

Trezeguet 99 per cent sure

AFP, Rome

Juventus striker David Trezeguet is '99 per cent certain' of extending his stay with the Italian champions, his agent Daniel Fonseca said Friday.

Trezeguet's current deal expires in 2005 but his failure to put pen to paper on a new contract has alerted several of Europe's leading clubs including Valencia.

The Spanish first division club offered 45-million-euros (53-million-dollars) for the French international last month which Juventus' general director Luciano Moggi turned down.

"The fact that several clubs are after him is part of the game but Trezeguet is 99 per cent certain of signing for Juventus, both parties want this to happen," Fonseca told StudioSport.

"We spoke with Juventus five days ago. I have a good rapport with Trezeguet because we are good friends.

"Moggi has been a friend of mine for many years and I don't think there will be any problems with the contract."

Contract talks annoy Bergkamp

REUTERS, London

Dutch striker Dennis Bergkamp wants to sort out his future with Arsenal and says he is ready to take a pay cut in order to secure a contract for one more year in the premier league.

"I've declared that I would be willing to accept a lower salary such is my desire to stay at Arsenal," Bergkamp was quoted as saying on the icons.com website.

"But the offers I've received from the board of directors have been constantly changing and I have found this very frustrating. It is important to me that my future is decided quickly," said the 34-year-old, whose contract expired on June 30.

"I made the decision that I wanted to stay at Arsenal some months back when it was made clear to me by my manager, Arsene Wenger, that he also wanted me to stay on at the club for another year.

"I have enjoyed eight very happy years at Highbury and it is now my wish to finish my career at the place which is so special to me.

"I feel I have shown loyalty to the club over the years and I would like to think that the club would be loyal to me also."

Bergkamp joined Arsenal from Inter Milan for a transfer fee of 7.5 million pounds in 1995 and played an important role in the London club's league and FA Cup double successes of 1998 and 2002.

Ehiogu sidelined

AFP, London

Middlesbrough and England defender Ugo Ehiogu will be forced to miss the start of the season as he struggles to get fit again after suffering a serious knee injury.

Ehiogu has been diagnosed with a ruptured posterior cruciate ligament in his left knee and is likely to be sidelined for several months.

"It's a big blow to lose Ugo in this way. He's a huge influence on the team and a big part of our defence," Middlesbrough manager Steve McClaren told the club's official website, www.mfc.co.uk.

"But we had a similar setback with Juninho's knee injury last year and we bounced back from that.

"As we did then, we just have to get on with it."

Ehiogu sustained the injury in Boro's final home game of last season, against Tottenham, but the extent of the problem has only now been revealed by scans.

"He had scans soon after the Spurs match. Unfortunately, they didn't reveal the full extent of the injury, as can often be the case," McClaren said.

"It was believed he had suffered bone bruising so he has been resting the knee over the summer. But when he joined the other lads for his fitness assessment on Thursday, the knee became swollen.

"We sent him for further scans which this time revealed the rupture."

The news is a major blow to McClaren's preparations for the new season, which will now have to begin without Ehiogu, who was the club's record signing when he moved from Aston Villa three years ago.

Ehiogu, who has four England caps to his name, has been a Boro regular alongside fellow former Villa defender Gareth Southgate but may now not return to Premiership action until Christmas.



PHOTO: AFP

LAST RITES: Military personnel carry the coffin of Marc Vivien Foe off the plane at the Yaounde Airport yesterday.

Cameroon in tears

REUTERS, Yaounde

Some fans wore black and others were dressed in the number 17 national team jersey worn by Cameroon's Marc Vivien Foe, who collapsed during his team's Confederations Cup semifinal win over Colombia nine days ago and died shortly later.

On occasions, mourners thronged into the road, blocking the cavalcade of 300 vehicles as they tried to pay last respects to the midfielder who died at the age of 28.

Fans waved placards reading "Marco, go in peace," or "Marco, a lion never dies, he is resting" -- the latter a reference to the national team's nickname, the Indomitable Lions. Grieving women fell to the ground as the

coffin passed.

Foe's body arrived at the airport on a special Cameroon Airlines flight, accompanied by his family and the national team.

After a brief religious ceremony and military honours, his body was taken on the 23-km (14-mile) memorial drive through the city.

Thousands had gathered at the airport to pay tribute. Mourners wailed as Foe's wife, Marie Louise, stepped off the plane with her children and other family members.

"Marc, so it is true that you are dead," said his father Martin Amougou Foe, tears rolling down his cheeks. "It is God's will. He gave me two sons, now he has taken away one."

Foe, who had 65 caps, featured

at two World Cups, 1994 and 2002, and twice won the African Nations Cup, in 2000 and 2002.

"He was a sportsman full of talent, generosity and humanity. We all miss him very dearly," said Kalkaba Malboum, head of the Cameroon's national Olympic committee and the African Athletics Federation.

Foe will be buried with full official honours on Monday, following a mass at Yaounde's cathedral. The burial will take place at the player's home.

The exact cause of his death is not yet known. The results of the autopsy are due next week and toxicology tests have been sent for analysis in Geneva.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter, thousands of soccer fans and a host of players paid tribute to Foe

at a memorial service in Lyons, France on Thursday.

Meanwhile, Foe's death has sparked a thriving cottage industry in memorabilia dedicated to the Cameroon international.

The Cameroon capital has been flooded with shirts, caps, scarves and T-shirts all bearing the 28-year-old footballer's name and his favourite number 17 position.

"Foe was my idol, the best player the Indomitable Lions have had," said Patrick Diffo, a retired civil servant kitted out in a Foe shirt and overlaid with other bits of Foe memorabilia.

"It's to pay him a tribute that I bought all these things for me and my family," he explained.

"We'll be wearing only this stuff up to the time Foe's laid to rest,"

declared Diffo pointing to the clothes he was carrying.

Prices vary from 2.29 euros (2.63 dollars) to 3.81 euros (4.37 dollars) for a T-shirt up to 22.90 euros (26.30 dollars) for a shirt.

One trader was unable to conceal his delight at his unexpected good fortune.

"The Cameroonians are only into buying Foe clothes, that means we're able to do good business - I've sold 600 shirts with Marco's name on them," said Joseph Mefire sitting in the shade in a corner of his shop in Yaounde's bustling commercial centre.

"I've virtually run out of stock," he said, rubbing his hands at the thought.

Iraq to play down under

Football

AFP, Perth

Iraq's national football side, attempting to rebuild after the disruptions of war, will play two games in Australia in November, officials confirmed here Saturday.

The matches will come only a few months after the United States-led invasion of Iraq in which Australia played a role.

Sporting promoter Tom Hoad said one match would be against the Australian under-23 team, known as the Olyroos, and the other with a Western Australian State League side or a composite National Soccer League team.

Both games had been approved by Soccer Australia and would be played in Perth, the Western Australian capital, Hoad said.

They would be at Perth's Subiaco Oval, a 42,000-capacity venue, or the Western Australia Cricket Association Ground -- known as the WACA -- which accommodates about 28,000, on dates in late November yet to be determined.

Hoad said the two-match package had been put together by Sport International Western Australia, with which he is senior project officer.

Sport International is an arm of the State Government's Department of Sport and Recreation.

Hoad said he expected soon to sign a major sponsorship which would pay for the cash-starved Iraqis to make the trip.

"We have two interested parties vying for the sponsorship," he said.

Western Australia-based Soccer Australia board member Paul Afkos said the Iraq players were expected to have a two-week camp in Perth to prepare for the games.

"Soccer Australia sees this as a tremendous goodwill gesture towards a country that has been battered for many years," he said.

"Sporting events are part of

bringing out the humanitarian support we can offer, as well as showing the goodwill that can be generated between two countries."

The Iraq team are coached by Bernd Stange, the former East German national coach, who was also in charge of Western Australian glamour side Perth Glory -- current Australian national champions -- until two seasons ago.

Stange recently appealed for international help in salvaging his team after the invasion.

He quit Iraq before the start of the war just three months after his appointment vowing to return to rebuild his team once hostilities had ended.

The 54-year-old has been exploring ways to get his side up and running again.

"Our aim is to save Iraqi football after the war," he told a press conference after his return.

Stange will be warmly welcomed in Perth, where he was credited with making the Glory side the trend-setting team of Australian football.

Porto get McCarthy

AFP, Lisbon

South African striker Benni McCarthy is set to sign for Portuguese champions Porto on a four-year contract, newspapers reported Saturday.

McCarthy has been at Celta Vigo in the Spanish first division for the last few years.

But he spent six months on loan with FC Porto early in 2002 and played six games in the Portuguese top flight.

Transfer talks based around a three million euro fee were successful late Friday and the deal will be clinched next week, A Bola and Record said.

Gascoigne bares his soul

Football

AFP, London

Paul Gascoigne believes David Beckham is the perfect role model both on and off the pitch and wishes he had been more like the Real Madrid player during his own troubled career, the former England international told a British newspaper published Saturday.

In a candid interview with The Sun, Gascoigne revealed that he was back with his wife following their stormy divorce, his ambition to be a successful manager and also gave an insight into his recent playing experience in China.

"I wish I'd handled my soccer career as well as David Beckham has," Gascoigne told the tabloid.

"Maybe if Beckham had played before me, I would have lived my life differently and taken some tips," he added.

"There is no greater example of how to handle the game, on or off the field, and make the most of it at the same time."

The former Tottenham and Newcastle star said Beckham had cracked the art of handling the media, something he never managed.

"I never learned the trick of using the media to your advantage instead of fighting with them. But David has got it off to an art. He smiles or he just walks on -- but never gets into those silly confrontations."

Gascoigne, who played in Italy for Lazio, said Beckham's move to Real Madrid was "a wonderful opportunity".

"If I can give him one word of advice, it would be to score a goal against Madrid's arch rivals Barcelona. If he does that, he will win everyone over in an instant. I scored for Lazio against their big city rivals Roma and I was made."

England captain Beckham was officially unveiled as a Madrid player earlier this week following

his move from Manchester United.

"When I saw David out there in Madrid, juggling a ball watched by all the screaming fans, it brought everything back to me," Gascoigne told Britain's biggest circulation daily.

"But I've had a good life in football. I've had 27 operations and still come back and I feel fit and happy for the first time in years. I want to prove to people I can be a great manager and I want to get my personal life sorted.

"If I can do that it will be my



PAUL GASCOIGNE

greatest achievement. David has got his goals and I've got mine. And I'm every bit as determined to achieve my goals as David is."

Meanwhile the 36-year-old revealed that he has been living with ex-wife Sheryl for six weeks. "Our relationship is very positive now. We are happy but we are not rushing things. We wanted to keep it quiet for as long as possible as we are taking one day at a time."

Gascoigne's ex-wife divorced him in 1998 over his violent drunken rages.

"Can you believe I beat her up just after our wedding (in 1996)? I think about that every day and I don't want to ever forget it. It reminds me of how low I was and why I can never be like that again," he said.

UEFA penalises Turkey



AFP, Nyon

Turkey were fined 50,000 Swiss francs (32,000 euros, 37,000 dollars) Friday for crowd trouble but allowed to play their potentially explosive match with England in October in front of their own fans.

European football's governing body UEFA launched an investigation after trouble in Istanbul saw fans throw bottles and coins at Macedonia players when the visitors took a 2-1 lead in a Euro 2004 qualifier in Istanbul in June.

World Cup semifinalists Turkey twice came from behind before winning the Group Seven match 3-2.

UEFA said the Turkish Football Federation were fined "for lack of order and security in the stadium".

The game against England on October 11 is Turkey's final home qualifying match. They currently head Group Seven by two points from England.

Only one team is guaranteed a place in the finals in Portugal in 2004 with the runner-up taking its chances in a play-off.

UEFA could have ordered Turkey to play England behind closed doors.

The English Football

Association has already refused its ticket allocation for the fixture in an attempt to stop troublemakers travelling.

England were fined 150,000 Swiss francs (120,000 dollars) following pitch invasions and racist chants during the match against Turkey at Sunderland in April.

Turkey have a history of crowd misbehaviour. In 1999 they were in trouble when fireworks were thrown and the pitch invaded in a game against Ireland.

They were also punished three times in 1998 for disciplinary offences, including the throwing of missiles and pitch invasions during games in a match against Finland, Germany and Northern Ireland.

At last month's Confederations Cup in France, Turkish fans invaded the pitch during the match against Brazil at St Etienne which finished 2-2 and led to the world champions being eliminated.

And Turkish midfielder Yildiray Basturk has predicted England will receive a 'welcome to hell' in Istanbul.

UEFA also slapped a 10,000 Swiss franc fine on Macedonia for celebrations by their players, which they said provoked the Turkish crowd.

Turkey and Macedonia can appeal against the ruling by July 7.

Hurry up, Barca tell Kluivert

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

Barcelona, eager to sort out their squad for next season, have demanded that striker Patrick Kluivert tells the club whether he plans to leave for a bargain basement fee.

Barcelona informed Kluivert at the end of last week they would not be paying a special annual bonus of 4.6 million euros (5.28 million dollars) agreed at his last contract revision.

Under the terms of the agreement, failure of the club to pay the bonus leaves Kluivert free to buy out his contract for 1.8 million euros. Reports from England say Newcastle United are among several clubs interested in signing the Dutchman.

His agent Sigi Lens told Barcelona this week that he had been unable to contact the player to find out about Kluivert's plans, a situation that is frustrating the club.

'The attitude is improper,' Barcelona's new president Joan Laporta told the club's television station on Thursday.

"I'm asking his representatives to take into account that they're dealing with a serious club, with 103 years of history. We're not going to accept this sort of attitude or them telling us again that they haven't managed to speak to their client."

New coach Frank Rijkaard has various plans for strengthening his squad, but until the Kluivert situation is resolved the club say their hands are tied.

Barcelona have proposed a new base salary of four million euros (4.59 million dollars) for Kluivert, rising as high as 7.9 million euros (9.06 million dollars) depending on matches played, goals scored and titles won.

If Kluivert does decide to leave, the club will use the money saved

on his contract to sign a replacement striker.

One target could be Roy Makaay of Deportivo Coruna, last season's Golden Shoe winner for Europe's best striker. The club are also talking with Valencia with a view to bringing in Argentina's Pablo Aimar.

Barcelona have already informed centre back Frank de Boer, midfielder Gaizka Mendietia, left back Juan Pablo Sorin and



PATRICK KLUIVERT

striker Alfonso that they will not be in next season's squad.

The only new player signed up is Turkish goalkeeper Rustu Recber who has joined on a free transfer from Fenerbahce.

Barcelona have also agreed a deal with Philip Cocu for the Dutch midfielder to stay on for another season.

Other players being looked at are Valencia's Argentine centre-back Roberto Fabian Ayala, Leeds United's Australian forward Harry Kewell and Monaco's Mexican defender Rafael Marquez.