



Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon answers to journalists' questions at the National Technical Centre of Coverciano in Florence on Tuesday.

Juve sure Trezeguet staying

Juventus director Alessio Secco insisted Tuesday that France international David Trezeguet will not leave the scandal-hit Turin club to join English Premiership giants Manchester United.

According to Italian media reports, United have tabled a take-it-or-leave-it bid of 15 million pounds (28.5 million dollars) for the 28-year-old striker, but Juve are certain Trezeguet is staying put.

"David will stay with us," Secco was quoted as saying by the Gazzetta dello Sports' website just two days before the transfer window closes.

"He's happy to stay in Turin. Even if he is a little bit sad, he will remain here." Media reports in Italy and France said Trezeguet's father Jorge was in Manchester over the weekend talking to United officials, who are looking for a striker to replace Dutch international Ruud van Nistelrooy.

The Gazzetta dello Sport newspaper had reported Tuesday that United are prepared to offer Trezeguet a four-year contract worth six million euros (7.7 million dollars) a year.

Juventus have already lost most of their star players following their relegation to Serie B for match-fixing.

Trezeguet, who has been at Juventus since the start of the 2000-01 season, is also understood to be a target for French champions Lyon and Real Madrid.

Trezeguet has scored 125 goals in his six seasons with Juventus: 95 in 151 Serie A matches, 27 in 43 Champions League matches, two in the Italian Cup and one in the Italian SuperCup.

Villa complete Petrov swoop

Aston Villa signed Bulgaria midfielder Stilian Petrov from Scottish champions Celtic on Wednesday.

Petrov agreed a four-year contract with the English Premiership club, who confirmed the move on their website and will pay Celtic a transfer fee of around seven million pounds.

The deal had stalled as Celtic refused to accept Villa's valuation of the former CSKA Sofia player, but they finally agreed when an additional appearance-based one million pounds was added to the fee.

Petrov becomes Villa manager Martin O'Neill's first signing since he took charge earlier in August and reunites the pair who worked together at Celtic.

O'Neill has a large transfer kitty after American billionaire Randy Lerner took over the club recently and is expected to move for Barcelona's Argentina striker Javier Saviola before the transfer deadline on Thursday.

Kohler at Ivorian helm

REUTERS, Abidjan

Former West Germany defender Jurgen Kohler has been named Ivory Coast's new coach, charged with getting the team to the 2008 African Nations Cup finals, the Ivorian football federation said on Wednesday.

Kohler, who made 105 international appearances, winning the World Cup in 1990, succeeds Frenchman Henri Michel, who quit after taking the team to the World Cup finals in June.

Kohler, who has signed a two-year contract with the Elephants, was sacked as coach of MSV Duisburg in April.

Ice cool Buffon

AFP, Rome

Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon believes the Azzurri can handle the extra weight of expectation that comes with being world champions.

"As world champions we carry with us a great responsibility," said the 28-year-old Juventus star ahead of Italy's first two Euro 2008 qualifying matches.

"But the experience will help us and we're still very hungry for success."

Italy play against Lithuania on Saturday and then travel to Paris to face France, whom they beat in last month's World Cup final after a penalty shoot-out, the following Wednesday.

Buffon added: "Everybody will be looking at us differently now. Against France what is important is that we don't lose."

"We must prove that it wasn't just by chance that we beat them in Berlin."

Buffon said he was glad that he didn't have to think about spot-kicks this time around.

"At least there won't be penalties on Wednesday," he joked.

While most of Juventus' stars have left the club following their relegation to Serie B for match-fixing, Buffon has decided to stick with the club he joined from Parma in 2001.

"Many feel his decision will be harmful to his career, but Buffon feels he has made the right decision."

"I've decided to stay and I have no regrets, even if it is regarded negatively from a professional point of view," he said.

Celtic secure Gravesen

AFP, Glasgow

Scottish champions Celtic have signed Denmark midfielder Thomas Gravesen from Real Madrid for an undisclosed fee on Wednesday.

Gravesen, 30, agreed a three-year contract with the option of a further year's extension after talks with Celtic boss Gordon Strachan on Tuesday.

The former Everton player had been told by Real manager Fabio Capello he could leave the Bernabeu after a training ground

row with Brazil forward Robinho in pre-season.

The tough-tackling Dane, who has now linked up with his country ahead of their forthcoming Euro 2008 qualifiers, told Celtic's website: "When I was made aware of Celtic's interest, naturally, I was very keen to talk to the club and now having spoken to the manager, the chief executive and other people at the club, I am very excited about this move."

"The team did brilliantly last season to win the Championship and together we will be trying to retain the title and do as well as we can in the Champions League."

"I know other Danish players who have had the opportunity to play with Celtic and they have nothing but great things to say about the club."

"I have also visited Celtic Park for matches, where the atmosphere is tremendous and I am very much looking forward to playing there."

Strachan added: "Thomas has shown great desire to play for Celtic and it is very clear that he is looking forward to joining the club."

"He is a player with great ability, experience and character, qualities which could enhance any team."



Bayern Munich's new recruit Mark van Bommel (L) shares a light moment with teammate Hasan Salihamidzic during a training session in Munich on Tuesday.

Vieri joins Atalanta

AFP, Rome

Journeyman striker Christian Vieri has signed a one-year contract with Atalanta, the newly-promoted Serie A side has confirmed.

The 33-year-old forward was out of contract after a brief and unhappy spell with Sampdoria and returns to the club he left 10 years ago to join Juventus.

Vieri didn't even take part in a single training session at Sampdoria and left three weeks ago.

According to Italian media reports, Vieri has agreed to a minimum monthly wage deal of 1,500 euros (1,900 dollars) with Atalanta, but has been given the added incentive of 100,000 euros (128,329 dollars) for every goal he scores.

Vieri missed out on going to the World Cup with Italy after suffering a knee injury while playing for Monaco in France.

Nicknamed 'Bobo', Australian-born Vieri has also played for Lazio, Inter Milan and AC Milan in Italy, and for Spanish club Atletico Madrid.

He was Serie A's top scorer in the 2002-03 season with 24 goals in 23 appearances for Inter Milan, with whom he played from 1999 to 2005. Atalanta were champions of Serie B last season.

Mido itching for action

AFP, London

Egypt striker Mido said Tuesday he can't wait to pull a Tottenham shirt back on after agreeing to rejoin Spurs from Roma.

Mido had spent the last 18 months on loan at the English Premiership club but returned to Italy in May after the clubs were unable to agree on a permanent deal.

Tottenham boss Martin Jol was determined to bring Mido back to White Hart Lane and has finally come to an agreement with the player and the Italian club.

The move will be completed when Mido is granted a work permit. Jol told Tottenham's website: "We've been tracking Mido since his loan ended and we were always keen to bring him back."

"Roma took some persuading and I'm delighted to have him in the squad. He knows I like him as a player, his strength in the air and his mentality. It's an excellent addition to the squad and our striking options are now complete."

Tottenham have suffered a poor start to the new Premiership season, losing two of their first three games, but former Ajax and Marseille star Mido can't wait to get back into action.

He will compete with Robbie Keane, Dimitar Berbatov and Jermaine Defoe for a place in Jol's forward line and said: "I'm very happy to be back. It was and it always will be a great honour for me to play for Tottenham."

"I always knew in my heart I would be coming back. It is a fantastic move for me. I can't wait to pull on a Tottenham shirt, to play at the Lane and score some goals."

Sorin close to Hamburg switch

AFP, Hamburg

SV Hamburg hope to pull off a major transfer coup before the transfer deadline with Argentina international captain Juan Pablo Sorin expected for a medical on Wednesday.

Hamburg are said to have agreed a three-million-euro deal with Spanish side Villareal for Sorin and pending a medical the Argentine left back is due to sign a three-year contract before Thursday's deadline.

"We hope that he is in Hamburg on Wednesday," said Hamburg spokesman Jorn Wolf to SportBild magazine.

The 30-year-old Sorin, capped 75 times by his country, will not stay long in Germany as Argentina play a friendly against Brazil in London on Sunday.

"Sorin is captain of the Argentina national team and a class act," said Hamburg sporting director Dietmar Beiersdorfer.

"We have a very young team and it is good if we have some experienced players like Sorin have been tested regularly at top level."

"Negotiations are at an advanced stage but the deal is not done."

Qualification for the Champions League has given Hamburg extra funds and the German club paid AZ Alkmaar six million euros for Dutch international defender Joris Mathijsen last week.

Hamburg also offloaded Dutch defender Khalid Boulharouz to English Premiership champions Chelsea in a deal worth 10.3 million euros.

Ronaldo makes light of bust-up

AFP, London

Cristiano Ronaldo claims reports of a bust-up with Manchester United teammate Wayne Rooney after Portugal's World Cup quarterfinal win were, like England's penalties that day, wide of the mark.

Ronaldo became public enemy number one in England for his perceived role in Rooney's red card and infamous wink to his bench once his United colleague had received his marching orders.

But the Portugal winger insisted he had no regrets over his behaviour in Gelsenkirchen when he urged the referee to send Rooney off for stamping on Ricardo Carvalho.

"Throughout my career I have always defended in any circumstances my country. It could be that my best friends play for other teams but firstly I will defend my country and my shirt," said Ronaldo.

