

## Play smarter and simpler

AFP, New York

US coach Jurgen Klinsmann wants his squad to play smarter and simpler after a stinging 2-1 loss at Jamaica on Friday in a 2014 World Cup qualifying match.

It was the first US loss to the "Reggae Boyz" in 19 matches, although the Americans have never won in Jamaica.

"Every time we played simple passing and combined, we created chances," said Klinsmann. "In between those moments we just made things far too complicated."

Tottenham striker Clint Dempsey scored only 36 seconds into the match, the fastest goal in US World Cup qualifying history.

But the Caribbean side answered with goals by Rodolph Austin in the 23rd minute and Luton Shelton in the 62nd.

"A couple of things went wrong," Klinsmann said. "Having that lead maybe gave players the feeling they can play the complicated way. I told them at half-time this is not the way it works. You've got to keep things simple on the field."

"We have to fix it now. We have to fix it back in Columbus and I think it's clear to the players that in certain moments you just need to be a little bit smarter."

The Americans will face Jamaica in a rematch on Tuesday at Columbus, Ohio, in what is now a crucial match to advancing into next year's final round of CONCACAF (North American) regional World Cup qualifying.

## Bellamy still feeling low

AFP, London

Former Liverpool and Manchester City striker Craig Bellamy admits he is suffering the lowest period of his life following the death of his close friend Gary Speed last year.

Speed, who was then in charge of the Wales national team, was found hanged at his home last November at the age of 42.

Bellamy, who played alongside Speed for Newcastle and Wales, has been in emotional turmoil as he tries to come to terms with the loss and that daily struggle has taken its toll on his life, including his marriage.

The 33-year-old, now playing for Championship club Cardiff, revealed he has moved out of the home he shared with wife Claire and their three children.

"Losing my best mate has affected everything. I can't believe how hard it is," Bellamy told the Sunday Mirror.

"He was the best mate I've ever had. It's sad but unfortunately it got to my marriage. I'm here and she's there."

"I don't know if that's it for us. All I know is that my best mate has gone. I'm struggling. I can't lie."

"I can't tell you how hard it is. It's the worst time in my life ever."

Bellamy, who was part of the Great Britain squad at this year's London Olympics, last month joined Cardiff on a two-year deal from Liverpool and played in their opening two Championship matches before being sidelined with a calf



Ivory Coast striker Didier Drogba hurdles a challenge from Senegal's Sadio Mane during their African Nations Cup qualifier in Abidjan on Sunday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Belgium strike gold

REUTERS, Brussels



The players and the coach will not admit it but there is something special about the current Belgian soccer side and they should really be targeting something more than merely qualifying for the 2014 World Cup.

Belgian media and the public are waking up to the fact that they have a potentially golden generation after a dry period of a dozen years without a World Cup or Euro finals presence.

They are, however, hard pressed to explain the abrupt change.

At Belgium's training ground after Friday's opening 2-0 victory over Wales in qualifying Group A, newspaper journalists mostly felt the sudden blossoming of talent was more due to luck than planning, albeit aided by experience gained from playing outside Belgium.

Ten of the 25-strong squad play in the English Premier League, including Manchester City captain Vincent Kompany and Arsenal skipper Thomas Vermaelen. Eden Hazard has already lit up Chelsea since his arrival this season.

Jan Vertonghen and Moussa Dembele are recent arrivals at Tottenham Hotspur and Marouane Fellaini is dictating play for Everton. Outside England, Zenit St Petersburg have just bought midfielder Axel Witsel from Benfica for 40 million euros.

"I'm not sure any of the players from five to 10 years ago would make it into the side today," said one team official. "Today, you've got to be playing for a big foreign club to make the cut."

Comparisons are already being drawn with the Belgian sides of the 1980s, particularly the 1986 team featuring Jan Ceulemans and Enzo Scifo that reached the semi-finals of the World Cup.

"Seven or eight years ago we had no stars. Even compared with the sides of the 80s I think there's more individual talent, with the likes of Hazard, in this team," said Rudy Nuyens, a journalist of top-selling Belgian daily Het Laatste Nieuws, who has been following Belgium since 1986.

"The clubs are working in a much more focused way with youth players, at Anderlecht, at Standard Liege although some of today's group went abroad at early ages," he said.

Hazard joined Lille's youth academy at 14. Vermaelen moved to Ajax Amsterdam at the same age, with Vertonghen following him at 16.

Foreign scouts have certainly been busy checking out Belgian youth in recent months, Chelsea signing a 15-year-old from Anderlecht in June.

Youth is indeed a Belgian asset. The average age of Belgium's starting 11 on Friday was 24. The two subs, Romelu Lukaku and Kevin De Bruyne, are respectively 19 and 21.

However, to suggest that Belgium have suddenly discovered talent is not quite true.

Eight of the 11 starters have 28 caps or more and six began the last bid for World Cup qualification in 2008. What is significant now, as well as the added experience, is that the subs are not just bench warmers.

"You could change, say, five players and you'd not notice the difference in terms of quality," said Nuyens.

Coach Marc Wilmots's challenge is to transform a potential on paper into a winning team, with Croatia a far tougher prospect than Wales as the next opponents on Tuesday.

The squad would normally have had a day off after playing on Friday. Wilmots instead kept the players together for a full 10 days, insisting that they retain their concentration.

"We've done nothing yet. There was no sense of elation among the players. Everyone is focused on the next match against Croatia," he said.

Against Wales, Belgium showed composure and patience lacking in the past when goals did not come.

"Previously I think we would have lost a match like that," said Fellaini, with the team now eyeing a further three points.

Belgium have a recent history of disappointing starts. In their last seven World Cup and Euro qualification campaigns, they have won their first match only once.

The 'Red Devils' last won two in succession in 1996 in qualification for France 1998. They last topped a qualifying group, and were undefeated,

## Old guard still going strong

Football

REUTERS, Cape Town

Didier Drogba and former Chelsea team mate Salomon Kalou were among the goal scorers as the Ivory Coast twice came from behind to beat Senegal 4-2 in an African Nations Cup qualifier in Abidjan on Saturday.

Gervinho and Max Gradel scored the other goals to give the Ivorians a two-goal advantage ahead of next month's return leg in the final round of preliminaries for the 2013 finals in South Africa.

Three-time winners Cameroon, however, face an uphill struggle to avoid missing out on qualification for a second successive tournament after they lost 2-0 to the Cape Verde Islands.

Nigeria, who also missed out last time, are well-placed after drawing 2-2 at Liberia while Sudan completed a thrilling 5-3 win over neighbours Ethiopia.

Emmanuel Adebayor marked his first competitive game for Togo this year with a late equaliser in a 1-1 away draw with 2012 co-hosts Gabon.

Defending champions Zambia, Ghana, Mali and the Central African Republic were also winners in Saturday's final round, first leg games, with five fixtures to be played on Sunday.

Senegal stunned the home crowd by taking a 32nd-minute lead through Dame Ndoye before Kalou equalised soon after halftime.

Papiss Cisse restored Senegal's advantage on the hour mark and the possibility of an upset against Africa's top-ranked team loomed large.

Ivory Coast, however, scored three goals in

20 minutes to turn the match around with Gervinho equalising in the 65th minute, Drogba adding a penalty soon after and Gradel scoring the fourth with five minutes to play.

Drogba also had a late effort disallowed.

Cameroon were without forward Samuel Eto'o, who is refusing to play for his country in protest against the team's management.

They face a tough task in the return leg of their tie after Portuguese-based Helton and Djanini scored in Praia for Cape Verde, who are now poised to qualify for the first time.

Victor Moses was instrumental in Nigeria's away draw in Monrovia, with the visitors' goals coming from Nosa Igiebor and an Ike Uche penalty.

Tunisia are also well set after a 2-2 draw in Sierra Leone.

Adebayor, playing just his third international in more than two years, netted a late equaliser in Libreville to give Togo hope of qualification.

Zambia, who won the last Nations Cup in Equatorial Guinea and Gabon earlier this year, made a winning start to the defence of their crown with captain Chris Katongo scoring the only goal of their qualifier at home to Uganda in Ndola.

Uganda were denied a late equaliser when Zambia goalkeeper Kennedy Mweene made an important save to deny Emmanuel Okwi seven minutes from fulltime.

The Nations Cup is usually held every two years, but is being played in 2013 to accommodate a switch from every even to every odd year.

The 16 finalists from this year's tournament play a two-legged tie against teams who won an earlier round of knockout matches to decide who goes through to the finals to be played in South Africa in January.

## Persie can be United's secret

AFP, London



Ryan Giggs believes Robin van Persie's world-class goalscoring talent will prove the key to Manchester United regaining the Premier League title.

