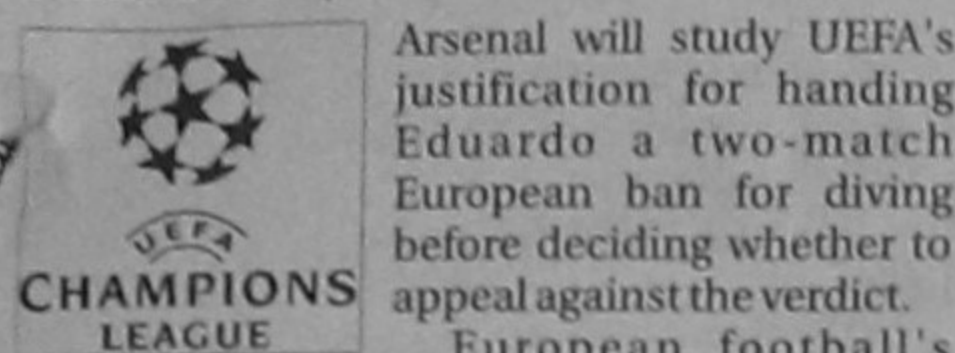


Arsenal mull appeal

AFP, London



Arsenal will study UEFA's justification for handing Eduardo a two-match European ban for diving before deciding whether to appeal against the verdict.

European football's governing body opened disciplinary proceedings against the Croatia international for "deceiving the referee" after he tumbled theatrically to win a penalty in last week's Champions League play-off against Celtic.

Despite there appearing to be no contact with Celtic goalkeeper Artur Boruc, referee Manuel Mejuto Gonzalez awarded the spot-kick, which Eduardo converted himself to set Arsenal on their way to a comprehensive 3-1 win and into the lucrative group stages.

The dive caused a storm of controversy and UEFA took action against Eduardo on Tuesday. Arsenal are understood to have made a 19-page submission to UEFA ahead of the hearing, which clearly made little impact on the panel.

The Gunners have three days to lodge an appeal against the suspension which, if upheld, would rule Eduardo out of the Champions League group matches away at Standard Liege on September 16 and at home to Olympiacos on September 29.

"The club is disappointed with UEFA's decision to suspend Eduardo for two Champions League matches starting with Standard Liege on September 16," a statement from Arsenal read.

"We have been informed that we will receive a 'reasoned decision' from UEFA by Thursday of this week.

"Once we receive UEFA's rationale, we will make a decision on the next steps.

"We have been deeply frustrated by the perfunctory and apparently arbitrary process that UEFA has followed in this instance.

"We believe it is imperative that UEFA's explanation for its decision provides clear and comprehensive standards that will be consistently enforced.

"It is also critical that UEFA provides specific details of the processes it plans to adopt in reviewing all games under its jurisdiction."

Pele incites Maradona

INTERNET, Rio de Janeiro

Adding to the tension between Brazil and Argentina ahead of their clash in the 2010 World Cup qualifier, Pele put in his two cents.

"Beating rival teams like Argentina has a different feeling. However, we all know who Maradona is. We cannot take into consideration anything he says. He has all the abilities to be a great coach, but he'd better not plan on beginning in the game against Brazil," Pele said in an response to recent remarks by Argentine coach Diego Maradona.

Maradona said recently that Argentina has been going through tough times, but that they would beat Brazil due to will.

Argentina will play host to Brazil on September 5 in the city of Rosario. Brazil currently leads the South American qualifying with 27 points. Argentina, desperately needing a win, stands in fourth place with 22 points.

No Ribery deal with Real

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge insisted Wednesday there is no deal with Spanish giants Real Madrid to sign French midfielder Franck Ribery for next season.

Throughout the summer, transfer speculation constantly linked the 26-year-old Ribery to a multi-million euros switch to Real and, as the transfer window closed on Monday, Rummenigge says no agreement is in place for the future.

