

# Eto'o on the double

Football

AFP, Johannesburg

Samuel Eto'o scored twice as Cameroon won in Mauritius Saturday and Rabah Saadane quit as Algeria coach after a home draw with Tanzania when the 2012 African Nations Cup qualifiers kicked off.

Uganda outclassed Angola 3-0 in wet Kampala and Botswana grabbed a last-gasp 2-1 victory over Togo in Gaborone to enhance chances of a first appearance at the tournament.

Meanwhile, Malawi overcame a two-goal deficit and playing the second half a man short to hold Tunisia 2-2 in a 2012 African Nations Cup thriller this weekend.

Inter Milan striker Eto'o scored in each half of a Group E clash before Eric Choupo-Moting converted a penalty as the 'Indomitable Lions' won 3-1 in Bellevue where Jonathan Bru scored from a spot kick for the islanders.

Saadane had hinted he would quit after the World Cup where they held England only to lose narrowly against Slovenia and the USA and ended his fifth stint in charge after the Desert Foxes dropped two unexpected points in a 1-1 draw.

Joel Mogorosi gave shock Group K pacesetters Botswana an early lead only for Floyd Ayite to equalise on the stroke of half-time, but Jerome Ramathlakwane snatched his third goal of the qualifiers in the final minute.

Uganda are seeking a first appearance at the biennial African football showcase since finishing 1978 runners-up behind Ghana and deservedly led 1-0 at half-time after dominating the opening half.

Angola had several narrow escapes before beanpole striker Obua struck on 35 minutes with a perfectly timed dash into the penalty area to poke a Vincent Kayizzi cross wide of goalkeeper Lama.

Huge defender Mwesigwa added a second 13 minutes into the second half as he ran past several slow-reacting defenders, controlled the ball superbly on the slippery, muddy surface and fired it into the net.

Algeria, shock qualifiers for the World Cup at the expense of seven-time African champions Egypt, were stunned in Blida when Jerry Tegete slammed a free kick into the net after 32 minutes.

Midfielder Adlane Guedioura levelled on the stroke of half-time and the North Africans dominated the second half only to be foiled by combative Tanzanian midfielders who kept scoring chances to a minimum.



PHOTO: AFP

Tunisia forward Khaled Korbi (number 8) tries to hold off Malawi's Ivis Kanyenda (R) in their Group K qualifying match for the African Cup of Nations on Saturday.



# Striking a claim

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Ruud van Nistelrooy, Antonio Cassano and David Villa



AFP, Paris



With one sumptuous swing of his right foot against Liechtenstein on Friday, David Villa moved to within one goal of Raul's all-time goalscoring record for Spain.

Villa's 25-yard strike in the 4-0 rout was his 43rd in Spain's colours and, having already inspired his country to victory at Euro 2008 and the World Cup, a goal in the friendly with Argentina on Tuesday will further strengthen his claim to the mantle of Spain's greatest ever striker.

The Barcelona new boy could even have drawn level with Raul in Vaduz after hitting the crossbar in the last minute, but he says he is not preoccupied by his pursuit of the record.

"It will come," said Villa. "It's a shame (not to score) because it was the final minutes but the goals will arrive. I hope that I stay in the national team for many years."

Spain's thrashing of Liechtenstein was also an important game for Villa's strike partner Fernando Torres, who went some way towards banishing memories of his goalless turn at the World Cup with a clinically taken brace.

Medical staff at Liverpool had claimed Torres will need another month to recover full fitness after an adductor muscle injury, and he was not the only striker to make a mockery of medical

forecasts in Friday's matches.

Jermain Defoe was scheduled to have a groin operation last week but Tottenham coach Harry Redknapp told him to postpone the procedure, and he responded by smashing a hat-trick in England's 4-0 victory over Bulgaria.

Defoe netted one of the paltry two goals that England managed to score in South Africa and his strike partner Wayne Rooney received more criticism than most for an uncharacteristically subdued showing in the tournament.

The Manchester United forward looked close to his best against Bulgaria though, setting up two of Defoe's goals and a first international strike for Adam Johnson, and coach Fabio Capello revealed that the secret was a subtle change in tactics.

"I played Rooney in a position different than usual. He did very well. I spoke with him before the game," said Capello.

"He had to stay just in front of the two central midfielders and from this position to go forward and to be free."

Holland's Klaas-Jan Huntelaar emulated Defoe's exploits with a triple in his side's 5-0 demolition of San Marino.

The former Ajax goal machine recently joined German side Schalke in a 14 million euros move and he is desperate to resurrect his career after underwhelming spells at Real Madrid and AC Milan.

Huntelaar's countryman Ruud van Nistelrooy

is another striker looking to relaunch his career in Germany and the Hamburg frontman celebrated his return to the international scene with an injury-time strike against San Marino.

It was his 34th goal in Holland's colours, taking him ahead of the legendary Johan Cruyff (33) and to within six of Patrick Kluyvert's all-time national record.

With first-team football at Hamburg guaranteed and a full qualifying campaign ahead of him, van Nistelrooy can realistically hope to make significant inroads on Kluyvert's mark.

Miroslav Klose, 32 and two years van Nistelrooy's junior, is also plotting to bring the curtain down on his goalscoring career in record-breaking style.

The Germany striker became the second highest scorer in World Cup finals history in South Africa and, prior to claiming his 53rd international goal in Germany's 1-0 win in Brussels on Friday, he said he intends to lead his country's challenge at the next World Cup, in 2014.

Antonio Cassano was another veteran marksman on target as Italy defeated Estonia 2-1.

"He's an example for anyone who wants to play for the national team," said Italy coach Cesare Prandelli of the Sampdoria forward whose last Italy goal was at Euro 2004 and had been in international exile for two years.

"He fought to get back in the squad and this week he's shown how much the shirt means to him."

# Domenech finally dismissed

Football

AFP, Paris

The French football federation has sent a letter of dismissal to former coach Raymond Domenech, who remains on the payroll as an employee of the federation's training staff, a source told AFP.

According to media reports, the reason for his sacking was given as "gross misconduct" linked to his actions as coach of France at the World Cup in South Africa.

Under French law, dismissal for gross misconduct means the person sacked has no rights to severance pay - believed to be between 300,000 to 500,000 euros - although he can dispute the reasons for the charge before an industrial tribunal.

Domenech was criticised for events leading up to and his handling of the sending home from the World Cup of Nicolas Anelka for his foul-mouthed outburst against the then-coach, and the team's one-day strike in protest

at the striker's expulsion.

Domenech - who guided France to the 2006 World Cup final where they lost on penalties to Italy - was also heavily criticised by French Football Federation caretaker president Fernand Duchaussoy on July 23 for refusing to shake South Africa counterpart Carlos Alberto Parreira's hand at the end of the final group match, a 2-1 victory for South Africa.

He also criticised Domenech for not informing then FFF president Jean-Pierre Escalettes of what had taken place between himself and Anelka.

Anelka, along with captain Patrice Evra, vice-captain Franck Ribery and Jeremy Toulalan all received varying bans for their role.

France lost two and drew one of their matches in South Africa, going out of the competition in the group stages. It was at half-time in the 2-0 defeat to Mexico that Anelka launched his tirade against Domenech.

When it was reported in the pages of sports daily L'Equipe two days later, Anelka was sent home.



Germany hitmen Miroslav Klose (L) and Thomas Mueller jointly address a press conference in Cologne on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Klose expects tough ask

AFP, Cologne

Veteran German striker Miroslav Klose expects Tuesday's Euro 2012 qualifier here against minnows Azerbaijan will be tougher than the World Cup show-downs against Argentina or England.

"In terms of motivation, it is more difficult to face Azerbaijan than play Argentina or England, because everyone wants to play these big games and upset us," said 32-year-old Klose in a press conference on Sunday.

