

Klinsmann hints at return

AFP, Berlin

Juergen Klinsmann dropped a sizeable hint that he may return to the managerial ranks in time for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

Klinsmann is back home enjoying life in California "taking my kids to school" having retired four days after guiding Germany into third in this year's World Cup finals.

"At the moment I'm really happy to be able to lead a normal life, taking my kids to school," he told a meeting of World Cup managers organised by world football's governing body FIFA here by video link.

But Klinsmann, who turned down overtures from the German Football Federation to sign a new contract to steer Germany through qualification to Euro 2008, added that he had not ruled out a return to the dug out.

"Who knows, perhaps I'll be a manager once again at the 2010 World Cup," he said.

Since his return to the United States Klinsmann's name has been linked with the US team, a rumour that he has consistently denied.

Theo Zwanziger, the newly elected president of the German Football Federation, raised another possible avenue when he suggested recently that Klinsmann "might take charge of a team in Africa".

FIFA VP facing expulsion

INTERNET, undated

FIFA's controversial vice-president Jack Warner faces a fight to avoid expulsion from the organisation after being engulfed by another World Cup ticket scandal.

Warner, from Trinidad and Tobago, has been identified in a report by auditors Ernst & Young as having sold World Cup tickets at up to three times their face value.

In their confidential report to FIFA, the accountants say: "We can confirm that tickets included in orders under customer reference 201498572 (Mr Jack Warner) were transferred or resold into the secondary market in breach of the 2006 FIFA World Cup Germany ticketing general terms and conditions."

The issue will now be dealt with at FIFA's executive committee meeting in Zurich on Friday. FIFA took tough action against another senior executive, Ismail Bhamjee, during the World Cup when he was discovered to have sold tickets to fans for profit and was sent home to Botswana in disgrace.

FIFA spokesman Andreas Herren said: "These auditors' reports do indeed exist and the matter will be discussed in the executive committee this Friday at the request of Jack Warner."

According to the Ernst & Young report, which has been published on www.transparencyinsport.org, the auditors were called in on June 20 when the boss of a Swiss travel firm named Antonio Gallicchio complained to FIFA that he had not received a number of World Cup tickets, with a cover price of 100 euros, that he was paying 400 euros each for.

He had bought the tickets from a Florida-based agency called Kick Sports but Ernst & Young traced the source of the tickets to Warner.

LeRoy appointed Ghana coach

REUTERS, Accra

Frenchman Claude Leroy has been named as coach of World Cup finalists Ghana, the country's football association confirmed on Wednesday.

LeRoy will take over next week and be in charge of Ghana's Asian trip next month when they play both Japan and South Korea in friendly internationals.

He replaces the Serbian Ratomir Djukovic, who resigned after Ghana reached the second round of the World Cup finals in Germany in June in their first appearance at the tournament.

The African coaching veteran has a two-year contract to the 2008 African Nations Cup finals, which Ghana will host, officials said.

In 1988, LeRoy led a Cameroon side, including the likes of Roger Milla, to the Nations Cup title at the tournament played in Morocco, where they beat Nigeria in the final.

The Frenchman was also Cameroon's coach 20 years ago when they reached the deciding match at the 1986 Nations Cup finals in Egypt but lost to the hosts on post-match penalties.

In 1992 Le Roy coached hosts Senegal to a quarterfinal place and this year took charge of the Democratic Republic of Congo's team, which also reached the last eight.

Barcelona off to a flyer

AFP, Barcelona



Barcelona got their defence of the Champions League off to a flying start by giving out a 5-0 thrashing to

Levski Sofia despite torrential rain, in their Group A match on Tuesday. Seeking to become the first team to retain Europe's top club trophy since AC Milan achieved the feat in 1990, Barca tormented the Bulgarians with goals from Andres Iniesta, Ludovic Giuly, Carles Puyol, Samuel Eto'o and Ronaldinho.

"I'm very happy that we won in such a fashion. It's always good to make a winning start to the Champions League, especially at home," said Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard, after their biggest win in a Champions League opening match.

"The first thing was to get the win, in the Champions League you have to respect every opponent. After that, yes, it was satisfying to score so many goals," added the Catalan club's captain Puyol.

Barca took to the pitch with seven of the men who also started when the Catalans beat Arsenal 2-1 in last season's Champions League final in Paris and almost immediately showed their class.

Iniesta, a substitute in Paris opened the scoring after just six minutes with a wonderfully struck right foot shot from just outside the area after Eto'o had pulled the ball

back from the penalty spot.

The heavens opened midway through the first half but the downpour didn't dampen Barca's enthusiasm for running up a big score and Giuly added their second after 39 minutes.

Eto'o again showed that not only can he score goals but he can create them as well by laying off the ball for Giuly, who was running down the right wing.

