

## Zizou lauds Zlatan

Former France skipper Zinedine Zidane took time out from praising his country's friendly success in Italy to laud Zlatan Ibrahimovic for the Swede's "extraordinary" scissor kick goal against England.

The Paris Saint Germain striker destroyed England with a four-goal salvo in a 4-2 success in Stockholm - but it was his instinctive overhead effort from distance which left many observers gasping, Zidane included.

Ibrahimovic is "an extraordinary player," said Zidane. "I never managed to score four in a game," added the Frenchman, though he did manage a brace in the 1998 World Cup final success over Brazil.

"It was magnificent - especially the overhead kick," enthused Zidane, who scored a goal of similar athletic class in Real Madrid's Champions League final win over Bayern Leverkusen in 2002.

Regarding France's 2-1 friendly win in Italy, Zidane said: "They did the job. After (drawing a World Cup qualifier with) Spain they confirmed they are on the right track.

"It is not easy to win in Italy - I know that after difficult confrontations with Italy," added the French legend, famously sent off in the 2006 World Cup final against the Azzurri.

## Terry out for three weeks

Chelsea captain John Terry will be sidelined for about three weeks after injuring his knee against Liverpool last weekend, Blues coach Roberto Di Matteo revealed on Friday.

The former England defender had to be stretched off after Liverpool striker Luis Suarez landed awkwardly on him during the 1-1 draw at Stamford Bridge. But scans revealed the damage was not as bad as feared.

"With JT, we're looking at approximately three weeks," Di Matteo said. "Fortunately, it's not as bad as we first thought. It's an MCL (medial cruciate ligament) strain."

## Bayern post record turnover

Bayern Munich posted a record 332.2 million euros in turnover in their trophy-less 2011-12 season, the club announced Thursday.

"Bayern Munich has today an economic base the likes of which the club has not had in its 112-year history," said Karl Hopfner, the finance official for the Bavarian giants.

DAY'S EVENT



**Bangladesh v West Indies**  
First Test, Day 5  
Time: 9:30am  
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Mirpur

**National Cricket League**  
(Four-day match, Day-2)  
Rajshahi v Chittagong  
Venue: Sylhet Divisional Stadium  
Khulna v Dhaka Metro  
Venue: Shaheed Chandu Stadium, Bogra  
Sylhet v Barisal  
Venue: Barisal Divisional Stadium  
Dhaka v Rangpur



France legend Zinedine Zidane holds up an autographed football during the opening of a sports equipment store in Marseille on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Defence concerns Pique

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona have only dropped two points so far this season, rolling out victories to open up an eight-point lead over rivals Real Madrid, but defender Gerard

Pique admits that they are still vulnerable at the back.

The Catalan side's gung-ho style under new coach Tito Vilanova, which has sometimes left only two in defence as both full-backs surge forward, has led to an average of more than three goals a game, with 36 amassed to date.

But as they prepare to take on Zaragoza on Saturday, Pique expressed concern that they were also conceding goals too easily.

"It has almost been as though they (opponents) score against us every time they attack and I am not sure why but it is something that we need to think over," he said.

FIXTURES	
<b>Saturday</b> (all GMT)	
Osasuna v Malaga 1500, Valencia v Espanyol 1700, Barcelona v Zaragoza 1900, Real Madrid v Athletic Bilbao 2100	
<b>Sunday</b>	
Deportivo la Coruna v Levante 1100, Celta Vigo v Mallorca 1500, Getafe v Valladolid 1650, Granada v Atletico Madrid 1845, Sevilla v Real Betis 2030	
<b>Monday</b>	

"We are also scoring more than last season and so, of course, the more attack-minded you are, the more you risk, but we need to improve at the back."

Barca have leaked 14 goals so far --

the most at this stage of the season in 12 years.

Injuries have been partly to blame, although Pique returned to the centre of defence in last weekend's win over Mallorca and now Carles Puyol is in line for a starting place.

Real Madrid dropped behind after a slow start but have now picked up speed with Cristiano Ronaldo returning to form but Pique believes that Barca are stronger with Lionel Messi.

