

Portuguese striker Pauleta, who joined French club Paris Saint-Germain, signs autographs on July 10.

PHOTO: AFP

Blackburn turn down Duff offer

Football

REUTERS/AFP, London

Blackburn Rovers have rejected two official bids from Chelsea for winger Damien Duff, according to a report.

Since the arrival of their new owner, Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich, Chelsea have been linked with moves for some of the biggest names in European soccer including Inter Milan's Christian Vieri and Real Madrid's Geremi.

"A very serious bid has been made and rejected (for Duff), and we want the player to stay," Rovers Chief Executive John Williams told the BBC.

The failed offer follows other rejected Chelsea advances on Brazilian Ronaldinho and Juventus's Edgar Davids.

Williams declined to say how much the London club had offered but said the bid was close to a figure the player could contractually consider.

He said an escape clause in Duff's contract which allows him to talk to other clubs if they offer a certain amount might prompt Chelsea to return with a third bid.

"It depends how serious Chelsea are about wanting to sign him," Williams said.

Chelsea reportedly made a 15-million-pound (24.5-million-dollar) bid for the Irish winger, the

Daily Mail said on Saturday.

The 24-year-old has also been linked with Premiership champions Manchester United, runners-up Arsenal and Champions League aspirants Liverpool.

Blackburn said they had already turned down a 13-million-pound bid but Chelsea are expected to up that to 15 million pounds this weekend, enough, the paper believes, to see Duff make the move south to London.

Duff can talk to clubs willing to pay 17 million pounds, because of a clause in his contract.

Blackburn chief executive John Williams said: "The clause was written in when Damien signed a new four-year contract last year. It is true that we have turned down two bids from Chelsea as we are very keen to keep Damien at Ewood Park.

"Once the figure is reached, the matter is out of our hands and the decision is Damien's to make.

"I can only repeat that we very much want him to stay with us and hope our recent success and qualification for the UEFA Cup will encourage him to do precisely that."

One bid under Abramovich has been successful. On Thursday West Ham United said they had accepted Chelsea's offer, for an undisclosed fee, for 18-year-old defender Glen Johnson.



DAMIEN DUFF

Bayern bid for Makaay

AFP, Munich

German league and cup double winners Bayern Munich have made an offer to Spanish club Deportivo La Coruna for Dutch international Roy Makaay, the Bavarian club's manager said here Friday.

"We have made an offer and now we are waiting to see if Coruna is in agreement," Ottmar Hitzfeld said, without giving any details of the offer.

The president of the Spanish First Division club, Augusto Cesar Lendoiro, told Marca, the Spanish daily, that no more meetings were arranged between the two sides.

The 27-year-old Makaay, who was the top scorer in the Spanish league with 29 goals, said at the end of June that he wanted to play for Bayern Munich.

Deportivo qualified for the preliminary rounds of the Champions League with a third place finish in the Spanish First Division.

Fadiga ready for Inter

Football

AFP, Milan

Senegalese international midfielder Khalilou Fadiga said Friday he could not wait to begin life in Italy with his new club Inter Milan.

Fadiga, 28, was signed from French Ligue 1 side Auxerre on Wednesday for a fee of three million euros (3.4 million dollars).

"I really am very pleased. Inter had been keeping an eye on me for a year now and I'm happy that negotiations reached a happy conclusion. It's a true joy for me to come to such an important club," Fadiga told Inter's official website.

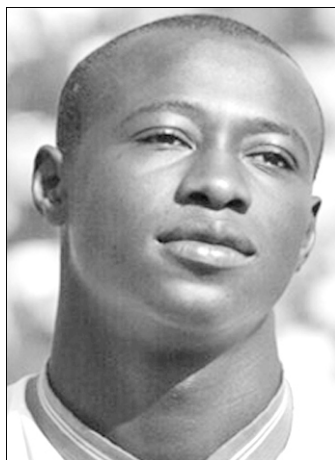
Fadiga, a key member of the Senegal side that surprisingly reached the quarterfinals of last year's World Cup finals, said he hoped his versatility would make him a useful asset to Inter coach Hector Cuper.

"I'm a midfielder that prefers to play down the wing, mainly on the left, but I can also play behind the strikers, like I did at the World

Cup," Fadiga added.

"But there's no problem, I can't wait to begin this new adventure. Serie A, along with the Primera Liga, is the best league in Europe. It is a very technical championship and one with great players."

Fadiga has signed a three-year contract - thought to be worth 600,000 euros (677,000 dollars) a



year to him - with last season's Champions League semifinalists.

