

# Injury weary Germans

REUTERS, Berlin



Germany may be missing more than half a dozen key players through injuries, including their top strikers, but anything other than automatic World Cup qualification with a win over Ireland on Friday will be a disappointment, officials said.

Germany coach Joachim Loew will be without his starting strikers Mario Gomez and Miroslav Klose as well as defender Marcel Schmelzer, twins Sven and Lars Bender, Lukas Podolski and offensive midfielder Marco Reus among others.

"We always hope that in the autumn to have all players fully fit but there are times when players are stretched every three days with matches," team manager Oliver Bierhoff told a news conference in Dusseldorf.

"Those who have been playing continuously are fully fit but the bad thing is that some (footballers) are missing because demands on players have been high during the past weeks."

Germany need two points from their last two games against Ireland in Cologne and away to Sweden four days later to top Group

C and advance to next year's World Cup finals in Brazil.

"Anything other than automatic qualification against Ireland would be disappointing," said Bierhoff. "Despite the injuries, we have to be ambitious enough to dominate the game and win it."

Germany are on 22 points from eight games with Sweden in second place, five points off the pace.

Bierhoff also brushed off criticism that a lack of attackers could be a problem, with Max Kruse the only designated forward in Loew's squad.

"We are missing about nine players but I did not sense any panic among the coaches. I only saw the trust in the players that we know well."

"What is important is to fill the positions and we have alternatives like Thomas Mueller, who has shown this season how dangerous he is up front and Max (Kruse) is also as a forward."

For Bastian Schweinsteiger, who will reach 100 caps if he plays in both games, a win over Ireland would be the first step towards winning that elusive first international trophy with Germany since 1996.

# Football season to start without calendar

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) is set to start its 2013-14 season later this month with the Federation Cup even though the game's governing body is yet to finalise its annual calendar, which is a practice followed the world over, in order to keep the clubs, the players and everyone involved, aware of the schedule.

The BFF managed to prepare only three annual calendars in the last five years even though the major competitions -- Federation Cup, Bangladesh Premier League, Bangladesh Championship League, Independence Cup and Super Cup -- have been held more or less regularly while the competitions at lower tier have been staged sporadically.

To give the participating clubs an advantage, it is imperative to open the players' transfer window, and start the major tournaments on time and as per calendar but it has hardly happened in the past which ultimately extended the misery of the clubs who had to bear extra payments for foreign recruits as well as additional expenditure to run the camp.

The 2010-11 season started in October,

the 2011-12 season started in January 2012 and the 2012-13 season started in December 2012. This scenario gives a clear picture of the inconsistency of BFF' planning regarding football season.

"We could not maintain our previous calendars, sometimes due to unavailability of grounds while at other times due to state programmes and renovation works at our prime venue (Bangabandhu National Stadium) and also due to political instability. Apart from these issues, we had to struggle to maintain the calendar due to engagement of the national team which always forced us to halt ongoing tournaments or leagues to make the players available for the national team," said BFF's senior vice president Abdus Salam Murshedy.

Murshedy, also chairman of the professional football league committee, could not confirm when the calendar for the 2013-14 season will be published as the national looms ahead. However, he promised to maintain the 2014-15 season calendar.

BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag informed that they have been working on the annual calendar for the next three seasons, with the aim of starting the season at a specific time.



PHOTO: STAR

Shamim Khan of India swings one on way to scoring a six-under-par (66) during the second round of the bti International Golf Championship at the Kurmitola Golf Club yesterday.

## btI INT'L GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP Shamim, Ranjit grab lead

SPORTS REPORTER

India's Shamim Khan and Ranjit Singh stole the lead from Bangladesh's Jamal Hossain Mollah and Mohammad Sayum at the end of the second day of the bti International Golf Championship which is being held at the Kurmitola Golf Club in Dhaka. Shamim shot six-under-par (66) while Ranjit shot four-under-par (68) as both the Indians sat on top at eight-under-par (136).

Shamim played a great round of golf as he hit three consecutive birdies on the third, fourth and fifth holes, followed by two more on the seventh and eight. With only one bogey on the tenth in the back nine and two more birdies on thirteenth and seventeenth, Shamim was sitting pretty at the top.

Jamal slipped to second place shooting a two-under-par (70) for an aggregate of seven-under-par (137). Bangladesh's amateur golfer Mohammad Nazim played four-under-par (68) to take the joint third position at six-under-par (138), along with Bangladesh's Sayum and India's Raju Ali Mollah.

The halfway cut was made at eight-over-par (152) with 38 players, including five Indians and one Nepalese, making it through.

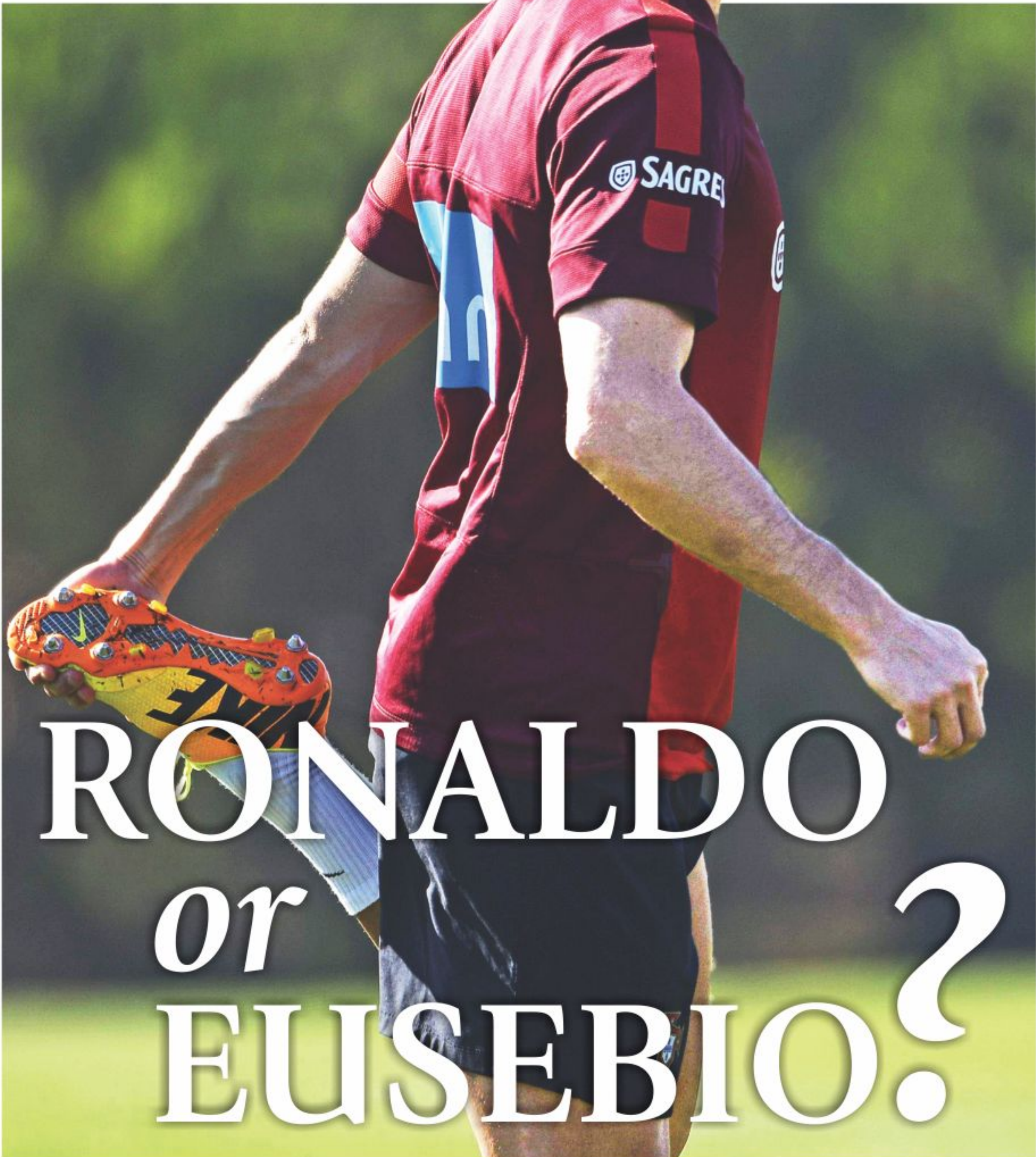


PHOTO: AFP

Portugal superstar Cristiano Ronaldo stretches during a training session in Praia Del Rey yesterday.

REUTERS, Lisbon



The fierce debate on who is the best Portuguese player of all time that erupted when Cristiano Ronaldo overtook Eusebio last month to go second on the country's list of top marksmen is far from being settled.

Benfica's 1960s great Eusebio has weighed in to the argument, saying he was upset by what he considered to be an unfair comparison because he had played fewer matches than Ronaldo.

"I am saddened because we can't make that comparison. It's a mistake because I played (around) 60 matches to score that amount (41 goals)," Eusebio told Portuguese national television.

Ronaldo reached 43 goals in 106 internationals after his hatrick earned Portugal a 4-2 comeback win over Northern Ireland in last month's World Cup qualifier.

"This is historic. I'd scored a lot of hatricks for Real Madrid but never any for Portugal," he said after the game.

"Going above Eusebio in the scorers' list was a natural thing to happen and it was only a matter of time but still I am really proud," the smiling player said while showing off the match ball.

Ronaldo has the chance to add to his tally on Friday in the home qualifier against Israel as Portugal seek to secure at least second place in Group F and a berth in the playoffs for next year's World Cup in Brazil.

While some of the football-mad Portuguese will angrily tell you not to compare the two because judging today's football against that of the 1960s is flawed, there are plenty of

arguments on each side.

Ronaldo, 28, is set to rewrite Portugal's soccer statistics as he is only four goals behind top scorer Pauleta and 21 matches away from the most-capped player Luis Figo.

Striker Pauleta has said he does not consider himself equal to Eusebio, Ronaldo and Figo.

Still, simple maths tell you Eusebio's goal rate is the best, with the 'Black Panther' grabbing 0.6 goals per match compared to Ronaldo's 0.4 and Pauleta's 0.5.

Eusebio, 71, believes Ronaldo has it easier than him.

"Now, after all these years, someone else scores (that many goals) but obviously that happens because today it is easier to play some of these teams. I never got to play against Liechtenstein or Azerbaijan," he said.

Portugal have also been to the major tournaments more often with Ronaldo.

He has shone for his country at five major competitions, including the Euro 2004 final where they lost at Lisbon's Luz stadium to Greece.

Portugal also finished fourth at the 2006 World Cup in Germany and reached the semifinals of Euro 2012.

Eusebio played at only one major tournament -- the 1966 World Cup in England -- where he was the overall top scorer as Portugal grabbed a best-ever third place.

Portugal and Real Madrid's Pepe prefers his teammate.

"I hope Eusebio forgives me but, for me, the best player ever is Ronaldo. Despite his relatively young age, what he has already achieved for the 'Selecao' leaves no doubts," he told sports daily o Jogo.

"Because of the goals he has scored and the clubs he has represented

Ronaldo will leave a mighty footprint."

Ronaldo, a product of Sporting Lisbon's youth academy, has had a massive impact during his time with Manchester United, where he won the Champions League, and at Real Madrid.

Eusebio spent most of his career at Benfica, winning the 1962 European Cup and 11 league titles.

Those behind the 'Black Panther' say he excelled at a time when soccer science was limited.

"Eusebio had no preparation, no gyms, no academies. He became what he did through sheer talent," said Hilario Conceicao, former coach to Ronaldo and Figo.

His 1960s team mate Jose Augusto told o Jogo: "Footballs are all high-tech and vulcanised today, much faster, lighter and with unpredictable trajectories. With today's balls Eusebio would have scored double the goals."

Despite their differences the two players have a lot in common - devastating shooting, power and pace and the ability to use both feet.

"Technically the two are not actually that distant. Both are incredible hard-workers who loved to practice and improved from a very young age," said Jose Pereira, the head of Portugal's coach association.

"Ronaldo and Eusebio thrived thanks to a tremendous sense of opportunity up front and explosive runs," Pereira said. "Both are football giants."

That said, with Ronaldo still performing, a major international trophy or a player of the tournament award in Brazil next year would perhaps tilt the balance in his favour for good.

# 'Bale loves his hair'

AFP, London

Former Tottenham Hotspur manager Harry Redknapp has revealed that he once feared Gareth Bale was too preoccupied with his hairstyle to make it as a leading footballer.

Bale left Tottenham for Real Madrid last month for a reported world-record transfer fee of £85 million (\$137 million, 100 million euros), but Redknapp says he used to have doubts about the Welsh forward's strength of character.

"He drove me mad in training," wrote Redknapp in his autobiography, which is being serialised in British newspaper the Daily Mail.

"Technically, he was outstanding, but he always seemed to be playing with his hair."

"It was never right. He'd be flicking the fringe or wiping it out of his eyes and I would be going quietly mad, just watching. 'Gareth, leave your barnet alone! Gareth! Stop touching you hair!'"

'Barnet' is cockney rhyming slang for 'hair', derived from a rhyme with 'Barnet Fair'.

Redknapp, who now manages second-tier Queens Park Rangers, was also worried about Bale's propensity for injury.

"He was always getting a little knock in training, too. He'd go down then limp off and I always thought the physios made too much fuss of him," he said.

"It was the same pattern every morning. Gareth would tumble and stay there, and they'd all go running over. In the end I told them just to leave him alone."

# Cole to miss WC qualifier

AFP, London

England left-back Ashley Cole will miss this week's World Cup qualifier with Montenegro at Wembley, the Football Association said on Monday.

The 32-year-old picked up a rib problem during Chelsea's Premier League win at Norwich on Sunday and a scan confirmed he can not play in the first match of England's crucial double header.

He is also uncertain for the following Tuesday's game against Poland.

Arsenal's Kieran Gibbs has been added to Roy Hodgson's squad, with Everton left-back Leighton Baines set to start.

England are top of Group H, one point ahead of Ukraine, but to be certain of reaching next summer's finals in Brazil they need to beat Montenegro, who are also a point adrift of them, and Poland, who are three points behind them.

Tournament organized by Bangladesh Professional Golfer's Association

7th - 10th October  
Kurmitola Golf Club, Dhaka Cantonment

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