

Glenn wants another chance

REUTERS, London

Former England manager Glenn Hoddle is interested in leading his country again on a caretaker basis at the European Championship in Poland and Ukraine.

Hoddle, 54, managed England from 1996 until after the World Cup finals in France 1998 when he lost his job following alleged comments made in a newspaper interview, and has not managed since leaving Wolverhampton Wanderers in 2006.

In an interview with the Independent newspaper on Monday, Hoddle, who also won 53 caps for England, said he had unfinished business with national side.

"If I were to die tomorrow, my life would be incomplete," he said.

Asked if he could manage England again, he replied: "Would I get that opportunity? Probably not.

"But I don't dwell on the past and, if we fast-forward to the present, I think we have a batch of players capable of going to the Euros and doing well. I find it a very interesting moment.

"Because Stuart Pearce, Harry Redknapp, Roy Hodgson, myself - anyone - who went to the tournament with the status of a caretaker would have the pressure off him and the players would be liberated too, not least those who have been on the fringes and are accustomed to thinking that the manager doesn't fancy them."

He gave the example of the England rugby union team who have recovered well from a disappointing World Cup under their caretaker coach Stuart Lancaster.

"Look at how a caretaker has worked for the England rugby team in the Six Nations they've done fantastically.

"Everyone's got an edge, no one's sure of a place and everyone has an incentive. So I'd back the FA if they decided not to go for a full-time manager yet."

Tottenham Hotspur manager Harry Redknapp is widely regarded as the clear favourite to take the job full-time but the FA have also said they would make no appointment until the "back end of the season."

SPORTS POLL

Do you think Sachin Tendulkar should retire?

Yes 43.4%

No 44.5%

TOTAL VOTES: 440

WEEKLY QUESTION

Were you happy with Mushfiqur Rahim's captaincy in Asia Cup?

Visit the sports page of www.thedailystar.net to cast vote

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What to WATCH

TEN Cricket

Sri Lanka v England

First Test, Day Two

Live from 10:30am

West Indies v Australia

First T20 International

Live from 12:00am (Wednesday)

ESPN

Sportscenter India

Sports News

Live at 8:30pm

TEN Sports

UEFA Champions League

Apoel Nicosia v Real Madrid

Live from 12:45am (Wednesday)

TEN Action

UEFA Champions League

Benfica v Chelsea

Live from 12:45am (Wednesday)

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh Premier League

Rahmatganj v Feni Soccer Club

Time: 3:45pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium



Juventus forward Alessandro Del Piero (R) jumps for joy after scoring against Inter Milan during their Serie A encounter in Turin on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Juventus keep up pressure

AFP, Turin



Juventus beat arch rivals Inter Milan 2-0 in Turin on Sunday to keep the pressure on AC Milan at the top of the Serie A table.

Second-half goals from Martin Caceres and veteran Alessandro Del Piero did the damage after the visitors had enjoyed the better of the first period.

Juve closed back to four points behind Milan, who beat Roma 2-1 on Saturday.

The defeat means Inter, who have just one win in their last 10 league encounters, are down in eighth and still three points behind a Europa League finish.

With one side desperate to keep hold of Milan's co-tails and the other in need of a win to boost their European qualification chances, both sides went all out for the win.

Inter's Maicon played in Diego Milito on the edge of the box but his snap-shot was blocked by Gianluigi Buffon's feet.

Juve started to take control and Caceres found acres of space on the right to pick out Alessandro Matri but from close range he headed straight at Julio Cesar.

Claudio Marchisio almost picked out Simone Pepe and then Arturo Vidal played in Caceres to feed Matri, who seemed to have forgotten his shooting boots and blazed over.

The momentum swung back the visitors' way and Diego Forlan's near-post flick from Maicon's corner had Buffon scrambling the ball away.

Milito then took down a long ball and volleyed goalwards, Buffon parried but the

Argentine forward thumped the rebound over from an angle.

Buffon made a couple of crucial stops to deny Joel Obi and Dejan Stankovic as Inter ended the half in the ascendancy.

Juve, however, started the second period better after Antonio Conte switched to a 3-5-2 formation and went in front just before the hour mark.

Marchisio let fly from outside the box and Cesar tipped the ball over.

But from Andrea Pirlo's resulting corner, Caceres was left all alone to head home from eight yards out.

Inter coach Claudio Ranieri threw on an extra striker in Giampaolo Pazzini but the visitors were struggling to create clear chances like they did in the first half.

And Juve finished the game just after Vucinic had been denied by Cesar when one-on-one, as Vidal slipped in substitute Del Piero to finish expertly into the bottom corner.

Juve could even have had more as Giorgio Chiellini was played in behind the

defence but tried to square the ball to Fabio Quagliarella, whose close range shot was miraculously blocked by Maicon on the line.

Cesar also made a flying save to keep out a Chiellini header late on.

Lazio put daylight between themselves and their Champions League rivals as a Mobido Diakite goal two minutes from time gave them a 1-0 win over Cagliari.

The crucial strike cemented the Romans in third place, three points ahead of Napoli and Udinese in the race for the final Champions League qualification position.

RESULTS

Atalanta 2 (Gabbadini 50, Tiribocchi 90) Bologna 0
Cesena 2 (Santana 46, Del Nero 53) Parma 2 (Flocari 40, Paletta 61)
Chievo 1 (Acerbi 9) Siena 1 (Destro 51)
Genoa 2 (Belluschi 20, Palacio 89)
Fiorentina 2 (Montolivo 31, Natali 65)
Juventus 2 (Caceres 57, 71) Inter Milan 0
Lazio 1 (Diakite 88) Cagliari 0
Napoli 2 (Dzemallic 61, Cavani 67)
Catania 2 (Spolli 75, Lanzafame 85)
Novara 0 Lecce 0

Malaga go fourth

AFP, Madrid



Two late goals gave big-spending Malaga a 2-1 win at Espanyol on Sunday which moved them into fourth spot in La Liga and well-placed for a Champions League place.

Malaga were a goal down for most of the match in Barcelona after Brazilian forward Philippe Coutinho scored his fourth goal in four matches.

However, two late goals in two minutes from Ruud Van Nistelrooy and Martin Demichelis changed the game and ensured the points went to the Costa del Sol.

Malaga have 47 points, the same as third-placed Valencia.

Levante are fifth, three points back, after losing 2-0 at home to Osasuna.

Raul Garcia got the first early on, assisted by Nino, and repaid the favour in the second-half for Nino to grab the second, as Osasuna put in a strong performance.

The win moves the club from Pamplona up to sixth place on 43 points, one behind Levante.

Bottom club Zaragoza continued their good form beating Atletico Madrid 1-0 with a last-minute penalty converted by Apono after Diego Godin fouled Hector Postiga in the 94th minute.

After months adrift at the bottom, the result dragged Zaragoza level in the relegation zone.

RESULTS

Real Zaragoza 1 (Apono 90+5-pen) Atletico Madrid 0
Levante 0 **Osasuna 2** (Raul Garcia 15, Nino 78)
Espanyol 1 (Coutinho Correia 24) **Malaga 2** (van Nistelrooy 75, Demichelis 77)
Athletic Bilbao 1 (De Marcos 77) Sporting Gijon 1 (Lora 90)
Real Betis 1 (Santa Cruz 17) Racing Santander 1 (Stuani 79)
Rayo Vallecano 0 **Villarreal 2** (Ruben 29, Angel 85)

Boys up against men

AFP, Nicosia



When Cypriot giant killers APOEL face the mighty Real Madrid on Tuesday, some might call the Champions League quarterfinal, first leg tie the biggest mismatch ever at this stage of the competition.

Real's multi-million euro 'Galacticos' will take on a team that usually falls under Europe's football radar.

Unkind observers could tag the contest as one between the journeymen no hopers of APOEL and the all conquering superstars from Spain.

But throughout this campaign the unfancied Cypriot have defied the odds in rewriting the history books -- giving justification to UEFA boss Michel

Platini who campaigned for an even playing field for smaller clubs.

APOEL have come through the qualifying rounds to become the first Cypriot team to reach this stage of the competition.

More than 6,000 fans turned up at Nicosia's GSP stadium on Friday to snap up the last 300 tickets.

The 23,000 capacity ground could easily have been sold-out three times over such is the interest in this game.

Obviously the star attraction for many Cypriots is the chance to see one of the world's best players in action -- Cristiano Ronaldo.

In terms of budget and status, APOEL are the smallest club left in the competition, especially in contrast to Real Madrid.

And APOEL's financial clout pales into insignificance when compared to

the planet's richest football club with a 490 million euro budget.

Goal machine Ronaldo is the world's most expensive player costing Real a record 80 million euros on an annual salary exceeding 13 million.

APOEL's record signing is Brazilian striker Ailton who cost 700,000 euros from Copenhagen in 2010 and their highest paid player Esteban Solari doesn't make in a year what Ronaldo earns in a week.

