

Trapattoni demands answers from FIFA

AFP, Rome



Giovanni Trapattoni has launched a furious tirade against FIFA president Sepp Blatter and referee Martin Hansson following his Republic of Ireland team's controversial World Cup elimination at the hands of France.

The French won thanks to a goal from William Gallus after a clear double-handball from Thierry Henry, who set-up his international colleague.

It was not the first time that a team coached by Trapattoni has been eliminated after controversial refereeing as his Italy team lost 2-1 after extra-time to South Korea at the 2002 World Cup, having had two strikes disallowed in normal time.

Speaking to the Gazzetta dello Sport, 'Trap' let fly. "I would like to know what bad I've done to Blatter. If someone could explain that to me at

least I'd be calm," he said.

"Often at schools I hear talk of fairplay. Maybe I'm a dreamer. FIFA violated its own rules by making the top seeded teams play in the play-offs.

"It's treachery. I think even (UEFA president Michel) Platini was against this revolution.

"Now there's this double handball from Henry on Gallus's goal. On top of that (Sebastien Squillaci) was offside. It's murder.

"Even a blind person would have seen Henry's double handball. The linesman, as the pictures showed, was in line with it and had a perfect view.

"I'm sure that Mr Hansson spoke to the fourth official and with whoever sees the slow motion replays.

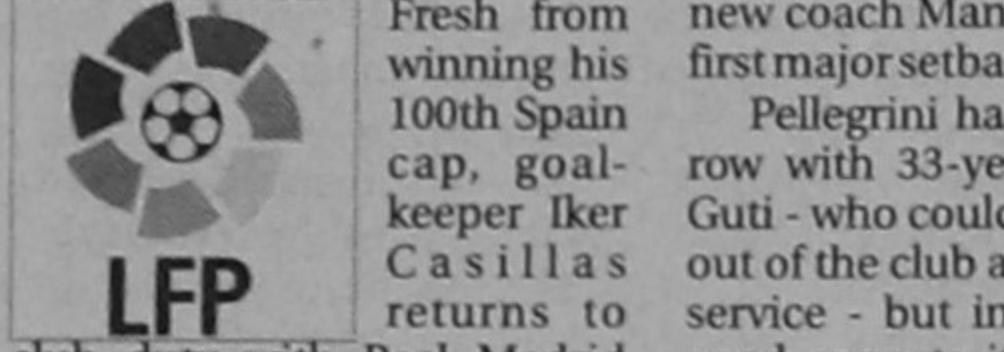
"Why then, knowing that he had made a mistake, did he not change his decision?

"I think the time has come for slow motion replays on the field in extreme cases. In 30 seconds you could avoid colossal injustices."

Ireland appealed to FIFA to have the game replayed but the world football governing body rejected their case.

Casillas shifts Barca focus

AFP, Madrid



Fresh from winning his 100th Spain cap, goalkeeper Iker Casillas returns to club duty with Real Madrid insisting they mustn't start thinking about the 'Clasico' against Barcelona in 10 days' time.

Real sit a point behind champions Barcelona going into Saturday's home match against Racing Santander and Casillas believes Real can't start getting ahead of themselves.

The president (Florentino Perez) has made a great effort for this season and we have to keep looking forward, not to the Champions League final at the Bernabeu (Real's home ground) or the game against Barcelona, but the next game against Racing Santander," said Casillas, who reached the 100-cap mark in last weekend's friendly against Argentina.

Despite heavy summer investment, Real won't be matching Barcelona's treble of last season after they were

knocked out of the King's Cup by third-division Alcorcon in new coach Manuel Pellegrini's first major setback.

Pellegrini has had a public row with 33-year-old veteran Guti - who could be on his way out of the club after 14 years of service - but insists he has a good rapport with his players.

It is a great group and I have a good relationship with the players. I know what I am doing," said the Chilean coach.

Racing hope the appointment of new coach Miguel Angel Portugal can lift the players for the Real trip after the club parted company with Juan Carlos Mandia.

Cristiano Ronaldo has said he is ready to return against Racing following an ankle injury but Pellegrini is likely to choose to give the Portuguese star more time with the game at Barcelona on the horizon.

Barcelona are unbeaten in the league this season, with eight wins and two draws from their first ten games, but have a tough trip to San Mames to face Athletic Bilbao on Saturday night.

"It is vital we win in San Mames and gain more confidence," said Barca goalkeeper

Victor Valdes.

"It's important to retain the lead not just over Real Madrid but any team."

Bilbao were well beaten by Barcelona in the King's Cup final and then the Spanish Super Cup final.

Barcelona striker Thierry Henry has only just returned from injury but has been the talk of the game after his controversial role in France's World Cup qualifying play-off

FIXTURES

Saturday (1700GMT unless otherwise stated)

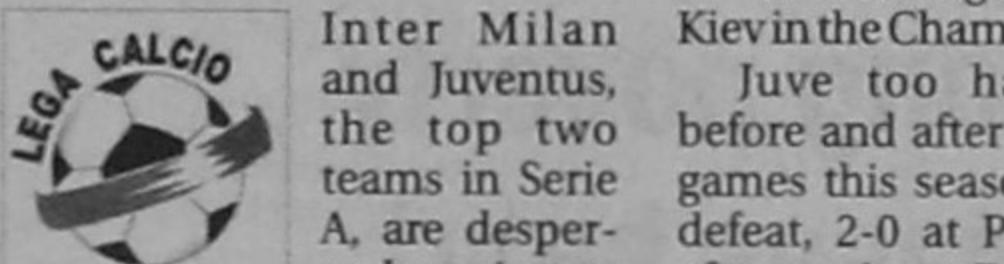
Deportivo La Coruna v Atletico Madrid, Tenerife v Sevilla, Real Madrid v Racing Santander (1900GMT), Athletic Bilbao v Barcelona (2100GMT)

Sunday (1600GMT unless otherwise stated)

Villarreal v Valladolid, Xerez v Sporting Gijon, Espanyol v Getafe, Real Mallorca v Almeria, Malaga v Real Zaragoza (1800GMT), Osasuna v Valencia (2000GMT)

Inter, Juve clash looms

AFP, Rome



Inter Milan and Juventus, the top two teams in Serie A, are desperately trying to avoid talking up their looming table-topping clash.

Leaders Inter have a five-point gap to second-placed Juventus but already thoughts in both Milan and Turin are turning to the 'Derby of Italy', which should be an early 'title decider' in two weeks' time.

First things first, though, both teams have relatively straight-forward matches to negotiate, as well as European commitments before that game comes around.

Champions Inter travel to Bologna on Saturday while Juve host Udinese and both will be more than aware of the dangers of looking too far ahead.

Last time out Inter were held to a 1-1 draw at home to struggling AS Roma, just a few days after earning a crucial

come-from-behind 2-1 victory in Ukraine against Dynamo Kiev in the Champions League.

Juve too have suffered before and after big European games this season - their first defeat, 2-0 at Palermo, came after a trip to Bayern Munich and their second, 3-2 at home to Napoli, was ahead of a trip to Maccabi Haifa.

But Italy captain and Juve centre-back Fabio Cannavaro insists talk of Inter is premature.

"I've heard that many people are already talking about the match against Inter, personally I have decided not to touch it for another two weeks," he said.

"I'm interested in the games against Udinese and Borussia. The first should let us know that we can't let up in the league and the second should book us our place in the Champions League knock-out rounds."

"Fortunately after the international break we will welcome back important players such as (Alessandro) Del Piero, which is a good thing for us given that

FIXTURES

Saturday

Bologna v Inter Milan, Fiorentina v Parma

Sunday

AC Milan v Cagliari, Juventus v Udinese, Livorno v Genoa, Napoli v Lazio, Palermo v Catania, AS Roma v Bari, Sampdoria v Chievo, Siena v Atalanta

Hanover ready for Schalke

AFP, Berlin



Hanover 96 return to Germany's action on Saturday having bid farewell to Robert Enke who committed suicide last week, but with memories of their tragic goalkeeper still fresh in their minds.

The 32-year-old, who had been set to travel with Germany to the World Cup in South Africa next June, flung himself under a train after a long battle with depression and a memorial service was held for him on Sunday.

Many of his team-mates were in tears as they carried out Enke's coffin and less than a week later they will be wearing a special-edition shirt at Schalke's Veltins Arena on Saturday in their first match since the tragedy.

The team has been impressive this week and I believe we



Ireland coach Giovanni Trapattoni gestures during a press conference at the FAI (Football Association of Ireland) Headquarters in Dublin on Thursday.

Liverpool's City test

AFP, London



Newly-rich City are - along with Tottenham and Aston Villa - one of the teams threatening to deny Liverpool their customary place at European football's top table and, after five league defeats already this season, Benitez's men badly need to start acquiring some momentum.

The return of Steven Gerrard to the starting line-up should help with the club captain having benefited from a two-week rest over the international break.

Glen Johnson and Daniel Agger also return from injury but star striker Fernando Torres is ruled out by a calf injury and Benitez appears reluctant to risk 20-million-

pound signing Alberto Aquilani.

