



Barcelona's latest recruit Mexican international defender Rafael Marquez (C) poses with the team's President Joan Laporta (R) and coach Frank Rijkaard during his official presentation yesterday.

Rijkaard for balance

Football

AFP, Barcelona

New Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard plans to work hard on defence next season but will not lose sight of playing attractive football.

The 40-year-old Rijkaard replaced Serbian coach Radomir Antic last month and follows Johan Cruyff and Louis van Gaal to become Barcelona's third Dutch coach in the last decade.

"We've got good players, but in recent years the team has conceded too many goals. We have to work hard on the defence, but without forgetting how to play attractive football," he told the Barcelona website.

But he admitted he was unsure which players he would have next season.

Barcelona have signed Turkish international goalkeeper Rustu

Recher, from Fenerbahce, and Mexican international defender Rafael Marquez from French first division side Monaco in the last month.

Marquez joins Barcelona on a four-year contract.

The 24-year-old, who played for French first division side Monaco, moved for a sum reportedly between five and seven million euros (5.6-7.9million dollars).

Marquez, who captained Mexico at last year's World Cup finals, will join up with former Monaco team-mate and fellow centreback Philippe Christanval.

They have also been linked with Auxerre's France striker Djibril Cisse and defender Jean-Alain Boumsong, Deportivo la Coruna's Dutch striker Roy Makaay, and Valencia's Argentine international defender Roberto Ayala and midfielder Pablo Aimar.

But they have given Dutch striker Patrick Kluivert until July 17 to sign a new contract or leave.

Barcelona have told Kluivert

they plan to cut his wages and the player is now free to activate a clause which would let him leave for a cut-price 1.8 million euros (2 million dollars).

They were beaten by Liverpool for Leeds United's Australian international Harry Kewell and appear unlikely to sign Paris St Germain's Brazil World Cup winner Ronaldinho who is also being chased by Manchester United.

Barcelona released one of their five Dutch players, veteran defender Frank De Boer, last month but plan to keep Philippe Cocu, Michael Reiziger and Marc Overmars, and possibly Kluivert.

"First, it's very important to know who's in the squad. I need to know which players I've got," Rijkaard said.

"We'll have to wait and then decide. I want a winning team that plays attractive football. People want players who give 100 percent but who also know how to play attractive football. It's very important to win because people want

good results."

He said it had been easy to accept Barcelona's offer.

"When a club like Barça offers you a job, it's not very difficult to answer. FC Barcelona is one of the best teams in the world, with wonderful fans," he said.

And he said he was unfazed by the demands after four years without a trophy.

"Pressure in a club like this has to be taken as normal," he said.

Rijkaard coached the Dutch national team from 1998 to 2000 and Sparta Rotterdam from 2001 to 2002.

He won 73 caps as a stylish midfielder for Holland. He played for Ajax, Sporting Lisbon, Spanish side Real Zaragoza and won three European Cups with AC Milan.

He also won the European Cup winners' Cup with Ajax, and the Champions' League with them when he returned to the Netherlands in 1995.

Anderson now Villareal's

AFP, Villareal

French champions Lyon's star Brazilian striker Sonny Anderson has signed a two-year contract at Villareal, the Spanish first division club said on Tuesday.

The 32-year-old, capped four times by Brazil and who inspired Lyon to two titles and a League Cup triumph in his four seasons there, was snapped up by Villareal on a free transfer four years after he signed for a then record French transfer fee of 17.8million euros (20million dollars) from Barcelona.

Brazil under pressure



AP, Mexico City

Brazil's under-23 soccer team held its first day of training

Tuesday in Mexico City in preparation for its Sunday match against host team Mexico in the CONCACAF Gold Cup.

Brazil could have sent world famous stars like Ronaldo, Rivaldo and Ronaldinho, but instead decided to send its under-23 youth squad to the tourney. They practiced Tuesday on the grounds of Mexico's City's America club.

"This is a young team, but it has a lot of quality and dedication," said Ricardo Gomes, the Brazilian team coach. "When you get to the Brazilian national team, given the team's tradition, the names become less important."

The Mexican team is going through hard times under the command of coach Ricardo Lavolpe. A streak of losses has made Sunday's game against Brazil a crucial one for the squad's future.

Pressure on the Brazilian team is also building up, after an embarrassing elimination from the Confederation Cup played in France last month.

"I think every player is under pressure because we are the Brazilian team and have good quality, but we are calm and know how to handle any type of pressure," said Robinho, the 18-year-old star of the team.

Brazil plays Mexico and Honduras in group A in Mexico City; the other three groups will play

in the U.S. cities of Foxboro, Massachusetts and Miami, Florida. Colombia, Guatemala and

Kewell Reds' for five years

Football

AFP, Sydney

Harry Kewell on Wednesday confirmed football's worst-kept secret when he announced he had signed a five-year contract to switch from Leeds United to Liverpool.

Although he did not say what the transfer fee was worth, English reports said it was seven million pounds (11.4 million dollars).

The Australian international forward has agreed personal terms with the English Premier League club and was expected to fly out with the Liverpool squad to Switzerland on Thursday for a pre-season training camp.

"I have been speaking to them (Liverpool) for over six months and everything just seems right for me to go there," Kewell told Australia's Channel Nine in what the television station called a "world exclusive" here on Wednesday.

"I'm looking forward to it, they have some great players there and exciting young players so there was something just special about Liverpool and that's why I accepted their offer."

Kewell said money was not the overriding factor in his decision.

"I was offered a lot more money

to go to different clubs so money wasn't a main factor.

"The main factor for me was my family and obviously the coach. You can have all the money in the world but you want to look back on your own career and see the medals in the box and say 'yeah, I was in



HARRY KEWELL

that final."

Asked in the television interview whether Chelsea was one of the clubs that weighed in with a bigger offer than Liverpool, Kewell said: "You will have to ask my agent that ... I was told that there were a couple of clubs that had come in with very big money, but it wasn't meant to be."

Kewell said Liverpool had promised him the famous No.7 jersey worn by former Liverpool greats Kevin Keegan and Kenny Dalglish.

"It's an honour to have that number and I'm thrilled to have it and I'm going to wear it with pride and hopefully I can achieve great things with it," Kewell said.

Kewell had been expected to make his announcement on Tuesday but there was a reported last-minute hitch over a 'loyalty' payment believed to be worth 500,000 pounds (800,000 dollars).

But his agent Bernie Mandic told Sky Sport television from Australia on Wednesday that the only hitch was a legal complication written into the contract.

"It's the lawyers," Mandic said. "Harry Kewell is not asking for any money from the transfer fee."

Leeds fans were furious to have heard from Kewell he spent the last few months of last season talking to Liverpool about a move.

"It's a real insult," said Leeds supporters' spokesman John Boocock.

"It makes you wonder whether his mind was fully on the job."

FIFA fix CONMEBOL fixtures



AFP, Asuncion

World football's governing body FIFA on Tuesday approved the schedule for South American 2006 World Cup qualifiers (World champion Brazil's matches in bold):

2003

September 6/7: Peru v Paraguay, **Colombia v Brazil**, Ecuador v Venezuela, Uruguay v Bolivia, Argentina v Chile

September 9/10: Paraguay v Uruguay, **Brazil v Ecuador**, Bolivia v Colombia, Venezuela v Argentina,

Chile v Peru

November 15/16: Paraguay v Ecuador, Uruguay v Chile, **Peru v Brazil**, Argentina v Bolivia, Colombia v Venezuela

November 18/19: Venezuela v Bolivia, **Brazil v Uruguay**, Ecuador v Peru, Chile v Paraguay, Colombia v Argentina

2004

March 30/31: Uruguay v Venezuela, **Paraguay v Brazil**, Bolivia v Chile, Argentina v Ecuador, Peru v Colombia

June 1/2: Ecuador v Colombia, Venezuela v Chile, Uruguay v Peru, **Brazil v Argentina**, Bolivia v Paraguay

June 4/5: **Chile v Brazil**, Colombia v Uruguay, Ecuador v Bolivia, Argentina v Paraguay, Peru v Venezuela

September 4/5: Paraguay v Venezuela, Chile v Colombia, Uruguay v Ecuador, Peru v Argentina, **Brazil v Bolivia**

October 9/10: Colombia v Paraguay, Bolivia v Peru, Ecuador v Chile, **Venezuela v Brazil**, Argentina v Uruguay

October 12/13: Paraguay v Peru, **Brazil v Colombia**, Bolivia v Uruguay, Venezuela v Ecuador, Chile v Argentina

November 16/17: **Ecuador v Brazil**, Argentina v Venezuela, Peru v Chile, Uruguay v Paraguay, Colombia v Bolivia

2005

March 26/27: Ecuador v Paraguay, Venezuela v Colombia, Chile v Uruguay, Bolivia v Argentina, **Brazil v Peru**

March 29/30: Paraguay v Chile, Peru v Ecuador, Bolivia v Venezuela, **Uruguay v Brazil**, Argentina v Colombia

June 4/5: Venezuela v Uruguay, Chile v Bolivia, Ecuador v Argentina, Colombia v Peru, **Brazil v Paraguay**

June 7/8: Chile v Venezuela, Peru v Uruguay, Paraguay v Bolivia, Colombia v Ecuador, **Argentina v Brazil**

September 3/4: Uruguay v Colombia, **Brazil v Chile**, Bolivia v Ecuador, Paraguay v Argentina, Venezuela v Peru

October 8/9: Argentina v Peru, **Bolivia v Brazil**, Ecuador v Uruguay, Colombia v Chile, Venezuela v Paraguay

October 11/12: Uruguay v Argentina, **Brazil v Venezuela**, Paraguay v Colombia, Chile v Ecuador, Peru v Bolivia



Italian homeless player Slaru Birimell (L) and Brazilian Caio Coimbra de Menezes battle for possession during the homeless world cup match on the centercourt in Graz, Austria on July 8.

Home is where football is

Football

REUTERS, Graz

At first glance it looked like any other World Cup match between Germany and the Netherlands.

The teams lined up, shook hands and then fought furiously as their coaches barked orders from the dugout.

But this time the Dutch -- resplendent in their orange strip -- got the upper hand and thrashed the 1990 world champions 14-0 in the first round of qualifying.

Like the score, this is no ordinary World Cup. Instead of spring grass, the players charge around on unforgiving flagstones and rather than proud owners of million dollar contracts from leading soccer clubs, they are homeless.

Eighteen nations from around the world are taking part in the first Homeless World Cup in the Austrian city of Graz.

The week-long event, staged in the town centre's picturesque renaissance main square, is a social integration project that seeks to remove the stigma from homelessness and to combat poverty.

"These days there is so much wealth in the world that it's just outrageous that anyone should be homeless," said Mel Young, president of the International Network of Street Papers, one of the co-organisers of the competition that is supported by UEFA.

The event is not only designed to raise the self-esteem of the players, many of whom are recovering drug and alcohol addicts, but also to break down the barriers of the attitudes of society.

"Football is an international sport and an international language which everyone can understand," Young said. "These people did not feel part of society, but here they have the feeling of inclusion."

Puerto-Rican born Osvaldo Lebron, who lost his job and home after spiralling into drug addiction, felt overwhelmed to be represent-

ing his country, the United States, at the World Cup.

"This is a wonderful idea. It is an incentive to do better. To motivate oneself," the 38-year-old said. Organisers have big plans for the Homeless World Cup.

The competition, which ends with the final on Saturday, has already proved such a success with those involved as well as the general public that a tussle is going on for the right to stage the next World Cup.

"You never know where this is going to go. In 10 years we may have a semi-professional league across the world providing employment," Young said.

Sustainability is the main goal.

"We hope this whole experience will be positive for them -- that they saw they could achieve something, could see other options of how they could reorientate themselves into society," the Scot added.

Tit for tat!

AFP, Saint Etienne

A Turkish fan who hurled a camera onto the pitch narrowly missing Ronaldinho's head during Brazil's Confederations Cup tie against Turkey last month has been identified after the roll of film was developed by police.

The device, which only avoided the World Cup winner by a matter of centimetres, was thrown from the stands after Adriano had put Brazil ahead in the match at the Geoffrey-Guichard stadium here on June 23.

