



Superstar Ronaldo (L) being greeted by an unidentified person after arriving at Inter Milan's training base in Pinetina yesterday.

Back to square one?

Football

REUTERS, Milan

Ronaldo returned to Italy from Brazil on Saturday but slipped home unseen, avoiding around 100 weary Inter Milan fans who waited at the airport with demands for an apology after he said he wanted leave the club.

"Ronaldo, now you have to tell us you are sorry," read one banner held up by fans at Malpensa airport, outside Milan.

"If he still wants to be our hero he has to say sorry to all of us," said one embittered fan who had waited patiently, although he added that he had some sympathy for the 25-year-old striker.

But Ronaldo, returning after playing just 33 minutes for the world champions in their 1-0 defeat by Paraguay on Wednesday, kept a low profile and stepped off the plane straight into the car of Inter Milan president Massimo Moratti.

However, he repeated his intention to quit Inter and said he is prepared to sit it out and wait for his chance to join Real Madrid despite the breakdown of transfer talks this week.

Real's sporting director Jorge Valdano confirmed on Saturday that the European Champions have abandoned their attempt to sign Ronaldo.

"There is now no time to restart negotiations," Valdano told Spanish television station Antenna 3 in an interview broadcast late on Saturday night.

"The transfer deadline expires in a week and there is no chance of concluding a deal by then. I don't know what might happen in six months or a year, but on this occasion the negotiations are definitively closed."

Valdano said that a hardening in

the bargaining stance of the Italian club was the reason behind the collapse of the proposed deal to sign the Brazilian.

"What happened is that their initial stance changed and...they then adopted a very tough stance," he said.

"We stuck to our initial proposals in which we made it clear from the start that Ronaldo was not a strategic signing for the club and that we were not prepared to go mad to sign him."

"For me, nothing has changed," said Ronaldo, as he left the plane. "I want to leave Inter. I'm in no hurry. I will wait until this situation resolves itself."

After stopping briefly at the Inter training ground near Appiano Gentile in Lombardy, where he spoke with Moratti, Ronaldo skipped out via a side exit around 6pm local time, avoiding journalists and photographers, and headed home.

In a statement, Inter said Ronaldo and Moratti had discussed the programme for the next few days, particularly the Champions League qualifier against Sporting Lisbon.

"Over the next days Ronaldo will undergo fitness training to ensure he is in a condition to work with the group as soon as possible," Inter said in a statement on its website.

Moratti meanwhile has not given up hope that he can change the World Cup's leading goalscorer's mind.

"Ronaldo has agreed to train, even if not with the team, because he wants to play in the Champions League," said the president.

"Then, day by day, we will try to build links and build bridges in our relations and work out what Ronaldo will do at Inter."

The twice World Player of the Year faces an uncertain future after transfer talks between his Italian club and suitors Real Madrid broke

down on Friday.

"Even when Ronaldo was hit by bad luck and didn't play, Inter did not even consider the possibility of a sale," Moratti told Saturday's Corriere della Sera in an interview.

"We could never have given Ronaldo to Real. On one count there are feelings and on another the talks. Ronaldo was the top scorer at the World Cup, which he also won."

Ronaldo is in the tricky position of returning to train with the club he has spurned after three injury-plagued years and also has to make peace with angry Inter fans who feel betrayed.

"What he did was unforgivable," said one 36-year-old man at the airport on Saturday.

Ronaldo joined Inter from Spanish club Barcelona before the 1997-98 season but has spent most of the last three seasons on the sidelines following a serious knee injury.

His contract, with a reported 4.5 million euro salary, runs until 2006.

Ronaldo was back on top form at the World Cup in South Korea and Japan in June and won the Golden Boot with eight goals including both goals in the 2-0 win over Germany in the final.

After the bitter disappointment of missing out on the Italian title on the final day of last season, Inter fans were confident that, with a fully-fit Ronaldo, they would have a real chance of claiming their first title since 1989.

Differences over a transfer fee for Ronaldo seemed to be at the heart of the breakdown in negotiations with Real.

Media reports suggested the European champions were prepared to pay dollars 12 million plus two players valued at dollars30 million for the Brazilian, whereas Inter wanted more than dollars60 million.

Bundesliga

Bochum bemuse Bayer

Football

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich steamrollered Hamburg 3-0 away on Saturday to keep up their solid start to the season - but promoted Bochum are hogging the headlines after they stunned Bayer Leverkusen 4-2 away to stay top.

Bochum's Spanish international Thomas Christiansen kept up his amazing start to the campaign with one of the goals, to add to a hat-trick last week against Energie Cottbus and two goals on the opening day at Nuremberg. His side have maximum points and are two clear of Bayern.

The Bavarians currently place third as Hansa Rostock joined Bochum on nine points after keeping their 100 percent record intact in some style with a 4-0 waltz away to Energie Cottbus.

Rene Rydlewicz scored twice, taking his season tally to four, with Rade Prica and Peter Wibran also on target for the easterners.

Bochum have blasted 12 goals in their three matches while Rostock have yet to concede a goal.

On Sunday, Schalke can go joint top if they win at home to Hertha Berlin while Nuremberg host Hannover 96 in the day's other game.

Bochum were a goal down after

10 minutes to a Jan Simak strike but roared back with Thorud Gudjonsson levelling just three minutes later.

Dariusz Wozniak and Frank Fahrenhorst scored before the break and Christiansen netted on the hour before Franca pulled one back for shell-shocked Leverkusen, who were runners up last season, but who since then have lost stars such as Michael Ballack and Ze Roberto - both joining Bayern.

Klaus Toppmoller's hapless side still await their first win of the new season even though World Cup star Oliver Neuville recovered from injury to take his place.

"We're delighted with this win," said Bochum coach Peter Neururer. "We bounced back after their opener and played superbly on the counter attack. This win shows we're on the right track."

Toppmoller claimed his side stopped fighting after Gudjonsson equalised.

"At times we played like a bunch of pensioners. I'll have to have words tomorrow morning," raged Toppmoller.

Bayern's Brazilian star Giovane Elber stepped out of the limelight following his four goals last week against Arminia Bielefeld as the Bavarians hammered a poor Hamburg side.

Peruvian forward Claudio Pizarro scored midway through the first half and again five minutes from

time before Alexander Zickler put the icing on the cake in the dying seconds.

Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld was happy with a workmanlike victory.

"I'm happy to get our first away win though the margin was wider than it might have been," he admitted.

"We missed a few first-half chances but we were never in any danger," said Hitzfeld, whose Hamburg counterpart Kurt Jara blasted defensive lapses for his side's misfortune.

Elsewhere, champions Borussia Dortmund bagged their first win after two draws in beating Stuttgart 3-1 with Jan Koller and Brazilian duo Dede and Ewerthon hitting the back of the net.

South African striker Sean Dundee scored for the third week running with a late spotkick.

Dortmund coach Matthias Sammer said his side deserved their win, despite struggling to impress early on.

"We put the pressure on but couldn't get an early goal. We appeared to lack direction but we deserved to get our noses in front and deserved to win," Sammer told reporters.

Promoted Bielefeld bounced back from their mauling at Bayern as an Ansgar Brinkmann goal saw off VfL Wolfsburg 1-0.

Wolfsburg handed a debut to former Bayern star Stefan Effenberg but he was unable to rescue a result.

Borussia Monchengladbach claimed their first win bonus with a 3-0 romp over Kaiserslautern, Peter van Houtd bagging a brace, while 1860 Munich are a promising fourth, a point adrift of Bayern, after whipping Werder Bremen by the same score.

Bundesliga's top six

German league table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Bochum	3	3	0	0	12	3	9
Rostock	3	3	0	0	8	0	9
Bayern	3	2	1	0	8	2	7
1860 Munich	3	2	0	1	6	3	6
Schalke 04	2	2	0	0	4	1	6
Bielefeld	3	2	0	1	6	6	6

Delighted with Diouf

Football

AFP, London

Liverpool manager Gerard Houllier predicted a brilliant future for El-Hadji Diouf after the Senegalese international scored his first two goals for the club on Saturday.

Houllier was equally delighted that both Diouf's goals in the 3-0 win over Southampton were created by English international Emile Heskey.

It took Diouf, a 15-million-dollar pre-season signing from French club Lens, just two minutes 57 seconds at Anfield to score his first goal for Liverpool.

Heskey broke down the left, surging away from Saints defender Paul Telfer and firing in a cross which Diouf coolly tucked away.

After 50 minutes Diouf struck again. Portuguese international Abel Xavier's long throw was nodded on by Heskey for Diouf to head wide of the exposed Paul Jones.

Diouf was given a standing ovation when he was replaced by Vladimir Smicer with 10 minutes remaining.

Houllier said he was aware of

Diouf's qualities even before his outstanding performances which helped Senegal reach the quarter-finals of the World Cup.

"Nobody knew of him before I signed him, but he's making a good start to his career in England, he was excellent," said the Frenchman.

"This was only his second league game here but he's a fast learner and is already a typical Liverpool player - he runs his legs off."

He added: "Diouf covers so much ground and is prepared to sacrifice himself for the team by working so hard. He can play right, left or in the centre and I like his skill and attitude."

"He will help us go further, we need all the skilful players we can get."

"He has the right attitude to the game, he's only 21 and there's so much more to come."

Houllier said he was encouraged by the blossoming partnership with Heskey.

"I'm so happy for Diouf because Heskey is the person who has helped him settle in at the club."