United's reign as English champions was ended in agonising fashion last season as local rivals Manchester City piped them to the title on goal difference on the final day.

But United manager Sir Alex Ferguson reacted to that blow by paying Arsenal £24 million to sign Dutch forward van Persie in a bid to ensure a lack of goals wouldn't be a problem again this season.

Van Persie, who scored 37 goals in all competitions for Arsenal last term, has made a superb start to life with his new club, scoring four times in three appearances, including a hat-trick against Southampton last weekend.

And veteran United midfielder Giggs is convinced van Persie's presence is going to end up being the decisive factor in the title battle.

"We lost it on goal difference, so hopefully the goals that he's bringing, if it does come down to goal difference, then we'll have the upper hand this time," Giggs told Sky Sports News on Sunday.

Giggs also acknowledged that splashing out on the 29-year-old was a necessary departure from Ferguson's transfer policy in recent years, which focused more on investing in the potential of gifted youngsters.

"The goals that he's scored, and his performances in general, it's obvious he's a world-class player," Giggs added. "The manager's policy over the last 10, 15 years is to buy young players and develop them, the likes of Cristiano (Ronaldo), the likes of Wayne (Rooney)."

"But Robin's a readymade world-class star and is proven. I think he's shown that in the first few games and I'm sure there's more to come."

## Germans planning well ahead

AFP, Berlin

Germany may have only just won their first World Cup qualifier, but the German Football Federation (DFB) are already planning their base for Brazil 2014, it was revealed Saturday.

Real Madrid's Mesut Ozil scored twice in Friday's 3-0 win over Faroe Islands in Hanover to start their Group C campaign with three points, but more than 600 days before the World Cup starts, the Germans are planning their Brazil base.

At the end of the year, team manager Oliver Bierhoff will head a DFB delegation to South America to look for their base hotel during the next World Cup which starts on June 12, 2014.

"We will fly at the end of November, start of December, to Brazil. We'll be looking at three different regions: Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Salvador," Bierhoff confirmed to German daily Bild.

The Porto Alegre region in Brazil's south has already been ruled out as it is already regarded by the DFB as being too cold and wet even in summer, with the next World Cup to be held during the southern hemisphere winter.

## DFL planning bullying measures

Football

AGENCIES, Berlin

The German Football League (DFL) is planning new measures to protect footballers from violent fans after Kevin Pezzoni quit Cologne having been repeatedly bullied and threatened by the club's supporters.

"In the first instance, the clubs will gather together all the measures which have been taken against fans and look at what additional steps can help quickly, such as the latest video technology and training of extra enforcement officers," DFL president Reinhard Rauball told German magazine Focus.

"In future we will not tolerate expressions of violence and threats."

Pezzoni, 23, had his Cologne contract cancelled by mutual consent ten days ago after being threatened with violence outside his home by a menacing group of supporters.

He later claimed second division Cologne did not do enough to protect him from the malicious fans, who had also left notes on his car threatening him with violence.

"I never wanted to cancel my contract. A proposal was put forward to me by the club," said Pezzoni who said he had no choice but to accept the termination of his contract by

mutual consent.

"What else could I have expected? My situation was not going to get any better," he added.

"Who knows if after the next bad game these guys would have suddenly appeared in my apartment rather than just outside it."

"A club is supposed to protect its players and supporters, but this was not the case."

Having joined Cologne in 2008 from Blackburn Rovers, Pezzoni, who had his nose broken by a fan in February while celebrating in the city, told club coach Holger Stanislawski he no longer felt safe playing for the team.

Pezzoni's plight has sent shockwaves through Germany's footballing community with national coach Joachim Loew having insisted the situation is "unacceptable".

Social media website Facebook was used in the threats against Pezzoni with German football officials and players complaining bullying and even death threats have increased significantly through the Internet, report Focus.

"With regards to social media networks, the authorities have to pay closer attention," said Ulf Baranowsky, head of Germany's professional footballers union.

"There must be more to filter what is allowed and what amounts to criminal



Swedish striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic is honoured with his own star in the Walk of Fame of Sports in Malmo on Sunday.

PHOTO: REUTERS



### TEN Sports

US Open

Men's Singles Final

Live from 2:00am (Tuesday)

ESPN

Sportscenter India

Sports News

Live at 8:30pm

STAR Cricket

England v South Africa

Second T20I

Live from 11:30pm

TEN Cricket

Australia v Pakistan

Third T20I