

Ronaldo Inter's for the moment

Football

AFP/INTERNET, Milan

Brazil superstar Ronaldo is to stay with Inter Milan at least for the coming season...

"Ronaldo chose the Italian squad. He's an Inter player and will remain at Inter 365 days a year for four years..."

"He still has to talk with the board, but there are no negotiations with nor an offer from Real..."

In an interview with Italian radio station Radio Capital, Martins was even explicit, saying he had met with Real Madrid sporting director Jorge Valdano but all talks were off.

"I met Valdano but there was no agreement. Ronaldo is an Inter player. Enough talk about Real. I'm not going to talk anyone any more about Ronaldo's future without permission from Inter..."

Real had already made it clear in the past week that they would only pursue talks with Ronaldo if Inter made it clear that he was free to talk



Superstar Ronaldo (C) chats with club mate Sergio Conceicao (L) and another unidentified player at the gym of Inter Milan's training base at Appiano Gentile yesterday

Valdano suggested that half that sum was about as much as Real could afford to pay.

While Martins seemed keen to make it clear that Ronaldo was staying at Inter, Earlier, Ronaldo had tried to

about leaving Inter," the Brazilian said on his website.

"Who really knows me also knows that money is not what interests me," he added.

"I will respect until the end the team that has been on my side also

Meanwhile, Ronaldo trained for sixty minutes yesterday morning under the orders of team trainer Claudio Gaudino.

Under 28 degrees at Inter's training base in Appiano Gentile, Ronaldo followed the following work program: massages, warm up, repeated (four) 930-meter runs around Pinetina at a constant pace...

After a ten-minute massage, the Phenomenon laced up his runners and, together with teammates, Turkish internationals Emre and Okan, began the warm-up.

Ronaldo also had an emotional reunion with club physician Dr. Combi at the training ground. After an intense hug Ronaldo declared: "Here is another man that helped me win the World Cup."

Ronaldo arrived back in Milan from Sao Paolo on Tuesday, dodging around 100 angry fans who held "Ronaldo: ungrateful" banners at the city's Malpensa airport.

He went straight into a 90-minute meeting with Inter managing director Rinaldo Ghelfi to demand a transfer.

"I confirmed my point of view which is the same as the one that my agent Alexandre Martins explained to president Moratti three months ago," Ronaldo said.

Moratti had insisted all along that Ronaldo will remain with the club.

Inter hope the star will fire them to the Serie A title this season after showing with his eight World Cup goals that he is back to his top form after three years blighted by serious knee injuries.



THEY DESERVE AN EXPLANATION: Inter Milan fans stand by a banner reading "Ronaldo Ingrate(Ungrateful)" as they wait for the arrival of the Brazilian superstar at the Milan Malpensa airport on August 6.

and that, anyway, the numbers being talked about were too high. Inter president Moratti, who bought Ronaldo from Barcelona for dollars 27.9 million in 1997, said he would not let him go for anything less than 100 million euros.

pacify Inter fans angry at his respect my contract as well, as I always did, and I hope that the situation will evolve in the next few days for my sake and for Inter's."

According to Martins that evolution comprises a status quo.

In the difficult moments and I will respect my contract as well, as I always did, and I hope that the situation will evolve in the next few days for my sake and for Inter's."

According to Martins that evolution comprises a status quo.

Velapan wants WC 2014 in China

AFP, Singapore

The World Cup soccer tournament in 2014 should return to Asia, preferably in China, Asian football supremo Peter Velapan said Wednesday.

In an interview with Singapore's NewsRadio 93.8, Velapan said by



PETER VELAPAN

that time China would have the facilities to host the event as successfully as the recent World Cup held jointly in Japan and South Korea.

China will host the Olympic Games in 2008.

"From now until after the Olympics, China will be focused on the development of sports and facilities. Thereafter, they will have some 30 stadiums," said Velapan, general secretary of the Asian Football Confederation.

"I think it's time for the World Cup to come back to Asia because we have done so much for the World Cup, so much for football and so much for FIFA," he added.

