Pele's tells Robinho to wait

INTERNET SOURCE

Pele has urged Robinho to snub Real Madrid and stay in Brazil with Santos.

Robinho has been likened to Brazilian legend Pele and Santos is said to have agreed a deal with Real which will go through once his mother is delivered safely from kidnappers.

But Pele said: "Robinho is intelligent, fast. He can adapt and play well in any place. But, if I were him, I would spend a little more time with Santos.

"I did it in my day and things worked out well for me."

'Spitting' Diouf sorry

AFP, *London*

Bolton's Senegal striker El-Hadji Diouf on Sunday issued a public apology after spitting in the face of Portsmouth's Arjan de Zeeuw during Saturday's English Premiership 1-0 defeat.

Diouf, who is on loan from Liverpool, was fined two weeks wages for the incident at the Reebok Stadium.

"I deeply regret my actions and wish to publicly apologise to Arjan de Zeeuw and Portsmouth Football Club," Diouf said on the club's website.

"I have let down my manager, Sam Allardyce, and team-mates.

"I am a role model to many thousands of fans throughout the world and my behaviour showed a lack of moral responsibility to the public who support me.

"I am deeply sorry and embarrassed about the incident."

It is not the first time Diouf's spitting has landed him in trouble.

Glasgow Sheriff Court fined the forward 5,000 pounds (7,130 euros, 9,460 dollars) for spitting at Celtic fans during Liverpool's UEFA Cup tie at Parkhead in March 2003.

And Cleveland police started an investigation after Diouf was accused of spitting at a Middlesbrough supporter during Bolton's match at the Riverside on November 7.

A combined statement from chairmab Phil Gartside and Allardyce said: "The club does not tolerate such behaviour from its players and we had no alternative but to evoke the maximum fine against El-Hadji Diouf.

"Bolton Wanderers takes great pride in its very proactive family image and yesterday's incident has left a sour taste.

"We do not condone the actions taken by the player and for that he has been severely punished."

Mourinho was threatened with death

REUTERS, *London*

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho says his Champions League triumph with Porto last season was overshadowed by a death threat on the eve of the final and "weeks of terror" afterwards.

Mourinho also said in a biography, extracts of which were published by The Times on Monday, that he had resorted to hiring security to protect himself and his family in the aftermath of the May final in Gelsenkirchen.

The Portuguese manager, who joined Chelsea a month after Porto beat Monaco 3-0, described how he returned a call he had received on his mobile phone the day before the game.

"On the other end of the line, there quickly came a death threat linked to my arrival back in Porto," Mourinho said.

"'You think you're the best ... you bastard ... we won't do anything now because you have a final to play tomorrow, but as soon as it's over, consider yourself a dead man, because we'll get you, and as soon as you get back to Porto your fate is sealed. You don't have a chance...'"

Mourinho said the caller was a member of Porto's underworld and that, once informed, police had said that surveillance would be stepped up.

Once the post-match party celebrations started, Mourinho recalled: "So did my escape to safety -- or so I thought at the time, without knowing what was to come in the days that followed.

"First I was subjected to a campaign of rumour and slander.

"Then I was hounded and had people waiting at the entrance to my home, threatening both my loved ones and me. For the first time in my life, I was forced to hire private security.

"They were dramatic and unforgettable weeks of terror."

Monday's extract came a day after it was revealed that Mourinho's lawyer has asked judicial officials to provide him with extra security on his return to Porto for Chelsea's Champions League game against his old club on December 7.

Mourinho, who spent two and a half years at Porto, guided the club to two successive league titles and the UEFA Cup, as well as the Champions League trophy.

PHOTO: AFP

HERE YOU GO SON, BECOME A RONALDO! Real Madrid's Brazilian superstar Ronaldo (C) gives away his jersey to a little boy at the end of the match against Levante at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid on November 28.

Primera Liga

Five-star Real

Football

REUTERS, *Madrid*

Real Madrid gave a stunning exhibition of finishing power to crush Levante 5-0 at the Bernabeu in the Primera Liga on Sunday.

