

Glazer closing in?

Football

AFP, London

Manchester United, the world's richest football club, said Monday it had received a preliminary takeover approach, following reports that American sports tycoon Malcolm Glazer was plotting to seize control.

Weekend press reports suggested that multi-millionaire Glazer, who holds a 19.2-percent stake in the club, was poised to launch a takeover bid for the English giants, worth at least 650 million pounds (943 million euros, 1.17 billion dollars).

"The Board of Manchester United PLC notes the recent press speculation," the company said in a



MALCOLM GLAZER

statement.

"It confirms that it has received a preliminary approach regarding a possible offer for the company. This approach contains a number of significant conditions.

"The company is seeking clarification of this proposal and at this stage it is unclear whether any offer will be made," it added.

In London, the price of shares in Manchester United jumped 3.40 percent to 266 pence, valuing the virtually debt-free club at 697.4 million pounds.

There was no immediate response from Glazer, owner of NFL franchise Tampa Bay Buccaneers, and the second-largest shareholder in United, whose fans number in millions from Manchester to Macau.

An analyst at Barclays Stockbrokers, Henk Potts, said the main attraction for Glazer would be to leverage marketing opportunities from the United brand, particularly in the United States, where the club signed a commercial tie-up with the New York Yankees baseball team in 2001 to market United merchandise.

"The club has been able to manage the great balancing act of being able to perform on the pitch as well as produce returns for shareholders," Potts added.

The Mail on Sunday newspaper said Glazer had hired investment bank JP Morgan to advise him on a bid

Serie A

Juve's joy at a price

Football

AFP, Rome

Juventus held onto first place in Serie A with an unspectacular 1-0 victory at Udinese on Sunday, but their joy at maintaining the lead in Italy was tempered by a serious injury to striker David Trezeguet.

The France international dislocated his shoulder in the narrow win in Udine and was replaced for the start of the second half by Marcelo Zalayeta.

And it was the Uruguayan forward who scored the winner on the hour, powerfully heading home Mauro Camoranesi's corner.

Unbeaten Juve sit proudly at the top of the table on 13 points, two ahead of surprise package Messina, who were comprehensive 4-1 winners at home to Siena.

Andriy Shevchenko scored twice and set up the other goal for Kaka in AC Milan's controversial 3-1 win against Reggina which moved them up to third on 10 points.

Palermo, champions of Serie B last season, joined Chievo and Cagliari on nine points after winning 1-0 at home to Bologna.

Luigi Del Neri's first game in charge of Roma ended in a thrilling 3-3 draw at home to Inter Milan.

Roma were 3-1 down with 54 minutes gone, but showed their new boss they are prepared to scrap for points by fighting back to sneak a draw.

Francesco Totti reduced the deficit with his 100th Serie A goal before Daniele De Rossi prodded home from close range to restore equality 16 minutes from time.

Roma took an early lead thanks to Vincenzo Montella's crisp volley, only for Esteban Cambiasso to head Inter level before the break.

Inter then scored two goals in four minutes through Juan Sebastian Veron's deflected shot and Alvaro Recoba's flashing drive.

Del Neri was appointed as Rudi Voller's successor on Wednesday.

Despite an impressive recovery, Roma have plenty of ground to make up in the title race having taken just five points from 15. Inter are faring slightly better in ninth place.

worth "at least 650 million pounds".

Glazer was expected to seek the support of United's major shareholders, Irish racing tycoons John Magnier and JP McManus, who own 28.9 percent via their Cubic Expression company, the report added.

The pair have not bought any shares in Manchester United since February, stopping just short of the 29.9 percent threshold above which an offer to buy out the club would have to be made under British takeover rules.

Britain's Daily Star on Sunday newspaper meanwhile quoted top banker Mehmet Dalman, who has helped Glazer snap up his existing United shares, as saying that "the Glazer family -- Malcolm and his sons Joel, Ed and Bryan -- are interested in having a major involvement in United.

"The Glazers want to own the club -- either through buying more shares or through management or board level."

Manchester United fans voiced anger at the prospect of Glazer winning control.

"Supporters feel very strongly that they do not want Malcolm Glazer to take over," said Mark Longden, of the Independent Manchester United Supporters Association.

"He does not have the money to buy the club and would have to borrow heavily. The fans do not want the club to go into debt. It is a very risky business."

In 1999 the British government blocked a 623-million-pound takeover bid for United by the satellite broadcaster BSkyB, although supporters' opposition was seen as playing a key role for the failure.

Manchester United last week reported a near 30-percent fall in annual profits, hit by a weaker performance on the pitch, and warned that future results would be affected by a drop in media revenues.

The group saw pre-tax profits slide to 27.9 million pounds in the 12 months to the end of July from 39.3 million in the previous financial year.

United endured a disappointing last season by their own very high standards, finishing third in the English Premiership and exiting the lucrative European Champions League tournament before the quarter-finals stage.

In a bid to turn around fortunes on the pitch, the club splashed out 27 million pounds on England's teenage striker Wayne Rooney during the summer.

Rooney, 18, bought from Premiership rivals Everton, scored a remarkable hat-trick on his United debut against Turkish champions Fenerbahce in the Champions League last week.

Off the field, United plan to increase the seating capacity at their Old Trafford stadium by 7,800 seats to 75,600.



Barcelona's Swedish veteran Henrik Larsson (C) heads to score against Numancia at the Camp Nou Stadium in Barcelona on October 3.

Primera Liga

Real slip again

Football

AFP, Madrid

A late goal from Barcelona's former Celtic favourite Henrik Larsson fired his chance of his first goal after 37 minutes when Figo came down the right and crossed for Raul only for Owen to chest and volley wide.

Owen, frustrated at being left on the bench so often since joining 29-time Spanish champions Real Madrid for 12 million euros in the summer, was substituted after 52 minutes by Fernando Morientes.

It was a woeful performance by Real with England captain David Beckham the best performer on the night.

The hosts rarely worried Deportivo keeper Jose Molina whose only real save came four minutes into extra time after French playmaker Zinedine Zidane blasted

the stroke of half time when he chipped over Iker Casillas in goal for the second win of the season for the Gallician side.

Real's new Liverpool signing Michael Owen failed to impress as he filled in for injured Ronaldo, missing his chance of his first goal after 37 minutes when Figo came down the right and crossed for Raul only for Owen to chest and volley wide.

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towards Roberto Carlos whose shot was saved.

Deportivo, who achieved just their second ever win at the Bernabeu, moved up to 11th position just behind Real Madrid.

Barcelona, meanwhile, were pushed all the way by lowly Numancia, who provided a solid defence, before Swede Larsson pushed through with a header off a corner into the bottom left hand corner of the net after 70 minutes of play.

But the hosts suffered after new recruit Edmilson, who came on as a substitute for African player of the Year Samuel Eto'o after 61 minutes, was stretched off the pitch just three minutes later.

The hosts missed a string of chances to increase their advantage late in the game with an effort from Brazilian defender Iuliano Bellotti after 76 minutes going over the crossbar.

Two minutes into extra time

Numancia had a chance to take a point but missed a corner, as Deco hit just wide before the whistle in what was the hosts last chance of a second goal.

Valencia, hit after inspirational left winger Vicente Rodriguez was ruled out for two weeks with a sprained left ankle, failed to fire.

After taking the lead after 10 minutes when Italian marksman Marco Di Vaio scored his fifth goal of the season Valencia failed to find any inspiration, with Brazilian Edu grabbing the equaliser after 30 minutes following a pass from Valencia reject Ricardo Oliveira.

Elsewhere third-placed Sevilla were held 0-0 at second from bottom Racing Santander, as goals in either half gave Malaga a 2-0 home win against Osasuna.

Tailenders Real Mallorca suffered their fourth loss in six ties when they fell 2-0 at Levante.

Atletico Madrid, missing a host of

first team players, fell 1-0 at Real Sociedad on Saturday.

The San Sebastian outfit jumped out of the relegation zone to 15th position thanks to a header from Serbian Darko Kovacevic off a shot from Russian Valery Karpin five minutes before the break.

Atletico were unfortunate to have three efforts at goal hit the posts as they dropped two spots to sixth position with their second loss of the season.

TOP SIX

Spanish league standings ahead of Sunday's late match (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Barcelona	6	5	1	0	13	3	16
Valencia	6	4	2	0	15	6	14
Sevilla	6	3	2	1	6	3	
11							
Malaga	6	3	1	2	8	5	

Ligue 1

Govou takes Lyon atop

AFP, Paris

Sidney Govou scored an injury-time winner for Lyon in a topsy-turvy 3-2 victory over St Etienne to shoot them into second spot in the French league table behind Lille on Sunday night.

Lille had earned a laborious 1-0 victory at Rennes through a Matt Moussilou goal to give them 19 points with Lyon, two points ahead of Monaco, who lost 4-3 at home to Nice on Saturday.

St Etienne coach Elie Baup fielded a defence of Herita Ilunga, Vincent Hognon, Soumana Camara and Patrice Carteron in front of keeper Jeremie Janot, plus a five-man midfield behind sole striker Frederic Piquionne.

Baup's opposite number at Lyon Paul Le Guen had a similar 4-5-1 system with Govou and Florent Malouda on the flanks trying to set up sole striker Sylvain Wiltord.

Juninho Pernambucano gave a hint of things to come when, from a freekick, he forced a superb, fingertip save from Janot in the 18th minute.

Carteron made a needless foul on the edge of the box, a very unadvisable thing to do with a player like Juninho around, leaving the Brazilian with another attempt after 34 minutes.

This time Juninho was spot on. He curled a right-footed shot over the wall and into the left hand side of goal, leaving Janot completely wrongfooted.

Three minutes after the break, St Etienne were back on level terms.

Lyon keeper Gregory Coupet punched away a corner and the ball eventually found Ilunga who hit a powerful shot between Lyon defenders and Nicolas Marin deflected the ball into the goal.

Just after Lyon's Malouda and Mahamadou Diarra both had attempts in a matter of seconds, St Etienne scored their second goal.

From a David Hellebuyck freekick, Pascal Feindouno connected with a superb header which beat Coupet.

Then came Juninho's equalising penalty scored on the second attempt in the 88th minute. Janot, diving to his right, saved brilliantly but Juninho was alert to slot home the rebound before Janot jumped two-footed against his own post in comical fashion in exasperation.

Govou then hit his powerful, injury time winner for Lyon.

TOP SIX

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

Lille	9	6	1	2	12	4	19
Lyon	9	5	4	0	11	5	19
Monaco	9	5	2	2	13	9	17
Auxerre	9	5	1	3	13	9	16
Marseille	9	5	1	3	10	7	16
Bordeaux	9	3	5	1	13	5	14

Apologies, apologies!

AFP, London

Spurs midfielder Jamie Redknapp has publicly apologised to Everton's Tim Cahill after his horror tackle on the Australian international at Goodison Park.

Cahill was forced out of the Premiership match after an hour on Saturday and will probably miss his country's forthcoming World Cup qualifier against the Solomon Islands.

To add to Everton's frustrations, they also went down to a 1-0 defeat.

"It was just not meant," said Redknapp. "There was no intention there whatsoever and, for me personally, it's taken the gloss off what was a great result for Tottenham."

"I tried to let the ball run and I can imagine it looks bad. As I tried to let it run my left foot has gone out and I don't even try to tackle with my left foot, I'm right footed."

"It was one of those things and I hope there is no serious damage. It's just not my game."

"I just hope he's okay. There was absolutely no maliciousness in the tackle, that's all I can say. I can put my hand on my heart and say that."

Meanwhile, Bayern Munich midfielder Michael Ballack has also apologised to Werder Bremen defender Frank Fahrenhorst for breaking his nose with a stray elbow in Bayern's 2-1 win on Saturday, but stressed there was no intent.

