



Olympic Mascots Wenlock and Mandeville are pictured as they welcome athletes at the Heathrow Airport in London yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Puyol back in training

REUTERS, Barcelona

Barcelona defender Carles Puyol has returned to training for the first time since a knee operation in May, the La Liga club said on Monday.

The 34-year-old Spain international had arthroscopic surgery and was ruled out for the final weeks of the season, meaning he missed the nation's triumphant Euro 2012 campaign in Poland and Ukraine.

"The captain trained apart from the rest of the squad in the group's penultimate session before they fly out to Germany on Tuesday for their first pre-season friendly against Hamburg," Barca said in a statement on their website.

"Puyol will undergo further medical tests next Monday, July 30th, to confirm his fitness to return to full training - the same day that the team's Spanish internationals resume training," the statement said.

Puyol's team mate Dani Alves added at a post-training news conference: "I am very happy that Puyol is back, that's he's in good shape and he is recovering."

"I think that with Puyol you don't need to look at his age, because it's irrelevant. For me, he's like a two-year-old kid."

## Spalletti advises Capello on life in Russia

AFP, Moscow

Russia's new national football coach Fabio Capello received advice on life in Russia from compatriot Luciano Spalletti, who coaches Russia's reigning champions Zenit St Petersburg, local media reported Monday.

After Sunday's match at the Petrovsky stadium, which Zenit won 2-0 over the visitors Amkar Perm, Capello visited Zenit's dressing room and had a friendly talk with Spalletti.

"Fabio (Capello) is a great figure and a coach with a tremendous experience," Spalletti was quoted as saying.

"He will never develop his outlook relying only on somebody's opinion as his own experience is the most important thing for him."

"In general only few Italians have a clear view of the situation in Russia. That's why I told Fabio some things about life in Russia. I hope our conversation will be helpful for him."

Spalletti added that he also introduced some of Zenit players to Capello.

"I introduced (Vladimir) Bystrov, who missed Euro 2012 because of an injury and (Alexander) Bukharov, who was also playing for the Russian national squad, to Capello," Spalletti said.

"But first of all he was interested in our video footage. Fabio is also going to travel a lot across Russia watching the league's matches to collect his own impressions about the candidates for the national side."

"I have a similar approach when I start working in a new team. I believe that only what you see with your eyes is really true information."

Russia earlier this month announced it had hired Capello as the new national coach after the squad's bitterly disappointing first round exit from Euro 2012. He is due to sign his contract on Wednesday, officials have said.

## Mata eyeing Olympic gold

AFP, Glasgow

Juan Mata wants Spain to make yet more football history by becoming the first nation to hold the world, European and Olympic titles at the same time with victory at London 2012.

The 24-year-old forward won the World Cup with Spain in 2010 and scored in the final of the European championship in July when they defeated Italy 4-0 in Kiev.

Mata, who also won the FA Cup and Champions League titles this year with English giants Chelsea, is one of three over-aged players in the Spain squad for an Olympic tournament where the bulk of squads must be under 23.

However, he insists neither he nor his compatriots have become jaded by their success.

"It would be amazing to win the Olympic tournament," said Mata on Sunday.

"I have had the opportunity to play in the World Cup and the European Championship and win both."

"Winning a gold medal at the Olympics would complete an amazing summer for me, but also for Spanish football."

"It would be great for us to win a gold medal and that is what we want."

## Rice feels fine

AFP, London

Australia's Stephanie Rice insisted Monday she felt fine after the latest injury scare to dog her build-up to the London Olympic Games.

Rice's recent neck problem came on top of a long-term shoulder injury which has hampered the 24-year-old's chances of defending the 200m and 400m medley relay titles she won in Beijing four years ago.

But Rice, whose shoulder injury requires treatment after every training session, told a news conference Monday: "I feel much better today in terms of the neck."

"We did a time-trial the other day and I pulled my suit off and just kinked it (the neck) a little. It's fine, it wouldn't be a high pressure preparation without something going a bit not to plan but I feel like I'm really capable of handling things like that at the moment."

"It's been a very rough and up and down prep," Rice added. "I'm just so excited to come into this last week before racing and focus on the mental side of things."

"Going into the (athletes') village and seeing the pool for the first time was really exciting."

Rice, who also won a 4x200m freestyle relay gold four years ago, said she felt no special pressure in being a defending Olympic champion.

"My goals are pretty similar to what I had going into Beijing. I'm not someone who likes to consider an end performance as a win or lose sort of situation."

"I never like to talk about winning, it's not just the way I like to think about things."

## PSG hold Chelsea

AFP, New York

Former England captain John Terry received a rousing reception at his first match since his acquittal on racism charges Sunday as European champions Chelsea played to a 1-1 draw with Paris Saint-Germain.

The friendly match between two of the world's richest clubs was played at new Yankee Stadium, the \$1.5 billion ballpark that opened in 2009 as the new home of the storied Major League Baseball Club the New York Yankees.

Both clubs received goals from Brazilians, Chelsea forward Lucas Piazon converting a cross by another Brazilian, Ramires, for the equaliser in the 82nd minute.

Nene had scored a goal off a rebound in the box after 30 minutes to give the lead to a PSG side that dominated the first half.

Terry, captain Premier League giants Chelsea, was given a standing ovation by overwhelmingly pro-Chelsea crowd of 38,000 when he entered the match in the 63rd minute.

Terry was found not guilty of racially abusing rival player Anton Ferdinand at the end of a five-day trial at Westminster Magistrates Court in London on July 13.

In another sub-plot, Carlo Ancelotti, who took over as manager of French club PSG in January, was facing the club that sacked him

in May of 2011.

PSG delivered an energetic first half with a line up that included four pure attackers: Ezequiel Lavezzi, Nene, Kevin Gameiro and Javier Pastore.

In the third minute, a long pass from the right flank found Lavezzi wide open in the box. Chelsea keeper Petr Cech was forced to come off his line to thwart the Argentinian's effort.

Nene combined with Lavezzi for a high shot in the 19th and with his captain, right back Christophe Jallet, who mis-fired eight minutes later.

Nene's outstanding work was rewarded with his goal in the 30th minute. Pastore brought the ball down the left side, eluding three players before firing a shot that bounced off the post and to Nene, who fired into the back of the net from close range.

However, PSG lost their momentum after making eight substitutions to start the second half.

Wholesale second-half substitutions helped Chelsea, however, paying off with the 82nd minute goal from Piazon, who collected a cross from Ramires and slotted the ball inside the left post.

Chelsea continue their North American tour in Philadelphia on Wednesday when they take on the Major League Soccer All-Stars in the US league's annual All Star Game exhibition.

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"For me it's more about the process and I think putting in a good preparation gives you the confidence you need to line-up in a really high-pressure environment."

"My preparation hasn't been spectacular and definitely has been very different to what it was four years ago."

"That said, I've done absolutely everything I possibly could have and that was the feeling I wanted to have standing behind the blocks, just knowing I couldn't have done anything more and I'm really proud of the character I've had to have to get to this point in time."

"So anything beyond making a final is truly a blessing."

## Too much security for their liking

AFP, London

France women's football coach Bruno Bini on Sunday hit out at the security surrounding his team in Glasgow, claiming that fans are being denied the opportunity to see the team train.

The French squad, one of the tournament favourites, arrived in the Scottish city on Friday to be greeted by armed police.

But Bini does not like the lack of privacy for his players or the fact supporters of the French team cannot watch them train, as anyone entering the venue needs to have accreditation.

"I am annoyed by all the security measures, it is a bit too much," he said.

"We don't have any privacy and that is not really acceptable. We have guards with guns walking around the corridor all the time and it is really annoying as we have no privacy for the team."

"For the first time it is not possible for fans to come and see all the training sessions and it is sad that that has happened."

"It is important with football that fans can see teams train."

## Drogba makes instant impact

AFP, Shanghai

Didier Drogba made an instant impact on his debut for Chinese Super League side Shanghai Shenhua on Sunday, setting up his new team's equaliser in a 1-1 draw away to Guangzhou R&F.

The former Chelsea striker started the game on the bench but came on at half time, almost scoring with his first touch of the ball -- an outrageous 40-yard free kick which Guangzhou goalkeeper Cheng Yuelei tipped wide.

Shenhua had struggled in the first half after falling behind to an unfortunate own goal by Brazilian defender Moises on 21 minutes, but the introduction of Drogba instantly transformed the visitors' fortunes.

The game had been one of China's most eagerly awaited this season, with Drogba-fever having swept the Chinese football world.

Former Japan national team coach Philippe Troussier, now managing Chinese second division side Shenzhen Ruby, and Italian World-Cup winning coach Marcello Lippi, manager of Guangzhou Evergrande, were in the stands.

Shenhua have struggled badly this season, winning just four of 17 games, but they played with an increased level of confidence when Drogba, a European Champions



Shanghai Shenhua striker Didier Drogba (2nd from R) celebrates with teammates after he set up the equaliser against Guangzhou R&amp;F in Guangzhou on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

League winner with Chelsea in May, stepped onto the pitch.

In the 52nd minute the Ivory Coast striker headed just over the bar from a cross from winger Feng Renliang, and was at the centre of

every Shenhua move as they tried to get back into the game.

Drogba's biggest contribution came in the 68th minute with an exquisite through ball which found Shanghaiense playmaker Cao Yunding,

who rounded the keeper to equalise.

The match was also notable for being the first time Drogba and Nicolas Anelka -- who were Chelsea team-mates -- have played together at Shenhua.

## Brazil booters to avoid Village

REUTERS, London

Brazil's Olympic soccer squad are opting for a quiet life away from the "temptations" of the Athletes' Village, coach Mano Menezes said on Sunday.

The young squad are under huge pressure back home to win the country's first Olympic soccer gold and Menezes believes they have a better chance of doing that from a secluded hotel in the Hertfordshire countryside outside the capital.

"There are too many temptations here," he said with a smile as he spoke to reporters in the sunshine during a visit to the Village at the Olympic Park.

While players shopped for Olympic souvenirs in the Village megastore, Menezes continued: "Some of the players like Neymar and the others have already been the focus of attention from so many other athletes when we've been here and we have serious work to do at these Games."

Neymar, 20, is the brightest star in the Olympic side, composed mainly of Under-23 players, who have been preparing for the Games at Arsenal's training complex at London Colney just north of the capital.

Brazil face Egypt, Belarus and New Zealand in their opening group and their squad, many of whom should be in the senior team at the World Cup in Brazil in two years' time, are the clear favourites for the gold.

They were impressive in Friday's 2-0 win over Britain in their final warm-up in Middlesbrough on Friday and Menezes added: "We know what we are capable of. Of course we are looking at reaching the semifinals to start with, and then the final, but we have a lot of hard work to do before that."

### SPORTS POLL

#### WEEKLY QUESTION

Did Milan make a mistake by selling Ibrahimovic to PSG or was it smart business?

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Second ODI

Live from 3:00pm

ESPN

Sportscenter India

Sports News

### DAY'S EVENT



### Premier Div Hockey

Azad SC v Police AC

Time: 2:30pm

Mariner Youngs v Sonali Bank

Time: 4:15pm

Venue: Maulana Bhasani