

Roma get Totti boost

AFP, Milan

Roma have been given a boost ahead of their Serie A home match against Bologna after playmaker Francesco Totti came through training unscathed on Friday.

Totti limped out of training session Thursday after suffering an ankle knock.

But the club's official site said the 35-year-old took part in the first of two sessions Friday to give fans of the Giallorossi a boost ahead of Sunday's fixture at the Olympic stadium.

Already Roma's all-time leading goalscorer, Rome-born Totti is the fifth-ranked scorer in Serie A history with 215 goals to date.

However it has been Totti's role in the number 10 shirt that has won him most praise so far this season after he provided both assists for goals scored by Alessandro Florenzi and Pablo Osvaldo in a 3-1 away win at Inter Milan.

Osvaldo, the scorer of two goals in two games, left Friday's session early because of a twisted knee but was suspended for this weekend's match anyway.

Although Zdenek Zeman's side are not considered title contenders in Serie A, their display against Inter at the San Siro two weeks ago suggested they could be one of the surprise packages this season.

After two league games Roma sit fifth on four points having drawn at home to Catania on the opening day of the season.

Redknapp's England job relief

AFP, London

Former Tottenham Hotspur coach Harry Redknapp says that being overlooked for the England manager's job came as something of a relief.

Redknapp, 65, appeared to be the people's favourite to take over from Fabio Capello when the Italian resigned over the decision to strip John Terry of the England captaincy after he was accused of racially abusing QPR's Anton Ferdinand.

But in the end the English Football Association handed the job -- considered by many in the game as something of a poisoned chalice -- to Roy Hodgson, and Redknapp has revealed he was "quite relieved".

He told Saturday's Daily Mail: "I was enjoying my life at Tottenham and I did wonder how I would cope, if it happened, with what is part-time football. I do enjoy seeing footballers every day, being on the training ground."

"I was driving when I heard on the radio that Roy had got the job. It happened out of the blue. But I didn't lose any sleep over it that night."

"I was almost quite relieved in a way -- that I hadn't been given a decision to make. The decision had been taken away from me."

Although the FA have insisted Hodgson was always their first choice, Redknapp hinted that contractual problems with his then club Tottenham may have played a part in him being overlooked.

He said: "When I look back, I think it was always going to be a problem for me."

"I mean, I have to be careful what I say here, but I had a contract that was very heavily loaded, that anyone who wanted to take me, we're talking massive money in compensation."

Redknapp parted company with Tottenham in June after falling out with chairman Daniel Levy, despite having led the club to fourth place in the Premier League and been cleared of charges of tax evasion.

Last week, Redknapp made a surprise return to the game after accepting an advisory role at League One (third-tier) club Bournemouth, where he began his long managerial



Arsenal striker Lukas Podolski (2nd from L) looks on as Southampton defender Joe Hooiveld (R) scores an own goal during their Premier League encounter at the Emirates Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Six-shooter Gunners Jose plays down row

AFP, London



Manchester United veteran Paul Scholes marked his 700th appearance for the club with a goal in a 4-0 Premier League win over Wigan on Saturday as champions Manchester City were held to a 1-1 draw by Stoke.

Elsewhere, Arsenal thrashed bottom of the table Southampton 6-1 to leave the newly promoted Saints still searching for their first points of the season.

At Old Trafford, Scholes got the ball rolling for United before two debutants in Alex Buttner and Nick Powell completed the scoring.

United missed the chance to take an early lead when Wigan's Ali Al Habsi saved Javier Hernandez's weak penalty.

It was a controversial spot-kick, won after Danny Welbeck dived in the box.

But after half-time Al Habsi could only weakly palm away Nani's cross, allowing Scholes to score his 163rd goal for United.

Hernandez then atoned for his spot-kick error by making it 2-0 after good work by veteran midfielder Ryan Giggs, playing his 600th Premier League game.

Dutch left-back Buttner, a recent signing from Vitesse Arnhem, then scored a superb solo goal, beating three men down the left before a shot from a tight angle went in off Al Habsi.

And eight minutes from time, midfielder Powell made it 4-0.