At APOEL most players' salaries do not exceed 13,000 euros a month.

Talisman Ailton scored four goals in the qualifying rounds, snatched the winner at home to Zenit in the group stage and scored in both games against Porto.

His impressive tally of seven in the competition so far began in modest surroundings in a qualifier against KS Skenderbeu in Albania last July.

Di Matteo confident

AFP, Lisbon



Chelsea manager Roberto Di Matteo is looking to his Benfica old boys as the Blues attempt to edge closer to the Champions League semifinals against the Portuguese giants here Tuesday.

Di Matteo's side head into their quarterfinal at the Stadium of Light hoping to exploit the inside knowledge of defender David Luiz and midfielder Ramires, who both played at Benfica before joining Chelsea.

"They are looking forward to going back and it can help. They know the atmosphere and the team," Di Matteo said.

"I remember having that same situation when I played against Lazio. You can give a lot of information to your team-mates.

"I'm well-documented about Benfica myself. I've seen them many, many times and I have a lot of information."

However Di Matteo was coy when asked if he had sought out the views of axed Chelsea boss Andre Villas-Boas. "I'd like to keep that private and confidential," Di Matteo said.

Chelsea's bid to secure qualification for next season's Champions League suffered a setback on Saturday when they could only manage a draw against Tottenham, a result which leaves them five points adrift of the top four.

With either Barcelona or AC Milan awaiting them in the semi-finals should they advance past Benfica, few are expecting Chelsea to qualify for the 2012-2013 Champions League by winning this year's edition.

The stakes for Chelsea could not be higher.

It is estimated that failure to reach the Champions League next year would create a £37 million (44.2 million euros/58.7 million dollars) hole in the club's finances, leaving the Blues struggling to meet the criteria set down by UEFA's Financial Fair Play rules, which will be introduced in 2013 based on

clubs' accounts from the current season and next season.

Nevertheless, Di Matteo insists his players like nothing better than proving their critics wrong, as evidenced in their remarkable 4-1 second leg victory against Napoli earlier this month which saw them overturn a two-goal deficit to storm into the last eight.

"We are trying very hard to prove everybody wrong that wrote us off," said Di Matteo, who is expected to rely on Chelsea's veterans once more on Tuesday.

"The experience factor does help you. If you are used to playing certain games over the year, it helps."

Di Matteo is adamant however that Chelsea cannot afford to concede a two-goal lead in Tuesday's first leg.

"Ideally, you want to get an away goal and you don't want to have a mountain to climb like we did previously," he said.

Di Matteo is also encouraged by Chelsea's improved recent defensive record, which he believes augurs well.

"I think we'll be good at Benfica. We've changed our set-up a little bit and our defensive mentality and I think we'll be okay," he said.

Benfica coach Jorge Jesus is confident his side have the firepower to trouble Chelsea's defence, with Paraguayan striker Oscar Cardozo and Argentinian veteran Pablo Aimar the danger men.

Jesus, whose team beat Zenit St Petersburg to reach the last eight, said he had hoped for Chelsea when the draw for the quarter-finals was made, pointing out that the Portuguese had already helped eliminate Manchester United in the group stage earlier this season.

"We have shown we can cope well with English football, having knocked out Manchester United, and there are four players I know very well at Chelsea, players who helped make me a better coach," Jesus said, referring to Luiz, Ramires and Chelsea reserves Paulo Ferreira and goalkeeper Hilario.



Benfica star Pablo Aimar controls the ball during a training session in Seixal yesterday on the eve of their Champions League tie against Chelsea.

PHOTO: AFP

Cisse steers Newcastle

REUTERS, London

Newcastle United continued their push for Europa League football next season when two excellent goals from Papiss Cisse and a superb strike from Hatem ben Arfa gave them a 3-1 win at West Bromwich Albion in the Premier League on Sunday.

The victory consolidated their sixth-place position, moving the north-east club on to 50 points with eight matches remaining, the same as Chelsea who are fifth with a better goal difference.

Newcastle are eight points clear of seventh-placed Liverpool, who are assured of a Europa League spot after winning the League Cup, and 10 points clear of arch-rivals Sunderland in eighth place.

Newcastle virtually wrapped up the game in the first 12 minutes with Cisse opening the scoring by side-footing home from close range after six minutes.

Ben Arfa doubled their lead after a rapid counter-attack ending with another well-worked goal and Cisse made it 3-0 following a clever move involving a pull-back from Ben Arfa.

It was Cisse's fifth goal in six Newcastle appearances but he was later carried off on a stretcher with a suspected knee injury.