"We do not have an agreement to sell Franck for next season to Real Madrid - that is a fact," Rummenigge told the Munich newspaper AZ despite claims in the German media a deal has been arranged for next summer.

Relations became strained between the two European super clubs during the summer while the Ribery saga rumbled on, but Rummenigge insists the signing of Arjen Robben from Real last week improved relations between the sides.

"Real were very helpful and supported us a lot. Our relationship is once again very relaxed and friendly," Rummenigge said.

Ribery came off the bench last Saturday to set up Robben for both of his second-half goals, but relations between him and Bayern are becoming increasingly strained.

Fluminense's fifth coach in 2009

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Crisis-ridden Fluminense have named Alexis "Cuca" Stival as the Brazilian club's fifth coach of 2009 in a bid to avoid relegation.

Cuca, who also coached the Rio-based outfit last year, took over after the sacking of Renato Gauchão, who was only in charge for 40 days after taking over from Carlos Alberto Parreira.

Cuca himself was sacked as Flamengo coach in July and will now bid to lead Fluminense away from the bottom of the Brazilian league, which they prop up with 16 points after 22 games.



PHOTO: AFP

Argentina striker Martin Palermo (C) fights for the ball with midfielder Juan Veron (R) during a training session in Buenos Aires on Tuesday.

Diego wishes to play

INTERNET, Buenos Aires



Argentina coach Diego Maradona would give anything to be able to play in Saturday's World Cup qualifier against Brazil, he said on Tuesday.

Argentina have been beset by injury worries before the game in Rosario, prompting Maradona to add 30-year-old midfielder Rodrigo Bana, 35-year-old striker Martin Palermo and 36-year-old defender Rolando Schiavi to his squad.

Schiavi and Bana are both uncapped and Palermo has not been called up for nearly nine years.

"Yesterday, when I met up with the players, I said that I'd give anything to be 20 years younger and be able to play myself," Maradona told Radio Del Plata.

"But after all these problems we have to move forward. The ones who can't play will just have to wait for the next game and the ones who can will have to be decisive on the field."

"The truth is that it's been terrible. With each phone call from (team doctor Donato) Villani, I

was praying. This one's been hurt, that one's pulled a muscle...."

Strikers Diego Milito and Lisandro Lopez, defender Nicolas Burdisso and midfielders Juan Veron, Jonas Gutierrez and Sebastian Battaglia are all doubtful for Saturday's clash with arch-rivals Brazil in Rosario.

Gutierrez's injury has dashed Maradona's plans for stopping the powerful bursts of Brazil right back Maicon.

"We've lost the best hope we had of stopping Maicon, which was Jonas," said Maradona. "In addition to marking, he can attack from behind, which is what worries him. We don't know which alternative to try."

Maradona's team are precariously placed in fourth place in the 10-team South American qualifying group with 22 points, two ahead of fifth-placed Ecuador, and four matches each to play.

The top four teams qualify directly for South Africa but the fifth team must play off over two legs against the fourth-placed side from CONCACAF.

Argentina, who last failed to qualify for the World Cup in 1970, visit Paraguay four days after the Brazil game.

IN BRIEF

Luyindula extends with PSG

AFP, Paris

France international striker Peguy Luyindula extended his contract with Paris St Germain by two years through to June 2012.

The 30-year-old, who has been with PSG since 2007, has scored two goals in four matches in the French first division this season.

Cole pens new deal

AFP, London

Chelsea defender Ashley Cole signed a new four-year contract with the Premier League club on Wednesday.

Cole is the second Chelsea star to commit his future to Carlo Ancelotti's team recently after captain John Terry put pen to paper on an improved five-year deal on Monday.

England star Cole joined the Blues in a controversial move from London rivals Arsenal in 2006 and remains arguably the best full-back in the Premier League.

He has won the FA Cup twice and the League Cup once with Chelsea, as well as reaching the 2008 Champions League final.

"Chelsea FC is delighted to confirm that Ashley Cole has signed a new four-year contract," a statement on Chelsea's website confirmed.

Everton sign Heitinga

AFP, London



Everton signed Dutch defender Johnny Heitinga from Atletico Madrid for six million pounds (6.8 million euros) just before the transfer window shut on Tuesday.

Heitinga agreed a five-year contract with the Premier League club and the move was announced in the final hour before the 1600GMT deadline.

The 25-year-old follows French defender Sylvain Distin to Goodison Park as Toffees boss David Moyes strengthens his back-four after Joleon Lescott's move to Manchester City.

Atletico could eventually receive seven million pounds (7.8 million euros) for the Holland international due to clauses in the terms of the deal.

On a relatively low-key transfer deadline day, Tottenham swooped for Portsmouth's Croatia midfielder Niko Kranjcar.

Tottenham boss Harry Redknapp moved for Kranjcar, who cost a reported 2.5 million pounds (2.8 million euros), after Croatian playmaker Luka Modric suffered a broken leg, which will keep him out for six weeks, against Birmingham on Saturday.

Aston Villa spent five million pounds (5.8 million euros) to sign Wales defender James Collins from West Ham and finally completed the signing of Republic of Ireland defender Richard Dunne from Manchester City for six million pounds (6.8 million euros) on Wednesday.

Portsmouth boss Paul Hart made a triple swoop for Watford centre-back Mike Williamson, Manchester City defender Tal Ben Haim and Benfica midfielder Hassan Yebda.

Israel international Ben Haim agreed a four-year contract and his free transfer will be rubber-

English tighten belts

AFP, London



Premier League clubs' spending on new players dropped by 10 per cent to 450 million pounds (511 million euros) during the close-season transfer window which shut on Tuesday.

Even Manchester City's 120 million pounds (136 million euros) spree failed to see the top flight match the record sum of 500 million pounds (568 million euros) spent a year ago.

Football finance experts believe the high rate of the euro and 50 percent tax rate for the very high-earners has contributed to the drop, particularly in terms of players coming from the continent.

Paul Rawnsley, director of Deloitte's Sports Business Group, said the figures were no surprise - and net spending has dropped from 200 million pounds (227 million euros) to 80 million pounds (90 million euros) as clubs such as Manchester United, Arsenal and Liverpool resisted spending all their earnings from transfer income from Cristiano Ronaldo, Emmanuel Adebayor and Xabi Alonso.

Rawnsley said: "Despite the significant spending by Manchester City, Premier League clubs' transfer spending has dropped.

"There are a number of contributory factors - the exchange rate, the tax regime in Spain being more favourable to players and clubs, and perhaps clubs thinking there is less of a risk

in buying established Premier League players than from overseas."

Rawnsley does not expect the picture to alter next year either even if, as expected, the top flight benefits from a big rise in the value of overseas TV rights.

He added: "Economic conditions may improve in 2010 and the Premier League is expected to secure enhanced values for international media rights generating higher revenue for Premier League clubs.

"However, without further significant capital injections from owners, transfer spending is unlikely to exceed the record level achieved in 2008."

Deloitte's analysis shows Manchester City's spending has been around 120 million pounds (136 million euros) representing 27 percent of the total spent, while Aston Villa, Liverpool, Sunderland and Tottenham have each spent more than 25 million pounds (28 million euros) on new players.

Rawnsley said the necessity of the owners of Manchester United and Liverpool to make big interest payments on loans taken out to buy the club have also had an impact.

He said: "Having to pay interest can have a bearing on transfer budgets but that is not necessarily why United have spent more of the Ronaldo money.

"Some clubs may well have felt that thanks to the spending of Real Madrid and others such as Manchester City the transfer market has been too inflated."

Roma appoint Ranieri

Football

AFP, Rome

New AS Roma coach Claudio Ranieri on Wednesday vowed to ditch the club's traditional style of play for a more results-based system.

Ranieri was speaking at his official unveiling after replacing Luciano Spalletti, who resigned from his post on Tuesday.

Roma, who were known for their expansive and attractive style of play under Spalletti, lost their opening two matches of the season and Ranieri insists he will focus on winning games rather than weaving pretty patterns.

"Spalletti's Roma had a sparkling style of play, my philosophy is a little different," said the former Juventus and Chelsea coach.

"I will bring my pragmatism to the team. This team needs a jolt because it's a team that needs to react straight away."

"Maybe the players have lost a bit of conviction. Over the last four years this team did some great things playing some of the most attractive football in Europe."

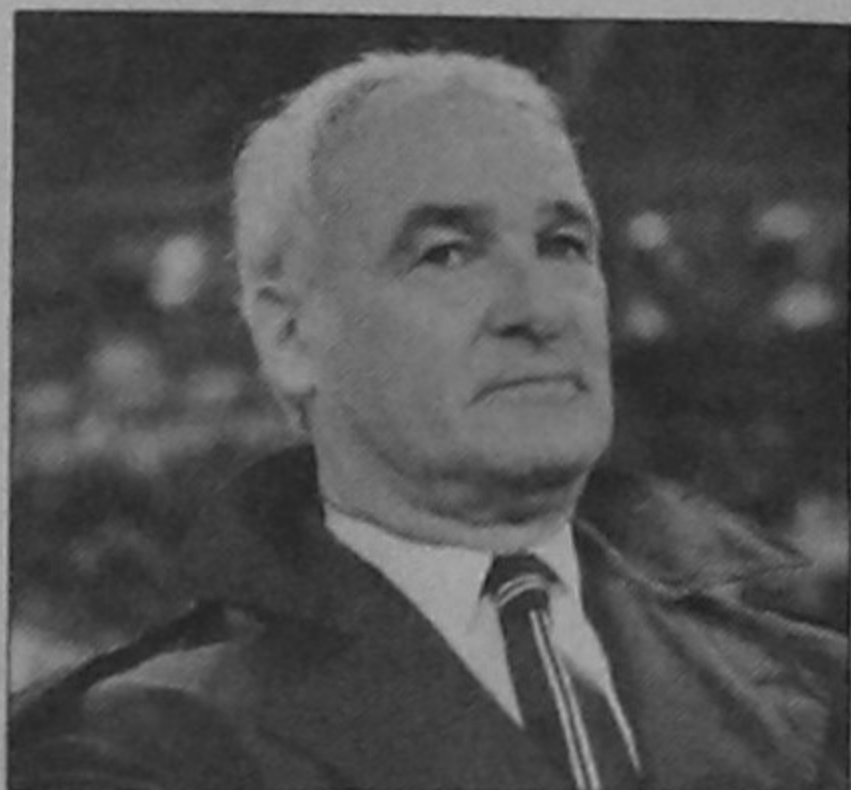
"As a Roman I was proud to watch them play. And I can tell you I'm going

home with a great desire to do well."

Ranieri is a local who used to stand on the terraces to watch Roma before beginning his playing career with the club in 1973.

Spalletti, 50, joined the club in 2005 from Udinese. His contract was due to expire in 2011.

He initially enjoyed success at the Stadio Olimpico, taking the side to second-placed league finishes in 2006, 2007 and 2008 and back-to-back triumphs in the Italian Cup in 2007 and 2008.



CLAUDIO RANIERI

Roma also made it to the quarterfinals of the Champions League in 2007 and 2008, but they never recovered from a terrible start to last season and finished the campaign in a disappointing sixth place.

He favoured a fluid 4-2-3-1 formation that earned many plaudits but broke down last season.

Ranieri admitted he is not sure what system he will use but said the team most needs to tighten up at the back.

"I don't have any particular favourite (system), during my career I've often changed tactics," said the coach known as the "Tinkerman" during his Chelsea days.

"But one thing's for sure, we need to concede fewer goals."

Roma's backline has been breached six times in two games already this season.

Ranieri, who was fired by Juventus two games before the end of last season after two years at the helm, said the team needs to get its confidence back.

"Fifteen months ago this team were a half hour away from winning the title. Roma have only lost confidence in themselves."

"A year ago this team was motivated and happy and believed in its project and we have to get back that conviction and strength."

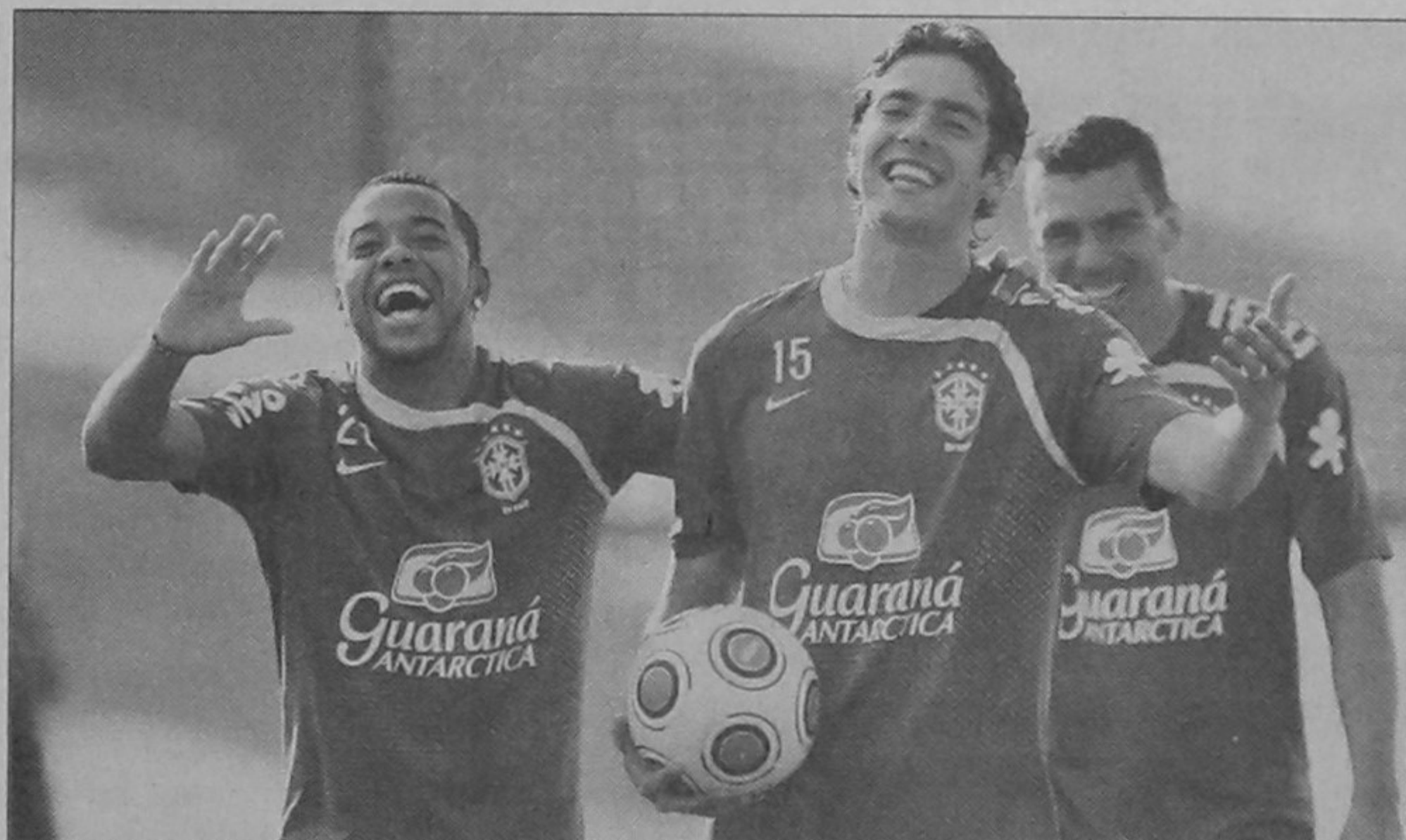


PHOTO: AFP

Brazil stars (L to R) Robinho, Kaka and Lucio shares a light moment during a training session in Teresopolis on Tuesday.

Carragher confident

AFP, Liverpool

Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher insists his side's slow start to the season won't affect their Premier League title challenge.

Rafael Benitez's team lost two of their opening three league games and only narrowly claimed a come-from-behind 3-2 victory against Bolton on Saturday.

But Carragher, 31, believes that hard-fought success at the Reebok Stadium typifies the team's character.

The Reds made a habit of recovering going a goal down to win last season and Carragher expects more of the same this year.

"We have taken a bit of criticism and rightly so, because we haven't made the best of starts," Carragher told The Sun.

"But no-one can ever write us off. Ourselves and Manchester United, not just in this league but probably anywhere in the world, are the best at coming back from deficits and winning games."

"At Bolton, the lads showed what great character we have."

It was so important to get those three points, especially with the international break coming up."

Milner rejects charge

Football

AFP, Watford

England winger James Milner has ruled out conspiracy theories that Croatia midfielder Luka Modric was deliberately injured ahead of a crucial World Cup qualifier at Wembley next week.

Croatia FA chiefs are frustrated that key midfielder Modric broke a leg in a tackle with Birmingham's Lee Bowyer just 10 days before a match against England that could decide the World Cup fate of both teams.

They already have bitter memories of how key striker Eduardo also suffered a broken leg playing against the same opposition for Arsenal in February 2008 and Croatia FA supremo Vlatko Markovic on Tuesday said: "First Eduardo, now Luka Modric. This is horrible. I can only ask myself if it was really an accident."

"I'm close to thinking it was done to us deliberately before the England match. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw what happened to Luka. He is irreplaceable."

But Markovic's claims have been quickly dismissed in Fabio Capello's camp with Aston Villa star Milner, speaking at England's team hotel in Watford, saying: "It's just bad luck, that's the way it is in football."

"People are making more of it but obviously it's nonsense. We just go out there and try and play as well as we can. You don't look at who you are tackling or anything like that when you are on the field."

"You don't think 'oh it's him, I'll go in hard on him.' You just are just trying to win the ball."

Far from being frightened of Modric, Milner would have relished facing the playmaker on

September 9.

He added: "You've seen what a good player Modric has been since he's been in England, he makes Tottenham tick and it's the same at international level. He will be a big miss."

"But as players you want to play in the best competitions in the world against the best players."

"In a way it helps you if the best players aren't there but also you want to challenge them. That's what being a professional in any sport is all about."

Milner, 23, is hoping to make a big impact against Croatia and also against Slovenia in a friendly at Wembley on Saturday, having finally made his debut in the recent draw in Holland after winning a record 46 caps at Under 21 level.

He showed great potential as a youngster, becoming the Premier League's youngest ever goalscorer at the age 16 years and 309 days - just three months after Wayne Rooney had set the previous record.

But his progress has always been slower in comparison to the Manchester United striker.

He said: "That goal put me on the map but Wayne came through at a very similar time and progressed very quickly at a very similar age. In a way, he took a lot of limelight off me, which helped massively. If that had not happened, I would probably have had more attention than I had."

"I am very grateful to him! When you look at how well he dealt with it, it just shows what a strong character he is and what a fantastic player. But now I feel ready for it to be my turn."

Milner has certainly waited a long time for his international breakthrough and perhaps it should come as no surprise that it happened after he moved to Aston Villa and left behind the trauma of crisis clubs Newcastle and Leeds.