

## London return for Scolari

AFP, Sao Paulo

Luiz Felipe Scolari will get the chance to polish up a reputation dented by a disastrous spell at Chelsea as his first match in charge of Brazil after Thursday's reappointment will be against England at Wembley.

"Great. There's no better scenario than facing England," said the 64-year-old after taking the reins of the Selecao for a second time barely a week after the sacking of predecessor Mano Menezes.

"I am really fond of the English people and it's great to go back and play at Wembley," said Scolari, who knocked England out of the 2002 World Cup in the quarterfinals on the way to lifting the trophy.

The match will be a February 6 friendly and gives Scolari the chance to make a return to the capital and show that his ill-fated eight months in charge at Stamford Bridge which ended in the sack in February 2009 was a blip.

## Inter mull selling Sneijder

REUTERS, Rome

Inter Milan will consider selling Netherlands midfielder Wesley Sneijder after talks over accepting a wage cut stalled.

Sneijder, a standout player in their 2010 treble season but who media reports say is newly-frugal Inter's top earner with a six million euro (\$7.8 million) annual salary, again looks set to be left out of their match with Palermo on Sunday.

"Sneijder isn't playing because the coach doesn't think he's at his best, above all psychologically," Inter president Massimo Moratti told reporters late on Thursday.

"For us it's natural to look for a way to not be forced to sell him and he has the right to not accept our offer. If it stays like that, the solution will be on the transfer market."



- STAR Cricket**  
Australia v South Africa  
Third Test, Day 2  
Live from 6:30am
- ESPN**  
English Premiership  
West Ham v Chelsea  
Live from 6:45pm
- Arsenal v Swansea City  
Live from 9:00pm
- Reading v Man United  
Live from 11:30pm
- Serie A**  
Juventus v Torino  
Live from 2:00am (Sunday)
- STAR Sports**  
English Premiership  
Liverpool v Southampton  
Live from 9:00pm
- Primera Liga**  
Valencia v Real Sociedad  
Live from 11:00pm
- Barcelona v Bilbao  
Live from 1:00am (Sunday)



- National Cricket League**  
(Four-day match, Day-1)  
Khulna v Dhaka  
Venue: Shaheed Kamaruzzaman Stadium, Rajshahi
- Sylhet v Rajshahi  
Venue: BKSP
- Dhaka Metro v Rangpur  
Venue: Shaheed Chandu Stadium, Bogra
- Chittagong v Barisal

# 'I am obliged to win WC'

AFP, Sao Paulo



Luiz Felipe Scolari believes Brazil have a solemn duty to win the World Cup on home soil in 2014, but admitted that the faltering giants are nowhere near favourites for a sixth world title.

Scolari is used to guiding Brazil through stormy waters having taken over a side struggling even to qualify for the 2002 World Cup before guiding them to their most recent triumph 10 years ago.

Winning the trophy again in 18 months' time would take things to a new level given that Brazil famously missed the target on the only other occasion they staged the showpiece -- losing the 1950 final in the Maracana to Uruguay.

"We have an obligation to win, we are playing at home. Don't you think our players are aware of the importance of winning the trophy on home soil?" asked Scolari after he was presented to the media in Rio at the start of his second spell in charge.

"We are not favourites right now but we intend to turn ourselves into favourites during the tournament."

The pressure looks on after two consecutive poor World Cup showings and a lost Olympic Games final to Mexico which saw predecessor Mano Menezes given the boot.

But Scolari, who had a stellar second spell in charge of Gremio and a less successful second stint with Palmeiras, says he can take the pressure.

"If you don't want pressure best not to be in the team. Go and work in an office for the Bank of Brazil," he was quoted as saying by one local newspaper.

The bank retorted by saying it "regrets the coach's unfortunate comment" which it found distasteful.

Scolari takes the helm of a side currently ranked just 13th in the FIFA standings behind the likes of Greece and Colombia.

As Brazil demand "new methods" Scolari insists he is focused.



Brazil's new coach Luiz Felipe Scolari answers questions during a press conference in Rio de Janeiro on Thursday. PHOTO: AFP

"The objective is clear -- to win the World Cup in 2014. I don't feel under pressure. The players are the ones with pressure on them."

A year after his initial arrival Brazil landed their fifth world title -- the Pentacampeao.

Now it is a Hexacampeao that Scolari and his sidekick, 1994 winning coach Carlos Alberto Parreira, are tasked with winning -- using next summer's home Confederations Cup as a springboard.

"I am happy to work with people who have confidence in me and happy to have at my side someone to share in this task -- that is, Parreira," said Scolari.

