



PHOTO: AFP

Germany striker Miroslav Klose (C) jogs with teammates during a training session in Wiesbaden on Thursday. Germany take on Kazakhstan tonight.

# Aiming to entertain

AFP, Berlin



Germany coach Joachim Loew can draw on a fully-fit squad on Saturday as the World Cup semifinalists seek to maintain an unbeaten record against minnows Kazakhstan in a Euro 2012 home qualifier.

With Bayern Munich stars Mario Gomez, Bastian Schweinsteiger and Miroslav Klose as well as Real Madrid playmaker Mesut Ozil at Germany's disposal, the aim is not only to win, but to please the fans, said Loew sidekick Oliver Bierhoff.

"We are the clear favourites and we want all three points. But we also want the fans in the stadium to get their money's worth. We've got a strong side here and want to impress the crowd with a good performance," he said.

"Of course the opposition are not exactly household names, so we've been concentrating on our own game in training and not on Kazakhstan," he added.

Germany are overwhelming favourites to beat lowly Kazakhstan, ranked 132 in the world. They have carried all before them so far in Group A, winning four out of four, scoring 13 goals and conceding only one.

They head into the game at the Fritz-Walter Stadium, home to Bundesliga club Kaiserslautern, in tremendous form, not having lost since the World Cup semi-final to Spain in July.

In contrast, Kazakhstan have lost all four of their qualifying games for Euro 2012, scoring none and letting in 10.

In the match in Astana in October, Germany won 3-0 courtesy of second-half goals from Klose, Gomez and Lukas Podolski.

"Of course, I only know a few players from Kazakhstan," admitted 26-year-old Schweinsteiger ahead of the match.

"But the next three qualifying matches are very important for us. We can really get ahead of Austria, Turkey and Belgium," he added, referring to Germany's main rivals in Group A.

Austria are five points behind Loew's side but with a game in hand. They play away against Turkey, who are currently third in the group.

Klose added: "We've got a lot of quality. If we play the football we are capable of, we'll win. If we get an early goal, then we can look at a big win."

The striker looks set to get the nod over club rival Mario Gomez, who has edged him out at club level.

"It's a completely normal competitive situation. Mario is a world-class player. He fits well into our club team at the moment and me in the national team."

Klose said he was hoping to add to his tally of 59 goals for his country as he chases Gerd Mueller's all-time German goal-scoring record of 68.

"It is my goal to break this record, but I would never compare myself to Gerd Mueller," said Klose.

## AFC CHALLENGE CUP Bangladesh fail to qualify

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's hope of qualifying for the finals of the AFC Challenge Cup has been shattered after suffering a 3-0 defeat to Philippines in their last group match of the qualifiers at the Aung Stadium in Yangon, Myanmar yesterday.

It was a must win match for Bangladesh against the Philippines with all four teams of Group A still in the race. When hosts Myanmar suffered a 3-1 defeat to eventual group champions Palestine, it needed only a draw to take Bangladesh through as group runner-up.

Bangladesh finished third in the group with three points, two more than fourth-placed Myanmar while Palestine and Philippines qualified for next year's final with seven and five points respectively.

According to a report from Bangladesh Football Federation, the charges of Robert Rubcic failed to keep the momentum of their win over Myanmar, conceding in the 40th minute with forward Ian Araneta putting Philippines ahead.

Midfielder Aldeguer Angel doubled Philippines' lead through a low header eight minutes into the second half before scoring his second and team's third in the 79th minute to seal the victory.

## Dream becomes

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around the Caribbean during the 2007 World Cup. This time, he trotted around in Sri Lanka, watched the Pakistan-West Indies at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur ("I bought a Tk 400 ticket for Tk 5,000") and returned to Colombo to watch the last quarterfinal. But what he really wished for, moments before the India-Australia game had begun on Thursday, was for India to win.