The home side had struggled to impose themselves on their modest opponents for most of the first half but burst into life two minutes before the break when Ronaldo fired in at the near post after a precision pass from David Beckham.

Real then put the result beyond doubt with a devastating three-goal salvo at the start of the second half featuring spectacular strikes from Luis Figo and Beckham and a second goal from Ronaldo.

Substitute Michael Owen completed the rout three minutes from time when he steered under keeper Juan Luis Mora after a brilliant dribble and through ball from the outstanding Guti.

The win kept Real in second place in the standings, seven points behind leaders Barcelona who claimed a nervous 2-1 win over Getafe on Saturday.

Espanyol, who beat Atletico Madrid 2-1 on Saturday, are third a further two points behind, while last season's champions Valencia moved up to fourth after notching their second win in a row with a 2-0 victory at home to Real Mallorca.

Osasuna produced the result of the day when they hammered high-flying Sevilla 4-1 at home, a win that pushed them up to seventh, while Deportivo Coruna are eighth after surrendering a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 at home to Real Sociedad.

Levante, who have surprised many by their early season form on their return to the top flight, made a confident start at the Bernabeu, giving Real goalkeeper Iker Casillas several scares in the opening minutes.

With Zinedine Zidane missing with a back injury, Real coach Mariano Garcia Remon reshuffled his midfield, switching Beckham to the right, Figo to the left and bringing Albert Celades into the middle.

The move gave Guti more space in the centre but Real struggled to create any clear chances in the first half hour.

But just as the crowd were getting restless, Ronaldo began the goal spree with a trademark finish in the 43rd minute.

Beckham wafted a perfectly weighted pass to the edge of the area, the Brazilian controlled with his chest, shook off the attentions of a defender and fired in at the near post.

Real then floored their opponents with three goals in the space of five second-half minutes.

Figo made it 2-0 when he let fly from 30 metres after the defence backed off when he picked up the ball on the halfway line.

Levante were still reeling from the blow when Ronaldo hit them again, this time slotting home from 10 metres after controlling a pass from Celades with his toe.

Not to be outdone by Figo, Beckham added a third with an action-replay of the Portuguese midfielder's strike, cutting inside former Leeds United defender Ian Harte before firing into the top of the net from the same distance.

England team mate Owen, who replaced Raul midway through the second half, completed the rout three minutes from time with a cool finish after Guti dinked the ball between two defenders at the start of a mazy run before poking a pass to the striker.

TOP SCORERS

Leading scorers in the Spanish league after the weekend matches:

10 - Samuel Eto'o (Barcelona)
8 - Ismael Urzaiz (Athletic Bilbao), Ricardo Oliveira (Real Betis)
7 - Maxi Rodriguez (Espanyol), Ronaldo (Real Madrid)
6 - David Villa (Real Zaragoza), Fernando Torres (Atletico Madrid)
5 - Marco Di Vaio (Valencia), Edu (Real Betis), Julio Baptista (Sevilla), Vladimir Manchev (Levante), Savo Milosevic (Osasuna), Michael Owen (Real Madrid), Savio (Real Zaragoza)
4 - Dani Garcia (Espanyol), Diego Forlan (Villarreal), Albert Luque (Deportivo La Coruna), Javi Moreno (Real Zaragoza), Nihat Kahveci (Real Sociedad), Valentin Pachon (Getafe), Walter Pandiani (Deportivo La Coruna), Juan Roman Riquelme (Villarreal), Paulo Wanchope (Malaga)

TOP SIX

Standings in the Spanish championship after Sunday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Barcelona	13	10	2	1	26	8	32
Real	13	8	1	4	21	9	25
Espanyol	13	7	2	4	15	8	23
Valencia	13	6	4	3	21	11	21
Betis	13	5	6	2	18	16	21
Sevilla	13	6	3	4	14	15	21

Premiership

Mellor makes Liverpool's day

Football

REUTERS, *London*

A superb stoppage time winner by striker Neil Mellor gave Liverpool a dramatic 2-1 victory over struggling Premier League champions Arsenal at Anfield on Sunday.

