

# Rooney's place in jeopardy

AFP, London



England coach Fabio Capello has warned Wayne Rooney that he cannot expect to stroll back into the Euro 2012 reckoning after serving his suspension for his red card in Montenegro.

Rooney will serve at least a one-match ban at the finals in Poland and Ukraine next summer after the Manchester United star suffered the sixth sending off of his career and Capello said he will no hesitate to look at alternatives.

"Yes," replied Capello, when asked if he was prepared to leave Rooney out of his team.

"In my life as a manager I have put on the bench a lot of players. I always decided who was the best player at that moment."

The Italian added: "I need to find the solution for the first game, or two games, that Rooney will not play.

"And if we find that solution, he needs to work to return to the first 11.

"You know me. Sometimes I make mistakes but I try to select the best players, in the best moment of form."

"There were two I did not select for this game who are doing really well. I saw the game that (Jermain) Defoe played against Arsenal. He did really well. He ran a lot and pressed a lot. Daniel Sturridge is the same."

With qualification assured, Capello will use the November 12 friendly against world champions Spain to examine the striking options available to him.

"Rooney will not play against Spain. I want to test new players, a new style and different movement," said Capello.

"Sometimes he will come on at half-time. But not from the start. He will not start. We need to prepare the first XI who will start in the Euros.

"I have got a lot of forwards at this moment, really good forwards, and I need to find the best solution."



Brazil starlet Neymar (C) practises with teammates during a training session at the TSM Corona Stadium in Torreon on Sunday. Brazil will play Mexico in an international friendly today.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## 'Everybody loves me'

INTERNET, Undated

Real Madrid forward Cristiano Ronaldo believes football fans around the globe love watching him in action as he responds to recent criticism.

Ronaldo was jeered and hissed in September's 4-0 Euro 2012 qualifying win over Cyprus in which a number of fans shouted the name 'Messi,' referring to Lionel Messi, the Barcelona striker.

"These things [the Cyprus jeers] are abnormal things. And, I don't care about them," Ronaldo is quoted as saying by AS.com.

The former Manchester United man shrugged shoulders at the whole affair and insisted he was not affected by it. In fact, he feels everyone loves his game - his message coming just days after former Madrid coach Bernd Schuster said Ronaldo is less selfish now.

"I think that all those who like football are happy when Cristiano Ronaldo is playing," he boasted.

## Cleverley pens new MU deal

AFP, Manchester

England midfielder Tom Cleverley has signed a new four-year contract with Manchester United, the Premier League club confirmed on Monday.

The 22-year-old, who is currently recovering from an ankle injury, penned a deal which will see him remain at Old Trafford until 2015.

"Tom is one of the brightest prospects in the English game," said manager Sir Alex Ferguson. "For a young boy, he has a good footballing brain which, when coupled with his energy and ability, makes for a player with a fine future ahead of him."

"It's the United way to encourage our young players to make their mark in the first team and Tom has grabbed that chance with both hands."

Cleverley joined the Manchester United Academy at the age of 12 years and his recent performances for the first team have seen him called into the full England squad.

"It's been a fantastic start to the season for me, breaking into the first team and getting an England call-up," he said.

# 5 spots up for grabs

AFP, Paris



Star-studded France and Portugal face a nail-biting Tuesday night if they're to fill two of the five remaining automatic qualifying places for

Euro 2012.

Germany, Italy, Netherlands, England and world and European champions Spain are already through, leaving four group winners spots to be decided as well as a best runners-up slot from the nine groups.

The eight remaining second-placed teams will go into the play-offs, a lottery that 1998 World Cup winners France and 2000 European champions France and Portugal, the Euro 2004 runners-up, are desperate to avoid.

France tackle Group D rivals Bosnia-Herzegovina in Paris where a draw will put Laurent Blanc's side into the finals in Poland and Ukraine next summer.

France are a point ahead of Bosnia and will be buoyed by having won the first match between the two sides in Sarajevo last year thanks to quickfire second-half goals from Karim Benzema and Florent Malouda.

Blanc's team are already certain of a play-off place having defeated Albania 3-0 on Friday.

With around 12,000 Bosnian fans expected to make the trip to Paris, France centre-back Adil Rami sought to raise the pre-match temperature by labelling Bosnia playmaker Miralem Pjanic "a cry-baby, who does nothing but fall over".

But Rami was quick to assess the danger of star striker Edin Dzeko, labelling the Manchester City striker "the number one danger" in Safet Susic's side.

In Group H, Portugal and Denmark have 16 points each ahead of their crunch clash in Copenhagen.

The Danes, having lost 3-1 in Porto in the countries' first meeting last year, need to win to snatch the automatic qualifying spot while a draw will be enough for Portugal.

Portugal made a disastrous start to their campaign which played a role in the ousting of Carlos Queiroz as coach.

His successor Paolo Bento has galvanised the squad, but their brittle defence was exposed in Friday's 5-3 win over Iceland.

In Group B, Russia are virtually certain of qualifying as they have a two-point lead over the Republic of Ireland

and welcome hapless Andorra to Moscow, their visitors having lost all nine matches, scoring just one goal.

Ireland face Armenia in Dublin over whom they have a one-point lead, but coach Giovanni Trapattoni is determined not to let his players get swept away on a tidal wave of Irish optimism.

Ireland captain Robbie Keane, his country's record scorer with 51 goals, is a major doubt with a groin injury.

Greece, the 2004 European champions, top Group F ahead of their trip to Georgia after a 2-0 win over rivals Croatia on Friday.

A draw in Tbilisi will be enough for Greece regardless of Croatia's result at home to Latvia.

Germany with nine wins in nine Group A matches complete their campaign against second-placed Belgium in Dusseldorf.

To make the play-offs, Belgium must match or better Turkey's result against Azerbaijan as the Turks, defeated 3-1 by Germany on Friday, have the better head-to-head record.

Italy have already taken top spot in Group C. Estonia are second after coming from behind to beat Northern Ireland 2-1 on Friday but Serbia can

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# 'Barca better than Spain'



INTERNET, Undated

The German legend has voiced his admiration for both the Champions League holders and the World Cup winners, but says the Catalans are better because of their star player.

Former Germany international Franz Beckenbauer has taken the time to praise Barcelona and the Spanish national side but has stated that he believes the Catalans are the better of the two because they have Lionel Messi.

"Barcelona have set the standard in football. They play perfect football because of the finesse of their game, their mobility and the way they move the ball around," Beckenbauer told Kicker.

Spain has dominated international football in recent years as they won both Euro 2008 and the 2010 World Cup, while Barcelona has lifted the Champions League trophy twice in the last three seasons.

"They're even better than the Spanish national team because they have Lionel Messi. They have the quality to successfully defend their Champions League title.

He continued to explain, "Spain are the best national team in the world and are the favourites to win Euro 2012. Germany have made a lot of progress as well and are up there. France could spring a surprise. They made the headlines for all the wrong reasons in 2010, but are looking much better now."

## Vettel makes them proud

AFP, Berlin

The German football squad are "very proud" of Sebastian Vettel, international midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger said Sunday hours after his compatriot retained his world title.

"He's essentially a hero as it's an exceptional achievement to win two world titles at such a young age," the Bayern Munich star said as the squad gathered in Dusseldorf ahead of Tuesday's final Euro 2012 qualifier at home to Belgium.

Coach Joachim Loew also saluted Vettel for his "competence, discipline and mental strength" and said the 24-year-old should be regarded as "one of the top German sportsmen of all time."

Vettel earlier became the youngest driver ever to retain his Formula One crown when his third place at Suzuka was sufficient to retain last year's title.



PHOTO: AFP  
Paraguay striker Nelson Valdez controls the ball during a training session in Asuncion on Sunday. Paraguay take on Uruguay in a 2014 World Cup qualifier tonight.

# Argentina seek pts

AFP, Buenos Aires



Argentina are gradually emerging from their Copa America nightmare and are gunning for Venezuela on Tuesday as they seek three World Cup qualifying points to add to Friday's impressive start against Chile.

After the Albiceleste sent the Chileans packing 4-1, with Gonzalo Higuain netting a hat-trick and Lionel Messi also hitting the target, new coach Alex Sabella said it was as if a dead weight had been lifted from their shoulders.

Barcelona's Messi produced one of his best displays in the national shirt and after he capped the performance with a goal, Sabella, who succeeded Sergio Batista two months ago, said it was time to put to bed claims the superstar cannot replicate his scintillating club form at international level.

Sabella, who led Estudiantes to the Copa Libertadores two years ago, is tasked with leading Argentina through to the 2014 finals in neighbouring Brazil, but, beyond that, with making the two-time world champions a team to be feared once more.

Since a 1993 Copa success, seven coaches have come and gone without achieving senior level silverware.

The qualifying programme is the first step for Sabella and his charges to show that they have the right blend.

The task is made easier in principle by the absence from the qualifiers of already-

qualified Brazil, meaning the Argentinians can go about their business fully focused on winning the group in the absence of the five-times world champions.

Venezuela will be a test on their own turf, having played some attractive football in reaching the Copa semis for the first time.

Four years ago, Argentina won the World Cup fixture 2-0 though they only just managed to qualify after some erratic showings with Diego Maradona taking the helm mid-campaign.

This time they have the bit between their teeth after thumping Chile although there will be no underestimating the Venezuelans even though the Albiceleste will be reinforced by the return from injury of Martin Demichelis and from suspension of Javier Mascherano.

Copa America winners Uruguay, having begun with a promising 4-2 home win over outsiders Bolivia, now meet Paraguay, the team they beat to land the continental crown in July.

Veteran Diego Forlan is warning that the test in Asuncion will be one of the most difficult of the tournament.

Paraguay got their campaign off to a rocky start in losing their opener away to Peru who, after a shocking 2010 qualifying programme, came third at the Copa America.

Peru will hope to keep their recent promising form going as they head for Chile while Colombia make their bow with a trek to face Bolivia at altitude in La Paz's Estadio Hernando Siles, where four years ago they managed a goalless draw.

There are four automatic regional qualifying slots up for grabs plus one via the playoffs.

### FIXTURES

(kick offs GMT):

Bolivia v Colombia (0000 Wednesday)  
Paraguay v Uruguay (2345)  
Chile v Peru (2245)  
Venezuela v Argentina (0050 Wednesday)

### SPORTS POLL

WEEKLY QUESTION

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Time: 5:00pm

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