

France recall Diaby

REUTERS, Paris

France coach Didier Deschamps on Wednesday recalled midfielder Abou Diaby, who has not played for the national team for over a year, for the 2014 World Cup qualifiers in Finland on September 7 and at home against Belarus four days later.

Injury-prone Diaby last featured with Les Bleus in a friendly against Poland in June last year and missed the European Championship because of a calf injury.

The 26-year-old, regarded for years as one of the best French midfielders, has won 15 caps.

Paris St Germain winger Jeremy Menez returns after he served a one-match ban for insulting the referee in the Euro 2012 quarterfinal defeat to eventual champions Spain.

Deschamps, who replaced Laurent Blanc, in July, left out Newcastle forward Hatem Ben Arfa, who received a warning when he was summoned to a disciplinary hearing along with Menez, Manchester City's Samir Nasri and Stade Rennes' Yann Mvila after the Euros.

Deschamps had been at odds with Ben Arfa when he was his coach at Olympique Marseille.

Nasri is serving a three-match ban for his conduct during Euro 2012, while Mvila, who received a warning at the disciplinary hearing, was not selected.

France have been drawn in qualifying group H, also containing defending cham-

SQUAD

Goalkeepers:
Mickael Landreau (Lille), Hugo Lloris (Olympique Lyon), Steve Mandanda (Olympique Marseille)

Defenders:
Gael Clichy (Manchester City), Patrice Evra (Manchester United), Christophe Jallet (Paris St Germain), Laurent Koscielny (Arsenal), Adil Rami (Valence), Anthony Reveliere (Olympique Lyon), Mamadou Sakho (Paris St Germain), Mapou Yanga-Mbiwa (Montpellier)

Midfielders:
Yohan Cabaye (Newcastle), Etienne Capoue (Toulouse), Abou Diaby (Arsenal), Maxime Gonalons (Olympique Lyon), Blaise Matuidi (Paris St Germain), Rio Mavuba (Lille), Mathieu Valbuena (Olympique Marseille)

Strikers:
Karim Benzema (Real Madrid), Olivier Giroud (Arsenal), Bafetimbi Gomis (Olympique Lyon), Jeremy

Bojan joins Milan

REUTERS, Milan

Bojan Krkic is to be unveiled as AC Milan's latest signing after the Spain international announced his move to fans via his official Facebook page on Tuesday.

Bojan, who had been on loan at AS Roma from Barcelona, said he was ready to play his part under manager Massimiliano Allegri.

"I'm already in Milan, tomorrow I will be presented footballer of AC Milan!", posted the winger, who celebrated his 22nd birthday on Tuesday.

"I'm ready for everything and can not wait to play the first game. Thank you all for the welcome and for the birthday wishes. See you tomorrow, Forza Milan."

His arrival follows on from Tuesday's signing of highly rated France under-21 striker M'Baye Niang from Caen.

Niang's transfer was announced by the club on their website after the 17-year-old passed a medical.

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Udinese defender Amine Benatia (R) and Braga forward Lima challenge for the ball during their Champions League play-off second leg tie at the Friuli Stadium on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Braga stun Udinese Stoke, Fulham crash out

AFP, Paris



Heartbreak befell Udinese in the Champions League play-off round for the second year running after they lost on penalties to Sporting Braga in the second leg of their qualifying tie on Tuesday.

Summer signing Maicosuel was the villain of the piece, his chipped penalty comfortably saved by Braga goalkeeper Beto as the Portuguese side won the shoot-out 5-4 to reach the group phase for the second time.

The game had finished 1-1 after extra time at Udinese's Stadio Friuli, leaving the score 2-2 on aggregate.

It meant that Udinese were eliminated from Europe's premier club competition in the play-off round for the second season in succession, after they were beaten by Arsenal at the same stage of the tournament 12 months ago.

Udinese finished third in Serie A last season but have lost several key players in the summer -- including goalkeeper Samir Handanovic -- and they had an early scare in the ninth minute, when Zeljko Brkic

had to save from Braga forward Lima.

Left wing-back Pablo Armero settled the hosts' nerves in the 25th minute, crashing home a back-post header from Dusan Basta's lofted cross to put Francesco Guidolin's side ahead.

Brkic was called into action on a number of occasions in the second half before the visitors' pressure told in the 72nd minute when Ruben Micael nodded in the equaliser from Mossoro's cross.

It was Micael who dispatched the winning goal in the shoot-out, drilling the ball down the middle of the goal after Brazilian midfielder Maicosuel's attempted Panenka failed to catch out Beto, to the despair of his team-mates.

Meanwhile, Malaga reached the Champions League proper for the first time in their history after drawing 0-0 at Panathinaikos to close out a 2-0 aggregate success.

The Spanish side, who have been plagued by financial problems this summer, will discover their group-stage opponents in Thursday's draw in Monaco.

Elsewhere, an 81st-minute goal from Dieumerici Mbokani set Anderlecht on their way to a 2-0 home win over Cypriots AEK Limassol

that enabled the Belgians to overturn a 2-1 deficit from last week's first leg.

In the night's other second-leg matches, Dinamo Zagreb and Belarusian representatives BATE Barisov also secured their places in the group phase.

The play-off round concludes on Wednesday, when 1967 European champions Celtic will take a

Lisandro out for several weeks

AFP, Lyon

Lyon's Argentine striker Lisandro Lopez has been ruled out for between two and three weeks with a thigh muscle injury, his club announced on Tuesday evening.

The 29-year-old injured himself during Lyon's 1-1 draw at Evian in Ligue 1 on Friday.

Lyon also announced that new recruit Fabian Monzon, another Argentine, will be unavailable for between two and three weeks due to a groin problem.

The 25-year-old left-back joined Lyon from Nice on

Football

AFP, London

Stoke and Fulham were biggest casualties in the League Cup second round on Tuesday as the Premier League clubs slumped to shock defeats against Swindon and Sheffield Wednesday respectively.

Tony Pulis's Stoke had held Arsenal to a 0-0 draw on Sunday, but League One side Swindon, managed by former West Ham striker Paolo Di Canio, upset the odds with a dramatic 4-3 victory after extra time at the Britannia Stadium.

Fulham were the other top-flight side to bow out as Martin Jol's team were beaten 1-0 by Championship club Sheffield Wednesday.

Pulis made six changes from the Arsenal match and one of those switches quickly backfired as a mistake from reserve goalkeeper Thomas Sorensen allowed James Collins to score in the 27th minute.

Collins struck again four minutes before half-time with a header from Raffaele DeVita's cross.

Kenwyne Jones launched Stoke's fightback when he scored in the 63rd minute and Jon Walters came off the bench to force extra-time with an 86th minute equaliser.

Aden Flint put Swindon back in front in the 105th minute and, after Peter Crouch equalised in the 111th minute, Collins capped a rollercoaster clash when he completed his hat-trick

with the winner in the last minute of extra-time.

At Hillsborough, Fulham became the latest victims of Wednesday's revival under boss Dave Jones, who has inspired promotion from League One and an unbeaten start to life in the Championship since taking over in March.

Gary Madine's 50th minute penalty, awarded when Chris Maguire was hacked down by Stephen Kelly, was enough to see off the Cottagers.

Aston Villa, beaten in their opening two Premier League matches, won for the first time under new boss Paul Lambert as goals from Fabian Delph, Chris Herd and Darren Bent secured a 3-0 victory over League One side Tranmere at Villa Park.

Japan striker Tadanari Lee scored his first goal of the season for Southampton as Nigel Adkins' team won 4-1 at Stevenage.

Billy Sharp, Jason Puncheon and Ben Reeves also got on the scoresheet as Saints won for the first time this season.

Swansea maintained their 100 per cent start to the season as Michael Laudrup's side defeated Championship team Barnsley 3-1 at the Liberty Stadium.

South Korea midfielder Ki Sung-Yueng, the club's record signing from Celtic, made his Swansea debut, but it was Danny Graham, after 24 minutes, and Luke Moore, in the 59th and 88th minutes, who got the goals.

Mali striker Modibo Maiga bagged

Bayern snap up Martinez

AFP, Berlin

Spain midfielder Javier Martinez looks set to sign for Bayern Munich on Wednesday after passing the obligatory medical in the Bavarian capital, according to reports in the German media.

The 23-year-old has been a Bayern target for weeks and the Bavarian giants are reported to be set to pay a Bundesliga record fee of 40 million euros (US\$50.2m) for him.

German Sky broadcast images of Martinez, who currently plays for Athletic Bilbao, arriving in Munich at midnight on Tuesday, having trained with his Spanish team earlier that day, with the transfer window set to close on Friday.

The defensive midfielder has made eight appearances for Spain and he came off the bench for Spain briefly at both the 2010 World Cup and Euro 2012.

Bayern have already strengthened their squad this season with midfielder Xherdan Shaqiri arriving from FC Basel, striker Mario Mandzukic from Wolfsburg and Brazilian defender Dante from Moenchengladbach.

Mutu challenges Ibra

AFP, Ajaccio



Adrian Mutu was presented to the media by modest French club Ajaccio on Tuesday and promptly vowed that he would score more goals this season than Paris Saint-Germain superstar Zlatan Ibrahimovic.

Mutu, 33, joined from Italian Serie B side Cesena but counts Chelsea, Juventus, Inter Milan and Fiorentina among his former clubs, and he dismissed suggestions that his career was winding down.

"I'm not in pre-retirement," he protested after arriving at Ajaccio airport.

"What's more, I'm launching a challenge to Zlatan Ibrahimovic -- I'll score more goals than him between now and the end of the season."

Ibrahimovic already has a two-goal head-start on the Romanian and Mutu is likely to have to wait a few weeks to get going, as Ajaccio coach Alex Dupont believes he will not be able to make his debut until the game with Bordeaux on September 22.

Mutu's signing is a real coup for Ajaccio, who narrowly avoided relegation last season and have the third-smallest budget in Ligue 1, but the striker said it was not a haphazard choice.

"They're expecting me in France but I'm coming to Corsica, not France," he said.

"It's the south, a region that suits me and which, in its atmosphere and its culture, resembles Italy."

Ajaccio president Alain Orsoni, meanwhile, said that Mutu was one of the biggest signings in the club's history.

"It's a huge coup for the club and, without any doubt, the biggest player we've had in Corsica since (Netherlands international who starred for Bastia) Johnny Rep in 1978," he said.

Mutu has a reputation as a bad boy, having tested positive for cocaine while at Chelsea in 2004, which earned him a record 17-million-euro (\$21.2 million) fine from world governing body FIFA.

He was also suspended for nine months after testing positive for banned substance sibutramine in 2010, and in August 2011 he was banned for life from the Romanian national team after an unauthorised night out prior to a friendly with San Marino.

On Tuesday, however, he insisted that his hell-raising days were over.

"My past and my reputation? I only want to talk about football," he said.

"I'm married and I'm the father of three children. I think that's an adequate response to my critics."



PHOTO: AFP

Ajaccio's latest recruit Romania striker Adrian Mutu holds his new jersey during a press conference in Ajaccio on Tuesday.