The Frenchman, perhaps with something to prove to national team coach Raymond Domenech who left him out of the World Cup squad and continues to give him the cold shoulder, hit another gear and went past two Bulgarians before finding the net.

Giuly nearly had another four minutes later and only the agility of Levski keeper Georgi Petkov kept the deficit down to two goals at half-time.

However, Barca's fans were soon singing in the rain again when club captain Puyol scored the team's third goal four minutes after the break.

Puyol got his first goal in eight years of European football, seven of which have been Champions League campaigns, when he was on hand to slot home a loose ball after Ronaldinho's curling free-kick had hit the post.

After being surprisingly left on the bench for Barcelona's 3-0 league win over Osasuna, some might see Puyol's improved form after some lacklustre outings as a victory for the psychological exper-

tise of Rijkaard.

"I have a lot of respect for my team mate who took my place and accept the decision of the coach, who puts on the pitch who he feels will do the best job. That was the case on Saturday, it's the case tonight," said Puyol.

"We have a lot of players and because of the World Cup they started the pre-season all at different times. Nobody has played 90 minutes in our first six official games so far. There is still a diversity of physical fitness among the squad," added Rijkaard, defending his policy of rotations.

Eto'o, after doing sterling service for the rest of the team, got himself on the scoresheet just before the hour.

Deco put the ball to the feet of Eto'o just outside the area.

The three-time African Player of the Year then danced his way around a myriad of now-demoralised Levski defenders before putting the ball into the net between the legs of Elin Topuzakov and the outstretched arms of Petkov.

Petkov proved his credentials as an international goalkeeper by stopping both Eto'o and second-half substitute Eidur Gudjohnsen scoring late in the game before Ronaldinho finished off the fiesta two minutes into injury time.

"They were clearly superior. It's no coincidence that they are one of the best teams in the world," said Levski coach Stanimir Stoilov, knowing his team had been able to do little to stop Barca running rampant.



YOU SCORED? Barcelona defender Carles Puyol (L) celebrates his goal against Levski Sofia with striker Samuel Eto'o during their Champions League match at the Nou Camp in Barcelona on Tuesday.

Torres extends Atletico contract

REUTERS, Madrid

Spain striker Fernando Torres has agreed a contract extension with Atletico Madrid until 2009, the Primera Liga club said on Wednesday.

"It is an important day for the club and it's fans because Torres is more than just another player," Atletico said in a statement on their Web site.

"He was developed through our youth system and for some time now has been the reference for the club on and off the pitch.

"He is an example for all the youth players who dream of playing in the Vicente Calderon one day."

The official presentation of his one-year extension will take place on Sept. 19.

The 22-year-old international was a reported target for Manchester United and Inter Milan after the World Cup, but he rejected their approaches to stay with Atletico.

Torres joined the club aged 11, scored his first goal with the first team in May 2001, and has been their leading scorer in each of the last four seasons.

He has notched up 14 goals in 37 appearances with Spain.

After a disappointing 10th-place finish in the league last year Atletico have spent around 50 million euros (64 million dollars) reinforcing their squad and are expecting to challenge for a Champions League place this season.

Tristan returns to Mallorca

REUTERS, Madrid

Former Deportivo Coruna striker Diego Tristan has agreed a move to Real Mallorca, the Primera Liga club said on Wednesday.

"Mallorca have reached an agreement with Tristan that will see the player return for his second spell at the club," Mallorca said on their Web site.

He will be presented later in the day subject to passing a medical.

The 30-year-old former Spain international negotiated a release from his contract with Depor at the end of August after being told he did not feature in Joaquin Caparros's plans.

Tristan had a two-year spell at Mallorca between 1998 and 2000, and ended up as the club's leading scorer with 18 goals in the 1999-2000 season.

From there he moved on to Deportivo and in 2002 helped them win the King's Cup, and ended the season as the Primera Liga's top scorer with 21 goals.

Mallorca have drawn their opening two league games this season.

Lennon recovers

REUTERS, Tottenham

Tottenham Hotspur's England winger Aaron Lennon has recovered from a knee injury and will travel to Prague for this week's UEFA Cup first-round, first-leg tie against Slavia Prague, the club said on Tuesday.

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Goalless start for Liverpool

AFP, Eindhoven



Liverpool's bid to reclaim the Champions League trophy they won in 2005 got off to a solid start with a goalless draw away to PSV Eindhoven here on Tuesday.

Given Liverpool's shaky domestic form, a first clean sheet of the season will have come as a welcome relief for Rafael Benitez and Dirk Kuyt's impressive leading of the attack on his Champions League debut offered further evidence that the Liverpool boss invested the club's money prudently this summer.

PSV had the better chances but Liverpool could easily have snatched all three points in the closing minutes when Steven Gerrard, who had started on the bench, hooked a shot against the inside of the post from 20 yards.

