

Cesc focused on Spain

AFP, Madrid

Arsenal midfielder Cesc Fabregas is totally focused on helping Spain to World Cup glory rather than the saga of a potential move to boyhood club Barcelona, international teammate Pedro Rodriguez said on Sunday.

"He is fantastic and with regard to Barcelona's interest he is only thinking about the national side," insisted Pedro, himself of Barcelona, as the European champions prepared to leave for South Africa.

Arsenal have rejected a 35 million euros offer for Fabregas, a mainstay of the English outfit whom he joined from Barca as a 16-year-old.

But Pedro said that it went without saying he would love to have the chance to see Fabregas in the ranks at club level.

"Of course I would love to have him at Barca - he's been away for a long time, he knows the place and he would settle in quickly. I think he would be a good player for us."

Xavi Hernandez, another Barca man in the national squad, said for his part that: "I would love it if he came and I have already told him. Barcelona is in his DNA."

Barca chairman Joan Laporta insists that contacts with Arsenal are still open for a possible move.

Marchisio's anthem scandal

INTERNET

Marcello Lippi has laughed off a 'scandal' calling for Claudio Marchisio to be dropped after allegedly insulting Rome during the national anthem.

"Marchisio is a fantastic lad," insisted Coach Lippi. "He is serious, exemplary and I really doubt he said anything like that."

"Will there be sanctions against him? Oh please...!"

Roma fansites have been circulating a clip of the team singing the anthem before Saturday night's 1-1 draw with Switzerland in Geneva.

Marchisio was on the touchline with fellow benchwarmers Fabio Cannavaro, Alberto Gilardino and Vincenzo Iaquinta, who turned to him and laughed after the 'offending' phrase.

It is claimed he said "Roma ladrona" -- Rome the thief -- but others suggest he merely tripped up over his words and said Roma twice.

'Roma ladrona' is a phrase often used in reference to the Italian Parliament in Rome.

"We must have immediate clarification that it was not an offence towards the anthem and to Rome, otherwise he should apologise," slammed MP Paolo Cento.

"In this case I hope that the Minister of the Interior Roberto Maroni will intervene quickly."

'Work to do for France'

AFP, Knysna

France midfielder Yoann Gourcuff accepts his side have work to do before their World Cup opener against Uruguay on June 11, but insists they are ready for the tournament.

The France squad arrived at their training base here on Saturday after an underwhelming series of warm-up matches that saw them beat Costa Rica 2-1, draw 1-1 with Tunisia and lose 1-0 to China on Friday.

The unconvincing nature of France's performances have dampened expectations that they can succeed in South Africa and Gourcuff says it is down to the players to make their new 4-3-3 system work on the pitch.

"We're ready, we're very motivated," he said on Sunday.

"We'll have to work, we'll have to make adjustments and watch the video (analysis) to create understanding (between the players) and make adjustments between us in attacking and defensive areas."

An injury to defensive midfielder Lassana Diarra prompted coach Raymond Domenech to ditch his tried and tested 4-2-3-1 in favour of the new formation, but France have struggled to create chances and Nicolas Anelka has at times looked uncomfortable in the lone striking role.



Germany striker Lukas Podolski (L) signs autographs on his way to boarding a flight for South Africa at the Frankfurt International Airport on Sunday.

Robben's race against time

AFP, Johannesburg



Winger Arjen Robben said Monday he is doing everything he possibly can to be fit for Holland's opening World Cup match as he battles to shake off a thigh injury.

While the Dutch team has arrived in South Africa, Robben has remained back home receiving treatment.

He is hoping to join the team later this week to play in the Oranje's opening game against Denmark next on Monday and then five days later against Japan, but faces a race against time.

"I am doing all I can to be fit again within a week," said Robben in a telephone interview with the TV programme Studio Voetbal.

"It is a small muscle tear on the left thigh which I have injured before."

"With conventional treatment, the muscle needs four to six weeks to heal, so now we need to use other methods."

Dutch coach Bert van Marwijk has left the door open for Robben, if he can prove his fitness.

"We want to give him every chance to rejoin the team, so I have not called up a replacement player yet," said Van Marwijk.

Robben is being treated by established Dutch physio Dick van Toorn and says he is healing well.

"I have had good experiences with Van Toorn's treatment in the past," said the 26-year-

old Robben, who injured himself in Holland's 6-1 win over Hungary last Saturday.

The Dutch held their first training session here since arriving and were in good spirits, despite having to leave Robben behind in the Netherlands.

"We hope he can join us as soon as possible," said midfielder Mark van Bommel, Robben's captain at Bayern Munich.

Real Madrid's Rafael van der Vaart says the Oranje will be even stronger if Robben makes it in time.

"Arjen has been outstanding this season," said Van der Vaart.

"With him, we are even stronger."

But the Denmark camp are hoping Robben fails in his fitness bid.

"That would clearly be an advantage for us," said Danish defender Lars Jacobsen.

"He can decide games on his own and is absolute world class."

"Holland will be missing something if he really can't play."

But Danish coach Morten Olsen, said the Oranje still have world-class players like Van der Vaart and Inter Milan's Wesley Sneijder to call upon.

"Even without Robben, Holland are an outstanding team."

"And if he does not play, they will just call up another class player, so it won't necessarily make things easier for us if he pulls out."



Dutch winger Arjen Robben (L) leaves after a visit at his physical therapist in Rotterdam on Monday.

Economists tip Spain

REUTERS, London/Johannesburg



Spain are favourites to be crowned World Cup champions, narrowly ahead of Brazil, according to a global field of 74 soccer fan economists polled by Reuters.

Twenty-four respondents said Spain would shed their reputation for perennial disappointment this year and clinch the title for the first time, a tad more than the 23 who expected Brazil to add to their record tally of five trophies.

But economists are not known for their powers of foresight in matters of football.

For Reuters' 2006 World Cup poll, most of them showed as much acumen in guessing Argentina would win that year as they did in predicting an impending global financial crisis. Eight out of 96 correctly predicted a victorious Italy.

In the latest survey, just one economist expected the Azzurri to retain their title in South Africa this year, and Argentina polled a distant third behind Spain and Brazil.

"I'd go for Spain because they seem to have not just the talent but also the resilience and strength which they missed in the past," said Jean-Francois Mercier, chief economist at Citi in South Africa.

"Brazil is a big threat but will they have the energy to go all the way?"

South American champions Brazil are top

of the FIFA rankings, with European champions Spain in second place.

Fifty-two out of 68 economists expected at least one African team to reach the quarterfinals this year -- a feat matched only by Senegal in 2002 and the 1990 Cameroon team inspired by striker Roger Milla.

Nigeria were the most popular bet for this year, followed by Cameroon.

But the poll showed it was likely that South Africa, ranked 83rd in the world and facing top-20 teams France, Mexico and Uruguay in their first round group, will become the first host nation not to progress to the second round.

"It's gonna be tough for South Africa, but the overwhelming sound of vuvuzelas will scare the pants off the Mexicans and the French," said Johannes Khosa of Nedbank in Johannesburg.

Last week, JPMorgan said England would win based on quant models used to predict stock returns. UBS picked Brazil, Germany and Italy as the most likely winners based on a probability analysis.

The largely European sample of economists selected Argentina's Lionel Messi as the competition's likely top scorer, followed by Spain's David Villa and Wayne Rooney of England, the fourth-most-fancied team for victory.

"Messi is bound to come good for his country at some point -- why not now?" said Noelani King Conradie at NKC Independent Economists in Cape Town.

Chile sweat on Suazo

AFP, Nelspruit

Chile arrived in South Africa on Sunday for the World Cup with Argentine-born coach Marcelo Bielsa sweating on the fitness of striker Humberto Suazo, who is likely to miss the opening two group games through injury.

"La Roja" arrived in the eastern city of Nelspruit to prepare for Group H matches against Honduras, Switzerland and Spain.

Suazo, who plays for Real Zaragoza in Spain, is expected to miss the matches against Honduras and the Swiss on June 16 and 21 is a major blow for the South Americans as he top-scored with ten goals in qualifying.

On Tuesday he picked up an injury to his left leg and is expected to be out of action for at least a fortnight.

For striker Mark Gonzalez of Russian side CSKA Moscow the finals are a return to old pastures as the one-time Liverpool player was actually born in the South African city of Durban, where his father once played football.

An aunt remains in the city where she sells tasty Chilean specialities.

Who is responsible?

AFP, Johannesburg

World Cup organisers sought to distance themselves Monday from a stampede outside a warm-up friendly that injured 16 people and raised new security fears in the final countdown to the tournament.

FIFA, which is due to give its verdict later in the day on state of readiness, tried to wash its hands over the crush on Sunday at Makhulong stadium in a township near Johannesburg where Nigeria were playing North Korea.

"This friendly match has no relation whatsoever with the operational organisation of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, for which we remain fully confident," football's world governing body said in a statement.

But the headlines on the front-pages of South African newspapers made uncomfortable reading for organisers who have long had to fend off claims that South Africa's beleaguered security forces will struggle to keep order.

"Soccer Stampede Mayhem", read the headline in The Star which quoted one of those injured as having feared for her life.

"When we were coming in, they were just stepping on us," Princess Mbali said. "I thought I was dying. I was at the bottom."

Officials said one police officer was seriously injured and 15 people sustained minor injuries in the stampede at Tembisa township as a mass of supporters without tickets tried to force their way into the ground.

Speaking at the ground, police spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Eugene Opperman said that 8,000 free tickets had been distributed ahead of the match but other fans without tickets had tried to push their way in shortly before kick-off.

Police said it was not immediately clear who had distributed the tickets and FIFA said that it was nothing to do with them.

Germany land in SA

AFP, Johannesburg



Germany were the latest World Cup giants to touch down in South Africa for the first World Cup staged on the continent.

The three-time champions landed at Johannesburg international airport on a crisp, clear Monday morning after the first official flight of the national airline in an Airbus A380 jumbo.

"It was a great experience to be on the first A380 flight," coach Joachim Loew told reporters as he and his 23-man squad completed immigration details before heading for a hotel near Pretoria.

"We want to show South Africans from the outset that we are happy to be in their country," added manager and former national team striker Oliver Bierhoff.

Germany finished third behind Italy and France when they hosted the tournament four years ago and were runners-up to Brazil in the 2002 finals in South Korea and Japan.

They are traditionally considered title contenders regardless of the state of the national team because of their famed refusal to give up no

matter how desperate the situation in a World Cup match.

Hopes of Germany going all the way in the June 11-July 11 tournament did suffer a massive blow last month when midfield conductor and captain Michael Ballack was ruled out after tearing ligaments in the English FA Cup final.

The injury followed a heavy tackle from Germany-born Kevin-Prince Boateng, a member of the Ghana squad that also landed in Johannesburg on Monday and which will contest Group D with Germany, Australia and Serbia.

Defender Philipp Lahm has been elevated to Germany captain by Bayern Munich teammate Bastian Schweinsteiger the new vice-captain of a country that conquered the football world in 1954, 1974 and 1990.

Germany had glamorous company on their flight from Frankfurt in the shape of Shakira, the Colombian megastar who will feature in a pre-tournament concert on Thursday at Orlando Stadium in Soweto township.

Other teams with first-class World Cup pedigree who have already arrived in South Africa are Argentina, England, Netherlands, France and Brazil, with Italy and European champions Spain due later this week.

Montolivo's chance to shine

INTERNET



Marcello Lippi could not have been clearer after the draw with Switzerland -- every single player in this Italy squad will get his chance. Nobody is guaranteed a starter's spot and no one should be considered a reserve. It must have been music to the ears of one midfielder.

With Andrea Pirlo and Mauro Camoranesi injured and the other options long on energy but short on imagination, this could just be Riccardo Montolivo's moment. He seems to be the only player in the Azzurri squad with a spark of "fantasia" in his armoury. He has skills in his locker that Angelo Palombo, Rino Gattuso or Claudio Marchisio can only dream about.

He showed flashes of what he can do against the Swiss, now it is time to do it on a regular basis. At the age of 25, the excuses of age will no longer do. He is fast approaching the peak of his powers and needs to stamp his character for the Azzurri sooner rather than later.

The Fiorentina man is an infuriating talent at times. Sometimes his class sparkles more clearly than a Tuscan mountain stream. On other occasions, he looks more lost than an English tourist on a day trip through the Apennines.

The Azzurri desperately need the inspirational Montolivo to turn up in South Africa. He can no longer afford to disappear or drift out of a game. Alongside Daniele De Rossi he could form a powerful, young central midfield packed with drive and creativity. Ally them with Marchisio and the team would no longer look ready to collect its pension.

Yet for this method to succeed, it will take Lippi to live up to his word and the former Atalanta man to seize his opportunity.

With Paraguay fast approaching will the Italy Coach really have faith in all of his squad or will he take the easy option and use his tried and tested stars? And if he turns to Montolivo, will he finally deliver for his country? The answer to both these questions could decide just how far the boys in blue progress in the defence of their title.

The Daily Star

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

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

Prizes for the audience (For First Five Rounds):
 1st. 20L Toshiba Microwave Oven
 2nd. 14" Toshiba Colour TV
 3rd. 3 Toshiba DVD Players

Prizes for the audience (For Bumper Round):
 1st. Toshiba Washing Machine
 2nd. 21" Toshiba Colour TV
 3rd. 20L Toshiba Microwave Oven
 4th. Two Toshiba DVD Players

QUIZ SCHEDULE				
Round & Draw	Starts	Ends	Answers must reach by 12pm	Lucky Draw for prizes
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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