



The closing ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Games on Sunday night was as glitzy as the opening ceremony 16 days ago. Wrapping up all the emotions of joy and sorrow of the previous sixteen days, it was time for the athletes and organisers to celebrate. Some eighty thousand spectators experienced it first-hand from inside London's Olympic Stadium while billions watched it live on television. While the opening reflected on the rich cultural heritage and history of Great Britain, the closing was all about a modern Britain, where pop culture ruled the roost. The participants sang and danced to the tunes of the Spice Girls, The Who, Take That, George Michael and many more British musical icons who are worldwide celebrities as well. And it all culminated in the handing over of the Olympic flag to the Mayor of Rio de Janeiro, where the Games will be staged in four years' time.

PHOTOS: AGENCIES

Jose prefers unique one
AFP, Lisbon

Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho said Tuesday that he would prefer to be known as the "unique one" rather than the "special one" as a result of his achievements.

"I'm the only one to have won the three biggest championships in the world," Mourinho said in an interview on Portuguese television channel Sic.

"So whether it pleases or not, if one recognises my value or not... people should may be call me 'unique' rather than 'special' until someone else wins three championships like me."

It was Mourinho who proclaimed himself to be the "special one" when he was coach of English Premier League side Chelsea from 2004 to 2007.

The Portuguese coach joined Real Madrid in 2010 and won the Primera Liga title in his second season to become one of the few coaches to win titles in four different countries -- Portugal, England, Italy and Spain.

He is also the only coach to have won two Champions League titles with two different clubs -- FC Porto in 2004 and Inter Milan in 2010.

Mourinho coached FC Porto (Portuguese champions 2003, 2004 and Champions League winners 2004), Chelsea (English Premier League title 2005, 2006) and Inter Milan (Serie A champions in 2009, 2010).

The 49-year-old said he felt "an enormous joy at Inter Milan" when they won their titles but insisted that his goals were shifting with age.



STAR Sports
Cincinnati Masters
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Live from 9:30pm
ESPN
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Sports News

Europeans gear up for 2014 World Cup



Football

AFP, Paris

World champions Spain return to action this week in their first match since retaining their European title, as countries gear up for the start of qualifying for the 2014 World Cup.

La Roja, currently number one in the FIFA world rankings, take on Puerto Rico, who are 137 places below them, in Bayamon on Wednesday, with Vicente del Bosque opting to rest Barcelona veterans Xavi Hernandez and Carles Puyol.

Also omitted from the 19-man squad is 23-year-old winger Jordi Alba, who is rested after his inclusion in Spain's Olympic football side.

Spain were in outstanding form when they beat Italy 4-0 in the Euro 2012 final on

July 1 and the Azzurri are looking to pick themselves up from that disappointment with a positive warm-up against England.

The match in the Swiss capital, Bern, is a re-run of the Euro 2012 quarterfinal, which Italy won 4-2 on penalties, but they will be without Manchester City forward Mario Balotelli, who has conjunctivitis.

Balotelli was one of the stars of the tournament in Poland and Ukraine, scoring three times, including twice in the semi-final against Germany. He was also absent from the English champions' 3-2 win over Chelsea in the Community Shield on Sunday.

Roy Hodgson had named a young side for the fixture, leaving John Terry, Wayne Rooney and Steven Gerrard out as they prepare for the start of the Premier League on Saturday.

But the England manager faces an injury dilemma, with Arsenal's Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain (ankle), goalkeeper Joe Hart (back) and Daniel Sturridge (toe) all sidelined.

Elsewhere, beaten Euro 2012 semifinalists Germany play Argentina in Frankfurt, with coach Joachim Loew also choosing to rest key players like Philipp Lahm and Bastian Schweinsteiger.

First-choice goalkeeper Manuel Neuer has also withdrawn after picking up an injury in last weekend's Super Cup, which his side Bayern Munich won 2-1, taking revenge on Borussia Dortmund who last season beat them to the Bundesliga title and German Cup.

Miroslav Klose is the only acknowledged centre-forward, in the absence of Mario Gomez, who is recovering from a heel operation.

For the Argentinians, Benfica's Enzo Perez has been called up to replace injured Newell's Old Boys winger Maxi Rodriguez (knee).

France play Uruguay in the northern city of Le Havre, in Didier Deschamps' first match in charge.

World Cup 1998 winner Deschamps has left out Yann M'Vila and Hatem Ben Arfa because of disciplinary issues at

Euro 2012, while Samir Nasri and Jeremy Menez are serving suspensions for misconduct.

The former Marseille manager has called up Paris Saint-Germain's Christophe Jallet, Real Madrid's Raphael Varane and Etienne Capoue of Toulouse for the first time.

Mapou Yanga-Mbiwa, of Ligue 1 champions Montpellier makes a return but there was no place for

Chelsea midfielder Florent Malouda, Newcastle United midfielder Yohan Cabaye, Valencia's Adil Rami and Philippe Mexes of AC Milan.

In other matches, former England boss Fabio Capello takes charge of Russia for the first time in their game against Ivory Coast in Moscow and has included controversial captain Andrei Arshavin.

Russia crashed out of Euro 2012 at the group stage and Arshavin found himself on the receiving end of a wave of criticism for dismissing the team's below-par performance as a problem for the fans rather than the players.

Another manager returning to international action is Louis van Gaal, who took over from Bert van Marwijk as Dutch coach after the Oranje's disappointing Euro 2012 campaign in which they lost all their matches.

The Dutch play Marc Wilmot's Belgium in Brussels.

World Cup 2014 hosts Brazil, who do not have to qualify, take on Sweden in Solna.

Ibra in doubt for Brazil tie

AFP, Stockholm

Sweden captain Zlatan Ibrahimovic is doubtful for the midweek international friendly against Brazil because of a bruised foot, the Swedish Football Federation (SvFF) said on Tuesday.

The Paris Saint Germain striker "received a kick in the right foot" during Saturday's Ligue 1 opener against Lorient.

Sweden coach Erik Hamren has called up Gothenburg striker Tobias Hysen as a possible replacement.

Meanwhile, Pele and other members of Brazil's 1958 World Cup-winning team are being invited to Stockholm to commemorate their victory against the hosts.

The match on Wednesday will be the last to be staged at the venue before it is demolished, to be replaced by a new 50,000-seat stadium nearby.

The Rasunda Stadium was the centrepiece of the 1958 World Cup finals.

'Devil Beast' Drogba



Football

AFP, Shanghai

Didier Drogba's first month in China is being heralded as an unequivocal success, the powerful Ivory Coast striker earning rave reviews, the moniker "Devil Beast" and being compared to "a nuclear bomb".

The 34-year-old became one of the world's highest-paid players when he swapped European Champions League winners Chelsea for the relative obscurity of the ambitious Shanghai Shenhua, in China's Super League.

Vocal in English football, Drogba has kept a low profile off the pitch since arriving in China to a hero's welcome in mid-July, insisting that his reported 200,000 pounds (\$314,000) a week was not the main motivation.

"China is a big sports country and it is a big challenge," said Drogba on his arrival, fresh from scoring the goal which won Chelsea the Champions League.

"For me it would have been easy to go to another team in Europe but I chose China because of the challenge."

Drogba got off to a flying start at struggling Shenhua -- then 12th in the 16-team Super League -- scoring twice on his home debut in the 5-1 thrashing of longtime rivals Hangzhou Greentown and quickly earning the tag "Devil Beast".

The fanatical home crowd, swelled from the usual 15,000 to 25,000, cheered the veteran's name repeatedly and gave him a rousing cheer as he performed the traditional post-match bow.

Anorthosis kicked out

AFP, Paris

Cypriot side Anorthosis Famagusta have been kicked out of the Europa League after crowd trouble forced their home game against Georgia's Dila Gori to be abandoned, UEFA said on Tuesday.

Anorthosis, 1-0 up going into the third qualifying round second leg, were 3-0 down in the return fixture last Thursday when violence flared, leading to the game being called off and the match declared forfeit.

UEFA said the result stood and Dila Gori will progress to the play-off round and face Portugal's CS Maritimo on August 23.

European football's governing body said that in addition to being expelled from the competition, Anorthosis will have to play their next three UEFA club competition home games behind closed doors and pay a fine of 50,000 euros (£39,000 \$62,000).



Pele (C) poses at the new Friends Arena in Solna near Stockholm during a meeting with former players of the Brazilian and Swedish national teams yesterday.

PHOTO: AGENCIES