Roma breeze past Shakhtar

AFP, Rome



Roma rode their luck before scoring four goals in the last 23 minutes to secure an emphatic 4-0 win against Shakhtar Donetsk in their opening Champions League Group D match here on Tuesday.

The visiting Ukrainians could have had Roma in trouble but for poor finishing, and they were made to pay dearly as the hosts ran riot late on for a result which flattered them.

Rodrigo Taddei broke the stalemate at the Olympic stadium, before further strikes from Francesco Totti, Daniele De Rossi and David Pizarro rubbed salt into Shakhtar's wounds.

Shakhtar coach Mircea Lucescu, who spent several years coaching in Serie A, including a spell at Inter Milan, felt his team had been robbed.

Ciprian Marica escaped his

Benitez's decision to drop Gerrard -- perhaps with Sunday's Premiership trip to Arsenal in mind -- was one of six changes from the side that had started Saturday's 3-0 derby defeat by Everton.

With Craig Bellamy's pace allied to Kuyt's presence up front, Liverpool looked dangerous on the counter attack in the early stages, although it was PSV who were first to seriously threaten.

A slack pass by Mohamed Sissoko gifted possession to Ivory Coast international Arouna Kone in the middle of midfield and his direct run was followed by a shot from the edge of the area that struck the crossbar.

Liverpool survived another scare when Dutch under-21 midfielder Ibrahim Afellay unleashed a sweetly struck left-foot shot that produced a good save from Jose Reina, diving to his right.

Liverpool's approach work offered plenty of encouragement for the visitors but PSV continued

to enjoy the better opportunities after the break, and Kone should have done much better after being played in behind rightback Steve Finnan just before the hour mark.

With only Reina to beat, the PSV striker lost his composure and the Spanish goalkeeper was able to block his scuffed shot.

At the other end, Kuyt underlined his ability to make things happen by winning a loose ball in the centre circle, charging to the edge of the area and firing a shot just inches wide of the upright.

With just under 20 minutes left, Bellamy made way for Gerrard and the England midfielder came agonisingly close to securing all three points for Liverpool in the 89th minute.

With his back to goal in the inside right channel, Gerrard volleyed a bouncing ball towards the opposite corner of the net only to see his opportunistic strike rebound across the goalmouth.

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Valencia striker Fernando Morientes (L) is hugged by defender Carlos Marchena after completing his hat-trick during their Champions League match against Olympiakos at Athens on Tuesday.

Fernando fires Valencia

REUTERS, Athens



Former Real Madrid striker Fernando Morientes gave new club Valencia the perfect start in the Champions League on Tuesday with a hat-trick in a 4-2 win in over Olympiakos Piraeus.

Morientes, who had also scored in the 3-0 home win against Salzburg in the third qualifying round, was on target twice in the first half as Valencia overturned a one-goal deficit.

He completed his hat-trick in the 90th minute with a powerful header that left Greece international goalkeeper Antonios Nikopolidis with no chance.

"Today we won because of our attack. It was the element of our game that worked the best and meant that in the end we did not pay for our mistakes," said Valencia

coach Quique Sanchez Flores.

"It was a good result on a bad surface and in front of a hostile crowd."

The scoreline, however, flattered the Spanish club who spent much of the game soaking up Olympiakos pressure. The Greek side might even have won had Rivaldo not missed a great opportunity with the score tied at 2-2.

The Brazilian was prominent in the early part of the game when the Greek champions created a number of good chances, notably his own free kick from the edge of the area that Santiago Canizares did well to palm away.

Olympiakos finally made the breakthrough in the 28th minute when Michalis Konstantinou latched on to a good through ball and popped it past the bleach-blond Valencia goalkeeper.

Morientes, who had a spell at Liverpool last season, struck back six minutes later when a David Villa cross found him unmarked in front of goal and five minutes after that he followed up to fire home after

Nikopolidis had saved from Miguel Angel Angulo.

Olympiakos came back in the second half and levelled through a wonderful strike from 22-year-old Uruguayan Nery Alberto Castillo on 66 minutes but Rivaldo's miss proved fatal as they conceded two goals from corners in the last five minutes.

First Raul Albiol pounced on a scrambled clearance to rifle the ball into the net and Morientes, who helped Monaco reach the 2004 final, completed his hat-trick.

The result was disappointing for the home side but Olympiakos coach Trond Sollied preferred to see the positives.

"It was a very strange football game where the result could have gone either way," he said.

"There are still 15 points to play for and I still think we can go through. Our aim is to make sure that we are still playing European football in the winter, whether it is in the Champions League or in the UEFA Cup."



AS Roma captain Francesco Totti (L) embarks on his trademark celebration alongside teammate Daniele de Rossi after scoring a stunning goal against Shakhtar Donetsk in their Champions League encounter on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP