

WC's curse is Chelsea's gain

AFP, Paris

Chelsea's players were celebrating only last month a hard won Premier League title, but now several are experiencing the pain of missing the World Cup finals because of injury.

Chelsea's Italian coach Carlo Ancelotti could be forgiven for smiling broadly at the thought that he will have a relatively fresh squad when they start their title defence in August.

However, the affable 50-year-old Italian - who appeared in two World Cups including the Italy side that lost to Argentina on penalties in the 1990 semifinals - would also feel deeply for Michael Ballack, Michael Essien and John Mikel Obi.

All three have been definitively ruled out of the finals which get underway in South Africa next Friday.

And Ivory Coast's iconic captain and striker Didier Drogba, whose goals propelled Chelsea to their title success, is battling desper-



ESSIEN



DROGBA



BALLACK



MIKEL

ately to overcome a fractured forearm he suffered in Friday's friendly against Japan.

That three of the quartet are Africans is especially cruel as Africa welcomes the World

Cup to the continent for the first time.

The absences of Essien, Mikel and in all probability Drogba will have a major impact on their respective sides as the African teams do not have the strength in depth to replace such players whereas Germany have several who can fill in for Ballack.

For Drogba and Ballack it means the end of their dreams of bowing out on the international stage at the highest profile event of the sport - Drogba will be 36 and Ballack 37 come the 2014 edition.

Another reason for Ancelotti to be upbeat about the upcoming season is that Ballack is being increasingly advised to retire from international football.

That could see him play an increasingly more influential role at club level like Paul Scholes has at Manchester United since retiring after Euro 2004.

"Even if he (Ballack) is a little bitter, you have to recognise when enough is enough," said Bayern Munich president Uli Hoeness, who won 35 caps for Germany in the 1970s.

"I don't think it is wise to

see the European Championships of 2012 as a major objective."

Hoeness said Ballack's bitter disappointment of missing his third World Cup finals is understandable, but he does not see Euro 2012 as an enticing proposition, especially as Ballack will be nearly 35.

"If it were a World Cup, I would understand it," said Hoeness.

"But Euro 2012 in Poland and the Ukraine is not exactly the sort of dream event which keeps me awake at night with excitement."

Ancelotti too could also benefit from Drogba believing that the 2012 Africa Cup of Nations and all the qualifiers involved is an international campaign too far, and devotes himself to at last capturing the Champions League trophy, which has proved so elusive to him and his generation of Chelsea players.

That would go some way to sweetening the bitter pill that the Chelsea quartet have been forced to swallow in the past few weeks.



PHOTO: AFP

Switzerland's Gokhan Inler (R) falls to the ground under a challenge from Italy defender Salvatore Bocchetti during a pre-WC friendly match in Geneva on Saturday.

Italy's Swiss stalemate



Football

AFP, Geneva

Italy were held to a 1-1 draw by Switzerland on Saturday, dashing the hopes of Italian fans who were hoping for a Swiss appetiser before the World Cup holders fly out to South Africa.

Playing without Fabio Cannavaro, the Italian back four recovered some of the composure they lost in their defeat by Mexico last Thursday, but a lacklustre Italy still suffered from a dearth of ideas going forward.

Switzerland had the best of the chances, recovering their bite to dominate the midfield and open the score in the 10th minute.

Gokhan Inler took advantage of fine running off the ball by Alexander Frei to place a shot from the edge of the penalty area past Federico Marchetti in the Italian goal.

Italy equalised five minutes later when Fabio Quagliarella awkwardly headed a loose

ball in the goalmouth, which arced over Swiss goalkeeper Diego Benaglio and in off the opposite post.

Apart from that lucky break the Naples midfielder rarely managed to muster the creativity of the injured Alessandro Pirlo, while Riccardo Montolivo's ideas were let down by wayward passing.

Italian coach Marcello Lippi told Rai television that he had not sent out a second-string team as he probed the depth of his squad by ringing the changes from the side which lost to the Mexicans.

"There is no Italy mark two. There is one Italy and all the (squad) players are part of it. They are great players," said Lippi.

The creative Inler marshalled the Swiss, let down only by flighty control by their two forwards Frei and Twente's Blaise Nkufo as well as last ditch defending by Salvatore Bocchetti.

Italy's best chances came with the few moments they managed to sneak the ball out to

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Domenech keeping calm

AFP, Paris

France manager Raymond Domenech has played down his squad's troubled buildup to the World Cup which culminated in a 1-0 defeat to China on Friday in the Indian Ocean island of Reunion.

"To lose against China in our final buildup game hardly pleases me but at the end of the day it remains a preparation match," he said. "Now we get down to the real thing."

Asked if he intended to tinker with his lineup following poor performances by his strikers against China (0-1), Tunisia (1-1) and Costa Rica (2-1), Domenech told French TV: "Everything is possible."

"We will see what the players can manage on Friday (against Uruguay)," he added.

France also have hosts South Africa and Mexico in their group as they attempt to reach the final once again having lost to Italy in Germany four years ago.

Boateng signs for Man City

AFP, Manchester

Manchester City signed Germany defender Jerome Boateng from Hamburg for an undisclosed fee on Saturday.

Boateng agreed a five-year contract with the Premier League club and will link up with Roberto Mancini's squad after playing for his country at the World Cup.

"Jerome Boateng has agreed the terms of a five-year contract to join Manchester City from German Bundesliga side Hamburg SV," a statement on City's website confirmed.

The 21-year-old, who can play at centre-back or full-back, is reported to have cost around 12 million euros and is likely to be the first of several big-money signings to arrive at City during the close-season.

Quagliarella ready to fire

SOCCERNET

Fabio Quagliarella believes Italy will arrive in South Africa "in the best possible condition" for their World Cup defence.

"The coach asked us to put in a good performance in the final game before we travel to South Africa and I think we did that," Quagliarella told RaiSport.

"It is normal that against Mexico we suffered a little from fatigue given it was our first test since the end of the season."

"The bottom line is that we arrive at the tournament in the best possible condition and who knows where we can go from there. Let's not forget we are still the current world champions."

Ardiles slates Diego

AFP, London



Diego Maradona's stewardship of the Argentinian national side is a negative factor which could harm his country's chances, according to 1978 champion and former international teammate Osvaldo Ardiles.

Under Maradona, the two-times champions just crept into the finals after some inept showings in the qualifiers and former Tottenham favourite Ardiles says the problem chiefly emanates in his view from the bench.

"I am critical of his irresponsible team selection, and I'm still of the view that he was a strange choice as national team manager," Ardiles said in an article for Britain's Daily Telegraph.

"Diego won't think so. He sees himself as 'The Chosen One', and believes his destiny on earth is to win the World Cup as a player, and as a manager.

"But so far he has clearly not been successful as a manager. We qualified for these World Cup finals by the skin of our teeth, and with plenty of luck," Ardiles observed.

"Yes, Diego was the greatest player in the history of the game. I know, I played with him (at the 1982 finals); but that does not excuse the glaring omissions from Argentina's squad," said Ardiles in a highly candid assessment, noting that Maradona has travelled to South Africa without "leaders" such as Javier Zanetti, Esteban Cambiasso and Juan Riquelme.

In addition, the squad has no natural candidate for right back, and Ardiles feels disappointment lies ahead in the coming weeks.

Iker digs at Eng 'keepers

SOCCERNET



Iker Casillas has launched a scathing attack on England's goalkeepers, claiming that their lack of big-game experience could cost Fabio Capello's side at the World Cup.

With more than 100 caps for his country, Casillas seems likely to be the man standing between the posts for Spain in South Africa, but he is being pushed hard for a starting berth by Pepe Reina and Victor Valdes, who can both boast top-level experience with Liverpool and Barcelona respectively.

And while Valdes and Real Madrid stopper Casillas ply their trade with the top two clubs in Spain, you have to go down as far as ninth in the Premier League table to find Birmingham's Joe Hart, who is not even likely to be Capello's No.1.

David James and Robert Green both endured relegation battles rather than Champions League nights with their respective clubs last season and that, according to Casillas, could harm England's chances of progression.

"I can see why both Lionel Messi and Xavi have talked up England's chances at the World Cup because their class is undisputed. But their

goalkeeping situation is a real problem," Casillas said.

"None of the keepers have played even European Cup level, that's the highest level you can play at club level. And if you have never played in the top club competition in the world, you are going to find it hard to perform at the top international level in the world when even more eyes are on you.

"If you look at myself, Gigi Buffon of Italy and Julio Cesar of Brazil, we are keepers who've all won European Championships, World Cups and European Cups. At this level nerves play a big part and any mistake a goalkeeper makes is going to be scrutinised. Casillas praised the potential of the highly-rated Hart but still expects him to play a reserve role, predicting that Capello will pick Green as his first choice between the sticks at the finals.

"It's not always about ability at the World Cup, it's about having been there - before and knowing how to handle the big games. I don't see that England coach Fabio Capello has any choice but to play Robert Green. It doesn't matter if Joe Hart has more natural ability.

"To throw him into the World Cup with no experience would be crazy and Fabio is far more intelligent than that. He has stuck with Robert Green throughout the qualifying stages and that is the way I am sure it will stay."



PHOTO: AFP

Spanish star Iker Casillas is at full-stretch to save a shot during a training session at the Sports City of Las Rozas in Madrid on Sunday.

Drogba bids to save dream

AFP, Sion

The Ivory Coast Football Federation on Saturday said that captain Didier Drogba had undergone successful surgery a day after sustaining a fractured forearm which threatens his World Cup dream.

The 32-year-old Chelsea striker was hurt by a robust challenge from defender Marcus Tulio Tanaka during the Ivorians' 2-0 friendly win over Japan here, in which Drogba scored the opening goal with a deflected free-kick.

Chelsea star Drogba had the operation in Berne, Switzerland and "the surgery was a success," the Federation said in a statement, adding that the squad's medical staff "are optimistic the player will make speedy recovery."

Drogba, 32, hopes to get back to fitness within ten days to enable him to play in Ivory Coast's Group G opener with Portugal on June 15. Under FIFA rules, a replacement could be drafted until the day before a team's first game.

Ivory Coast will play in Group G, where they will also face Brazil and North Korea.

Kanu eyes final hurrah

AFP, London

Nigeria captain Nwankwo Kanu wants to mark his international retirement by helping the Super Eagles to an historic World Cup victory.

Brazil legend Pele's claim that an African team would lift the famous trophy by 2010 has so far failed to come to fruition.

But Kanu believes this year's first tournament on African soil could prove Pele's prediction correct.

Portsmouth striker Kanu, the most decorated player in African football history, said: "In football you cannot tell what is going to happen."

"We want an African team in the final and if that is Nigeria then great."

"We have to be positive and always believe we can make it and I believe we can be really achieve something in the World Cup."

"Being in the semifinal and finals is our aim and we can do it. That is our dream and our goal and we will want to head towards it and we can get it."

Kanu has amassed over 80 appearances for Nigeria and was part of their under-17 World Cup winning team and triumphant 1996 Olympic winning side.

Kanu added: "Everybody wants to be at his best on the highest stage at the World Cup."

"It is every player's dream to be playing in South Africa and being part of such a historic event."

"For me I want to score goals and if I can do that then we can do well."

The Daily Star

RANGS TOSHIBA

World cup **QUIZ** 2010

fresh life with **HYBRID PLASMA**

TOSHIBA REFRIGERATOR

...THIS CAN BE YOURS

ROUND 3, DRAW IN RAJSHAHI ON JUNE 16

PRIZES UP FOR GRABS (ROUNDS 1-5)			PRIZES FOR BUMPER ROUND		
Prize	Item	Winner	Prize	Item	Winner
1st	One 8 CFT 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 (1Ton)	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)			Prizes for the audience (For First Five Rounds)		Prizes for the audience (For Bumper Round)
			1st.	20L Toshin Microwave Oven	1st. Toshiba Washing Machine
			2nd.	14" Toshin Colour TV	2nd. 21" Toshin Colour TV
			3rd.	3 Toshiba DVD Players	3rd. 20L Toshin Microwave Woven
			4th.	Two Toshiba DVD Players	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. Rajshahi	June 06	June 14	June 15	June 16
4. Khulna	June 15	June 23	June 25	June 29
5. Sylhet	June 24	July 02	July 04	July 06
Bumper Round, Dhaka	July 03	July 11	July 13	July 16

The Daily Star - RANGS TOSHIBA World Cup Quiz, Round 3 Ends June 14, 2010

Tick (✓) the correct answers

1. Who is the captain of France in this year's World Cup?	Henry <input type="checkbox"/>	Evra <input type="checkbox"/>	Gallas <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Pele scored his first World Cup goal against	Wales <input type="checkbox"/>	Sweden <input type="checkbox"/>	Italy <input type="checkbox"/>
3. How many World Cup matches did Gary Lineker play?	18 <input type="checkbox"/>	15 <input type="checkbox"/>	12 <input type="checkbox"/>
4. Which stadium will host this year's World Cup final?	Ellis Park <input type="checkbox"/>	Soccer City <input type="checkbox"/>	Mandela Bay <input type="checkbox"/>
5. Who is this player?	Lucio <input type="checkbox"/>	Marquez <input type="checkbox"/>	Branco <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.

Rajshahi readers can also drop entries at Rangs Toshiba Showroom, Alo Patti More, Rajshahi.

You may send as many entries as you like. Envelopes of entries must be clearly marked "Star World Cup Quiz 3".

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