Capped 32 times, Fadiga was involved in controversy before the World Cup in Japan and South Korea even started when he was charged with stealing a gold necklace from jewellers in the Korean city of Daegu.

However, the charges against Fadiga were dropped at the request of the shopkeeper.

The player has always maintained that he took the necklace as a prank and always intended to pay for it.

Fadiga, who holds a Belgian passport after spending six years there in which he won the Belgian title with FC Bruges, had a successful season with Auxerre following the World Cup.

He finished the campaign on a high note when his side lifted the French Cup after beating Paris Saint Germain.

In addition to Fadiga, Inter have also signed Brazilian winger Luciano from Chievo and Ajax midfielder Andy Van der Meijde this week.

Souness impresses Emerton

Football

AFP, Blackburn

Australian midfielder Brett Emerton says he is raring to get going at new employers Blackburn Rovers following his transfer from Feyenoord.

The no-nonsense managerial style of Graeme Souness has been slammed in the past by his own players such as David Dunn and

Keith Gillespie following their arrivals from Birmingham and Leicester respectively.

But Emerton, who moved to Ewood Park for an undisclosed fee, says he has been nothing but impressed by the Souness during negotiations.

The 24-year-old told talkSPORT: "Obviously I have a great impression of him otherwise I would not be considering going to the club.

"I cannot comment about the

other players but as far as I am concerned he has treated me well.

"I have been very impressed. I only arrived on Monday and a deal has been struck already."

Emerton claims he is joining a club that can push for Champions League qualification.

Other clubs, including Newcastle, were reported to be interested in acquiring his services but Emerton believes he has made the right decision and will fit in well at Ewood Park.

"It's no secret that several clubs were interested and it's been a tough decision because all the clubs interested are great clubs.

"But I chose Blackburn because they are a club on the move, they play attractive football and I will fit in nicely.

"I don't think it will take long to settle. I think I am more suited to English football than Dutch. I'll settle in quickly and hopefully make a big name for myself."

Zamorano accepts suspension

AFP, Santiago

Chilean striker Ivan Zamorano, who received an 11-month suspension for attacking a referee, has said he will accept his suspension but he won't be quitting football.

Zamorano verbally and physically attacked a referee while contesting the third goal of his side Colo Colo's 4-0 home defeat by Cobreloa on Sunday.

The player said: "At one point I thought I would quit but in fact I realised that I am still in good enough physical shape to continue to play once my suspension has finished."

Zamorano, formerly of Real Madrid and Inter Milan, played for his country 69 times and scored 34 goals before retiring from international competition two years ago.

Wenger steps up keeper hunt

BBC ONLINE, London

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger is to intensify his search for a goalkeeper after Stuart Taylor suffered an injury scare.

Taylor was taken off on a stretcher with a neckbrace fitted after colliding with Peterborough's Andy Clarke in a friendly on Friday.

The Gunners have been on the look-out for a new number one following the departure of veteran David Seaman to Manchester City.

Wenger now wants a deal to be done for a new goalkeeper by July 19.

The Highbury manager has been linked with moves for a number of keepers including Leeds' Paul Robinson and Turkey international Rustu Recber, who has signed for Barcelona.

Wenger has yet to make his move but confirmed his intention to make a signing this summer, adding: "At the moment we haven't made a decision. The only thing that is clear is that we will buy a keeper."

Taylor, 22, is currently the number one at Highbury, with Swedish keeper Rami Shaaban still recovering from a broken leg and Graham Stack behind both in the pecking order.

Japan enter eves' WC football

AFP, Tokyo

Japan earned a place in the women's football World Cup for a fourth straight time when they defeated Mexico 2-0 in the second leg of a home-and-away playoff on Saturday.

US outfit Atlanta Beat midfielder Homare Sawa headed home the opening goal past Mexican goalkeeper Pamela Tajonar in the 56th minute thanks to a nice pass produced by Emi Yamamoto from just outside the left corner of the box.

In the 83rd minute, second-half substitute Karina Maruyama quickly flicked in at the Mexican goalmouth after skipper Yumi Obe sent a long pass on a free kick far from the midfield.

Japan, who almost failed to qualify earlier after finishing fourth in the Asian championship, lost a goal lead twice to be held to a 2-2 draw in Mexico City in the first leg a week ago.

Ferdinand joins Leicester

AFP, London

Former England striker Les Ferdinand will add experience to the Leicester City strikeforce next season after signing a one-year deal with the newly promoted club on Friday.

Leicester manager Micky Adams beat off competition from a number of other clubs to land Ferdinand on a free transfer.

