

## Spectre Of 1993 Haunts France's Euro 2012 D-Day

France may require just a point at home to Bosnia-Herzegovina on Tuesday to reach Euro 2012, but Les Bleus have been here before and thrown it all away in heart-breaking fashion. Eighteen years ago, France approached consecutive home games with Israel and Bulgaria needing one point to book their place at the 1994 World Cup in the US.

It should have been a straightforward conclusion to a straightforward qualifying campaign, but instead it turned into one of the most traumatic episodes in the country's sporting history.

Stunned 3-2 by an Israel side that had not previously won a game, France were drawing 1-1 with Bulgaria in their final game when a last-minute counter-attack for the visitors ended with Emil Kostadinov lashing in an unforgettable winner.

Laurent Blanc was the defender who hurled himself vainly at Kostadinov's feet and in the build-up to Tuesday's game, the France coach has been obliged to re-visit that agonising November night at Parc des Princes.

"You can make a parallel (with 1993), but it's starting to get a bit old," he said last week. "The media are always there to remind us about it." (AFP)

## Belgium Up For Mission Impossible Against Germans

Belgium have not qualified for a major finals since the 2002 World Cup and to keep alive their hopes of reaching Euro 2012 they will need to do something no-one else has managed in the qualifiers and beat Germany on Tuesday.

The Belgians are presently in second place, which would give them a play-off spot, but only a point ahead of Turkey, who should take three points against Azerbaijan.

Both Belgian coach Georges Leekens and his players acknowledge that beating Germany in Dusseldorf let alone denying them a record 10th successive win in the qualifiers is a tough ask - the last Belgian win on German soil dates back to 1983 against East Germany.

"It is almost mission impossible but even so I believe deep down we can do it," said midfielder Timmy Simons.

Leekens - who is in his second spell as national coach having guided them to the 1998 World Cup finals but was sacked after they exited in the first round - said that but for a couple of moments of slapdash defending they would already be in the play-offs. (AFP)

## Reborn Argentina Set For Venezuela Test

Argentina are gradually emerging from their Copa America nightmare and are gunning for Venezuela on Tuesday as they seek three World Cup qualifying points to add to Friday's impressive start against Chile.

After the albiceleste sent the Chileans packing 4-1, with Gonzalo Higuain netting a hat-trick and Lionel Messi also hitting the target, new coach Alex Sabella said it was as if a dead weight had been lifted from their shoulders.

Barcelona's Messi produced one of his best displays in the national shirt and after he capped the performance with a goal, Sabella, who succeeded Sergio Batista two months ago, said it was time to put to bed claims the superstar cannot replicate his scintillating club form at international level.

"This goal will be important for Lionel to lay to rest this apparent collective psychosis that he can't do the business with Argentina," Sabella insisted.

Sabella, who led Estudiantes to the Copa Libertadores two years ago, is tasked with leading Argentina through to the 2014 finals in neighbouring Brazil, but, beyond that, with making the two-time world champions a team to

be feared once more.

Since a 1993 Copa success, seven coaches have come and gone without achieving senior level silverware.

The qualifying programme is the first step for Sabella and his charges to show that they have the right blend.

The task is made easier in principle by the absence from the qualifiers of already-qualified Brazil, meaning the Argentinians can go about their business fully focused on winning the group in the absence of the five-times world champions.

Venezuela will be a test on their own turf, having played some attractive football in reaching the Copa semis for the first time.

Four years ago, Argentina won the World Cup fixture 2-0 though they only just managed to qualify after some erratic showings with Diego Maradona taking the helm mid-campaign.

This time they have the momentum with them after thumping Chile although there will be no underestimating the Venezuelans even though the albiceleste will be reinforced by the return from injury of Martin Demichelis and from suspension of Javier Mascherano. (AFP)

## Ireland Won't Take Armenia Lightly In Euro Decider

Republic of Ireland manager Giovanni Trapattoni has warned his players not to underestimate Armenia in Tuesday's shoot-out for a place in the Euro 2012 play-offs. Trapattoni's second placed side go into their final Group B qualifier in Dublin with a one-point lead over third placed Armenia and a draw will guarantee their spot in the play-offs.

A defeat however would eliminate Ireland and allow Armenia to move into the play-offs instead.

Ireland could also snatch automatic qualification if they win and group leaders Russia slump to a shock defeat at home to minnow Andorra, but that is an extremely unlikely prospect.

A dramatic finale to the qualifying campaign is in store for Ireland's fans, who will expect their side to nail down that second spot against an Armenia team beaten 1-0 in the sides' last meeting. (AFP)

## Scots Plot Shock Downfall Of Mighty Spain

Scotland manager Craig Levein sees no reason why a famous victory can't be achieved against world champions Spain on Tuesday that would guarantee his team a place in the Euro 2012 play-offs.

Currently sitting in second place, one point ahead of the Czech Republic in Group I, Scotland need a result that equals or betters their rivals who play away in Lithuania.

Defending champions Spain, who top the group after seven straight victories, already did the Scots a big favour by beating the Czechs 2-0 in Prague on Friday.

"We are in a position where it is ours to lose," said Levein. "A position that I would have taken at the start of the group. If we win on Tuesday, we are second, that's a fact. There is nothing for us to fear. The players have the ability to rise to the challenge," he added. (AFP)

## FOOTBALL

**Pepe, Coentrao Back To Fitness For Real**

Real Madrid welcomed Portuguese international duo Pepe and Fabio Coentrao back to training on Monday, three weeks after picking up injuries in the 1-0 league defeat to Levante.

"Pepe and Coentrao trained normally with their teammates after recovering from the muscle tears suffered against Levante," reported the Spanish giants on their official website.

Jose Mourinho's side return to action on Saturday when they entertain Betis at the Santiago Bernabeu. They will be without Raul Albiol for the game, after the defender fractured a cheekbone in training with the Spanish national team. (AFP)

**Danes In Must Win Game With Resurgent Portuguese**

Denmark will look to give long serving coach and Danish football great Morten Olsen the chance of a final golden farewell with a place in next year's Euro 2012 by beating Portugal here on Tuesday in their final qualifier.

Olsen, who captained Denmark to their first ever World Cup finals in 1986, has announced last year he will stand down at the end of the present campaign but his reign will be extended to summer next year if the Danes beat a revitalised Portuguese side which would see them top the group at their rivals' expense.

The 62-year-old, capped 102 times, has guided the Danes to three major championships - the 2002 and 2010 World Cup finals and Euro 2004 - in the 11 years he has been in charge.

Whilst they are level on points with Portugal a draw would not suffice as they would finish second because the Portuguese have a better head to head record having beaten them 3-1 at home.

Denmark's highly-rated young midfielder Christian Eriksen believes that he and his team-mates have no reason to fear their opponents despite that defeat, because they had come off best in their two 2010 World Cup qualifiers, beating Portugal in Lisbon and drawing at home.

"It would be better to avoid the play-offs, but we can only avoid them by getting a win," the Ajax star told uefa.com. (AFP)

**Injured Klose Leaves German Camp, Returns To Rome**

Veteran striker Miroslav Klose left the Germany camp on Monday on the eve of their final Euro 2012 qualifier against Belgium and returned to his club Lazio for treatment on a knee injury.

Klose played no part in Germany's 3-1 win away to Turkey on Friday and was not expected to feature against Belgium in Dusseldorf, with coach Joachim Loew set to stick with Mario Gomez in attack.

**SUSPENDED IBRAHIMOVIC RETURNS TO MILAN**

AC Milan striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic was back in training with his club on Monday after leaving the Sweden squad ahead of Tuesday's final Euro 2012 qualifier against the Netherlands. The 30-year-old is suspended for a game which is crucial for Sweden's chances of qualifying automatically for next year's finals in Poland and Ukraine.

Erik Hamren's men are already certain of finishing second in group E, but a win could allow them to qualify directly as the best runners-up out of all nine European groups.

Hamren wanted his captain to stay with the squad even though he couldn't play. "My wish was for him to stay. I spoke to Zlatan and he said to me that he also wished to stay. Now we must speak to Milan, because the decision is theirs," he said. (AFP)

Klose is the second player to be sent home from the Germany squad in recent days after Borussia Dortmund's Mario Gotze was allowed to rejoin his club to prepare for their Bundesliga clash away to Werder Bremen.

However, Real Madrid's Mesut Ozil is likely to return to the side after missing the Turkey win with a painful achilles tendon.

Bastian Schweinsteiger (thigh) and Jerome Boateng (muscle problems) will remain doubts until the last minute, but Loew has admitted that their Bayern Munich teammate Toni Kroos could start. Germany are already through to the European Championship finals, but are looking to end their qualifying campaign with a perfect ten wins from ten. (AFP)

**Big-Spending Russian Club Anzhi Line Up New Targets**

Anzhi Makhachkala joint coach Roberto Carlos told French television that the ambitious Russian club are considering moves for Neymar, Nicolas Anelka and Robin Van Persie.

"We want to make a club of the calibre of Real Madrid or Barcelona," Carlos told Canal Football Club on Canal Plus as he outlined Anzhi's plans to add to a squad that already includes Samuel Eto'o, former Russia wing-back Yuri Zhirkov and ex-PSV Eindhoven winger Balazs Dzsudzsak.

Brazilian World Cup winner Carlos, now 38, was the first big arrival at the club based in the republic of Dagestan, in the Caucasus, in February, and was made joint caretaker boss in the wake of Gadzhi Gadzhiyev's dismissal last month.

With the funds of billionaire owner Suleyman Kerimov being pumped into the club, the former Real Madrid man believes the likes of Anelka, van Persie and Neymar are now realistic targets.

"Anelka is not the only player," Carlos said when asked about possible moves. "Nene from PSG and Van Persie from Arsenal are players we are following," he added. (AFP)

**Pint-Sized Giovinco Set For Full Italy Debut**

Italy coach Cesare Prandelli confirmed on Monday that diminutive Parma striker Sebastian Giovinco will start for the Azzurri for the first time in Tuesday's Euro 2012 qualifier against Northern Ireland. Giovinco - who stands just 1m64 (5ft 5in) tall - is preferred to Giuseppe Rossi as partner to AC Milan's Antonio Cassano for the game in Pescara.

"For me his size has never represented a problem," said Prandelli.

"I have always been convinced that if a player is good enough to make it to Serie A then it shows that he is prepared to climb any mountain. I never thought that a little guy like Giovinco could not break through," he added.

Prandelli considers the ex-Juventus player to be an out-and-out striker rather than a trequartista (a creative player positioned behind the strikers).

Giovinco has been capped four times as a substitute, all under Prandelli, and has yet to score for Italy despite sitting at the top of the Serie A scorers' charts just now along with Genoa's Argentine frontman Rodrigo Palacio. (AFP)

**China, Iraq Face 'Critical' Clash**

China and Iraq face a "critical" World Cup qualifying clash on Tuesday as Asia's big powers look set to step closer to the 2014 tournament in Brazil. Australia host Oman, Japan entertain Tajikistan and South Korea are at home to UAE in games the 'Big Three' should win easily as they march towards the fourth round. But China's match-up with Iraq is shaping up as a tense affair after Zico, coach of the 2007 Asian champions, called it a must-win.

The teams are level on points in Group A behind leaders Jordan with four rounds to play.

"The situation of Iraq in the qualifiers is critical, we have no choice other than victory against China," the Brazilian legend warned.

"China is good and well prepared team and will be playing at home. We have to be cautious but the players' confidence is sky-high." China coach Jose Antonio Camacho blasted his team as "lazy" and threatened to banish some players from his squad after last week's friendly against UAE, when they were forced to hang on for a 2-1 win. (AFP)

**Football Results**

**Spain - Segunda Division:** Sabadell 1 - 0Recreativo Huelva. **Sweden - Superettan:** Falkenberg FF 2 - 4 Sundsvall; Jonkoping S 1 - 1 Assyriska; Atvidaberg 1 - 0 Landskrona. **Russia - 1 Division:** FC Yenisey Krasnoyarsk 0 - 0 Alania Vladikavkaz.

**Argentina - Primera B Nacional:** Patronato de Parana2 - 2Independiente Rivadavia; Atletico Tucuman1 - 0 Dep Merlo; Rosario Central 0 - 0 Quilmes.

## TRACK & COURT

### F1: Vettel Tipped To Emulate Schumacher

Sebastian Vettel is on course to become one of the greatest champions in Formula One history - and has the potential to secure more glory than Michael Schumacher, according to two of the greatest drivers of all time.

Jackie Stewart and Niki Lauda, both triple world champions, believe the 24-year-old German can go on and emulate his compatriot's achievements providing Red Bull can maintain their levels of car design.

And if he does, it will cement an era of German supremacy in Formula One.

Stewart, champion in 1969, 1971 and 1973, said: "He is unquestionably the most mature 24-year-old racing driver I have seen. He has made slight errors, such as losing in Canada to Jenson Button, who was supreme that day, but his second world title is an incredible achievement for one so young."

He added: "Vettel's greatest strength lies in his mind management. God gives you your natural talent, but it is what you do with that talent. So many people have let it slip away or abused it. Vettel hasn't."

Lauda, who took the title in 1975, 1977 and 1984, said: "If you choose the wrong car, or the car you are driving doesn't work, then you can't win because it's always the combination of the two." (AFP)

### F1: Hamilton Will Bounce Back, Warns Team Boss

McLaren team chief Martin Whitmarsh has backed Lewis Hamilton to bounce back from his recent string of disappointments to win again and be a title contender next season.

Whitmarsh said he believed the 26-year-old Englishman's difficulties this year have sapped his confidence, but he is just one win away from rediscovering his form as the world's fastest and most exciting racing driver.

Speaking after Sunday's Japanese Grand Prix won by Hamilton's team-mate and fellow-Briton Jenson Button, Whitmarsh said: "He's a great racing driver. His heart is in it and he is very open about his emotions. He doesn't like not winning, but it will come good. I hope that this time next week we are celebrating one of Lewis's greatest ever victories-and that is entirely possible. We all know he's got it, we know we've got a car that can win and he has got the capability to do it."

"We just have to make sure he has the focus and ensure that we do that." Whitmarsh spoke out as Hamilton avoided being dragged into a new controversy after a brush with Brazilian Felipe Massa of Ferrari in Sunday's race in which Hamilton finished fifth. (AFP)

### Tennis: Roddick Survives Scare In Shanghai

A frustrated Andy Roddick dug deep to beat Taiwan's Lu Yen-hsun 6-2, 3-6, 6-2 at the Shanghai Masters Monday and avoid a second ignominious first-round exit in a week in China.

The American 10th seed, who lost to Lu at Wimbledon last year in their most recent meeting, started the match in blistering form, breaking twice and racing into a 4-0 lead, taking the first set 6-2. But the Taiwanese world number 74 hit back strongly in the second set, striking a stunning two-handed backhand down the line to force a break for a 3-1 lead, which proved enough to level the match against an erratic Roddick.

Clearly unsettled, the American voiced his frustration at noise and movement in the sparse crowd and at a ball-boy, but he refocused and crucially broke in the fourth game of the decider.

Roddick, ousted from the first round of the Beijing Open by South Africa's Kevin Anderson last week, kept his grip as the Lu challenge faded, breaking again to seal the match in a little under two hours. (AFP)

### Tennis: Nalbandian Wins At Shanghai Masters

Former world number three David Nalbandian eased into the second round of the Shanghai Masters on Monday, beating Latvia's Ernests Gulbis 7-5, 6-4. Nalbandian, a member of the Argentinian team that beat Novak Djokovic's Serbia in last month's Davis Cup semi-finals, has slipped to 57th in the world rankings after an injury-plagued season. But the 29-year-old was too good for his higher-ranked opponent, breaking Gulbis (ranked 51) twice in the first set and then once more in the second set to seal the win.

Later matches feature 10th seed Andy Roddick against Taiwan's Lu Yen-hsun, 16th seed Fernando Verdasco against China's Li Zhe, and Russian Mikhail Youzhny against Spain's Juan Carlos Ferrero, a former world number one.

Top seeds Rafael Nadal and Andy Murray, who met in Sunday's Japan Open final, won by the British player, both have byes into the second round in Shanghai. (AFP)

### Basketball: NBA Cancels First Two Weeks Of Regular Season

NBA commissioner David Stern has cancelled the first two weeks of the 2011-12 regular season after several hours of meetings failed to result in a new labour deal with players. Stern said he is cancelling 100 scheduled regular season games through November 14 after the two sides in the contract dispute met for seven hours on Monday.

### F1: GERMAN PRESS HAIL PRODIGY VETTEL

The German press on Monday hailed the achievement of prodigy Sebastian Vettel, a day after he became the youngest back-to-back world championship title winner in Formula One history.

"The second German child-prodigy after Boris Becker is among us," headlined the Leipziger Volkszeitung of the 24-year-old's achievement in Suzuka, Japan.

The regional daily hailed "a superstar who doesn't behave like a star" whose behaviour is always impeccable "whether it be in the cockpit or in his life."

"After years marked by scandals, intrigue and different campaigns, Formula One can finally make positive headlines. And they owe it to Vettel who has brought it back down to earth by his performances," said the daily Westfälische Nachrichten.

"Managing his engine, tyre wear, technical knowledge, he gets the best out of the engineers and has shown great team spirit contrary to a number of his predecessors," the newspaper said. Top-selling daily Bild predicted he could outstrip the achievements of Germany's seven-time world champion Michael Schumacher. (AFP)

Stern said the latest effort to end the lockout of the players and begin the season on time failed because the owners and players are far apart on a number of key questions.

"We just have a gulf that separates us," Stern said. "With every day that goes by, I think we need to look at further reductions in what's left of the season." All of the NBA's 114 pre-season games have already been wiped out by the dispute. No new talks have been scheduled but owners and players said they plan to keep in touch. (AFP)

### Cycling: Romero Not To Defend Olympic Title

Britain's Olympic cycling champion Rebecca Romero confirmed on Monday that she will not compete at the London 2012 Games next summer. British Cycling said the 31-year-old double world champion, who claimed individual pursuit gold in Beijing four years ago, has left the Olympic Programme.

"Having suffered several setbacks at crucial points, I believe I'm no longer on a pathway which will see me fulfil my Olympic ambition to win a second Olympic gold medal," Romero said.

"I'm proud to have contributed to the cycling team's great Olympic triumph in Beijing and I thank all the amazing people within British Cycling who were central to my success. I wish my current team-mates every success in London next year."

Former rower Romero is the only British woman to win Olympic medals in two different sports following her silver medal at the 2004 Games in Athens in the quadruple sculls. (AFP)

## MIXED BAG

### Rugby: All Black Call Leaves Donald Reeling

Stephen Donald says he was unwinding down by the Waikato River fishing when the SOS call came from through from the All Blacks to become their fourth fly-half of the World Cup.

New Zealand have had wretched luck with number tens at the tournament, losing first-choice playmaker Dan Carter and his understudy Colin Slade, both with groin injuries, and fully testing the deep Kiwi talent pool.

Aaron Cruden is expected to be named at fly-half when New Zealand unveil their semi-final team on Friday to play Australia at Auckland's Eden Park on Sunday.

Donald, who is bound for Bath in the English Premiership after the World Cup, is back in the All Black fold after missing out on the initial 30-man squad and could yet play a role if misfortune befalls Cruden. "Fairly surprised, obviously I never gave up the dream, but I was fairly surprised considering what's happened," Donald said Tuesday. (AFP)

### Boxing: Haye Set To Announce Retirement

Former WBA heavyweight champion David Haye is set to announce his retirement after informing the British Boxing Board of Control he intends to quit the sport, according to reports on Tuesday.

Haye, who celebrates his 31st birthday on Thursday, had always said he would not fight past the age of 30, but many had expected him to delay his retirement for one more big fight, possibly against Ukraine's Vitali Klitschko, who holds the WBC title.

Board secretary Robert Smith told The Sun: "I received an email on Monday advising me Haye would not be carrying on. The board will discuss it on Wednesday but there is no way we could go against his wish not to renew his boxing licence. Without it, he can't fight."

The Londoner lost his WBA belt to Klitschko's brother Wladimir by an unanimous points decision in Hamburg, Germany in July. The contest was a heavyweight unification fight for the WBA, WBO, IBF and IBO belts and the three judges scored 117-109, 118-108 and 116-110 all in Klitschko's favour. (AFP)

### NFL: Undefeated Lions On A Lofty Perch

Detroit moved to 5-0 to start the season for the first time since 1956 by beating Chicago 24-13 on Monday behind a dominating defence and sharp passing from quarterback Matthew Stafford.

### RUGBY: FRANCE CAN BE CONSISTENT, WARNS EDWARDS

France should not be written off as a one-trick pony unable to string together two good World Cup games on the trot, Wales assistant coach Shaun Edwards warned on Tuesday. The French, who play Wales in a World Cup semi-final on Saturday, have been labelled as a team incapable of capitalising on an impressive result the following week.

France suffered two pool losses, to New Zealand and Tonga, before surprising England 19-12 in the quarter-final, turning the formbook on its head to be 16-0 up at half-time. But France have rarely produced two good knockout World Cup wins in succession.

A stunning semi-final victory over Australia was followed by defeat by New Zealand in the 1987 final, while two brilliant wins over the All Blacks, in 1999 and 2007, were the forerunners of losses to Australia and England in the final and semi-final respectively of those World Cups. But Edwards insisted France had it in them to produce another good performance. (AFP)

Stafford's second touchdown pass put the Lions in front in the third and Jahvid Best's 88-yard run later in the quarter gave the Lions a double-digit lead in their first Monday night appearance in a decade.

The reigning NFC North champion Bears (2-3) are off to their worst start in four years.

They are three games behind the Lions and defending Super Bowl champion Green Bay in the standings.

Stafford went 19-for-26 with 219 yards, two touchdowns and an interception.

Best gave the Lions a 21-10 lead with 5:20 left in the third by taking a handoff and racing 88 yards untouched into the end zone. In the fourth quarter, Best scorched the Bears defence with a 43-yard run that led to a 31 yard field goal with just under two minutes left in the game to seal the victory in front of a crowd of 67,861. (AFP)

### Baseball: Pujols' Cardinals Crush Brewers

Albert Pujols put on a hitting display Monday with a home run and five RBIs as the St Louis Cardinals crushed the Milwaukee Brewers 12-3 in game two of their semi-final playoff series. Pujols went four-for-five with three doubles for the Cardinals who rebounded from a 9-6 loss on Sunday to level the National League series at 1-1.

"When they come, they come in bunches," said Pujols. My main job is to try and get a good pitch to hit. Once in a while when you look for your pitches you are going to hit one out of the ballpark and today they came in bunches."

Pujols smashed a two-run homer in the first inning and a two-run double in the third.

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He added an RBI double in the fifth and another double in the seventh. The series now shifts to St Louis, where Cardinals starting pitcher Chris Carpenter will face Brewers right-hander Yovani Gallardo on Wednesday. Pujols can become a free agent after the World Series. (AFP)

### Baseball: Cruz Belts Walk-Off Grand Slam For Rangers

Nelson Cruz blasted the first game-winning grand slam in Major League Baseball playoff history, lifting Texas to a 7-3 win over Detroit for a 2-0 lead in their second round playoff series.

Cruz hit a towering homer into the left field stands with no outs in the bottom of the 11th inning Monday after blasting a game-tying home run four innings earlier.

His walk-off grand slam came off Tigers pitcher Ryan Perry. It was amazing," said Cruz, who also ripped a game-tying solo homer in the seventh inning and was hit on the right arm by a fastball by Tigers starting pitcher Max Scherzer in the ninth.

Cruz's grand slam sent the crowd of 51,227 into a frenzy as his teammates mobbed him during a wild celebration at home plate.

"The first two pitches I was too aggressive. I hit the ball, foul ball, foul ball," said Cruz. "After that, I told myself just slow down and try to hit a fly ball to the outfield." Cruz also homered in Texas' game one 3-2 victory. (AFP)

### Cricket: Australia Says Match-Fixing Claims 'Baseless'

Cricket Australia chief James Sutherland on Tuesday said allegations made in a London court implicating Australian players in match-fixing were baseless claims made by a person of "dubious repute".

The details emerged as Mazher Mahmood, the former investigations editor for Rupert Murdoch's now-defunct News of the World, gave evidence at the trial of ex-Pakistan cricket captain Salman Butt and fast bowler Mohammad Asif. (AFP)