



Italy players walk off the pitch after an official team picture session in Sestriere on Wednesday. The world champions are holding their training camp in the Italian Alps. PHOTO: AFP

Mueller falls off his bike

AFP, Berlin

Germany's rising star Thomas Mueller was left needing stitches to a chin injury after falling off a mountain bike at his team's World Cup training camp in northern Italy on Wednesday.

The 20-year-old attacking midfielder, who won the league and cup double with Bayern Munich last season, fell from his bike as part of the team's training and was left with a cut knee and a gash on his chin, the DFB confirmed.

He received stitches from the German Football Federation's (DFB) doctor Josef Schmitt, but the DFB stressed Mueller has no muscle or bone injuries after the crash in the Alps near Eppean.

The German team have been hit by a spate of injuries ahead of the World Cup, which starts on June 11, with midfielders Christian Traesch and captain Michael Ballack both ruled out.

Van Gaal rules out big guns

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich coach Louis van Gaal said Wednesday he could not imagine any of his players from Argentina, France, Holland or Germany winning next month's World Cup in South Africa.

"To be honest, I don't expect that one of my players will come back from South Africa with the status of world champion," Bayern's Dutch coach told German daily Bild.

Van Gaal, who lost last Saturday's Champions League final 2-0 to Inter Milan, says he expects the winners to come from South America or the Iberian peninsula.

"I think Spain or Brazil will be world champions," said the 58-year-old.

Lions fail to roar

AFP, Vienna

Cameroon, possibly the African side favoured to do something at next month's World Cup finals, will need to deliver a better performance than it showed on Tuesday in Austria if it wants to make it to the last-16.

Faced with a team that hasn't qualified for the World Cup, Georgia, the "Indomitable Lions" failed to even score a single goal, settling instead for an unimpressive 0-0 draw.

The African team, playing without star Samuel Eto'o, who helped Inter Milan to Champions League victory on Saturday, had one shot at goal before half-time through striker Rostard Dorge Kouemaha.

But it was the Georgians who were the better team during most of the match, played in front of a packed stadium in Lienz, near Salzburg, with some 3,500 spectators.

Cameroon, in Austria for a 10-day training camp, plays another friendly against fellow qualifiers Slovakia on Saturday in the southern city of Klagenfurt, before packing up camp on May 30.

It will face the two-time finalists The Netherlands, Denmark and Japan in Group E at the finals, which run from June 11 to July 11 in South Africa.

Uncertainty over Gallas

AFP, Tignes

France coach Raymond Domenech confirmed on Tuesday that central defender William Gallas was still not 100 per cent sure of his World Cup place despite signs to the contrary.

Gallas is recovering from a calf injury and went into France's week-long training camp in Tignes with doubts he could make the 23-man squad for the June 11-July 11 finals in South Africa.

Domenech revealed a 23-man squad late on Monday which included the Arsenal defender, however the Frenchman said that until June 1 - when all federations must submit their final teams to FIFA - nothing was definitive.

"There's still a question mark over his calf but nothing is definitive until June 1," said Domenech.

"I was really pessimistic (over Gallas) a week ago. I'm not overflowing with optimism right now but so far in training he's been pretty good, he can accelerate and change direction no problem.

"He's been in quite critical situations, and that's reassuring."

Domenech admitted that his squad had arrived at the French ski resort under a shroud of uncertainty, but that incidents like Gallas crashing a karting buggy last week had helped gel the squad.

Cesc's future unclear

AFP, London

Arsenal captain Cesc Fabregas says his future is now out of his hands as Barcelona continue to eye a bid for the Spain midfielder.

Fabregas recently told Gunners manager Arsene Wenger that he wants to rejoin his former club Barca as soon as possible after losing patience with Arsenal's failure to win a trophy for the last five years.

But, although the Spanish champions have made contact with Arsenal regarding Fabregas's availability, they have not made a firm bid.

The situation looks certain to drag on for weeks as Wenger is believed to be determined to hang onto his star player unless Barca pay a world record equalling 80-million-pound (115-million-dollar) transfer fee.

Fabregas admits he does not know where he will be playing next season, but for the moment he is just focused on helping Spain win the

"It gave everybody a good laugh, we needed something to relax us all a little," said Domenech.

Striker Nicolas Anelka agreed: "Honestly, we had a really good time out there on the buggies. And that kind of thing happens to William quite often."

In revealing his squad on Monday, Domenech hands World Cup debuts to Bordeaux defender Marc Planus and Marseille winger Mathieu Valbuena.

Lyon's Hugo Lloris keeps his place in goal, with Steve Mandanda of Marseille his back-up and Bordeaux's Cedric Carraso at number three.

While Gallas remains uncertain on paper, the Arsenal man has looked strong in training and will play part of France's friendly against Costa Rica on Wednesday.

Joining him in central defence is Bordeaux's Eric Abidal, with Planus and Sebastian Squillaci of Sevilla as back-ups.

In theory, Bakary Sagna of Arsenal will occupy the right side of defence with Patrice Evra of Manchester United on the left. Their potential replacements will be Gael Clichy of Arsenal and Lyon's Anthony Reveillere.

In what is seen as a risky move, Domenech will head to South Africa with only three real defensive midfielders in Jeremy Toulalan, Alou Diarra and Abou Diaby.

During their week in Tignes Domenech has experimented with a 4-3-3, a system that, with Diarra and Diaby on

the bench, allows Toulalan to feed playmaker Yoann Gourcuff of Bordeaux and Chelsea left winger Florent Malouda as part of a central midfield triangle.

"It's an interesting formation," said Domenech. "It gives us more attacking guarantees but also leaves us more exposed at the back."

Despite his topsy-turvy season, Bayern Munich's Franck Ribery is virtually assured of a starting place up front although the inclusion of Valbuena could make it harder for the Bayern Munich forward.

Barcelona striker Thierry Henry meanwhile appears to have escaped paying the price for a lack of playing time at the Spanish club, although he is unlikely to be used on the left.

Domenech should use the France captain in a more central striking role, while Anelka - a World Cup reject in 1998, 2002 and 2006 - will get the chance to make his debut at the age of 31.

The other strikers in Domenech's list are Djibril Cisse of Panathinaikos, Toulouse's Andre-Pierre Gignac, and Sidney Govou of Lyon.

Domenech said Tuesday their altitude training camp had started under a cloud of uncertainty, but the Frenchman said his squad had now taken control of the situation.

"We've had great weather, great conditions and these are important, as much for the training field as for our enjoyment off it," he said.

Coles getting divorced

AFP, London

England international footballer Ashley Cole and his pop star wife Cheryl are getting divorced, her representatives said Wednesday, three months after they announced their separation.

The Chelsea defender, 29, and the 26-year-old Girls Aloud singer are to formally split after three and a half years of marriage. They are one of Britain's most high-profile celebrity couples.

"I can confirm they are getting divorced," a spokeswoman for Supersonic PR told AFP, giving no further details.

Kiss-and-tell stories alleging the footballer's serial infidelity had appeared in newspapers before her publicists announced in February that they had split.

Ashley Cole is among England manager Fabio Capello's 30-man shortlist and is considered a certainty to be named in the 23-strong squad for the World Cup in South Africa, which starts on June 11.

The former Arsenal left-back is among the most senior players in the squad, with 77 caps.

In his last appearance, he won the FA Cup with Chelsea, to earn a record sixth FA Cup winner's medal.

Girls Aloud scored top 10 hits in Britain with their first 20 singles, including four number ones.

The band was formed in 2002 from a television talent contest. Such shows regularly top the British viewing charts.

Cheryl Cole's first solo album, released last year, topped the British charts, as did its first single, "Fight For This Love", said to have been inspired by her marital problems.

Ballack warns fans

AFP, Berlin



Germany's injured captain Michael Ballack has warned his country's football fans against having high expectations for the World Cup finals in South Africa.

"After the draw in Cape Town, I said then: people should know that we can lose in the preliminary rounds to any of the other sides," Ballack told German magazine Stern.

"Australia, Serbia and Ghana are all athletic, tough teams."

Damaged ankle ligaments mean Ballack has been ruled out of next month's World Cup, which starts on June 11, and he says his side will need to fulfil their potential to make the last four.

"The team will need to play to their limits to beat some of the great teams in the knock-out round," said the Chelsea midfielder.

"That is just the same as it was before I had to pull out."

Since Spain in 1982, Germany have never failed to reach at least the last eight of a World Cup finals and Ballack says Joachim Loew's side will have that goal in mind when they open their campaign against Australia on June 13.

"It is terrible for a team if they can only enjoy a tournament from the semifinal stage onwards

as everything else would mean a failure," said Ballack.

"It drives you on, it pushes you, but it is also a merciless game."

Despite his ankle injury, Ballack has already visited the national team at last week's training camp in Sicily, despite his injury.

With 98-caps to his name, Ballack's experience will be sorely missed in the Republic but Loew's young side can come of age, says the injured captain.

"Our team has a good mentality, they will not hide, they will put their heads down and go to the limits," said Ballack.

"Joachim Loew will tease the best out of them, of that I am convinced."

"In the last few tournaments we were second and third, so why hold anything back?"

With an air of expectancy growing at home for the public's national heroes, Ballack says only German success in South Africa will be viewed as acceptable by their public.

"Germany is a nation that has to win," said Ballack.

"When I watched the German athletes at the Olympic Winter Games in February, I thought: it is the same for us."

