

Ronaldinho omitted

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

There was no place for Ronaldinho or Adriano in Brazil coach Dunga's 23-man squad for the World Cup, which was announced on Tuesday, though, Ronaldinho still has a slight hope as he was named on a seven player reserve list.

Both players have fallen out of favour during Dunga's reign and were not expected to be selected for the June 11-July 11 tournament in South Africa.

The 30-year-old Ronaldinho, part of the 2002 World Cup-winning team, made his last appearance for Brazil in April 2009 while Dunga had expressed concern over Adriano's fitness.

"We did all we could to get him (Adriano) to full fitness, but in the end we had to make a decision," said Dunga.

Ronaldinho's AC Milan team-mate Alexandre Pato was also overlooked, with Wolfsburg striker Grafite taking the fourth forward berth alongside Robinho, Luis Fabiano and Nilmar.

"The players who I have called up enjoy my complete confidence," said Dunga, who is seeking to emulate Franz Beckenbauer and Mario Zagallo in winning the World Cup both as a player and a coach.

"Unfortunately I was only able to select 23 players."

"I judged them on their commitment, attitude, and the ability of the players to assume responsibility and at the same time inject passion into their performances."

Brazil, five-time World Cup winners, have been drawn in Group G alongside Ivory Coast, Portugal and North Korea.

SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS: Julio Cesar (Inter/ITA), Doni (Roma/ITA), Heurelho Gomes (Tottenham/ENG)

DEFENDERS: Luisao (Benfica/POR), Lucio (Inter/ITA), Juan (Roma/ITA), Thiago Silva (AC Milan/ITA), Daniel Alves (Barcelona/ESP), Maicon (Inter/ITA), Michel Bastos (Lyon/FRA), Gilberto (Cruzeiro)

MIDFIELDERS: Gilberto Silva (Panathinaikos/GRE), Josue (Wolfsburg/GER), Elano (Galatasaray/TUR), Kaka (Real Madrid/ESP), Ramires (Benfica/POR), Felipe Melo (Juventus/ITA), Julio Baptista (Roma/ITA), Kleberson (Flamengo)

FORWARDS: Luis Fabiano (Sevilla/ESP), Nilmar (Villarreal/ESP), Grafite (Wolfsburg/GER), Robinho (Santos)

RESERVES: Ronaldinho (AC Milan/ITA), Alex (Chelsea/ENG), Marcelo (Real Madrid/ESP), Carlos Eduardo (Hoffenheim/GER), Sandro (Internacional Porto Alegre), Diego Tardelli (Atletico Mineiro), Paulo Ganso (Santos).

Maradona's shocker

INTERNET, undated

Inter Milan duo Esteban Cambiasso and Javier Zanetti have been left out of Argentina's provisional 30-man squad for this summer's World Cup.

Full-back Zanetti and midfielder Cambiasso have been omitted despite playing a key role in Inter's march to the Champions League final.

Coach Diego Maradona did find places for Liverpool's Maxi Rodriguez and Newcastle's Fabricio Coloccini.

Maradona will have to reduce his squad to 23 players by 1 June.

There are a total of five English-based players in the party, the others being Manchester City striker Carlos Tevez, Newcastle midfielder Jonas Gutierrez and Liverpool midfielder Javier Mascherano.

However, Real Madrid midfielder Fernando Gago and Barcelona central defender Gabriel Milito have been omitted.

Cambiasso, who helped Argentina reach the World Cup quarterfinals in 2002, has never played under Maradona but the coach was under pressure to select the 29-year-old because of his fine form for Inter.

Zanetti, a veteran of the 1998 and 2002 World Cups, has a record 136 caps for his country.

Inter, though, do have striker Diego Milito and defender Walter Samuel in the squad, while Bayern defender Martin Demichelis has also been selected.

Maradona, who has called up over 100 players during his year and a half in charge, picked several Argentina-based players who impressed him in a 4-0 friendly win over Haiti last week.

Colon defender Ariel Garce, who had won two caps in 2003 as a River Plate player, made his third international appearance against the Haitians.

Midfielder Juan Mercier, who also earned a third cap against Haiti, has been impressive for Argentine title favourites Argentinos Juniors.

Boca Juniors striker Martin Palermo is among seven forwards, which includes Barcelona star Lionel Messi.

Maradona, speaking before naming his squad, said he wanted Messi to roam freely during the World Cup in South Africa.

"I don't want him stationed on the [right touch] line," said Maradona. "All the balls have to pass through him."

"I'm going to defend with four centre-backs but I'm also going to have full-backs available in case we need to improve coming out of defence."

Argentina are in Group B together with Greece, Nigeria and South Korea.

SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS: Sergio Romero (AZ Alkmaar/NED), Mariano Andujar (Catania/ITA), Diego Pozo (Colon)

DEFENDERS: Nicolas Otamendi (Velez Sarsfield), Martin Demichelis (Bayern Munich/GER), Walter Samuel (Inter Milan/ITA), Gabriel Heinze (Marseille/FRA), Nicolas Burdisso (AS Roma/ITA), Clemente Rodriguez (Estudiantes), Juan Manuel Insaurralde (Newell's Old Boys), Ariel Garce (Colon), Fabricio Coloccini (Newcastle/ENG)

MIDFIELDERS: Jonas Gutierrez (Newcastle/ENG), Maximiliano Rodriguez (Liverpool/ENG), Javier Mascherano (Liverpool/ENG), Juan Sebastian Veron (Estudiantes), Jose Sosa (Estudiantes), Angel Di Maria (Benfica/POR), Juan Mercier (Argentinos Juniors), Javier Pastore (Palermo/ITA), Mario Bolatti (Fiorentina/ITA), Jesus Datolo (Olympiakos/GRE), Sebastian Blanco (Lanus)

FORWARDS: Lionel Messi (FC Barcelona/ESP), Gonzalo Higuain (Real Madrid/ESP), Martin Palermo (Boca Juniors), Sergio Aguero (Atletico Madrid/ESP), Diego Milito (Inter Milan/ITA), Carlos Tevez (Manchester City/ENG), Ezequiel Lavezzi (Napoli/ITA).



French forward Jimmy Briand (R) tackles midfielder Yann Mvila (C) during a training session in Rennes on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Terry's WC fate in balance

AFP, London

England defender John Terry's hopes of playing in the World Cup hung in the balance Wednesday after the Chelsea defender was rushed to hospital with a suspected fracture in his right foot.

In a statement, Chelsea said their captain had taken a knock in training ahead of Saturday's FA Cup final against Portsmouth and "has gone to hospital for a precautionary scan on his right foot."

Chelsea added: "He left Cobham walking freely in a protective boot, and we await the results which are expected on Thursday."

If a fracture is confirmed, Terry will have little chance of featuring in England's campaign in South Africa, which kicks off on June 12 against the United States in Rustenburg.

The loss of Terry would be a major blow to England coach Fabio Capello and would compound what has been a tough season for the defender, who was stripped of the national team's captaincy earlier this year following revelations of an extra-marital affair.

Bayern hope to keep Ribery

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich boss Christian Nerlinger admitted Wednesday he is hopeful of keeping French midfielder star Franck Ribery for next season as the German giants wait to hear Ribery's Champions League fate.

Ribery will discover on May 18 whether he will face Inter Milan in the Champions League final four days later when the case concerning his three-match ban is heard by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

Bayern's director of sport Nerlinger has admitted the club's bosses met with Ribery's advisors before the Champions League semi-final victory at Lyon last month and there was a positive discussion about extending Ribery's contract.

"I do not deny that," Nerlinger told Sport Bild.

"We are in close contact with Franck."

"Overall, we got the impression that he enjoys his situation in Munich very much."

"Now we think there is a strong possibility that we can extend his contract."

Ribery has a contract at Bayern until July 2011, but Munich want him to sign an extension after this season, rather than risk losing him on a free transfer in a year's time.

Real Madrid had been reported to be very interested in signing the 27-year-old before he was questioned by police investigating the under-age call-girl scandal which has rocked the French football team.

France overlook Vieira

AFP, Paris

Patrick Vieira's international career appears to be over after he was omitted from the 30-man provisional World Cup squad announced by France coach Raymond Domenech on Tuesday.

Vieira, the former captain and a World Cup winner in 1998, joined Manchester City from Inter Milan in January in a bid to prove his fitness after struggling with injuries in recent seasons.

He will not be given a chance to add to his 107 caps in South Africa though, and Domenech revealed the decision not to choose him had been a difficult one.

"We talked about this for a long time," said the France coach.

"I had to judge him on the professional side. It is a very emotional decision."

Vieira said he accepted Domenech's choice but admitted to feeling aggrieved that he had not been contacted personally.

"I still feel in good shape. I'm not questioning this list. I respect his choice," Vieira told Infospport.

"I would have accepted it more easily if he'd called me yesterday (Monday) rather than learning about it like that. That's what hurt."

Real Madrid striker Karim Benzema was the other high-profile player to miss out, barely 10 months after his 35 million euro transfer from Lyon.

Domenech held out a slight hope for Benzema - whose attitude at the failed Euro 2008 tournament provoked veteran Claude Makelele to launch a tirade of criticism at him - but more for the years to come than for the finals.

"It's not definitively over for him with regard to the finals," said Domenech, who stands down after France's final match at the finals.

"One can call up anybody prior to the first match. He (Benzema) has talent but he has had a difficult year. I made a choice on some criteria that are not so evident but he is of an age where he can dream of better days ahead."

Domenech, who has enjoyed a love hate relationship with media and public alike with the latter emotion more to the fore in recent years since he surprisingly guided France to the penalty shootout defeat to Italy in the 2006 World Cup final, said that the recent scandal surrounding star playmaker Franck Ribery and an underage prostitute, which also included another member of the squad Sidney Govou as well as Benzema had not played a role in his selections.

"I am going to be frank: No. There was no doubt because of that: it is not one of my criteria, it is the quality of the players on the pitch and what they can give which counts."

"As for the mocking press the affair has received, that is not my business. Me, I take care of the football side, that is sufficient, and that is a lot of work. I leave the rest of the stuff that concerns the players outside of football to the comedians, to the media. I hope that we don't make anyone laugh during the World Cup."

Striker Djibril Cisse received his first call-up since being cut from France's squad prior to the 2008 European Championship, after netting 29 goals this season for Greek champions Panathinaikos.

There were also first call-ups for 25-year-old Marseille winger Mathieu Valbuena and 28-year-old Bordeaux centre-back Marc Planus, and a surprise selection for 19-year-old Rennes midfielder Yann M'Vila.

"It's a surprise for me, a huge surprise," M'Vila, a France Under-21 international, told RTL.

"Personally it's a dream to play at a World Cup. It's a big surprise to be in the 30. Why not make the 23?"

Domenech revealed his provisional squad live on French television channel TF1's main evening news programme, having earlier indicated that he would be naming his final 23-man squad for the June 11-July 11 tournament.

"There is a team and there are those who will come alongside," said Domenech. "They have to bring something: a bit of freshness, a bit of calmness, a bit of aggressiveness. Each in their own way can bring a little extra."

"It is a sign for them that they are on the right path."

The 30-man list will have to be trimmed to 23 by June 1, 10 days prior to France's opening match with Uruguay in Group A.

Mexico and hosts South Africa are France's other group stage opponents.

SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS: Hugo Lloris (Lyon), Steve Mandanda (Marseille), Cedric Carrasso (Bordeaux), Mickael Landreau (Lille)

DEFENDERS: William Gallas (Arsenal/ENG), Eric Abidal (Barcelona/ESP), Bakary Sagna (Arsenal/ENG), Patrice Evra (Manchester United/ENG), Rod Fanni (Rennes), Gael Clichy (Arsenal/ENG), Marc Planus (Bordeaux), Anthony Revellere (Lyon), Adil Rami (Lille), Sebastien Squillaci (Sevilla/ESP)

MIDFIELDERS: Abou Diaby (Arsenal/ENG), Alou Diarra (Bordeaux), Lassana Diarra (Real Madrid/ESP), Yoann Gourcuff (Bordeaux), Yann Mvila (Rennes), Florent Malouda (Chelsea/ENG), Jeremy Toulalan (Lyon)

FORWARDS: Nicolas Anelka (Chelsea/ENG), Hatem Ben Arfa (Marseille), Jimmy Briand (Rennes), Djibril Cisse (Panathinaikos/GRE), Andre-Pierre Gignac (Toulouse), Sidney Govou (Lyon), Thierry Henry (Barcelona/ESP), Franck Ribery (Bayern Munich/GER), Mathieu Valbuena (Marseille)



PHOTO: AFP

Germany striker Stefan Kiessling (R) signs an autograph as he arrives at the Hilton Hotel in Duesseldorf on Wednesday ahead of their friendly match against Malta.

Ruud misses the cut

AFP, Hoenderloo

Veteran Ruud van Nistelrooy was the big name missing from the provisional 30-man Netherlands squad for the 2010 World Cup, announced by the team's coach Bert van Marwijk on Tuesday.

The 34-year-old striker, who has scored 33 goals in his 64 international appearances, moved from Real Madrid to Hamburg this season in an ultimately fruitless bid to increase his playing time and impress the coach.

"I congratulated Ruud: he has made great efforts to try to push for his selection," said Van Marwijk.

"But he has been inactive for a very long time because of his knee problems. It was tough for him to come back to his old level."

There are eight forwards in the squad

Also missing from the squad is AC Milan's Clarence Seedorf, but that comes as no surprise as he has never been picked by Van Marwijk, who will cut this squad to 23 on June 1.

The Dutch - who have yet to win the World Cup despite reaching two finals in 1974 and 1978

- have been drawn in Group E alongside Denmark, Japan and Cameroon for the June 11-July 11 World Cup in South Africa.

They have friendlies slated against Mexico (May 26), Ghana (June 1) and Hungary (June 5).

SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS: Sander Vorm (FC Utrecht), Maarten Stekelenburg (Ajax), Michel Bosker (FC Twente)

DEFENDERS: Vurnon Anita (Ajax), Khalid Boulahrouz (Stuttgart/GER), John Heitinga (Everton/ENG), Joris Mathijsen (Hamburg/GER), Andre Ooijer (PSV), Giovanni van Bronckhorst (Feyenoord), Gregory van der Wiel (Ajax), Ron Vlaar (Feyenoord), Edson Braafheid (Celtic/SCO)

MIDFIELDERS: Ibrahim Afellay (PSV), Orlando Engelaar (PSV), Nigel de Jong (Manchester City/ENG), Wesley Sneijder (Inter Milan/ITA), Stijn Schaars (AZ Alkmaar), Demy de Zeeuw (Ajax), Wout Brama (FC Twente), David Mendes da Silva (AZ Alkmaar), Mark van Bommel (Bayern Munich/GER), Rafael van der Vaart (Real Madrid/ESP)

FORWARDS: Ryan Babel (Liverpool/ENG), Eljero Elia (Hamburg/GER), Klaas-Jan Huntelaar (AC Milan/ITA), Dirk Kuyt (Liverpool/ENG), Robin van Persie (Arsenal/ENG), Otman Bakkal (PSV), Jeremain Lens (AZ Alkmaar), Arjen Robben (Bayern Munich/GER)

Hitzfeld sets the tone

AFP, Zurich

Switzerland's coach Otmar Hitzfeld on Tuesday opted for experience in his squad for the World Cup on Tuesday and set the tone for their opening match in South Africa against Spain.

"We want to win," Hitzfeld replied when he was asked if the Swiss would go for a draw against the European champions in Group H on June 16.

However, the experienced German coach underlined that Spanish concerns about injured stars such as Cesc Fabregas made little

difference to the task ahead.

"I don't see any personnel problems with Spain. Spain can field two whole teams," he told journalists.

Hitzfeld has injury worries of his own, even though he announced his preferred squad of 23 here instead of a preliminary 30, with seven mainly young reserves on standby.

"I think it's important that there's a certain degree of experience in a World Cup team," he said.

"If nothing happens then the 23 should be the final squad. I'm giving the 23 my trust and they must also earn that trust."

Hitzfeld broke a cardinal rule he had set when he took over the helm of the Swiss national side by including Philippe Senderos even though the Arsenal defender has played little for his club this season.

"I discovered it was hard to stick to that... A good example is Senderos," Hitzfeld smiled.

"Playing with youngsters in the World Cup is a big risk, it's okay in the championship but this is the pinnacle."

The squad included stalwarts such as FC Twente striker Blaise Nkufo, injury-plagued Alexander Frei, Auxerre defender Stephane Grichting and 33-year-old midfielder Hakan Yakin, whom Hitzfeld openly labelled as a super-sub.

But there was space in the 23 for Sampdoria's Marco Padalino as well as an unexpected call up for under-21 international Xherdan Shaqiri.

"He's the kind of player who can live up a side with his touch... We have a young all-rounder," he said.

There was no space for gifted Colombian-born striker Johann Vonlanthen, who has had a chequered club career over the past two seasons and came down with a knee injury on Tuesday.

Switzerland face Spain, Honduras and Chile in Group H of the June 11-July 11 World Cup finals in South Africa.

SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS: Diego Benaglio (Wolfsburg/GER), Johnny Leoni (Zurich/SUI), Marco Woelfli (Young Boys/SUI)

DEFENDERS: Mario Eggmann (Hanover/GER), Stephanie Grichting (Auxerre/FRA), Stephan Lichtsteiner (Lazio/ITA), Philippe Senderos (Arsenal/ENG), Christoph Spycher (Eintracht Frankfurt/GER), Steve Von Bergen (Hertha Berlin/GER), Reto Ziegler (Sampdoria/ITA)

MIDFIELDERS: Tranquillo Barnetta (Bayer Leverkusen/GER), Valon Behrami (West Ham/ENG), Gelson Fernandes (St Etienne/FRA), Benjamin Huggel (Basel/SUI), Goekhan Inler (Udinese/ITA), Marco Padalino (Sampdoria/ITA), Pirmin Schwegler (Eintracht Frankfurt/GER), Xherdan Shaqiri (Basel/SUI), Hakan Yakin (Lucerne/SUI)

STRIKERS: Eren Derdiyok (Bayer Leverkusen/GER), Alexander Frei (Basel/SUI), Blaise Nkufo (Twente/NED), Marco Streller (Basel/SUI)

RESERVES: Fabio Coltorti (Racing Santander/ESP), Francois Affolter (Young Boys/SUI), Fabian Lustenberger (Hertha Berlin/GER), Albert Bunjaku (Nuremberg/GER), Nassim Ben Khalifa (Grasshopper/SUI), Valentin Stocker (Basel/SUI), Ludovic Magnin (FC Zurich)

IN BRIEF

Bronckhorst set to retire

AFP, The Hague

Veteran Dutch defender Giovanni van Bronckhorst announced Wednesday that he will retire after the June 11-July 11 World Cup.

The 35-year-old, who has scored five goals in winning 97 caps for the Netherlands, has played for Waalwijk (1993-94), Feyenoord (1994-98, 2007-10), Rangers (1998-2001), Arsenal (2001-3) and Barcelona (2003-7).

Van Bronckhorst will join the backroom staff at his current club Feyenoord next season after returning from South Africa and take his first steps to a coaching badge.

Black Cats snap up Riveros

AFP, Sunderland

Sunderland manager Steve Bruce signed Paraguayan midfielder Cristian Riveros from Mexican club Cruz Azul on Tuesday.

Riveros, who has been named in his country's provisional World Cup squad, agreed a three-year contract with the Premier League club and joins compatriot Paulo Da Silva at the Stadium of Light.