

'Goal-line tech inevitable'

Football

AFP, Tokyo

FIFA Secretary General Jerome Valcke says he expects goal-line technology to be used in the English Premier League "sooner or later", as football's world body prepares to trial two systems in Japan.

Hawk-Eye and GoalRef will feature at the eight-game Club World Cup, which starts Thursday and features continental champions -- including Chelsea and Brazil's Corinthians -- battling to be crowned the best team on the planet.

Speaking ahead of the opening match in Yokohama, Valcke said the high financial stakes involved in England's top flight meant goal-line technology would ultimately be introduced into one of the world's most profitable leagues.

He said it was costing FIFA \$1 million to run the two systems in Japan, adding that high installation costs would mean the technology was out of reach for smaller leagues initially but over time would become more affordable.

"At the moment it's a luxury cost. That's why you'll see it mainly in high-level competitions," Valcke told a news conference in Tokyo on Wednesday.

"I don't think that for the time being you will see this goal-line technology system used in minor leagues.

"But I could expect or could imagine that the English Premier League and such leagues where the result is important, where there is so much interest, money, financial implication, you will see sooner or later a goal-line system in place."

In July, the International Football Association Board (IFAB) -- custodians of the game's laws -- decided to use goal-line technology at the Club World Cup, next year's Confederations Cup and the World Cup in Brazil in 2014.



Chelsea striker Fernando Torres (R) goes around Nordsjaelland goalkeeper Jesper Hansen to score during their Champions League encounter at Stamford Bridge on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Fergie shifts focus

AFP, Manchester



Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson insists he has no worries about going into Sunday's Manchester derby on the back of a defeat.

United were beaten for the second successive time in Europe when they slipped to a 1-0 home defeat to Cluj on Wednesday night.

Ferguson's side had progressed to the knock-out phase after four matches and he was able to make 10 changes to the team that won 4-3 at Reading at the weekend.

England striker Wayne Rooney, who is continuing to work his way back to full fitness after a spell on the sidelines at the start of the season with a gash to his leg, was the only player to start both matches.

Premier League leaders United have the chance to move six points clear of City when they head to the Etihad Stadium on Sunday.

Ferguson was adamant that there were good signs from his team despite seeing them beaten for the first time at home in the Champions League in more than three years.

He said: "I think we've set out what we've set out to do.

"We've given young players game time and other players that needed games more game time.

"The more game time that (Phil) Jones and (Chris) Smalling get only helps us and Wayne Rooney has got another 90 minutes behind him.

"He is close to full fitness and hopefully he will be approaching top form come Sunday and Sunday will be a different kettle of fish altogether."

In the build-up to the game against the Romanian champions at Old Trafford, Ferguson had bemoaned his team's defending so far this season.

He was more justified with the display of a youthful back four of Jones, Smalling, Scott Wootton and Alexander Buttner.

But he maintains that his senior players still have to improve when they head to City.

Ferguson added: "They did the job quite well.

"Scott Wootton has only had a couple of games, Smalling has been out for long time and Jones has been out, Buttner has had two or three first team games.

"The commitment and composure was good but they're young so that is without doubt but that doesn't solve the issue of defending tonight.

"Hopefully that's in the future and the experienced players that have been playing have got to get their act together, it's as simple as that."

Ferguson was due to assess the fitness of midfielder Tom Cleverley, who limped out of the game just before half-time.

But the United manager dismissed any doubts about defender Jonny Evans' fitness after the Northern Ireland international was absent from training on Tuesday.

Ferguson claims that Sunday's game will come too soon for Japan midfielder Shinji Kagawa, who has been absent with a knee problem.

Balotelli like Mona Lisa

AFP, Milan

Mario Balotelli's agent has upped the ante for potential suitors, including AC Milan, by claiming the unsettled Manchester City striker is like the Mona Lisa, virtually unaffordable.

"In Italy, no club could afford Balotelli," said Balotelli's agent, Mino Raiola.

The claims would appear to scupper AC Milan's hopes of launching an audacious bid to bring the Italian back to Milan.

It was reported Sunday the club's owner Silvio Berlusconi wants to re-create his partnership with fellow striker Stephan El Shaarawy at Milan.



Channel 9
Bangladesh v West Indies
Fourth ODI
Live from 2:30pm
STAR Sports
India v England
Third Test, Day 3

Chelsea out despite win

AFP, Paris



Chelsea made the wrong sort of history on Wednesday as they became the first holders to exit the Champions League at the group stage despite winning their final group game.

Their 6-1 thumping of Danish minnows Nordsjaelland - their biggest Champions League win, having previously twice won 5-0 - proved pointless as Juventus won 1-0 and inflicted a rare home defeat on Ukrainian side Shakhtar Donetsk.

Chelsea's despair was in contrast to the joy in Glasgow as Celtic reached the Last 16 with a 2-1 home win over Spartak Moscow and become the first Scottish side to garner 10 points from the group stage.

Benfica failed to match their result - if they had done they would have gone through on head-to-head meetings - drawing 0-0 away at table-toppers Barcelona, who had a scare when Lionel Messi went off on a stretcher.

However, fears of a long-term injury were allayed as it was revealed he had bruised his left knee, keeping alive his hopes of overhauling Gerd Mueller's record of 85 goals in a calendar year as he is just one short.

