Ronaldinho's path clear

Barca in the frame too

Football

AFP, Paris

Paris St Germain completed the signing of Portuguese striker Pauleta from Bordeaux on Thursday, opening the way for their Brazil World Cup winner Ronaldinho to go to Manchester

However, PSG president Francis Graille has claimed Barcelona have already made a better offer than United for Ronaldinho.

Barcelona were understood to have offered 27 million euros (31 million dollars) plus French defender Philippe Christanyal and Argentine midfielder Juan Roman

Howevver, French newspaper reports on Thursday doubted whether Barcelona would be able to come up with the money as they had already delayed paying Monaco the five million euros (5.6 million dollars) for the French club's Mexican defender Rafael

United were said to have offered 25 million euros plus additional payments based on the 23-year-old Ronaldinho's performance which

could raise the deal to 35 million euros (40 million dollars).

Last month, Barcelona failed to lure David Beckham to the Nou Camp with the England skipper preferring instead to move to Real

United said Wednesday they



RONALDINHO

would be going back to Paris in an attempt to sign the Brazilian.

Graille said a recent cash injection of 20 million euros (23 million dollars) by majority shareholders Canal Plus TV would allow him to

However, new coach Vahid Halilhodzic admitted there was only a slim chance now of naldinho staying.

"Just because we sign Pauleta esn't mean Ronaldinho has to go," he insisted before adding: "If I had been here a month earlier to talk things through with the player and his people I could have changed his mind."

The 30-year-old Pauleta was leading scorer in the French league last season with 23 goals.

Bordeaux confirmed his transfer to Paris in a statement. Reports put the fee at eight million euros (9

"He's the one player I had set my heart on," said Halilhodzic.

Manchester have refused to be drawn on their latest moves because as a listed company they cannot let details of their moves in the transfer market out before informing the Stock Exchange.

"We are pursuing our interest in the player," was all the club had to

Ronaldinho's brother and agent Roberto Assis has already agreed terms with united and United manager Alex Ferguson was reported to be poised to fly to Paris to clinch the deal

The corporate Nakata!

Football

Japanese football star Hidetoshi Jakata, whose future with Italian Serie-A side Parma is up in the air, is to use his head as a part-time corporate executive to help revive a Tokyo confectioner as well as nod

Sweet maker Tohato, restructuring itself after bankruptcy, said Thursday it has signed up the 26vear-old international midfielder as a "Chief Branding Officer" to help the company package new products and establish a code of conduct.

Nakata will participate in Tohato's weekly business strategy meetings once or twice a month from his Italian base by telephone video conferencing, a company spokesman said.

He will also take part remotely in Tohato's debate on management planning but not appear in

Blatter for

club cuts

adverts for the firm. Nakata already endorses a range of products in Japan including Vodafone mobile telephones and Canon digital

His contract will run for three years with an annual salary of 12 million yen (100,000 dollars).

"With my overseas perspective, I have been worried about Japan's lack of spirit," Nakata was quoted as telling the company. "I would be glad to cooperate if there is anything I can do to help revive a Japanese company."

Nakata, a high school graduate with a keen interest in mathematics, has said in the past he wanted a career outside football one day and might acquire qualifications in such professions as accounting.

Tohato filed for court protection from creditors in March with estimated liabilities of 46 billion ven (380 million dollars), which mostly derived from its excessive investment in real estate ventures such as golf courses.

Leeds feel cheated



AFP, Leeds

Australian international Harry Kewell was accused of effectively blackmailing his former financially troubled Premiership club Leeds into selling him for a cut price fee by the side's chairman John McKenzie on Wednesday.

McKenzie said that he had agreed a fee of 7million pounds (7.9million dollars) with Liverpool last Friday but 24-year old Kewell, and his agent Bernie Mandic, rejected it and threatened to walk out for nothing next summer when he will become a free agent.

Leeds, desperate for money, surrendered and agreed a 5million pound (5.7million dollars) fee with Liverpool on Wednesday of which 2million pounds went to Kewell and his advisors as a loyalty pay-

However, McKenzie wasted little time in blasting his former star player.

"I can say that I am angry and frustrated at the outrageous situa-tion that has developed over the

"The reality is that on Friday July 4 I agreed a deal of 7 million pounds with Liverpool Football Club, which Kewell and his agent refused to countenance.

"Instead they made it a condition of not doing a Bosman that we pay 2million pounds to Kewell's representatives, and Liverpool Football Club then reduced the fee to 5million pounds."

McKenzie also hinted that he thought the 2million differential between the original fee of 7 and the eventual fee of 5million might also have been paid to Kewell.

"What happened to the remaining 2million pounds, I believe I know, but only Liverpool or Harry Kewell could tell you.

McKenzie said that given the threats from the Australians the club had no option but to accept

"The Leeds PLC was therefore faced with the alternative of taking the net 3million pounds (plus saving 2.5 million pounds in wages) to enable Peter Reid to strengthen the squad or getting next to nothing, if rather like Lee Bowyer, Kewell did a Bosman. "And in Kewell's case, given his outburst on television and his indication he has been talking to Liverpool for six months, it would be impossible for

him to play for Leeds ever again. "So, sadly, the PLC felt it had no alternative but to accept the paltry

McKenzie, who replaced Peter Ridsdale in the post earlier this year after his predecessor accepted his role in the disastrous financial situtation at the club, slammed Kewell for his taking advantage of their parlous financial state which has seen several stars leave in the past year.

"I believe that Kewell and



HARRY KEWELL

Bernie Mandic have taken no account of the contribution Leeds has made to the player's develop-

"I am outraged that having threatened to walk away for nothing in 2004, they now seek to suggest that it is our fault that my PLC board felt the need to settle for such a small sum.

Earlier Mandic, speaking to Sky Sports News from Australia, had

claimed that Kewell had not asked for any money from the transfer from the club he has been with since 1995 and for whom he had scored 63 times in 242 first team

> The whole fee is way below the expected 7million pounds tag and which other clubs are believed to have offered for him.

The size of his loyalty bonus will also incense fans as he revealed in a television interview in Australia that he had been talking to Liverpool for the last six months, a large part of which the club had been fighting against relegation.

Kewell signed a five year contract worth 60,000 pounds a week with the club he supported since he was a boy and was handed the celebrated number seven shirt previously worn by legends Kevin egan and Kenny Dalglish.

Kewell was expected to fly out with the Liverpool squad to Switzerland on Thursday for a preseason training camp.

Kewell told Australian TV 'Channel Nine' earlier on Wednesday that money was not the overriding factor in his deci-

"I was offered a lot more money to go to different clubs so money wasn't a main factor.

family and obviously the coach. You can have all the money in the world but you want to look back on your own career and see the medals in the box and say 'yeah, I was in that final'."

Leeds fans were furious to have heard from Kewell he spent the last few months of last season talking to Liverpool about a move.

"It's a real insult," said Leeds supporters' spokesman John Boocock.

"It makes you wonder whether The deal was signed in Amsterdam after two days of talks his mind was fully on the job." between Galatasaray boss Ozhan Canaydin and the 33-year-old de

Legendary Argentine striker Gabriel Batistuta (R) shows a plaque given to him by the head of Argentina's Football Association Julio Grondona during a gala match to celebrate his country's first World Cup victory in 1978, at the

'Thank you Batigol'

Football

Asociacion del Futor

Argentino

AFP, Buenos Aires

Argentinian football great Gabriel Batistuta was given a special award for his record goalscoring exploits for the national side here on Wednesday during a friendly match to celebrate the 25th anniversary of their first World Cup

The 34-year-old scored 57 goals in 78 internationals but never tasted World Cup glory, the 1998 quarter-finals being the nearest he got to a final in three renewals.

De Boer goes

AFP, Istanbul

on its official website.

to Galatasaray

Dutch international defender

Frank de Boer on Wednesday

Reports had suggested last month that apart from Galatasaray, Turkey's Fenerbahce, Greek club Panathinaikos and English Premiership side Blackburn Rovers had been inter-

ested in signing de Boer, a former

AS Roma have been banned from international transfer deals by world soccer's governing body FIFA due to

an outstanding debt to a Peruvian

The ban means that Roma's 18

million euro transfer of Romanian

defender Cristian Chivu from Ajax

Amsterdam is now on hold until the

Serie A club can satisfy FIFA that they

first major signing of the close-season on Wednesday after agreeing

a five-year deal with the Italian side.

million euro transfer fee for the 22-

player cannot be completed due to

the Italian FA as per standard com-

international transfers has been

financial obligations to the Peruvian

the transfer of the player Gustavo

A spokesman for Roma declined

year-old central defender.

Chivu was unveiled as Roma's

Roma and Ajax have agreed an 18

But on Thursday FIFA said the

"FIFA has informed AS Roma, via

have settled the outstanding sum.

Chivu has

to wait

REUTERS, Milan

The former Inter Milan, AS Roma and Fiorentina star bade his farewell to his devoted fans, though he left open the unlikely possibility of him once again returning to the international fold from which he announced his retirement last summer after exiting at the first hurdle of the World Cup finals.

"I believe you will never see me again in the national colours," he

"However if I feel well physically well we will see," he added.

Batistuta is the latest former top class player to join the lucrative route to football in the tiny Gulf state of Oatar having joined Al-Arabi on a two year contract.

It was reported he would receive .5 million dollars for the first year and 2.5 million dollars for the

Qatar, with huge financial resources thanks to its oil and gas wealth, has attracted numerous ageing top-level players in recent months including 1994 Brazil World Cup winning striker Romario, France's 1998 World Cup winning defender Frank Leboeuf and German veterans Stefan Effenberg and Mario Basler.

Batistuta will be hoping for better fortune on the pitch than Romario, who returned to Brazil after just three months with Al-Saad having failed to score - though his bank balance swelled by

AFP, London

Football

The world's leading football championships should radically reduce the number of clubs in them so as to avoid a repeat of the tragic death of Cameroon international Marc-Vivien Foe, said FIFA supremo Sepp Blatter on Wednesday.

The Swiss told a press conference in London that he would put his proposal to the world governing body's congress in October in Doha, Qatar, and if accepted, take it to FIFA's centenary congress in Paris in May 2004 for ratification.

Blatter acknowledged that if successful it would take time for the measures to be adopted but he added it was high time that club football accepted that players were not machines that could be asked to play relentlesslv.

"We must do something otherwise we will never get off this carousel of too much football with no holidays for the players, injuries and even deaths," said Blatter, who attended the state funeral of Foe in the Cameroon capital Yaounde on Monday.

"The ideal number in a league should be 16, have 30 league matches and then Cup matches and international club

"I will bring this up in the congress in Doha where it can be discussed and then it shall be decided at the ordinary congress in May next year in Paris. "If such a decision is taken by

the congress I am sure everyone will abide by it, but it will not happen immediately, there needs to be time to adapt and it will take place step by step.' Foe died after collapsing in the 72nd minute of his coun-

try's Confederations Cup semifinal against Colombia in the French city of Lyon on June 26. The cause of death for the 28year-old Lyon midfielder, who

spent last season on loan at nglish Premiership side Manchester City, was diagnosed as a rare heart problem. Blatter's proposal received a muted response from English football's governing body, the Football Association (FA) - the

Premier League has 20 teams in it at the moment. "Clearly this is hypothetical and is not an issue of discussion

at this time. "However as a national association the English FA would always endeavour to abide by FIFA rules."

the reduced fee. Inter rope in Fadiga

AFP, Milan

Senegalese international midfielder Khalilou Fadiga signed for Italian giants Inter Milan on Wednesday from French Cup winners Auxerre for a fee of 3 million euros (3.4 million dollars), the buying club announced.

The 28-year-old signed a three year contract - thought to be worth 600,000 euros a year to him - with last season's Champions League semi-finalists.

Fadiga was inspirational in midfield for Senegal in last year's World Cup finals - scoring one goal - where they reached the quarterfinals before exiting to a golden goal by Turkey. The left sided midfielder, capped 32 times scoring three

times, had been involved in controversy before the tournament started when he had been charged with stealing a gold necklace from jewellers in the Korean city of Daegu. However, he said the affair had been a prank gone wrong and returned the necklace while the

charges were dropped after the store keeper asked the police to do It allowed the team to concentrate on their opening match with then holders France - it did the trick

as Senegal sensationally beat them Fadiga, who holds a Belgian passport after spending six years there in which he won the Belgian title with FC Bruges, had a successful season with Auxerre following the World Cup playing 34 times and scoring just once, finishing on a high note when they lifted the French Cup after beating Paris Saint Germain 2-1.