Ballack's caught his German international team-mate Fahrenhorst with an elbow to the nose in the seventh minute and the Werder man had to leave the pitch with Ballack jeered by the home fans at the Weserstadion.

"I am really sorry for injuring Frank," explained Ballack. "He was behind me and I didn't see him. There was certainly nothing intentional."

Fahrenhorst was confirmed as having a broken nose forcing him to pull out of the German squad for next Saturday's friendly match in Iran.

The needle in this title fixture was further underlined in the 43rd minute when Bayer captain Oliver Kahn had a heated first half confrontation with Bremen striker Miroslav Klose over a late challenge.

Premiership

Super-sub Cole

Football

AFP, London

A strike from Joe Cole allowed Chelsea to keep within two points of champions Arsenal at the top of the Premiership with a 1-0 defeat of Liverpool Sunday as Manchester United were held 1-1 at home to Middlesbrough.

Midfielder Cole came off the bench to provide Jose Mourinho's side with a much-needed three points as he struck the Blues' winner after 64 minutes.

Blues striker Didier Drogba limped off injured after 38 minutes and without a specialist forward on the bench, Mourinho sent on Cole to deputize up front.

The midfielder's goal extended Chelsea's unbeaten start to the season while condemning Liverpool to a fourth straight away defeat.

Petr Cech made a vital late save from Steve Finnan but Liverpool, who only threatened twice through Djibril Cisse, were unable to find an answer.

Despite the goal, Mourinho branded his talented midfielder 'two-faced' and criticised him for being the only Chelsea player not to help out in defence after scoring.

"Joe Cole scored a goal, he played really well in terms of his attacking dynamic, but when he scored a goal, the game's finished for him," blasted Mourinho.

"The game had two faces, one was beautiful and the other I did not like. The good one is to keep, the other one is to change. It's normal with a young player like him."

Alan Smith climbed off the bench to upstage Wayne Rooney and snatch another late goal to save Manchester United at Old Trafford.

Smith headed home Ronaldo's deep cross with just nine minutes remaining to salvage a point for Alex Ferguson's men and deny Middlesbrough after Stuart Downing had put them ahead with a well-taken strike on 33 minutes.

The spotlight was on Rooney on his Premiership debut for United

following his stunning European hat-trick earlier in the week but he failed to shine and had to take a back seat to Smith, who produced another one-man rescue act.

With 10 minutes remaining, after neither Rooney nor Ruud van Nistelrooy could break down the visitors' defence, Smith rose highest to nod home Cristiano Ronaldo's cross.

Ferguson was left frustrated at seeing his side drop another two home points, although they move up one spot to fourth position nine points behind Arsenal.

"It was one of those days. We got to the by-line so many times but it was one of those days that didn't go

for us," said the Scotsman.

At St Andrews, Nicky Butt preserved Newcastle's unbeaten record under new manager Graeme Souness with a stunning equaliser in a 2-2 draw with Birmingham.

Dwight Yorke cancelled out Jermaine Jenas' early opener in a dramatic first half which saw the hosts lose Emile Heskey and Muzzy Izzet to injury.

Blues defender Matthew Upson looked to have earned Steve Bruce's side only their second win of the campaign when he put them ahead after 57 minutes, but a superb half-volley from 15 yards out from Butt beat Blues goalie Maik

Taylor.

Arsenal, meanwhile, ended a turbulent week on a high Saturday by sweeping Charlton aside 4-0 to move to within two matches of a phenomenal 50-game unbeaten run in the English Premiership.

At the other end of the table, West Brom became the first of the newly-promoted sides to register a win this season when they held on for a 2-1 win over Bolton that lifts Gary Megson's side out of the relegation zone.

At Goodison Park, Tottenham withstood a fierce onslaught from Everton before taking all three points.

Blackburn and Aston Villa settled for a point apiece in a feisty 2-2 draw



Manchester United's Portuguese international Christiano Ronaldo (C) tries to evade the tackle of Middlesbrough's Spaniard Gaizka Mendieta (L) at Old Trafford on October 3.

PHOTO: AFP