Liverpool took a deserved first-half lead with a cracking shot from the edge of the area by Spanish playmaker Xabi Alonso, but Arsenal looked to have earned a draw after skipper Patrick Vieira knocked in a 57th minute equaliser.

However, Mellor's last-gasp drive consigned Arsenal to their second league defeat of the season and handed title rivals Chelsea a commanding five-point lead at the top.

Earlier, Everton ground out a 1-1 draw at Newcastle United and Tottenham Hotspur ended a run of six league defeats with a morale-boosting 2-0 victory over 10-man Middlesbrough.

Chelsea, who thrashed Charlton Athletic 4-0 on Saturday, are top on 36 points. Arsenal stay second on 31 points, while Everton remain third, a point further back.

The main attraction on Sunday was at Anfield, where Liverpool bossed the first half and Arsenal looked to have secured a deserved point for their second half-display.

Mellor, playing only because of injuries to regular strikers Djibril Cisse and Milan Baros, rose to the occasion though with his first Premier League goal of the season -- a thundering shot on the bounce from 25 metres out.

NEIL MELLOR

"Fantastic result and a fantastic game for all the supporters," Liverpool's Spanish manager Rafael Benitez told Sky Sports.

"The players ran a lot and tried to do all the things we prepared during the week. All I can say is congratulations.

"It's only three points, but against a very, very good team it's more important for the confidence."

The result is another bodyblow to Arsenal, whose season has rapidly been turning sour since their record 49-match unbeaten league run was ended by Manchester United on October 24.

Arsenal, who are also battling to qualify for the Champions League knockout stage, have taken just six points from a possible 18 on domestic duty and would have ended Sunday in third place had Everton won their game at St James' Park.

Newcastle made an ideal start when Wales striker Craig Bellamy worked a neat one-two with Dutch partner Patrick Kluivert and sped through to score after only five minutes.

Further chances went begging for Newcastle before Everton midfielder Lee Carsley curled a spectacular free kick over their wall in the 56th minute, while Bellamy had a close-range shot blocked in the closing minutes at St James' Park.

Spurs were helped to their much-needed victory at White Hart Lane by a red card five minutes before the break for Boro's French defender Franck Queudrue.

They capitalised four minutes after the re-start when England striker Jermain Defoe fired home and Mali international Frederic Kanoute sealed the victory in the 76th minute.

TOP SIX

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

Chelsea	15	11	3	1	27	6	36
Arsenal	15	9	4	2	39	20	31
Everton	15	9	3	3	17	12	30
Man Utd	15	7	6	2	19	10	27
Boro	15	7	4	4	24	18	25
Aston	15	6	6	3	20	16	24

Serie A

Adriano ensures draw No. 11

Football

REUTERS, *Milan*

Inter Milan fought back from two goals down to draw 2-2 with leaders Juventus in the 'Derby d'Italia' at the San Siro stadium with Brazilian Adriano grabbing an 85th minute equaliser.

Although the result means Inter maintain their record as the only unbeaten side in Serie A, their 11th draw from 13 matches leaves them down in seventh place still 15 points behind Juve.

The happiest team on Sunday were second placed AC Milan who won 1-0 at Chievo with a Hernan Crespo goal and were able to close the gap on Juve to four points. Juve have 32 points, Milan are on 28 and Udinese, who won 2-1 at Livorno on Saturday, are in third place on 22 points.

Cagliari moved up to fourth after a 3-2 win at Lazio with former Italy forward Gianfranco Zola on target for the Sardinians.

After a scrappy first half, Juve went ahead in the 53rd minute when a long-range shot from European Footballer of the Year Pavel Nedved deflected off Uruguayan striker Marcelo Zalayeta and beat the wrong-footed Francesco Toldo.

Juve then doubled their lead when a goal-bound Zalayeta was brought down inside the area by Toldo and Swedish striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic squeezed his penalty under Toldo.

Inter coach Roberto Mancini responded with a radical double substitution, taking off Dutch midfielders Andy van der Meyde and Edgar Davids and throwing on forwards Christian Vieri and Alvaro Recoba to create a four-pronged attack.

