

Zizou lauds Zlatan

AFP, Marseille

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

AFP, London

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 stretchered 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

AFP, Berlin

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



PHOTO: AFP

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

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

Saturday

(all GMT)

Osasuna v Malaga 1500, Valencia v Espanyol 1700, Barcelona v Zaragoza 1900, Real Madrid v Athletic Bilbao 2100

Sunday

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

Monday

"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."

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)

Saturday

Juventus v Lazio (1600),

Napoli v Milan (1845)

Sunday

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 fair 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

Football

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

Football

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 to 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 4:45pm
Liverpool v Wigan	Live from 9:00pm
North 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)	