Two Australian state governments -- New South Wales and Victoria -- on Sunday launched their joint bid to host the Cup in 2014.

Velapan said: "I think if you compare Australia and China, naturally the bet would be China and they would do as much as Korea and Japan (in hosting the Cup)."

Senior officials of Australia's soccer authority on Monday ridiculed the announcement of the bids by the two state governments.

At least she is staying!

Football

INTERNET, Milan

There was good news for a football club in Milan today, when they got reassurances that their Brazilian star would not be leaving. Not Ronaldo, whose future is still unclear, but his wife, Milene Dominguez, affectionately known by the media as "Ronaldinha".

Dominguez plays for women's Serie A side Fiammamonza, and despite the speculation that her husband wants to move to Real Madrid, she will stay with her Italian club, according to their President.

Sergio Negrini said: "Milene is signed to us. Even if Ronaldo doesn't stay with Inter she will continue to play in Fiammamonza's colours. She signed a contract. We discussed the programme for the next season together."

His comments were backed up by Fiammamonza coach Raffaele Solimeno, who said: "With us she's always been very clear. We talked three days ago. My mind is at ease, she will stay in Milan even if her husband goes to Spain or somewhere else. We've arranged for all the squad to meet on August 18."

Solimeno continued: "She's already booked a room for the baby sitter and little Ronald [her son]. She asked me if she could have a couple of hours a day with the baby, which is fine by us. Milene is a fundamental element of the team."

Dominguez began playing the game when she was 3 years old in the streets of Sao Paolo along with her brothers. She met Ronaldo



MILENE DOMINGUEZ

when she was showing off her ball skills and became world champion by juggling the ball 55,187 times in 9 hours and 6 minutes. She did this as a way to recuperate from a serious knee injury, so maybe her husband

has been learning from her, judging by his World Cup 2002 performances.

Milene signed for Fiammamonza earlier this year, but played down the idea that her arrival would help raise the profile of the women's game in Italy: "I really do not want to have this responsibility on my shoulders," she said. "I just want to play and have fun. I do know that people will come to see me because I'm married to a champion but on the field I am simply Milene Dominguez."

Good news for Fiammamonza then, but not such good news for the man at the centre of the transfer wrangles. Did Ronaldo get around to telling his wife he was moving to Spain? Is he planning to commute? Well, with a job offer in Madrid and a wife determined to stay in Milan, the Brazilian finds himself in a tricky situation that a bunch of flowers and an apology might not fix.

If Milene puts her foot down, it would be the exact opposite of the transfer of Zinedine Zidane from FC Juventus to Real, a transfer driven by Mrs Zidane's determination to leave foggy Turin for sunny Madrid. Inter will soon find out whether Dominguez's decision will influence her husband.

Bielsa announcement delayed

REUTERS, Buenos Aires

Argentine football officials postponed a meeting on Tuesday at which they had been expected to confirm that Marcelo Biers would continue as coach of the national team for the next four years.

The meeting of the Argentine Football Association (AFA) executive committee was called off because AFA president Julio Gordon was unable to attend for personal reasons, the AFA said.

"There won't be an announcement. Gordon is not at the AFA and everything has been postponed until next week," said AFA spokesman Raul Steinberg.

Bielsa, who has remained in virtual isolation on a farm near Rosario since his team's shock first round elimination at the World Cup, began talks last week with an AFA commission and Grondona said there were no other candidates for the job.

Bielsa, who comes from a successful family of lawyers and is seen as eccentric and introverted, is expected to start his new spell in charge -- dubbed "The Revenge" by the Argentine media -- with the same staff.

But he may be asked to give more chance to locally-based players in the team.

Argentina's next game is a friendly away to Japan in November.

Beckham to help Scotland Yard

AFP, London

British police were Tuesday carrying out a major hunt for two 10-year-old girls missing from their homes, a high profile case which has prompted an offer of help from England soccer star David Beckham.

"How did they vanish?" demanded the Daily Mail tabloid on its front page, reflecting the huge media interest in the search for the pair, while a page one headline in the Sun, Britain's best-selling daily, urged: "Come home."

