



Brazil star Robinho (R) and his son Robson Jr., wave during a training session at the C.T. Corinthians Stadium in Sao Paulo on Sunday. Brazil take on Romania in an international friendly today.

Argentina slump again

Football

AFP, Warsaw

Sergio Batista has much to ponder after his experimental Argentina side went down to a friendly loss in Poland on Sunday, losing 2-1 hot on the heels of a 4-1 thumping by Nigeria.

The earlier match is subject to a FIFA investigation following irregular betting patterns but what will worry Batista more is that he has yet to come up with a formula less than a month out from the start of the Copa America, which this summer is on home soil.

Adrian Mierzejewski and Pawel Brozek got the goals for Euro 2012 co-hosts Poland, sandwiching an effort from Marco Ruben just after the interval.

At least Ruben's goal on his debut was a bright point for the albiceleste, who are reshuffling their pack after the departure of Diego Maradona following a World Cup which started well but ended in a quarterfinal thumping by Germany.

After the nightmare in Nigeria, Batista made seven changes and elected an all new strikeforce in the shape of Ruben, Jonathan Cristaldo and Pablo Piatti.

But even if Batista can point to the fact that only two Copa America starters - Pablo Zabaleta and Ezequiel Garay - featured in what was essentially a B team, another defeat will not have done much for morale.

Robert Lewandowski set up the opener for the Poles on 26 minutes, Mierzejewski finishing neatly as central defender Federico Fazio was caught out and although Piatti set up Villarreal's Ruben with a backheel for the equaliser - the latter had already gone close minutes earlier.

Mierzejewski, freshly elected player of the year in Poland, went close again just after the hour but keeper Adrian Gabbarini made a fine stop.

However, in the 67th minute Poland sealed the win as Brozek, a second half substitute, took a pass from Jakub Blaszczykowski and finished with aplomb.

Injuries mount for Loew

AFP, Berlin



With his team almost assured of a place at Euro 2012, Germany coach Joachim Loew is relaxed about his side's qualifier against minnows Azerbaijan on Tuesday despite mounting injury problems.

Victory in Baku on the Caspian Sea would give Germany a ten-point lead at the top of Group A and would almost certainly mean a place at Euro 2012, to be hosted by Poland and the Ukraine next June.

Germany left it late to beat Austria 2-1 in Vienna on Friday and a win in Baku would put them in an almost unsailable position at the top of the table.

With his team bidding to make it seven wins from seven, Loew flew from Vienna to Baku with a squad missing eight players, including first-choice stars Sami Khedira, Bastian Schweinsteiger and Miroslav Klose.

With a depleted midfield, Loew has called up Under-21 players Lewis Holtby of Mainz and Sebastian Rudy of Hoffenheim to complete his squad.

Rudy has cut short a holiday in Italy to make the long trip to Azerbaijan, but Loew brushed off any injury concerns with his side on the verge of qualifying.

"Since we met up, eight players have now dropped out with injury," he said.

"The situation as it is doesn't concern me, I think we are in a decent position to play this game, even under these circumstances.

"Both players (Holtby and Rudy) have been on our radar for a while and they are midfielders, where we have most of our problems."

Holtby, 20, is being widely tipped here as a star for the future and despite his father hailing from Liverpool, England, he opted for the white shirt of Germany and made his debut last November in the draw with Sweden.

Rudy is uncapped at senior level and is hoping to play a role in Baku.

Little resistance is expected from Bertie Voigts-coached eastern European minnows as Azerbaijan lost 2-1 in Astana to Kazakhstan on Friday and only escape being bottom of Group A by virtue of goal difference.

Tuesday's game is Germany's last of this season and Loew wants three points to finish on a high.

"We must pull out all the stops and lift ourselves again after a long journey," said Loew.

"Then we can go into a well-deserved vacation with

21 points."

Loew admits his side are feeling the effects of a long season and are facing the last of three end-of-season games having beaten Uruguay in a friendly and now Austria.

"The players have mainly been doing regeneration work since Friday," he said.

"The batteries can't recharge anymore, you can see they aren't as resilient in training."

Loew says he does not expect a 'footballing treat' in Baku and his side may well have to grind out a win, but after Bayern Munich hot-shot Mario Gomez netted twice in Vienna, the 25-year-old is in impressive form.

FIXTURES	
Group A At Baku Azerbaijan v Germany	Belarus v Luxembourg At Zenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina Bosnia-Herzegovina v Albania
Group C At Toftir Faroe Islands v Estonia	Group E At Solna, Sweden Sweden v Finland
Group D At Minsk	At Serravallo, San Marino San Marino v Hungary

Fuchs heads to Schalke

AFP, Berlin

Austrian international left-back Christian Fuchs has joined Champions League semi-finalists Schalke 04 from fellow German league side Mainz for around five million euros, it was announced Monday.

