



Juan Roman Riquelme (C), Barcelona's new signing from Argentina is being welcomed by fans at Barcelona's El Prat Airport yesterday.

Riquelme arrives

Football

INTERNET, Barcelona

The Nou Camp boardroom was packed with reporters at lunchtime on Monday as Barcelona's Argentine sensation Juan Roman Riquelme was finally presented to the press.

More than 48 different media organisations were on hand, including five from Argentina, as more than 100 reporters packed the area to get their first glimpse of Barca's new signing.

After arriving in Barcelona in the morning, Riquelme passed his medical at the club and was obviously keen to make a good impression despite his evident tiredness after his marathon flight.

Barca's new star signing landed at Barcelona airport after a fourteen hour transatlantic flight to be greeted by a sea of fans desperate to get their first glimpse of the Argentinean.

After his official presentation, the 24-year-old playmaker was due for his first training session with the rest of the squad.

Meanwhile, The first team squad was put through a series of medical and physical tests behind closed doors at the Nou Camp in the morning.

The players were split into two groups, with Philip Cocu, Dani, Frank de Boer, Gabri, Geovanni, Gerard, Patrick Kluivert, Enke, Michael Reiziger and Fabio Rochembach going through the medical tests whilst Javier Saviola, Luis Garcia, Victor, Navarro, Tortolero, Trashorras, Babangida, David Sanchez and Santamaria were put through their paces on the training ground.

No stars in Perez's sky

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

A lack of star quality in the transfer market is making it difficult for Real Madrid to make any signings this year, says club president Florentino Perez.

Real, who won the European Cup for the ninth time last season, broke the transfer record twice in Perez's first two years in charge to bring in Luis Figo for \$56 million from Barcelona and Zinedine Zidane for \$66 million from Juventus.

Real's sporting chief Jorge Valdano recently let slip to reporters that the club were in the market for a central defender and a forward but Perez is now warning there may be no new arrivals.

"The club's policy is to bring in genuine stars and there aren't many of them about," Perez said in an interview with Spanish sports daily

Later the two groups were to swap activities.

The physical tests, carried out under the eye of Paco Seirul-lo and Dr. Segura aim to check the players' speed and resistance levels, whilst the medical tests include cardiovascular examinations and various checks on the players' bodies.



Barcelona's Dutch international Frank de Boer going through some tests on the treadmill at the Club's medical facilities yesterday.



FLORENTINO PEREZ

Inamoto loaned to Fulham

Football

AFP, London

Fulham have signed Junichi Inamoto of Japan on a one-year loan deal from Japanese club Gamba Osaka, the English Premiership club confirmed in a statement on Monday.

The west London outfit's manager Jean Tigana of France had been impressed by Inamoto's sparkling display with two goals in the World Cup.

Inamoto was on a loan deal with Arsenal but he did not make one Premiership appearance and manager Arsene Wenger chose to release him at the end of last season.

The deal for the 22-year-old

midfielder, who scored two goals to power Japan to the last-16 round in last month's World Cup finals, includes the option of a three-year extension on a permanent contract.

A Fulham statement read: "Fulham Football Club today announce the signing of Junichi Inamoto from Gamba Osaka on a one-year loan agreement, with an option for three further years on a permanent basis.

"The agreement could see Inamoto at Fulham until the summer of 2006. He joined up with the squad this morning for training."

Inamoto said on his website (<http://www.sportsnavi.com/ina/ina.html>): "I have decided to move from Gamba Osaka to England's Fulham Football Club.

"It will be my second season in Europe and another year for me to make a challenge. I will try hard to

do my best," he said.

Japanese media estimated Inamoto's fee at 4.5 million dollars and his annual salary at 400,000 dollars.

Inamoto's performances attracted interest from several European clubs including PSV Eindhoven of the Netherlands as well as Italian sides Perugia, Atalanta and Juventus.

But Tigana won the race for his signature after the midfielder expressed a firm interest to stay in the Premiership despite a miserable season with Arsenal.

Earlier this month, the Highbury side told Inamoto that he could leave the Premiership champions after featuring in only four matches for Arsenal last season -- two in the Champions' League and two in the English League Cup.

Santa Cruz out indefinitely

Football

AFP, Hoffenheim, Germany

Bayern Munich's Paraguayan striker Roque Santa Cruz is facing months on the sidelines with an ankle injury, his manager Ottmar Hitzfeld feared on Sunday.