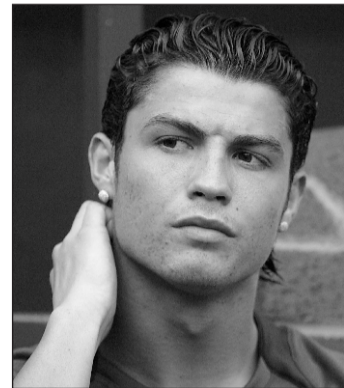
"Secondly, what actually happened was absolutely normal -- and I think any player who was in my situation would have done the same. And thirdly I haven't had any problem with Rooney."

"He is my colleague and my friend

and we continue to get along fine. "After the game he congratulated me, told me Portugal had an excellent team and he told me to carry on."

"Everything that was said about that was a lie."

Ronaldo has been the target of



CRISTIANO RONALDO

jeering from rival fans in England but the 21-year-old insists he's able to take the flak from the terraces.

"I won't give any importance to the whistles or the insults," he told Wednesday's Daily Mail.

'Knuckle down Owen'

AFP, Munich

Bayern Munich captain Oliver Kahn has told teammate Owen Hargreaves to roll up his sleeves and accept the fact that his dream of joining English titans Manchester United is now over.

Despite having a contract at Bayern until June 2010 England international Hargreaves openly declared his wish to sign for United after the club lodged a reported 25-million-euro bid.

Bayern proved unwilling to play ball and Kahn said Hargreaves now had to put it all behind him.

"Professional football is not always what you want," Kahn told German television channel DSF.

"I can't sign a contract for three or four years and then disappear at the first opportunity."

"I have to be professional and turn in good performances. You have to do that."

The 25-year-old Hargreaves was dropped for Bayern's last two matches -- with flu cited the official reason for his absence -- but Kahn said he was a vital member of the team.

"We want to achieve all our targets and we need all our good players. It was certainly not a good idea to sell Owen Hargreaves to one of our rivals," Kahn added.

"He is an England international and I think he has a better chance on the international stage at Bayern than at Manchester United."

FIFA backs Makelele

BBC ONLINE, undated

Fifa has hinted that Chelsea's Claude Makelele could have gone through with his decision to quit internationals.

France coach Raymond Domenech angered Chelsea by threatening him with a club ban if he declined a call-up for Euro 2008 clashes with Georgia and Italy.

But Fifa spokesman Andreas Herren has revealed a player can quit providing he informed his country before a call-up.

And BBC Sport has now learned Makelele wrote to FFF director general Jacques Lambert 48 hours before he was picked.

Chelsea coach Jose Mourinho accused France of treating the 33-year-old like a "slave" by ignoring his wish to quit - and Makelele has since agreed to play for his country again.

Herren told AFP: "The general situation is that any player is free to decide that he is not playing for his national team."

"There is no Fifa rule to prevent any player stopping his international career, that's up to him."

"The one thing that has to be considered is that the intention to leave a national team, or put an end to an international career, needs to be communicated prior to a specific summons."

And BBC Sport understands that Makelele did this by faxing a letter to Lambert before a meeting at Chelsea's training ground between Domenech, coach Jose Mourinho and chief executive Peter Kenyon on 22 August - and two days before the squad was announced.

Chelsea are likely to point to the letter as proof that they and Makelele followed the correct

procedures, and he was within his rights to go through with his decision to quit, first announced after the World Cup final defeat against Italy in Berlin.

Domenech took a hardline

stance on Makelele's international career, warning him he would face a two-game suspension at club level for every game he declined to play for France.



CLAUDE MAKELELE

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS 1 Moment the food 2 Continen- tal coin 26 Cold War abbr. 4 Tummy muscles 41 Hire 43 Altar 4 Jungfrau, for one 7 Rainbow 11 Greek liqueur 44 Channel marker 6 Staghorn, e.g. 13 Gossett or Gehrig 46 Water- logged 7 Sondheim musical 31 - Plains 37 53 Also 8 Caviar base 35 Tackle moguls 41 55 Clinton opponent 9 - Got 38 Ad- dresser 40 Sullivan and McMahon 42 Famous 45 Bygone times 47 Twain called it "a good walk spoiled" 48 Smooth-talking 49 Bigfoot's kin 50 Winter ailment 51 Melody 52 "Amazing Race" episode 54 Scepter topper

Grid for Cryptiquip puzzle with letters L S B N R Z L T U D N X X U D O L P F S C Z A U X R V N X A C P E V B O J A E N U A O J C O V C T U B N R C S L D O L N P X L F J O U X ? Saturday's Cryptiquip: I WOULD SAY A GROUP OF BIGWIGS FOR A PROMINENT ATLANTA UNIVERSITY IS AN EMORY BOARD. Today's Cryptiquip Clue: B equals Y

The Cryptiquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.