

Roy not happy

REUTERS, London

England manager Roy Hodgson has reluctantly accepted John Terry's retirement from internationals but said he was disappointed in the defender's decision.

Terry, who is due before a Football Association tribunal on Monday facing a charge of racially abusing Queens Park Rangers defender Anton Ferdinand, announced on Sunday he was quitting international soccer.

The former England captain, capped 78 times in an international career stretching back to 2003, said the impending case against him had made his position in the national team untenable as he was cleared in the criminal trial over the affair.

"I'd like to thank John Terry for his commitment to the England team since I became manager," Hodgson said in an FA statement.

"I am of course disappointed to lose a player of John's international experience and exceptional ability.

"I have enjoyed a good relationship with John during my time as England manager and I reluctantly accept his decision.

"I can also confirm that he had the courtesy to call me prior to announcing his retirement from the England team. I'd like to wish John well for the future with Chelsea."

Terry hangs up his Eng boots



AFP, London

Former England captain John Terry dramatically quit international football on Sunday, fewer than 24 hours before a Football Association hearing into allegations he racially abused Queens Park Rangers' Anton Ferdinand.

Chelsea skipper Terry, 31, said the FA had made his position "untenable" after he had already been cleared of criminal charges emanating from the controversy which rocked the game last October.

"I am today announcing my retirement from international football," Terry said in a statement.

"I would like to thank the England managers who have selected me for my 78 caps. I have had great pleasure in sharing that honour with all the players that I've played with.

"I would like to thank them, the fans and my family for their support and encouragement during my international career.

"Representing and captaining my country is what I dreamed of as a boy and it has been a truly great honour. I have always given my all and it breaks my heart to make this decision," added Terry who made his England debut in 2003.

"I want to wish Roy (Hodgson, the England manager) and the team every success for the future.

"I am making this statement today in advance of the hearing of the FA disciplinary charge because I feel the FA, in pursuing charges against me where I have already been cleared in a court of law, have made my position with the national team untenable.

"I now look forward to playing for Chelsea FC, and challenging for domestic and European honours, and I want to thank the fans and the club for their continued support."

Central defender Terry has always denied using a racist slur against Ferdinand during a Premier League match last October and was cleared of criminal charges relating to the incident by a London court in July.

The criminal action had to prove Terry's guilt beyond reasonable doubt but the judge ruled the prosecution had not proved their case to that standard.

An FA panel is set to consider the claims resulting from the match but has a lower burden of proof based on the balance of probabilities.

Terry was stripped of the England captaincy as a result of the allegations and there was further controversy when he was included in Hodgson's squad for this year's European Championships while long-term England central defensive colleague Rio Ferdinand, Anton's older brother, was left out.

The announcement of Terry's international retirement is not expected to delay or halt the FA hearing.

Hodgson had repeatedly made it clear he wanted Terry in his squad as England try to qualify for the 2014 World Cup in Brazil.

But had Terry still been available for international football and been found guilty of the FA charge, officials would have come under pressure to drop Terry from England duty as a result.

Now, whatever the FA decide, it is Terry himself who has called time on his nine-year international career.



Years	Team	Apps	Goals
2000-2002	England U21	9	1

Chelsea learn Club WC fate

AFP, Paris

Chelsea will play either the winners of the Asian Champions League or Mexican side Monterrey in the semifinals of December's Club World Cup in Japan, after the draw for the tournament was made by FIFA on Monday.

The identity of the team representing Asia in the annual intercontinental competition will be known until the final of the Asian Champions League on November 10.

The other quarterfinal will be contested by the champions of Africa and the winners of a play-off between Oceania champions Auckland City of New Zealand and the winners of Japan's national football championship.

The victors of that encounter will tackle South American champions Corinthians in the other semifinal.

Chelsea qualified for the tournament by beating Bayern Munich on penalties in May's UEFA Champions League final and Roberto di Matteo's side will be seeking to succeed Barcelona as World Club champions.

Ba 'top drawer'

AFP, Newcastle

Demba Ba was described as "top drawer" by Newcastle manager Alan Pardew after the Senegalese striker grabbed the only goal of the game to beat Norwich 1-0.

Ba had come off the bench on Monday night to score both goals in his team's 2-2 draw at Everton, but had since been embroiled in a row with the club after his agent suggested the player should be a regular starter.

Pardew has put that down to a misunderstanding, but insists that it is impossible to guarantee a starting place for every player in a season where Newcastle are also involved in the Europa League.

"There is no way that Demba can play every game this season. He is going to miss some other games - so will Shola Ameobi and so will Papiss Cisse," said Pardew.

"The best thing we can do is try to play the best players we have and get a win, and Demba led from start to finish today. Not just his goal - in the dressing room, everything about him was top drawer."

Ba, who has a £7.5 million release-clause in his current contract, has apologised to Pardew for the furore and the manager is happy to try to put the incident behind him.

"There has just been so much nonsense written about it. His agent sent me an e-mail saying he was misquoted, and I actually believe him," said the Newcastle manager.

"I am not usually one to believe agents that much, but I do believe him on this occasion, and I also think Demba's anger has been generated in the right way - to improve for Newcastle United."



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Serie A

Fiorentina v Juventus

Real match sabotaged

AFP, Madrid



Real Madrid's La Liga match at Rayo Vallecano was postponed on Sunday after vandals reportedly sabotaged the floodlights by cutting through electrical cables.

"Vandals have cut cables, we tried to solve the problem. We will leave it to the police to find out who is responsible," said Rayo's president Raul Martin Presa.

"This was a disgrace, sabotage, it was an attack on our stadium."

It was later agreed by both clubs that the game would be played at 1945 local time (1745 GMT) yesterday.

"It is agreed by both parties that the match will kick-off at 1945 on Monday," said Javier Thebes, the vice-president of the Spanish Professional Football League (LFP).

Fans were not allowed into Vallecano's Estadio de Vallecas ground for security reasons for a match which had been due to start at 2130 local time (1930 GMT).

Real were desperate for a win in the match having made a dismal start to the season to languish 11 points behind leaders Barcelona after just one win in four games.

Local politician Cristina Cifuentes said an investigation will be opened to discover the full reason why the floodlights failed at the Vallecano ground in the south-eastern suburbs of Madrid.

"We cannot jump to conclusions but we need to find the culprits if indeed this was a case of sabotage," she said.

Some reports suggested that fans were angry over ticket prices for the high-profile match being held.

The president of the Madrid football federation Vicente Temprado was worried about the damage the incident will have on the image of the game in Spain, the home of the world and European champions.

"This is very negative for football in our country that a game which was to be beamed around the world has not gone ahead -- whether it is due to sabotage and a lack of security or not," he said.

Sources from television channel Canal Plus say cables were cut and the floodlight failure was not due to heavy rain in the area.

In matches that did take place, Malaga maintained their unbeaten start to the season as they hung on for a 0-0 draw against a much-improved Athletic Bilbao, who dominated the encounter.

Manuel Pellegrini's side have started the season brightly with three wins but were pegged back by an Athletic side who produced some of their best football of the campaign so far but they crucially lacked an end product.

Mallorca and Atletico Madrid maintained their strong starts with 2-0 and 2-1 victories over Valencia and Valladolid respectively, while Levante beat Real Sociedad 2-1.

Villas-Boas hails Defoe

AFP, London

Andre Villas-Boas revelled in his first home win as Tottenham manager, but was quick to praise the goal-scoring knack and consistency of England striker Jermain Defoe.

Spurs came back from a goal down to defeat London rivals Queen's Park Rangers 2-1 at White Hart Lane through an Alejandro Faurin own-goal and a Defoe strike from close-range.

"Defoe is performing at the top level," Villas-Boas said of a player whose future at the club has been a source of constant speculation.

"He has had his opportunities this season and he is taking them tremendously.

"This summer I had conversations with him and his agent and told them that I am a person who respects people who are performing well and he deserved a lot of credit for the goals he scored last season.

"This season he is facing tough competition from Emmanuel Adebayor and Clint Dempsey, but he keeps on performing. The competition is making him tick."

Milan keep losing

AFP, Milan



Massimiliano Allegri's tenure as coach of Serie A giants AC Milan came under fresh scrutiny when the Rossoneri suffered their third defeat of the season in a 2-1 reverse away to Udinese on Sunday.

Milan opened their campaign with defeat at home to Sampdoria and have failed to win or score any goals at the San Siro in three attempts including the scoreless draw against Champions League opponents Anderlecht.

Reports last week suggested only a win on Sunday would save Allegri's job, but post-match reports citing unnamed sources at Milan suggested the 45-year-old had the support of the club.

Udinese started the day fourth from bottom and took a 40th minute lead when giant Swedish striker Mathias Ranegie rose to send a header under the crossbar of 'keeper Christian Abbiati.

Italy under-21 international Stephan El Sharaway levelled for Milan 10 minutes after the restart with a shot from outside the box.

But from then on, things got worse for the seven-time European champions.

Milan's Colombian defender Cristian Zapata was sent off for a second bookable offence after a foul from behind on Ranegie in the box.

The referee pointed to the spot and striker

Antonio Di Natale stepped up to beat Abbiati with a low drive to put the hosts in the lead.

Milan's hopes of levelling suffered a blow seven minutes from time when they were reduced to nine players after Kevin Prince Boateng was sent off for a second bookable offence.

A day after champions Juventus underlined their title credentials in emphatic style with a 2-0 home win over Chievo, it was a disastrous day all round for the Milan giants.

Inter Milan started the day six points behind Juve and finished it with the same deficit after suffering a shock 2-0 defeat at home to basement side Siena.

Simone Vergassola silenced the San Siro with his 73rd minute opener and midfielder Francesco Valiani came off the bench to inflict further damage with a goal on the stroke of full-time.

Inter's second defeat at home, following a 3-1 reverse to Roma, could prompt suggestions there is a curse at the San Siro: so far this season, neither Inter nor AC Milan have won there.

While Inter sit in sixth, AC Milan are 15th in the table ahead of the late match between Lazio and Genoa.

Elsewhere, Sunday struggling Pescara grabbed a share of the points, their first this season, in a 1-1 draw at Bologna while Atalanta beat Palermo 1-0 at home to leave the Sicilians second from bottom.

RESULTS

Real Mallorca 2 (Victor 8, Arizmendi 55) Valencia 0
Levante 2 (Barkero 70-pen, Martins 86) Real Sociedad 1 (Zurutuza 23)
Atletico Madrid 2 (Godin 31, Falcao 45-pen) Valladolid 1 (Bueno 55)
Athletic Bilbao 0 Malaga 0
Rayo Vallecano v Real Madrid -

RESULTS

Sampdoria 1 (Pozzi 84-pen) Torino 1 (Bianchi 69-pen)
Udinese 2 (Ranegie 40, Di Natale 68-pen) AC Milan 1 (El Shaarawy 54)
Catania 0 Napoli 0
Atalanta 1 (Raimondi 88) Palermo 0
Bologna 1 (Gilardino 9) Pescara 1 (Quintero 41)
Inter Milan 0 Siena 2 (Vergassola 72, Valiani 90+2)
Lazio 0 Genoa 1 (Borriello 79)



General view of the Vallecas Stadium after the Primera Liga match between Rayo Vallecano and Real Madrid was postponed on Sunday after the floodlights failed amid reports of electrical cables being cut.

PHOTO: AFP

'Hulk no Messi'



AFP, Moscow

Zenit Saint Petersburg midfielder Igor Denisov has branded new signing Hulk a second-rate star after being demoted from the first team for speaking out about the Brazilian striker's lucrative contract.

"I would understand if we got (Argentine superstar Lionel) Messi or (Spanish midfielder Andres) Iniesta -- they probably deserve any price," said Russian captain Denisov.

"Yes, we bought some good players who will clearly help Zenit. But are they really so much better than the current team leaders that they deserve to get three times more?" the 28-year-old midfielder asked.

"Zenit have assembled some great players who have won at least as many titles as the new guys."

Denisov and leading league scorer Alexander Kerzhakov were both dropped to the youth squad on Sunday after voicing displeasure at the 100-million-euro (\$129 million) transfers from the Portuguese league of Hulk and Belgian midfielder Axel Witsel.

Hulk reportedly signed a 6.5-million-euro annual contract after joining from Porto, while former Benfica midfielder Witsel was

awarded just under half that amount.

The two players were purchased by Zenit's wealthy team sponsors Gazprom in early September after a disappointing start to the season that has seen the Russian champions squander their lead at the top of the league and drop to fourth.

The new signings represent direct competition for Denisov and Kerzhakov.

But their case has reportedly also been taken up by other Russian players, including figures as influential as Zenit goalkeeper Vyacheslav Malafeyev and veteran Vladimir Bystrov.

The club issued a statement late on Sunday calling Denisov's behaviour "unprofessional" and noting that he still had three more years left on a contract that made him one of the highest-paid players in Russia.

"He is discrediting himself as a player for club and country while doing serious damage to his own reputation," Zenit said in a blistering statement.

For its part, Gazprom said it would not be taking sides in the dispute despite Denisov's criticisms of the club's recruitment strategy.

"These are issues for the club to deal with," said official spokesman Sergei Kuprianov.

Denisov insisted he held the good of the team close to his heart.