

Germany leave out Frings

AFP, Berlin

With skipper Michael Ballack telling coach Joachim Loew he has recovered from a calf injury ahead of next week's crucial World Cup qualifier with Russia, Germany on Friday found no room for midfielder veteran Torsten Frings.

Chelsea midfielder Ballack, 33, sat out Wednesday night's 1-0 Champions League win at Apol Nicosia with a calf injury, but sent Loew a text message on Thursday saying he will be fit for the Group F clash on October 10 in Moscow and then the final game with Finland four days later.

Loew does make one change from the last squad with keeper Tim Wiese in for the sick Robert Enke, although Rene Adler will start between the posts for the European vice-champions.

European youth international championships winner Jerome Boateng, who has impressed this season for Bundesliga pace-setters Hamburg, also comes into the senior picture for the first time - but Frings, who has won 79 caps, misses out although Loew says his international career "is not over."

The Werder Bremen star fell out with the coach earlier this year for leaving him out of the squad to face Azerbaijan without any explanation.

Loew justified his decision by saying that if he called up Frings the latter would expect to start and he wanted to blood some new talent.

Germany are just a point ahead of Russia in the qualifying group and are out to ensure the win which would guarantee the three-time world champions a place in South Africa next June regardless of their last match against Finland in Hamburg on October 14.

A second-place finish in the group would mean Germany face a play-off over two legs against one of the other eight best runners-up from the European qualifying zone.

The draw for the play-offs will be made on October 19 and the games will be played on November 14 and 18.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Rene Adler (Bayer Leverkusen), Manuel Neuer (Schalke 04), Tim Wiese (Werder Bremen)

Defenders: Andreas Beck (Hoffenheim), Jerome Boateng (SV Hamburg), Arne Friedrich (Hertha Berlin), Philipp Lahm (Bayern Munich), Per Mertesacker (Werder Bremen), Marcel Schaefer (VfL Wolfsburg), Serdar Tasci (VfB Stuttgart), Heiko Westermann (Schalke 04)

Midfielders: Michael Ballack (Chelsea/ENG), Christian Gentner (VfL Wolfsburg), Thomas Hitzlsperger (VfB Stuttgart), Sami Khedira (VfB Stuttgart), Marko Marin (Werder Bremen), Mesut Ozil (Werder Bremen), Bastian Schweinsteiger (Bayern Munich), Piotr Trochowski (SV Hamburg), Simon Rolfes (Bayer Leverkusen)

Strikers: Cacau (VfB Stuttgart), Mario Gomez (Bayern Munich), Miroslav Klose (Bayern Munich), Lukas Podolski (Cologne)

4-way battle over 2016

OLYMPICS

AFP, Copenhagen

The International Olympic Committee on Friday launched into a key meeting to choose the host for the 2016 Olympics with US President Barack Obama pressing the case for Chicago against government leaders and kings from rival bidders.

Japan's new prime minister Yukio Hatoyama is fighting for Tokyo, Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula Da Silva for Rio de Janeiro and Spain's King Juan Carlos and Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero campaigning for Madrid.

Chicago were first to give their presentation to the 100-plus members of the IOC.

Generally seen as odds on favourites, they were led by a relaxed looking Obama and his wife Michelle as they bid to become the first American city to host the Summer Games since Atlanta in 1996.

Obama, former senator of

Illinois and resident of Chicago for nearly 25 years, flew in on Friday while the US First Lady has been lobbying IOC members here since Wednesday.

The President did not speak first, but was later introduced to the podium by his wife to whom he gave a tender kiss before setting out his vision of why Chicago should host the Games.

"The reason I chose to settle in Chicago 25 years ago is not just because I met that lady who just spoke but because I fell in love with it," he said.

"I was born in Hawaii and was taken to Indonesia so I never really had any roots until I came to Chicago and discovered this most American of cities which nevertheless possesses 130 different ethnic groups.

"It is a rich tapestry of neighbourhoods. If you choose us we walk this path together."

Michelle Obama had used her father as her inspiration for bringing the Games to her

hometown.

"Even when he was increasingly suffering from multiple sclerosis he would struggle on his crutches and play with us and he taught me a mean right hook," said the First Lady, who was born and raised in the South Side of the city.

"I am not just asking you to give us the Games as a Chicagoan or as an American but also as a daughter. My father would have been so proud to see us here bidding for the Games."

The First Lady also said that the Games was seen by her and her husband as a vital strand in their diplomatic strategy.

"We would use these Games as a vehicle for reaching out to the world. It would usher in a new era of international engagement."

Chicago began first to be followed by Tokyo, the only one of the four to have previously hosted the Games, Rio, attempting to bring the Games to South America for the first time, and rank outsiders Madrid.

EUROPA LEAGUE

Villa strike sinks Genoa

Football

INTERNET, undated

French club Lille and Everton came from behind to register important victories in the Europa League on Thursday - on a night on which Bundesliga sides SV Hamburg and Werder Bremen also won.

Lille went behind in their Group B match at Slavia Prague in the first half but scored five goals after the break to register a 5-1 win, while Valencia needed a late David Villa goal to secure a thrilling 3-2 victory against Genoa in the other group game.

Everton fell behind in Borisov in the 16th minute when Belarusian international Dmitriy Likhartovich opened the scoring for BATE Borisov.

Marouane Fellaini found an equalizer in the 68th minute before Australian international Tim Cahill scored the 2-1 winner for the visitors nine minutes later.

Everton coach David Moyes said that he was very pleased as his side had missed several regulars. "It was a resilient performance, which in the end allowed us to get the win. It's always nice to win away in Europe and this was an important victory."

"We were hoping to take points early in the campaign and now we are in a good position. We want to stay there and keep progressing in this competition."

The other game in Group I saw AEK Athens beat Benfica Lisbon 1-0.

Bundesliga leaders SV Hamburg had an ideal start against Hapoel Tel Aviv, scoring twice in the opening 12 minutes through Marcus Berg. Itay Shechter pulled one back for the Israelis in the 37th minute, but just three minutes later Eljero Elia ensured a two-goal half-time lead.

After the break Samuel Yeboah scored for the visitors to give them some hope again, but after captain Valed Badeer was sent off in the 65th minute, the Bundesliga side proved too strong and Ze Roberto's goal in the 78th minute ensured a comfortable 4-2 win for Hamburg.

The other game in the Group C saw Celtic play to a 1-1 draw with Rapid Vienna.

In Bremen Aaron Hunt and Brazilian defender Naldo gave the home side a two-goal half-time lead against Spanish visitors Athletic Bilbao, but then had Peter Niemeyer sent off for a second bookable offence on the hour.

The substitute had come on just four minutes earlier.

Bilbao managed to claw their way back into the game and scored through Fernando Llorente in injury time.

Any hopes they had of securing an unlikely draw from the match went up in smoke four minutes into injury time though when Bremen were awarded a penalty, which Torsten Frings converted to give Bremen a 3-1 victory.

The other Group L game saw Austria Vienna score a late equalizer at home against Nacional Funchal for a 1-1.

Ajax Amsterdam drew 1-1 at Anderlecht in their Group A game, while Dinamo Zagreb secured a 3-0 victory at Timisoara in the other group match.

Troubled Bundesliga side Hertha Berlin's woes continued in Group D, as they slumped to a 1-0 defeat at Sporting Lisbon, giving new coach Karsten Heine no luck in his first match in charge.

Also in Group D Ventspils played to a goalless draw with Dutch club SC Heerenveen.

Danny Murphy scored in the 57th minute to give Fulham a 1-0 victory against Basel in a Group E game, where AS Roma beat CSKA Sofia in the other match.

Fulham coach Ray Hodgson admitted that it was not an easy win. "We were playing a good team, it was a very tough game. We were better in the second half, got on top and luckily scored our goal - but they made it tough to the final minutes."

In Group F Panathinaikos won 1-0 at Dinamo Bucharest, while Galatasaray drew 1-1 at home with Austrian club Sturm Graz.

There was also no joy for Spanish club Villarreal, who slumped to a 2-0 defeat at Red Bull Salzburg in a Group G game, with Lazio securing a 4-0 hammering of Levski Sofia in Bulgaria in the other group game.

In Group H, Fenerbahce Istanbul got their points tally off the mark with a 1-0 victory at Sheriff Tiraspol, while Twente Enschede and Steaua Bucharest drew 0-0.

French club Toulouse managed a 2-2 draw at home against Club Brugge, while Shakhtar Donetsk, who won the final edition of the predecessor of the Europa League, the UEFA Cup, trounced Partizan Belgrade 4-1 in Group J.

Group K saw both home sides registering 1-0 victories, with FC Copenhagen beating Sparta Prague and PSV Eindhoven getting the better of CFR Cluj.

IN BRIEF

Keegan awarded £2m in damages

AFP, Newcastle

Kevin Keegan has been awarded two million pounds (2.1 million euros) in damages after winning his case against Newcastle for constructive dismissal.

The independent arbitration panel arranged by the Premier League found in Keegan's favour following his departure from the club in September last year.

Announcing its decision, the panel said in a statement: "We declare that Kevin Keegan was constructively dismissed by Newcastle United Football Club Ltd, for which Newcastle United Football Club Ltd must pay to Kevin Keegan damages in the sum of two million pounds plus interest to be assessed if not agreed."

Eduardo faces fitness battle

AFP, Zagreb

Croatian sharpshooter Eduardo Da Silva may miss his country's October 14 World Cup qualifier with Kazakhstan after aggravating a thigh problem in Arsenal's Champions League win over Olympiakos, Federation spokesman Davor Gavran said Friday.

Croatia need a win in their final match in Group Six to boost their chances of bagging a playoff place ahead of Ukraine, England having already secured qualification.

Ukraine trail the Croatians by two points yet have two games remaining against England and Andorra.

"We won't rule out Eduardo entirely. I will examine him and then we will judge," Croatia team Boris Nemec told daily Novi List.

The Croatians will in any case be without Spurs midfielder Luka Modric, goalkeeper Stipe Pletikosa and potentially defender Josip Simunic.

Torres eyeing L'pool finish

AFP, London

Fernando Torres admits he is enjoying life at Liverpool so much that he could spend the rest of his career with the Premier League club.

Spain striker Torres has adapted quickly to English football, scoring 58 goals in 93 appearances since moving from Atletico Madrid in 2007.

Reds manager Rafael Benitez recently admitted that Premier League clubs, believed to be Manchester City and Chelsea, declared their interest in Torres during the close season.

But the 25-year-old is adamant he would never join another English team, especially arch rivals Manchester United, because he has been made so welcome at Anfield.

"I'm a foreign player, but I know how the Liverpool fans feel and I remember the welcome I had when I arrived - it was amazing."

"I hope to play a lot of years or maybe even finish my career here."

"I don't know, but Liverpool is my English team and I don't think about playing for another one."



Brazilian football legend Pele waves to the IOC members during the Rio's presentation yesterday for the 2016 Olympics at the Bella Centre in Copenhagen, Denmark. The 121st session of the IOC yesterday voted for choosing the hosts for the 2016 Olympic Games.

Reds visit Blues

AFP, London



Chelsea's clash with Liverpool this weekend was always going to be a significant encounter in the Premier League title race but a difficult week has raised the stakes involved for both clubs.

It may only be six weeks into the new season, but both Rafael Benitez and Carlo Ancelotti know that a defeat at Stamford Bridge on Sunday will represent a significant blow to their prospects of wresting the title away from Manchester United.

Having lost twice already this season, Liverpool travel south with less margin for error than their hosts and with morale dampened by the poor display that led to a 2-0 defeat at Fiorentina in midweek.

Ancelotti, who only speaks Italian to his squad when he is angry, has had to call on his mother tongue twice in the last week.

The former AC Milan coach was almost as unimpressed by a laboured 1-0 victory at Apol Nicosia in midweek as he was by last Saturday's 3-1 defeat at Wigan, which ended his perfect start to life in London.

Predictably, the noises from both camps have all been about the need to put things right on Sunday.

"We have to be better

against Liverpool," Chelsea skipper John Terry acknowledged. "They will be up for it and they are a big club, so we will have to respond again when we play them."

The corresponding fixture last season saw Liverpool end Chelsea's 86-match unbeaten run at Stamford Bridge but more recent history is less encouraging for Benitez, who watched his side get overrun in midfield and look distinctly shaky at the back in Florence.

Javier Mascherano's return from injury should bolster the protection offered to the back four but Benitez must be contemplating breaking up the centreback partnership of Jamie Carragher and Martin Skrtel that has looked shaky of late, particularly as Daniel Agger is ready for a return following close-season back surgery.

Whatever he decides, Benitez has made it clear he is expecting a significant

FIXTURES

(1400 GMT unless stated)
Saturday
Bolton v Tottenham, Burnley v Birmingham, Hull City v Wigan, Manchester Utd v Sunderland (1630 GMT), Wolves v Portsmouth
Sunday
Arsenal v Blackburn (1230 GMT), Chelsea v Liverpool (1500 GMT), Everton v Stoke City, West Ham v Fulham
Monday
Aston Villa v Manchester City (1900 GMT)

improvement. "I believe you will see a different Liverpool in the Chelsea match," he said. "A totally different performance with a different mentality."

Reds skipper Steven Gerrard echoed that theme: "We need to get the defeat in Florence out of our system quickly, because it's a massive game at Chelsea," he said. "We need to produce a reaction."

Chelsea's defeat at Wigan enabled Manchester United to top the table for the first time this season and the champions will expect to stay there after the return of old boy Steve Bruce and his Sunderland squad to Old Trafford on Saturday.

United appear to be hitting form with the remarkable form of Ryan Giggs compensating for the loss of Cristiano Ronaldo to Real Madrid.

Ronaldo's departure has also resulted in Wayne Rooney being deployed regularly in a central striking role.

Theo Walcott is expected to return from injury when Arsenal entertain Blackburn on Sunday.

Fourth-placed Tottenham travel to Bolton on Saturday while Manchester City will have Emmanuel Adebayor available for Monday's trip to Aston Villa after the Togo striker escaped a ban for his provocative goal celebration against former club Arsenal last month.

Sevilla test for Real

AFP, Madrid



League leaders Real Madrid roll into Sevilla on Sunday, giving the hosts the perfect chance to prove that this year's Spanish title race won't just be all about Real and Barcelona.

Real have won all seven of their matches this season and sit top of both the domestic league and their Champions League group, but face a Sevilla side that have won their last four league matches and demolished Rangers 4-1 on Tuesday in the Champions League.

"We are playing the all-powerful Real Madrid but they should bear in mind that Sevilla are going well at the moment," warned Sevilla coach Manolo Jimenez.

Jimenez and several of his players have talked up Sevilla's title chances in recent weeks and their fine starts sees them lying in third, three points behind Real and Barca.

"It will be a tough game against Sevilla as they are on a roll but then so are we," said Real midfielder Guti. "I think it will be a physical match with lots of goals."

Real have a doubt over Cristiano Ronaldo, who hobbled out of Wednesday's 3-0 Champions League win over Marseille with an ankle injury and coach Manuel Pellegrini will hope his free-scoring winger, who has nine

goals in seven games so far, can make it for the crunch clash.

"We are still not ruling him out of the Sevilla game," said Pellegrini.

"We just have to see how it goes over the next few days."

One man who will be extra fired up for the game is Sevilla striker Alvaro Negredo who Real sold for 15 million euros after deciding he was not good enough for the latest Galactico era.

Barcelona are only behind Real on goal difference and can knock their rivals off the summit on Saturday when they host Almeria at Camp Nou.

Barca overcame Dinamo Kiev 2-0 in their mid-week Champions League outing, with the big boost being the form of Andres Iniesta who made his first start since the Champions League final win over Manchester United back in May.

The form of new signing Zlatan Ibrahimovic has been

FIXTURES

Saturday
Tenerife v Deportivo La Coruna (1600 GMT), Barcelona v Almeria (1800 GMT), Atletico Madrid v Real Zaragoza (2000 GMT)
Sunday
(1500 GMT unless otherwise stated)
Xerez v Malaga, Villarreal v Espanyol, Valladolid v Athletic Bilbao, Sporting Gijon v Real Mallorca, Getafe v Osasuna, Racing Santander v Valencia (1700 GMT), Sevilla v Real Madrid (1900 GMT)

another plus with the Swede breaking the club record by scoring in each of his first five league games - something even Barca's Brazilian greats Romario and Ronaldo didn't manage.

Defensive troubles are at the root of Atletico Madrid's problems as coach Abel Resino continues to cling to his position, with a 2-0 Champions League defeat against FC Porto the latest setback.

Atletico host Real Zaragoza on Saturday searching for their first win of the season after collecting three points from 15 in the league and one from six in Europe.

Villarreal coach Ernesto Valverde is also having a bad time of things as he searches for his first win in charge against former club Espanyol on Sunday.

It has been Villarreal's worst ever start to a season in the top flight with two points from 15 taken, as Valverde struggles to fill the shoes of iconic coach Pellegrini following his summer exit to Real.

Valverde guided Espanyol to the final of the 2007 UEFA Cup but cannot afford to show any sentiment towards his old club.

Down at Valencia criticism is ringing in the ears of manager Unai Emery with the fans unhappy with his conservative tactics.

Valencia have already fallen seven points behind the leaders and need to get back on track with a win at Racing Santander on Sunday.



Valencia's forward David Villa celebrates scoring the winner against Genoa during their Europa League encounter at the Mestalla on Thursday.