After local police recovered the missile and developed the film they found a clear image of its owner, a 21-year-old French-based Turkish supporter.

A photograph showed him posing in front of the Turkish flag, with his car's number plate clearly visible behind.

Police went to pay a call on the petrol station attendant at his home in Mulhouse last week, a visit that resulted in his receiving a summons to appear in court on October 29.

The match ended in a 2-2 draw which was not enough to save World Cup winner's Brazil from elimination from the competition.

No Ronaldinho plans

Football

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid president Florentino Perez has confirmed the Spanish champions will not try to sign Brazil World Cup striker Ronaldinho next season.

The Paris St Germain star has been linked with a move to Madrid for several weeks but Perez told the Marca sports daily that Tuesday's signing of Argentine international defender Gabriel Milito completed their transfer dealings.

"The question of signings for next season is now closed," he said.

"Yesterday we finished the signing of Milito and with that we have now completed the four central defenders the club needs."

"For that reason Ronaldinho will not come to Real Madrid this year."

English champions Manchester United said Wednesday they would be going back to Paris St Germain in an attempt to sign Ronaldinho.

PSG president Francis Gaille said Tuesday he had received a verbal offer of 25 million euros (28 million dollars) plus additional payments based on performance which could raise the deal to 35 million euros (40 million dollars).

He said he wanted a written



GABRIEL MILITO

offer by the end of the week and ordered Ronaldinho to report for pre-season training on Thursday -- something Ronaldinho's brother and agent Roberto Assis said was unlikely.

Manchester have refused to be drawn on their latest moves because as a listed company they cannot let details of their moves in the transfer market out before informing the Stock Exchange.

"We are pursuing our interest in the player," was all the club had to say.

Assis said he believed a deal would be struck on Thursday, with United manager Alex Ferguson reported in France to be poised to fly to Paris to clinch the deal.

Boss' faith on Ranieri

Football

AFP, London

Claudio Ranieri has been given a vote of confidence by Chelsea's new owner Roman Abramovich despite speculation over Sven-Goran Eriksson leaving his England post to take over the London club.

Ranieri met the Russian billionaire for the first time Tuesday and was told he will remain as manager, the London Evening Standard reported Wednesday.

A source close to the manager said: "The meeting went well and Claudio will be staying. Abramovich took the time to talk to the players on a one-to-one basis and explained his vision for the club. He wants to bring in new players but will give the current squad the chance to prove itself."

Israeli agent Pini Zahavi, who brought Abramovich to Chelsea, took Eriksson to meet the Russian.

"The coach is Ranieri - and he will remain the coach," Zahavi said.

Chairman Ken Bates added: "They (Ranieri and Abramovich) got on very well and most of the talking was about players. Efforts are now focusing on the preliminary rounds of the Champions League."

Bookmakers have suspended bets on Ranieri being the first Premiership manager to be sacked this season. Rumours reached fever pitch after the Abramovich-Eriksson meeting was revealed.

Eriksson was forced to issue a statement reaffirming his commitment to England and admitted the timing of the meetings was unfortunate.

The Swede was last year reported to have agreed to take over from Alex Ferguson as Manchester United manager and

has been linked with Real Madrid and Barcelona.

"I can confirm that last week I met with Pini Zahavi and the new owner of Chelsea Football Club - Roman Abramovich," Eriksson said in a statement.

"Due to the intense media profile given to Mr Abramovich's involvement with Chelsea, I accept that this meeting may create unfortunate speculation. Therefore, I would like to once again categorically re-affirm my total commitment to my role as England head coach."



CLAUDIO RANIERI

Zahavi added: "Eriksson has been a friend of mine for 25 years. He knows Mr Abramovich very well and they have met in the past. Eriksson wanted to wish him good luck in his new job. It was a social meeting, nothing more."

The Israeli played a key role in taking David Beckham to Real Madrid and Rio Ferdinand to Manchester United and is expected to go into the transfer market for Chelsea.

"Mr Abramovich is trying to get the best players possible. He will not buy defenders but wants to get the best midfielders and strikers in the world. Only the best available will do," he said.



Brazil's hotshot Robinho (C) runs with teammates during a practice session in Mexico City on July 8.