

Goal line tech put on trial

REUTERS, Berne

Two Danish league matches will be used this month to test GoalRef, one of two goal line technology systems being evaluated by FIFA, soccer's governing body said on Wednesday.

FIFA said testing of the system would take place at the Silkeborg-Sonderyske and Nordsjaelland-AC Horsens matches.

Rival system Hawk-Eye is being tested in two minor league games in England, the first being the Hampshire FA Senior Cup final between Totton and Eastleigh later on Wednesday.

FIFA emphasised that the systems would not be used by match officials in the test matches to make decisions.

"Only the (test) observer in the stadium will have access to the Goal Line Technology system readings," said FIFA.

"Therefore, should a goal-line incident occur in any of the test matches, the system will not be utilised by the match officials, meaning the GLT system will have no influence on the outcome of the matches in which the system is being tested."

A final decision on which system will be used is expected to be taken at a meeting of the International Football Association Board, soccer's rule-making body, in Kiev on July 2.

Obama teases Beckham

REUTERS, Washington

U.S. President Barack Obama poked fun at one of sport's biggest stars at the White House on Tuesday, remarking that British soccer player David Beckham had a knack for combining athletic prowess with commercial appeal.

The quip came as the president congratulated Beckham and his teammates on the Los Angeles Galaxy, who defeated the Houston Dynamo last November to clinch the 2011 Major League Soccer Cup.

"It is a rare man who can be that tough on the field and also have his own line of underwear," Obama said with a smile to laughter from the audience.

Beckham's fame transcends the soccer field. He has landed endorsement deals with Adidas and Pepsi, and is known for showing off his body in underwear ads for H&M. His wife, Victoria, is a former member of the Spice Girls, one of the most successful bands of the 1990s.

Obama joked about the veteran soccer player's age. The 37-year-old has a good number of years on most of his teammates. "I have to say I gave David a hard time - I said half his teammates could be his kids," the president said. "We're getting old David, although you're holding up better than me."



Germany goalkeeper Marc-Andre Terstegen dives for the ball during a training session at the Andrea Corda Stadium in Sardinia on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Heartbreak for Rio

AFP, London



Veteran defender Rio Ferdinand was the highest-profile casualty on Wednesday as England manager Roy Hodgson unveiled his squad for the European Championships.

After intense speculation about whether Hodgson would risk picking Ferdinand and Chelsea captain John Terry in the same squad, an announcement confirmed that it was the Manchester United centre-half who had been left out.

Terry had previously been tipped to miss out with Hodgson questioning whether the centre-half could exist happily in the same squad as Ferdinand, who has accumulated 81 caps since making his debut in 1997.

Terry is facing a July court case on allegations he racially abused Ferdinand's younger brother Anton during Chelsea's Premier League clash with Queens Park Rangers last October, accusations he strongly denies.

However Ferdinand's ability to withstand the rigours of a tournament campaign were called into doubt by his Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson last week, who questioned whether the defender could play two games in four days.

Other notable selections on Wednesday

saw Arsenal teenager Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain earn his first senior call-up after a promising first season with the Premier League giants.

Meanwhile Liverpool striker Andy Carroll's reward for a strong finish to the season is a place among the pool of four strikers picked by Hodgson.

With Wayne Rooney suspended for England's opening two Group D games, Carroll is now a strong candidate to lead the attack in the Three Lions' opening game against France in Donetsk on June 11.

Rooney's Manchester United colleague Danny Welbeck and Tottenham's Jermain Defoe complete the line-up of forwards.

In midfield Hodgson has opted for an experienced pool of players with several veterans of England's ill-fated 2010 World Cup campaign in the frame, including Steven Gerrard, Frank Lampard, James Milner and Gareth Barry.

Meanwhile Norwich goalkeeper John Ruddy has also forced his way into the squad after an acclaimed season for the Canaries.

Ruddy has been given special dispensation to miss England's final warm-up game against Belgium on June 2 as it clashed with his planned wedding.

