## Messi shines in win

Football

AFP, Seoul

Lionel Messi scored a quick-fire double as Barcelona cruised to a convincing 5-2 win over the K-League All Stars in a friendly at Seoul World Cup Stadium Wednesday.

SPORT

The Argentinian superstar made his preseason debut halfway into the game and scored two quick goals, giving his team the spark it needed to notch up an impressive victory.

Barca, dressed in the famous turquoisecoloured strip, looked rusty out of the blocks and were punished after a minute as Choi Sung-Guk scored the opening goal for the K-League All-Stars.

It did not take long for Barcelona to respond, however, as Zlatan Ibrahimovic conjured an equaliser in the sixth minute.

Messi was brought on in the 29th minute to oud applause from the 32,581 crowd.

But his introduction did not stop the K-League All Stars regaining the lead through a header from Lee Dong-Gook in the 36th min-

That advantage proved short-lived as Messi showed his skills scoring off a pass from Eduard Oriol Garcia in the 42nd minute.

The diminutive Argentinian struck again three minutes later to give his team a one-goal lead at the end of the first half.

Syrian wants L'pool

AFP, London



Gillett.

Syrian businessman Yahya Kirdi claims he is close to sealing a takeover of Premier League giants Liverpool. Chinese businessman

Kenny Huang emerged on Tuesday as the latest of several potential buyers to submit a bid to buy the club, which is owned by Americans Thomas Hicks and George

On Wednesday Kirdi, who represents a group of investors from the Middle East and Canada, claimed a price has been agreed and a formal purchase agreement "is in the final stage of negotiation".

A statement from Kirdi said: "The group is in advanced negotiations with Thomas Hicks and George Gillett, co-owners of Liverpool Football Club, to purchase 100 percent of the club.

"Agreement has been reached on all major terms including the purchase price, repayment of the existing bank debt from RBS (Royal Bank of Scotland) and Wells Fargo and financing of a new stadium in Liverpool's Stanley Park.

"A formal purchase agreement between the parties is in the final stage of negotiation."

Kirdi's claims, however, are being treated with caution.

His representatives made similar claims in April when no deal was done, and he has been dealing with Hicks and Gillett rather than Liverpool chairman Martin Broughton, who has been detailed to sell the club.

Kirdi is a resident of Canada and a former Syria international who oversees investments in Europe and North America on behalf of his

investor group, said the statement. "Liverpool is a massive football club with

passionate and proud fans in Merseyside and in every part of the world," said Kirdi.

squad and financing in place to build the new stadium, LFC will be on a solid foundation to compete in the Premiership and in Europe for years to come."

Keith Harris, head of investment bank Seymour Pierce, told Sky Sports News there are still other interested parties looking at the club.

"All I am prepared to say is we've looked at it very carefully on behalf of would-be buyers, who we know are very serious, we know are cash-rich, we know have the right incentive to do it, the right motivation to do it, and are prepared to take a long-term view," Harris said.

"I can't say any more at the moment. We have represented a buyer in the past and that is an ongoing situation.'

Huang on Tuesday expressed his interest in assuming control of the Reds, with suggestions he would seek to acquire the club's 237million-pound (285-million-euro) debt from principal lender the Royal Bank of Scotland. However, Broughton, who was brought into

the club in April to facilitate a sale, revealed there had been "several" bids for the Reds and insisted the decision over the sale will be made by the Liverpool board. "Any bids that go straight to RBS - and there

have been several - come to me and are directed to Barcap (Barclays Capital)," he told the Guardian.

"RBS are not involved. The control remains with the board.'

Broughton added: "It still remains the objective to conclude a deal before the end of the transfer window (August 31).

"That remains the objective but there are no deadlines, and we will continue working to complete the process.

"Both (owners) George Gillett and Tom Hicks remain on the board and they have given commitments that the board of Kop Holdings (Liverpool's UK parent company) is the party "With additional money to improve the that is responsible for the sale."



Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard gestures during a training session at Melwood yesterday. Liverpool take on Rabotnicki Skopje from Macedonia in their Europa League third qualifier round today.

# Marseille won't sell Niang

AFP, Paris



French champions Marseille insist that Senegalese striker Mamadou Niang will not be granted his wish to join Turkish giants Fenerbahce -- at least not this season.

Marseille reacted defiantly to reports last Sunday which

claimed Niang was set to complete an eightmillion euros move to the Istanbul side, with a contract offer of three to four years worth 2.5

million euros annually. Niang's French league-topping 18 goals helped the south-coast side, which is coached by Didier Deschamps, to a long-awaited league crown in 2010.

On Tuesday club president Jean-Claude Dassier offered a compromise, saying he would be prepared to pave the way for Niang to leave for Turkey next season.

But Dassier said it would be "suicidal" to sell the highly-rated striker only three days before Marseille begin their title defence in a league opener against Caen.

"Fenerbahce's offer has come in so late that it would be suicidal for us to respond positively only three days before the start of the champi-

onship," Dassier told L'Equipe on Wednesday. "We wouldn't have someone to replace him. I'm happy to guarantee Mamadou a written clause in his contract which would allow him to

leave the club after next season." Niang's contract with Marseille does not expire until 2014.

half but a Barcelona team consisting of reserve players came out in full control and dominated possession with crisp passing.

The K-League All Stars managed to create a few chances but Victor Sanchez Mata added a goal in the 80th minute and Eduard Oriol

Garcia scored three minutes later. Messi's appearance in the friendly had been in doubt.

Barcelona coach Pep Guardiola had said Tuesday that Messi -- whose World Cup ended in disappointment as Argentina were humbled 4-0 by Germany in the quarter-finals -- would not feature as he had just returned from holiday and was not match-fit.

However, following a hastily-arranged meeting with the promoters, the Catalan club issued a statement saying that Messi would play a role after all.

"The promoters of the tournament and Barcelona representatives held a meeting in which the matter of Leo Messi playing in the match was raised," read the statement.

"In the light of the good progress shown by the player in the last training session and that there will be another one before the match, the coaching staffs believe that it is fine for the Argentinian striker to play for a few minutes of the match."

Comments in the Spanish press claimed that Messi's appearance came only because he was compelled to play for at least half-an-hour under the terms of the tournament contract --Messi and Ibrahimovic sat out the second otherwise Barcelona would receive no money.

#### EPL to invest in youth Bayern blame Yossi smarter than Joe' **Dutch for**

Barcelona star Lionel Messi (R) scores one of his two goals past South Korea All-Star goalkeeper Jung Sung Ryong during their exhibition match at the World Cup

world class.

AFP, London

Stadium in Seoul yesterday. Barcelona won 5-2.

Robben injury

Angry Bayern Munich accused

the Netherlands of allowing

Arjen Robben to play at the

World Cup with an injury after

announcing the striker would

miss the first two months of

the Bundesliga season on

site (www.fcbayern.t-

home.de) that a routine pre-

season exam had shown that

Robben had a torn muscle in

his left thigh, adding he had

suffered the injury shortly

the World Cup campaign,

helping the Dutch reach the

final where they lost 1-0 to

doctor Hans-Wilhelm Mueller-

Wohlfahrt told the club's web

site (www.fcbayern.t-home.de).

this injury has not been pre-

cisely diagnosed and that they

saying: "It's a shock for me to get a diagnosis like this on my

return. I'm very disappointed, this absence is bitter for me

Rummenigge was also upset.

are angry," he said. "Once

again, we as a club must pay

Zidane set

for charity

against a European select side.

Cup winners, Zidane and

Thuram have both retired

'Bleus' for the day on Sunday

in a match held to raise funds

for victims of severe flooding

and the violent 'Xynthia'

windstorms, which combined

roll back the years and be

joined by Bixente Lizarazu,

Christian Karembeu, Fabien

Barthez, David Trezeguet in a

team that will be captained by

Didier Deschamps, who is

Jacquet will return with for-

mer assistant Roger Lemerre

while recently appointed

France coach, Laurent Blanc,

is also scheduled to make an

Former striker Thierry

Henry, who recently joined

New York Red Bulls, will not be

at Nantes' Stade Beaujoire for

France particularly hard.

The funds raised, which are

France '98 coach Aime

now coach of Marseille.

appearance.

the match.

Zidane and Thuram will

Like most of France's World

But the pair will become

reunion

AFP, Nantes

from the game.

left 70 people dead.

"I find it irresponsible that

Robben was quoted as

Club president Karl-Heinz

"Naturally, Bayern Munich

"This is a severe injury," club

Robben played throughout

before the World Cup.

Spain after extra-time.

have let Arjen play."

and for the time."

national team."

Bayern said on their web

REUTERS, Berlin

Tuesday.



The English Premier League (EPL) is contemplating the creation of "football schools" in a bid to improve the standard of the England national

EPL chief executive Richard Scudamore insisted his organisation had "suffered" as a result of England's early World Cup exit and wanted to do something to address the issue of youth development.

"What we can't do is have a knee-jerk reaction and alter everything we do, but it hurts us as much as it hurts anybody and we do suffer," Scudamore said on Wednesday.

"It absolutely strengthens our resolve in terms of youth development and to make sure that the maximum number of young English players are identified to give the England team the best chance."

One possible change could involve the creation of 'football schools', which will see youth academies associated with top-flight clubs extending to 15-20 hours of coaching for their nine to 16-year-olds instead of the current five

hours per week. That increase would bring English academies into line with European counterparts such as the

Netherlands. The plan was spawned following a review of Ged Roddy, the Premier League's director of

last season and we believe that is enough to find 11 to perform in international competition. "What we really want is an England manager who is spoilt for choice."

He added: "I can envisage a day where in the north west of England we have a Premier League school where a number of clubs have their boys.

clubs before England's failure at the World Cup.

too many foreign players in the Premier League.

something about the foreign players, it's the

opposite: if you are going to make it as an English

player into our first teams you have got to be

played first-team football in the Premier League

"There were 222 English-qualified players who

However, Scudamore insisted there were not

"It's not an acceptance that we have to do

"Or perhaps a sports school in London where a number of sports get together and have a school for elite athletes whether it be swimmers, runners, rugby players or whatever."

Britain's Department for Education said they would be happy to talk to the Premier League about setting up a school.

A DFE spokesperson said: "We want every child to have a premier league education and would be very happy to talk to the Premier League about setting up schools in communities across the country, where there is a local need.

hundreds of passionate and talented groups that care about raising standards for all children and youth development, and was agreed by the 20 are interested in setting up new schools."

#### he has improved his squad with the swap of attacking midfielders. "Joe Cole is quicker than

SOCCERNET

Carlo Ancelotti has criticised

Chelsea outcast Joe Cole's

tactical nous, saying new

signing Yossi Benayoun is a

superior option because

unlike Cole, Benayoun "un-

Liverpool after being released

by Chelsea while Benayoun, a

similar player in terms of

position, went the other way

more moves in the transfer

market before the transfer

window closes on August 31,

but having had some time to

work with Benayoun on the

training pitch he is confident

Ancelotti is hoping to make

in a move worth £5.5 million.

Cole has signed for

derstands what I tell him".

Benayoun but Yossi is better tactically. He understands what I tell him," Ancelotti said in quotes in the Sun. "Yossi is a very intelligent player."

#### suffer **Jovetic blow**

REUTERS, Milan

Fiorentina forward Stevan Jovetic has been ruled out for at least six months after suffering a cruciate knee ligament injury, the Serie A club said in a statement on Wednesday.

The shaggy-haired Montenegrin, who will have surgery following the injury in pre-season training, was a key part of the side which made the Champions League last 16 last term.

His loss is a big blow to the Florence club, who now only have Alberto Gilardino available as a recognised frontman given Adrian Mutu is out until October because of a drugs

Fiorentina may now have to enter the transfer market having said on Tuesday that no more deals would be done before the Aug. 29 kickoff after pulling out of an agreement to

sign Liverpool left back Emiliano Insua.

#### Zenit complete Alves swoop

SOCCERNET

Zenit St Petersburg have signed Portugal defender Bruno Alves from Porto for a fee of •22 million, as they look to cement their position at the top of the Russian Premier League.

Alves, 28, won four league titles and three domestic cups during a five-year spell with Porto, but has now moved on to pastures new, joining international team-mates Danny and Fernando Meira at the Petrovsky Stadium.

Zenit are unbeaten in 15 games this season and sit nine points clear of second-place CSKA Moscow, with the signing of Alves likely to help strengthen the 2008 UEFA Cup winners' position atop the

table.

### Milan duo will miss

Brazilian Ronaldinho and star outfit Panathinaikos.

strained left hamstring last week, prompting the Italian side to leave the 2004 and 2005 FIFA Player of the Year at home to recover.

land were AC Milan forward Filippo Inzaghi and top midfielders Pirlo and Massimo Ambrosini. US defender Oguchi

AC Milan will have tuneup against Lecce.

team-mate Wayne Bridge, there was never a sense that remain a significant force Terry enjoyed the same level of despite regular changes of influence in Capello's dressmanager. Keeping Terry fit and in ingroom.

But it is that desire to be seen as a leader of men which gives Terry his status at Chelsea.

At Stamford Bridge, he is the main on-pitch motivator and, just as importantly, acts as the squad's social secretary, organising team-bonding events that keep the players entertained and morale high.

There can be no doubting the positive effect of Terry's leadership, as Chelsea's

# US match

AFP, Pontiac

Italian midfielder Andrea Pirlo are among four top AC Milan players who will not make the trip to suburban Detroit for a Friday friendly against Greek Ronaldinho suffered a

Remaining in their home-

Onyewu, a standout for the

Americans at the 2006 and 2010 World Cups, will be on the field for AC Milan against the Greek side at a domed stadium which was used as a venue for the 1994 World Cup.

be played at Wembley this matches against Juventus and It would be little surprise to Barcelona later this month before opening their Serie A see Terry making a victorious walk up to Wembley's Royal campaign on August 29 Box in nine months time.

"We would be delighted if they joined the **Fiorentina** 

form will be more important

than ever as Ancelotti strug-

gles with injuries that threaten

to derail the Blues' bid to

retain the Premier League

Cech has been ruled out for a

month, while Brazilian centre-

back Alex is also likely to be

sidelined for a similar period.

still not certain as Real Madrid

eye the England left-back,

Terry looks like the one cer-

tainty Ancelotti can rely on

when he selects his back-four

for the season-opener at home

to newly-promoted West

Bromwich Albion on August

14.Critics of the 29-year-old

will claim his defensive prow-

ess waned to an alarming

But, while Terry's lack of

pace was exposed at times, he

performed well enough in the

title run-in to suggest it would

be premature to write him off

bounds - as he proved by

trying a head-first full-length

dive along the turf to block a

Slovenian shot at the World

will motivate Terry most this

would have won the shootout

against United in the 2008

Champions League final

remains the most painful

amends and it probably hasn't

escaped Terry's notice that the

Champions League final will

He is desperate to make

memory of Terry's career.

But there is no doubt what

Missing the penalty that

His bravery knows no

extent last year.

just yet.

Cup.

year.

With Ashley Cole's future

Czech goalkeeper Petr

### Terry's point to prove togetherness has ensured they

### Football

AFP, London

the bill after a player has been severely injured with his John Terry will return to Chelsea with a point to prove this season as the England defender attempts to reassert his authority after a traumatic

World Cup. If Chelsea manager Carlo Ancelotti harboured fears that Terry would be adversely affected by his experience in South Africa, the Italian would Zinedine Zidane and Lilian have been mightily reassured Thuram are set to make a rare by the sight of his captain appearance for France in a jogging contentedly around charity match which will pit the club's training base just the 1998 world champions days after England's dismal

> exit against Germany. England's World Cup experience left many of Fabio Capello's squad nursing bruised egos as they were pilloried by angry fans for another flop at a major international tournament.

> Terry could easily have been one of those keen to lie low after the centre-half's erratic displays and an astonishingly ill-judged attempt to fill the leadership void created by injured captain's Rio Ferdinand's absence. Yet, luckily for Ancelotti,

> Terry is infused with an unbreakable sense of selfbelief and, after an uncomfortable time with England, he is relishing the chance to rule the roost at Chelsea once again. Terry clearly got it wrong

when he used a pre-match press conference at the World Cup to portray himself as the man to challenge Capello's tactics following England's poor start to the tournament. It was a provocative state-

ment that led to disharmony estimated to be in the region of in an already-unsettled 500,000 euros, will go to help victims of the violent 'Xynthia' England camp. windstorms which crossed western Europe in late

Even before being stripped of the England captaincy following his affair with the ex-February 2010 and which hit girlfriend of former Chelsea