

## Italy recall Balotelli

AFP, Milan

Italy coach Cesare Prandelli has named Manchester City striker Mario Balotelli in a reinvigorated 27-man squad unveiled on Sunday for upcoming World Cup qualifiers against Armenia and Denmark.

Beaten Euro 2012 finalists Italy were lucky to escape with a draw from their opening fixture in Bulgaria in early September before defeating Malta 2-0 in an unconvincing display in Modena four days later.

Italy may sit top of Group B, thanks to superior goal difference compared to Bulgaria, but Prandelli will be looking for better displays when they host Armenia on October 12 and travel to Denmark four days later.

As well as Balotelli, who was sidelined from the earlier World Cup qualifiers because of an eye problem, the Azzurri coach has called up several players who have been absent from the national team in recent years.

Zenit Saint Petersburg defender Domenico Criscito returns only months after pulling out of the Euro 2012 squad after his name cropped up in a match-fixing scandal, in which he was later cleared.



Inter Milan defender Walter Samuel (L) scores the all-important goal of the Milan derby during their Serie A encounter against Milan at San Siro on Sunday

PHOTO: AFP

## Alan accuses Van Persie

AFP, Newcastle

Robin van Persie was accused of elbowing Yohan Cabaye as Manchester United climbed to second place in the Premier League after a bad-tempered 3-0 victory at Newcastle.

The Football Association will await referee Howard Webb's report before deciding whether to take any action following the alleged incident, which occurred late on in a comfortable win for Sir Alex Ferguson's side on Sunday.

Newcastle manager Alan Pardew urged the FA to scrutinise the actions of Manchester United forward van Persie, who has history with the Tyneside club following an angry confrontation with goalkeeper Tim Krul last season when he was playing for Arsenal.

The sanction for violent conduct, should it be proved in this case, is normally a three-game ban.

Should Webb reveal he saw the coming together with France international Cabaye and decided to take no action, that is likely to be the end of the matter.

## Marseille hold PSG

AFP, Paris



Andre-Pierre Gignac matched Zlatan Ibrahimovic goal for goal to earn Marseille a 2-2 draw at home to Paris Saint-Germain on Sunday and keep OM three points clear of their arch rivals at the top of Ligue 1.

All the goals came in the first half at Stade Velodrome, with Gignac scoring either side of a stunning quick-fire double from Ibrahimovic, whose eye-catching contribution masked a listless performance from his side.

PSG remain unbeaten in the French top flight this season, but Marseille showed enough to suggest that their storming start to the campaign is not about to fizzle out.

Having seen their perfect Ligue 1 record destroyed by a 4-1 defeat at Valenciennes last weekend, Marseille righted the ship by thrashing AEL Limassol 5-1 in the Europa League on Thursday, and they began in positive fashion against PSG.

Gignac fired over after deftly eluding Thiago Silva in the fourth minute but 13 minutes later he found the target, wriggling away from Christophe Jallet and planting a low drive into the bottom-left corner.

PSG's lethargy

evoked unwelcome reminders of their 3-0 capitulation at the Velodrome last season, but they were quickly shaken out of their slumber by the brilliant Ibrahimovic, who took his tally for the season to nine league goals.

The giant Swede scored twice in the space of two minutes to turn the game in PSG's favour, equalising with an audacious volleyed back-heel from Maxwell's corner in the 23rd minute and then ripping a ferocious free-kick past Steve Mandanda from 25 yards.

Ibrahimovic's breath-taking intervention was a stark reminder to OM of the new financial dimension in which their foes now operate, but Gignac headed home his second from a Mathieu Valbuena corner to ensure parity at half-time.

Temper flared at the interval, with Morgan Amalfitano fortunate to escape sanction for a slap on Blaise Matuidi, while PSG coach Carlo Ancelotti opted to introduce Kevin Gameiro in place of the disappointing Javier Pastore.

Gameiro and Andre Ayew spurned chances at either end early in the second period, but the game dipped in intensity thereafter as both sides seemed to settle for a point.

Earlier, Lyon were held to a 1-1 draw at Lorient in an open and entertaining game at Stade du Moustoir that left Remi Garde's side in third place.