President of the African Football Confederation Issa Hayato (L) shakes hands with his Asian counterpart, Qatar's Mohammed bin Hamam (C) while the president of the Lebanese football confederation Hashem Haidar looks

on after their press conference in the Beirut on July 9. AFC, CAF friends

Football

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and its African counterpart have buried the hatchet following their bitter three-year row over the

2006 World Cup vote. The Confederation of African Football (CAF) snapped all relations with the AFC after Asia voted for Germany instead of South Africa in the closely-contested 2006 World Cup ballot three years

Furious CAF officials accused Asia of betrayal after Germany scraped home to leave South Africa

All contacts between the two continental associations were scrapped, meaning the end of Afro-Asian club and national team competitions, as well as exchange programmes for match officials.

However both the AFC and CAF have now decided to put the row behind them, a statement released here Thursday said.

AFC President Mohamed Bin Hammam held a meeting with African soccer chief Issa Hayatou in Beirut Wednesday where the two bodies announced the resumption of relations.

"I am delighted to be re-Vassallo Ferrari, have been met," a establishing firm links with the Confederation Africaine de FIFA spokesman said. Football, as our friends and brothers in the development of football, bin Hammam said.

Teixeira again

Football

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

signed a two-year contract with 2001 UEFA Cup champions Galatasaray after his release by Barcelona, the Istanbul club said Ricardo Teixeira was elected president of the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) for the fifth successive time Wednesday amid a battle of court orders.

> times world champions" party, beat Carlos Alberto Oliveira by 46 votes to one with two abstentions. His latest victory comes two years after a Congressional investigation accused him of tax evasion and

Teixeira, standing for the "Five-

The result was briefly suspended when Itamar Vasconcelos, a member of Oliveira's opposition group,

described his administration as

"negligent.

won an injunction from a court in the city of the Belo Horizonte, which ruled the electoral college was too

injunction. "Do you think that the CBF would organise an election, with the backing of all the clubs, knowing that the result could be overturned," said the CBF in a statement. "Of course not.

within four hours, overturning the

Some people just want to appear." The presidents of Brazil's 27 regional soccer federations and 22 of the country's biggest clubs voted, but critics claimed the second and third division clubs should also be allowed

Teixeira, who has been in charge of the CBF since 1989, described the election as totally democratic.

Brazil has won the 1994 and 2002 World Cups since Teixeira, a member of FIFA's executive committee, took over and they also reached the final in 1998. It now has an But the CBF said Wednesday that unequalled five World Cup wins to its it had won a court order of its own

> the tournament would be held in South America and the presidents of the continent's 10 national associations unanimously backed Brazil as their only candidate.

The country is also set to host the

2014 World Cup after FIFA decided

But Teixeira has also been involved in controversy.

In 2000, the Brazilian Congress began a two-pronged investigation into alleged corruption and mismanagement in Brazilian football with the CBF among its targets.

The Senate's investigation ended with a 1,600-word report, which

accused 16 leading club and federation directors -- including Teixeira -of tax evasion, fraudulent foreign exchange operations and illegally pocketing the funds of their federa-

Teixeira said the clubs had persuaded him to change his mind after he said last year that he would not stand again. "They put pressure on me, I thought and I accepted," he said. "How many federations have man-

tions or clubs.

aged to get to three (successive) World Cup finals. Teixeira also guaranteed that under-fire national team coach Carlos Alberto Parreira would keep his job until the 2006 World Cup.

"I'm absolutely sure," he said. "I didn't choose him to take charge of two games, it's a project.'



to comment but the club is expected VISA ASSURED! The Brazil under-23 squad take a photo with the US ambassador in Mexico Antonio Garza (second from L) as they wait for their visa in to make a statement later on Mexico City on July 9, 2003. The team was headed to the United States to partake in the upcoming CONCACAF Gold Cup tournament.