

Italy do not know when goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon will be able to return from a sciatic nerve problem, the world champions said on Tuesday. Buffon, who has suffered an injury-hit two years, was substituted at halftime in Monday's 1-1 draw with Paraguay in their World Cup Group F opener in Cape Town. "Buffon has a strong sciatic problem. It is impossible to estimate when he might return," an Italy statement said.

Star SPORT

DHAKA WEDNESDAY JUNE 16, 2010 E-MAIL: sports@thedailystar.net



PHOTO: AFP

THIS IS YOUR LAST WARNING: Ivory Coast striker Didier Drogba is frustrated at not winning a foul during their Group G match against Portugal at Nelson Mandela Bay stadium in Port Elizabeth yesterday.

Drogba, Ronaldo fire blank

AFP, Port Elizabeth

Ivory Coast and Portugal entered the World Cup fray here on Tuesday and produced a goalless draw marked by Didier Drogba's return to action just ten days after surgery on his broken arm.

The African superstar, wearing a protective cast, was introduced as a second half substitute but he was unable to tip the balance in his countrymen's favour in the Group G clash.

Portugal captain Cristiano Ronaldo had the best chance to break the stalemate on a crisp winter's afternoon in the first half when the Real Madrid winger's 25m shot rattled Boubacar Barry's left post in the 10th minute.

Barry's opposite number Eduardo was let off the hook

when shortly after Siaka Tiene's curling long range freekick edged wide.

Another Ivorian, Ismael

Tiote, then watched as his effort went over the Portuguese crossbar.

Referee Jorge Larrionda

flashed his yellow card at defender Guy Demel for a foul on Ronaldo who in turn was cautioned for his stropky reaction.

The Ivory Coast, the last of the six teams from Africa to enter the World Cup fray in South Africa, were giving as good as they got against their rivals from Europe ranked third in the world.

The game needed a goal and Salomon Kalou had Eduardo working with his shot on target in the 50th minute as Portugal manager Carlos Queiroz made his first change, replacing Danny with Atletico Madrid forward Simao.

Gone now was the caution that had marked much of the first period as this Group of Death curtain raiser really opened up and Barry had to be at full stretch to get hold of

Liedson's header after some nifty work down the left from Deco.

On 66 minutes manager Sven Goran Eriksson unleashed Drogba, who came on for his Chelsea teammate Kalou to by far the biggest cheer of the afternoon.

As the rain came down Ronaldo thought he had put the 2006 semifinalists into the lead but Larrionda had already whistled for a foul by Liedson.

On 80 minutes Ronaldo, who failed to score in any of Portugal's World Cup qualifiers, sent a 35m freekick edging over Barry's crossbar.

A Drogba-inspired Ivory Coast had Portugal on the hop in time added on but he mis-cued his shot and man-of-the-match Ronaldo and co. escaped with a point.

The result left Ghana as the

only one of the six African teams playing in this first ever World Cup in Africa to have won their opening first round match.

SCORE BOARD	
IVORY COAST 0 - 0 PORTUGAL	
Ivory Coast (4-3-3): Boubacar Copa Barry - Guy Demel, Kolo Toure (capt), Didier Zokora, Siaka Tiene - Emmanuel Eboue (Romaric 89), Yaya Toure, Cheik Ismael Tiote - Gervinho (Kader Keita 82), Aruna Dindane, Salomon Kalou (Didier Drogba 66)	
Portugal (4-3-3): Eduardo - Paulo Ferreira, Bruno Alves, Ricardo Carvalho, Fabio Coentrão - Deco (Tiago 62), Pedro Mendes, Raul Meireles (Ruben Amorim 85) - Cristiano Ronaldo (cap), Liedson, Danny (Simao 55)	
Venue: Nelson Mandela Bay stadium, Port Elizabeth	

KEY STATS	
Ivory Coast	Portugal
Shots (on target)	
9(2)	7(1)
Corners	
6	4
Possession	
45%	55%
Yellow Cards	
2	1

Honduras v Chile Time: 5.30pm Nelspruit

Spain v Switzerland Time: 8.00pm Durban

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TODAY'S POLL

Do you think Spain can win the World Cup this year?

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WORLD CUP POLL

Which team from Asia will go the farthest in this World Cup?

South Korea 74.0%
Japan 14.0%
Korea DPR 8.0%

TOTAL VOTES: 50

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Portugal striker Cristiano Ronaldo controls the ball during his side's World Cup match against Ivory Coast in Port Elizabeth yesterday.

Photo: AFP

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Viva La Espana or the Chocolate Boys

The bull fighters are raring to go, spurred by the spirit of Juan Belmonte, the man credited for modern style of Spanish bullfighting. The world has already seen the brilliance of Messi, the goal scoring prowess of Klose and the samba football from Brazil. And now the anticipation of savoring the football delights of Fernando Torres and David Villa, the mercurial Fabregas and not forgetting the armory of Iker Casillas in the goal.

No tweeting, no facebooking, only football. It is true that the Spanish Coach Vicente del Bosque has banned the Spanish players from using social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook during the tournament. Pity the female bandwagon, who will not have any tweeting and facebooking with the Spanish hunks. No wonder, some women hate football!

Well, have to wait till the Vuvuzela horns blare at Durban, to see the duel of the Matadors with the men from the Swiss Alps. Speaking of the Swiss entourage, the team doesn't have big fan followings or poster boys, but has the guts to surprise many. And, they certainly are the toppers in making chocolates. All the mouth watering chocolates comes from Switzerland, brands like Lindt and Toblerone are all over the world. Jean Tobler was the man who founded Toblerone in 1867. God bless him and the Swiss football army.