The gangly 21-year-old suffered the injury when he collided with Arsenal's Moritz Volz shortly after scoring the last goal in Bayern's 6-0 friendly win over the German youth

side.

He is due to undergo an intensive series of medical tests to determine the seriousness of the problem on Monday with Bayern doctor Hans-Wilhelm Wohlfart.

Hitzfeld, commenting on the situation after a training game here, said that his player could be out "for weeks, or even months".

Santa Cruz, part of Paraguay's World Cup team, joined Bayern from Paraguayan side Olimpia in 1999.

Perugia stop Ahn's wage

Football

REUTERS, Rome

Italian club Perugia has suspended the pay of its South Korean striker Ahn Jung-hwan after the player failed to turn up for pre-season training.

The move is the latest in a bitter spat between the Serie A club and the South Korean whose goal knocked Italy out of the World Cup.

Perugia said in a statement on its Web site that despite having taken up an option to sign Ahn on a contract until June 2005, the player had not appeared for pre-season training.

"In a few words, in the coming season Ahn will not receive one euro or one dollar if he does not come here and undergo his medical and put himself at the disposition of our coach," said the club.

Perugia, which agreed a fee of \$1.6 million for Ahn, said the player had sent three faxes to the club saying he had no intention of playing for the Umbrian team.

Ahn had been on loan at Perugia from his South Korean club Pusan I.cons for the past two seasons.

"The option has been taken up therefore the player should be considered to all effects a registered

player of Perugia," the club said.

Ahn was told he would "never set foot in Perugia again" by club president Luciano Gaucci after his 'golden goal' header ended the hopes of Giovanni Trapattoni's side as it lost 2-1 in the second round of last month's World Cup.

Gaucci later softened his stance and decided to take up the option on the striker, but it is now likely that Perugia will try to cash in on Ahn's success at the finals by selling him.

"Any eventual future destination for Ahn with another club needs to have the necessary agreement of Perugia, otherwise no transfer can be considered valid," said the club's statement.



AHN JUNG-HWAN

Rio ponders future

Football

INTERNET

Rio Ferdinand is to spend the next few days considering his future at Leeds United after his new manager Terry Venables emerged from talks with the player optimistic that the England centre-half would remain at Elland Road.

In the wake of weeks of frenzied speculation and with Manchester United and Arsenal waiting in the wings with £30m bids for the player, Ferdinand finally met his new club manager face to face in a west London hotel yesterday. The 23-year-old spent an hour listening to Venables - who introduced the defender to the England set-up as a teenager - outline his objectives for the new season.

Ferdinand, who has four years to run on his contract, is not due back at Leeds's Thorp Arch training centre for pre-season fitness work until Thursday but was keen to meet with the 59-year-old coach before Venables departs today on a working holiday. The former England manager will not link up with his newly inherited squad again until he joins them in Melbourne for Leeds's tour of the far east and Australia later this month, but is believed to be confident that his captain and most influential player will remain at the club.

"Terry Venables had a meeting with Rio and emphasised how highly he rates him as a player," said the Leeds chairman Peter Ridsdale. "He has also outlined to him his vision for the future of the club in which Rio has an important role to play. They had a very amicable discussion. Terry shared his thoughts with Rio, who has gone away to reflect on what they talked about."

"As far as I'm concerned this was nothing more dramatic than the new manager of Leeds United meeting his captain for a chat before going away on business, which he was committed to before he accepted the job with us."

Should Ferdinand remain at Elland Road, Leeds will revert to Plan A in their attempt to raise the £15m needed to eat into their spiralling debts, which already amount to £7.7m after three years of heavy transfer spending. To that end, Lee Bowyer is due at Liverpool's Melwood training centre this morning to discuss personal terms and

undertake a medical prior to completing a £9m move to Anfield, while negotiations over the French midfielder Olivier Dacourt's proposed £11m move to Juventus remain ongoing

The money from those two deals would be enough to ease Leeds's financial plight and generate a small



RIO FERDINAND

transfer kitty, with Feyenoord's Australian midfielder Bret Emerton, who worked with Venables when he coached the Socceroos, likely to be lured to the Yorkshire club as a replacement for Bowyer.

