

Ballack not happy

Football

AP, Frankfurt

Former Germany captain Michael Ballack says he is so disappointed with being ousted from the national team that he will not accept a farewell match.

Germany coach Joachim Loew said Thursday there was no Germany future for the 34-year-old Ballack and that he was under the impression that the player understood his position.

Ballack used a statement from his lawyer to say that he was "disappointed and surprised" by Loew's statement.

Ballack said the offer to have a farewell appearance in a friendly against Brazil on Aug. 10 in Stuttgart is "a farce."

"To pretend that they always dealt with me and my role as captain openly and honestly is the height of hypocrisy," Ballack said in the statement.

The 34-year-old former Chelsea midfielder has 98 caps but has not played for Germany in more than a year and missed seven months with an ankle injury, including last year's World Cup in South Africa, where Germany finished third.

Ballack, who had 42 goals in a Germany career that began in April 1999, never won a major title with the national team. He was Germany's captain in 55 games.

Loew had nominally retained Ballack as captain, but left him out of the Germany squad recently despite the player enjoying a strong end to the season.

On Thursday, however, the federation said Ballack won't be part of the squad in future though it made an offer for him to play one last game as captain in the friendly against Brazil.

Loew said recent months have brought many young players to the fore who have "good prospects."

"In our talks, I had the impression that Michael definitely understands our point of view," Loew said. "So in the interest of everyone, an honest and clear decision is now appropriate."



Argentina superstar Lionel Messi (R) tries to dribble striker Diego Milito during a training session in Ezeiza near Buenos Aires on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP



Portuguese legend Luis Figo gestures during a charity match against Austria Wien in Vienna to mark the home club's 100th anniversary on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

Mexico bullish on retaining trophy

Football

AFP, East Rutherford

Even with a squad depleted due to a doping dust-up, Mexico believe they have what it takes to retain the CONCACAF Gold Cup crown.

Mexico were rocked early in the regional football championship, when five players were pulled from the squad by national federation officials because of positive tests for banned clenbuterol during a training camp near Mexico City in May.

So far a decision on whether the players can be replaced has yet to be made as an investigation continues into how they ingested the drug.

But that didn't stop Mexico winning the remaining two of their three first-round matches to emerge unbeaten atop Group A in the regional championship for North and Central America and the Caribbean.

They won their three group matches by a combined score of 14-1, their 14 goals twice the number scored by any other team in the tournament.

"If CONCACAF at some point decides to allow the players, good," Hector Inaturri, Mexico's national director of football said Friday as the side prepared for their Gold Cup quarter-final clash with Guatemala on Saturday. "If not, we have 17 players and we are going to win."

Honduras and Costa Rica kick off the quarter-finals on Saturday at New Meadow-

lands Stadium, with Mexico v Guatemala to follow.

On Sunday, Jamaica play the United States and Panama face El Salvador at RFK Stadium in Washington.

CONCACAF, football's governing body for the region, said Friday the matches at New Meadowlands, the billion-dollar stadium that opened about a year ago, are sold out.

Mexico Coach Jose Manuel de la Torre also said he wouldn't worry about when CONCACAF officials might decide on possible replacement players.

"We will continue working with the players we have and go from there," de la Torre said. "We have to adapt to the circumstances. We have thought about it in case we are allowed to bring the players and see what we can do then."

"Now we have to focus on what we have at hand."

De La Torre said his team wouldn't underestimate Guatemala, who shocked Mexico 3-2 in 2007 in a victory that derailed Mexico's Olympic bid.

And Guatemala said they wouldn't be over-awed by the mighty Mexicans, led by Javier "Chicharito" Hernandez.

"We know their offence is the best (in the Gold Cup)," Guatemala goalkeeper Ricardo Jerez said. "Chicharito has been great. That is something you have to respect."

"We know they've scored 14 goals in three games. But this is a different game. We know who they are. If we are positioned well, there is no chance for them to harm us."

FIFA suspend Belize

Football

AFP, Paris

World football's governing body, FIFA, announced Friday that it had suspended the Football Federation of Belize (FFB) with immediate effect because of "severe governmental interference".

The suspension means that the return leg of the qualifying tie for the 2014 World Cup, due to be played in Belize on June 19 between the home team and Montserrat, has been postponed.

The first game, played in Port of Spain (Trinidad and Tobago) on June 15, was won 5-2 by Belize.

FIFA said the decision followed the Belize government's informing the FFB on June 8 that it was "not authorised to represent this country in any local or international competition or in any other forum for football on behalf of the Government, People and Nation of Belize".

The Belize government, FIFA continued, said the federation had "failed to meet the requirements for registration with the Council, as the National body for the administration of football in Belize".

FIFA gave the FFB until June 30 to settle the dispute but the Belize government wrote to FIFA on June 16 saying the Belize police would "not be providing any services to the Federation with respect to the security of the visiting team and officials at the match" to be played on June 19.

"Under these circumstances, and due to the interference of the government of Belize, FIFA cannot take the responsibility of letting the match take place," FIFA said.

"The match has therefore been postponed to a new date to be confirmed, but no later than July 10, 2011, provided that the situation is back to normal regarding the FFB and the suspension has been lifted by that date."

"In the event that the match cannot take place by that date, the national "A" team of Belize will be excluded from the 2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil preliminary competition."

Modric undecided

AFP, London



Tottenham midfielder Luka Modric says he is tempted by the prospect of a move to Chelsea and ready to leave Spurs but insists he will not submit a formal transfer request.

Chelsea have already had a 22million pound (30 million dollars) offer rejected while Manchester City and Manchester United are monitoring the situation - although Spurs' chairman Daniel Levy insisted they will keep their star.

With all three potential suitors able to offer Champions League football next season - unlike Spurs - the Croatia international wants to move on if a suitable offer is made for his services.

"If somebody comes to the club and the offer is good for me and acceptable to them, then I want to leave," Modric told the Daily Mail.

"I want to leave Tottenham as friends. I have enjoyed my time there, but now it is right for me to look at another club."

"I have an arrangement with the chairman. When I signed my new contract, he said that, if another club came to sign me, they would consider the offer. I won't ask for a transfer, no. That would be disrespectful. I hope they can reach an agreement that is

satisfactory for everyone.

"Chelsea are a big club with an ambitious owner. They have great players and they have ambitions to fight for the title and win the Champions League. I want to stay in London. I am very happy here and so are my family."

But Levy insisted in a club statement there will be no sale "at any price, to Chelsea Football Club or any other club."

Levy said: "I wish to make it absolutely clear, as I have said previously, that none of our key players will be sold this summer. We are building a team for the future to consistently play at the highest level and retaining quality players is crucial to that."

Tottenham boss Harry Redknapp dubbed Chelsea's initial offer as "ridiculous" while insisting that Modric, whom he rates in any case at a minimum 30million pounds, was "irreplaceable" and not for sale.

Modric, 25, says he must consider his options, noting that "it is for football that players leave clubs and move."

"It is normal for a player to dream about playing for a bigger club."

Modric joined Spurs from Dinamo Zagreb in 2008 for £16.6m and has played 120 games and scored 12 goals. He signed a new six-year deal at the club last year.



Dominique Ela Wisniewski from New Zealand parades during the Miss World Cup football beauty contest in Rust, which she won, on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

SPORTS POLL

WEEKLY QUESTION

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STAR Cricket
England v Sri Lanka
Third Test, Day 4
Live from 4:00pm



Bangladesh League
Feni Soccer v Ctg Abahani
Time: 4:00pm
Venue: Feni Stadium