"The World Cup project is starting off strongly," said the man named 'Felipao'.

"Our sole commitment is to seek out

and offer the best for our football and it is in this vein that we have chosen these two great champions, respected not just in our country but worldwide," Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) president Jose Maria Marin said.

Scolari, whom Chelsea sacked mid-season in early 2009, was out of work after parting company with Palmeiras last September -- the team were later relegated.

Former players are divided on whether Brazil can go back to a glorious future under him.

Ronaldo, whose goals landed the 2002 World Cup title, said: "Congratulations to him. It's a great challenge for him."

Zico, star of the early 1980s, also favoured the move.

"Felipao (Scolari) has won so many titles he has to be respected," he said.

But former skipper Carlos Alberto, who lifted the 1970 World Cup after starring in the Pele-inspired 4-1 thrashing of Italy, is not impressed.

"I don't know that this is Felipao's moment. He won in 2002 -- but that was 2002! This year he bombed out at Palmeiras."

Single-mindedness is now the name of the game for the new tandem.

"I'm not talking about there being a 'Scolari family' -- but we're going to foster an atmosphere of unity," Scolari stressed.

Parreira earlier told Brazilian media that "it's time to put other problems aside and focus on winning the World Cup."

## Ribery has full faith in Bayern

AFP, Munich

France winger Franck Ribery has said he is "100 per cent sure" that Bayern Munich will finish the season as Bundesliga champions ahead of Saturday's crunch showdown with Borussia Dortmund.

Bayern host defending Bundesliga champions Dortmund, third in the league, at Munich's Allianz Arena with the Bavarians currently 10 points clear at the top of the table and Ribery in superb form with four goals in nine games.

Although Bayern held an eight-point lead at one stage last season, Dortmund still eventually won their second league title, with Munich finishing second. But Ribery has said the club will not make the same mistake again.

"I am 100 per cent sure that we will be German champions," Ribery told German daily Bild after Bayern failed to win any silverware in the last two seasons.

"We have to be careful and not allow any mistakes against the smaller clubs, like we did last year. We had an eight point lead last season, but Dortmund were still German champions. I am sure we have learnt our lesson."

Ribery is under contract until 2015 and having joined Bayern in 2007.

## Mourinho's derby test

AFP, Madrid



Atletico Madrid take on derby rivals Real Madrid this weekend aiming to pile up the pressure on under-fire coach Jose Mourinho whose team are a ready trail leaders Barcelona by 11 points.

It is the first time in almost 14 years that Atletico take on their illustrious neighbours with more points in La Liga - they are second with an eight-point lead over a stuttering Real who were beaten once again last weekend by Real Betis.

Despite winning the league last season Mourinho is coming under fire from a demanding Madrid media who are speculating whether he will be still at the helm next summer.

The Portuguese flatly denies he is feeling the strain.

"I have perfect health and I am working

as I have done for many years. My relationship with the players and the club is like it has always been," he said.

"This is not a courtroom but a press conference. I am just an employee of the club and it is they who decide if they are happy with what they have but I have a very, very, very good relationship with the president and the board."

Atletico's fine start to the campaign is partly due to the form of Radamel Falcao who has hit 14 goals in 13 games and he is now geared up for the derby.

"I don't feel as much pressure as motivation. We play a great side and it will be a high-tempo match but we will go out looking to win," he said.

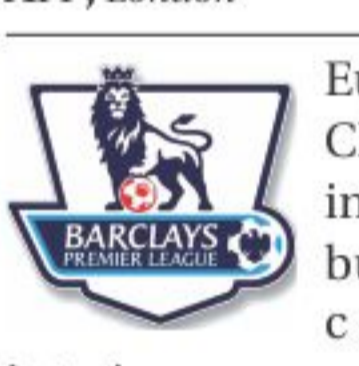
Barcelona take on Athletic Bilbao aiming to maintain their prolific start which has seen them only drop two points so far in the Clasico against Real Madrid.

Lionel Messi has hit 19 goals in the league and is only three away now from former-Germany striker Gerd Muller's record of 85 in a calendar year.

FIXTURES	
(all times GMT)	
<b>Saturday</b>	Getafe v Malaga (1500), Valencia v Real Sociedad (1700), Barcelona v Athletic Bilbao (1900), Real Madrid v Atletico Madrid (2100)
<b>Sunday</b>	Granada v Espanyol (1100), Deportivo la Coruna v Real Betis (1600), Celta Vigo v Levante (1800), Mallorca v Zaragoza (2000)
<b>Monday</b>	

## Rafa seeks first win

AFP, London



European champions Chelsea may be third in the Premier League but that will be little consolation to interim manager Rafael Benitez as he takes his side across London to West Ham on Saturday.