The Italy midfielder has yet to start for his new club and is keen to put six months of injury frustration behind him.

"He is very positive and wants to help the team now but we will not take any risks at this stage," Benitez said.

The midfielder, bought to plug the gap created by Xabi Alonso's departure for Real Madrid, looks set to be on the bench on Saturday.

City, who have slipped out of the top four after drawing their last five league matches, will hope Robinho will be able to play some part at Anfield.

The Brazilian star is nearing full fitness after two months out with an ankle injury.

Manchester United will welcome Nemanja Vidic back for the meeting with Everton after he played for 70 minutes of Serbia's 1-0 win over South Korea in midweek. Fellow centreback Rio Ferdinand remains sidelined by a calf problem.

Tottenham are the only club in the top four not in action on Saturday, with Wigan visiting White Hart Lane 24 hours later.

FIXTURES

(1500GMT unless stated):

Saturday

Birmingham v Fulham, Burnley v Aston Villa, Chelsea v Wolves, Hull City v West Ham, Liverpool v Manchester City (1245 GMT), Manchester Utd v Everton (1730 GMT), Sunderland v Arsenal

Sunday

Bolton v Blackburn (1330 GMT), Stoke City v Portsmouth (1600 GMT), Tottenham v Wigan

Who's saying what

AFP, Paris

Ireland coach Giovanni Trapattoni

"Who's saying what about Thierry Henry's handball, which helped send France to the 2010 World Cup finals in South Africa at the expense of the Republic of Ireland."

"Yes, there was a hand, but I'm not the referee. Of course, I kept playing. The referee didn't whistle for handball. I was behind two Irish players, the ball bounced and it hit my hand."

- Henry on the controversial moment at the Stade de France on Wednesday, in which he handled the ball before setting up William Gallas for the winning goal

"You could see the referee hesitate and look at Henry. He could have asked him what he thought. If the referee had asked Henry, he would have said: 'Yes, it was handball'."

"This isn't just a league match, it wasn't just a game of 36 matches over a season. This was a defining game that the whole world was watching. If FIFA believe in fair play and integrity... this is their opportunity to step forward. Thierry Henry's a wonderful footballer, but does he want to

remembered like Maradona was in 1986, does he want his legacy to be this handball?"

- Football Association of Ireland chief executive John Delaney

"Neither the French government nor the Irish government should interfere in the functioning of the international federation."

- French PM Francois Fillon

"Football is the real loser. It's a victory without glory for France."

- Former Ireland coach Mick McCarthy

"We were robbed."

- Irish Star newspaper "Le Cheat"

- Irish Mirror "Hand of the Frog"

- Irish Sun "The hand of God"

- French sport daily L'Equipe "The worst refereeing mistake in 20 years - Martin Hansen robbed Ireland of a place in the World Cup."

- Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet

Duo calls for video tech

Football

AFP, Manchester

Sir Alex Ferguson and Arsene Wenger joined forces Friday to call for video technology to be used in football to avoid controversies like the one that has marred France's qualification for the World Cup.

The issue over whether football should embrace the technology available was reignited on Wednesday night when France's Thierry Henry used his hand to control the ball before crossing for William Gallas to score the goal that ended Ireland's chances of going to South Africa.

Ferguson supports change but the Scot fears that all discussion on the issue is futile because world football's governing body, FIFA, are simply not interested in revolutionising the role of the referee.

He said: "The stance is that they prefer human decision-making rather than technology decision-making and until they change their mind there is nothing you can do about it - you have to convince them, nobody else."

"It is not a matter of asking every player and

manager in the world their opinion because they will all share the same one, as I do myself, that technology can play a part and can help referees in a situation like the other night."

Ferguson's call for the introduction of technological support for match officials was backed by Arsenal boss Wenger, who argued that mistakes like the Henry one could no longer be accepted given the stakes involved.

"Football accepts that a billion people see it, one guy doesn't see it and it is the one who prevents it. It cannot work," Wenger said.

"We cannot accept that an obvious decision is wrong because we do not want to give ourselves all the needed help we can have in the modern game."

"Being at the game, I saw the referee giving a goal knowing that something was wrong and that is really sad. He didn't see it, I can understand, the linesman didn't see it, but they couldn't get any help."

"In the end, he gave a goal, already knowing that it wasn't a goal. We cannot accept that in our sport and you have to do something about it."

Wenger said the referee should be able to consult video footage in such cases.

"We cannot sort out all the cases but we have to sort out as many cases as we can."



PHOTO: AFP