



Inter Milan defender Lucio is at full stretch to kick the ball during their Serie A encounter against Bologna at the Dall'Ara Stadium on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Stuttgart seal Mauro deal

REUTERS, Berlin

VfB Stuttgart have signed former Italy World Cup winner Mauro Camoranesi from Juventus for one year with an option to renew, the Bundesliga club said on Tuesday.

Hours before the end of the transfer window, Stuttgart, who are competing in the Europa League, said they had finally clinched a deal for the Argentina-born midfielder, who won the 2006 World Cup with Italy.

They said neither club would reveal any more details of the transfer of the 33-year-old, who has been hit by injuries in the past two years.

Stuttgart are in desperate need of reinforcement after failing to win any points in their first two league games.

## Spurs sign Pletikosa

AFP, London

Tottenham signed Croatia goalkeeper Stipe Pletikosa on a season-long loan from Spartak Moscow on Tuesday.

Pletikosa, 31, joins the Premier League club as cover for first-choice Heurelho Gomes, who missed Saturday's defeat against Wigan after suffering a groin injury during his team's Champions League play-off win over Young Boys last week.

Spurs boss Harry Redknapp selected veteran Italian Carlo Cudicini in goal against Wigan, but he wants more senior back-up to cope with the demands of competing in Europe as well as battling for domestic honours.

"We are delighted to announce the signing of Stipe Pletikosa from Spartak Moscow on a season-long loan," a statement on Tottenham's website confirmed.

Pletikosa moved to Russian club Spartak in 2007 after four years with Shakhtar Donetsk and has won 80 caps for Croatia, appearing in the 2002 and 2006 World Cups, as well as Euro 2008.

## Barca unveil Masche

Football  
AFP, Barcelona

AFP, Barcelona

Argentinian international midfielder Javier Mascherano completed his 17.25 million pounds (26.6m dollar) transfer to Spanish champions Barcelona from English Premier League giants Liverpool on Monday.

The 26-year-old - who captained Argentina at the World Cup finals where they were humbled 4-0 in the quarterfinals by Germany - signed a four-year contract after passing a five-hour medical, according to the buying club's website.

The get-out clause is set at 90 million euros (113.9m dollars).

Mascherano said that he wasn't going to the Spanish club "for a holiday but to take advantage of a once in a lifetime opportunity" to play for a team which was made up of world champions.

Mascherano paid tribute to the calibre of his new teammates and said that he was determined to earn his place in the squad.

"There are great players in my position," he said. "I would be stupid if I thought that I was coming here to play everything, you have to respect the people who are doing well and who have won everything."

"In the positions in which I can play, there are three world champions," he said in reference to Sergio Busquets, Xavi Hernandez and Andres Iniesta.

"The day that I'm called on to play, I want to do it in the best possible way and will do everything to ensure that the absence of the team-mate who had to come off isn't felt."

He added: "I'm coming to a team which has in the past few years won everything. It is made up of world champions. I will try to help the team continue winning things."

"In the future I am certain to say that I was a better player for having played in this club."

Barcelona's first-team doctor Ricard Pruna spoke to Barcelona TV about Mascherano's level of fitness.

"It was an exhaustive medical that lasted around five hours," he explained.

"He is in excellent condition and is physically great."

Dr Pruna said that fans should not be concerned about Mascherano missing many matches through injury.

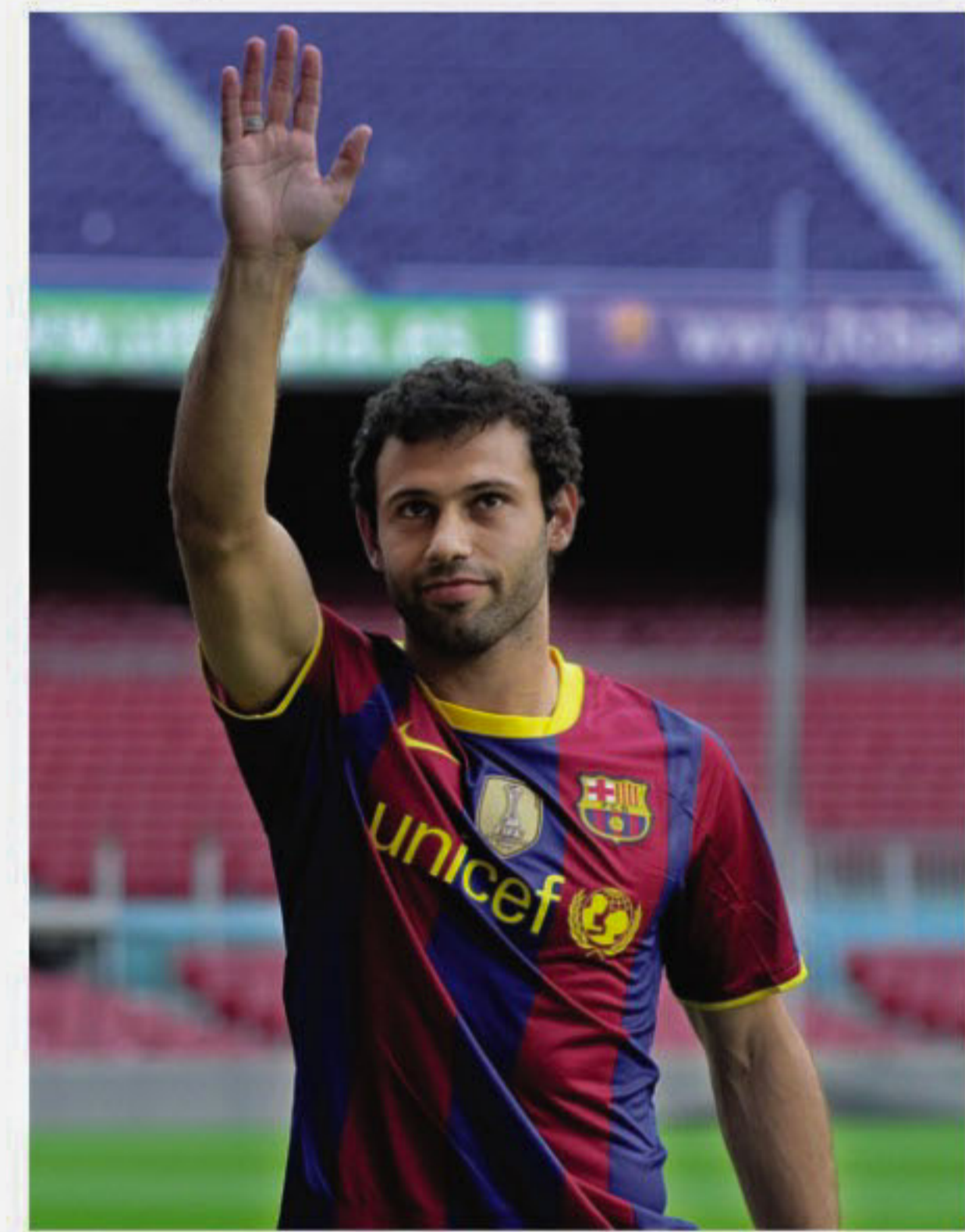
"His cardiovascular level is perfect and he is a player who has had very few injuries," he said.

"In the last five years he has suffered one injury that has left him with problems."

reasons - he constantly complained his family had not settled in England - Liverpool came to an agreement with him that if they received an acceptable bid they would allow him to leave.

Liverpool rejected an initial bid of 16 million pounds from Barcelona but finally accepted that they would let him leave when the Spanish club came back with an improved offer last Friday.

The player, bought for 18 million pounds from West Ham over three years ago, had angered present Liverpool manager Roy Hodgson when he refused to play for the club



Barcelona's new signing Argentinian midfielder Javier Mascherano waves during his official presentation at Nou Camp on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

Mascherano has been keen to leave Anfield for several months having almost joined the Spanish champions 12 months ago only for former Liverpool manager Rafael Benitez to eventually price the player out of a move.

However, with Mascherano keen to leave for personal

in their defeat to Manchester City last Monday.

Mascherano will train on Tuesday with his new teammates before leaving for Argentina to join the national side, where he will play a friendly on September 7 in Buenos Aires against World Cup winners Spain.

## Forlan fires Atletico

AFP, Madrid

A double by Uruguayan star Diego Forlan inspired Atletico Madrid to an opening 4-0 victory over Sporting Gijon here on Monday in the Primera Liga.

Forlan, who was named the best player of the World Cup finals where he scored five goals as Uruguay reached the semi-finals, scored his brace in the 40th and 64th minutes to add to Jose Jurado's 11th minute opener.

The victory came fresh on the heels of the Europa League titleholders European Super Cup triumph over Champions League winners Inter Milan on Friday.

Jurado struck early on to show the team were not suffering from fatigue after their exertions against Inter when he shot home into the top right hand corner after a Jose Antonio Reyes corner had been partially cleared by the Gijon defence.

Forlan doubled their lead close to the break when he fired in at close range after being set up by Argentinian international striker Sergio Agüero.

The 31-year-old former Manchester United and Villarreal forward made no mistake in wrapping up the three points when Czech international Tomas Ujfalusi created an opening for him.

Atletico could have had a hatful more but wasted their chances until Portuguese veteran Simao popped up to add a fourth in time added on after being set up by Reyes.

## Kalle demands compensation for Robben

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich president Karl Heinz Rummenigge has demanded compensation from the Dutch football federation for the lengthy injury lay-off of winger Arjen Robben.

Robben could be out for the rest of the year as he struggles to recover from a thigh injury he picked up before the World Cup finals.

For Rummenigge, the Dutch federation are liable to pay compensation to Bayern for the temporary loss of the 26-year-old's services.

"I think that the Dutch federation should assure compensation at the level of the salary during the period of unavailability," Rummenigge said.

He added that the dossier concerning insurance cover by UEFA for clubs hit by an injury to a player on international duty was moving forward.

"UEFA would be ready to insure European clubs against eventual injuries," Rummenigge told the Munich dailies Munchner Merkur and TZ. "Not only for the big tournaments but also for friendlies with the national sides."

The finer details of the agreement were still under discussion, he said.

"We're currently looking into it with UEFA, and following on with FIFA the criteria which could be part of such insurance. It's expensive but it's a necessity."

# Inter held goalless

AFP, Rome



Champions Inter Milan were held to a frustrating 0-0 draw away to Bologna in their opening match of the 2010/11 Serie A season on Monday.

In a game delayed due to Inter's European Supercup commitments in Monaco on Friday, the nerazzurri took 45 minutes to wake up and then despite bombarding Bologna's goal in the second period, they could find no way through.

If playing last season's treble winners wasn't tough enough already, Bologna's preparations were thrown into disarray on the eve of the match when president Sergio Porcedda sacked coach Franco Colomba and temporarily replaced him with youth team boss Paolo Magnani.

But the hosts showed remarkable resilience, not least from goalkeeper Emiliano Viviano, who made a number of crucial saves, including one with his head.

Although Inter changed coaches in the summer -- Rafael Benitez replacing the Real Madrid-bound Jose Mourinho -- the starting XI in a 4-4-3 formation came straight from the Portuguese's mould.

However, Inter failed to sparkle and only reached something resembling their own high standards after the interval.

Benitez paid tribute to Viviano's performance but lamented his team's lack of freshness.

"He did very well with his head, with his hands, with everything," joked Benitez.

"In the beginning we had control, we did well but then they had some chances on the counter-attack, but in the second half we did everything we'd spoken about beforehand.

"We're lacking physical condition and then (Bologna) worked well in defence, they were organised and it wasn't easy to find space, but I'm happy with the reaction of my team in the second half."

"We hope to do better in future, we're at the beginning and everyone needs to understand that we must have more of the ball."

"We had some chances, we showed that even

away we wanted to win. We had control, we did everything we could but we lacked freshness."

Magnani, who will not be in charge of Bologna's next game, said the next coach will inherit a team in good shape.

"We did well in the first half, physically and with our positioning, we did everything we'd talked about perfectly," he said.

"In the second half we struggled, they were winning the one-on-one battles."

"We've got all the credentials to do well, the president has tried to bring in youth to the squad, I think we have a great chance to have a good season."

Inter had a scare on 14 minutes as Marco Di Vaio played a crossfield ball over the top that both centre-back Lucio and goalkeeper Julio Cesar went for.

Lucio got in a weak clearance that went back across goal and left Julio Cesar stranded, but with an empty net to aim at Henry Gimenez lofted his shot hopelessly over the bar.

Inter were creating little of note with Esteban Cambiasso volleying over and Kenya international McDonald Mariga dragging a shot from the right well wide of the far post.

Bologna again threatened on 41 minutes as Di Vaio crossed for Gimenez but the 24-year-old Uruguayan took an age to bring the ball down and then fired over.

Late on in the half Wesley Sneijder dipped a free-kick just over the bar but Inter had failed to impose themselves on the first period.

After the break the champions started to turn the screw as Goran Pandev headed a Diego Milito cross straight at Viviano who then plunged to his left to keep out a rasping Sneijder drive.

