



Portugal players jog during their morning training session at the Covilha Sports Complex on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

Ballack blow for Germany

AFP, Berlin



With Germany bidding for their fourth World Cup title in South Africa, defender Philipp Lahm admits there is an air of expectation on Joachim Loew's side to prove themselves.

After victories in Switzerland in 1954, on home soil in 1974 and in Italy in 1990, there is expectations east of the Rhein, despite the loss to injury of skipper Michael Ballack, that another World Cup trophy awaits in Johannesburg on July 11.

Lahm says consistent success has bred a culture of expectation in Germany with the current squad eager to add to the legacy.

"We've been very successful in the past, and that's an inspiration to the next generations," said Lahm.

"You only have to look at Germany's record at major tournaments.

"We won the World Cup in 1954, '74 and '90, and the European Championship in '72, '80 and '96.

"We've grown up with the conviction that Germany are always good enough to reach the final.

"We were third at the World Cup and second at Euro 2008, so our goal for 2010

is to make the final and win the trophy."

While Germany finished runners-up at the 2002 World Cup finals in Japan and Korea, third when they hosted the tournament in 2006 and lost to Spain in the Euro 2008 final, they have largely been untested in the two years since Vienna.

They beat Russia home and away to qualify for the World Cup, including a 1-0 win in Moscow last October, but back-to-back home defeats by England in November 2008 and minnows Norway in February 2009 caused concern.

Germany have an uncanny knack of coming into form during major championships, but Loew has suffered a series of set backs in the year leading to South Africa 2010.

The tragic suicide of Hanover goalkeeper Robert Enke in November 2009 and injury to Leverkusen's Rene Adler last month means Loew looks set to rely on third-choice goalkeeper Manuel Neuer in South Africa.

There are also concerns up front with first-choice strikers Lukas Podolski and Miroslav Klose both failing to impress in the Bundesliga.

Podolski, 24, voted the best young player at the last World Cup, failed to make the grade at Bayern Munich whom he joined after Germany 2006 while a move back to his former club Cologne has

yielded just two goals all season.

Ex-Germany goalkeeper Uli Stein even recently accused Podolski of being 'lazy'.

Likewise, Klose, 31, has failed to impress this season with just three goals for Bayern having lost his place in the first team to striker Ivica Olic and the Croatian's purple patch has helped Munich reach the Champions League final.

But both Podolski and Klose have both played a big part in getting Germany to South Africa with Klose's hat-trick in Helsinki rescued a 3-3 draw in September 2008 and he scored the winner against Russia in Moscow in 2009.

Podolski's late equaliser in Hamburg against Finland last October meant Germany finished the World Cup qualifiers unbeaten.

Klose's reputation in the Germany shirt is unquestionable.

His record of 48 goals in 93 internationals puts him third in the Germany all-time scoring chart, behind only living legend Gerd Muller (68 goals) and former GDR goal-getter Joachim Streich (55).

Ballack's withdrawal after picking up a bad ankle injury for Chelsea in the FA Cup final though will be hard to swallow with his vast experience of 98 caps and 42 goals deemed as essential to Loew's plans.

Champions still a threat

AFP, Rome



There are two ways of looking at reigning champions Italy at the World Cup in South Africa in June.

The first is that which coach Marcello Lippi will be focussing on, the fact that they are the holders, they have bags of experience from Lippi himself right through the team and they have a history and a culture of winning.

The other, though, is that this is a team in crisis with no star players, a squad made up mostly of players unknown outside Italy and a team that is usually less than convincing on the pitch.

But first the pluses which starts of course with Lippi, the coach who led Italy to the title four years ago before stepping down, only to retake the reins two years later following Roberto Donadoni's sacking.

Lippi is one of the premier coaches in Italy who in two separate spells with Juventus led them to five Serie A titles, an Italian Cup, the Champions League and three other finals in Europe's top competition.

He then went on to guide the national team to their first World Cup win in 24 years.

Not only does he have the experience of managing top players and orchestrating victories at the highest stage but he is someone for whom reputations mean nothing, which he proved by ignoring

calls in the media to call-up the likes of Francesco Totti, Alessandro Del Piero, Antonio Cassano and even Mario Balotelli.

The only things that count for Lippi are hard work and team ethic.

"I don't think that in Germany I took the best players from a technical point of view," Lippi said recently.

"However, I had players who were great for the group's cohesion, winners who really had the desire to give everything for their team-mates and who together formed a group where no-one felt superior to anyone else."

Of that group from 2006, few remain but amongst them are players certain to be starting in South Africa such as Gianluigi Buffon, Fabio Cannavaro, Andrea Pirlo and Daniele De Rossi.

What Italy, and in particular those players, have shown in the past is that they know how to play as a team and get results.

Their results, in fact, have been very positive despite a disaster at last year's Confederations Cup.

They qualified for this World Cup without any problems and made it the 2008 European Championships where they were only beaten on penalties in the quarterfinals by eventual winners Spain.

However, despite those good results, Italy have very rarely actually played well.

They have laboured and stumbled past the likes of Georgia, Cyprus and Montenegro in qualifying while they failed to beat Ireland at all.

The creaks have been all the more apparent when those stalwarts of the team have been playing for their clubs.

Juventus had eight players in the initial 30-man squad, although two were ditched when it was cut to 28.

But those players left have just been responsible for the worst season in the club's proud history.

What's more, three of those players are expected to be in Italy's back five -- goalkeeper Buffon and centre-backs Cannavaro and Giorgio Chiellini, although left-back Fabio Grosso was surprisingly ditched by Lippi on Tuesday.

The trouble for Italy is that one of Juve's biggest problems this season has been a porous and disorganised defence.

If they can't get it right playing week in, week out for their club, what chance of those players suddenly performing for Italy.

And if those big-name players don't perform, the players waiting in the wings are hardly household names.

Players like Cagliari goalkeeper Federico Marchetti, Bari centre-back Leonardo Bonucci, or Sampdoria pair Angelo Palombo and Giampaolo Pazzini have very little top level match experience, either for Italy or in Europe's top club competitions.

It all points to worrying times for Italy but if any team can master a major competition it is them, and it would be no surprise to see them scraping through to the latter rounds with a series of tight victories by 1-0 or even on penalties.

Real after Martinez

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid, who failed to win a title last season despite a massive spending spree, are hoping to snag rising star Javier Martinez of Athletic Bilbao to boost their fortunes, a news report said.

Sports daily AS said Friday Real are ready to pay 30 million euros to buy out the contract of the 21-year-old midfielder, one of three uncapped players in Spain's squad for the World Cup.

It said Martinez would be an ideal partner for ex-Liverpool playmaker Xabi Alonso at the club.

In addition, Real appear ready to dispense with several of their current midfielders such as France's Lassana Diarra, Mali's Mahamadou Diarra and Argentine Fernando Gago, AS said.

Real splashed out more than 250 million euros on new talent last year, including Cristiano Ronaldo and Kaka, but failed to pick up any silverware.

They finished runners-up to arch rivals Barcelona in the league, exited the Champions League at the last-16 stage and spectacularly crashed out of the King's Cup to third division Alcorcon.

The Spanish media have predicted coach Manuel Pellegrini will be axed after just one season and replaced by Inter Milan's Jose Mourinho, who is incredibly popular in Madrid after eliminating Barcelona in the Champions League semifinals.

Cameroon arrive in Austria

AFP, Vienna

The Cameroon national team on Thursday arrived in Austria for a training camp ahead of the June 11-July 11 World Cup in South Africa, the Austrian news agency APA reported.

The team and coach Paul Le Guen touched down in the southeastern city of Klagenfurt and headed immediately for Lienz, where they will be based until May 28.

When in Austria, Cameroon will play two friendlies, against Georgia on May 25 in Lienz and then fellow World Cup qualifiers Slovakia in Klagenfurt four days later.

INTER MILAN V BAYERN MUNICH



GOALKEEPER

Inter Milan: The Italian champions boast one of the finest goalkeepers in world football in Julio Cesar. The Brazilian has 47 caps for his national team and Inter have won the Serie A title every year he has been at the club. Former Italy World Cup winner Dino Zoff is a big fan.

Bayern Munich: Hans-Jorg Butt did not impress during either leg of Bayern's quarterfinal tie with Manchester United, often appearing indecisive. However, aside from the United clashes, Butt has enjoyed an outstanding season and his experience could prove vital for Bayern.

DEFENCE

Inter Milan: In stifling a Barcelona attack at the Nou Camp, Inter's defence showed itself to be one of the most unforgiving in Europe. In Maicon, the Italians have a right-back who is good enough to keep Barcelona's Dani Alves out of the Brazil team, while the no-nonsense pairing of Walter Samuel and the outstanding Lucio complement each other superbly. Jose Mourinho is expected to play the ageless Javier Zanetti at left-back.

Bayern Munich: Although relatively untested against Lyon in the semi-finals, Bayern's creaking defence will be the source of some concern for manager Louis van Gaal. The experienced Dutchman will be desperate to avoid a repeat of the first half at Old Trafford against United, when the hosts ran Bayern's backline ragged and Van Gaal must hope Phillip Lahm can snuff out the threat posed by Wesley Sneijder.

MIDFIELD

Inter Milan: The jewel in Inter's midfield is the superb Sneijder, who has been one of Europe's signings of the season. The former Real Madrid midfielder excels in the role just behind Milito, contributing three goals and five assists in the Champions League, and he will be keen to impress on his return to the Bernabeu. However, Esteban Cambiasso and Dejan Stankovic will arguably be just as important on Saturday.

Bayern Munich: Arjen Robben will be expected to spearhead Bayern's attacking thrust in Spain in the absence of the suspended Franck Ribery, and the Dutch international certainly has the potential to hurt Inter. Robben has scored four times in the Champions League this season, including the goal that knocked out United. Captain Mark van Bommel adds steel to a well-balanced Bayern midfield.

ATTACK

Inter Milan: In Samuel Eto'o, the Italians have a player on the verge of winning consecutive Trebles, and yet the Cameroon international has only scored twice in Europe this season. Instead, it has been Milito who has shouldered much of the goal scoring burden, scoring four times, and what the Argentine lacks in pace he more than makes up for with his clinical finishing.

Bayern Munich: While it would be wrong to suggest the Germans' route through to the final had been solely down to Ivica Olic, his prominent role is undeniable. The Croatian has netted seven times in nine appearances, including vital strikes in both legs against Manchester United in the quarterfinals and a hat-trick against Lyon in the semifinal second leg in France. Thomas Mueller, the young striker, is expected to partner him up front.



Barcelona's new signing David Villa smiles as he shows his new jersey during his unveiling at Nou Camp on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

Ribery to sign new deal

AFP, Berlin



Bayern Munich playmaker Franck Ribery will sign a three-year contract extension that will make him the club's highest ever earner and keep him with the German champions until 2015, it was reported Friday.

Bild tabloid daily said Ribery, who has endured arguably one of his toughest seasons both on and off the pitch, would on Saturday sign a deal worth 10 million euros annually.

Although he still has a year left on his current contract the paper said Ribery's new deal would begin on July 1, 2010.

who were looking to sign Ribery.

The French international then suffered a series of injuries that scuppered his season, and last month he hit the headlines after being implicated in a scandal involving an underage escort girl.

The affair reportedly turned Real Madrid off Ribery's scent. On-field frustrations, in the shape of a three-game UEFA ban for a nasty tackle during the Champions League semi-final against Lyon -- which will keep Ribery out of Saturday's final against Inter Milan -- soon followed.

Ribery, however, will be in Madrid Saturday to sign his contract extension with Bayern, according to Bild which cited "reliable French sources".

Representatives for Ribery and Bayern reportedly met Thursday at the Madrid hotel where Bayern Munich are staying prior to the final.

Ribery said recently he wanted to sort his club future out before the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, which begins on June 11.

RANGS TOSHIBA

World cup QUIZ 2010

fresh life with HYBRID PLASMA TOSHIBA REFRIGERATOR

...THIS CAN BE YOURS

ROUND 1, DRAW IN BARISAL

Competition Information Prizes and Rules

INFORMATION

- The Daily Star Rangs-Toshiba World Cup Quiz 2010 is a series of competitions on World Cup Soccer to be held in South Africa from June 11 to July 11.
- There will be **SIX** rounds of competition.
- Each round will have a separate draw with attractive prizes from the house of **RANGS TOSHIBA** as per announcement.
- For each round, a set of questions including a photographic quiz will be published in The Daily Star.
- Names and addresses of all prize winners will be published in The Daily Star.
- Winners will have to collect their prizes from The Daily Star office after satisfactory authentication of their identity.
- Any taxes or levies, as per law, for all the above prizes will have to be borne by the prize winners.

PRIZES UP FOR GRABS (ROUNDS 1-5)

Prize	Item	Winner
1st	One 8 CFT Toshiba Refrigerator	YOU
2nd	One Toshin 24" LCD TV	YOU
3rd	One Toshiba 21" Colour TV	YOU
4th	One Toshin 21" Colour TV	YOU
5th	One Toshin Microwave Oven (23L)	and YOU

PRIZES FOR BUMPER ROUND

Prize	Item	Winner
1st	One Toshiba 32" LCD TV	YOU
2nd	One 15CFT Toshiba Refrigerator	YOU
3rd	One Toshin Heat & Cool AC (1Ton)	YOU
4th	One Toshin 24" LCD TV	YOU
5th	One 21" Toshin Colour TV	and YOU

Prizes for the audience (For First Five Rounds)

1st.	20L Toshin Microwave Oven
2nd.	14" Toshin Colour TV
3rd.	3 Toshiba DVD Players

Prizes for the audience (For Bumper Round)

1st.	Toshiba Washing Machine
2nd.	21" Toshin Colour TV
3rd.	20L Toshin Microwave Oven
4th.	Two Toshiba DVD Players

QUIZ SCHEDULE

Round & Draw	Starts	Ends	Answers must reach by 12pm	Lucky Draw for prizes
1. Barisal	May 19	May 27	May 29	June 2
2. Chittagong	May 28	June 05	June 07	June 11
3. Rajshai	June 06	June 14	June 15	June 16
4. Khulna	June 15	June 23	June 25	June 27
5. Sylhet	June 24	July 02	July 04	July 06
Bumper Round	July 03	July 11	July 13	July 16

The Daily Star - RANGS TOSHIBA World Cup Quiz, Round 1 Ends May 27, 2010

Tick (✓) the correct answers

- Who scored the first-ever goal in World Cup history? Stable Laurent Monti
- Who is the highest scorer in World Cup history? Maradona Pele Ronaldo
- What is the name of the official ball of the 2010 World Cup? Teamgeist Fevemova Jabulani
- When did South Africa play their last World Cup? 1994 2002 2006
- Who is this player? Materazzi Zidane Figo

Name (Mr/Mrs/Ms)..... Age.....
 Father's name..... Occupation.....
 Address.....
 Telephone (if any)..... Signature..... Date.....

Write with a ballpoint pen in clear BLOCK letters.
 Cut along the dotted lines and mail to OR drop in the Quiz Box at The Daily Star, 19 Karwan Bazar, Dhaka-1215.
 You may send as many entries as you like. Envelopes of entries must be clearly marked "Star World Cup Quiz 1".

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