Jessica Chapman and Holly Wells disappeared Sunday after playing at Holly's house in Soham, a small town in Cambridgeshire, central England, while her parents were enjoying a barbecue in the garden.

About 500 members of the public joined police in scouring the countryside around their homes overnight Monday, but found nothing.

"We have had to experience friends and family searching ditches and rivers looking for shallow graves for our children," Holly's father Kevin Wells told reporters Monday. "It doesn't get any more difficult than that."

The girls were both wearing red Manchester United shirts with a number seven on the back, as worn by England football captain Beckham -- Britain's best known celebrity sportsman.

A Cambridgeshire police spokesman said Beckham has "indicated that he would be willing" to help the search for the girls. He did not elaborate.

Several instances of missing and murdered children have provoked a wave of concern in Britain in recent years, escalating fears over children's vulnerability to paedophiles.

One such case was the murder in July 2000 of eight-year-old Sarah Payne, who was snatched from near her grandparents' home in southern England.

Her killer, Roy Whiting, 43, who was sentenced last year to life in jail, had his face cut in a knife attack by a fellow inmate on Sunday, according to press reports.

Juninho completes the jigsaw

AFP, London

Brazil's World Cup winning midfielder Juninho was unveiled as "the final piece in the jigsaw" after his return to English Premiership side Middlesbrough on Tuesday.

Juninho, 28, joins George Boateng and Geremi as the third new signing in two days at the Riverside Stadium and manager Steve McClaren said he was delighted that the fan-favourite had agreed a 3.8 million-pound (5.5 million-dollar) switch from Spanish side Atletico Madrid.

"We've been searching for quite a while for the sort of player who can excite the crowd and win football matches," McClaren told a press conference.

"We brought him back for what he can do on the football field. We believe the timing is right for Juninho to come back."

"We have made quite a few signings and he is the final piece in the jigsaw," he added.

Juninho has already enjoyed two spells with Middlesbrough, in 1997 and a brief loan period in 1999-2000.

Rivaldo thanks Berlusconi

Football

REUTERS, Milan

Brazilian World Cup-winning striker Rivaldo has revealed that Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi was personally involved in luring him to AC Milan.

"I spoke with him several times during the talks," Rivaldo said at a press conference in Milan on Wednesday.

"I want to thank him for his confidence in me."

Rivaldo, 30, signed a three-year deal with Milan last month after his contract with Spanish club Barcelona expired.

Berlusconi, a billionaire media mogul before he became prime

minister last year, helped build AC Milan into one of Europe's premier clubs in the 1980s, spending heavily to bring international talent to the club.

Rivaldo said he had high hopes that Milan, who have not won a major trophy in the past three seasons, could return to their glory days.

"We hope to be in a position to do it this year," he said. "There are so many good players on the team."

Rivaldo, who began training with his new club on Wednesday, is Milan's third major acquisition of the close-season.

He follows Danish striker Jon Dahl Tomasson, signed from Feyenoord, and Dutch midfielder Clarence Seedorf from city rivals Inter.

"I hope to be in top form as soon

as possible, but of course, when I start playing will be the choice of the doctors," added Rivaldo in response to questions about his all-round fitness.

Rivaldo, who formed a formidable partnership with Ronaldo in Brazil's World Cup winning squad, refused to be drawn into talking about whether his compatriot would quit Inter.

"I'm only interested in discussing Milan here," he said.

When he first signed with Milan, Rivaldo said he looked forward to facing Ronaldo in the Milan derbies at the San Siro stadium shared by Milan and Inter.

But that potential clash looked in confusion on Wednesday with Ronaldo saying he wanted to leave Inter and his agent saying he was set to stay.



AC Milan's star signing Rivaldo (L) with the club's Vice Chairman Adriano Galliani as he holds his AC Milan jersey at Milan yesterday.

Veron was a wreck

Football

INTERNET

Juan Sebastian Veron has admitted his disastrous first season at Manchester United turned him into a "lunatic" and left him a physical and emotional wreck.

The £28million midfielder lifted the lid on his nightmare year and revealed he would walk the city streets in the early hours, haunted by his poor form.

