



New Zealand striker Rory Fallon (R) is ecstatic after scoring the all-important goal against Bahrain during their 2010 World Cup qualifier in Wellington on Saturday.

NZ book SA ticket Fallon strike sinks Bahrain

AFP, Wellington



A goal by Rory Fallon just before half-time and some heroic goalkeeping by Mark Paston secured New Zealand's ticket to next year's World Cup as they squeezed past Bahrain 1-0 here on Saturday.

In a match billed as the biggest sporting event ever staged in New Zealand, the single goal broke the deadlock after the first leg of the Asia-Oceania final at Manama last month ended in a scoreless draw.

Bahrain's best chance to equalise, a penalty early in the second half, went begging as Paston blocked Sayed Adnan's shot.

Before a crowd of 35,100 at Westpac Stadium, a record for a football match in a country obsessed with rugby union, New Zealand reached the World Cup finals for only the second time, after qualifying for Spain 28 years ago.

New Zealand coach Ricki Herbert, a member of the 1972 World Cup side, was ecstatic.

"We're back. We're there. South Africa, here we are," he said after giving Paston a congratulatory kiss, adding the team had done their preparation in the event of a penalty.

"We had done a little bit of homework and Paston pulled one out of the top drawer," he said.

"He's done a big one for us. We thought we could get through without conceding a goal. We thought one would do it and we're there."

Paston, who said it would probably take a few days for New Zealand's success to fully sink in, described his penalty save as "a bit surreal, really."

"I basically guessed which way and it ended up in my hands and I got up and went on with the game really."

After dominating the goalless first encounter, where they missed two golden chances, Bahrain started the return match with the luxury of knowing a score draw would be enough to progress, and they attacked from the outset.

One particular snap shot from striker Jaycee John was forced away by a diving Paston, who was quickly on his feet to block the rebound.

But after weathering the opening onslaught, the Ryan Nelsen-led New Zealanders fought their way into the game.

Leo Bertos and Celtic's Chris Killen both hit the woodwork before Fallon headed home a Bertos corner in the 44th minute.

In the 51st minute Abdulla Omar was brought down by Tony Lochhead in the penalty box and Uruguay referee Jorge Larrión had no hesitation in pointing to the spot, only for Paston to deny Adnan's penalty.

The Gulf nation, with a population of a little over a million, also went agonisingly close to playing in the last World Cup -- losing at the same stage to Trinidad and Tobago.

WC QUALIFIED TEAMS

Countries assured of qualification for next year's World Cup in South Africa after Saturday's Asia-Oceania play-off match (32 nations will take part in the tournament):

- Europe Zone**
Netherlands, England, Spain, Germany, Denmark, Serbia, Italy, Switzerland, Slovakia
- Asia Zone**
Japan, Australia, South Korea, North Korea
- Africa Zone**
South Africa (as hosts), Ghana, Ivory Coast
- South America Zone**
Brazil, Paraguay, Chile, Argentina
- North America Zone**
Mexico, United States, Honduras
- Oceania Zone**
New Zealand

IN BRIEF

Conceicao calls it quits

AFP, Lisbon

Former Portuguese international Sergio Conceicao announced Saturday that he is retiring as a player.

"I want to announce today the end of my footballing career. When I look back I'm proud of what I achieved," Conceicao told the Portuguese press.

The midfielder, who turns 35 on Sunday, will become sporting director of Greek club PAOK Salonica where he has played for the past two seasons.

During his career he played for major European clubs including FC Porto, Lazio, Parma, Inter Milan and Standard Liege.

He also notched up 56 caps and scored 13 goals for Portugal between 1996 and 2004. The highlight of his career was the clash against Germany in Euro 2000 when he scored a hat-trick during their 3-0 victory.

Qatar's Brazilian stun Paraguay

AFP, Rouen

Qatar's Brazilian-born striker Fabio Cesar Montesin scored both goals as the 2011 Asian Cup hosts defeated World Cup qualifiers Paraguay 2-0 in a friendly here on Friday.

Montesin struck in the 57th and 81st minutes to secure victory for the Gulf side.

Klose released from swine flu quarantine

AFP, Berlin

Germany striker Miroslav Klose was on Saturday released from a four-day quarantine for swine flu after showing no signs of the virus and is available to play against the Ivory Coast next week.

Both the Bayern Munich star and his wife Sylvia were put under observation last Wednesday after their four-year-old twin sons Noah and Luan were discovered to both be suffering from the H1N1 virus.

Neither Klose, the top scorer at the 2006 World Cup, nor his wife showed signs of the virus and have been allowed to leave quarantine.

Klose, 31, is now free to join the Germany squad to prepare for Wednesday's friendly against the Ivory Coast while Saturday's planned Germany-Chile match has been called off after last week's suicide of national goalkeeper Robert Enke.

Klose is expected to join the Germany squad in Hanover on Sunday for Enke's memorial service which is expected to be attended by 45,000 fans and colleagues from across German football.

Stars request Enke memorial game

AFP, Berlin

Germany's top players including Michael Ballack and Bastian Schweinsteiger have requested the German Football Federation (DFB) hold a memorial game for tragic goalkeeper Robert Enke.

The 32-year-old shot-stopper committed suicide last Tuesday by flinging himself under a commuter train passing through his home town of Neustadt am Ruebenberge, near Hanover, having suffered from depression since 2003.

The ex-national team goalkeeper, who won the last of his eight caps in August and helped Germany qualify for the 2010 World Cup, will be buried on Sunday after a memorial service at his home club.

Up to 100,000 people are expected at Hanover 96's stadium for a memorial service which will be attended by the entire Germany squad before Enke's coffin is carried out of the stadium by six Hanover team-mates.

With Germany playing a friendly against the Ivory Coast on Wednesday, the national team led by Ballack will attend a service for Enke on Sunday morning and then train in Duesseldorf in the afternoon to prepare for the game.

After consultation with the players, Germany coach Joachim Loew opted to bring the squad

together to prepare in the aftermath of Enke's tragic death.

Saturday's planned friendly international between Germany and Chile, which had been due to be held in Cologne, was called off as a mark of respect, but the national team's stars on Friday asked the DFB to consider holding a memorial match.

"The players have asked if there can be some sort of game next year to allow them to say goodbye to Robert," the DFB's secretary general Wolfgang Niersbach told German tabloid Bild.

Enke was set to travel with the Germany squad to South Africa for next June's World Cup before his tragic death and one possibility is the full national side could play Enke's club Hanover 96 in a warm-up match.

Meanwhile, DFB president Theo Zwanziger says more must be done in the sport to break the taboos around depression.

"After this tragedy, we must think about the issues in football and look at ways of breaking some of the existing taboos," Zwanziger told German tabloid Bild.

Enke leaves behind his wife Teresa, 33, and eight-month-old daughter Leila, whom the couple adopted in May -- three years after their two-year-old daughter Lara died from a brain infection.

The Germany goalkeeper will be buried on Sunday next to the grave of his daughter.

Jose sees his future in England

AFP, London

Inter Milan's Portuguese coach Jose Mourinho revealed Saturday that he sees his future in English football.

The former Chelsea coach is doing well with Inter Milan, leading them to the Serie A title last season and they currently have a five-point lead in the championship.

However, after five titles in seven seasons in three countries, the Portuguese admitted: "I want to build something."

"Clearly it is unrealistic to expect to stay at a club as long as Sir Alex Ferguson - but I am ready for the next phase of my career. I want to work with a different perspective."

"At Porto my objective was to win to earn the right to go abroad. At Chelsea my ambition was to create a bit of history."

"But I always knew Chelsea lacked the normal English culture of stability."

"I was never under any illusions. I understood the personality of (owner) Roman Abramovich and the culture of the people around him. I knew it wasn't a job for 10 years."

The 46-year-old, who left Chelsea in September 2007, added in The Times: "I love Inter and would love to build for the future here."

"In fact, I am doing it now, because I am not a selfish coach and I'm thinking about the future in terms of youth development and the age structure of my first team."

"But Italy is not the country for this. England is the country - and my football is English football."

Argentina honour Di Stefano

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid's iconic former striker Alfredo Di Stefano was on Friday named as a 'sporting ambassador' of Argentina at a ceremony in the Spanish capital to honour his career.

"You're a great among greats, the history of football cannot be told without you," Argentine ambassador Carlos Bettini told the 83-year-old, who is widely regarded as one of the greatest players of all time.

Bettini officially named him as a sporting ambassador for Argentina and handed him a plaque in honour of his life and career.

"I have always been a team player," Di Stefano, Real's honorary president, told the ceremony at the Argentine embassy.

A two-time European Player of the Year, the Argentine-born forward nicknamed the 'Blond Arrow' played for Real from 1953 to 1963, scoring 418 goals in 510 games.

Last year he was named the best player in Real Madrid's history in an online poll.

Friday's ceremony came on the eve of a friendly match between Spain and Argentina in Madrid to mark the centenary of the Spanish Football Federation.

Galaxy in MLS final

AFP, Los Angeles

Gregg Berhalter and Landon Donovan scored in extra time Friday as the Los Angeles Galaxy secured their berth in Major League Soccer's title match with a 2-0 victory over Houston.

David Beckham's free kick set up Berhalter's goal in the 102nd minute.

Houston's Eddie Robinson tried to clear Omar Gonzalez's header off Beckham's free kick but Berhalter was able to slot the ball into the net from seven yards out.

Donovan added another goal in the 109th minute when he converted a penalty - setting an MLS record for career playoff scoring with 17 goals. The penalty was awarded after Dynamo's Ricardo Clark tripped Alan Gordon.

The Galaxy's triumph in the Western Conference title contest means they will play in

their first MLS Cup final since 2005 on November 22 in Seattle against the winner of Saturday's Eastern Conference final between Chicago and Real Salt Lake.

Not only did they have to overcome Houston, they had to wait out two power outages that saw the lights go out and play halted at the Home Depot Center for a total of 36 minutes.

The Galaxy will make their sixth MLS Cup final appearance since the league began in 1996. The Galaxy won championships in 2002 and 2005.

Another trip to the championship match seemed unlikely early in the season for a club that equalled the league's worst record in 2008, and started 2009 with 11 draws in their first 13 matches.

England star Beckham was at the centre of a storm as he stayed on at Italian club AC Milan four months beyond his original loan period, provoking the ire not only of Galaxy fans but also of teammate Donovan - who questioned Beckham's commitment to the US league in a book.

Lamps out of Arsenal tie

AFP, London



Chelsea will have to do without Frank Lampard for their Premier League summit meeting with Arsenal on November 29 after the England midfielder was ruled out of

action for three weeks.

Lampard suffered a thigh injury while training with the England squad in Qatar on Thursday and flew back to London amid fears he could be sidelined for up to two months.

But after he was assessed by Chelsea's medical staff on Friday morning, a club spokesman predicted that the muscle tear he suffered will need only three weeks to heal.

Chelsea will claim Lampard's 151,000-pounds-a-week (251,000 dollars) wages in compensation from the Football Association (FA) while he is sidelined by an injury that has been linked, in English media reports, to the allegedly cramped conditions on the charter plane England used to fly to Doha for Saturday's friendly with Brazil.

That thesis was dismissed by England's head coach Fabio Capello, who pointed out that the same plane has been used without repercussions by the squad for much longer trips, notably to Trinidad and to Kazakhstan.

England made the seven-hour flight to Doha on Wednesday and Lampard suffered the injury at the start of England's first training session the following morning, which took place in temperatures of more than 30 degrees at a time when most of the players would normally have been having breakfast.

"We always train at this time, except the day before an away game when we train at night in the stadium where the match is going to be played," Capello said.

"Yes, it is hot. But if we are going to need air-conditioning, we have to train inside. The match is being played outside."

"There always seems to be a different story. The plane was exactly the same one as we used to get to Trinidad last year and Kazakhstan earlier this year. We had no injuries then and we won both matches."



Argentina Football Federation president Julio Grondona (L) presents a number 9 jersey of the national team to soccer legend Alfredo Di Stefano in Madrid on Friday.