## Samuel the difference

REUTERS, Milan



Inter stuck in the third minute with a Walter Samuel header and hung on despite playing nearly all the second half with 10 men to beat AC Milan 1-0 in a bad-tempered, scrappy but absorbing Serie A derby on Sunday.

Samuel scored with a diving header at the far post after Milan goalkeeper Christian Abbiati hesitated and failed to cut out Esteban Cambiasso's free kick.

Milan created far more chances and were in almost total control after Inter had midfielder Yuto Nagatomo sent off for a second bookable offence three minutes into the second half.

The defeat left Milan with only seven points from their first seven league games of the season. Inter have 15, four behind leaders Juventus and Napoli who both won.

A late goal by Claudio Marchisio gave Juventus a 2-1 win at lowly Siena and Napoli beat Udinese by the same score with Goran Pandev scoring the winner.

Cagliari won their first game of the season, 1-0 at Torino, and AS Roma finally managed their first home win as they beat Atalanta 2-0 to ease the pressure on coach Zdenek Zeman.

Milan, after selling several top players, have made a dreadful start to the season and continued with a farcical opening five minutes at San Siro.

Coach Massimiliano Allegri was still arguing angrily with the referee over the award of a free kick to Inter when Cambiasso swung the ball over. Abbiati initially came then retreated, allowing Argentine defender Samuel, in his eighth season at Inter, to score with a free header.

Handovic.

It was one-way traffic after Nagatomo was given a second yellow card for handball but Milan's attacking woes following the departure of Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Antonio Cassano, now with Inter, were exposed as they failed to take advantage.

Riccardo Montolivo, the one bright spot for Milan, twice had Handovic in difficulty with powerful long-range drives but on each occasion Krkic failed to make the most of the rebound.

Substitute Giampaolo Pazzini twice missed the ball when he had close-range chances, Urby Emanuelson nearly scored with a shot across the face of the Inter goal and Robinho had a penalty turned down, leading to furious Milan protests.

Juventus and Napoli both have 19 points out of 21.

Marchisio volleyed home from a partially cleared corner in the 85th minute to stretch champions Juve's unbeaten Serie A record to 46 matches.

Andrea Pirlo had put the titleholders ahead in the 14th minute with a low free kick and hit the crossbar with another effort before Emanuele Calaio hit back for Siena in first-half stoppage time.

### RESULTS

Roma 2 (Lamela 30, Bradley 62) Atalanta 0  
Catania 2 (Gomez 2, Bergessio 80) Parma 0  
Torino 0 Cagliari 1 (Nene 74)  
Fiorentina 1 (Jovetic 7) Bologna 0  
Pescara 0 Lazio 3 (Klose 25, 35, Hernanes 5)  
Siena 1 (Calaio 47) Juventus 2 (Pirlo 14, Marchisio 85)  
AC Milan 0 Inter Milan 1 (Samuel 3)  
Napoli 2 (Hamsik 30, Pandev 45+1)

Two minutes later, Abbiati kicked an attempted clearance straight to Diego Milito on the edge of the area but his effort was blocked by Daniele Bonera. The ball fell to the Argentine again but his weak header was saved.

Milan, officially the home side, took control as Kevin-Prince Boateng twice shot wide from dangerous positions and Bojan Krikit had a snap shot turned away by goalkeeper Samir

## 'Theo wants to stay'

AFP, London

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger insists Theo Walcott remains keen to extend his stay with the north London club even though he is yet to sign a new contract.

Walcott's current deal expires at the end of the season and he has so far refused Arsenal's offer to renew his contract, sparking speculation that the England winger could be ready to quit the Emirates Stadium.

Walcott, also a target for Liverpool and Chelsea, has started just one league game this season, while making a further five appearances from the bench.