In a remarkably frank interview, he also admitted he wept all night after England's 1-0 World Cup win over Argentina.

Veron has already conceded his first season at Old Trafford was a "catastrophe", but his admission he came close to a mental breakdown will stun team-mates and fans.

"I seemed like a lunatic, but at the time I had a chance to think about what happened," Veron said.

"Walking calmly gave me a chance to take into account other things, like knowing who was on my side and who was supporting me."

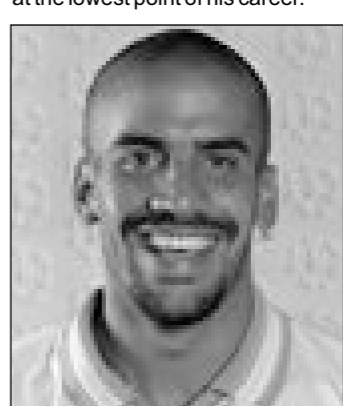
"I don't know if the pain of last season was erased and the problems could one day return."

"I do know there are things in

football that are difficult to digest, but with my girlfriend and friends, I didn't have a great deal of communication about it," he added.

"It was hard, but not as hard as someone who has to get up at five o'clock in the morning and look for work."

The 27-year-old also admitted that Argentina's World Cup failure, following on from Manchester United's poor season, had left him at the lowest point of his career.



JUAN SEBASTIAN VERON

Especially after he was substituted in his country's 1-0 group F defeat to England in Sapporo in a game he felt Argentina should not

have lost. "I cried all night and maintain that we did not fail, we just did not give a good account of ourselves," he said.

"I do not believe we deserved to lose against England. They were not better than us but Argentina did not play well -- that we know only too well."

"I never thought we wouldn't go through, although I felt inside that the squad was not playing as well as we had done in qualifying."

"I always had faith that we would do well."

After Argentina drew with Sweden in the final group game to go out of the tournament, Veron admitted that he did not watch any of the remaining matches.

"For me the World Cup finished against Sweden," he said.

Veron, however, has looked in good form in the build-up to the new season and will be hoping to impress his manager Alex Ferguson in a charity match against his former Argentine club Boca Juniors Saturday.

"It will be a special party for me because the people at that club gave me so much," Veron said.

"I've had about 15 days rest and a good pre-season, so I feel fine. I can't wait to play."

Fergie impressed

Football

REUTERS, Manchester

David Beckham is back on top form, says Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson after watching the England captain in a 5-0 friendly win over Aarhus.

Beckham, held back at the World Cup finals by his return from a broken foot, played the first half in Tuesday's victory in Denmark.

"I think he's shown he's back to his best," Ferguson told MUTV.

"His form has been good, his passing is good, his movements good and his fitness levels are very good."

Beckham made way in the second half for striker Diego Forlan. The Uruguayan has yet to score in a competitive game since joining in January but steered home United's fifth against the Danes.

"He made a good run for his goal and placed it nicely in the corner," said Ferguson.

"I always think that scoring a goal is helpful. He impressed me immensely."

England defender Rio Ferdinand, United's 30 million pound signing, missed the game after pulling up earlier in the day.

"He got a little strain in his thigh in training," said the United manager, who opted to avoid any risks before next week's Champions League outing.

"With a big game seven days away, there was no point," Ferguson said.

United face a third qualifying round, first leg clash away to either Hungary's Zalaegerszegi or Croatia Zagreb next Wednesday. After the home leg a fortnight later, the winners will go into the main group phase of the competition.

Goalkeeper Fabien Barthez was also missing from the starting lineup, but Dutch striker Ruud van Nistelrooy signalled his presence with two goals.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and Ryan Giggs were also on the scoresheet as a late flurry guided United to their sixth win in seven pre-season games.



Manchester United ace David Beckham (C) is sandwiched between Martin Nielsen(L) and Bo Nielsen of Denmark's Aarhus FC during a friendly match in Aarhus on August 6.



Middlesbrough's Brazilian international midfielder Juninho (R) acknowledges some autograph-hunters as fans celebrate his return to the club for a third time yesterday.