"I just want to see the India-Pakistan game," said Basheer, a man quickly drawn in by the mere mention of cricket. "You know my wife said I was crazy to save up so much for this World Cup but it didn't stop me. I took a flight, watched matches in Sri Lanka, in Dhaka, and now I will go to Mohali to make my dream come true."

Initially, he was afraid Ricky Ponting's Australia would spoil his party but as it happened, Basheer can smile a bit more. "I don't care who wins that game. I just want to be there," he said, relaying the voice of many who wished they could be there on that momentous day.

# Injuries ravage Irish

AFP, Dublin



Ireland coach Giovanni Trapattoni's options have never been less plentiful as he leads his team into Saturday's 'must-win' Euro 2012 Group B qualifier at home to Macedonia.

The veteran Italian has always claimed his Ireland side could compete with any team in world football -- provided he had his front line players available.

But even before his pared back squad gathered in Dublin on Monday, he had some major absentees.

Manchester City goalkeeper Shay Given missed out on his 111th cap through injury, while Manchester United utility man John O'Shea will need to wait to win his 70th.

Skipper Robbie Keane is hopeful of starting the game up front alongside Kevin Doyle, despite barely playing over the past month and being well short of optimum match fitness.

Trapatttoni's preferred 4-4-2 formation is likely to be employed once again, as the hosts try to push Macedonia out of the equation in what is a tight qualifying group.

Ireland head into the game joint second, with seven points from four games, the same tally as Armenia and Slovakia. Russia, with nine points from four, top the table.

Having already lost at home to Russia, in October, Ireland cannot afford to drop any more points at home, and so Trapatttoni is likely to stick with some tried and trusted players when he names his starting XI.

Damien Duff and Aiden McGeady will resist pressure from other options on the

wings, while Sean St Ledger is likely to join Richard Dunne in the central defensive pairing, although Darren O'Dea could yet play if the Preston defender fails to prove his fitness.

Kevin Foley, of Wolves, should win his first competitive start at right back following the injury to O'Shea -- and the withdrawal of Everton's Seamus Coleman from the squad on Thursday.

The main decision remains to be made at left back where Kevin Kilbane, now of Huddersfield, is eyeing a 65th consecutive competitive international, while Ciaran Clark of Aston Villa is hoping for just his second appearance.

"I feel very fit, I've played about 20 games since I went to Huddersfield, full games, so I've got to be happy with that," offered Kilbane.

"There would be a symmetry of sorts if Kilbane didn't feature on Saturday -- the last time he wasn't in an Irish competitive fixture was 1999, when Ireland played Macedonia.

Coventry City's Keiren Westwood will make a competitive debut in goal, and goalkeeping coach Alan Kelly insists he's ready for the challenge.

"I just look back to the (friendly) games against Algeria and Paraguay last year and he (Westwood) acquitted himself very, very well," he said.

"He has just got to take what he has done in those two games in the summer and the five caps he has got and transfer that into this game coming up. He has been superb and I have no reason to think that won't continue."

## Colombo expects

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screen set across the city showing the game with on-lookers hoping for the Mohali promise to be fulfilled. Yet, it was the Sri Lanka game that caught the imagination with most of the people quietly confident of what would unravel.

What this game also holds is potentially, if Sri Lanka lose, the last international game for legendary spinner Muttiah Muralidaran but Sangakkara certainly believed that the occasion wouldn't get to the great man, nor his tight hamstring.

"Murali is fine to play, he's 100 per cent okay and that is great for us," said the skipper. "He is the guy who rises to the occasion and does really well in big games. I think the squad is confident about what he can produce for us in important games. I think the rest of the guys will support each other really well. We will do the utmost to win the game."

And if the win does come, Sri Lanka would

also have to bat well and although they bat deep, but the form of Thilan Samaraweera, Angelo Matthews, Chamara Silva and Chamara Kapugedera have slightly put a doubt on their middle-order as none of them have put up a strong performance under their belt in the first round of the World Cup.

But Sangakkara was confident that these four would stand up when needed, something they've done at various times in the past.

"I think our middle-order is very good. I think they are the best players in Sri Lanka. Some of them are equal to the best players in the world.

It is hard to judge a middle-order when they only get to bat 5-10 overs. We are not only confident in ourselves but on each other's ability. (Thilan) Samaraweera, Chamara Silva, Angelo Matthews and (Chamara) Kapugedera are the best players and they've done it against the best opposition in the world. They'll keep doing that for us as we go along," he explained.

## Pawar praises Bangladesh

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Sheikh Hasina, Finance Minister, Abul Maal Abdul Muhith, Sports Minister, Ahad Ali Sarker, and the Government of Bangladesh for their support and cooperation in successfully hosting the ICC Cricket World Cup opening ceremony and all of the matches in Bangladesh.

"The manner in which the whole country has embraced the World Cup has been a joy to behold. The passion that the people of Bangladesh have for cricket is wonderful.

"I have also been very impressed with the facilities here in Dhaka. The Sher-e-Bangla Stadium is a world-class venue that all of Bangladesh should be proud of.

"All eight matches in Bangladesh were well-attended and even those that did not feature the home team were played out in front of big crowds. The people came in and

appreciated the good performances and enjoyed the game.

"Immense credit must go to the president of the Bangladesh Cricket Board, AHM Mustafa Kamal, his team at the BCB, the local organising committee, the Government of Bangladesh and, of course, the people of this beautiful country.

"An event of the scale of the ICC Cricket World Cup poses many logistical and operational challenges for host nations and I am pleased to say that the cricket community in Bangladesh has not merely met those challenges but has exceeded them.

"I am sure cricket in Bangladesh has a positive and prosperous future and we look forward to returning to the country for the ICC Women's World Cup qualifier later this year and the ICC World Twenty20 in 2014."

# Eng face Wales test

AFP, London



England travel to Wales for a vital Euro 2012 qualifier on Saturday with Fabio Capello knowing only a win will do after a public relations blunder that has hurt

the Italian manager's credibility. Capello's decision to reinstate John Terry as captain would have been controversial at the best of times -- but the clumsy way in which it was announced has substantially raised the stakes as England head to Cardiff.

Trailing Montenegro by three points, England have little margin for error following last October's dismal 0-0 draw at Wembley with the Group G leaders.

A defeat against Wales, who are bottom of the group after losing all three of their matches, and the calls for Capello's dismissal may become deafening.

Publicly, England's players have all voiced support for the move to restore the armband to Terry, who was sacked last year after lurid allegations about his relationship with the ex-girlfriend of team-mate Wayne Bridge.

Privately, however, there is reported to be unhappiness at the treatment of Rio Ferdinand, a popular figure in the England dressing room who learnt of Terry's return as captain via a newspaper report.

Capello, who only last year said Terry would never captain England again while he remained in charge, said he changed his mind after seeing the armband moved between several players in last month's friendly against Denmark.

The Italian also believes the expected

intimidating atmosphere at the Millennium Stadium will require an experienced captain.

"Wales will be a tough game. The atmosphere, everything is incredible, and we need a captain with a big personality, a leader," Capello said.

"When John played without the armband, he was every time a leader. He is the biggest personality in the dressing room. He made mistakes but is normal. The players respect Terry as a leader, absolutely. One year's punishment is enough."

Terry, meanwhile, has responded to the furore over his return with typical defiance, stating without the merest hint of contrition that he still firmly believed he should never have lost the job in the first place.

"As I said to the manager at the time, I accepted their decision. It doesn't mean to say I agreed with it, and I never will. That's me being very proud and having been honest with them," Terry said.

"Over the last year I'd like to think I've personally kept my head down and done the right thing."

Terry also responded to suggestions that his reinstatement had split the England dressing room by stating that the squad was behind him whilst acknowledging he was "not everyone's cup of tea."