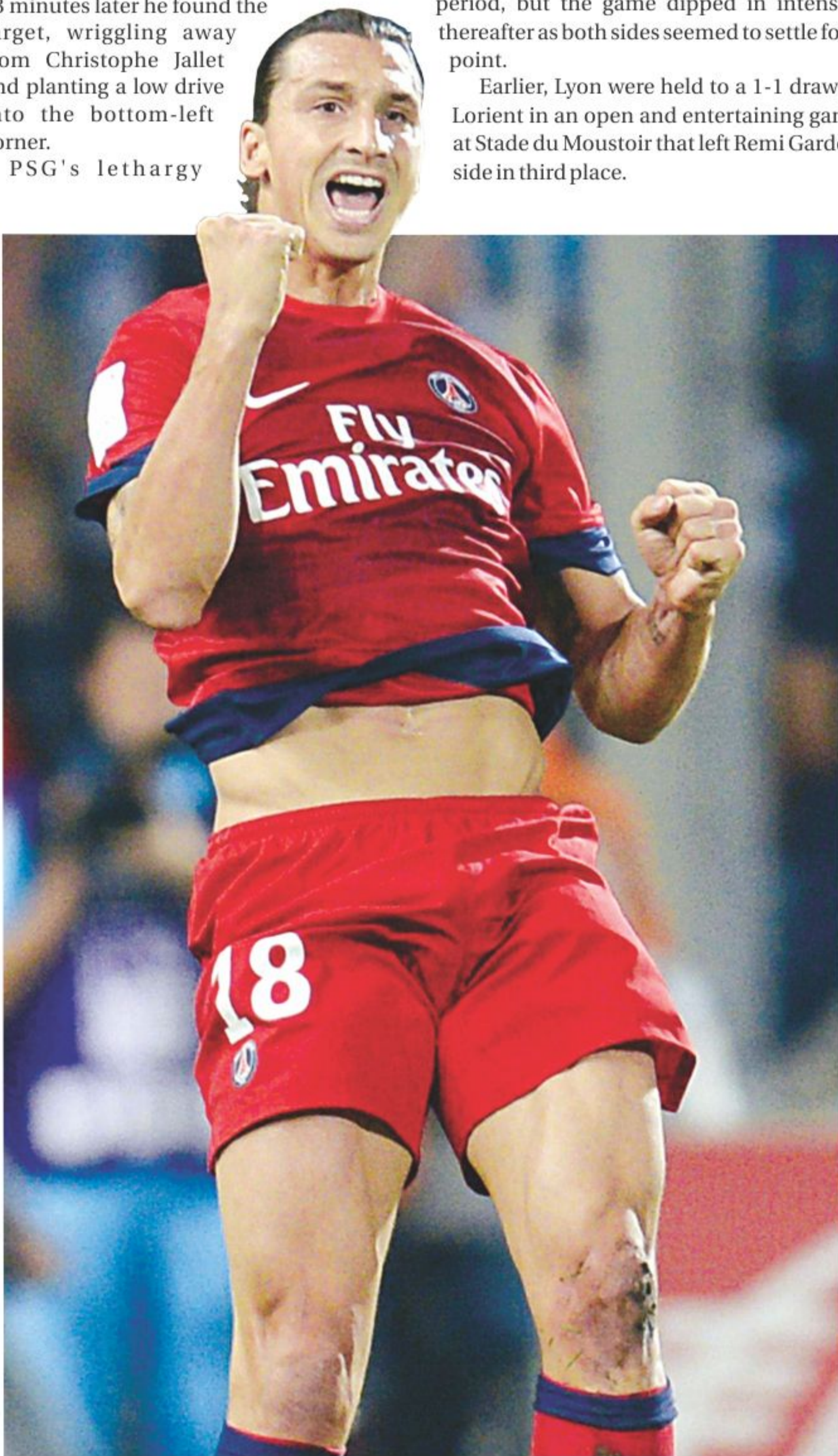
That kind of involvement is unlikely to persuade Walcott to stay, but Wenger believes he is still willing to commit to Arsenal.



ESPN  
Sportscenter India  
Sports News  
Live at 8:30pm



GP Federation Cup  
Mohammedan v Bangladesh police  
Time: 3:30pm  
Abahani v Jessore DFA  
Time: 5:30pm  
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium  
Brothers Union v Rahmatganj  
Time: 3:30pm



Paris Saint-Germain superstar Zlatan Ibrahimovic is ecstatic after scoring one of his two goals during their League One away tie against Marseille at the Velodrome Stadium on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

## C'Ron joins up with Portugal

AFP, Madrid

Cristiano Ronaldo will join up with the Portugal World Cup squad despite suffering a suspected sprained left shoulder during Real Madrid's 2-2 draw with Barcelona at the weekend, the Spanish club said on Monday.