Two successive goalless draws is not what owner Roman Abramovich wanted after sacking Roberto di Matteo, the man who brought the European Cup to Stamford Bridge for the first time courtesy of last season's Champions League triumph.

And those performances, against Manchester City and derby rivals Fulham, have done little to alter the hostility felt towards Benitez by a large section of Chelsea fans on account of the Spaniard's outspoken comments about the Blues when he was Liverpool manager.

Even wins may not be enough to appease those sections of the Chelsea faithful who remain implacably opposed to his appointment.

But a win, not to mention a goal, at

West Ham would be a start in an early kick-off fixture where victory would see the Blues close to within four points of Manchester United before the leaders are in action at Reading.

"If you analyse 10 games without a clean sheet, when the team are attacking and then you give the chance to the other team to score, you lose your confidence," said Benitez.

"The main thing is to keep a solid team with good shape and then we have to take the chances we create with the talent we have up front."

United travel to Reading following a midweek 1-0 win where it took striker Robin van Persie just 33 seconds to score the fastest goal of the Premier League season so far.

Moreover, that match saw United rid themselves of the worrying habit they've developed this season of conceding first.

"The clean sheet is something to build on because the performance needs to be better," insisted United midfielder Michael Carrick in words that could have been borrowed from manager Alex Ferguson.

Meanwhile Manchester City, still the only unbeaten side in the league, are at home to Everton with manager Roberto Mancini demanding more of Mario Balotelli after the striker opened his Premier League account for the season with the first goal in a 2-0 midweek win at Wigan.

"It's his first goal this year (season) and I hope he can improve after that game," Mancini said of his fellow Italian.

West Brom, still fourth despite a 3-1 midweek defeat by Swansea, will look to return to winning ways at home to Stoke while Tottenham, whose 2-1 win over Liverpool took them up into fifth place, make the cross-London trip to Fulham.

FIXTURES	
(1500GMT unless stated)	
<b>Saturday</b>	Arsenal v Swansea, Fulham v Tottenham, Liverpool v Southampton, Manchester City v Everton, QPR v Aston Villa, Reading v Manchester United (1730GMT), West Brom v Stoke, West Ham v Chelsea (1245GMT)
<b>Sunday</b>	Norwich v Sunderland (1600GMT)
<b>Monday</b>	



FIFA president Sepp Blatter (R) shakes hands with Spain coach Vicente del Bosque during a Team Workshop for the 2013 Confederations Cup in Sao Paulo on Thursday. PHOTO: REUTERS

## Clasico time in Germany

AFP, Berlin



Bayern Munich are out to break their losing streak against defending champions Borussia Dortmund on Saturday in the Bundesliga clash which has been described as 'El Clasico' of Germany.

Bayern extended their lead at the top of the league to 10 points on Wednesday with a 2-0 win at Freiburg while Dortmund, who have won the title for the last two years, lag behind in third and are 11 points adrift.

Munich managed a 2-1 pre-season victory at home to Dortmund in August's Super Cup, but the Bavarian giants are eager to break a Bundesliga run of four defeats in their last four league meetings with Borussia.

Bayern midfielder Javi Martinez, who joined Munich from Athletic Bilbao in August, has likened the Dortmund-Bayern clash to the Real Madrid-

Barcelona El Clasico in Spain.

"I have followed the duel in Spain and it is a bit like the Clasico," said the 24-year-old.

"There have always been problems against Dortmund and we have to change that."

Bayern have already lost to second-placed Bayer Leverkusen at home this season and must make home advantage count, said Munich midfielder Toni Kroos.

"Dortmund are the team with the highest quality after us," he said.

"We know they are a strong opponent against whom we have had big problems in the last two years. We want to show we can do better against them."

Bayern will have virtually a full strength squad to choose from with only Luiz Gustavo and Robben out with injury.

Dortmund have a few concerns of their own with midfield pair Mario Goetze and Ilkay Gundogan and defender Mats Hummels all facing a race to be fit.

FIXTURES	
<b>Saturday</b>	Schalke 04 v Borussia M'gladbach, Bayer Leverkusen v Nuremberg, Mainz 05 v Hanover 96, Augsburg v Freiburg, Greuther Fuerth v VfB Stuttgart, Bayern Munich v Borussia Dortmund
<b>Sunday</b>	Hoffenheim v Werder Bremen, VfL