

Pitch-invaders punished

AFP, Warsaw

Two Poland fans who became overnight Internet stars after invading their national stadium's waterlogged pitch when a World Cup qualifier against England was called off have been banned from matches for two years.

"I'd been dreaming about doing this since I was a kid," 41-year-old Adam Dziewulak, whose sliding belly-flop in the soaking turf has gained cult status, said as he was led handcuffed into a Warsaw court.

Quizzed by the judge, however, he said: "I didn't realise what the consequences would be". He asked the court to be lenient, noting he had spent two nights in a remand cell.

He was also ordered to serve a year's probation and to pay 110 zloty (22 pounds, 27 euros, \$35) in court costs. His fellow televised invader received a similar punishment and a ruling was pending on a third man who was not caught on camera.

Under Poland's anti-hooliganism law, pitch invasions carry up to three years in prison, community service or a fine of several thousand zloty.

The fans were arrested on Tuesday in Warsaw's Kazimierz Gorski Stadium after managing to slalom around pursuing and stumbling stewards amid a deluge, roared on by supporters in the packed 58,000-capacity arena.

A tongue in cheek video of their antics, set to the music of the television series "Baywatch", had already drawn almost 633,000 views on YouTube by Thursday.



Brazil legend Ronaldo makes a putt on the third green during the World Celebrity Pro-Am tournament in Haikou yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Spurs test for Chelsea

AFP, London



Andre Villas-Boas has warned his old club Chelsea that a Tottenham are desperate to end the Blues' unbeaten start to the Premier League season.

Spurs boss Villas-Boas will face Chelsea on Saturday for the first time since being sacked by Roman Abramovich in March following a miserable nine-month reign at Stamford Bridge.

The former Porto coach has a chance to get his own back this weekend when league leaders Chelsea visit White Hart Lane and, while Villas-Boas insists he isn't motivated by thoughts of revenge, he admits his players are relishing the chance to inflict some pain on their London rivals.

Not only did Chelsea, by then managed by Villas-Boas's former assistant Roberto Di Matteo, beat Spurs in last season's FA Cup semi-final, but they also denied the north London club a place in the Champions League.

Spurs finished fourth, which should have guaranteed a Champions League spot, but Chelsea, who

came sixth, took the last English berth after winning the competition.

Now a win would move fifth-placed Tottenham within two points of Chelsea and Villas-Boas said: "In the end there is one thing which has been to a certain extent blown out of proportion - this is certainly not a personal matter.

"But it is the team who took this

the European champions could be vulnerable on Saturday as they will be without suspended captain John Terry.

The defender starts his four-match ban for racially abusing QPR defender Anton Ferdinand after deciding not to appeal against the Football Association's punishment, while England midfielder Frank Lampard is a doubt with the knee problem that forced him to miss both of his country's recent World Cup qualifiers.

If Chelsea slip up, then second placed Manchester United, currently four points off the top, will hope to take advantage at home to Stoke.

However, Alex Ferguson's team have already lost twice this season and Portugal winger Nani admits they face another tricky test against physical Stoke.

"It is always hard to play against Stoke because they play a different kind of football to most teams in the Premier League," Nani said.

"They are very physical and have very strong players. It is also difficult because most of the game is in the air."

"But it is very important because when you play at home, you have a good chance to win these games."

club out of the Champions League, this is the team who prevented this team from playing in the FA Cup final last year.

"We never know how the game can develop. But certainly, a good game might hopefully give us a chance to go nearer the top, which is what we want."

Although Chelsea have won six of their seven league matches this term,

Drogba hurts his ankle

Football

AFP, Shanghai

Didier Drogba will miss a Shanghai Shenhua game Saturday due to an ankle injury sustained when Senegal fans rioted during a match against his national side last weekend, the club said.

The former Chelsea striker, who has just arrived back in China after international duty for the Ivory Coast, will not play against seventh-placed Changchun Yatai, manager Sergio Batista said Friday.

A club official described the injury to his right ankle as "light". At a practice session on Friday evening, Drogba was visibly limping though he kicked the ball with his left foot, an AFP photographer witnessed.

French striker Nicolas Anelka and Colombian midfielder Giovanni Moreno were also hurt and would not play in the game, Batista said.

"Drogba, while playing for his national team, was kicked and has some foot swelling," said Batista, according to a transcript of the news conference posted by media website Shanghai Online.

The club official said: "In the riot at the Senegal match, Drogba received a bit of a light injury, but the situation is not serious."

Explaining why the other players would not take part, Batista said: "Moreno's foot has some swelling. Nico has pulled a thigh (muscle), he still has not completely recovered."

Drogba returned to China after scoring twice in Ivory Coast's Africa Cup of Nations qualifier against Senegal, which had to be abandoned in the second half because of rioting fans.

The absence of the three foreign stars follows a reported protest by the club's Chinese players earlier this week over unpaid wages.

Shenhua players were said by Chinese media to have protested on Monday over a pay dispute, turning up late for practice at the club's training ground and taking a leisurely stroll around a running track.

Chinese media have previously reported that Shenhua's chief investor Zhu Jun has threatened to withhold salaries of foreign players unless he is granted majority control of the club.



Shanghai Shenhua star Didier Drogba (R) is helped up by goalkeeper Dong Guangxiang before a training session at the Hongkou Stadium yesterday.

Top of table clash

AFP, Milan

Napoli will put their Serie A title credentials on the line Saturday in a top-of-the-table clash against Juventus that is reviving memories of Diego Maradona's fairytale spell at the club.