Liverpool are second in the Premiership with a 100 percent record after beating Aston Villa 1-0 in their opener.



REVERED ALREADY: Liverpool's Senegal international El-Hadji Diouf firing in his side's second goal against Southampton at Anfield on August 24.

MP wants police action over Keane

Football

AFP, London

A leading British MP has called for a police investigation into Manchester United captain Roy Keane's horror tackle on Norwegian Alf-Inge Haaland.

According to Sunday's newspaper The Observer, Colchester MP Bob Russell, the Liberal Democrats' spokesman on sport, has written to Greater Manchester Police to report the April 2001 incident as a crime.

The paper quotes Russell as saying Keane's "violent tackle was premeditated and was, therefore, a deliberate assault".

The letter goes on to state: "Acts of assault, whether in the workplace or at entrances to nightclubs, should not be viewed differently simply because one occurred during a football match while another was at a drinking venue."

"When is football going to realise that it cannot be above the law of the land that relates to everyone else?"

"I am inviting the chief constable to regard the written admission of assault by Roy Keane as seriously as any other assault at any other location and to view my letter as a formal report of a crime."

In the serialisation of his autobiography, Keane admitted that he had gone out deliberately to seek

O'Leary going to court

AFP, London

David O'Leary is set to go to court to sue his former club Leeds United following his dismissal as manager two months ago, the Daily Mail newspaper reported here Saturday.

Talks between O'Leary and Leeds chairman Peter Ridsdale over a compensation package have broken down without agreement.

And the Daily Mail reported he is now expected to take his former club to a Premier League sackings tribunal.

O'Leary had four years of his contract at Elland Road remaining when he was dismissed and feels he is entitled to a pay-out of at least one million pounds (1.5 million dollars).

Leeds are looking to reduce that figure, claiming that the relationship between them and the Irishman had deteriorated.

revenge on Manchester City player Haaland, after he had accused him of feigning injury.

Keane could also be the subject of an Football Association (FA) charge once his book is published this week.

Meanwhile Keane has restated his desire to move into management and hopes to use his now-empty international calendar to complete a FA coaching course.

"I've spoken to the manager already about getting my (coaching) badges," said the Irishman.

"I'm nearly 31, I've got another four years left in me and then management is something I'll seriously consider."

League One Anderson on fire

Football

AFP, Paris

Brazilian striker Sonny Anderson scored a hat-trick to fire reigning French champions Lyon past Bastia and into third position of League One but unfancied Nice head the table after beating Montpellier 2-1 on Saturday.

Lyon won 4-1 after Anderson, not part of Brazil's international plans but a potent force for several years in France, opened the scoring on 17 minutes before Hassan Ahamada equalised six minutes later.

Then Lyon took control, playmaker Eric Carriere feeding Anderson time and again. The Brazilian gave Lyon the lead in the 37th minute but his third goal, on 64 minutes, attracted protest from the Corsicans as he appeared to use his arm to push the ball past on-rushing goalkeeper Nicolas Penneteau.

Carriere, fresh from his mid-week appearance in the national squad in the 1-1 draw with Tunisia, finished off the job two minutes from time to stretch Lyon's unbeaten home record to



Arsenal's French international striker Sylvain Wiltord (C) equalising against West Ham at Upton park stadium in east London on August 24.

Premiership Gunners thank Wiltord

Football

AFP, London

English Premiership champions Arsenal saved their 23-match unbeaten record by snatching a 2-2 draw against West Ham on Saturday with late goals from Thierry Henry and Sylvain Wiltord.

Seeking an English record 15th consecutive victory, Arsenal were outplayed by their fellow Londoners who scored through 20-year-old England international Joe Cole a minute before half-time and Frenchman Frederic Kanoute in the 51st minute.

Arsenal pulled a goal back when French international Henry rifled the ball home after 65 minutes but Kanoute then had a penalty saved by David Seaman.

Wiltord, proving why Arsenal are the champions, rifled home in the 88th minute to grab an improbable draw at Upton Park.

Arsenal coach Arsene Wenger said: "It was a tough game. We needed to be patient, resilient and mentally strong and show great spirit and that's exactly what we did."

"I knew we would not give up and that we would fight until the last minute."

"Henry and Wiltord can turn the game and they proved that again," he said.

Liverpool went briefly to the top with a 3-0 win over Southampton before Leeds took over by defeating Premiership new boys West Bromwich Albion 3-1 in a late-starting game that featured a superb goal for Lew Bowyer.

Harry Keell scored his first of the season after 39 minutes before Bowyer, showing signs he is returning to form after a miserable season on and off the field last year, finished off a slick passing move with a 20-metre drive.

Mark Viduka scored the third before West Brom managed a

consolation goal for their home fans.