The former QPR and Newcastle forward was out of contract after his deal with West Ham expired at the end of last season.

Adams made it three signings in three days by snapping up Lilian Nalis from Italian club Chievo, securing the French midfielder on a free transfer, further strengthening his squad following Keith Gillespie's signing on Wednesday.

The Foxes manager had targeted Nalis while the midfielder was at Bastia 12 months ago, and has now lured the 31-year-old from Serie A to the Premiership. Adams told the club's official website, www.lfc.co.uk: "I am delighted to have signed him because I was disappointed not to be able to get him on board a year ago when I first wanted to bring him to the club."

Real deal for Ronaldinho

Football

AFP, Paris

The best offer French Ligue 1 side Paris Saint-Germain have received for Brazilian international Ronaldinho has come from Real Madrid, the French club's president said Thursday.

Francis Graille said on the club's website that the offer from the Spanish Division One champions would allow Paris Saint-Germain to keep the Brazilian World Cup star for another year.

"We would like to keep Ronaldinho but for the moment the only written offer we have received has come from Barcelona and Chelsea.

"There have been numerous rumours about a Manchester United offer but we haven't received any," Graille said.

The Brazilian has added fuel to the controversy surrounding him by not turning up for pre-season training with the cash-strapped French side.

"Ronaldinho will be punished. His attitude shows a lack of respect towards Paris Saint-Germain," Graille said.

The 23-year-old, who has been linked with a move to Barcelona, told his brother and agent Roberto Assis that he is determined to play for Manchester United where he would be guaranteed Champions League football next season.

"Ronaldinho wants to go to Manchester United, so at the moment it's just a question of waiting for the deal to be completed," Assis told the Press Association Thursday.

Barcelona, who finished sixth in

the Spanish First Division, remain one of the main contenders to lure the Brazilian after Graille said their offer was better than United's.

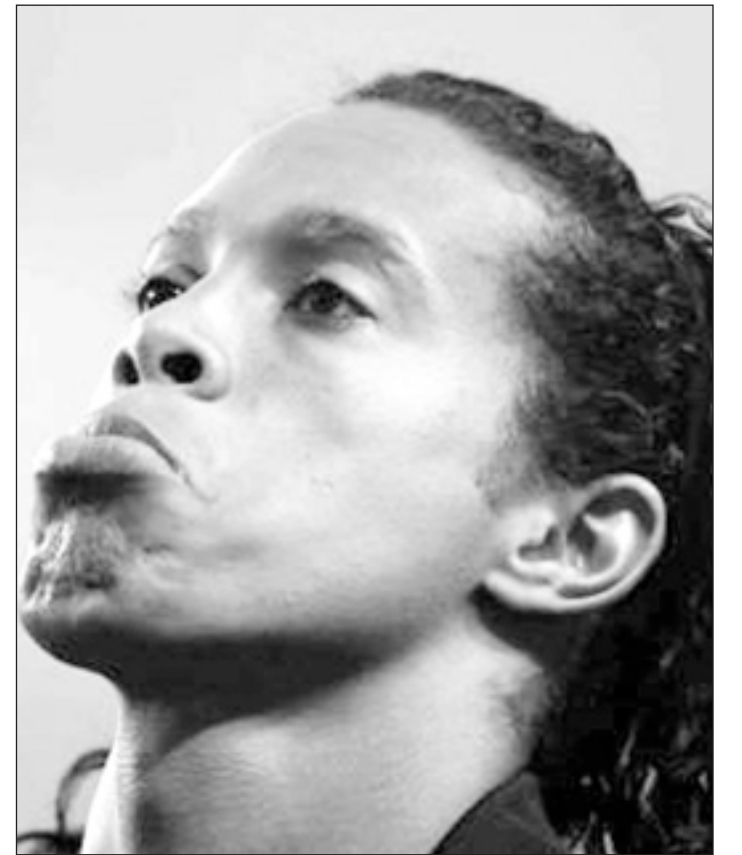
The Catalan team have made a reported offer of 27 million euros (31 million dollars) along with French defender Philippe Christanval and Argentine midfielder Juan Roman Riquelme.

United were said to have offered 25 million euros plus performance bonuses which could raise the deal to 35 million euros (40 million

dollars). Paris Saint-Germain's signing of Portuguese striker Pauleta on Thursday was believed to have opened the way for Ronaldinho's departure.

The French side's new coach Vahid Halilhodzic admitted there was only a slim chance of the Brazilian now staying in Paris.

PSG said late Friday that no decision would be taken on Ronaldinho's transfer until the start of next week.



RONALDINHO