

## 'Fight to the death'

AFP, London



Chelsea captain John Terry expects English football's superpowers to fight to the death for the Premier League title as his side prepare to launch their challenge against Hull on Saturday.

Carlo Ancelotti's team have an opportunity to send a message to title rivals Manchester United and Liverpool when they kick-off the new campaign in Saturday's early match at Stamford Bridge.

Terry and company are desperate to end United's three-year reign as champions and bring the crown back to west London for the first time since 2006.

But England defender Terry knows United won't surrender without a struggle and he is relishing a battle royale at the top of the table.

"It will be close, as it has been for the last four or five years. We have been pushing them (United) closely and when we won it, they were pushing us, so it will be a fight to the death," Terry said.

"I am sure at the same time Liverpool, Arsenal and Manchester City will be pushing and upsetting a few good teams as well."

United manager Sir Alex Ferguson will have expected bold words from Stamford Bridge and Anfield, but he is convinced his players are hungry to make history as they chase a record fourth successive title.

Ferguson's team, who host newly-promoted Birmingham in their opening match on Sunday, have established a vice-like grip on the title over the last three years, but the close-season departures of Cristiano Ronaldo and Carlos Tevez have left United looking a little more vulnerable than usual.

Yet Ferguson has the motivation of leading United to two significant landmarks this season.

Like Liverpool, Arsenal and Huddersfield before them, United have won three successive titles and a fourth would not only set a new record for prolonged dominance in England but also take United past Liverpool's haul of 18 English league titles.

The prospect of passing bitter rivals Liverpool promises to be the story of the season and Ferguson has no doubts United can rise to the challenge.

"We would like to do it. It would be a great achievement obviously, because we all know what a difficult league it is," Ferguson said.

"Under the circumstances, it was a great achievement to win it last year. But we don't have to go for the Club World Cup this time and we don't have to play catch-up in terms of games."

If United do stumble without Ronaldo and Tevez, then Liverpool, who finished second last term, will be expected to take advantage.

But Rafael Benitez's side will get an early examination of their title credentials at Tottenham on Sunday.

Benitez has seen Xabi Alonso depart to Real Madrid, while his replacement Alberto Aquilani won't be fit for several weeks.

As if that wasn't disrupting enough, captain Steven Gerrard is struggling with an ankle injury and first-choice centre-backs Jamie Carragher and Martin Skrtel are both less than 100 per cent fit.

"If we talk about expectations and the title, that's normal because we've done well and have a good squad," Benitez said. "But to win something every single year is difficult because of the quality of the teams."

Arsenal can offer a rebuke to critics who have written them out of the title race when they face Everton at Goodison Park, while Manchester City fans at Blackburn will get a first look at their star-studded line-up after boss Mark Hughes's 100 million pounds spending spree.

"We are chomping at the bit to get going. There is a tangible feeling of anticipation both within the club and amongst the fans," Hughes said.

"We have the opportunity on Saturday to start on the front foot. We can make a statement."

## Defoe sues police

Football

AFP, London

England striker Jermain Defoe is suing police over his "unlawful" arrest that left him wrongly "locked in a cell," his lawyer said.

The Tottenham Hotspur forward was held for several hours at a police station in Harlow, northeast of London, at the end of July, on suspicion of driving while disqualified.

Defoe, who scored twice Wednesday in England's 2-2 draw with the Netherlands at the Amsterdam Arena, had been disqualified from driving earlier in the month -- but the ban was suspended pending an appeal.

The local Essex Police force has apologised for holding Defoe, blaming the mistake on a "computer inputting error".

The 26-year-old has pledged to donate any damages won to charity.

"The claim arises out of Mr. Defoe's wrongful arrest for driving whilst disqualified last month," said the star's lawyer Nick Freeman.

"At the time the police were advised by Mr. Defoe, and on no less than five occasions by my office, that Mr. Defoe was not disqualified and that his detention was unlawful."

"Notwithstanding this, he remained incarcerated in a police cell for approximately five hours until Chelmsford Magistrates' Court confirmed our assertion that he was not disqualified."

"The police should have bailed Mr. Defoe when they were put on notice of their error to enable them to pursue their inquiries."

"Instead, in addition to being locked in a cell, the police were unable to recall where his car had been impounded and were not prepared to return his car keys (which also contained house keys) until he produced documentation to his vehicle."

Defoe was convicted of speeding earlier in July by a

court in Essex. He was banned from driving for six months but the disqualification was suspended pending an appeal.

And at the start of July, Defoe was fined and given penalty points on his licence for speeding.

"We've formally apologised, acknowledging our mistake, which was due to an inputting error," an Essex Police spokesman said.

"An internal investigation is under way to determine why this error occurred and to ensure that a similar mistake is not repeated in the future."

## Gignac extends with Toulouse

AFP, Toulouse

Andre-Pierre Gignac followed his starring performance for France in Wednesday's narrow World Cup qualifier win over the Faroe Islands by signing a new deal Friday with Toulouse.

The 23-year-old, heavily courted by former France champions Lyon over the close season, has decided to extend his stay by a year up to 2013.

"It's a strong sign which proves the club's wish to keep its best elements and also underlines the player's attachment with the 'Violets'," Toulouse said in a statement.

Gignac scored his debut goal on his fourth cap for France in Torshavn to earn Raymond Domenech's side a 1-0 win to keep the wheels on their campaign to make it to the 2010 World Cup finals in South Africa.

The 2006 beaten finalists cut their deficit on Group Seven leaders Serbia to five points with a game in hand.

Gignac was the French first division's top scorer last season with 24 goals.

Lyon were keen to lure him to the Stade Gerland to replace Karim Benzema after his transfer to Real Madrid.



Zenit St. Petersburg's former coach Dick Advocaat (R) wipes a tear while meeting with fans in St. Petersburg on Friday on his way to the airport as he departs Russia.

## Zenit agree terms with Spalletti

AFP, Saint Petersburg

Russia's 2007 champions Zenit St Petersburg have reached an agreement with AS Roma coach Luciano Spalletti, Russian daily tabloid Tsvoi Den reported Friday.

The report said Zenit and the 50-year-old Italian, who was twice named Italy's Coach of the Year (in 2006 and 2007), will sign a deal in the near future.

Spalletti would receive an annual salary of four million euros, plus benefits in the event of success in the domestic league and European club competition.

Zenit, who won the UEFA Cup and the European Super Cup in 2008, were also in talks with another Italian coach, Roberto Mancini, but failed to reach an agreement.

## Messi wants to play Brazil

AFP, Madrid

Argentina striker Lionel Messi, who has pleaded to be left out of Barcelona's opening league game to concentrate on his country's crucial World Cup clash with Brazil, could miss Sunday's Spanish Super Cup clash with Athletic Bilbao.

The Spanish champions said Thursday that Messi has a groin injury picked up in training for the midweek international friendly win in Russia, a match which he sat out.

"I want to play all Barcelona's matches up to the game against Shakhtar Donetsk (European Super Cup on August 28), but then rest until the match against Brazil (Sept. 5)."

Barcelona are due to open the defence of their La Liga title on Monday, August 31.

Argentina are currently in fourth place in South American qualifying for the 2010 World Cup finals with 22 points, just two ahead of Ecuador but five behind leaders Brazil.

## Ribery will play: van Gaal

AFP, Berlin



Bayern Munich coach Louis van Gaal says he plans to play star midfielder Frank

Ribery in Saturday's clash with Werder Bremen as he integrates the Frenchman back into the squad.

With Real Madrid and Manchester United both reported to still be chasing the 26-year-old midfielder, who played in France's 1-0 World Cup qualifier win over the Faroe Islands on Wednesday, van Gaal will play him against Bremen.

Ribery has made a slow start to the season after picking up an ankle injury during pre-season training and van

Gaal is still working out his first-choice line-up after less than two months in charge.

"Franck is back now, but I must integrate him in the team," said the Dutchman after Ribery missed last week's 1-1 draw with Hoffenheim on the opening weekend of the season.

"Perhaps he will play 20 minutes against Bremen."

And Bayern Munich general manager Uli Hoeness insists Ribery is going nowhere despite Real and United's interest.

"Let me say this for the 98th time: Franck Ribery is staying at Bayern," he said.

"The subject was closed once and for all last month."

"All the offers that came in after that, or are still to come in, won't receive a moment's consideration from us."

With club captain and first-choice midfielder enforcer Mark

van Bommel sidelined for four weeks with a broken toe, Ukraine star Anatolii Tymoshchuk has his chance.

"I'm more than certain I can claim a regular place," he said defiantly.

"Up to now, I've not had time to show everyone what I can do. I've had to take in a lot of new things," remarked the

Ukraine man, who is about to polish up his German.

Defending champions Wolfsburg are aiming to build on last week's winning start when they travel to Cologne with strikers Grafite and Edin Dzeko showing the same form which netted them more than 50 goals between them last season.

Wolfsburg coach Armin Veh strengthened his attack in midweek by signing former Inter Milan forward Obafemi Martins from English Premier League side Newcastle United.

On Sunday, third-placed Schalke 04 are home to VfL Bochum but the Royal Blues will be without Germany defender Christian Pander for the next few weeks after the 25-year-old had his fifth operation on his left knee on Monday.

### FIXTURES

**Saturday**  
(1330 GMT unless stated)  
Bayern Munich v Werder Bremen, VfB Stuttgart v Freiburg, Hamburg v Borussia Dortmund, Bayer Leverkusen v Hoffenheim, Hannover 96 v Mainz 05, Eintracht Frankfurt v Nuremberg, Cologne v VfL Wolfsburg (1430)  
**Sunday**  
Borussia M'gladbach v Hertha Berlin (1330), Schalke 04 v VfL Bochum (1530)

## Torres eyes title

AFP, Liverpool



Fernando Torres signed a new contract with Liverpool on Friday and then told his team-mates they have a golden opportunity to end the club's 19-year wait to win the English title this season.

Spain striker Torres agreed an improved deal that will keep him at Anfield until 2013 with the option of a further year's extension and he insists there are no excuses for not winning the title.

"Fernando Torres has put pen to paper on a new and improved contract at Anfield," a statement on Liverpool's website confirmed.

"The 25-year-old striker agreed the terms of the deal back in May and has now completed the formalities of signing the new contract."

Rafa Benitez's runners-up finished just four points behind Manchester United in the Premier League last season and Torres is confident Liverpool can hold their own against the top four rivals.

He believes landing wins rather than draws in some of the other tricky fixtures, like Sunday's Premier League opener at Tottenham, will be enough to overhaul United.

"We have no problem beating Manchester

United or Chelsea but it is games like Sunday's at Tottenham where we need to show our real title intentions," Torres told The Sun.

"Tottenham is not an easy place to go but these are games we must be winning if this is to finally be our year."

"I am not thinking can we win the title, I am thinking we have to win the title."

After several seasons on the fringes of the title race, Torres believes the experience of going so close last term will stand them in good stead this year.

"We came so close last season but for many of the players it was their first time experiencing the pressure of a Premier League title race," Torres said.

"We have experience and if we don't bring the title back to Anfield I won't be offering up any excuses at the end of the season."

"We don't need to improve a lot on last season to win the title. There is only a slight improvement needed to give the fans and players the title they have wanted for so many years now."

"This is the best Liverpool team there has been in years, that is what many of the experienced players are saying."

"Now is our time. Second best is just not going to cut it with me any more."

## Mancienne joins Wolves on loan

AFP, Wolverhampton

Chelsea defender Michael Mancienne joined Premier League newboys Wolverhampton on a season-long loan on Thursday.

England Under-21 centre-back Mancienne, who has made just four appearances for Chelsea, agreed the deal with Mick McCarthy's team after talks at the club's Molineux stadium.

The 21-year-old spent two months on loan with Wolves last season and helped the side win promotion from the Championship.

Mancienne's impressive displays at Molineux earned him a surprise call-up to Fabio Capello's England squad for a friendly against Germany in November but the youngster is still waiting to make his senior international debut.

### IN BRIEF

## Donovan contracts swine flu

AP, Los Angeles

Los Angeles Galaxy forward Landon Donovan says he has tested positive for swine flu.

Galaxy coach and general manager Bruce Arena told the Los Angeles Times in a story posted on its Web site Thursday that Donovan is believed to have contracted the virus from two Galaxy staff members who came down with it during last weekend's game against the New England Revolution in Foxborough, Mass.

Donovan told the Times he had been feeling ill since joining the U.S. men's national soccer team in Florida on Sunday.

Arena told the Times that Donovan is not infectious. He says Donovan has a mild strain of the flu and is at the tail end of it.

Information from: Los Angeles Times, http://www.latimes.com

## Teixeira sanctioned

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Brazilian football confederation (CBF) president Ricardo Teixeira, a vice-president of FIFA, has been sanctioned by a top federal court for smuggling contraband into the country in 1994.

Teixeira has been shorn of his civic and political rights for a three-year period after illegally importing electrical equipment on Brazil's return trip from their triumphant World Cup campaign in the United States 15 years ago.

According to Brazilian sports daily Lance! Teixeira declared a total of 886 kilos for the entire squad to Brazilian customs but it is now alleged the total weight was 1480 kg.

Included in the haul were electrical appliances and equipment for a bar which Teixeira, the son-in-law of former FIFA president Joao Havelange, owns in Rio.

A federal court in Rio ruled Wednesday that Teixeira, who chairs Brazil's 2014 World Cup organising committee, would lose his civic and political rights for the next three years.

Teixeira has the right to appeal although the report did not say whether the Brazilian official would proceed with that option.

## Pair quizzed over grenade

AFP, London

A man and a woman were questioned Friday on suspicion of conspiracy to commit murder over a live hand grenade found at the home of football legend Kenny Dalglish.

The grenade was discovered on the garden wall of Dalglish's home in Southport, near Liverpool in northwest England, on July 27 -- although it was not thought to be an attack on Dalglish or his family.

Merseyside Police said the pair quizzed Friday were a 50-year-old woman and a 21-year-old man, who were arrested in Liverpool on Thursday.

Separately, Simon Lewis Ignacio, 28, and Carl Higgins, 29, both from Liverpool, have already appeared in court charged with conspiracy to commit murder over the incident.

Police have said they believe the incident was "linked to a series of other recent incidents in this area, and not to the owner of the property where the device was found."

Dalglish now works in a senior role at Liverpool Football Club's academy for emerging young players and as a global ambassador for the Reds.

The Anfield icon was away on Liverpool's pre-season Asian tour when the grenade was found.

Former Scotland striker Dalglish, 58, captained Glasgow giants Celtic and won four Scottish league titles before moving to Liverpool in 1977.

While with the Reds, he won the English league title six times, three European Cups, the FA Cup and four League Cups.

He then became Liverpool's player/manager in 1985 and guided the club to three league titles and two FA Cups.

Dalglish quit under the strain but returned to manage unfancied Blackburn Rovers, guiding them to the 1994-1995 Premier League title.



Liverpool's new signing Italian midfielder Alberto Aquilani (R) poses with manager Rafa Benitez at the club's Melwood training ground on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP