

Juventus's veteran forward Alessandro Del Piero (L) celebrates his goal with teammates during their Europa League encounter against Shamrock Rovers at the Braglia Stadium in Modena on Thursday.

# L'pool, Juve cruise

AFP, Paris



Former European champions Liverpool and Juventus guaranteed a heavyweight presence in the Europa League play-offs on Thursday after wrapping up their qualifying ties.

Roy Hodgson's first home match as Liverpool manager ended in triumph as the five-time European

kings overcame Rabotnicki of Macedonia 2-0 at Anfield for a 4-0 aggregate. First half goals by David Ngog and captain Steven Gerrard were enough to see Liverpool

through. On a day when the Chinese government's foreign investment arm denied funding a bid for the club, there was no confusion on the pitch about who was going through to the next stage of Europe's second-tier club competition.

Having established a 2-0 first leg lead in Skopje seven days ago, Hodgson's Anfield arrival was never in danger of turning sour.

He made sure of that by naming his strongest side available with Jamie Carragher and Glen Johnson starting along with Gerrard while new signing Joe Cole also impressed by setting up Ngog's headed opener. "It's nice to be in the next round although,

quite honestly, I thought we would be after that good performance in Skopje," said Hodgson. "It was important tonight to be disciplined

and have a quality performance and we certainly did that. Obviously we're just delighted to be in the next round, I'm sure that round will prove tougher than this one."

Cole was delighted with his home debut and was unlucky not to get on the scoresheet, hitting the woodwork in the second half.

"I was nervous before the game but it's always like that when you go to a new club," said former Chelsea star Cole.

"It was good to get 90 minutes in and get the win in the end. The main difference (at Anfield as a Liverpool player) is that I wasn't getting

too much stick. That's different." Juventus rested a host of stars, but still moved into the next round with Alessandro Del Pierro coming off the bench to score the only goal in a 1-0 win over Irish side Shamrock

Rovers. The Italians had won the first leg 2-0 in Dublin last week.

Australian star Harry Kewell scored twice as Turkish side Galatasary made sure of their place in Friday's play-off draw with a 5-1 win

at OFK Belgrade for a 7-3 aggregate. Kewell struck in the 22nd minute and also

converted a 57th-minute penalty. Red Star Belgrade, who were 1991 European Cup winners, were knocked out by Slovan Bratislava despite a 1-1 draw in Slovakia. The Serbian side had lost the first leg at home 2-1 a week ago.

A day after Celtic crashed out of the Champions League, Motherwell salvaged a little Scottish pride with a 3-0 win over Norway's Aalesund for a 4-1 aggregate win.

Jamie Murphy, John Sutton scored in the in the opening 13 minutes at Fir Park with substitute Jonathan Page adding a third in the last minute for Craig Brown's team.

Fellow Scottish Premier League side Hibernian, 3-0 down from the first leg against Maribor of Slovenia, were knocked after losing the return 3-2 at Easter Road.

#### Loew rests stars for friendly

AFP, Frankfurt

Germany coach Joachim Loew has as anticipated rested the bulk of his World Cup stars for next week's friendly against Denmark.

Loew's 18-strong list announced here Friday included only eight of the 23 players he took to South Africa for the 2010 finals where Germany finished third.

World Cup players called up for this Euro 2012 qualifier warm-up included goalkeeper Manuel Neur and defender Jerome Boateng. Loew appeased some of

Germany's top clubs like Bayern Munich by leaving out the likes of Philipp Lamm, Bastian Schweinsteiger, Thomas Muller, Miroslav Klose and Sami Khedira.

"It was obvious that we would overlook our most important players for this game", Loew commented.

He added: "We are conscious of our responsibilities with regard to the international players. After a competition such as this it's important for them to be able to focus on their clubs and to prepare for the new season."

Missing also was Germany captain Michael Ballack, the former Chelsea midfielder now with Bayer Leverkusen who was sidelined for the World Cup with

Loew has called up two debutants, Wolfsburg defender Sascha Riether and Monchengladbach midfielder Marco Reus.

#### **SQUAD**

Goalkeepers: Manuel Neuer (Schalke 04), Tim Wiese (Werder Defenders: Andreas Beck

(Hoffenheim), Jerome Boateng (Manchester City/ENG), Sascha Riether (Wolfsburg), Marcel Schäfer (Wolfsburg), Christian Schulz (Hannover), Serdar Tasci (Stuttgart)

Midfielders: Christian Gentner (Stuttgart), Thomas Hitzlsperger (West Ham/ENG), Aaron Hunt (Werder Bremen), Toni Kroos (Bayern Munich), Marko Marin (Werder Bremen), Marco Reus (Monchengladbach), Christian Trasch (Stuttgart), Piotr Trochowski (Hamburg)

Forwards: Mario Gomez (Bayern Munich), Patrick Helmes (Bayer Leverkusen)

### Degen loaned to Stuttgart

AFP, Stuttgart

Liverpool right-back Philipp Degen has been loaned out to Stuttgart for the upcoming season, the German club has

announced. The 27-year-old Swiss international moved to Anfield on a free transfer in 2008 from

Borussia Dortmund. The move sees Degen reunited with Stuttgart coach Christian Gross, the pair having worked together at

Basel. Degen, who has 31 caps to his name, said on Friday: "For me this loan represents a great chance to rediscover my best

Trio to fight it out

AFP, Paris



Their national side may have wallowed in humiliation at a disastrous World Cup but French fans can look forward to an intriguing domestic season as Lyon and Bordeaux look to knock Marseille off their Ligue 1 perch.

Marseille landed their first

title success since 1992 last term with outgoing champions Bordeaux failing to qualify for Europe at all after falling away badly to finish sixth. But ahead of this weekend's opening round

of action Marseille coach Didier Deschamps is battling to keep his squad together as predators circle around some of his side's top assets.

On Thursday, the 1998 French World Cupwinning skipper had to underline his desire to hang on to striker Mamadou Niang, who is a target for Turkey's Fenerbahce, while English Premier League side Newcastle are still out to buy playmaker Hatem Ben Arfa after having a loan bid rejected.

Niang told La Provence newspaper that "I will not go back on my decision (to leave)" the club.

But Deschamps countered by saying: "The club has to be stronger than the players. When the door is not open to a player (allowing him to leave) then the door is not open, full stop."

Marseille's problem is that, even if they have captured Spanish right-back Cesar Azpilicueta from Osasuna for a fee rising to 9.5 million euros for the top transfer of the summer, the French league continues not to have the financial pulling power of the likes of England, Spain or Italy.

The southerners and Lyon are the closest thing the Ligue has to financial big-hitters.

Yet with annual revenue of around 140 million euros that leaves them both languishing outside the top ten in the Deloitte Football Money League, led by Real Madrid with some 400 million with Barcelona snapping at their

Marseille remain the only French side to

Sir Alex Ferguson believes

Chelsea are the team that pose

the biggest threat to

Manchester United's hopes of

bringing the Premier League

Carlo Ancelotti's Chelsea

title back to Old Trafford.

ended United's three-year reign as Premier

League champions last season and also won the

Manchester City and Tottenham, who finished

fourth last season, to progress this term, but the

United manager says Chelsea remain his team's

they face the Blues at Wembley on Sunday in the

Community Shield, which marks the final week-

end before the start of the Premier League season.

season and you can't dismiss them," Ferguson

that the competition is being raised all the time.

Last season the monopoly of the big four was

progress this season and Man City have bought

again, you obviously have to put them in the

they had last season, will come into it also. It's

going to be a competitive league, there's no doubt

now. But I do think the team that won the league

the previous season are the ones you look at.

back at United after a disappointing World Cup

with England, will play at least 45 minutes at

the best of the forward until well into the season.

But the Scot believes supporters will not see

squashed and Tottenham came into it.

Chelsea have got that experience.'

Wembley this weekend.

United will get an early look at Chelsea when

"They won the league and cup double last

"It could be a league of a lot dangers in terms

"You'd think that Tottenham would make

"I think Everton, after all the injury problems

"It's getting more competitive every season

Ferguson has confirmed that Wayne Rooney,

Ferguson expects big-spending neighbours

FA Cup to complete the double.

AFP, Manchester

biggest rivals.

said on Friday.

equation.

about that.

have lifted the European Cup - in 1993 - though disgrace followed in the shape of enforced relegation for match-fixing.

But where the Champions League is concerned it is Lyon who have, thanks to 11 straight years of participation, managed to use the tournament as a means of strengthening their financial profile.

Having won the title by six points last May, Marseille start off with what should be a home banker against Caen on Saturday while Lyon host Monaco before Bordeaux travel to Montpellier on Sunday.