At the Britannia Stadium, England striker Peter Crouch gave Stoke a 15th minute lead when he bundled the ball in from close range.

But City, who've already had to come from behind to preserve their unbeaten start to the season, were level 10 minutes before half time when new signing Javi Garcia scored on his debut after heading in Carlos Tevez's free-kick.

Stoke defender Ryan Shawcross's goal-line clearance late

on ensured a point for the Potters.

Arsenal struck in the 11th minute at the Emirates when Keiran Gibbs's cross was turned in to his own net by Southampton defender Jos Hooiveld.

Lukas Podolski then made it 2-0, just after the half hour mark, when he swung in a 25-yard free-kick over the wall.

Gervinho added Arsenal's third 10 minutes before half-time before another Gibbs-inspired own-goal, this time by Nathaniel Clyne, made it 4-0.

There was still time in the half for Saints to get on the scoresheet when Arsenal goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny dropped a cross and Danny Fox smashed in the loose ball.

But Gervinho restored Arsenal's four-goal lead in the 71st minute when he tapped in from close range after substitute Aaron Ramsey's cross hit the post.

And, two minutes from time, Theo Walcott scored against his old club to make it 6-1.

At Loftus Road, there was no pre-match handshake from Anton Ferdinand and Chelsea captain John Terry.

The match was the first between the clubs since Chelsea and England defender Terry was found not guilty of using a racial slur against the Hoops' Ferdinand in the corresponding fixture last October.

Terry is still the subject of a Football Association investigation over charges he has always denied.

The match ended goalless, with QPR duo Park Ji-Sung and Bobby Zamora both failing to make the most of good chances.

Aston Villa won their first league match under new manager Paul Lambert as they ended Swansea's unbeaten start to the season with a 2-0 home win.

Matthew Lowton gave Aston Villa a 16th-minute lead with a 20-yard volley before Christian Benteke's goal two minutes from time secured victory.

RESULTS

Arsenal 6 (Hooiveld 11-og, Podolski 31, Gervinho 35, 71, Clyne 37-og, Walcott 88) Southampton 1 (Fox 45)

Aston Villa 2 (Lowton 16, Benteke 88) Swansea 0

Fulham 3 (Berbatov 32, 45-pen, Sidwell 89) West Brom 0

Manchester Utd 4 (Scholes 51, Hernandez 63, Buttner 66, Powell 82) Wigan 0

Norwich 0 West Ham 0
QPR 0 Chelsea 0
Stoke 1 (Crouch 15) Manchester

REUTERS, Madrid



LFP

Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho has sought to play down Cristiano Ronaldo's revelation two weeks ago that he was feeling "sad" at the club.

"If he is sad and he plays like he plays then that's perfect for me, he can carry on doing the same," Mourinho told a news conference on Friday when asked about his Portuguese compatriot's comments.

"I am a soccer coach and my responsibilities are the results and for that reason when the results are not good you kill me," Mourinho added as Real prepare for Saturday's La Liga match at Sevilla. "That's what I need to focus on."

Ronaldo dropped his bombshell to reporters after Real's 3-0 win at home to Granada, prompting speculation he was unhappy with his salary and might be seeking an exit from the club that made him the world's most expensive player when they bought him from Manchester United three years ago.

The 27-year-old, who media reports say earns 11 million euros (\$14.20 million) a season, had refused to celebrate his two goals in the La Liga victory.

He would not elaborate on the reasons for his sadness, saying only that "those who worked in the club" knew why. He later denied it was a money issue.

Fiercely pro-Real sports daily Marca

reported on Tuesday he had demanded a contract extension and a hike in wages to a post-tax 15 million euros.

Mourinho, who has the same agent as Ronaldo, said he was not bothered by the player's remarks even though they came at a time when he has expressed dissatisfaction with his team.

Real dropped five points in their opening three league outings, including a shock 2-1 defeat at Getafe when they let slip a halftime lead.

"Cristiano is working at his top level, he is playing at his top level," Mourinho said.

"Some days better and some days worse, obviously he can't score in every game or be decisive in every game. He is always a team player, a player who in terms of training and discipline is absolutely exemplary."