The move paid off in the 79th minute when Vieri fired home a fine diagonal shot from the left to bring Inter back into the game and then five minutes from the end Adriano volleyed in a cross from Nigerian Obafemi Martins.

It was no surprise that the prolific Adriano, who has 10 league goals so far, proved to be the saviour for Inter. But for Milan's Crespo this has been the week when he defied critics who had written him off.

The striker, on loan from English leaders Chelsea, had not scored until last week's Italian Cup win at Palermo but now has four goals in three games after his Champions League double against Shakhtar Donetsk on Wednesday and the winner against Chievo.

The Verona outfit caused Milan plenty of problems, especially in the first half when Simone Tiribocchi and Roberto Baronio both hit the post.

Milan also created plenty, with Crespo and then Clarence Seedorf both going close, but it took a stroke of luck for them to break through five minutes after the break.

Kaka burst forward from midfield and the ball ricocheted straight into the path of Crespo who fired home with a first time shot.

Eight minutes later Dida produced a remarkable acrobatic save to tip over a deflected free-kick from Baronio.

Lazio coach Domenico Caso is under pressure after his side slumped to a 3-2 defeat at home to Cagliari.

Goran Pandev put Lazio ahead in the seventh minute but the impressive Antonio Langella brought the visitors level before the break.

Lazio had goalkeeper Angelo Peruzzi sent off for a 'professional foul' in the 57th minute and Cagliari took full advantage with goals from Mauro Esposito and Zola making it 3-1.

Massimo Oddo pulled a goal back from the penalty spot 10 minutes from the end but the defeat leaves Lazio down in 13th place.

TOP SCORERS

Leading scorers in the Italian league after Sunday's matches:

11 - Vincenzo Montella (Roma)
10 - Adriano (Inter Milan)
9 - Andriy Shevchenko (AC Milan)
8 - Valeri Bojinov (Lecce)
7 - Francesco Totti (Roma), Cristiano Lucarelli (Livorno), Mauro Esposito (Cagliari)
6 - Alberto Gilardino (Parma), Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Juventus)
5 - Andrea Caracciolo (Brescia), Obafemi Martins (Inter Milan), Alessandro Del Piero (Juventus), Mirko Vucinic (Lecce), Arturo Di Napoli (Messina)

TOP SIX

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

Juventus	13	10	2	1	25	6	32
Milan	13	8	4	1	19	8	28
Udinese	13	6	4	3	20	13	22
Cagliari	13	5	4	4	18	20	19
Palermo	13	4	6	3	11	9	18
Messina	13	4	6	3	18	18	18

The future is artificial

Football

REUTERS, *London*

Pele says he could have improved his career tally of 1,282 goals if only he had played on artificial grass.

Players in Europe aspiring to better the Brazilian great's impressive total may get the chance to test his theory, thanks to UEFA's recent decision to allow artificial pitches to be used in its competitions from next season.

Debate about whether natural or artificial turf is better for players has raged for decades but Pele is a fan of the new generation of synthetic pitches and an advocate for their use at the 2010 World Cup in South Africa.

"If I had played then on today's artificial grass I would have scored many more goals," Pele told delegates at Stadia magazine's Sports Turf Summit 2004 in Berlin this month. "Players don't get hurt as much as on natural grass."

UEFA said this month that advances in the quality of artificial turf had made it comparable to, or even better than, some natural turfs.

Chief executive Lars-Christer Olsson said UEFA would sanction the use of artificial pitches for matches in the Champions League and UEFA Cup and for qualifiers for the European Championship.

The decision would be a boon to countries with severe winters where maintenance of natural grass was difficult, he said.

Imitation turf has been around since the 1960s but it has gone through difficult times.

In the United States, it was quickly obvious that American football players preferred natural grass to the early makes of artificial surface.

"There was a general consensus that the injury rate on AstroTurf was much higher than on natural grass," said Timothy Gay, professor of physics at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and author of 'Football Physics: The Science of the Game'.

Friction, second-degree burns, blistered palms and turf toe, which occurs when a hard surface forces the big toe back into the foot causing ligament and tissue damage, were all common injuries.

"Many teams replaced the AstroTurf with natural grass after heavy injuries...in the NFL, players still prefer natural grass," said Gay.

In comparison to Field Turf, one of the newer versions of artificial turf on the market, the early generation surfaces were much thinner, said Gay.

Field Turf, dubbed "third-generation, long-pile grass" by its manufacturers, is thicker and, thus, less likely to cause injuries, they say.

"What you're hearing in the marketplace is there are a lot of national teams thinking about it as an option," said Pall Halldorsson, CEO of Metatron EHF, an agent for Field Turf in Iceland.

"You get a much truer surface with artificial turf," said Gay, whose university pitch is synthetic. Its "g-max", or maximum acceleration, had remained unchanged for five years, he said. "The field is very consistent...that would be very desirable (for players)."

Although long-term studies had yet to be conducted on Field Turf and its parallels, Halldorsson said, "in actuality (some studies) seem to indicate injury was less than on natural grass."

Soccer's world governing body FIFA have approved some 16 manufacturers of artificial turf which is now installed in around 80 stadiums, including European venues such as Almelo in the Netherlands, Dunfermline in Scotland, Orebro in Sweden and Salzburg in Austria, which were part of UEFA's pilot project on synthetic turf.

Dunfermline's pitch hit local headlines on its debut when a male streaker suffered nasty carpet burns after running on and doing a swallow dive across the surface.

A mixture of rubber, synthetic fibres and sand, artificial turf requires none of the constant maintenance that natural grass needs.

Countries with bad winters and high rainfall find it difficult and expensive to maintain natural grass pitches.

"With clubs with money problems, their cashflow issues would seriously go down," said Gay.

The synthetic pitches would not only reduce maintenance costs but could be easily used to host events such as concerts, bringing additional income to soccer clubs.

Despite that, there are still objections to artificial turf.

English second division club Leeds United had been rumoured to be considering a switch at its Elland Road ground but spokesman Bryan Morris said there were no plans to change the natural grass.

"It's the players that don't like it," said Morris. "You don't get the same control on synthetic."

Clearly, artificial turf still has some convincing to do.

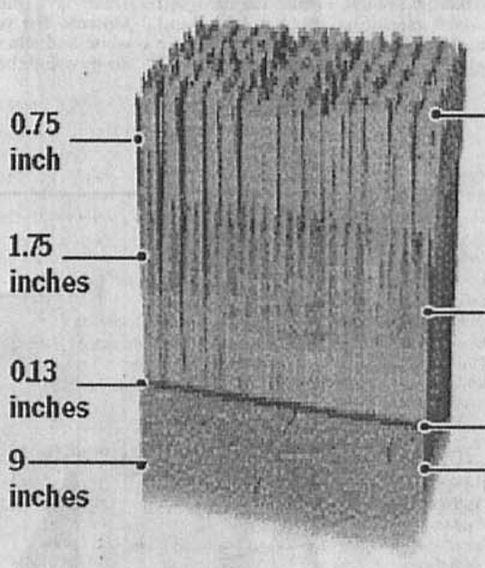
Although UEFA sanctioned artificial turf for qualifying matches in its flagship European Championship, Olsoson insisted the finals would still be played on the real thing.

"If you have a final tournament like a European Championship, I think that it is important to have the same turf to play on, so you don't jump from one turf to the other," said Olsson.

"I cannot imagine that you could change between the different surfaces (in the finals)," Olsson added. "I think that for the 2012 European Championship final round, we would go for natural turf."

FieldTurf

Here's a look at the new turf at Ford Field.



Hybrid fiber: Plastic blades, made of polyethylene and polypropylene, are placed in a pattern that emulates real grass.

FieldTurf infill: A mixture of sand and ground rubber (from recalled Firestone tires) supports the grass fibers.

Geotextile: Holds grass in place.

Base: The turf is laid on top of 2 feet of crushed stone and 9 inches of concrete.