Auxerre, third last term to earn a spot in the Champions League qualifiers, should also put three early points on their scorecard with a win at home to Lorient. Fans in the capital will meanwhile likely

have to keep on waiting for Paris St Germain, who host fellow former giants St Etienne, to emerge from their slumbers. PSG did at least lift the French Cup but have made no impact in recent years on the title race,

indeed they flirted with relegation in three of the last four seasons. Bordeaux, having lost coach Laurent Blanc, who led them to the championship in 2009, to the France top job, will under Jean Tigana have

to make do without European revenues this season. "That means we will be concentrating everything on the league and we will have to give it everything we have got," said Brazilian

midfielder Fernando. "We can't miss out a second time - another year without European competition would be really tough," compatriot and striker Wendel concurred.

#### **FIXTURES**

Saturday

Auxerre v Lorient, Lens v Nancy, Lyon v Monaco, Marseille v Caen, Nice v Valenciennes, Paris SG v St Etienne, Rennes v Lille, Sochaux v Arles, Toulouse v Brest Sunday

"The profile of the World Cup means that it

"You can't dismiss that in terms of giving them

"I don't think we'll get the benefit of these

Eight days before United start their Premier

rest and we've done that. We've given them 28

days rest and we'll get the benefit throughout the

players (who appeared at the World Cup) until

League campaign at home to Newcastle,

Ferguson will send a patched-up side out at

son after damaging his ankle during a friendly in

team-mate Rio Ferdinand and French winger

minor car accident a few days ago, will also be

absent at Wembley, while Owen Hargreaves is still

having his damaged knee assessed in the United

Rafael are unlikely to feature after suffering a bout

a non-starter on Sunday after only returned to

start of the season because he is in danger of burn-

"Over the last five years he has played an average

well so we felt he deserved another week's rest. He

Welbeck and Mame Biram Diouf are both set to go

out on loan, while promising midfielder Tom

Cleverly will remain at Old Trafford despite inter-

out after a hectic schedule over the last few years.

Gabriel Obertan on the treatment table.

of food poisoning earlier in the week.

training on Thursday after the World Cup.

won't be available until into the season."

est from Newcastle and Wigan.

while Blackburn are chasing Diouf.

Michael Carrick will miss the start of the sea-

The England midfielder joins international

Brazilian Anderson, who was involved in a

In addition, Fabio Da Silva and his brother

Patrice Evra, the France full-back, is definitely

Ferguson admitted Evra is unlikely to make the

"We decided to give Patrice more rest," he said.

"This summer he has had the World Cup as

Ferguson also revealed young strikers Danny

Welbeck has been watched by Sunderland,

maybe the third week of the season."

Wembley.

States.

of 55 games a year.

Ireland on Wednesday.

does take a lot out of players," Ferguson said.

Montpellier v Bordeaux

#### Ronaldinho not for sale

REUTERS, Milan

AC Milan have strongly denied that Ronaldinho and Thiago Silva are up for sale after renewed media speculation on Friday that they could be sold. Milan owner Silvio

Berlusconi has been adamant

that Ronaldinho, 30, will not only see out the last year of his contract this coming season but also stay at the club for the rest of his career. However, problems with the Brazilian's fitness after the close-season break have

reignited speculation about a late transfer window move for the waning talent, with Los Angeles Galaxy said to be very interested. "AC Milan confirm yet again that Ronaldinho and

Thiago Silva are absolutely not for sale," the Serie A club said in a statement. Reports had said Milan

would try to recruit fellow Brazilian Robinho, on loan at Santos from Manchester City, if former world player of the year Ronaldinho departed.

Defender Thiago Silva is still being linked to Real Madrid despite the Rossoneri saying previously they had rejected the Spanish club's advances and would not be selling.

### Ambassadors get wet

AFP, Dushanbe

Ambassadors from the United States and Britain dived into a swimming pool fully clothed here as payment for a bet struck on the World Cup.

Blues the biggest threat The pair had placed a private wager on the result of the first round match between the USA and England in South Africa with the loser pledging to take a swim wearing his suit.

> After the match ended in a 1-1 draw the ambassadors of both countries were consigned to the same watery fate.

> The two men paid off their respective part of the bet when they met in the Tajikistan capital last month, with a group if invited guests on

hand to act as witnesses. Unlike their clothes, the ambassadors' spirits were not dampened.

### Reds to face Trabzonspor

AFP, Nyon

Former European champions Liverpool will face Turkish side Trabzonspor and Manchester City take on Romania's Timisoara in the Europa League play-offs. The draw, staged at UEFA's

headquarters here on Friday, also pitted Aston Villa against Austrian heavyweights Rapid Vienna and Celtic against Dutch side Utrecht. This is the second succes-

sive season Villa and Vienna have met at this stage of the competition, with the Austrian side advancing on away goals last campaign.

Celtic dropped down to Europe's second tier club competition after defeat to Sporting Braga in the Champions League qualifiers.

#### Cesc stays a Gunner While Fabregas has ended speculation over Football

AFP, London

Cesc Fabregas has confirmed he will stay at Arsenal this season after conceding he won't get his wish to rejoin Barcelona. Fabregas met Arsene Wenger before the

World Cup to ask the Gunners boss to let him move to Spanish champions Barca. But the Spain midfielder, who quit the Nou Camp to join Arsenal as a teenager, was unable to persuade Wenger to accept Barca's offers of

around 30 million pounds (47.7 million dollars) and has now announced he will remain at the Premier League club. "Firstly I would like to apologise to all the Arsenal fans for not speaking sooner about my future but I have not known what I was going to

ment to Sky Sports News. "I cannot deny that joining a club like Barcelona was not an attractive move for me.

do until this moment," Fabregas said in a state-

"This was the club where I learned my football, it is my home town where my friends and family are and a club where I have always dreamed of playing.

"There are not many players in the world who would not want to play for Barcelona.

"I have had many conversations with Arsene Wenger both in person and over the phone over the last few months and although the content of those conversations will remain private, the conclusion is that Barcelona have had two formal offers rejected by Arsenal.

"I am a professional and I fully understand that it is Arsenal's prerogative not to sell me."

A host of Barca players had gone public with their belief that Fabregas was desperate to move to the club he supported as a boy, but Wenger's determination not to be bullied into selling his captain has paid off.

his future in the short term, it would be no surprise if Barca return with another bid at the end of the season. The conclusion of the longest running trans-

fer saga of the close-season will be a relief to Arsenal fans, who were desperate to see their best player stay in north London. And Fabregas, who had refused to speak publicly about the situation until now, was quick

to calm any fears that he would spend the next nine months sulking at his failure to get the move he desired. "I owe a lot to the club, manager and the fans and I will respect their decision and will now

Arsenal," Fabregas said. "I can assure all the fans that now the negotiations have ended I will be 100 per cent focused

concentrate on the new season ahead with

on playing for Arsenal. "I am an Arsenal player and as soon as I step out on to the pitch, that is the only club I will be thinking about.

"I am looking forward to the start of the season and putting this speculation behind me." Fabregas, who is under contract at Arsenal until 2014, returned to training on Thursday

after a lengthy break following Spain's victorious World Cup campaign. He was greeted warmly by 10,000 Arsenal supporters at a members' day at the Emirates

Stadium this week, with banners and chants making it clear how much they wanted him to With Fabregas on board and new signings

Marouane Chamakh and Laurent Koscielny blending in well during pre-season, Wenger will now harbour hopes of ending the club's fiveyear trophy drought. Whether that will be enough to keep the 23-

year-old in the long-term remains to be seen but, for now at least, Wenger and his club's fans have got their way.



Picture made available yesterday shows US Ambassador to Tajikistan Kenneth Gross (R) and British counterpart Trevor Moore standing fully clothed in a swimming pool in Dushanbe on July 23, 2010.

## FFF summons five

AFP, Paris



France internationals ordered ary commission of the French Football Federation (FFF) on Friday to explain the team's training ground strike at the World Cup.

The 31-year-old Chelsea striker was sent home early from South Africa in disgrace after a dressing-room bust-up with former coach Raymond Domenech.

His expulsion resulted in the other 22 members of the squad staging a one-day strike in support of Anelka.

Anelka, along with France captain Patrice Evra, Franck Ribery, Eric Abidal and Jeremy Toulalan, have been ordered to explain their roles in the refusal to train before the FFF on August 17, a well-

placed source told AFP. The five players have been targeted because they were deemed to have had key roles to play in

Evra as the captain, Ribery as vice-captain, Nicolas Anelka was among five Anelka for insulting Domenech, Abidal for his refusal to play France's final World Cup match to appear before the disciplin- against South Africa, and Toulalan for writing the statement issued by the players announcing their intention to strike. An inquiry into the World Cup fiasco is due to

be published later Friday and may recommend further sanctions against the players, although new coach Laurent Blanc hopes it will not hinder his bid to qualify France for Euro 2012. As a result of their behaviour in South Africa all members of the French World Cup squad

were left out of Blanc's squad for his first game in charge, a friendly against Norway in Oslo on August 11. Ribery is also facing trouble on another front after being charged with having sex with an

under-age prostitute. The Bayern Munich player, who faces up to three years in prison if convicted, has admitted paying for sex with Zahia Dehar but denies knowing the call girl was under 18 at the time.

# form."