



England star Wayne Rooney (2nd from R) reacts after a challenge by teammate James Milner (lying on the ground) during a training session on the eve of their friendly international against Egypt at London Colney on Tuesday. PHOTO: AFP

## ENGLAND V EGYPT, INT'L FRIENDLY Capello facing chaos

**Football**

AFP, London

Fabio Capello will get a clear indication of how much damage has been done to his World Cup plans during a tumultuous month off the pitch when England face Egypt in Wednesday's friendly at Wembley.

Capello has spent the last 48 hours at England's training base assessing his squad's morale following a series of scandals and injuries that threaten to derail his meticulous preparations for the finals in South Africa.

Since England were last in action against Brazil in November, Capello has had to axe John Terry as captain following the Chelsea defender's alleged affair with Vanessa Perroncel, the former partner of international teammate Wayne Bridge.

Terry could be in for a rough ride against the Africa Cup of Nations winners at Wembley if England fans feel

the centre-back has let his country down.

As if that wasn't enough to give Capello sleepless nights, he also had to watch first-choice left-back Ashley Cole, already sidelined for three months due to an ankle injury, split from his popstar wife Cheryl after a series of tawdry tabloid stories linking him to affairs with a string of women.

But his problems didn't

The match will be shown live on SuperSport3 from 1:30am (Thursday)

end there as Bridge opted to consign himself to international exile rather than face the unpalatable prospect of playing alongside Terry.

Thrown in injuries to Rio Ferdinand, the man Capello had planned to name as his new captain, and right-back Glen Johnson, as well as the poor form of Theo Walcott and Joe Cole, and all the Italian's carefully laid plans suddenly look in danger of crumbling

with England's World Cup opener against the United States less than 100 days away.

The one shining light for Capello in the gloom enveloping his team is the form and attitude of Wayne Rooney.

The Manchester United forward is enjoying the best moment of his life and continued his goal-scoring hot streak with the winner in Sunday's League Cup final against Aston Villa.

It was Rooney's 28th goal of the season and provided further reward for his wise decision to stay out of the spotlight as much as possible and enjoy the quiet life with his family.

Rooney knows better than most just how difficult it can be to grow up in public after a series of youthful indiscretions were splashed over the front pages.

Now married and with a new baby to look after, Rooney is content to live life in the slow lane and his football has reached new heights.

## No return for Nesta: Lippi

SOCERNET

Italy coach Marcello Lippi has revealed Alessandro Nesta will not be coming out of international retirement.

Nesta made his last appearance for Italy against Georgia in October 2006 before injuries forced him to officially call time on his international career the following August.

There have been widespread calls for his comeback thanks to the AC Milan defender's impressive form this season, but he rejected former Azzurri boss Roberto Donadoni's attempts to get him back into the national



ALESSANDRO NESTA

team and the 33-year-old has given Lippi the same response.

"Nesta told me he doesn't feel like it and I believe it's definite," he said. "I tried to explain to him how much he meant to us, it would have even been a shock, but I respect his choice."

Lippi was more tight-lipped over Amauri's Italy future. The Brazilian is to finally be awarded Italian citizenship on Wednesday - the same day as the Azzurri's friendly against Cameroon.

However, Lippi refused to comment on whether that would be too late for the Juventus striker to figure in his World Cup plans. "I'll talk about it in a few days," he said.

## Spain promised hefty 2010 WC win bonus

AFP, Madrid

The 23 members of Spain's national team will each get a bonus of 550,000 euros (745,000 dollars) if their side wins the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, daily newspaper El Mundo reported Tuesday.

The bonus, which is more than double the 250,000 euros that each member of the Spain 2008 championship collected, will be discussed over the coming days between the players and Spain's football federation, it said.

Spain, who take on France in a friendly on Wednesday, are considered to be one of the favourites to win the 2010 World Cup along with Brazil and England.

The England squad has been promised a bonus of 450,000 euros each if they win the June 11-July 11 tournament while the figure of 300,000 euros has been mentioned for Brazil according to El Mundo.

## FRANCE V SPAIN, INT'L FRIENDLY Tough test for Spanish

**Football**

INTERNET, undated

European champions Spain face their biggest test before the World Cup finals on Wednesday, away to France in a high-profile friendly. Spain have not won in France for almost 42 years, and the memories of defeat against "Les Blues" in the 2006 World Cup round of 16 are still painful.

"This will be an important test for us," said Carles Puyol, Spain's defensive lynchpin, on Sunday.

"We were a bit unlucky to lose to them in 2006," he added. "They are always a good team, and they will make things difficult for us."

The journeys of "La Roja" to Paris have rarely been happy occasions.

Their last trip to France, for the friendly which inaugurated the Stade de France in 1998, was a 1-0 defeat in 1998. "La Roja" then performed poorly at the 1998 World Cup finals, failing to reach the second round.

In 1984, Spain lost the

European Championship final to the France of Michel Platini in Paris.

There are no surprises in the Spain squad, which was announced by national manager Vicente del Bosque on Friday.

Sevilla striker Alvaro Negredo has been given the nod ahead of Athletic Bilbao's Fernando Llorente.

The only (very small) controversy in Spain surrounding

the match will be shown live on SuperSport6 from 1:30am (Thursday)

Del Bosque's choices centres on whether Diego Lopez of Villarreal, Andres Palop of Sevilla or Victor Valdes of Barcelona should be the first-choice keeper, behind Iker Casillas of Real Madrid and Liverpool's Jose Reina.

Apart from that, there is a general consensus that Del Bosque is picking the right players and preparing well for South Africa.

He said on Friday that "this list (of players) is not the list for South Africa... There are

many players qualified to join (the squad) and we will be attentive to their development this spring."

Del Bosque denied the allegation made in the media that he had asked Liverpool coach Rafa Benitez to be careful with the physical state of striker Fernando Torres, with the World Cup in mind.

Spain have no injury problems now that Torres and Barca playmaker Xavi are fit again.

Spain's other pre-World Cup friendlies will be against Lithuania, South Korea and Poland.

Embattled France manager Raymond Domenech, meanwhile, is hoping that a win on Wednesday will reduce the pressure on him.

France needed a controversial play-off against Ireland to qualify for the World Cup, with Thierry Henry clearly handling the ball in the build-up to the crucial goal.

Domenech has raised eyebrows by calling up for the friendly players that he has not previously looked towards, such as Hatem Ben Arfa, Mickael Ciani, Benoit Cheyrou and Louis Saha.

## Robot booters wow crowd in Germany

AFP, Hanover

Forget Cristiano Ronaldo, Wayne Rooney or Lionel Messi. With less than 100 days to the World Cup, it was four pint-sized robots that wowed crowds in Germany Tuesday with their footballing skills.

The four robots, about 60 centimetres (23 inches) high, named Rajesh, Penny, Sheldon and Leonard, part of the team that won the Robot Football World Cup in Austria 2009, played out an exhibition match at the world's biggest high-tech fair being held in Hanover.

The white robots use colour and line recognition to "see" the ball (orange), pitch (green) and goals (yellow and blue), explained Wiebke Sauerland from the B-Human team, part of the University of Bremen, which developed them.

By "seeing" the white lines on the pitch, the robots can tell where they are and adjust their movements towards the ball accordingly. When they sense they are near the ball, they kick out towards the goal.

"You programme them and then they do what they have been told to do. Normally," said Sauerland from the sidelines at the CeBIT fair, echoing many a football manager's agony.

The team from Bremen is due to compete in the 2010 World Cup for robots, held in Singapore on June 19, right in the middle of the "real" tournament in South Africa.

"We are confident, but there is a team from the United States that is really good," she said. The last competition drew 23 teams from around the world.

## MONEY TABLE

The Deloitte Football Money League table for 2008/09 (position, last year's position, club, country, revenue in millions of pounds, revenue in millions of euros):

01 (01) Real Madrid (ESP)	341.9
02 (03) FC Barcelona (ESP)	311.7
03 (02) Manchester United (ENG)	278.5
04 (04) Bayern Munich (GER)	246.6
05 (06) Arsenal (ENG)	224.0
06 (05) Chelsea (ENG)	206.4
07 (08) Liverpool (ENG)	184.8
08 (11) Juventus (ITA)	173.1
09 (10) Inter Milan (ITA)	167.4
10 (07) AC Milan (ITA)	167.4
11 (15) Hamburg SV (GER)	124.9
12 (09) AS Roma (ITA)	124.7
13 (12) Lyon (FRA)	118.9
14 (16) Marseille (FRA)	113.5
15 (14) Tottenham Hotspur (ENG)	113.0
16 (13) Schalke 04 (GER)	106.0
17 (n/a) Werder Bremen (GER)	97.7
18 (20) Borussia Dortmund (GER)	88.1
19 (n/a) Manchester City (ENG)	87.0
20 (17) Newcastle United (ENG)	86.0

## Real break 400m barrier

**Football**

AFP, London

Real Madrid have become the first sports team in the world to generate annual revenue in excess of 400 million euros (362 million pounds, 543 million dollars), according to figures compiled by accountancy firm Deloitte.

The latest edition of the Deloitte Football Money League published on Tuesday also shows Spanish giants Real as the world's largest revenue generating football club, for the fifth consecutive year.

Real's broadcast income of 161 million euros was greater than the total revenue of all but the top ten clubs in the Deloitte table.

Their arch domestic rivals Barcelona moved up into second place, primarily as a result of winning last year's Champions League final while Barca's beaten opponents Manchester United dropped down into third position, partly as a result of sterling's depreciation against the Euro.

Although the Premier League saw Portsmouth enter administration last week, and doubts persist over the huge debts being carried by United, who recently launched a 500 million pounds bond issue scheme, seven English clubs feature in Deloitte's top 20 with Arsenal moving up into fifth place.

Figures in the report showed the world's most financially successful football clubs had managed to weather problems caused by the global economic downturn.

Overall revenues for the top 20 clubs increased in 2008/09 and were over 3.9 billion

euros, as the report said "top clubs showed relative resistance to the economic downturn".

Dan Jones, partner in Deloitte's sport business group, said: "Real Madrid's 10 percent increase in revenue to 401 million euros (342 million pounds) came despite a relatively disappointing season domestically and in Europe."

"Broadcast income provided Real with its largest increase in revenue, and at 161 million euros (137 million pounds) is now greater than the total revenue of all but the top ten Money League clubs.

"Barcelona's unprecedented on-pitch success, winning a domestic double and the Champions League, helped drive a revenue increase by 57 million euros, the largest absolute increase of any Money League club, to 366 million euros.

"This resulted in a Spanish one-two at the top of the Money League as, like in Rome last May, Barcelona proved just too strong for Manchester United. United slipped to third and, like other English clubs, were impacted by the continuing depreciation of the Pound Sterling against the Euro.

"The scale of this is shown by the fact that if exchange rates remained at their June 2007 level, United would be top of the Money League table."

Chelsea, Liverpool, Tottenham Hotspur, Manchester City and Newcastle, despite being in the second-tier Championship, were the other English clubs in the top 20.

UEFA chief Michel Platini has repeatedly hit out at 'financial doping' of clubs, in moves seen as thinly veiled

attacks on the financial structure of several leading English teams.

But Jones said: "Whilst there has been much recent comment on the finances of English football clubs, we believe the fundamentals of football remain strong.

"Financial problems experienced at the very highest level are far more likely to be a result of mismanagement, weak cost control or a lack of available credit than any problems with revenue generation."

All of the 'big five' European leagues featured in the list with Germany contributing five clubs, Italy four, and France and Spain represented by two teams each.

## Hamsik Slovak's best player

AFP, Bratislava

Marek Hamsik's role in capturing Slovakia to their first ever World Cup finals this year in South Africa won him the 2009 player of the year award on Monday.

The 22-year-old midfielder - who plays for Serie A highfliers Napoli - edged out VfL Bochum striker Stanislav Sestak and Legia Warsaw goalkeeper Jan Mucha in the poll.

Slovakian national coach Vladimir Weiss was named coach of the year.

Slovakia have been drawn in Group F for June's finals alongside defending champions Italy, New Zealand and Paraguay.

## ARGENTINA V GERMANY, INT'L FRIENDLY Battle of heavyweights

**Football**

AFP, Berlin

Two World Cup favourites lock horns in Munich on Wednesday night as Diego Maradona's struggling Argentinian all-stars take on solid three-times champions Germany.

Ninety-nine days before the World Cup starts in South Africa, the clash finds the flamboyant "El Diez" under pressure after the 1978 and 1986 winners came within a whisker of not qualifying for the first time in 40 years.

The Albiceleste eventually made it though thanks to a goal in the dying minutes against Uruguay in Montevideo, and Argentina's greatest-ever footballer has found that coaching the national side is not as easy as playing for it.