On 73 minutes Viviano made a stunning one-handed save to keep out a Sneijder free-kick and then moments later the stopper saved Bologna again.

Substitute Coutinho crossed to Samuel Eto'o who came flying in to volley goalwards from two yards out but the ball cannoned off the unwitting Viviano's head, onto the bar and away to safety.

Despite being given a remarkable six minutes of stoppage time to try to find a winner, Inter could find no way through.

## Prandelli not worried

Football  
AFP, Rome

AFP, Rome

Italy coach Cesare Prandelli has said he is not worried about the possibility of being jeered by his former Fiorentina fans when he leads the national team out against the Faroe Islands next Tuesday.

Prandelli is just beginning his career as Italy coach following five successful years with the Florence club.

And following Friday's Group C opener away to Estonia in Tallinn, Italy will tackle the Faroes in Florence.

During Sunday's Serie A match between Fiorentina and Napoli, some home fans at the Stadio Artemio Franchi took part in anti-Italy chants, showing their displeasure at losing their popular coach to the national team at the end of last season.

However, Prandelli insisted that such actions won't be repeated next Tuesday.

"Those will be the last, as of now everyone will be supporting Italy. I am sure that against the Faroe Islands the Florentine response will be excellent," he said.

Prandelli was also at pains to play down the animosity that developed between himself and the Della Valle family that owns Fiorentina over the manner of his departure.

Club president Diego Della Valle had accused him of a lack of respect when he left.

"I had an extraordinary relationship with the Della Valles over the past few years," said Prandelli.

"Over the last few months there have been some misunderstandings due to things said by third parties."

"Soon we'll be able to have a couple of chats face-to-face while looking each other in the eyes."

Prandelli also had a word to say about the infamous 'ultra' fans that are the scourge of Italian football.

England coach Fabio Capello recently claimed Italy was being held hostage by just such fans, and Prandelli agrees.

"The majority of fans are against violence in any form, when something happens it's embarrassing to continue talking about the same things for the last 40 years," he said.

"When Capello said that football was in the ultras hands he wasn't entirely wrong."

"There's a type of psychological violence that can affect everyone within the game."

Looking ahead to the two matches against Estonia and

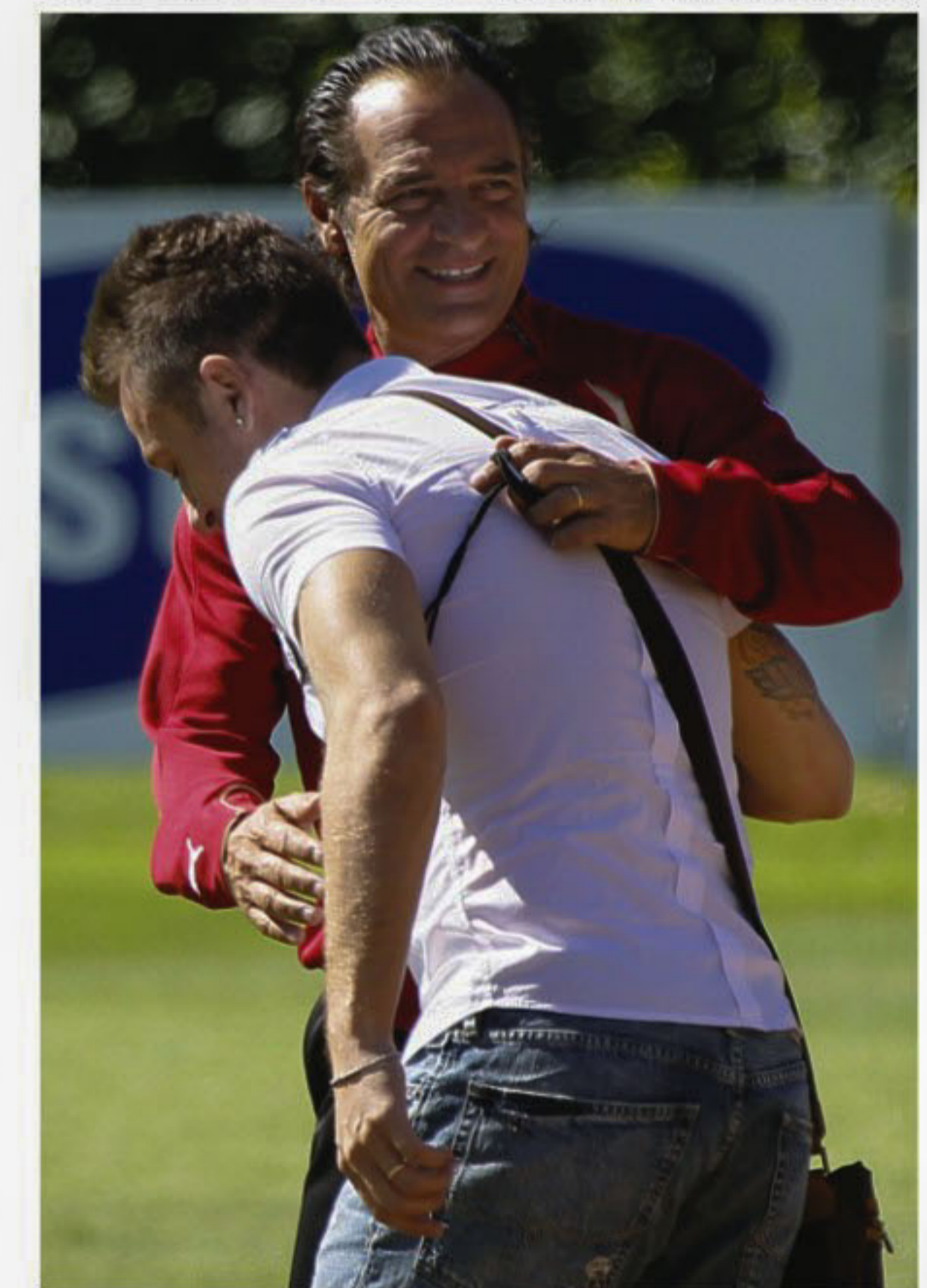
international level but he will be sticking to those who've produced the goods before.

"We want to be prepared for the next game, we have new players who I hope will have a future (with Italy)," he said.

"We're playing for points so we won't be experimenting."

"We're at the beginning of a cycle and we want to win points right away."

"But our idea is to look to play well to get the result. We'll



Italy coach Cesare Prandelli (R) greets striker Antonio Cassano during a training session at the technical centre of Coverciano in Florence yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Faroe Islands, Prandelli insisted he would be taking neither team for granted.

While on paper they are the two weakest teams in the group, ranked respectively 94 and 118 in the world, Prandelli said this is not the time to start trying out players.

He has picked a relatively young and untested squad at

start by trying to find the right tactical balance, order and most of all get results.

"Having had more days to prepare we want to do better than we did against Ivory Coast (a 1-0 friendly defeat)."

"It won't be a stroll in the park against Estonia, they're a tight outfit, we'll have to be careful."



England players jog during a training session at London Colney yesterday. England take on Bulgaria in a Euro 2012 qualifying match on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Age just a number

Football  
AFP, Glasgow

AFP, Glasgow

David Weir is set to become Scotland's oldest capped player if he is selected in the Euro 2012 qualifying double-header against Lithuania and Liechtenstein.

But the 40-year-old Rangers defender is focusing solely on getting Scotland off to a winning start in their qualifying campaign.

"To be honest, it doesn't change anything," the Rangers captain said of his age. "I enjoy playing in the games and being involved in the games."

"Maybe one day when I sit down, I'll get a bit of satisfaction from it. But, at the moment, I don't think of myself as a 40-year-old, I just think of myself as one of the other players."

"I don't think of it in those terms really, I don't really think about the past, I just think about the future."

"The game on Friday is what all our attention is on and I'm just trying to focus on that rather than worrying about how old I am."

"I'm just glad to be back," added Weir, whose

last international appearance was in the loss to the Netherlands at Hampden Park just over a year ago.

Weir said Scotland's 3-0 loss to Sweden in a friendly in Stockholm earlier this month was a setback for those involved.

"Whenever you lose a game, you've got to question yourself."

"That's part and parcel of being a football player, I don't think you should be happy if you lose a game."

"But you learn from it and you come out stronger and you come out better. That's what football is all about."

Meanwhile Scotland manager Craig Levein said Chris Iwelumo, Lee Wallace and Kevin McNaughton would miss the match against Lithuania in Kaunas.

"Definitely out of the game is Chris Iwelumo. He picked up a hamstring strain, he has been assessed by the medical team and is definitely out," Levein revealed on Monday.

"Lee Wallace will also miss the first match. Andy Webster is out, he has an ongoing situation with his hamstring and hasn't played for a while so I expected that one."