Napoli have not won the championship since 1990, three years after Maradona's goals helped the Partenopei to an historic first of two league titles in 1987.

And as Walter Mazzarri's side prepare for the mouthwatering clash at Juventus Stadium, the Old Lady of Turin boasts a league record 28 titles and an unbeaten streak extending to 45 games.

Napoli, however, have plenty going in their favour.

Mazzarri's side are playing attractive, attacking football that has left their Uruguayan striker Edinson Cavani top of the league scoring charts on six goals and they are the only other unbeaten team in the table.

Although still early in the campaign the game -- historically regarded as a battle between the rich northerners and poor southerners -- has dominated headlines for two weeks, relegating Italy's ongoing World Cup campaign to the inside pages.

On fans' forums memories of Napoli's 3-1 win over Juventus in November 1986, six months before Maradona led them to an historic title triumph, have been evoked.

Napoli are also the only team since May 2011, when Juve's unbeaten run began, to beat the Turin side in a 2-0 Italian Cup victory.

On paper both sides will be aiming for nothing less than three points. A draw would do neither any favours and give hope to Lazio and Inter Milan, who sit

third and fourth respectively at four points adrift.

While Juventus usually count on several national team regulars, caretaker coach Massimo Carrera, standing in for the still suspended Antonio Conte, is not worry-free.

Keeper and captain Gianluigi Buffon remains a doubt with the left adductor muscle injury which forced him out of Italy's 3-1 win over Denmark on Tuesday. And while midfielder Andrea Pirlo will be ready to play his usual orchestrating role ahead of a three-man 'Azzurri' defence of Andrea Barzagli, Leonardo Bonucci and Giorgio Chiellini, Carrera may have to send out a makeshift attacking pair.

Mirko Vucinic returned from international duty with a cold, meaning Fabio Quagliarella could get to start against his former and hometown club.

In a rare Saturday treat for fans third-placed Lazio host an AC Milan side which is trying to regain respectability after a disastrous start to the season.

While Vladimir Petkovic's

capital side have five wins in seven games Milan sit mid-table with two wins and four defeats.

Milan lost the derby to Inter last time out, but CEO Adriano Galliani has denied the game will be make-or-break for embattled coach Massimiliano Allegri.

"Allegri's last game for the club won't be against Lazio in Rome or against Malaga (in the Champions League), or against Genoa at the San Siro," Allegri said.

The club will continue with the coach that has put the most points on the table in Italian football for the past two-and-a-half years.

"Inter ended last season with 22 points less than Milan and no one mentions that. The same is true for Juventus two seasons ago."

Injury crisis hits Real

AFP, Madrid



Real Madrid are battling an injury crisis ahead of their home clash with Celta Vigo on Saturday as World Cup duty threatens the team's La Liga pursuit of bitter rivals Barcelona.

Madrid coach Jose Mourinho

faces the loss of up to seven of the 19 players who went off on international duty after the vital 2-2 draw with Barcelona in their last league game.

It's a problem which has left "los blancos" the main victims of what the Spanish press have dubbed the "FIFA virus".

Despite the draw against Barcelona at Camp Nou two weeks ago, Madrid still

have an eight-point gap to make up on their Catalan rivals, a task made even more difficult by the loss of so many key defenders.

Right-backs Alvaro Arbeloa, injured in Spain's 1-1 draw with France, and Fabio Coentrao are unavailable for a number of weeks while left-back Marcelo is expected to be out for three months after breaking

his foot in a Brazil training session.

Midfielder Sami Khedira and forwards Karim Benzema and Gonzalo Higuain picked up knocks with their national sides and all could be rested ahead of an important Champions League tie at Borussia Dortmund next Wednesday.

Mourinho will have to be creative to fill the full-back berths.

Michael Essien has experience on the right while Sergio Ramos could also be used there with Raphael Varane or Raul Albiol coming into the centre of defence.

Even using Varane is in doubt after the youngster picked up a muscle injury while playing for the French Under-21 side.

Youngster Nacho Fernandez could make his first start of the season at left-back.

Leaders Barcelona have few worries as they go to Deportivo La Coruna on the same evening, looking to make it four wins from four on the road.

One player unaffected by the international break was midfielder Andres Iniesta.

On Sunday, Atletico face a tough away game at Real Sociedad who have won their three home games to date this season.

FIXTURES

Saturday

Malaga v Valladolid (1400 GMT), Real Madrid v Celta (1600 GMT), Valencia v Athletic Bilbao (1800 GMT), Deportivo v Barcelona (2000 GMT)

Sunday

Getafe v Levante (1000 GMT), Espanyol v Rayo Vallecano (1400 GMT), Granada v Zaragoza (1600 GMT), Osasuna v Betis (1750 GMT), Real Sociedad v Atletico Madrid (1930 GMT)

Monday

Real Madrid v Atletico Madrid (1930 GMT)

FIXTURES

Saturday

Malaga v Valladolid (1400 GMT), Real Madrid v Celta (1600 GMT), Valencia v Athletic Bilbao (1800 GMT), Deportivo v Barcelona (2000 GMT)

Sunday

Getafe v Levante (1000 GMT), Espanyol v Rayo Vallecano (1400 GMT), Granada v Zaragoza (1600 GMT), Osasuna v Betis (1750 GMT), Real Sociedad v Atletico Madrid (1930 GMT)

Monday

Real Madrid v Atletico Madrid (1930 GMT)