Galatasaray secured the 16th and last place as they came from behind to beat Braga 2-1 in Portugal making Cluj's stunning 1-0 defeat of

Manchester United at Old Trafford academic because of a better head-to-head record with the Romanian side.

While United had already sealed top spot, it was not a memorable way for manager Alex Ferguson to celebrate being in charge of United for the 200th time in the Champions League.

Chelsea's victory gave interim coach Rafael Benitez - who has received a less than warm reception

do our job. As a manager, you have to be really pleased with the performance of your team.

"People ask about the Europa League. Every competition is important for us. We will try to challenge and win where we can."

Juventus progressed thanks to an own goal by Olexandr Kucher, although they also spurned several chances of their own and left assistant coach Angelo Alessio a happy man.

"We are really happy with this victory, to have reached the next round and to have finished top of our group," he said.

Celtic looked to be heading into the Europa League until Kris Commons slotted home a penalty 10 minutes from time to restore Celtic's one-goal advantage.

With Spartak's veteran Swedish international Kim Kallstrom sent off soon afterwards, for an horrific foul on Commons, on his 50th Champions League appearance, the Scottish champions held on to reach the last 16.

"I'm very proud of the players - they've performed a miracle," said Celtic manager Neil Lennon, who was leading the Hoops for the first time in the competition, said.

"No one gave us a prayer coming into this group and we have qualified and deservedly so. I felt in the second half we had control of the game and deserved to win."

RESULTS

Chelsea (ENG) 6 (Luiz 38-pen, Torres 45+2, 56, Cahill 51, Mata 63, Oscar 71) **Nordsjaelland (DEN) 1** (John 46)
Shakhtar Donetsk (UKR) 0 Juventus (ITA) 1 (Kucher 56-og)
Bayern Munich (GER) 4 (Gomez 21, Mueller 54, Shaqiri 66, Alaba 83) **BATE Borisov (BLR) 1** (Filipenko 89)
Lille 0 Valencia 1 (Jonas 36-pen)
Barcelona (ESP) 0 Benfica (POR) 0
Celtic (SCO) 2 (Hooper 21, Commons 82-pen)
Spartak Moscow (RUS) 1 (Ari 39)
Braga (POR) 1 (Mossoro 32) Galatasaray (TUR) 2 (Yilmaz 58, 78)
Manchester United (ENG) 0 CFR Cluj (ROM) 1

by the Chelsea fans since he replaced Roberto di Matteo - his first win in four games at the Stamford Bridge helm.

"The other game was out of our hands, so we couldn't do anything about it," said Benitez, who will not have enjoyed seeing some Chelsea fans holding up posters of another former Chelsea manager, Jose Mourinho, imploring him to return.

"I said before that we just had to

Messi escapes serious injury

AFP, Barcelona



Lionel Messi was stretchered off with a knee injury as Barcelona drew 0-0 with Benfica at the Camp Nou, a result which saw Celtic go through at the

expense of the Portuguese from Champions League Group G.

The club later confirmed the injury was only bruising to the left knee, but added that the Argentine "is still awaiting more tests to determine the extent of the injury".

Benfica needed only to match Celtic's result against Spartak Moscow

and they wasted a number of excellent chances against a weakened Barca, especially in the first half and were to rue them as Celtic snatched a 2-1 win over Spartak Moscow.

Messi was brought on as a second-half substitute but went down clutching his knee late on in the game.

The Catalan side cruised through

the group stage with just one defeat, away to Celtic, in what has been a prolific start to the season where domestically they have established a new record of 13 wins from 14 games.

Fans turned up hoping to see Messi match or better Gerd Mueller's record of 85 goals in a calendar year but in the end the night finished on a sour note

with the Argentine still a goal behind.

"It doesn't appear too serious as it is a knock to his knee but he will have to have tests now to find out exactly what the situation is," said coach Tito Vilanova.

"He is calm although a little worried as you would expect for a player with an injury who is waiting to know how serious it is.

"I played him for the last 30 minutes to give him a run out and he didn't play just to break the record as if that had been the case then he would have started.

"A player can get injured at any moment and at the end of the day we are Barcelona and we are playing in the Champions League."

Barca chose to rest the bulk of the regular side and took the opportunity to blood youngsters in the true spirit of the club which takes such pride in the production line from their Masia academy.

Benfica's task of toppling the Catalan giants was made more difficult by the loss of a number of important players, including Pablo Aimar, Enzo Perez and Eduardo Salvio.

Mikel signs new deal

AFP, London

Nigerian midfielder John Obi Mikel has signed a new five-year contract with Chelsea, the European champions announced on Wednesday.

The 25-year-old, who arrived from Norwegian club Lyn in 2006, is now under contract at Stamford Bridge until 2017.



National Cricket League
(Four-Day Match; Day 1)
Rajshahi v Khulna
Venue: Shaheed Chandu Stadium, Bogra
Sylhet v Dhaka Metro
Venue: Rangpur Cricket Garden
Chittagong v Rangpur
Venue: Sylhet Divisional Stadium
Barisal v Dhaka
Venue: Shaheed Kamruzzaman



Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi lies on the pitch after being injured in their Champions League tie against Benfica at Nou Camp on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP