

# Monaco destroy Chelsea dream



AFP, London

Chelsea's lavishly financed aspirations to Champions League glory dissolved into tears as Monaco battled back from two goals down to book their place in the final.

A 2-2 draw on the night put Monaco into the May 26 final against FC Porto 5-3 on aggregate, and denied Claudio Ranieri the opportunity of an intriguing encounter with Jose Mourinho, the man tipped to take over from him at Stamford Bridge this summer.

The margin between triumph and failure was much smaller than the raw figures suggest. But for the goal that Hugo Ibarra scored in first-half stoppage time with the help of his arm, Chelsea might easily have overturned the 3-1 deficit they conceded in the first leg.

As it was, Monaco got the break when they needed it and ultimately had too much quality to surrender control of the tie.

"We played very, very well in the first half. We put them under a lot of pressure, dominated the match and had a lot of chances," Ranieri said.

"But when we conceded the goal just before half-time, that changed things for us. If we had gone in with 2-0 it is a different match - they have to attack and we can play on the counter."

Ranieri shrugged off Ibarra's apparent handball. "Yes I think it hit his hand but the referee did not see it. What can you do."

Although the Italian has failed to convince Chelsea's billionaire owner Roman Abramovich that he is the man to take the club forward, the Italian defiantly defended his record since the Russian started pumping his money into the club last summer. "A lot of clubs have spent a lot of money and didn't arrive where Chelsea have arrived," he said. "I think Roman's money was very well spent."

Up until Ibarra's contested goal, Chelsea had looked firmly on track to defy the odds and overturn the 3-1 deficit that was the legacy of Ranieri's tactical blunders in the first leg.

The Frank Lampard strike that put Chelsea 2-0 ahead may have followed a fluky opener by Jesper Gronkjaer but the Blues generated sufficient chances to deserve their lead.

But their failure to take their opportunities, including two gilt-edged chances to take a 3-1 lead early in the second half, sealed their fate even before Fernando Morientes ended the contest with a clinically-taken equaliser on the hour mark.

Deschamps admitted his side had been on the rack in a first half in which goalkeeper Flavio Roma produced good saves to deny

Lampard and Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink, as well as allowing Gronkjaer's cross to fly over his head and into the net.

"We really struggled to get into it and Chelsea put us under a lot of pressure," he said.

"I think some of my players were quite nervous because of the occasion but Chelsea's second goal acted as a liberating factor. We were obliged to go for it and fortunately we got that goal at the decisive time."

Chelsea had set the tone for a high-tempo encounter right from the start and should have gone ahead when Roma failed to hold Geremi's drive and was relieved to see Joe Cole snatch at the rebound and slice his shot wide.

Roma then did well to block a Hasselbaink shot from a tight angle but he blotted his copybook by allowing Gronkjaer's cross to float over his head as Chelsea took the lead.

Monaco's threat on the break had been underlined either side of the goal, Morientes pushing one shot wide from just inside the box then seeing a more difficult chance deflected on to the post by John Terry.

But defensively they were creaking at the edges as they battled to contain a Chelsea side playing as well as they had done all season.

Eidur Gudjohnsen struck a header against the bar after Roma had flapped at Hasselbaink's cross

before Lampard doubled the home side's lead.

Two simple, angled passes from Melchiot and Gudjohnsen were enough to open up a weary Monaco defence and leave Lampard with the job of beating Roma from just inside the box.

It was a goal that should have set the stage for a nerve tingling second half. Instead Chelsea's hopes suffered a crushing setback deep into first half stoppage time.

The impressive Jerome Rothen was again the instigator, rounding Melchiot on the left wing and picking out Morientes eight yards out. The Spanish striker's header looped over Cudicini and appeared to strike Ibarra's arm as it bounced off the woodwork, on to the Monaco midfielder and back into the net.

Chelsea could still have forced the tie into extra-time by scoring a third but Gudjohnsen and Gronkjaer squandered good chances early in the second half and Morientes made sure they paid.

A neat one-two with Lucas Bernardi put the Spaniard into the box and he made no mistake.

## Metsu in race for Korea job

AFP, Seoul

Former Senegal coach Bruno Metsu was among nine candidates named Thursday by football officials to replace Portugal's Humberto Coelho as coach of the South Korean national side.

Coelho stepped down last month after a string of poor results for the World Cup 2002 semi-finalists.

The Korea Football Association said Metsu was one the strongest candidates favored to lead South Korea's national soccer squad. It plans to come up with a list of two or three finalists by the end of this month.

Metsu led Senegal to the quarterfinals in the 2002 World Cup and is currently coach of a professional team in the United Arab Emirates.

Other top contenders are Luiz Felipe Scolari, the Portuguese team coach, Senol Guney, former coach of Turkey, Mick McCarthy, former Ireland coach and former Argentina coach Daniel Alberto Passarella, it said.

The rest are Roger Lemerre, who coached France to victory in the Euro 2000 tournament, Vadenlei Luxemburgo, former Brazil coach, Vincent Del Bosque, former coach of Real Madrid, Faith Terim, former coach of Turkish football club Galatasaray, and former Canada coach Holger Osieck.

The departure of Coelho, who took over from legendary Dutchman Guus Hiddink, followed South Korea's goalless draw with lowly Maldives on March 31 and defeats to Oman and Vietnam earlier in the year.

Under Coelho, South Korea played 18 matches, winning nine, drawing three and losing six.



Monaco's mercurial Spanish marksman Fernando Morientes (R) celebrates scoring the decisive second goal against high-flying Chelsea in their UEFA Champions League semifinal encounter at Stamford Bridge on May 5.

# Marvellous Morientes



REUTERS, Madrid

Fernando Morientes, the best-paid player in French football, is proving to be the bargain of the season for Monaco.

The Spanish striker took a huge gamble moving from Real Madrid to the casino principality where he plays in front of a few thousand fans in a ground built over a car park.

However, it is Morientes, Monaco's talisman, who will be playing in the Champions League final on May 26, not Ronaldo, David Beckham and the other "galacticos" from Madrid.

His second half goal finished off Chelsea in Wednesday's semi-final second leg and at the final whistle Morientes, shaking his head in disbelief and staring into the night sky, seemed overwhelmed by what he had achieved.

"I'm still on a high," he said. "This is incredible and I just want to enjoy it as long as it lasts."

Coach Didier Deschamps persuaded Morientes to leave Real on loan early in the season after Monaco's Shabani Nonda, the top scorer in Ligue 1 last season, was badly injured.

The 28-year-old has become the

pivot around which a talented Monaco team turns. His ability both to score goals and set up others, particularly with his head, has thrilled a country which nurtured the skills of Zinedine Zidane and Thierry Henry.

"Morientes is our best player and an example to the rest of the team," says Deschamps. "We always go on the attack because we have him up front."

Morientes was frustrated last season sitting on the bench watching new signing Ronaldo lead the Real line.

He had been one of a raft of players that joined Real from middle-ranking Spanish sides, in his case Real Zaragoza, as the celebrated club cherry-picked the best players in the Primera Liga and offered them lucrative long-term deals.

Renowned for his prowess in the air, the centre-forward was an important piece in the side that won the 1998 European Cup, allowing the club to regain its status as the best on the continent after a 32-year wait.

Forming a lethal partnership with close friend Raul, Morientes picked up two more European Cup winners medals in 2000 and 2002 and helped Real to league titles in 2001 and 2003.

However, just after finishing the

season as Real's top scorer in the league with 18 goals, he fell victim to club president Florentino Perez's "galactico" recruitment policy.

Perez tried to use Morientes as a bargaining counter in a Ronaldo deal in August 2002, first as part exchange for the Brazilian World Cup winner and then by selling him to Barcelona.

Although Ronaldo arrived, Morientes ended up staying and watching most of the season from the dugout. After then losing his place in the Spanish national side, Morientes realised he would have no choice but to move on.

His sky-high wages - around 4.5 million euros (3 million pounds) - meant that a loan move was the only option. In the end, Real had to agree to keep paying about two-thirds of his salary so that Monaco could afford the move.

The striker from the province of Caceres has become a far more rounded player since his move to the principality.

At Real he was an out-and-out centre-forward. Under Deschamps he has dropped back to play behind or alongside Monaco captain Ludovic Giuly, yet he has still managed to be the top scorer in the Champions League with nine goals.

In a delicious piece of irony it was Morientes's goals that helped eliminate Real from this season's

Champions League.

His late strike in the 4-2 first leg at the Bernabeu brought a cheer from Real fans who were confident they would reach the last four regardless.

It was Monaco, though, who went on to make the semis on the away goals rule after a 3-1 win in the return and who now face Porto in the final at Gelsenkirchen.

"At the start of the season I didn't have the confidence in myself that I have now because I hardly played the year before," Morientes told Spanish sports daily Marca in a recent interview.

"My aim when I left Real was to rediscover that confidence. Now thanks to my coach, to Monaco and my team mates I've got it all back."

The importance of Morientes's performances was not lost on Inaki Saez who has recalled him to the Spanish side and is certain to make him a part of his plans for Euro 2004.

With Real struggling in the league, Perez said on Thursday that Morientes will be returning to Madrid at the end of June.

It is certain that he will be in no mood to spend the next campaign on the bench.

# Deschamps tips Porto instead



AFP, Paris

Monaco boss Didier Deschamps said his side had a good chance to win the Champions League final against FC Porto, though he believed Jose Mourinho's team were the favourites for the May 26 clash in Germany.

A 2-2 draw at Chelsea on Wednesday night earned Monaco a 5-3 aggregate victory and booked their place in the Gelsenkirchen final.

Deschamps, who has been offered an extension to his contract, said they were cautiously optimistic against 2002/03 UEFA Cup champions Porto.

He told Thursday's L'Equipe when asked if they were afraid of Porto: "Fear no. Porto inspire respect. They have won the UEFA Cup, their players have a lot of experience, and without wishing to put them under pressure, I believe they are the favourites."

"But I also recognize that we have a good chance to win this final."

Deschamps said his side had improved immeasurably in the last year, adding: "Monaco have improved, like the whole of French football."

"We have become very competitive because we have worked very hard. A year ago, we embarked on a period of discovery and we lacked a lot of things. But now we deserve our place in the final."

Things are now looking good for Deschamps to build on Monaco's success during the next few seasons. Club president Pierre Svara



Monaco coach Didier Deschamps jumps off the bench after his side defeated Chelsea in their Champions League semifinal clash at Stamford Bridge in London.

announced after the match that the Monaco board had offered an extension to his contract a few days ago. Deschamps' current deal runs till June 2005.

"The club board are in agreement and we have offered him a new contract which is now under negotiation," Svara said. "He was happy about it and said he was very content in Monaco. The extension will be from between one and three years."

Svara added he was optimistic that the ban on buying new players which has been in force since last year would be lifted. "I have high hopes that this handicap will be lifted," said Svara, who added Monaco would probably keep between 70 to 80 percent of their squad for next season.

Porto coach Jose Mourinho said the best team won. "Monaco were a lot better tactically, were a lot better tactically but also had good individuals," Mourinho said.

"Monaco started really badly and for a few minutes, Chelsea had qualified for the final. But Monaco came back through (Fernando) Morientes who at the moment is in the form of his life."

Mourinho added he would rather have played Chelsea in the final but not for just footballing reasons. He said the Chelsea fans would have made for a better atmosphere at Gelsenkirchen than those from Monaco.

"Monaco are a team which plays very well with and without the ball. (Hugo) Ibarra was very good. From now on we will try to watch a lot of Monaco's matches and study them as much as we can."



BLUES BLURRED: Chelsea striker Eidur Gudjohnsen hangs his head after the match.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# The final whistle



REUTERS, London

After their tumultuous season ended in Champions League disappointment, Chelsea can expect more upheaval in the coming weeks with the likely departure of coach Claudio Ranieri and the arrival of more big-name signings.

The multi-million pound London side looked headed for the final on Wednesday after goals from Jesper Gronkjaer and Frank Lampard cancelled out Monaco's 3-1 first-leg semi-final lead.

Their joy lasted only two minutes, however. The top-scoring principality team hit back on the stroke of halftime through a fumbled Hugo Ibarra goal and the prolific Fernando Morientes added a second on the hour.

Russian oil magnate Roman Abramovich, who bought Chelsea last July and has spent over 120 million pounds on new players, visited the team in a subdued dressing room after the game and said: "It will be better next time."

Just who will be involved in "next time" has been a matter of intense speculation.

Abramovich has made no secret of his desire to turn Chelsea, a perennially fashionable but underachieving club, into the biggest team in Europe.

The billionaire swept through Stamford Bridge, clearing out chairman Ken Bates and recruiting top staff, including chief executive Peter Kenyon from Manchester United, to raise Chelsea's profile and sell the



CLAUDIO RANIERI

brand worldwide.

Ranieri, recruited by the old regime in 2000, has said he does not expect to remain. The media in Britain and Portugal tip Porto coach Jose Mourinho, who won the UEFA Cup last year and will face Monaco in the

Champions League final this season, to take over.

Ranieri has won enormous sympathy for his humour and dignity in sticking to his task, knowing the Chelsea boardroom were lining up his successor.

Mourinho, in London to watch the game, signed autographs at Stamford Bridge before sizing up his rivals for the May 26 final in Gelsenkirchen. It was a good opportunity for the suave, English-speaking Portuguese to assess his prospective employers and newspapers speculated that, despite his denials, he would meet Abramovich on Thursday.

Ranieri, who has insisted since Abramovich's takeover that moulding a disparate group of top talent and egos into a winning team would take more than one season, said he leaves "a very, very good foundation".

A probable second place finish in the premier league behind rampant Arsenal and reaching the Champions League semifinals is more than he and most fans expected.

That Ranieri has had to rely on his pre-Abramovich signings for the consistency and commitment that took Chelsea so far proves, perhaps, that money is no guarantee of success.

Midfielder Lampard has been

outstanding, backed by England defender and Chelsea youth product John Terry.

In attack Eidur Gudjohnsen has shown more intelligence and verve than either 16.8-million-pound Hernan Crespo or the 15.8-million-pound Romanian Adrian Mutu who has not scored since February.

Significantly only three of the 14 post-Abramovich signings - Joe Cole, Wayne Bridge and Geremi - started on Wednesday.

It was Lampard who ran to the last second, Terry who sobbed at the whistle and Gudjohnsen who was comforted by Monaco coach Didier Deschamps as he walked tearfully to the tunnel.

More signings are on the cards when the transfer window opens, however. Mourinho has said how much he admires David Beckham and, after scandals over his private life, the England captain is reported by the British press to be considering a return home.

Newspapers have also linked his Real Madrid team mate Ronaldo to Chelsea saying he met Kenyon earlier this year. More recently Juventus's French striker David Trezeguet and Roma's Argentine defender Walter Samuel have been touted as targets for the club with unrivalled spending power.

Ranieri's successor will have a lot to think about during the close season.