More significantly, the injection of cash would ensure there is no immediate need to off-load the £30m England centre-half to either of Leeds's championship rivals, leaving Manchester United - who had hoped to conclude a deal for his signature by the end of this week - in particular back at square one in their search for defensive reinforcements.

"We know Rio wants to win things and we know he wants to be at the top," said Venables. "Well, this is a huge club and I do not want him to go anywhere else. He has a contract and I think it's fair that contract is honoured, but I believe he belongs here. He has a chance to be involved in something that's new - shaping the entire future of this club. That's the way players become legends."

"People should remember that, for all the speculation, Rio has never said anything other than that he's happy to stay at Leeds United," added Ridsdale. "As chairman, I can only reiterate that we don't want to sell Rio Ferdinand. He's a quality footballer and he's not for sale. Terry believes we are building something special here and that's a vision that is shared by myself and the club's board."

Life will never be the same



AFP, Seoul

Success is taking an early toll on South Korea's World Cup heroes with one fleeing to a hospital to avoid the limelight and others battling over their future.

Midfielder Kim Nam-II, who has become the focus of the country's soccer fervor after the departure of coach Guus Hiddink, disappeared last week and was later reported to be in a hospital in a secret location, being treated for injuries sustained during the World Cup.



KIM NAM-II

The tough-tackling 25-year-old has taken on pop star status in the country with hordes of teenaged girls following him wherever he goes since South Korea became the most successful Asian team yet at the World Cup finals.

Kim is known as the "Vacuum Cleaner" because of the way he handles opposing forwards and fans say they worship him because his blunt style epitomised South Korea's fearless approach which got them to the semi-finals.

When the squad were feted before hundreds of thousands and given top honours by President Kim Dae-Jung in Seoul after the tourna-

ment, each member was asked by television presenters to make a comment.

Kim said "I just want to go to a night club". And he did for four days.

When he was given a 300-million-won (250,000-dollar) reward by the Korean Football Association he immediately gave it to his father and later told reporters he was "broke". Kim has turned down lucrative advertising offers.

But nearly every day last week, he featured on the front page of the main sports dailies who told tales of young girls following him around the country.

One group of 1,000 girls organised their own special train to go and see a match by his Korean league club Cheonan Dragons, even though he did not play and only appeared to sign autographs.

Cheonan Dragons secretary general Park Kang-Hoon said "all our staff are now tied up with endless telephone calls" about Kim.

But the number of spectators at the team's K-League games has reached record numbers even though Kim has not played. Nearly every club has reported a surge in attendance because of World Cup fever.

Kim's personal website has become one of the most popular in South Korea and is now swamped with requests from fans for news of his whereabouts.

According to press reports, however, doctors say the fanatical women around him have delayed his recovery from an ankle injury suffered during the World Cup. In hospital he has no communication with the outside world.

His team said he is not expected back in action before August 7.

Women have played a key role in the football mania that has swept the country since the World Cup opened in South Korea and Japan on May 31.

The authorities now say up to 60 percent of the millions of people who poured out onto the streets of major cities for South Korea's matches were women.

Groups of chanting housewives in their 40s now cheer the top players at K-League matches.

Kim's father, Kim Jae-Ki, said: "I have hardly seen his face because he has always been surrounded by fans. Now the biggest concern is his injuries."

"I hope he will not be distracted by his popularity and work harder and make his dreams come true by going to Europe."

The dream of going to Europe is also proving difficult for star strikers Ahn Jung-Hwan and Lee Chun-Soo.

Pinup boy Ahn has not been playing for the Busan I.cons during his battle against Italian club Perugia. The club insists Ahn should



LEE CHUN-SOO

return now, making a u-turn from saying his loan contract would be terminated because Ahn scored the winning goal in South Korea's shock second round win over Italy.

Ahn's managers, who say they are negotiating with two clubs in England and one in Spain, insist that his contract is now held by Busan.

Lee is wanted by English Premier League side Southampton, but his Korean team Ulsan Tigers have refused to let him go for a trial insisting that a permanent transfer be organised first. Negotiations are still going on.

A Keane test

Football

INTERNET

Roy Keane will gamble his reputation as an Ireland folk hero next Saturday when he plays on home soil for the first time since his controversial World Cup exit.