"Cristiano Ronaldo will join the Portuguese squad today (Monday)," Real Madrid said in a statement on their website.

Ronaldo "will remain under observation" at their base in the Portuguese city of Obidos but is expected to play the two qualifiers against Russia this Friday and against Northern Ireland on October 16.

Ronaldo, who scored both of his club's goals at Barcelona's Camp Nou stadium on Sunday, landed badly on his shoulder after trying to score with an overhead kick in the 64th minute.

"Cristiano Ronaldo suffered a sprained left shoulder. He will undergo more tests with doctors over the next few hours," Real Madrid said.

Ronaldo, who leads coach Paulo Bento's team that are coming off victories over Luxembourg and Azerbaijan and take on unbeaten Russia at the top of Group F, could be seen grimacing and gripping his shoulder as he sat on the pitch after the injury.

## Debate over world's best

REUTERS, Madrid



Billed in Spain as the decisive showdown between Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo for the 2012 FIFA Ballon d'Or award, Sunday's La Liga 'Clasico' gave plenty of ammunition to both camps as each player netted twice in a thrilling 2-2 draw.

Barcelona's Messi, who succeeded Real Madrid's Ronaldo as the world's best player in 2009 and has won the award the past three years, scored once from close range and with a stunning 30-metre free kick, while Ronaldo's pair were trademark clinical strikes from just inside the area.

Both again produced virtuoso performances when it counted, wowing close to 100,000 fans in the stadium and the millions of others watching around the world in what is probably the biggest fixture in international club soccer.

Argentine Messi closed to within one goal of leading 'Clasico' marksman, Real great Alfredo Di Stefano, with his 16th and 17th goals in his 22nd Real-Barca game.

Ronaldo of Portugal became the first player to score in six consecutive 'Clasicos' with his ninth and 10th strikes on his 16th appearance against Barca.

"I don't know I cannot speak individually," a typically modest Messi told reporters when asked about the Ballon d'Or, the winner of which will be announced at a gala ceremony in Zurich on January 7.

Ronaldo's coach at Real, his Portuguese compatriot Jose Mourinho, was asked about the award at his post-match news conference on Sunday but said he was not a fan of the idea of singling out the world's best player.

"I don't want to have to think about the Ballon d'Or, choosing who is the best in the world should be banned," he said.

"They are two players from another planet," he added. "I would like one of my players to get the prize, one who was champion in the best league in the world."

Mourinho's Barca counterpart Tito Vilanova had no doubt whom he would select.

"He is still young and we don't know yet what his limits are," he told a news conference when asked about Messi.

"I believe we will never see another player of his calibre. He is the best in the world by a long way."

## Chantome replaces Diarra

AFP, Paris

Clement Chantome has replaced the injured Lassana Diarra in France's squad for the friendly with Japan and the World Cup qualifier against Spain, the French Football Federation announced on Sunday night.

Diarra injured his back in Anzhi Makhachkala's 2-0 win at Dynamo Moscow in the Russian Premier League on Sunday and was unable to finish the match.

### SQUAD

Goalkeepers:

Hugo Lloris (Tottenham Hotspur/ENG), Steve Mandanda (Marseille), Mickael Landreau (Lille)

Defenders:

Christophe Jallet (Paris Saint-Germain), Mamadou Sakho (Paris Saint-Germain), Mapou Yanga-Mbiwa (Montpellier), Gael Clichy (Manchester City/ENG), Patrice Evra (Manchester United/ENG), Laurent Koscielny (Arsenal/ENG), Adil Rami (Valencia/ESP), Mathieu Debuchy (Lille)

Midfielders:

Etienne Capoue (Toulouse), Clement Chantome (Paris Saint-Germain), Maxime Gonalons (Lyon), Blaise Matuidi (Paris Saint-Germain), Yohan Cabaye (Newcastle United/ENG), Moussa Sissoko (Toulouse)

Forwards:

Karim Benzema (Real Madrid/ESP), Olivier Giroud (Arsenal/ENG), Bafetimbi Gomis (Lyon), Mathieu Valbuena (Marseille), Franck Ribery (Bayern)