"He offered to cancel it but we told him there is no need to. He will rejoin the squad after his wedding," an FA spokesman said.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers:

Joe Hart (Man City), Rob Green (West Ham), John Ruddy (Norwich)

Defenders:

Glen Johnson (Liverpool), Phil Jones (Man United), John Terry (Chelsea), Joleon Lescott (Man City), Gary Cahill (Chelsea), Ashley Cole (Chelsea), Leighton Baines (Everton)

Midfielders:

Theo Walcott (Arsenal), Stewart Downing (Liverpool), Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain (Arsenal), Steven Gerrard (Liverpool), Gareth Barry (Man City), Frank Lampard (Chelsea), Scott Parker (Tottenham), Ashley Young (Man United), James Milner (Man City)

Forwards:

Wayne Rooney (Man United), Danny Welbeck (Man United), Andy Carroll (Liverpool), Jermain Defoe (Tottenham)

Standby:

Jack Butland (Birmingham), Phil Jagielka (Everton), Jordan Henderson

Cahill slams Cabaye

AFP, Liverpool

Everton's Australian attacking midfielder Tim Cahill launched a broadside at Newcastle's French international Yohan Cabaye after accepting a three-match ban for his red card in his side's 3-1 victory last Sunday.

Cahill, 32, accused Cabaye of using offensive language at the end of the match, which saw the Australian react by grappling with the Frenchman and being red-carded.

Everton appealed against the red card but it was rejected earlier on Tuesday by the Football Association (FA). "I accept my three-match ban," Cahill said in a statement.

"My reaction at the end of the game was out of character but I was disgusted at comments made to me by Cabaye. "Cabaye has apologised via his club's website and as far as I am concerned, the matter is now closed."

"I would like to apologise for the cross words I exchanged with Tim Cahill, which resulted in his red card and my booking on the final whistle," said the 26-year-old, who has impressed in his first season in the Premier League after signing from 2011 French champions Lille.

Di Matteo faces toughest test

AFP, London



Roberto Di Matteo is bracing for the toughest managerial challenge of his career as he attempts to lead an injury and suspension-hit Chelsea to Champions League glory over Bayern Munich.

Just 10 weeks after taking over at Stamford Bridge following the sacking of Andre Villas-Boas, Di Matteo has already overseen a string of notable performances including an unforgettable semifinal win over Barcelona.

But the Italian believes that orchestrating a win over Bayern on their home ground on Saturday would represent his greatest triumph as he attempts to pull together a Chelsea side decimated by injuries and suspensions.

Chelsea will be without suspended captain John Terry and fullback Branislav Ivanovic as well as inspirational midfielder Ramires and Raul Meireles.

Di Matteo is also sweating on the fitness of defenders Gary Cahill and David Luiz along with midfielder Florent Malouda.

Given the circumstances, Di Matteo agreed he faced the most challenging tactical assignment of his career.

"With all the problems that we have it's certainly causing me a headache," the 41-year-old said.

Despite overseeing a rebound in Chelsea's fortunes, which included an FA Cup victory as well as their passage to the Champions League final, Di Matteo has yet to be given any assurances about his long-term future at Chelsea.

Chelsea say no decision on a long-term successor to Villas-Boas will be taken until the season has ended, and Di Matteo insists he is happy to wait.

"I'm very relaxed about it," Di Matteo said. "I just have a big drive and a big motivation to do something extraordinary for this club and that's all I want to do. And whatever comes afterwards -- well, there's always a reason for things that happen."

He also brushes off suggestions that failure to land the top job would be a bitter pill to swallow if Chelsea were successful on Saturday.

France recall Gourcuff

AFP, Paris



France coach Laurent Blanc named Yoann Gourcuff in his preliminary 26-man squad for Euro 2012 on Tuesday, while there was a surprise first call-up for Montpellier defender Mapou Yanga-Mbiwa.

Gourcuff, 25, had been in danger of missing out, having made only 13 league appearances for Lyon this season due to injury, and received the last of his 28 caps in March 2011.

"On club form, his record is indefensible, as he's hardly played and when he has played, he's not performed well, but for France, his record is not that bad," explained Blanc, who won the Ligue 1 title with Gourcuff at Bordeaux in 2009.