"They will be very focused," warned Klose who scored his 53rd goal on his 102nd appearance for Germany in the 1-0 win over Belgium in Brussels on Friday.

"For these nations, to play against Germany, is a huge deal and it is a unique chance for these teams to beat us."

"Azerbaijan are a very athletic team, they have the potential to hurt us."

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# Coentrao out of Norway game

AFP, Lisbon

Portuguese defender Fabio Coentrao was ruled out on Saturday of Tuesday's Euro 2012 qualifier against Norway after injuring his right thigh in Friday's opening qualifier a 4-4 draw with Cyprus.

The 22-year-old Benfica defender underwent scans on Saturday and it was decided that he would not be able to recover in time for Tuesday's match with the Norwegians.

Portugal are going through a rough patch after a much criticised World Cup finals campaign which saw them go out 1-0 to eventual winners Spain in the second round, their coach Carlos Queiroz has been suspended for six months and star player Cristiano Ronaldo is injured.

# Scandal puts Rooney in spotlight

AFP, London



England striker Wayne Rooney is expected to shrug off lurid reports about his private life to travel to Switzerland on Monday for a Euro 2012 qualifier.

The striker has been the subject of reports in the News of the World and Sunday Mirror about his frequenting a prostitute while wife Coleen was pregnant, leading to speculation about his participation in Tuesday's match.

However, FA sources told the Press Association that no decision has yet been taken and as it stands, Rooney is expected on the flight.

The Manchester United star is an integral part of England coach Fabio Capello's team, even though it is now 11 matches since he last scored for his country.

He claimed three assists and had a hand in the other goal as England opened their qualification campaign on Friday with an impressive 4-0 win over Bulgaria at Wembley.

England take on fellow World Cup contenders Switzerland in Basel on Tuesday.

Following the withdrawal of Peter Crouch through injury, aside from Rooney, Capello has only three other strikers to call upon.

His other options are Darren Bent, Carlton Cole and Jermain Defoe, who profited most from his forward partner's creative talents by scoring his first international hat-trick against the Bulgarians.

# Drogba to play on for Ivory Coast

AFP, Paris

Didier Drogba on Sunday insisted that he had not given up on his international career with Ivory Coast.

"Each time they call me up, I'll be there," the 32-year-old Chelsea hitman told TF1.

Drogba - scorer of 45 goals in his 71 appearances for Ivory Coast - was omitted from new coach Francois Zahoui's 21-strong squad for an African Cup of Nations qualifier against Rwanda in Abidjan on Saturday.

Zahoui said at the time that after talks with Drogba, he deemed the striker "not psychologically ready to play the game".

# Ballack in Loew's plans

AFP, Berlin



Germany coach Joachim Loew said Sunday he still has captain Michael Ballack in his plans for the national side, despite dropping the midfielder for the opening Euro 2012 qualifiers.

The 33-year-old missed Friday's 1-0 win over Belgium in Brussels and will not be in the side for Tuesday's qualifier against Azerbaijan in Cologne as he works his way back to fitness after an ankle injury.

In his absence, Real Madrid's Sami Khedira has taken Ballack's midfield place, but Loew insists he still has the former Chelsea star in his planning.

"I hope the team continues to grow, and that certainly includes Michael," Loew told German daily Bild on Sunday.

Last Wednesday, Loew confirmed

Leverkusen's Ballack will regain the captaincy from Philipp Lahm when he returns.

"We must acknowledge that Michael is not yet able to help us, that was clear in his first match (with Bayer Leverkusen in the Bundesliga) since his ankle injury," said Loew, who led Germany to third at the World Cup.

"Our team progressed enormously during the World Cup, some players like Sami Khedira and Bastian Schweinsteiger raised their game," he said.

"But I thought about it calmly and it was clear that Michael should remain captain."

Loew refused to confirm whether Ballack will return for October's qualifiers against Turkey and Kazakhstan.

"We must evaluate the situation closer to the time, but the issue was not discussed during my conversations with him," said Loew.