The 25-year-old defender, who captained Austria in the 2-1 defeat to Germany in a Euro 2012 qualifier on Friday, will sign a four-year contract, Schalke have confirmed.

"The idea of playing for Schalke gives me goosebumps," said Fuchs, who is a dead-ball expert.

"The club has a fantastic stadium and fans, they won the UEFA Cup in 1997 and they reached the Champions League semi-finals last season."

The German Cup winners have utilised an option in Fuchs' contract at Mainz to allow him to leave for a multi-million euros deal.

"We have been unable to find a permanent solution in his position over the last few years," said Schalke's director of sport Horst Heldt.

Klose to quit Bayern

Football

AFP, Berlin

Veteran Germany striker Miroslav Klose is to quit Bayern Munich, the Bavarian giants announced Monday, and he is now set to join Spanish side Valencia, according to a report in German daily Bild.

Klose, who turns 33 on Thursday, will part company with Bayern Munich, where his contract expires at the end of the month, and is set to announce his switch from the Bundesliga to the Spanish league.

"Unfortunately, the talks with Miroslav Klose have not led to a positive outcome," said Bayern CEO Karl-Heinz Rummenigge in a statement.

"We would have liked to have extended his contract, but we could not agree on terms."

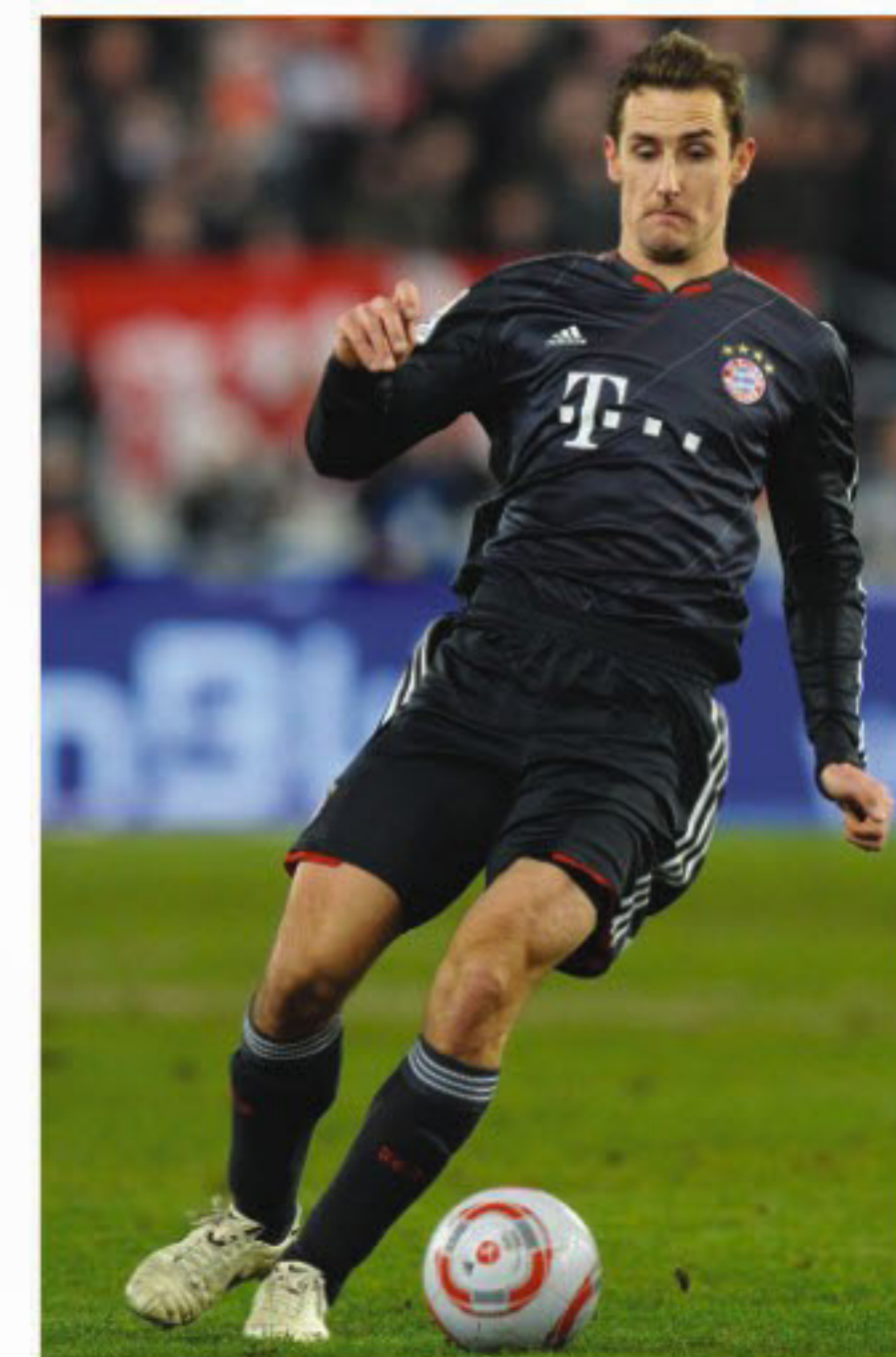
"Bayern Munich would like to wish Miroslav Klose and his family all the best for the future and to thank him for all his work with us."

The Germany star, who has scored 61 goals in 109 international appearances, has rejected Bayern's offer of a one-year contract with the option of an extra year having spent most of last season on the bench, according to Bild.

"I have had four very nice and successful years in Munich, so I would like to sincerely thank Bayern," said Klose.

"It was something special for me to play for this team."

Bild report Klose wanted a two-year deal



and was demanding a higher salary than Bayern were prepared to offer him.

Competition is fierce for places up front at Bayern with Germany striker Mario Gomez netting 28 league goals in 32 matches last season.

Croatia striker Ivica Olic and new-signing Nils Petersen will also be competing for starting places next season in Munich's attack.

Klose has been at Bayern since 2007 and a host of clubs including Italy's Lazio and Premier League side Everton are reported to have also been interested in signing him.

Kagawa heading to Old Trafford?

Football

AFP, Tokyo

Japan and Borussia Dortmund star Shinji Kagawa is back on Manchester United's radar after returning from a four-month layoff with a foot injury, a report said Monday.

Sir Alex Ferguson's side are planning to send a team of scouts to follow the 22-year-old attacking midfielder at Dortmund games next season, the Japanese daily Nikkan Sports said.

"His goal of joining a big club may be realised within this year at the earliest," the daily said.

Kagawa, who scored eight goals in 17 Bundesliga games after moving from J-League side Cerezo Osaka at the start of last season but broke his right foot in January, is keen to play for the English Premier League champions.

"If I get a formal offer, I'll be strongly interested in listening to what they have to say," Kagawa was quoted as saying by an associate, according to the Nikkan Sports.

"The Premiership is one of the leagues I want to challenge," said Kagawa, who once targeted Barcelona as his final destination. "If it is Man U,



SHINJI KAGAWA

I'll be still more eager to go and try how much I can do there."

Manchester United first showed an interest in Kagawa late last year but backed off after he suffered the injury in Japan's Asian Cup semi-final win over South Korea in January, the daily said.

The Blue Samurai went on to lift a record fourth continental title in his absence.

At that time, Spanish clubs Villarreal and Atletico Madrid as well as Juventus and Tottenham were also

reported to be interested in him.

British radio station talkSport reported that Manchester United had been quoted a price of 20 million pounds (24 million euros) for Kagawa.

After seeing Dortmund lift the Bundesliga shield from the bench, he came back onto the pitch to play the last three minutes of their final league game of the season, a 3-1 home win over Eintracht Frankfurt.

Manchester United scouts watched him at the match, the Nikkan Sports said.

Marseille keep hold of Deschamps

Football

AFP, Marseille

Didier Deschamps has confirmed he will stay on as coach of French giants Marseille through next season, the club announced Monday.

Speculation had surrounded Deschamps' future with Marseille after he made comments in May which suggested he could move on if club bosses did not spell out their intentions for the coming seasons.

Marseille said in a statement: "We confirm that Didier Deschamps will remain with Marseille next season and wants to play a long-term role with the club," top official Vincent Labrune told AFP.

Deschamps, 42, arrived at the club in the summer of 2009 as a replacement for Belgian coach Eric Gerets. Under his leadership Marseille have lifted four trophies in two seasons, including the 2010 league title.

His existing contract will expire at the end of the 2012 season.

Marseille gave no further hint as to what Deschamps' involvement in "long-term" projects might be.

Rojas flare thrower left brain dead

AFP, Brasilia

Rosinery Mello do Nascimento, a Brazilian fan who achieved notoriety after triggering the greatest scandal in Chilean football, has been left brain dead after suffering an aneurysm, her family announced here Sunday.

In 1989 Do Nascimento, then aged 24, attended a Chile v Brazil qualifier for the 1990 World Cup at Rio de Janeiro's Maracana stadium.

During the match she hurled a firework from the stands which landed near Chile's goalkeeper, Roberto Rojas.

The Chile team surrounded their keeper before quitting the pitch, declaring that Rojas had been injured when the firework exploded. The referee stopped the match.

Television pictures however later showed that Rojas's injuries were self-inflicted.

He was subsequently banned for life, and the Chile manager Osvaldo Aravena and team doctor Daniel Rodriguez were also banned from the game.

SPORTS POLL

WEEKLY QUESTION

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STAR Cricket

England v Sri Lanka

Second Test, Day 5

Live from 4:00pm

ESPN

Sportscenter India

Sports News

Live at 8:30pm



Bangladesh League

Ctg Abahani v Muktiyoddha

Time: 4:00pm

Venue: Cox's Bazar Stadium