



Roma defender John Arne Riise (L) celebrates scoring the equaliser against Fulham during their Europa League encounter at the Olympic Stadium in Rome on Thursday.

CAS suspends Chelsea transfer ban

AFP, Lausanne

International sport's top court on Friday suspended a transfer ban imposed on Chelsea while it rules on a dispute over the signing of French youngster Gael Kakuta.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) has granted the request for a stay filed by Chelsea Football Club Ltd and Mr Gael Kakuta in relation to the decision taken by the FIFA Dispute Resolution Chamber on 27 August 2009, the Lausanne-based court said in a statement.

The English Premier League side had asked for a suspension in a bid to sign new players during the January transfer window.

The ban on signing any new players until January 2011 was imposed by world football's governing body FIFA in August, when its Dispute Resolution Chamber concluded the Blues had induced Kakuta to break his contract with his first club, Lens.

A four month suspension imposed by FIFA on Kakuta was also lifted temporarily pending a full ruling on the case by the arbitrators.

The statement added: "Such sanctions are now stayed until the CAS renders its final decision in this matter."

SA can reach quarterfinals

AFP, Johannesburg

New coach Carlos Alberto Parreira says struggling 2010 World Cup hosts South Africa can defy the odds and reach the quarterfinals.

"The greatest challenge is getting to the second phase. South Africa must work hard but I'm confident we will get there," he told Brazilian television ahead of a second spell in charge of Bafana Bafana (The Boys).

"I hope that with the backing of home fans we will reach the quarterfinals and after that the sky is the limit," said the 66-year-old, who guided Brazil to the 1994 World Cup title.

"The World Cup is kill, kill, kill, and it is not always the best teams that reach the final. It is different from a championship and I think we could have a very competitive team."

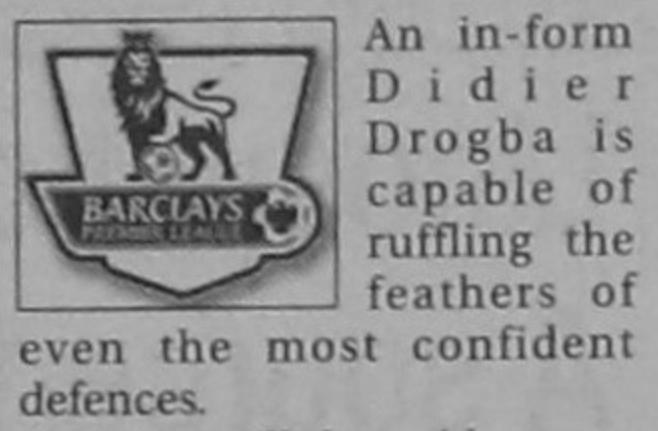
"Brave words from a man inheriting a national team ranked 85 in the world by FIFA and demoralised after eight losses in nine matches with the sole success coming at home against African lightweights Madagascar.

The defeats were inflicted by Spain (twice), Brazil and Serbia at home and away to Germany, Republic of Ireland, Norway and Iceland and cost another Brazilian, Joel Santana, his 200,000-dollar-a-month coaching post.

Parreira ended his first spell as a moderately successful coach of South Africa in mid-2008 to be with his ill wife in Rio de Janeiro and reportedly recommended Santana to take over despite no national team experience.

CHESLSEA V MAN UTD Top of the table clash

AFP, London



An in-form Didier Drogba is capable of ruffling the feathers of even the most confident defences.

So it will be with some trepidation that Manchester United, whose back four has been looking decidedly shaky of late, pitch up for Sunday's Premier League summit meeting with a Chelsea side whose confident start to the season has been underpinned by Drogba's return to his battering-ram best.

The Ivorian's late double in the Champions League win over Atletico Madrid in Spain took his tally for the season to 12 in all competitions.

United have not won at Stamford Bridge since April 2002 and the manner in which Sir Alex Ferguson's side capitulated at Liverpool last month and then conceded three goals to CSKA Moscow at Old Trafford on Tuesday will not have encouraged fans to believe that particular seven-year itch is about to be scratched.

Chelsea have won all nine of their domestic and European fixtures at home this season, scoring 25 goals in the process while conceding only one.

But Ferguson is counting on the chastening impact of the

defeat at Liverpool to act as a galvanising force for his players.

"It's always a hard game at Chelsea, but we'll deal with it better than we did at Anfield, I'm sure of that," the Scot predicted.

With Rio Ferdinand unlikely to be involved because of the latest recurrence of a troubling calf injury, Ferguson will be relieved to have Serbian centreback Nemanja Vidic available again.

Dimitar Berbatov and Ryan Giggs, who also missed the 3-3 draw with CSKA, are also on track to return from injury while Wayne Rooney, who started on the bench in mid-week, will return to the starting line-up looking for a goal to celebrate the birth of his baby boy, KaiWayne.

With either one or both of the top two destined to drop

FIXTURES

(1500 GMT unless stated)
Saturday
 Aston Villa v Bolton, Blackburn v Portsmouth, Manchester City v Burnley, Tottenham v Sunderland, Wolves v Arsenal (1730 GMT)
Sunday
 Chelsea v Manchester Utd (1600 GMT), Hull v Stoke (1330 GMT), West Ham v Everton, Wigan v Fulham
Monday
 Liverpool v Birmingham (2000 GMT)

Raul to start on bench

AFP, Barcelona

Real Madrid captain Raul Gonzalez accepts that he is likely to find himself on the bench for the derby clash with local rivals Atletico Madrid on Sunday.

The Bernabeu icon has been a regular in the first team since he made his debut at 17 and the power he yields in the dressing room means that it is a bold move for the coach Manuel Pellegrini.

Having missed the last two matches, though, against Getafe and AC Milan, Raul agrees it would be logical for him not to be in the starting line-up.

"In the last two games the team has played well and I suppose he will stay with the same players. I don't know if I will play or not but I consider myself capable of performing at the level of any player in the world," said Raul who has become a nemesis for Atletico, scoring eleven goals in total against them.

"These are always difficult games, above all in the Calderon. Atletico have improved a lot recently, against Chelsea they deserved to win and their confidence will now be much higher."

Leaders Barcelona will be looking to rediscover their incisive football after two draws against Osasuna and Rubin Kazan in which they only managed to score one goal.

But they play a Mallorca side that hopes to spring a surprise.

Sevilla have the difficult task of taking on a rejuvenated Villarreal side although they are likely to have Frederic Kanoute and Adriano available after fitness scares.

Following a woeful start to the season under Ernesto Valverde, Villarreal have moved up the table with back-to-back wins in the league.

Valencia must recover their morale when they take on Zaragoza after letting a

FIXTURES

Saturday
 Tenerife v Malaga (1700GMT), Getafe v Deportivo la Coruna (1700GMT), Barcelona v Mallorca (1900 GMT), Atletico Madrid v Real Madrid (2100GMT)
Sunday
 (1600GMT unless otherwise stated)
 Valladolid v Xerez, Sporting Gijon v Espanyol, Racing Santander v Athletic Bilbao, Almeria v Osasuna, Valencia v Zaragoza (1800GMT), Sevilla v Villarreal (2000GMT)

two-goal lead slip in the Europa League against Slavia Prague and returned to the Mestalla with only a draw.

Deportivo la Coruna striker Riki Sanchez faces his previous club Getafe in good form but he will be only too aware of the danger posed from Getafe by another Real Madrid youth product Roberto Soldado.

Sporting Gijon meet Espanyol in what is expected to be a tightly fought match between two sides which have made surprisingly good starts to the season and are level on 13 points.

Racing Santander coach Juan Carlos Mandia has sent out a message of calm ahead of their match with Athletic Bilbao as the pressure is starting to rise following a poor start.

Bottom side Malaga need a good result from their visit to Tenerife although the Canary Island side boast a strong home record.

One point above them Xerez travel to Valladolid who sneaked an injury time equaliser against Espanyol last weekend.

Osasuna also scored in the final minutes against Barcelona to earn a draw in Pamplona and will look to continue their good run against Almeria.

No place for Vieira

AFP, Paris

Patrick Vieira has failed to impress France coach Raymond Domenech, who left the Inter Milan midfielder out of his squad for two World Cup qualifying playoff matches against the Republic of Ireland.

Aly Cissokho was the only surprise face among a 24-man squad named by Domenech Thursday, the Lyon defender thus being given the chance to win his first cap for France only three years since moving out of the amateur divisions.

France face the Republic in Dublin on November 14 and then host the return leg at the Stade de France in Paris four days later, with the aggregate winner gaining entry to the World Cup finals in South Africa next summer.

Given Vieira's improved performances for Inter, Domenech had been half expected to give the defensive midfielder a chance to feature for 'Les Bleus' for the first time since a friendly against Nigeria on June 2.

However, Domenech appears unwilling to break up a midfield defensive pairing of Lassana Diarra and Jeremy Toulalan which is just beginning to gel and pay dividends.

It could prove to be a psychological blow to Vieira, who said Sunday that his aim was to "go to the World Cup" in South Africa next summer.

Coming into the team in place of injured defender Gael Clichy, Cissokho's football dream continues.

Playing in France's amateur fifth division three years ago he has since played for FC Porto and now plays at French giants Lyon, who secured qualification to the Champions League knockout phase on Wednesday with a 1-1 home draw against Liverpool.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Cedric Carrasso (Bordeaux), Hugo Lloris (Lyon), Steve Mandanda (Marseille)
Defenders: Eric Abidal (Barcelona/ESP), Aly Cissokho (Lyon), Julien Escudé (Sevilla/ESP), Patrice Evra (Manchester United/ENG), Rod Fanni (Rennes), William Gallas (Arsenal/ENG), Bacary Sagna (Arsenal/ENG), Sébastien Squillaci (Sevilla/ESP)
Midfielders: Abou Diaby (Arsenal/ENG), Alou Diarra (Bordeaux), Lassana Diarra (Real Madrid/ESP), Florent Malouda (Chelsea/ENG), Yoann Gourcuff (Bordeaux), Moussa Sissoko (Toulouse), Jeremy Toulalan (Lyon)
Strikers: Nicolas Anelka (Chelsea/ENG), Karim Benzema (Real Madrid/ESP), Andre-Pierre Gignac (Toulouse), Sidney Govou (Lyon), Thierry Henry (Barcelona/ESP), Loïc Rémy (Nice)

Roma leave it late

Football

AFP, Paris

Fulham compromised their hopes of advancing in the Europa League on Thursday when Roma came from behind to win 2-1 in Italy, the English Premiership side ending the Group E contest with nine men, while Everton slumped 2-0 at home to Benfica.

Djedson Kamara shocked the Stadio Olimpico by netting a spotkick on 19 minutes after Marco Andreoli brought him down but everything went downhill for the visitors thereafter as substitute Erik Nevland was dismissed within three minutes of coming on for a heavy challenge on Daniele De Rossi.

Former Liverpool man John Arne Riise then levelled after 69 minutes with a deflected effort and Stefano Okaka headed the clincher a quarter of an hour from the end before defender Paul Konchesky fouled Rodrigo Taddei to leave Fulham two men down.

The loss means Roy Hodgson's side, who had held the Romans on their own turf, suffered their first reverse in the group and they now stand third, two points behind Roma with two games remaining.

At Goodison Park, Everton were outclassed for the second time by Benfica, the Portuguese winning with strikes from Javier Saviola after good work by highly-rated Angel di Maria, then an acrobatic volley from Oscar Cardozo to leave the Portuguese three points clear at the top of Group L.

The top two teams from each group will join the third-placed sides from the eight Champions League groups in the last 32.

Shakhtar Donetsk, who won the final UEFA Cup competition last season before the competition morphed into the Europa League, are through after they made it four wins in four

games, beating French side Toulouse 2-0 in Group J.

Werder Bremen of Germany are through after seeing off Austria Vienna 2-0 in Group L.

French veteran Robert Pires was twice on target for Villarreal in Group G group in a 4-1 home romp over Lazio to join the Italians on six points.

