



PHOTO: AFP

Argentina forward Sergio Aguero (R) scores the third goal against Albania during their international friendly at the Monumental Stadium in Buenos Aires on Monday.

## Brazil looking beyond

Football

AFP, Rio De Janeiro

Reigning champions Brazil will be looking beyond next month's Copa America to the World Cup they will host in 2014, coach Mano Menezes admitted Monday.

The 'auriverde' will use the Copa as a springboard to what they hope will be a sixth world crown but the latter tournament will be the clear priority - even though they hope to put one over rivals Argentina, who host the continental showpiece from July 1. "We are going to use all the opportunities (afforded by their Copa schedule) to prepare ourselves well for the World Cup," Menezes told reporters in Rio as the squad prepared to set off to Argentina on Tuesday in advance of their first pool meeting with Venezuela on July 3.

Recent friendlies have not shown the flair in abundance which Brazil fans crave - their last outing was a 1-0 win over Romania in Ronaldo's final goodbye to the fans and that came somewhat limply on the heels of a goalless draw with 2010 World Cup finalists Holland.

But Menezes, who replaced Dunga after Brazil lost to the Dutch in the World Cup quarter-finals, insists he is building a strong side.

"We have the basis (of a side) which has been used in most (recent) matches and that will form the backbone for Venezuela," prior to further pool games against Paraguay and Ecuador.

"Theoretically, Paraguay are the strongest of the three teams (in Brazil's pool) but that doesn't mean the others won't pose problems," said Menezes.

"We can say Argentina are the favourites as they are playing at home - by the same token Brazil will be favourites for the World Cup in 2014 - well that's the theory," said Menezes.

Earlier, AC Milan's Brazilian defender Thiago Silva made Argentina and Brazil joint favourites to lift the Copa.

"Between Brazil and Argentina, it'll be 50/50 - Argentina can be seen as favourites as they'll be at home but we are also seen as the team to beat as we won the last two editions," Silva told a media conference in Rio.

## Argentina thrash Albania

Football

REUTERS, Buenos Aires

Lionel Messi laid on two goals and scored another as Argentina romped to a 4-0 win over Albania at the Monumental on Monday in their last warm-up for next month's Copa America.

Defender Javier Zanetti won an Argentine record 140th cap in the match, which his team controlled at will against mediocre opponents.

Striker Ezequiel Lavezzi put the Copa hosts ahead in the fifth minute, sticking the ball over goalkeeper Arjan Beqaj from Messi's perfect pass, before Messi made it 2-0 in the 43rd, taking the ball from Lavezzi's lay off and striking a low left-footed shot inside the base of Beqaj's post.

"Lionel had a great match, generating scoring chances and scoring," coach Sergio Batista said of Messi, who took his international tally to 17 in 57 matches.

"The team played well. There are things that need adjusting because our opponents did not attack much and did not see much of the ball, but I'm happy because we showed

everything we've been practising," he told reporters.

Argentina got their third in the 74th minute after Messi fed another sublime pass with the outside of his left foot to Sergio Aguero, who rounded the goalkeeper to slot home from a tight angle.

"These kind of matches help us to get confidence and get to know each other better," said Lavezzi.

Aguero then laid on the last goal in the final minute for fellow substitute Carlos Tevez, who was recalled by Batista despite appearing out of the Copa reckoning less than a month ago.

Messi drew three defenders as he raced into the box, leaving Aguero to pass to Tevez to score with a low shot.

Albania did not create a single clear-cut chance, goalkeeper Sergio Romero going down just once to stop an early effort.

"It was not as hard as it's going to be in the Copa (America) but it's useful to get our movements right," Tevez told Argentine TV.

The Copa America, which Argentina have not won since 1993, kicks off on July 1 when the hosts play Bolivia in La Plata in their Group A opener. The final is scheduled for the Monumental on July 24.

## 'Arch-rivals favourites for Copa'

AFP, Rio De Janeiro

Argentina and Brazil must be considered joint favourites to lift the Copa America next month, AC Milan's Brazilian defender Thiago Silva said Monday.

"Between Brazil and Argentina, it'll be 50/50 - Argentina can be seen as favourites as they'll be at home but we are also seen as the team to beat as we won the last two editions," Silva told a media conference in Rio.

But he also forecast that World Cup semi-finalists Uruguay would pose a threat.

"They have a lot of quality - especially when you look at what they served up in South Africa. In our pool, I think Paraguay will be our most dangerous rivals - but we have to respect everyone," said Silva, nicknamed the Monster while with Rio outfit Fluminense and who will be playing in his first Copa.

## Villas-Boas quits Porto

Football

AFP, Lisbon

Chelsea target Andre Villas-Boas has opened the way for a move to the English Premier League by resigning as FC Porto coach, the Portuguese champions confirmed on Tuesday.

Villas-Boas informed FC Porto that he was breaking his contract by paying a 15-million-euro (\$21.35m) departure clause.

FC Porto said in a statement that they had been "notified of the intention of coach Andre Villas-Boas to terminate his contract by activating the departure clause with immediate effect".

The club added that the 33-year-old Villas-Boas' contract "would be terminated after the payment of the required sum".

Earlier Portuguese news agency Lusa reported that Villas-Boas informed the club by fax of his decision.

The payment of the departure clause would allow Villas-Boas to sign for Chelsea, without a coach since Carlo Ancelotti was sacked.

The Blues are seeking to replace Ancelotti, who was given the boot at the end of last season after failing to land any silverware, just 12 months after guiding the west London club to an historic double of league and FA Cup titles.

Porto president Pinto da Costa admitted

on Monday the club could not prevent their manager from leaving if the required financial conditions were met.

"Villas-Boas has a contract and a clause of 15 million euros," he said.

"If someone deposits 15 million euros into our account and he wants to go, we cannot do anything because it is something that is contractually specified."

A former assistant to Jose Mourinho at Chelsea, 33-year-old Villas-Boas led Porto to three titles in his first season at the club: the Portuguese league title, the Portuguese Cup and the Europa League.

In doing so, he became the youngest coach to win a European trophy.

Although Chelsea made no official comment, reports suggest a £4.4m-a-year (\$7.1m) salary is on the table for Villas-Boas, who could bring Porto's Colombian star striker Radamel Falcao to Stamford Bridge with him.

Turkey coach Guus Hiddink has also been linked with a return to Chelsea, where he won the FA Cup as a caretaker manager in 2009, as well as former Fulham, Manchester City and Blackburn Rovers boss Mark Hughes.

Porto were unbeaten in the league last season with 27 wins in 30 matches, becoming only the second Portuguese club to finish a league season unbeaten, after Benfica in 1972-73.

## Jol relishing challenge

AFP, London

New Fulham manager Martin Jol said Tuesday he was relishing his return to the top flight of English football.

The 55-year-old Jol, who has been without a club since leaving Ajax last year, spent three years in charge of Tottenham between 2004 and 2007.

"Everybody knew I would like to come back. I said that when I left, like Arnold Schwarzenegger I will be back, and I am back," said, Jol who was on Tuesday unveiled as Mark Hughes' successor at Craven Cottage.

"I think Fulham is a traditional club, like Spurs, West Ham and all the London clubs. They gave me a good feeling and when we played here (with Spurs) we had a couple of good results, and I like the colours, black and white as well.

## Cesc desperate for Barcelona

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona will refuse to pay 40 million euros (35 million pounds) for Arsenal skipper Cesc Fabregas although he "really wants" to transfer, according to Barcelona president Sandro Rosell.

"I don't know if we will sign Cesc or not. What I have no doubt of is that he really wants to come to Barca," Rosell told Catalan television TV3 in an interview late Monday.

Barcelona coach Pep Guardiola knows that every player has a value "and that Cesc is worth less than 40 million. We will offer less than 40 million and if Arsenal don't accept it, Cesc won't come," Rosell said.

"This year we won't offer the same as last year because a year has gone by and Cesc today is not worth 40 million."

Gunners coach Arsene Wenger had insisted last month that he was determined to spend a second successive summer fighting off mighty Barcelona to keep Fabregas at the Emirates.

But Spanish media say he has since decided not to fight the move.

The Gunners turned down a bid from the Spanish champions last year for a player who spent his junior days at Barcelona before joining Arsenal at the age of 16 in 2003.

"I am a Barca supporter. I am a member like my grandfather, my uncle, my cousin," Fabregas said last year.

"I love their colours since I was very small. I am Catalan. However, I am captain of Arsenal, I am a Gunner and it is there that I have become a player and that I have matured as a person."

Rosell, who took over as president from Joan Laporta in July 2010, also said "nothing was closed" regarding the transfer of Chilean international forward Alexis Sanchez from Italian side Udinese.

Spanish sports media have said the 22-year-old, who is under contract with Udinese until June 2014, is close to joining the European champions.

"We don't have money for signings. When we arrived we saw that the club's debt was much higher than what was being stated," the Barcelona president added when asked about the possibility of signing either Sanchez or Italian striker Giuseppe Rossi from Villarreal.

"Only one of the two will come," he said.

Rosell said cost-cutting measures put in place since he became president "were necessary for the sustainability of the club".

Banning colour photocopies alone "saves us 300,000 euros", he said.

Shortly after Rosell's arrival, Barcelona secured a 150 million euro bank loan to help pay player and staff wages.



PHOTO: AFP

Sevilla's latest signing Polish-born German midfielder Piotr Trochowski gives two thumbs up during his official presentation at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan Stadium yesterday.

### SPORTS POLL

#### WEEKLY QUESTION

Do you think match-fixing allegations in the B League are substantial?

Visit the sports page of [www.thedailystar.net](http://www.thedailystar.net) to cast vote

Follow The Daily Star Sport on

[twitter](https://twitter.com/dssport)

[www.twitter.com/dssport](http://www.twitter.com/dssport)

### What to WATCH

#### TEN Cricket

West Indies v India

First Test, Day 3

Live from 9:00pm

STAR Sports

Wimbledon Championships

First Round

Live from 5:00pm

ESPN

Sportscentre India

Sports News

### DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh League

Sk Jamal v Brothers Union

Time: 4:15pm

Venue: Bangabandhu