

Coca-Cola drops Rooney

REUTERS, London

England and Manchester United striker Wayne Rooney has been dropped by his sponsor Coca-Cola from an advertising campaign following media allegations about his private life.

The 24-year-old forward, who has endured intense media scrutiny in recent weeks, will continue to work with Coca-Cola on other projects but his face will not appear on cans and bottles of Coke Zero in a promotion to run in Britain until 2011.

A statement from Coca-Cola on Monday read: "Last month we amended our marketing plans on Coke Zero. Given the situation at that time we did not feel it was appropriate to run an on-pack promotion featuring Wayne Rooney."

"Our relationship with Wayne Rooney is ongoing. We are currently working with Wayne on Coke Zero Street Striker--an award winning programme which over the past 3 years has encouraged thousands of young people to get involved in football."

The decision on whether Rooney's face will return to Coke's cans and bottles in the future has yet to be made, the company added.

Rooney, who on Monday was named in England's Euro 2012 qualifying squad for their match at home to Montenegro on Oct. 12 after recovering from an ankle injury, has been in patchy form this season after hitting 34 goals in the last campaign.

Last month United manager Alex Ferguson left him out of his side's Premier League match with former club Everton to avoid fan abuse.

Rooney's deal with the world's largest soft drink maker is worth 600,000 pounds (\$949,000), according to media reports.

The striker was reported in the British media to have been unfaithful with prostitutes while his wife was pregnant.

Torres out for Spain

AFP, London

Liverpool's Fernando Torres is out of the Spain squad to face Lithuania and Scotland in next week's Euro 2012 qualifiers and could also miss a crucial Merseyside derby after picking up an adductor strain in Sunday's loss to Blackpool, his club said Monday.

The striker limped off after just nine minutes of the 2-1 defeat to Blackpool - a loss which left the side in the bottom three - and he has withdrawn from the Spanish squad, Liverpool said on their website.

"Fernando was assessed earlier today at Melwood and underwent a scan this afternoon," said Dr Peter Brukner, Liverpool's Head of Sports Medicine and Sports Science.

"He will have intensive treatment over the next couple of weeks but it is too early to say if he will be fit for the game against Everton."

Everton have also struggled this season in the league but moved above their city rivals after winning for the first time this campaign at Birmingham at the weekend.

Duff misses Russia tie

AFP, Dublin

Republic of Ireland midfielder Damien Duff was ruled out of the upcoming Euro 2012 qualifier at home to Russia with a calf injury, manager Giovanni Trapattoni announced Monday.

And the Italian said it was "90 per cent" the Fulham player would also miss the subsequent qualifier against Slovakia.

"Damien Duff has had a scan and there is a little injury," said Trapattoni. It is 90 per cent he is not available (for both games).

"A muscle injury is very dangerous. It is not easy to recover in eight days."

"He has pulled the muscle and there is a little blood showing on the scan, so we spoke to the doctor and he is going home."

The Republic launched their campaign with back-to-back victories over Armenia and Andorra last month.

"We are happy after the first two games, but I have told the players we must start every game as if it were the first," Trapattoni said.



France playmaker Yoann Gourcuff (C) controls the ball during a training session in Clairefontaine yesterday ahead of their Euro 2012 qualifier against Romania.

Loew blames it on WC

AFP, Berlin



Germany coach Joachim Loew said Tuesday football's top stars have not had enough time to recover from the World Cup and pointed to Bastian Schweinsteiger's ankle injury as an example of the problem.

Schweinsteiger will sit out Friday's Euro 2012 qualifier against Turkey at Berlin's Olympic Stadium after injuring his ankle in Bayern Munich's 2-0 Bundesliga defeat last Sunday.

Having helped Germany finish third at the World Cup, Schweinsteiger had just a few weeks between his return from South Africa on July 12 to recover before training started for the new Bundesliga season which kicked off on August 20.

"These things happen after a World Cup," Loew said to German daily Bild in reference to Schweinsteiger's ankle knock.

"The players have only had a short time to

prepare for the next season and the risks of getting injury are of course higher.

"The Spanish also have the same problems with injuries."

