



Injured duo passed fit

AFP, London

Injured doubts Danny Welbeck and Glen Johnson were both passed fit to play at Euro 2012 after being included in England's final 23-man squad for the tournament on Tuesday.

Manchester United striker Welbeck and Liverpool defender Johnson missed last Saturday's 1-0 friendly victory over Norway in Oslo because of lingering fitness issues.

However the duo were both named to travel to Poland and Ukraine in a squad showing only two changes from the original 23 unveiled by manager Roy Hodgson earlier this month.

Everton defender Phil Jagielka comes in for the injured Gareth Barry, ruled out on Monday, while Birmingham goalkeeper Jack Butland replaces John Ruddy, who broke a finger in training last week.

England also confirmed squad numbers for the tournament on Tuesday, and in a possible indicator of Hodgson's preferences in attack, handed Liverpool striker Andy Carroll the No.9 shirt.

Carroll is expected to start for England in their opening matches against France and Sweden in the absence of the suspended Wayne Rooney.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Joe Hart (Man City), Rob Green (West Ham), Jack Butland (Birmingham)

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

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

Forwards: Wayne Rooney (Man United), Danny Welbeck (Man City)

No room for Cacau

AFP, Berlin

Coach Joachim Loew on Monday unveiled his final 23-man squad for next month's European Championships, cutting four players from his initial pre-list.

Goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen, who leaked five goals in an upset 5-3 loss to Switzerland in a friendly on the weekend, was omitted along with Stuttgart striker Cacau, Schalke's teenage midfielder Julian Draxler and Borussia Dortmund's Sven Bender.

Germany open their Group B campaign against Portugal on June 9 before playing the 1988 winners Netherlands four days later and rounding off against 1992 champions Denmark on June 17.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Manuel Neuer (Bayern Munich), Tim Wiese (Werder Bremen), Ron-Robert Zieler (Hanover)

Defenders: Holger Badstuber (Bayern Munich), Jerome Boateng (Bayern Munich), Benedikt Hoewedes (Schalke 04), Mats Hummels (Borussia Dortmund), Philipp Lahm (Bayern Munich), Marcel Schmelzer (Borussia Dortmund), Per Mertesacker (Arsenal/ENG)

Midfielders: Lars Bender (Bayer Leverkusen), Toni Kroos (Bayern Munich), Thomas Mueller (Bayern Munich), Mesut Ozil (Real Madrid/ESP), Andre Schuerrle (Bayer Leverkusen), Sami Khedira (Real Madrid/ESP), Bastian Schweinsteiger (Bayern Munich), Mario Goetze (Borussia Dortmund), Ilkay Guendogan (Borussia Dortmund)

Forwards: Mario Gomez (Bayern Munich), Miroslav Klose (Lazio/ITA)



PHOTO: AFP
Dutch wingers Arjen Robben (L) and Dirk Kuyt run during a training session at their base camp in Hoenderloo on Monday.

Quake disrupts friendly

AFP, Rome

A friendly football match between Italy and Luxembourg scheduled to take place in Parma on Tuesday was called off after a strong earthquake hit the region, killing at least 12 people.

The match was part of preparations for next month's European Football Championships in Poland and Ukraine and was called off by the Italian Football Federation and local authorities.

Italy coach Cesare Prandelli said there were more important things in life than a football match.

"There are situations that make you think and make you realise there are worse things in life (than cancelling a game)," he told Rai.

A federation spokesman told AFP that the match would not be moved elsewhere or postponed to a later date.

Italy still have another friendly to come on Friday against Russia in Zurich before opening their Euro 2012 campaign against Spain on June 10.

Hazard opts for Chelsea



AFP, Lille

Lille's Belgian international playmaker Eden Hazard announced on Monday he had signed for Champions League winners Chelsea in preference to Premier League champions Manchester City and runners-up Manchester United.

The fee is reported to be 40million euros with Hazard signing a five year contract and breaks the record for a Belgian footballer's transfer with Marouane Fellaini's to Everton of 20million in 2008 being the previous mark.

He will also earn a reported 550,000 euros a month.

The 21-year-old - who was voted Ligue 1 Players' Player of the Year for the second successive year recently - had previously said he would definitely sign for one of the Manchester clubs without specifying which one.

However, Chelsea's penalty shootout win over Bayern Munich in the Champions League had he admitted at the time made him hesitate as to his choice - speculation he ended on Monday even though the transfer window doesn't officially open till June 13.

"I'm signing for the Champion's League winner," he tweeted.

Hazard, capped 27 times and scorer of two goals, was inspirational when Lille won the domestic double in 2011 and though they failed to defend their titles this season he nonetheless enjoyed a successful season, scoring 17 goals and providing 15 assists.

Hazard is due to play against several of his new teammates in Saturday's friendly with England at Wembley.

New Belgian national coach Marc Wilmots said that no-one should expect too much else to be said on his reasons for choosing Chelsea for the moment.

Blanc drops Gourcuff

AFP, Le Touquet

France coach Laurent Blanc named his final 23-man squad for Euro 2012 on Tuesday, with Lyon's Yoann Gourcuff and Montpellier's Mapou Yanga-Mbiwa the two men axed from the provisional list.

Midfielder Gourcuff endured a miserable season with his club, marred by injuries and lack of form, but had been given hope of going to the finals in Poland and Ukraine when Blanc -- who previously coached him at Bordeaux -- included him in an initial 25-man squad.

However, he failed to impress in Sunday's 3-2 friendly win against Iceland and will now watch the tournament from home.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Cedric Carrasso (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 Revellere (Lyon)

Midfielders: Yohan Cabaye (Newcastle United/ENG), Alou Diarra (Marseille), Florent Malouda (Chelsea/ENG), Marvin Martin (Sochaux), Blaise Matuidi (Paris Saint-Germain), Yann M'vila (Rennes), Samir Nasri (Manchester City/ENG)

Forwards: Hatem Ben Arfa (Newcastle United/ENG), Karim Benzema (Real Madrid/ESP), Olivier Giroud (Montpellier), Jeremy Menez (Paris Saint-Germain), Franck Ribery

Kagawa set to join MU

AFP, Berlin

German football magazine Kicker reported Tuesday that Japan star Shinji Kagawa is set to join English giants Manchester United for 15 million euros (\$18.8 million) with the deal almost complete.

Borussia Dortmund's director of sport Michael Zorc told Kicker that some details have yet to be finalised and Kagawa is still contracted to the German league and cup winners until June 2013.

The club have already slapped a price tag of 20 million euros on their attacking midfielder with several Premier League clubs reported to be interested.

SPORTS POLL

WEEKLY QUESTION

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Prandelli not convinced



AFP, Rome

Italy have twice before won the World Cup following a match-fixing scandal but coach Cesare Prandelli says he does not read too much into that statistic.

The country is once again gripped by the shame of a match-fixing episode just ahead of a major international tournament but Prandelli believes it would be wrong to expect another instance of triumph through adversity.

In 1982 Italy won their third World Cup just two years after the Totonero scandal that saw star forward Paolo Rossi banned for two years and only just allowed back in time to fire the Azzurri to triumph.

Then in 2006 Calciopoli broke but again Italy regrouped, dug deep and finished victorious for the fourth time at a World Cup.

But Prandelli would still prefer to avoid such affairs that have seen him ditch first choice left-back Domenico Criscito from his tournament squad due to the 25-year-old's implication in Calciocommesse.

"As I've said before it seems to me that comparisons with 2006 are familiar ground," he said.

"People say that adversity unites a group and I hope that's the case.

"But I don't subscribe to the theory that Italians thrive in difficulty, we thrive in serenity."

The current sports betting scandal, which has seen the involvement of some high profile names such as Lazio captain and former Italy international Stefano Mauri, involves Italian clubs but not the national team.

And Prandelli says it is the national team's job to make the public forget about their domestic club woes.

"We're Italy and we have to put on a brave face even in the most uncomfortable moments," he said.

"We have to tackle the most sensitive themes with the dignity of people who approach their own work in the most serious manner.

"These players are sensitive lads but they're lucky, they can let their tensions out on the pitch.

"When they've got rid of their mental fatigue they can play football."

Prandelli also spoke of his pain at ditching Criscito, claiming he did so for the player's own good.

But he denied accusations of double standards as he is taking Leonardo Bonucci to the Euros despite his implication in the scandal.

AFP, The Hague

World football's perennial bridesmaids, the Netherlands, will be hoping that Euro 2012 is the tournament at which they end their 24-year wait for a major title.

Making the latter stages of tournaments has never been a problem for the nation that has given the world Johan Cruyff, Marco van Basten, Dennis Bergkamp and Total Football.

Beaten World Cup finalists in 1974, 1978 and 2010, they have reached the semifinals at the European Championship three times since they last lifted the trophy in 1988, only to fall before the final on each occasion.

The Dutch side that competed at Euro 2008 were the sensation of the group phase, beating Italy (3-0) and France (4-1) in scintillating fashion, but they went out timidly to Russia in the last eight.

In a bid to address the country's traditional football failings, coach Bert van Marwijk turned the team that went to the 2010 World Cup into a more dogged and pragmatic outfit.

It was enough to take them to the final -- and an extra-time defeat at the hands of Spain -- but the team were disowned by Cruyff, who accused them of betraying their footballing heritage.

Nobody could accuse the Netherlands of being boring on the road to Poland and the Ukraine.

With 37 goals in 10 matches they were the top scorers in qualifying, while their 11-0 annihilation of San Marino last September was the biggest victory in the country's history.

Klaas-Jan Huntelaar topped the scoring charts in qualifying with 12 goals and he has also been in sensational form for club side Schalke, plundering 29 goals to win Kicker magazine's award for the Bundesliga's top marksman.

Robin van Persie played second-fiddle to Huntelaar in qualifying but over the past 18 months he has belatedly emerged as one of the world's top strikers, netting 30 goals for Arsenal this season and being crowned the PFA Players' Player of the Year.

There have been mixed results in recent friendlies, with a 0-0 draw against Switzerland in November followed by a 3-0 humbling at the hands of Germany in Hamburg a few days later.

Key players, including van Persie, were missing for the Germany game, however, and there was encouragement to be found in February's 3-2 defeat of England at Wembley, where Arjen Robben scored a fine brace.

With Robben fit and firing for Bayern Munich, van Marwijk has plenty of options in attack but Wesley Sneijder -- talisman of the World Cup campaign -- has endured an injury-plagued season for Inter Milan, making just 16 league starts.

09 DAYS TO GO

The Netherlands match with old rivals Germany in Kharkiv on June 13 promises to be the big match in Group B but van Marwijk says his players cannot afford to look beyond their opening game against the Danes four days earlier.

The game against Portugal will also revive memories of "The Battle of Nuremberg" in the 2006 World Cup, which saw an unprecedented 16 yellow cards awarded.

But van Marwijk said: "I only look at the first match. For me the first match is the most important. At the World Cup (in 2010), it was similar: we also played the first match against Denmark (which the Netherlands won 2-0), and now we will again."

"So that will be exactly the same. We just have to win it."

The weight of history is nothing new for the Netherlands, and nor is the burden of expectation.

As ever, the quality in their squad is undeniable but only by prevailing in the final on July 1 can the Dutch emerge from the shadow of their glorious predecessors.

Ribery ready to fire

AFP, Le Touquet

Midfielder Franck Ribery said Monday he felt like a man liberated after scoring his first international goal in three years in France's 3-2 friendly win against Iceland here.

The 29-year-old has been unable to transfer his form with Bundesliga giants Bayern Munich to the national team, but his 85th minute goal on Sunday has rekindled his ambitions ahead of Euro 2012.

"This really lifts me and those close to me," said Ribery, who will be appearing in his fourth major finals.

"It's been three years since I've scored for France. It was becoming difficult to have to justify myself, people were asking questions."

He continued: "Yesterday I was really liberated, very happy, very satisfied. But that doesn't surprise me because what I did yesterday I've done for an entire year with Bayern and couldn't manage to reproduce it with France, I don't know why."

"I hope that this time I'm back on track again."

He explained that part of the problem was that he feels unloved in his native country.

"Recently with the France team I haven't been relaxed, able to let go, always being criticised," said Ribery, who was nevertheless cheered when he replaced Yoan Gourcuff, who was booed off the pitch, in the 75th minute.

"There comes a time when you begin to ask yourself what you should do. It's been a long time since my name has rung out in a French stadium."

"I hope that this is the trigger. When the public calls out my name, that gives me even more confidence to try things, to score, to dribble. These are things that I'd lost. I'm loved at Bayern."

Ribery said he had put the Champions League final defeat on penalties to Chelsea behind him.

"It's better now. It was difficult for three or four days because it was a mad scenario. We had a perfect match, we were at home, we had chances and we didn't score. It's a pity, we deserved this title."



PHOTO: AFP
French star Franck Ribery signs autographs after a training session in Le Touquet-Paris-Plage on Monday.



NEO Cricket

French Open

Second Round

Live from 7:00pm

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Sports News



Bangladesh Premier League

Brothers Union v Sk Russel

Time: 6:00pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium

Team BJMC v Abahani

Time: 4:00pm

Venue: Tangail Stadium

Farashganj v Soccer Club, Feni

Time: 4:15pm