"You have to really torture yourself to reach the heights which are expected of you, because you only get respect if you win."

USA fall to Czech

AFP, East Hartford

The United States fell 4-2 to Czech Republic on Tuesday in their last friendly football match before coach Bob Bradley names the 23-man squad for the World Cup finals.

Czech Republic took full advantage of defensive lapses by the Americans, who will host Turkey in a friendly on Saturday before the squad departs for South Africa.

Maurice Edu in the 17th minute and Herculez Gomez in the 66th each got their first international goals as Bradley rested regulars including Landon Donovan, Clint Dempsey and Tim Howard and instead took a last look at some of the players hoping to make the World Cup roster he was to name on Wednesday.

The news wasn't all good as defenders Oguchi Onyewu, Heath Pearce, Clarence Goodson and Steve Cherundolo often struggled in midfield, giving room to the Czechs, who didn't qualify for the World Cup.

After Edu opened the scoring, Czech Republic equalized through Tomas Sivok a minute before halftime.

Jan Polak made it 2-1 for the visitors in the 58th. Gomez, who came on at halftime, answered, but Martin Fenin in the 77th and Tomas Necid in injury time secured the victory that disappointed most of the crowd of 36,218 at Rentschler Field.

Gomez, making just his third international appearance and his first in three years, equalized when he beat Czech keeper Petr Cech after

a neat backheel pass from Brian Ching.

Fenin took advantage of an American defensive breakdown, beating US keeper Brad Guzan after Goodson and Cherundolo all failed to clear a ball in front of the goal.

Necid had an open path to the final goal after Edu jumped but failed to clear pass.

Gomez, DaMarcus Beasley and Stuart Holden turned in solid performances that appeared to augur well for their chances of making the trip to South Africa.

Onyewu played 65 minutes in his first match since knee surgery.

Edson Buddle, making his second national team appearance and first in seven years, made an aggressive start. He was hindered as he had to get treatment for a cut on his face, but played a part in the goal from Edu, who plays for Rangers in the Scottish Premier League.

Holden, playing his second match since his right leg was broken in a March 3 friendly in the Netherlands, sent a freekick in from the near side.

Cech came out but didn't reach the cross, and the ball went from Buddle to Edu, who knocked it in.

Sivok capitalized on a slow-to-react Onyewu to get the equalizer. Onyewu, the towering defender who tore a left knee tendon in America's last World Cup qualifier on October 14 and had surgery the following week.

After a foul by Goodson, Jaroslav Plasil fired a free kick across the box and Sivok headed the ball past Guzan, beating Onyewu who was late to jump.

Polak beat Pearce to David Lafata's pass in front of the goal and easily beat Guzan.

The Daily Star

RANGS TOSHIBA

World cup QUIZ 2010

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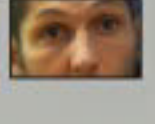
ROUND 1, DRAW IN BARISAL ON JUNE 2

PRIZES UP FOR GRABS (ROUNDS 1-5)			PRIZES FOR BUMPER ROUND		
Prize	Item	Winner	Prize	Item	Winner
1st	One 8CFT Toshiba Refrigerator	YOU	1st	One Toshiba 32" LCD TV	YOU
2nd	One Toshin 24" LCD TV	YOU	2nd	One 15CFT Toshiba Refrigerator	YOU
3rd	One Toshiba 21" Colour TV	YOU	3rd	One Toshin Heat & Cool AC (11ton)	YOU
4th	One Toshin 21" Colour TV	YOU	4th	One Toshin 24" LCD TV	YOU
5th	One Toshin Microwave Oven (23L)	and YOU	5th	One 21" Toshin Colour TV	and YOU

(See May 23 issue of the Star Sport for competition information and rules)

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

Tick (✓) the correct answers

1. Who scored the first-ever goal in World Cup history?	Stabile <input type="checkbox"/>	Laurent <input type="checkbox"/>	Monti <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Who is the highest scorer in World Cup history?	Maradona <input type="checkbox"/>	Pele <input type="checkbox"/>	Ronaldo <input type="checkbox"/>
3. What is the name of the official ball of the 2010 World Cup?	Teamgeist <input type="checkbox"/>	Fevemova <input type="checkbox"/>	Jabulani <input type="checkbox"/>
4. When did South Africa play their last World Cup?	1994 <input type="checkbox"/>	2002 <input type="checkbox"/>	2006 <input type="checkbox"/>
5. Who is this player?	 Matereazzi <input type="checkbox"/>	Zidane <input type="checkbox"/>	Figo <input type="checkbox"/>

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".

READ The Daily Star TO CATCH THE WORLD CUP FEVER



Cameroon midfielder Alexandre Song (L) fights for the ball with Georgia's Vladimer Dyalishvili during their international friendly in Lienz on Tuesday. PHOTO: AFP