The midfielder is prepared to run a gauntlet of anger or even hate when he captains a strong Manchester United side in their first pre-season friendly at Shelbourne.

Keane's public bust-up with Irish boss Mick McCarthy blighted the country's hopes before a ball was kicked.

McCarthy, who recently signed an extended contract, insisted afterwards that Keane would never play for Ireland while he was in charge.

In his absence the team performed magnificently in holding both Cameroon and eventual finalists Germany before beating Saudi Arabia. They eventually went out in the first knock-out stage in a dramatic penalty shoot-out against Spain.

United manager Sir Alex



ROY KEANE

Shelbourne boss Pat Fenlen underlined the divided feelings of Irish football fans when he said: "The country was split on what happened before the World Cup and I don't think it will be any different for Roy because he will be with United."

"Some of the fans will be support-

ive of him but others will give him a hot reception. I can see them being split down the middle. There was some support for him in that he was right in criticising the preparations that Ireland have sometimes undergone."

"What happened after that we don't know much about but, looking at it from the outside, it appeared that although he was right up to a point, he overstepped the mark with the manager."

The United side will include most of their top players. Only those on World Cup duty with England will be absent.

David Beckham, Paul Scholes, Nicky Butt and Wes Brown were allowed an extra week to recover from their exertions in Japan and will report back for training at the Carrington complex on Wednesday.

Keane signalled his eagerness to get started on the new season by working out on his own days before other players returned.

The United skipper's presence will add spice to what would under normal circumstances be a gentle opening spin for him and his teammates.

Metsu finalises Al-Ain contract

AFP, Dubai

Frenchman Bruno Metsu, who guided Senegal to the quarter-finals of the World Cup, has finalized a one-year contract to coach Emirati side Al-Ain, the club said on Sunday.

Club official Hamad bin Nikhairat al-Amri however refused to reveal financial details.

The long-haired coach's easygoing approach to the talented west African team won him praise throughout the football world.



BRUNO METSU

Roma-Real at Giants

AP, New Jersey

Real Madrid and AS Roma, two of the premier European soccer clubs, will play an exhibition game Aug. 8 at Giants Stadium.

The game, marking the 100th anniversary of the Madrid club, will be a fundraiser for the Global AIDS Fund.

Among the international stars expected to play in the game are Real's Zinedine Zidane, Roberto Carlos, Luis Figo and Raul. They led Real to the European Champions League crown this year.

For Roma, the stars are Francesco Totti, Cafu and Gabriel Batistuta.

Portsmouth after Ginola

Football

INTERNET

Portsmouth boss Harry Redknapp will make a second attempt to sign David Ginola this week.

Redknapp's first effort to sign the mercurial Frenchman foundered when Pompey chairman and owner Milan Mandaric balked at Ginola's £30,000-a-week wage demands.

But Redknapp told BBC Sport Online he will go back to the former Tottenham and Newcastle favourite this week with his hand strengthened.

It's always been an open door for both parties and it's never closed Redknapp is not saddled with Robert Prosinecki's hefty salary following the Croatian's decision to leave Fratton Park and not take up the second season option on his contract.

The Pompey boss is poised to make further inroads into Mandaric's wallet by making Carl Robinson his eighth signing since succeeding Graham Rix in March.

But Redknapp has persuaded Pompey's American owner that Ginola could be the final piece in the promotion jigsaw.

Former West Ham manager Redknapp is no stranger to signing talented players with a difficult reputation.

He said: "I would like to think that David could have a similar effect to what Paolo di Canio had when I signed him."

"People pay good money to watch football, and they should be entertained."

"But more importantly, it's what he might do for the team. I don't think



DAVID GINOLA

you could question his talent and he could be the one to help us unpick defences."

The canny Redknapp is playing his interest in Ginola coolly.

He said: "I had a chat with him, firstly to see whether he wanted to play for us."

"It was never a case of negotiations breaking down or stopping over what he wanted."

"It's always been an open door for both parties and it's never closed."

"In the end, it will depend on what he wants and whether he is prepared to move."

"He's got to be flexible for us to do something with him."

Ginola is without a club since being released by Everton in May.

He was used only fleetingly by the Toffees last season.

In the absence of any other Premiership clubs showing an interest, he faces a decision of whether he wants to lengthen his career by dropping down into the Nationwide League.