

Spain eye gold

REUTERS, Madrid

In an ominous sign for their rivals for an Olympic soccer medal, Spain's coach Luis Milla says his team at the London Games will be a richly talented and well-drilled outfit with the same roots and playing style as the nation's all-conquering senior side. The Spanish have swept to back-to-back European titles with a first World Cup triumph in between by honing the style of fast-flowing, possession-based football known as "tiki-taka" to something close to perfection.

Many of the young players who will feature for the Iberian nation at the London Games, where Spain will make their first appearance in the football competition in 12 years, are products of the same youth academies that spawned Xavi, Andres Iniesta, Iker Casillas and Fernando Torres.

In an interview with Reuters at the Olympic team's training base outside Madrid on Monday, Milla said he was benefiting from the work done in youth schools from the richest La Liga clubs such as Barcelona and Athletic Bilbao down to those in lower leagues.

"It's our very good fortune that the clubs are doing fantastic work in their academies, from the most modest up to the first division," said Milla, a former Barca and Real Madrid midfielder who led a Spanish side featuring many of the Olympic squad to a

European under-21 title last year.

"We coaches have to adapt to the already established profile of the players and do things in a similar way to the senior side," added the 46-year-old.

"That means understanding the dynamic of the game, trying to impose absolute domination, trying to dominate the ball."

The Olympic squad includes three players - Juan Mata, Javi Martinez and Jordi Alba - who were part of Spain's victorious Euro 2012 campaign in Poland and Ukraine, with Alba, who scored Spain's second goal in a 4-0 thrashing of Italy in the final, a particular revelation.

The 23-year-old has just sealed a move to Barca from Valencia, while Mata, another former Valencia player, won the Champions League with Chelsea last season and Martinez was a losing finalist for Athletic Bilbao in the Europa League.

"They are young but they have been through a lot with their clubs and the senior squad and will bring maturity, energy and experience," Milla said.

"They have been exemplary because they have been able to join the under-21 team and help us become European champions. They are essentially a great example for the youngest players."

The trio are the obvious leaders in a squad that also includes Manchester United goalkeeper David De Gea, Atletico Madrid striker Adrian Lopez and Bilbao pair Iker Muniain and Ander Herrera.



Spain's Olympic team goalkeeper David de Gea makes a save during a training session at the Soccer City area in Las Rozas on Monday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Kagawa heads to Man Utd

AFP, Tokyo

Japanese midfielder Shinji Kagawa on Tuesday left his home country for Britain to join Manchester United, vowing to secure a starting slot when the Premier League season kicks off in August.

"It is a big challenge for me. I have nothing but a positive mind now," the 23-year-old told reporters ahead of his departure on a flight from Osaka in western Japan.

"I want to fight with confidence," he added.

Kagawa, on a four-year deal from German champions Borussia Dortmund, is to attend a team practice and hold a news conference in Britain on Thursday.

Kagawa, having been ruled out of the Olympic football tournament in London, is set to feature in United's pre-season tour of South Africa and China.

"First, I want to display what I have at the training camp and prepare myself so that I can firmly gain a position in time for the opening game," Kagawa said.

The Japanese player's arrival is expected to be a boost for United, who were within minutes of retaining their Premier League title last season until a late winner on the final day for Manchester City in a 3-2 win over Queens Park Rangers saw their cross-town rivals crowned champions instead.

Deschamps signs two year deal

Football

AFP, Paris

France's new coach Didier Deschamps on Monday signed a two year contract with Les Bleus, with an additional two years should he succeed in qualifying the side for the 2014 World Cup in Brazil.

The 43-year-old, who captained France to the 1998 World Cup title and Euro 2000, put pen to paper 24 hours after being named as the successor to Laurent Blanc, who stood down after Euro 2012.

Deschamps, who became the favourite to succeed his fellow World Cup and Euro winning team-mate Blanc when he quit as coach of Marseille last Monday, appeared at a press conference alongside France Football Feder-

ation (FFF) president Noel Le Graet.

"He (Deschamps) will be manager for two years with a further two years if we qualify for the World Cup," confirmed Le Graet.

Elaborating on how the FFF went about getting their man Le Graet said: "Laurent (Blanc) made his decision (to stand down) on the Friday (June 29). I made contact with Didier, and only with Didier, on the Monday - he was the first choice.

"There was no plan B."

Deschamps, who since hanging up his boots has had spells managing Serie A giants Juventus and French outfit Monaco who he guided to the 2004 Champions League final, told the press conference: "The players no longer have the right to make mistakes."

For Deschamps, two of the most important elements he wants to see from his team are "the concept of a group and spirit".



Newly-appointed France coach Didier Deschamps addresses a press conference at the FFF headquarters in Paris on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

Terry won't be branded racist

AFP, London

Former England football captain John Terry said he suffered continual abuse during football matches but was not prepared to put up with being branded a racist, his trial heard Tuesday.

Westminster Magistrates Court in London was played a recording of an interview between Chelsea skipper Terry and an investigator from the Football Association (FA), the sport's governing body in England.

The 31-year-old denies committing a racially aggravated public order offence.

A week after the incident, Terry was called in for an interview with FA investigator Jennifer Kennedy.

"I have been called a lot of things in my football career and off the pitch, but being called a racist I am not prepared to take," the court heard Terry saying on the tape.

"That's why I came out and made my statement immediately.

"I am not having Anton thinking that about me or anyone else.

He told the investigator he was repeating back to Ferdinand what he believed the QPR defender he had said to him.

He said he thought Ferdinand was accusing him of calling him those words.

New deal for Mancini

REUTERS, Manchester



Manchester City manager Roberto Mancini has agreed a new five-year contract with the Premier League champions, the club announced on Monday.

"Manchester City Football Club today are pleased to announce that a new contract has been agreed with manager Roberto Mancini," City said on their website.

"The deal, which runs until the summer of 2017, follows the club's most successful season in more than four decades, which concluded in the most dramatic of circumstances in the team's thrilling 3-2 win over Queens Park Rangers in May this year."

City won the title in the most dramatic circumstances with added-time goals from Edin Dzeko and Sergio Aguero securing a last-gasp victory over Queens Park Rangers in their final game.

Mancini replaced Mark Hughes in December 2009 and led City to FA Cup success in 2011 before last season's title triumph when they lifted their first top-flight crown since 1968.

The 47-year-old Italian's success has been rewarded after a deal was reached following discussions between the parties which began as their triumphant league season ended.

"Manchester City is a fantastic football club, from the owner, chairman, board and the executive team, through to the players, staff and fans," said Mancini. "I am very much looking forward to the challenges and excitement ahead."

"I am delighted to be able to give all of my efforts to Manchester City for a further five years. The opportunity which exists to build on our recent success is enormous," said Mancini.

While City pipped arch rivals Manchester United on goal difference to claim the league title, their first Champions League campaign ended with a group-stage exit.

However, City have tied Mancini to a long-term contract in the hope that he can build on domestic success and deliver a first European trophy since the Cup Winners' Cup triumph of 1970.

Mancini, who played for Bologna, Sampdoria and Lazio as well as representing Italy, has also managed Fiorentina, Lazio and Inter Milan and had recently been linked with the vacant Russia job.

UEFA warns Wilshere

AFP, London

Arsenal midfielder Jack Wilshere has been reprimanded by UEFA after the England star made comments on Twitter that suggested he had bet on a team-mate to score during a Champions League tie.

Wilshere had said on Twitter that Gunners midfielder Emmanuel Frimpong was "worth a cheeky £10" to be the first scorer at long odds in the Champions League match against Olympiacos in December.

The 20-year-old, who didn't play in the clash due to an ankle injury that forced to miss all of last season, then said after Frimpong went close to scoring: "Frimmy nearly won me some money there!"

Wilshere later insisted that he had only been joking, tweeting: "I didn't actually bet on the game. I know we're not allowed to! I was only messing just to be clear."

But UEFA's regulations forbid players from gambling on matches in which their teams are involved and European football's governing body has now given Wilshere an official warning.

A UEFA spokesman said: "The player has been warned for being in breach of the principles of integrity of matches and competitions. The disciplinary measure was a warning."

SPORTS POLL
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Premier Div Hockey
S Bima v Usha KC
Time: 2:30pm
Mariner Youngs v Azad SC
Time: 4:15pm
Venue: Maulana Bhasani National

No room for Carroll

AFP, London



Liverpool manager Brendan Rodgers admits he will consider sending Andy Carroll out on loan next season if he doesn't feel the England striker can fit into his Anfield revolution.

Carroll has endured a disappointing 18-month spell with the Reds since his club record £35 million transfer from Newcastle in January 2011 and recent reports suggest Italian giants AC Milan are interested in signing him on loan.

The 23-year-old made a good impression for England at Euro 2012, scoring in their group match against Sweden, but former Swansea boss Rodgers isn't convinced the burly targetman has the right attributes for the smooth passing style he wants to introduce at Anfield.

"It's something I would have to look at, I have to be honest," Rodgers told the Daily Telegraph.

"I'm not going to sit here and say I will never let anyone go on loan, then come in here in two weeks and a player's gone, and you're saying 'you said you wouldn't let them go'.

"There are many things to going on loan. Is it going to be beneficial for the club, that's the most important thing?"

"Sometimes a player going out on loan - in general, not just Andy - can benefit the club in the long term.

"It gets them game experience, and they come back a better player, a more confident one. Certainly more so than if they've been sitting on the bench for the majority of the season."

Elia joins Bremen

AFP, Berlin

Dutch international midfielder Eljero Elia has signed a four-year deal with Bundesliga club Werder Bremen, his current team Juventus confirmed on Tuesday.

The transfer fee is reported to be in the region of 5.5 million euros with the contract running until June 2016.

"I can't wait to start my first training session today," Elia said on his Twitter account after joining up with his new team in north west Germany on Tuesday.

Elia, 25, returns to the Bundesliga after previously playing with Hamburg from 2009 until transferring to Juventus in November 2011 for nine million euros.

In Turin, the 26-times capped midfielder played just four Serie A matches and one Italian Cup tie.

Elia becomes Werder's fifth recruit for the new season after German striker Nils Petersen, Congolese-German defender Assani Lukimya, Czech defender Theodor Gebre Selassie and German goalkeeper Raphael Wolf.

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