

Crespo loaned to Milan

Drogba deal near

Football

AFP, Marseille

Marseille expect to sell Ivory Coast striker Didier Drogba to English Premiership side Chelsea by the end of the week.

Three days after club president Christophe Bouchet denied they were considering the move, Marseille now admit they will be unable to resist a 35 million euro offer.

"We'll see by the end of the week

if Drogba leaves or not," said Marseille general manager Pape Diouf.

Marseille coach Jose Anigo added: "If the offer Christophe Bouchet has talked about comes in then it's only logic. It's a lot of money for the club."

Bouchet has already turned down a 28 million euro bid.

Chelsea appeared to be poised to return with an improved offer after their 16.8 million pound Argentina striker Hernan Crespo flew to Milan to complete a 12-month loan move.

Marseille said on their club website the 29-year-old had signed until June 30, 2005.

Marseille vice-president Adriano Galliani said: "I am delighted Crespo will be coming to Milan.

New Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho had said they would only bid for Drogba if Crespo left.

Marseille bought Drogba, 26, for six million euros from Guingamp last year and his contract runs to 2008.

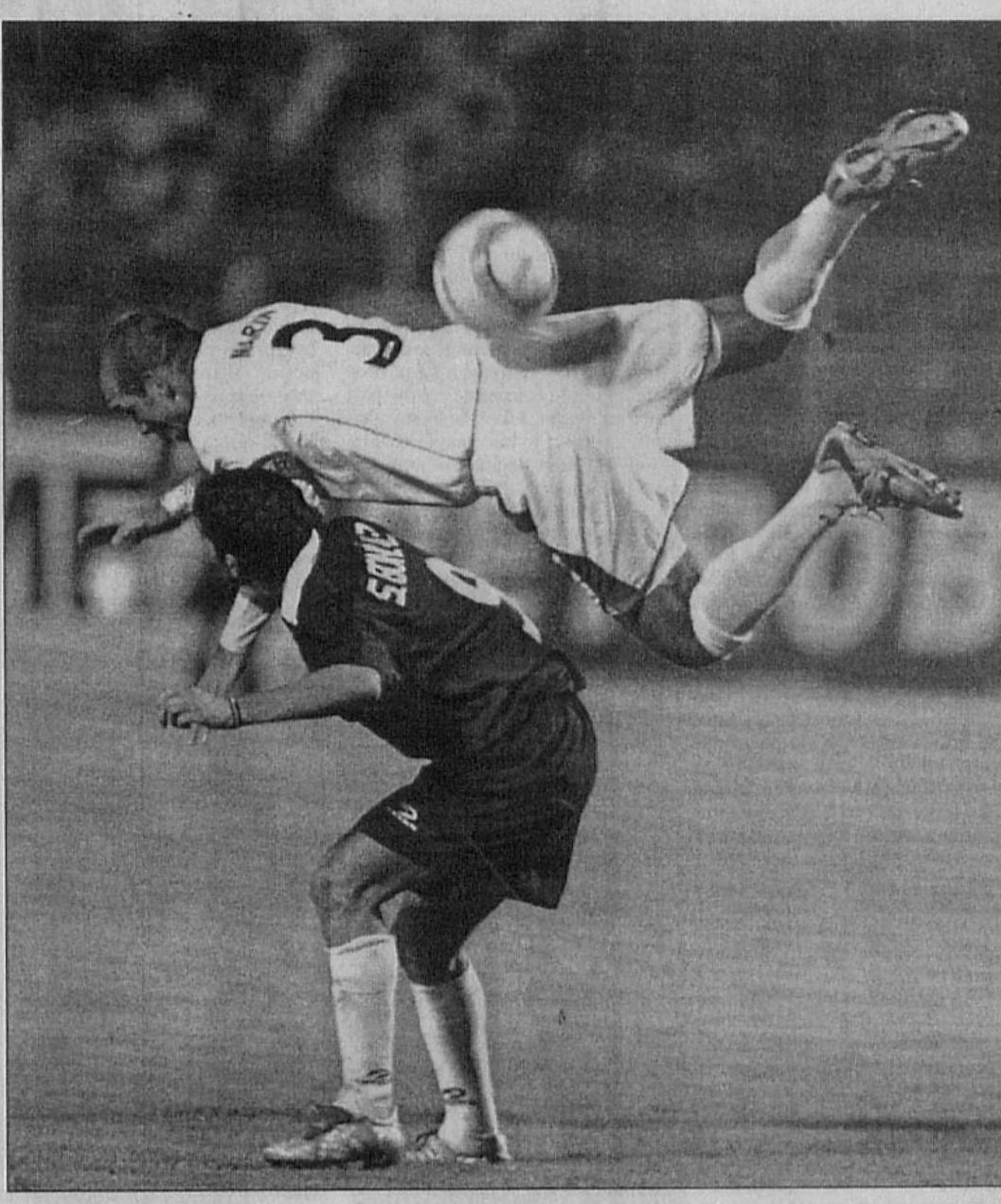
He scored 19 of Marseille's 47 goals in the French championship last season and 11 of their 18 goals in their path to the UEFA Cup final.

including a brace which killed off Newcastle in the semi-finals.

Marseille were already being linked with Ajax's Sweden striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Lyon's Congo-born French striker Peguy Luyindula, who scored 16 goals in the last championship.

Crespo began his career at River Plate before moving to Parma where he had a successful time - scoring 62 times in 116 appearances - and landed the 1999 UEFA Cup.

He joined Lazio for 35 million pounds and then had a season at Inter before joining Chelsea.



WATCH OUT! Costa Rican Luis Marin falls over Chilean Sebastian Gonzalez during their match on July 14.

Wake up call

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ourselves against something that we knew was coming," Brazil coach Carlos Alberto Parreira said.

"Losing is never nice but at least we could afford to lose this one."

Luis Fabiano scored a fine equaliser on 35 minutes, chesting down a cross from midfielder Kleberson and shooting into the net from a tight angle. The game seemed to be drifting toward a draw in the second half when Paraguay stunned Brazil by regaining the lead.

Figueroa knocked on a hopeful ball from midfield and a gaping hole opened up in the Brazilian defence, allowing Bareiro to slot the ball past Julio Cesar.

Paraguay coach Carlos Jara Saguer said: "We all know that Brazil have excellent players and will make life difficult for you, but my players did an excellent job of organising themselves and snapping up the chances that came their way."

"What more can you ask?"

COSTARICA 2; CHILE 1

Costa Rica beat Chile on Andy Herron's goal three minutes into second-half injury time. Herron's goal eliminated Chile and Bolivia, who would have qualified if the score remained 1-1.

Chile captain Rafael Olara put his team ahead in the 40th minute when he was in the right place at the right time. Luis Jimenez's free kick glanced off the back of Costa Rica defender Cristian Badilla and in off the right shoulder of Olara.

Costa Rica tied it just before the hour mark. Alonso Solis sent in a free kick that rebounded to Walter Centeno, whose shot from the right wing was trapped in the goal mouth by team-mate Mauricio Wright, who tapped in the ball.

Herron then scored the winner with a hard shot from the right side past Chile keeper Alex Vargas.

Costa Rica, who eliminated Chile 2-1 on an injury-time goal earlier Wednesday, advanced as the second-best third-place team and will play Colombia this weekend.

Stoichkov to the rescue

AFP, Sofia

Former Barcelona star Christo Stoichkov was made Bulgaria coach on Thursday, succeeding Plamen Markov after Bulgaria's woeful performance in Euro 2004.

The 38-year-old, leading scorer in the 1994 World Cup, was offered a two-year contract with an option for a further two years.

Stoichkov scored 35 goals in 83 internationals for Bulgaria. He ended his playing days with Barcelona in 2003 after a brief spell in the US soccer league.

A strong-headed man, he was in conflict with coach John Cruyff in his Barcelona days.

His first task will be to qualify Bulgaria for the 2006 World Cup.

Ricardo couldn't care less!

AFP, Lisbon

Portuguese goalkeeper Ricardo has labelled as crazy the fans who have offered millions for the ball that England captain David Beckham blasted into the stands during the Euro 2004 penalty shoot-out against Portugal.

"Would not pay anything for it. It is the same as other balls," he told Portuguese daily 24Horas, adding "there are crazies capable of anything".

A Spanish fan who caught the ball put it up for sale on an Internet auction site in Spain on Monday at a starting price of one euro but after little more than 48 hours bids reached 10 million euros (12.4 million dollars).

The online auction will close on July 22.

Ricardo became a national hero after he saved a penalty in the shoot-out then slammed the decisive spot kick into the net to give Portugal a 6-5 victory over England.

Hull's recognition for Collina

Football

AFP, London

Italian referee Pierluigi Collina was awarded an honorary degree Wednesday by England's Hull University to mark his contribution to football.

Collina, widely regarded as the best referee in the world before his retirement from international football following the Euro 2004 Championships, was made a Doctor of Science.

Speaking before the ceremony at Hull town hall, north-east England, 44-year-old Collina said: "This is a very particular day for me. It's not usual for anyone to receive an honorary degree from a university, particularly for an Italian in England.

"The degree has been awarded for my ability as a referee on the field and I am proud that what I did on the field in the last 27 years has been recognised.

"I hope that what I did in the last years can help the image of other referees," added Collina, whose bald head and bulging eyes made him one of the most easily identifiable

sporting officials of his generation.

Collina also received a silver whistle engraved with the Hull University crest. "This is a very nice gift from the university, but it's a bit different to the whistle I'm used to on the field."

In a speech to graduating students, Collina said: "I am used to facing hundreds of millions of people on television but this is a very different experience for me."

However, his last international match ended in a suitably dramatic style as Greece's Traianos Dellas headed in a silver goal winner in the dying seconds of the first-half of extra-time to give them an historic 1-0 victory over the Czech Republic in the Euro 2004 semi-final earlier this month.

His degree was greeted with loud applause and David Sewell, Dean of Hull's Faculty of Applied Science and Technology, who made the presentation, said Collina was an appropriate recipient of such an award.

"We believe Pierluigi Collina brings a range of skills to the science of refereeing, including detailed knowledge of his subject matter, objectivity and fairness and the ability to make rapid decisions based on evidence such as events on the field. "He also exhibits excellent communication skills, leadership qualities and calmness under considerable pressure - all skills valued

Shearer's threat

AFP, London

Former England captain Alan Shearer has warned Newcastle United he might ask for a transfer if manager Bobby Robson does not make him an automatic first-choice next season.

The prolific former Blackburn man is an iconic figure for The Magpies, and underlined his desire to remain at the club for what is expected to be the last year of his glittering career.

However, with Robson being linked with a number of strikers - including James Beattie and Patrick Kluivert - Shearer says he is not ready to play a bit-part role.

"If the manager said to me I wasn't going to be a regular, I'd have to consider things," said the 33-year-old.

"I want to play as much football as I can in my last season. I think there's a goodyear left in my legs."

"I was pleased with passing 20 goals again last season and I hope I do the same, if not better this year."

"David sees this as his big break into the BBC, and this could lead to other meaty roles," the source said.

Sheringham at West Ham

Football

AFP, London

Former England striker Teddy Sheringham joined First Division side West Ham on a one-year deal Wednesday.

Last season 38-year-old Sheringham scored nine goals for Premiership side Portsmouth, managed by former Hammers boss Harry Redknapp, but left when his contract expired at the end of June.

West Ham just missed out on

promotion to the Premiership when they lost 1-0 in May's playoff final against London rivals Crystal Palace.

But Hammers boss Alan Pardew told the club's official website, www.whfc.com, that Sheringham could help take the team back to the top.

"I am very pleased to have signed Teddy, whose vast experience and goalscoring ability will be a vital ingredient to my promotion plans for this season," Pardew said.

"He is a proven goalscorer at all levels and will be a massive influence on the younger players in the squad."

Moratti can't forget Ronaldo

Football

INTERNET SOURCE

Inter Milan supremo Massimo Moratti hasn't given up on trying to bring Ronaldo back to the San Siro.

With Florentino Perez having secured the Real Madrid presidency for another two years, Moratti, who is prepared to splash out big to bring the striker back to Inter before his deal expires at the Santiago Bernabeu, says

Tuttosport.

his congratulations.

The phone call is also believed to have included an enquiry about Ronaldo. The Brazilian international

has committed himself to a new

contract at Real, but that hasn't

detected Moratti, who is prepared to

splash out big to bring the striker

back to Inter before his deal expires

at the Santiago Bernabeu, says

Tuttosport.

Media reports had suggested that

bigger clubs were also interested in

signing the player, including

Portugal's Benfica and England's

Blackburn Rovers.

But Maradona's mother

Cristina Sinagra told local news

papers in Scotland that she felt her son

had a better chance of first-team

success with Inter.

Costa Rica advanced as the

second-best third-place team and

will play Colombia this weekend.

The other quarterfinal match

features Peru against Argentina.

Diego Maradona junior, the son of

Argentina's 1986 World Cup winner,

began a two-day trial with Scottish

premier league club Dunfermline

Athletic on Thursday.

Dunfermline opened up their

East End Park ground to enable the

public to watch the 17-year-old

forward train with the club's first

team squad.

Maradona is in the youth ranks of

Italian second division club Napoli,

the team his father helped win their

only Serie A titles in 1987 and 1990,

as well as the 1989 UEFA Cup.

"There is always a risk when you

bring in a foreign player but if he is

good enough, we will take it forward," Dunfermline's director of football Jim Leishman told reporters.

Dunfermline, who will play in the

UEFA Cup after finishing fourth in

the SPL and Scottish Cup runners-

up last season, first declared an

interest in signing Maradona junior

last year.

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