"I don't have to worry about things that for me are supplementary and not fundamental."

Mourinho urged the media and the public to let the matter drop and judge Ronaldo by his performances on the pitch.

"Now give Cristiano what he needs, which is peace and quiet and to play football, which is what he knows best and what he likes best," he said.

"We should all evaluate his performance on the pitch and nothing more. Tomorrow in the 80th minute, the 75th minute, he has played a horrible game, he's not in good shape, he's tired, off, another player on."

"That's how we have to judge people, especially those we don't know."

PSG warm up well

AFP, Paris



Paris Saint Germain warmed up for the opening of their Champions League campaign with a 2-0 win over Toulouse on Friday, the big-spending team's first home victory of the season.

Argentine star Javier Pastore and Swedish international striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic, with his fifth of the season, were on target for PSG who moved into third place in Ligue 1 with nine points.

Defending champions Montpellier, who face Arsenal in their European opener next Tuesday, slumped to their third defeat in five games when they lost 3-1 at Reims.

Pastore opened the scoring for PSG after 38 minutes.

He was put through by a clever ball from Marco Verratti, who had only just been booked, with the Argentine star chipping the ball over Ali Ahamada in the Toulouse goal.

PSG, who welcome Dynamo Kiev in the Champions League on Tuesday, made sure of the points in the 69th minute when Pastore released Jeremy Menez who crossed for Ibrahimovic to beat Ahamada at the far post.

PSG are three points behind leaders Marseille, who will be seeking a fifth win in five games when they go to Nancy on Sunday.

"It was a difficult match, the first after the international break, so it was important to win," said Ibrahimovic.

"I felt a little tired tonight. I played 90 minutes on Tuesday and 90 again tonight. For my goal, it was a fantastic pass from Menez -- I just put the ball in the net."

Reims went ahead at home to Montpellier in the 38th minute when Brazilian import Diego grabbed his first goal for the club.

Remy Cabella equalised in the 55th minute, just seconds after coming on a substitute, beating goalkeeper Kossi Agassa who got a touch to the ball but could not keep it out.

Reims were back in front in the 78th minute thanks to a superb individual goal from Christopher Glombard who skipped through two challenges before slotting the ball over goalkeeper Geoffrey Jourden.

Gaetan Courtet hit the third for Reims, four minutes from time.

Slovak stars punished for partying

AFP, Bratislava

Four Slovakia stars have been punished for partying before their nation's World Cup qualifier against Liechtenstein, local media reported Friday.

Midfielders Marek Hamsik and Karim Guede, plus wingers Vladimir Weiss and Miroslav Stoch breached their squad's strict rules and went to a Bratislava disco last Saturday when they should have been resting a day after Slovakia's 1-1 away draw with Lithuania.

Joint coaches Stanislav Griga and Michal Hipp punished them with a salary cut and the four will also have to play for free in the eight remaining qualifiers, the Slovak tabloid Novy Cas said.

The stalwart players' night out did not leave Slovakia with red faces, however, as they beat minnows Liechtenstein 2-0.

The quartet are among the biggest names in Slovakia's squad, and all ply their trade



Paris Saint-Germain star Zlatan Ibrahimovic (R) goes airborne to control the ball next to Toulouse defender Serge Aurier during their League One clash at the Parc des Princes Stadium on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

Conte ban extended worldwide

AFP, Zurich

Juventus coach Antonio Conte had his 10-month corruption ban extended worldwide by FIFA on Friday.

Conte was suspended by the Italian authorities after being accused of failing to disclose knowledge of match-fixing during his time at Siena in the 2010-11 season.

"This suspension covers all types of matches, including domestic, international, friendlies and official," said a FIFA statement.

FIFA's ban comes just five days before Juventus open their Champions League campaign against Chelsea in London.



ESPN

English Premiership
Reading v Tottenham
Live from 9:00pm

Serie A

Torino v Inter Milan
Live from 12:40am (Monday)

STAR Sports

MotoGP World Championship
San Marino & Rimini's Coast GP
Live from 3:00pm

Primera Liga

Granada v Deportivo
Live from 8:00pm

Real Sociedad v Real Zaragoza