick-off after spending half a day travel-

assured performance this time around.

below France in FIFA's world standings.

corner, free-kick or a counter-attack."

with first blisters, then tendonitis.

On that occasion atrocious weather led to a

That didn't prevent them running out 6-0

smartly against rivals that are ranked 154 places

make the difference like (in the 6-0 win in 2007)

and not suffer like martyrs because we can't

score (as in 2004 when France edged the

encounter 2-0) and remain at the mercy of a

in his squad despite the Bayern Munich star

missing the weekend's Bundesliga curtain-

a brief spell," the French boss said last week.

raiser with Hoffenheim following his problems

"He could be useful for us even if it's just for

Captain Patrick Vieira, who is lacking match

dangerman Henry was ruled out on Monday

To general surprise he named Franck Ribery

"We have to score that first goal which can

#### Jarque's body brought back to Spain

AFP, Barcelona

The body of Espanyol captain and defender Daniel Jarque was brought back to Spain on Tuesday, three days after he died from heart failure while on a pre-season tour of Italy.

Fans will be able to pay their respects for the 26-year-old at a chapel set up at the Spanish club's recently inaugurated new stadium between 2:00 pm and 6:00 pm (1600 GMT) before a private funeral is held for the player, the club said.

"The family is devastated because nobody expects something like this," Espanyol president Daniel Sanchez Llibre, who accompanied Jarque's body back from Italy, told

Jarque, who was about to become a father, had trained on Saturday morning but collapsed in his hotel room in Coverciano while talking to his girlfriend on the telephone in the early evening.

Since his death hundreds of fans have left candles, flowers and blue and white Espanyol jerseys at the club's stadium in Barcelona as a tribute to the player, who had just been made captain for the new

Jarque came up through the club's youth ranks, helping them win the King's Cup in 2006 and reach the UEFA Cup final in 2007.

In the last campaign, he featured in 36 league matches and scored two goals.

### Flu-hit C'Ron pulls out

AFP, Lisbon

Cristiano Ronaldo has returned from Real Madrid's pre-season tour of North America with the flu and has been ruled out of Portugal's midweek friendly against Liechtenstein, the Portuguese football federation confirmed on Monday.

The 24-year-old will be replaced by Lazio striker Eliseu for the tie in Vaduz on Wednesday. Eliseu was not named in coach Carlos Queiroz's 18-man squad but won the Italian Super Cup title with Lazio in Beijing on Saturday.

The game is the last chance for Queiroz to fine tune his team for upcoming qualifiers against Denmark and Hungary on September 5 and 9.

After six of 10 qualifiers Portugal sit third in Group 1 seven points behind leaders Denmark.

#### Lack of Domenech fires warning signings worry Moyes

AFP, Liverpool

Everton manager David Moyes admitted Monday he was worried by the club's failure to bolster their squad ahead of the new season. Moyes knows he is in a race

against time to bring in new players ahead of the club's winners on their way to qualifying for Euro Europa League play-off tie 2008, and Domenech is looking for a similarly against Czech side Sigma Olomouc later this month. He stressed the importance of scoring

"We are not ready as far as the squad goes, we want more players in," said Moyes, who has rejected bids for Joleon Lescott and Louis Saha.

"We let a few go in the summer - Andy van der Meyde, Lars Jacobson, Nuno Valente - and we have not replaced any of those players yet.

"If we want a run in Europe we need more players quickly. The search goes on, it has never stopped all summer and I am feeling a bit demented with it all now!

'Apart from a couple of clubs, the transfer activity around the country has been limited. But for us, to have finished fifth and reached a cup final, to improve on that costs a lot of money.

"But we don't have that money. So trying to find players who are cheap, don't want much wages and will come here to improve us, well, it is noteasy." So far, Moyes has only

brought in Brazilian striker Jo on loan from Manchester City and a few untried youngsters who will be in the reserve squad.

And he remains hopeful of a positive outcome in his bid for Arsenal defender Philippe Senderos.

Moyes said: "We have a good team but what we do not have is back-up, and that is what we are trying to get.

"The bid for Senderos has been with Arsenal for a while now, and maybe it is getting closer.



summer I realised they are just ordinary people For football minnows Estonia, Wednesday's who also get into trouble sometimes," coach friendly with giants Brazil is about far more Tarmo Ruutli told reporters on Monday. than just honing the team ahead of next Estonia may be second-from-bottom in the month's 2010 World Cup qualifiers against six-team Group 5 of Europe's World Cup quali-

Spanish midfielder Cesc Fabregas (R) challenges teammate Fernando Torres during a training session at Las Rozas Sport City in

Madrid on Monday. Spain faces Macedonia in an international friendly on Wednesday.

fiers, ahead of Armenia, but they have managed what for them is a half-decent run so far. They have five points from six games, and their 7-0 drubbing away in Bosnia last September contrasts with their holding Turkey

football in Tallinn," Estonian federation 0-0 at home the following month. Estonia's players may not be global names like the Brazilians, but Uiboleht singled out a visiting Estonia all at the same time," Uiboleht

trio on whom the team is counting. He cited midfielder Ragnar Klavan, who plays for Dutch top-flight side Alkmaar, centreback Raio Piiroja, of Norway's Fredrikstad, and goalkeeper Sergei Pareiko, of Russian club

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# No return for Schumi

AFP, Berlin



Football

AFP, Tallinn

Turkey and Spain.

Queen of Pop.

"Brazil only has two friendlies this year. They

played the first one with Italy in February and

now they're playing Estonia. We feel very proud

spokesman Mihkel Uiboleht told AFP.

that we've got the world's absolute kings of

"Having Brazil here is like 11 Madonnas

added, referring to last week's headline-

grabbing concert in Tallinn by the eponymous

But Estonia are not blinded by the stars,

even though the game has all the makings of a

serious mismatch: Brazil top the 203-team

rankings established by world football's gov-

who invoked rules and regulations to block his testing Michael Schumacher has abandoned plans to return to Formula One racing at the European Grand Prix in Valencia on August 23 due to a desperately short of practice neck injury, he announced on his website on Tuesday.

who won the world title seven times before retiring in 2006, had been primed to replace the injured Felipe Massa in the Ferrari team for the race in Spain and possibly for the rest of the season.

But he injured his neck in a motorcycle accident in February and medical tests showed that he had yet to fully recover.

"Yesterday evening, I had to inform Ferrari President Luca di Montezemolo and Team Principal Stefano Domenicali that unfortunately I'm not able to step in for Felipe," Schumacher said on his website. "I really tried everything to

make that temporary comeback possible, however, much to my regret it didn't work out.

"Unfortunately we did not manage to get a grip on the pain in the neck which occurred after the private F1day in Mugello, even if medically or therapeutically we tried everything possible.

The door for a sensational Schumacher comeback to the sport he dominated for so long was opened when Brazilian Massa sustained serious head injuries during qualifying for the Hungarian Grand Prix in Budapest on July 25.

That looked certain to rule him out for the rest of the season and the Italian team immediately turned toward their former top driver to step in.

His planned comeback to

racing added more spice to not stand the extreme stresses what has already been a dramatic season, but was not welcomed by all, especially Formula One rivals Williams,

Valencia. That would have left him for the race, but as it turned out it was physical more than The 40-year-old German, mechanical reasons that spoiled his return.

Ferrari's current car ahead of

"The consequences of the injuries caused by the bikeaccident in February, fractures in the area of head and neck, unfortunately have turned out to be still too severe," he said.

"That is why my neck can-

caused by Formula 1 yet. I am disappointed to the core. "I am awfully sorry for the guys of Ferrari and for all the

fans which crossed fingers for me. I can only repeat that I tried everything that was within my power. All I can do now is to keep my fingers crossed for the whole team for the coming races." Ferrari announced that the

team's test driver Luca Badoer would take the place of Schumacher replacing Massa for the European Grand Prix. The 38-year-old Italian has

competed in five Grand Prix during his career, the last being in 1999.

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MICHAEL SCHUMACHER

## Gerrard out of Dutch game

AFP, London

Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard has pulled out of the England squad for Wednesday's friendly against the Netherlands in Amsterdam because of a groin strain.

The midfielder trained on Monday but felt a slight soreness in the leg and it was decided to pull him out of the

squad as a precaution. The remainder of Fabio Capello's squad was able to make the trip to the Netherlands and they will have a training session at the Amsterdam Arena later

Goalkeeper Ben Foster has already been replaced by Joe Hart after hurting his knee in Manchester United's Community Shield defeat to Chelsea on Sunday.

## Rosenborg Milan

AFP, Madrid

Tuesday.

Real Madrid will face Norway's Rosenborg in the 31st edition of the Santiago Bernabay trophy instead of Italian side AC Milan, the Spanish club said

The tournament was to be played on August 24 against the Italian side but Real changed the date on the advice of UEFA, which was concerned that it would clash with the Atletico Madrid-Panathinaikos Champions League match that

AC Milan refused all other alternative dates proposed by Real and were replaced by Rosenborg as a result, Real said in a statement posted on their website.

The trophy commemorates former club president Santiago Bernabeu and is played each year at the stadium that bears his name with a different team invited each time.

Real had billed the match against AC Milan as a clash between "the two mostheralded teams of Europe" since the two sides have won a total of 16 European Cups.

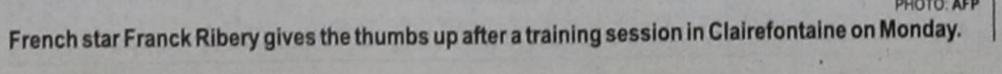
## West Ham sign Kovac

AFP, Prague

West Ham have signed Radoslav Kovac on a permanent deal from Spartak Moscow following the Czech international's successful loan spell at Upton Park last season.

The 29-year-old impressed in his 10 appearances after joining the Hammers for the second half of last season.

The defensive midfielder has gotten his wish to return to Upton Park with Spartak confirming the transfer for an undisclosed fee, his agent Viktor Kolar confirmed on Monday.



we have to fully take onboard the importance of fitness, did not make the call-up, and Barcelona

France are no strangers to this island of with an Achilles tendon problem.