"When the manager confronted the team on the training pitch, he asked the players if they had any questions and nobody spoke. Nobody said a word to the manager, nobody said a word to me," Terry told reporters on Tuesday.

"I'm not going to be everybody's cup of tea, but it is the decision the manager has taken.

## Mario still learning

AFP, Ljubljana

Italy coach Cesare Prandelli said he is confident errant striker Mario Balotelli will have a great career despite his recent problems.

"For Mario the important thing is that he thinks about his mistakes," Prandelli told RaiSport.

"He's aware of this problem and he's sorry for it, he's asked for help and we will stay close to him to help him with his development."

Prandelli has a vested interest in remodelling Balotelli as he is considered the one great talent to emerge from the current generation of young Italian footballers.

## Ignominy

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young age, at 22, and after the pressures of the last eight years I am looking forward to contributing as a player and supporting the next guy who will be the captain. I am very proud of my record as a captain, and as a batsman over those years but now I am looking forward to the next phase of my career."

Kiwi skipper Daniel Vettori was in a wholly different mood to his counterpart, with the reaction being as much of relief as elation.

"We're really happy, not just because we won a quarterfinal, but because we thought that 250 would have been a good score," said the Kiwi skipper. "We knew that we had to get into the middle order, they have some very good top order players with excellent records."

Vettori thought that the fact that they scored 220 helped matters because they had only one way to go, which was to attack. "It was always about getting past de Villiers. They have a longish tail, and we had the team to suit the conditions," said Vettori whose side had toured Bangladesh only last October.

When reminded that his team were perennial semi-finalists, Vettori said, "People often put a negative slant on it, but they have to remember that we are a country of only 4 million people and reaching the semifinals is a big achievement."

He also credited Jesse Ryder with playing the definitive hand. "His score of 80-odd was the highest score by some distance, and the partnership he put together with Ross Taylor was, I think, the catalyst for the win."

The man-of-the-match, however, was Jacob Oram who took a stunning catch on the boundary to get rid of Kallis, aside from taking four wickets to speed the Proteas' demise.

# Juup set for Bayern

Football

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich said Friday that veteran Jupp Heynckes is set to replace Louis van Gaal at the end of the season for a third stint coaching the Bundesliga giants.

"We are very happy to have agreed a two-year contract," club president Karl-Heinz Rummenigge said. "I am convinced that our cooperation with Jupp Heynckes will be successful."

Heynckes, 65, won two league titles with Bayern between 1987 and 1991, then took over again for five games at the end of the 2009 season. He also won the Champions League with Real Madrid in 1998.

Heynckes, who is leaving Bayer Leverkusen at the end of the season, said he was looking forward to his comeback.

"Quite apart from my good personal relations with bosses at Bayern I have always been very impressed with how professionally the club is run," the silver-haired German said.

And with the speed that Bayern have got through coaches in recent years,

## The best

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when it is the Ashes!" he said.

But while the fans may have won Bangladesh many admirers, they were also the cause of our moment of nadir; the stoning of the West Indies team bus amid a case of mistaken identity following our capitulation against the Caribbeans. It encapsulated the dark side of the game and the dual nature of the thousands who pack the stands.

Aside from that one blemish though, Bangladesh have proved thoroughly competent hosts with excellent stadiums complementing our noted hospitality. Our cricket may not have been exceptional, but everything else definitely left most satisfied and wanting more.

For Dileep, the challenge for Bangladesh was now in converting the passion for the game in the stands to results on the pitch. "It will be interesting to see, if in the long run, Bangladesh can give these fans a team worthy of the support."

It is a view mirrored by one and all. The World Cup was Bangladesh's coming out party, and we have flown through this with relatively flying colours. To the world, we have shown our best and we have shown our worst. But the focus now will be to move on to newer challenges. Upwards and onwards.



JUPP HEYNCKES