Leeds fans chanted to unsettle Bowyer to decide his future by signing a new contract with Leeds.

But Bowyer, tried and cleared earlier this year on assault charges, hinted at troubled negotiations.

"There are things going on behind closed doors that no-one knows about and I'm not going to start talking about it in front of the media."

Viduka said he hoped Bowyer, whose move to Liverpool broke down in the off-season, stays in Yorkshire.

"He's an invaluable part of the club and I wish he'd stay but it's up to him," said the Australian.

Liverpool, along with Leeds the only club to retain a 100 percent record, cruised to victory over Southampton at Anfield, with newly signed Senegalese striker El-Hadji Diouf scoring his first two goals for the club.

Diouf fired home after just three minutes from Emile Heskey's pass and headed a second six minutes into the second half after a nod-on from Heskey before England international Danny Murphy scored a last-minute penalty.

Coach Gerard Houllier hailed his new 15-million-dollar hitman, who made such an impact at the World Cup.

"Nobody knew of him before I signed him, but he's making a good start to his career in England, he was excellent," said Houllier.

"And I'm so happy about his goals because Heskey is the person who has helped him settle in at the club."

Italian under-21 international striker Massimo Maccarone also struck twice as Middlesbrough went 2-0 up against Fulham at the Riverside.

Maccarone opened his account with a 20-yard drive after 32 minutes and beat two men to score again in the 51st.

But the Londoners pulled two goals back in a chaotic finale

Premiership's top six

Standings in the English Premiership after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Leeds	2	2	0	0	6	1	6
Liverpool	2	2	0	0	4	0	6
Fulham	2	1	1	0	6	3	4
Arsenal	2	1	1	0	4	2	4
Chelsea	2	1	1	0	5	4	4
Everton	2	1	1	0	3	2	4



Sonny Anderson, Lyon's Brazilian striker, is jubilant after scoring his second goal against Bastia at the Gerland stadium in Lyon on August 24.

League One's top six

Standings in the French championship after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Nice	4	3	0	1	10	3	9
Auxerre	4	3	0	1	6	3	9
Lyon	4	2	2	0	14	6	8
Guingamp	4	2	1	1	9	5	7
Bordeaux	4	2	1	1	5	2	7
Nantes	4	2	1	1	7	5	7

through Sean Davis and Facundo Sava to grab a 2-2 draw.

French international Youri Djorkaeff took just two minutes to score for Bolton against Charlton but the Londoners fought back through Chris Bart-Williams with a 26th minute penalty and Jason Euell, who notched a 71st-minute winner.

Former Manchester United striker Dwight Yorke scored his first goal for Blackburn Rovers for a 1-0 away victory over newly promoted Birmingham City.

Everton grabbed their first victory of the season thanks to a Kevin Campbell strike at Sunderland.

Sunderland manager Peter Reid, under pressure after narrowly avoiding relegation last season, watched his team have one goal disallowed and then saw Everton keeper Richard Wright save a Kevin Phillips penalty.

Jamie Redknapp scored the only goal of the match in the 26th minute against Aston Villa at White Hart Lane to open his account at the London club.

Earlier, newly promoted Manchester City brought title hopefuls Newcastle United down to earth, claiming a deserved 1-0 win at Maine Road to kickstart their English Premiership campaign.

Former Newcastle man Darren Huckerby gave City, coached by former Newcastle star and coach Kevin Keegan, a deserved win with a close-range header after 36 minutes - although he appeared to be offside.

With City inspired by the return of fit-again goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel, Keegan claimed victory over Bobby Robson's outfit after losing last week's contest against another former England manager in a 3-0 defeat to Terry Venables' Leeds.

Debutant Schmeichel was delighted. "It was hard work, perhaps harder than it should have been," he said.

"But as the game progressed we got more and more confident."

England captain David Beckham dedicated his goal in Friday's 2-2 draw with Chelsea to murdered schoolgirls Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman, who were wearing Manchester United shirts emblazoned with Beckham's name and number when they disappeared.

Every professional match in Britain on Saturday was preceded by one minute's silence in memory of the two murdered girls.

29 games. Anderson has six goals in four matches.

Lyon have eight points, one less than Nice and second-placed Auxerre.

Goals from former Paris Saint Germain player Kaba Diawara and Eric Roy pulled Nice clear of the opening goal from Montpellier's 18-year-old Valery Mezague.

Guingamp led the league before the day's action but crashed 2-1 at Auxerre, for whom Djibril Cisse scored, as the 21-year-old continues to shake off the World Cup nightmare he endured with France.

Two former champions, Monaco and Marseille, also took full points, a driven shot from Jerome Rothen giving the team from the principality a 1-0 win over Sochaux.

Marseille appear finally to have left their organisational chaos behind them and stability off the pitch is showing on it.