Celtic's hopes of advancing hang by a thread after they could only manage a goalless draw in Hamburg, to whom they had lost at home in Group C.

Celtic, just one win now in 25 European away ties, prop up the group with Thursday's point only their second to date after striker Scott McDonald missed two good chances to secure maximum points at the Nordbank Arena.

The Germans lie second in the group on seven points with Israeli outfit Hapoel Tel Aviv out in front after the latter moved onto nine points following a 3-0 romp at Rapid Vienna.

Elsewhere, Ajax are as good as through after they won 2-0 away to nine-man Dinamo Zagreb with Marko Pantelic and Demy de Zeeuw on target.

Dinamo had Leandro Cufre and Adrian Calello dismissed in a match played behind closed doors owing to recent crowd trouble.

Anderlecht are also looking set fair for the next phase after a 3-1 home success over Romania's Timisoara left them and their Dutch rivals six points clear.

In Group B, veteran Hernan Crespo was on target as Genoa edged out Lille 3-2 while Valencia, twice Champions League finalists, let slip a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 at Slavia Prague.

Lille are still a point ahead of Valencia and Genoa.

Turkish side Galatasaray are through from Group F after Aussie striker and former Leeds and Liverpool forward Harry Kewell netted the opener in a 3-0 win at Dinamo Bucharest.

Romans tackle Milanese

AFP, Rome



Champions Inter Milan host AS Roma at the San Siro at the weekend while AC Milan travel to the capital to take on Lazio as the Serie A title race reaches a keystone.

In the not so distant past these would have been two top-of-the-table clashes between teams fighting for the title.

But that's not the way things have been going this season. Inter are top and, despite an indifferent start, Milan are up and running and up to fourth.

In Rome, however, this season has gone from bad to worse. Roma and Lazio sit 14th and 15th with just six wins between them in a combined 22 matches.

Roma were expecting to get back to challenging for the scudetto after finishing a disappointing sixth in the last campaign following three runners-up finishes in a row.

And cup holders Lazio

would have been expecting to make a run at top four finish.

Instead, they are both in disarray. Luciano Spalletti quit as Roma boss after just two games and despite beginning his Roma career well with successive victories, Claudio Ranieri's team lost three on the bounce before last weekend's narrow 2-1 success against Bologna.

A title challenge is out of the question -- they have only half the points of Inter -- and even a fight for a top four finish and Champions League next season looks unlikely.

Lazio look more likely to be involved in a relegation dog-fight, sitting currently only two points above the drop zone.

They drew away to both Atalanta and Livorno and needed an Alessandro Nesta winner deep into injury time -- just moments after a stunning Dida save prevented them from losing -- to beat Chievo.

Elsewhere second-placed Juventus travel to Atalanta while Napoli can go fourth, for a day at least, if they win at Catania on Saturday.

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Real Madrid's Portuguese star Cristiano Ronaldo will be out of action for at least another two weeks, the club said Thursday, after a doctor in Amsterdam examined his injured ankle.

It said new tests by his former doctor, Cornelius Nicolas Van Dijk, "confirmed the diagnosis given by the medical team of Real Madrid obtained after MRI and CT scans" on Tuesday.

Van Dijk will remain unavailable to play for Bayern in its Royal Blues have made a habit of coming from behind to seal late draws against title rivals Hamburg and Leverkusen in the last two weeks.

With just four points separating the top six teams, league leaders Leverkusen will be looking to cement their position with a win at home to Eintracht Frankfurt on Friday night.

Leverkusen have drawn their last three Bundesliga games and still top of the table: Bayer have conceded the fewest goals (eight), kept the most clean sheets (six) and been most successful in restricting shots on their own goal (22).

Second-placed Werder Bremen, who beat Austria Vienna 2-0 in the Europa League Cup, are at home to mid-table Borussia Dortmund and third-placed Hamburg, who drew 0-0 with Celtic in the Europa League, are also in action on Sunday at Hanover.

"It's another important game and it's another one we have to win," said van Gaal.

"My emotional reaction would be to raise my voice after the Borussia defeat,