"I respect those who believe that Cristiano Ronaldo deserves to be European Player of the Year but I live with Leo and he is like an alien and Cristiano would be the best human," he said.

"I was a team-mate of Cristiano's at Manchester (United) and he is a hard worker but alongside Messi he doesn't compare."

## It's heating up

AFP, London



The battle for the Premier League title may be compelling, with three heavyweights in contention, but the fight to avoid relegation from English football's top-flight is nearly as fierce.

At the top, leaders Manchester United travel to Norwich on Saturday with a two-point advantage over champions Manchester City, at home to Aston Villa.

European champions Chelsea, a point further back in third, travel to surprise package West Brom, an impressive fifth in the table, in a match that pits Blues boss Roberto di Matteo and the Baggies Steve Clarke, once an assistant manager at Stamford Bridge, against their former clubs.

In an era where Premier League players are routinely criticised for being primarily concerned with their pay packets, United veteran Rio Ferdinand said the lure of silverware remained as strong as ever.

"It doesn't matter how much money you have, at the end of your career, what you will be most proud of are your achievements," said Ferdinand.

"If you have won things and continue to win things for this great club, that is something to talk about. I wouldn't sit down and talk about how much money I

have."

It was a point echoed by City winger James Milner, who said: "Our fans turn out in big numbers.

"They were here when we weren't winning things for so many years so it's nice that we are now and as I say, that's not a feeling we could ever get tired of," the England international added.

There will be plenty of attention at Eastlands on City and England goalkeeper Joe Hart, beaten on four occasions by

striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic during Sweden's 4-0 friendly international win in midweek, with the striker's stunning scissor-kick fourth set to become a staple of all great goal compilations.

But there will be a different sort of grim fascination in watching bottom of the table QPR welcome second-bottom Southampton to Loftus Road as both clubs battle to remain in

the lucrative top flight.

West London club QPR have yet to win in 11 Premier League matches this season while Southampton have just one victory to show for their efforts since ending seven years' of Premier League exile.

The North London derby between Arsenal and Tottenham sees both clubs battling to get back into the four while Everton will look to maintain their place among the leading quartet at home to strugglers Reading.

## Lazio face Juve test

AFP, Milan



Lazio's away-from-home blues could be set to continue on Saturday when they travel to Juventus seeking to overcome an unenviable record against the champions.

Juventus stretched their lead over title rivals Inter Milan to four points last week thanks to a 6-1 rout of Pescara and the shock 3-2 defeat for their closest rivals in Atalanta.

With Inter expected to collect three points at home to struggling Cagliari on Sunday, Juve know they have to seize every possible chance for three points.

"We've started the season well and taken a lot of points, but there are still plenty of games to play and we need to hang in there," said Ghanaian Kwadwo Asamoah.

Lazio may take heart from Inter's stunning 3-1 defeat of the champions two weeks ago, but the form of Vladimir Petkovic's side has been inconsistent.

Having suffered a first away defeat to Napoli, in which Edinson Cavani scored a memorable hat-trick in a 3-0 win, Petkovic could only look on helpless as his side were humbled 4-0 by Sicilian side Catania two weeks ago.

That reverse came on the back of a 1-1 home draw to Torino and a 2-0 defeat away to Fiorentina.

In all, Lazio have amassed only nine points from a possible 22 on their travels

FIXTURES	
(times GMT)	
<b>Saturday</b>	
Juventus v Lazio (1600), Napoli v Milan (1845)	
<b>Sunday</b>	
Siena v Pescara (1030), Bologna v Palermo, Catania v Chievo, Fiorentina v Atalanta, Inter v Cagliari, Udinese v	

this season -- and the statistics against Juve do not make good reading.

In a total of 68 matches away to the Old Lady of Turin, Lazio have won only eight times and drawn 17.

In last season's corresponding fixture Juve prevailed 2-1 thanks to a late freekick from Alessandro Del Piero, a result which allowed the hosts to retain top spot until the end of the season.

On paper, Juve will be hard to beat but a shock defeat would boost both Inter and Napoli ahead of their respective matches.

Napoli welcome an AC Milan side which is enduring its worst start to the

season in living memory. Napoli, too, have suffered their fare share of away defeats but rolled up their sleeves to secure a gutsy 4-2 win against Genoa last week to move to within a point of Inter.

Both AC Milan forward Stephan El Shaarawy and Napoli striker Edinson Cavani are top of the Serie A

scoring charts on eight goals apiece and are attracting interest from some of the top clubs in Europe.

El Shaarawy is in rude health, having scored Italy's only goal in a 2-1 friendly defeat to France on Wednesday, but after 12 games Massimiliano Allegri's men sit 13th on just 14 points, 17 adrift of Juventus.

Inter, meanwhile, will have to get back on the winning trail if they are to keep pace with Juve and keep Napoli at bay.

The Fiorentina v Atalanta match, meanwhile, could produce one of the tightest contests this weekend.

## Wenger nearly signed Ibra



AFP, London

Arsenal coach Arsene Wenger has revealed that he almost signed a teenage Zlatan Ibrahimovic, scorer of all four goals in Sweden's 4-2 friendly win over England on Wednesday.

Ibrahimovic was shown around Arsenal's training facilities when he was 16 but Wenger said the London club were unable to conclude a deal for him.

"He came here to visit the training ground," Wenger said.

"He didn't want to make a trial because he was 16 years old at the time. He went home and we concluded to watch him again.

"I wanted to see him in training but it didn't stop him from making a great career. In the end, he chose to go to Ajax Amsterdam. That happens. He's not the only one in that case."

Wenger also acclaimed Ibrahimovic's fourth goal against England, which saw him dispatch an audacious overhead bicycle kick past stranded goalkeeper Joe Hart from 30 yards.

"I believe we are all amazed because, sometimes, when a guy has a shot from 30 yards and puts it in the top corner, you say, 'It's a fantastic goal' -- but somehow you believe you can do that as well, even if you cannot do it on a consistent level," Wenger told the Arsenal website.

## Adler's depression fears



AFP, Berlin

Germany goalkeeper Rene Adler has revealed his fears about suffering from depression and his concerns about avoiding a similar fate to Robert Enke, who committed suicide after struggling with the illness.

"We had both felt we are similar, which has scared me, because I could follow a similar path," Hamburg goalkeeper Adler told German magazine Stern, three years after the suicide of his Germany team-mate and fellow goalkeeper Enke.

"We are both sensitive and had no desire to put ourselves under more pressure against each other.

"The pressure of playing for the national team is large enough."

Adler was recalled to the Germany squad for Wednesday's goalless draw with Holland in Amsterdam after some impressive displays for Hamburg in the Bundesliga.

Having spent the last year out of the Germany squad through injury and after losing his place at previous club Bayer Leverkusen, Adler says he



has to be careful "that I don't fall into depression.

"I put myself under much too much pressure, the body looks for a way to release the valve and in my case it was injury after injury," he added having admitted it made him consider retiring.

Having had to watch while his former club Leverkusen played eventual winners Chelsea and Spanish giants Barcelona in the Champions League last season, Adler admitted

he had dark thoughts during that period.

"It is brutal to feel that you can be replaced," he said.

"To quit football would have felt the same for me if a member of my family had died."

The 27-year-old admits it got to the point when he could not face talking to his Leverkusen team-mates.

"I was happy when I was back home again. I just had no desire to talk to people."



**What to WATCH**

**Channel 9**  
**Bangladesh v West Indies**  
First Test, Day 5  
**Live from 9:30am**

**STAR Cricket**  
**India v England**  
First Test, Day 3  
**Live from 10:00am**

**TEN Cricket**  
**Sri Lanka v New Zealand**  
First Test, Day 1  
**Live from 10:30am**

**ESPN**  
**English Premiership**  
Arsenal v Tottenham  
**Live from 6:45pm**  
Liverpool v Wigan  
**Live from 9:00pm**  
Norwich City v Man United  
**Live from 11:30pm**

**Serie A**  
Napoli v AC Milan  
**Live from 1:45am (Sunday)**

**STAR Sports**  
**English Premiership**  
West Bromwich v Chelsea  
**Live from 9:00pm**  
**Primera Liga**  
Barcelona v Real Zaragoza  
**Live from 1:00am (Sunday)**