The 26-year-old Schweinsteiger has damaged ankle ligaments and will sit out the next ten days including both Euro 2012 matches against Turkey and Kazakhstan in Astana.

With 83-caps to his name, Schweinsteiger is an important part of Germany's midfield and his place is likely to go to Bayern team-mate Toni Kroos.

Hamburg defender Marcell Jansen will also miss Germany's next two Euro 2012 qualifiers, the German Football Federation has said.

On Tuesday morning, Dortmund forward Kevin Grosskreutz, who has one cap to his name, withdrew from the Germany squad suffering from the flu, but may still travel with the team for the game against Kazakhstan on October 12.

Germany are top of Group A, equal on six points with second-placed Turkey, after two games.

Tevez, Mancini fight

SOCCERNET



Manchester City manager Roberto Mancini and captain Carlos Tevez were involved in a heated bust-up at half time in their side's 2-1 win over Newcastle on Sunday, according to widespread reports in the English press.

Tevez was reportedly unhappy at Mancini's negative tactics and spoke out while the Italian boss was berating the players in the dressing room for their poor first-half performance with the score at 1-1 at Eastlands.

Newspapers including The Guardian, Daily Telegraph and Daily Mail add that Mancini took exception to having his authority undermined and the situation escalated into a shouting match where Mancini demanded Tevez follow his instructions as manager.

Tevez had scored from a penalty in the first half and City went on to win the match 2-1 thanks to a piece of individual brilliance from substitute Adam Johnson but the argument threatens to derail City's strong start to the season, which sees them in second place after

seven matches. It's the latest in a series of rows between Tevez and Mancini. The striker last season questioned the club's decision to sack Mancini's predecessor Mark Hughes and complained about the heavy workload of Mancini's training regime.

City's mean defence, which has conceded just three goals in seven matches, is the main factor behind their good results so far this term. But the team is so solid because Mancini's formation features just two wingers in support of Tevez up front, meaning there is a heavy reliance on the Argentine's famous workrate and a lack of service to Tevez, which is reportedly what angered the striker.

It is said that the duo made up privately before the second half and City assistant manager Brian Kidd said: "There was an awful lot said between the group at half-time, but the lads showed a great response in the second half. It showed how badly they wanted to win."

Tevez is away on national team duty for Argentina's friendly in Japan on Friday and Mancini will then have next week to sort out his relationship with his captain ahead of City's visit to Blackpool on October 17.



Argentina striker Diego Milito executes a side-volley during a training session at the National Stadium in Tokyo yesterday.

Blanc rues Ben Arfa injury

AFP, Paris



France coach Laurent Blanc called Lyon right-back Anthony Revellere into his squad on Monday for the Euro 2012 qualifiers against Romania, on Saturday in Paris, and Luxembourg, on October 12 in Metz.

Revellere has been brought in amid fears Arsenal defender Bacary Sagna, who missed Monday training, may not be fit to play after suffering a knock in his team's loss to Chelsea on Sunday.

Blanc said, however, that he had received positive news concerning the ankle injury sustained by Arsenal midfielder Abou Diaby in that match.

"The news is generally reassuring," said Blanc.

"As I could see, he took a blow to his ankle, which wasn't in a very good state. But after the first examina-

tions, although his ankle is sore, there's nothing worrying."

On Sunday, Arsenal coach Arsene Wenger had said Diaby would be "doubtful" for the

international dates.

Blanc also said he felt sorry for attacking midfielder Hatem Ben Arfa, on loan to Newcastle from Marseille this season, who broke his left leg in Newcastle's 2-0 loss at Manchester City on Sunday.

Newcastle said the 23-year-old had broken the tibia and fibula bones in a tackle by Nigel de Jong and would likely be out for much of the rest of this season.

"I saw his injury -- it is a serious injury that will require patience," said Blanc.

"It is a shame for him as when you arrive at a new club you have to adapt and that is not easy. When you pick up a serious injury it is all the more difficult."

Ben Arfa, who scored on his full Newcastle debut at Everton last month, was not selected for the upcoming internationals.

He did, however, score in Blanc's first match in charge -- a 2-1 friendly loss in Norway on August 11.

Bommel backs De Jong

Football

SOCCERNET

Netherlands captain Mark van Bommel has backed team-mate Nigel De Jong, claiming that he should not alter his game after he was dropped from the squad.

De Jong was left out by coach Bert van Marwijk for his robust style of play that left winger Hatem Ben Arfa with a broken tibia and fibula when Manchester City took on Newcastle on Sunday.

The former Ajax midfielder has courted controversy in the past as he made a tackle which broke the leg of Bolton midfielder Stuart Holden in March and could arguably have been sent off in the World Cup final after a chest-high challenge on Spain midfielder Xabi Alonso. But Dutch skipper Van Bommel refused to criticise De Jong for his combative tackling.

"Nigel is and remains one of us," he told AD Sportwereld. "We find this all very frustrating. It's very unfortunate that he has broken the leg of an opponent twice in six months."

"But I know Nigel as a sweet guy. He doesn't want to injure anyone but wants to win every match. That is his strength. Thanks to Nigel we reached the final of the World Cup. And now I

hear people calling him a criminal. What a nonsense."

Holland's physical style at the World Cup saw them widely criticised - most notably by Dutch legend Johan Cruyff - with Van Bommel and De Jong two of the men targeted.

"I know exactly what Nigel is suffering," Van Bommel added. "I have also had to answer for playing hard. But I didn't want to injure anyone and I have had to think about that criticism. Nigel should not change his game, we need him as he is. But maybe he should occasionally go into a tackle slightly differently."

Van Bommel, though, admits he can understand why the decision to drop De Jong was made. "I think it was a very difficult decision for him [Van Marwijk]," he said. "We are stronger with Nigel than without him. But he did it for the overall good."

Manchester City manager Roberto Mancini has also sprung to the defence of De Jong, following the criticism and has pledged his support for the player.

"I don't want to comment about Nigel not being called up by his National Team as it is a matter for the Dutch Federation," he said. "However, as his Club Manager I wish to say that whilst he is naturally competitive, Nigel is first and foremost a great player as well as being honest and loyal and I support him wholeheartedly."



Netherlands players jog during a training session in Katwijk on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

FIFA grounds Super Eagles

Football

REUTERS, Berne

Nigeria's Super Eagles were grounded on Monday when the country was barred from international soccer because of government interference, three months after narrowly escaping suspension for the same reason.

Soccer's governing body FIFA had previously threatened to suspend Nigeria in July when the government, angry at the national team's first-round exit at the World Cup, ordered them to pull out of all international competition for two years.

Nigeria President Goodluck Jonathan reversed the decision after the federation agreed to disband the team but FIFA said it would continue to monitor events in the country.

On Monday, FIFA said outside interference, including court action, had prevented Nigerian Football Federation (NFF) directors from doing their job.

It also blamed the government for a decision to start the Nigeria League without relegation from the previous season.

"The FIFA Emergency Committee decided today... to suspend the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) with immediate effect on account of government interference," said FIFA in a statement.

"The suspension will be maintained until the court actions have ceased and the duly

elected NFF Executive Committee is able to work without any interference."

"During the period of suspension, the NFF will not be able to be represented in any regional, continental or international competitions, including at club level, and also not in friendly matches," FIFA said.

Nigeria, known as the Super Eagles, were due to visit Guinea for an African Nations Cup qualifier on Sunday, having beaten Madagascar 2-0 in their opening match last month.

It was the latest chapter in the chaotic administration of Nigerian soccer which sees national team coaches hired and fired with astonishing regularity and continual infighting among directors and politicians.

Nigeria were banned by the Confederation of African Football (CAF) in 1996 when then President Sani Abacha withdrew the team from the African Nations Cup finals in South Africa because he had been criticised by Nelson Mandela over the judicial execution of political opponents.

As a result, Nigeria missed the following Nations Cup in Burkina Faso in 1998.

Monday's suspension means Nigeria cannot compete in age-restricted competitions or international club competitions, although the country has no representatives left in this season's African Champions League.

It also deprives the NFF of an annual grant of \$250,000.

Nigeria have played at the World Cup finals four times, twice reaching the second round, and twice won the African Nations Cup.