Since taking over in late 2008 the team has been woefully inconsistent, while his suggestion to journalists in October to "suck it and keep sucking it" earned him a two-month ban from FIFA, football's governing body.

Argentina, drawn against Nigeria, South Korea and Greece in the World Cup, has won its last two friendlies, beating Costa Rica 3-2 and Jamaica 2-1, but Maradona has offered few clues on the makeup of the final team.

He has used around 100 different players, and with only the Germany game and two possible fixtures against Canada and Israel in May before the World Cup, time is running short.

His 20-man squad to face Germany includes 17 foreign-based players including Barcelona forward Lionel Messi, FIFA's world player of the year 2009, Manchester City striker Carlos Tevez

## ARGENTINA V GERMANY, INT'L FRIENDLY Battle of heavyweights

and Newcastle midfielder Jonas Gutierrez. Inter Milan trio Nicolas Burdisso, Walter Samuel and Diego Milito, Palermo forward Javier Pastore and Olympiakos midfielder Jesus Datolo were meanwhile recalled.

"All the players are being tested," Maradona said. "The ones who are not in this list have the same opportunities. I already phoned the 50 per cent of the players who will play the World Cup."

Germany, by contrast, in Group D with Ghana, Serbia and Australia, have been the model of cool efficiency, finishing top of their qualifying group unbeaten, with eight wins out of 10 including two over a fancied Russian side.

Coach Joachim Loew has brought just two new players into his 26-man squad, Bayern Munich and Bayer Leverkusen midfielders Thomas Mueller and Toni Kroos, in what will be Germany's final match before the final choice is made.

With worries about firepower up front, Miroslav Klose and Mario Gomez being out of sorts of late, Loew may turn to Brazilian-born Cacau, who has scored seven goals in his last three matches.

In midfield Loew has Chelsea's Michael Ballack, Bayern Munich's Bastian Schweinsteiger, Lazio's Thomas Hitzlsperger and Hamburg's Piotr Trochowski all fit and raring to go.

"We are looking forward to it. We are definitely well prepared... It is an important test for us - and we want to win," defender Philipp Lahm said on Monday.

"Although it's a friendly there's a lot at stake."



Germany goalkeeper Rene Adler (L) is about to kick the ball during a training session in Munich on Monday ahead of their friendly match against Argentina tonight. PHOTO: AFP

## 'SA ready for WC'

AFP, Durban



FIFA on Tuesday brushed aside lingering doubts about South Africa's readiness for the World Cup, as cities across the nation staged dance parties and celebrations to launch the 100-day countdown.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter insisted the country was ready to host Africa's first World Cup, which kicks off June 11, and said he was bothered by naysayers who worry South Africa won't pull it off.

"It's not so much that there's pessimism, but that it's always being thrown into doubt. It's bad, because when there's doubt, there's no confidence. For me and FIFA, that bothers us sometimes," Blatter told a news conference in Durban's new stadium.

"There is no doubt, no doubt," he said. "Let's go now, let's have this World Cup, and then we will discuss end of July."

He spoke after a tour of South Africa's 10 stadiums that will host the month-long tournament. Construction is complete at all the stadiums, and only two have yet to host games to try out the new facilities.

this inspection tour," FIFA secretary general Jerome Valcke said.

The 100-day countdown dominated South African media Tuesday, with celebrations planned in all the country's main cities.

Schoolchildren were invited to ditch their uniforms for football jerseys, while Johannesburg planned a street party in the Sandton business district to teach people the "diski" -- a dance inspired by football moves that is the centrepiece of the country's marketing campaign.

Durban was deploying teams to taxi ranks and train stations across the city to pass out 100-day badges, while in front of City Hall a pile of 100 footballs was set out, with one to be given away each day until June 11.

South Africa has poured \$3 billion rand (3.9 billion dollars, 3.2 billion euros) into preparations for the tournament.

In addition to the stadiums, major upgrades to airports in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Bloemfontein are complete, while Durban's new airport is set to open on May 1.

FIFA said that 2.2 of the 2.9 million tickets have already been sold, even though fewer foreign fans are expected to attend.

South Africa is banking on 450,000 foreign visitors, though the actual number could be lower, with many fans overseas still recovering from the shock of the global recession.