"He's definitely benefited

SQUAD

Goalkeepers:

Cedric Carrasco (Bordeaux), Hugo Lloris (Lyon), Steve Mandanda (Marseille)

Defenders:

Gael Clichy (Manchester City/ENG), Mathieu Debuchy (Lille), Patrice Evra (Manchester United/ENG), Laurent Koscielny (Arsenal/ENG), Philippe Mexes (AC Milan/ITA), Adil Rami (Valencia/ESP), Anthony Reveliere (Lyon), Mapou Yanga-Mbiwa (Montpellier)

Midfielders:

Yohan Cabaye (Newcastle United/ENG), Alou Diarra (Marseille), Yoann Gourcuff (Lyon), Florent Malouda (Chelsea/ENG), Marvin Martin (Sochaux), Blaise Matuidi (Paris Saint-Germain), Yann M'Vila (Rennes), Samir Nasri (Manchester City/ENG), Franck Ribery (Bayern Munich/GER)

Forwards:

Hatem Ben Arfa (Newcastle United/ENG), Karim Benzema (Real Madrid/ESP), Olivier Giroud (Montpellier), Jeremy Menez (Paris

from the circumstances: during his long absence, no-one has imposed themselves in his area of the pitch."

Yanga-Mbiwa, who celebrated his 23rd birthday on Tuesday, took the place of Tottenham Hotspur centre-back Younes Kaboul, who was forced to drop out of the squad due to a patellar tendon injury.

"Younes is out of the Euro," Blanc announced on Eurosport.

"He has a fairly significant injury to his knee, the patellar tendon, that's been troubling him for quite a while."

Blanc had previously unveiled a 12-man list of players playing overseas on May 9.

Yanga-Mbiwa's inclusion came at the expense of Mamadou Sakho, who lost his place in the Paris Saint-Germain starting line-up following the arrival of Italian coach Carlo Ancelotti in December.

Kagawa meets Ferguson

AFP, Tokyo

Japan international Shinji Kagawa revealed Wednesday that he had met Manchester United boss Sir Alex Ferguson, as rumours swirl that the Borussia Dortmund star is eyeing a move to the Premier League.

The midfielder said the Scot, one of football's most successful managers, had "good words" to say about him during two hours of talks in Manchester this week.

Kagawa, who still has a year to run on his contract with the German champions and has stalled over signing an extension with the club, said he wanted to "think hard" before deciding where his future lay.

"It was good that I was able to meet him in person and talk," Kagawa told reporters on his return ahead of Japan's friendly against Azerbaijan.

Ferguson "had some good words," the player added when asked by journalists at Tokyo's Haneda Airport about the meeting, without disclosing what they discussed.

The 23-year-old scored 17 goals this season in all competitions to help Dortmund secure a second consecutive Bundesliga title and win the domestic double for the first time in their 103-year history.

He has made no secret of his desire to move to England with United tipped as front-runners to sign him.

Ferguson watched Kagawa score in Dortmund's 5-2 German Cup final win over Bayern Munich at Berlin's Olympic Stadium Saturday.

"I want to think hard before making my decision," Kagawa said, adding that several other Premier League clubs have also expressed interest in him.

"I want to choose a team where I can take on challenges," he added.

Dortmund are in a position to make a handsome profit by selling Kagawa, who cost the German club just 350,000 euros (\$450,000) from Cerezo Osaka in 2010 but is now worth around 13 million euros.

Other big name clubs, including Chelsea, AC Milan and Arsenal have also been linked to Kagawa, media reports have said.

SPORTS POLL

WEEKLY QUESTION

Do you think Richard Pybus is a good choice as Bangladesh coach?

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What to WATCH

STAR Cricket

England v West Indies

First Test, Day 1

Live from 4:00pm

SET Max

Indian Premier League

Punjab v Chennai

Live from 4:30pm

Delhi v Bangalore

Live from 8:30pm

ESPN

Sportscenter India

Sports News

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh Premier League

Abahani v Arambagh

Time: 6:00pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National



Al-Wasl coach Diego Maradona (L) stands with his son in law, Manchester City striker Sergio Aguerro (C) and his grandson Benjamin at the end of a Gulf Cooperation Council Champions League match against Al-Wehda in Dubai on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP