

Maradona the movie

Football

INTERNET SOURCE

Italy's Sorpasso Films and Spain's Catalonia Film Institute are interested in co-producing a movie based on former Argentine star Diego Maradona.

The negotiations are underway and the movie project likely starts this year, said Friday the Spanish company Globomedia, which has

the exclusive rights on any audio-visual production on the former player. The movie will include the trajectory of the player since childhood; his moments of glory when he won 10 titles and was elected in 2000 as the best player of the century in a FIFA voting, as well as his decline. Although the actors to appear as Maradona as boy, youngster and adult have not been selected, the only thing that is certain, is that the film would be directed by Italian director Marco Risi, said

Globomedia.

The Globomedia Scriptwriters, Manuel Valdivia, Manuel Rios and Cesar Vidal, recorded over 10 hours of conversations with Maradona, his relatives and friends, that will serve as the basis for a work that as close to reality as possible.

Maradona, 44, currently is vacationing in Greece after receiving drug-addiction control treatment in Cuba's Medical Health Center of Havana.

He used to be praised for having the finest feet and most perfect balance in world football. But now Maradona is almost as round as the ball he used to treat with such love.

The Argentine icon has grown steadily since his fall from the footballing pinnacle after testing positive for drugs at the 1994 World Cup.

In May last year concerns over his health rose dramatically after he was admitted to hospital twice within a few weeks.

The 1986 World Cup winner was treated for severe and heart and lung problems, which his family insisted were not related to drugs. But any worries the 44-year-old might have had over his health appeared to have been long forgotten as he landed in Athens on a surprise trip and paid tribute to the country's unexpected success at last year's Euro 2004 football tournament.

Also new to his look were a stereotypical-looking bandito moustache trailing down to his chin and longer hair.

He had cut short his drug rehabilitation in Cuba, part of a battle to beat a four-year cocaine addiction, to fly to Athens.

Globomedia, one of the biggest producing firms of Spain, has the exclusive audio-visual rights of Maradona until 2010, in accordance with a contract signed with the former player. The firm said it has plans to make a biographical documentary on Maradona, jointly with producer Pentagrama, in 2006.



Argentine legend Diego Maradona waves at the entrance of an Athens hotel on January 13. Maradona is in Greece on a private visit.

SERIE A

Inter frustrated

Football

AFP, Rome

Inter Milan were held to a goalless draw at Reggina on Saturday, despite having an extra man for the final 23 minutes following the sending-off of Giuseppe Colucci.

Colucci went for an early bath after picking up his second yellow card, but Inter still failed to break down a resolute Reggina defence that held firm in the face of a late onslaught.

Despite their numerical disadvantage, Reggina might have snatched victory 13 minutes from time but Giacomo Tedesco's shot struck the post.

Inter's 13th draw of the season ended their three-match winning streak and left them in fourth place, a massive 12 points adrift of Serie A leaders Juventus.

Reggina, the only team to inflict a defeat on Juventus in the league, climbed to ninth place after their hard-earned point.

Brescia remain fourth from bottom and in danger of relegation after they were held to a 1-1 draw at home to Fiorentina.

Fabrizio Miccoli gave the visitors a deserved lead with a superb solo

effort soon after the break, only for Luigi Di Pasquale to level the score for the Lombardy club.

A point for Fiorentina, who had lost their previous two games against bottom club Atalanta and Lazio respectively, saw them rise one place to 11th.

Miccoli's goal four minutes after half-time, his seventh in the league this season, was an absolute gem.

Picking up possession near the centre-circle, the former Juventus forward played a quick one-two with striker partner Enrico Fantini, out-paced the Brescia defence and clipped the ball coolly over keeper Luca Castellazzi.

Di Pasquale equalised in the 62nd minute, toe-poking home after a dreadful mix-up in the Fiorentina defence for his first ever Serie A goal.

TOP SIX

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

Juventus	18	13	4	1	33	10	43
Milan	18	11	6	1	32	11	39
Udinese	18	10	4	4	27	15	34
Inter	19	6	13	0	38	26	31
Sampdoria	18	8	3	7	19	1	27
Roma	18	7	5	6	33	27	26

Tevez breaks Brazilian mark

INTERNET SOURCE

Corinthians completed a nearly \$US20 million (\$A26.4 million) deal on Tuesday to acquire Argentine striker Carlos Tevez, making a final payment in the most expensive signing ever by a Brazilian club.

Officials at Tevez's former club, Boca Juniors, confirmed the payment, which came on the last day of a plan laid out in November when the deal was first announced.

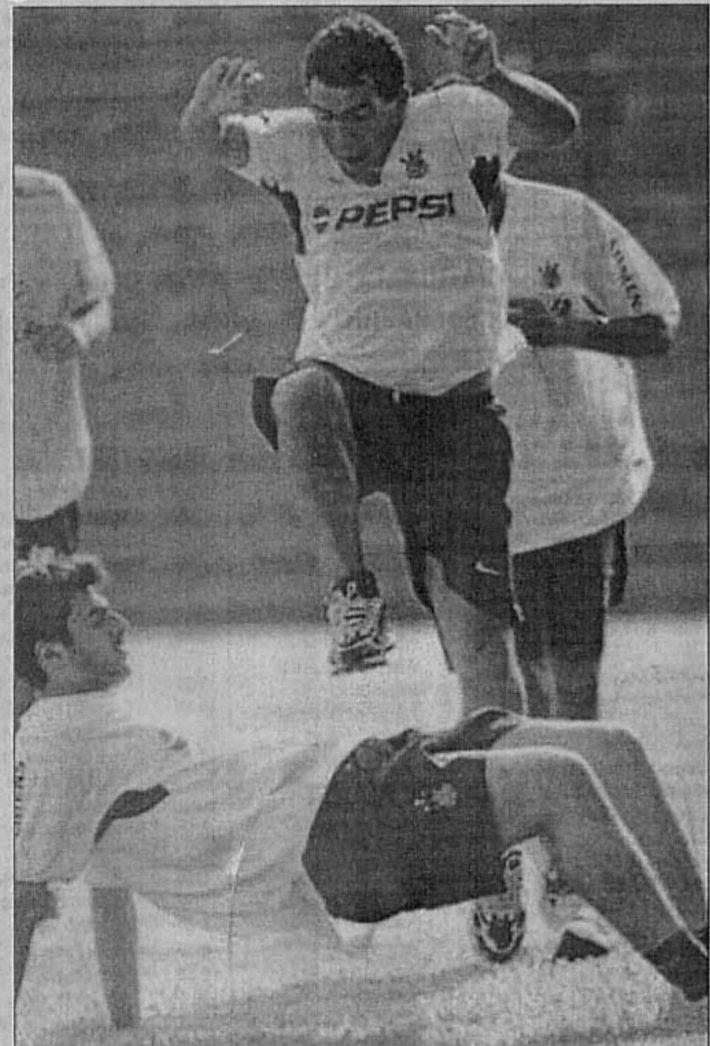
The payment was being closely watched in Argentina, where media reports had raised questions over whether the deal would be finalised after questions were raised about Corinthians' ability to finance the signing.

"Boca never doubted the seriousness of Corinthians," Jose Beraldi, a Boca official, told reporters.

Tevez, 20, led Argentina to the Olympic title in Athens, and is being heralded as the symbol of a rejuvenated Corinthians, a three-time national champion that finished fifth in Brazil's national championship.

Corinthians began a partnership with Media Sports Investments in December that has seen the England-based group move to bolster the Brazilian team with top players.

The club is reportedly close to signing FC Porto midfielder Carlos Alberto and CSKA Moscow striker Wagner Love, team officials have said.



Former Boca Juniors hero Carlos Tevez jumps over teammate Rubinho during a training session with his new Brazilian team Corinthians in Sao Paulo on January 15.



Bolton Wanderers's Stelios (2ndL) heads past Arsenal's goalkeeper Manuel Almunia to score at the Reebok Stadium in Bolton on January 15.

PREMIERSHIP

Bolton bemuse Gunners

Football

AFP, London

Chelsea have taken a huge step towards their first English title in 50 years on Saturday when a hard-fought 2-0 win at Tottenham allowed them to pull 10 points clear of near-estrivals Arsenal.

The Gunners, desperately needing to beat Bolton to stay in touch with the leaders, instead crashed to a 1-0 defeat that could be fatal to their title defence.

Greek midfielder Stelios Giannakopoulos sealed the points for Bolton with a first half header after goalkeeper Manuel Almunia misjudged a cross from El Hadji Diouf.

Frank Lampard was Chelsea's hero, adding a last-minute strike to a hotly-disputed, first-half penalty to give his side a priceless victory.

"It's for other people to say whether it's our title to lose," Mourinho's assistant, Steve Clarke, said afterwards, before conceding: "There's not much other teams can do if you keep getting three points."

Arsene Wenger echoed that comment when he admitted that the outcome of the title race was now firmly in Chelsea's hands.

"There is a long way to go and of course Chelsea is in a fantastic position," Wenger said. "They can only lose it now but we will keep going and fight until the last minute of the championship, which finishes in May."

"That is why football is interesting, nobody knows what is going to happen."

Manchester United moved to within a point of Arsenal with a lunchtime win over bitter northwest rivals Liverpool, courtesy of Wayne Rooney's 21st-minute strike.

But both they and Arsenal now look like they could be chasing a lost cause as Chelsea show no sign of faltering with 15 games left to play.

The decisive moment at White Hart Lane came seven minutes before the break when Chelsea's Russian midfielder Alexei Smerin went down in the box under a challenge from Ledley King.

Referee Graham Poll pointed to the spot -- wrongly in the view of Spurs manager Martin Jol -- and Lampard struck the penalty right in the corner to beat Paul Robinson's dive.

Tottenham piled on the pressure in the second half but Lampard's eighth goal of the season made the points sure right at the death.

"I think the penalty was a bit

harsh," Jol said. "Ledley wanted to win the ball and the other lad was stamping on his foot and fell over."

Rooney, playing in his home town for the first time since his 25-million-pound summer move from Everton to United, was subjected to a cacophony of jeers at Anfield.

But he had the last laugh with a long-range shot that slipped under Jerzy Dudek to give United victory in a match which saw former Real Madrid striker Fernando Morientes make an unspectacular debut for Liverpool.

United had to play the last half hour with 10 men following the sending off of centreback Wes Brown, who deservedly earned a second yellow card for a mis-timed lunge at Liverpool's Norway midfielder John Arne Riise.

But Ferguson's men held out to register their seventh consecutive clean sheet, equalling a club record, and extend their unbeaten run in the league to 12 matches.

"We passed the ball well and that took a lot of the steam out of Liverpool," the United boss said. "When it went to 10 men, obviously there was going to be a bit of an onslaught and we had to survive that and we did."

Liverpool boss Rafael Benitez admitted Dudek's error had been

fatal. "In the big games against the big teams, if you have a mistake, you must pay and we paid today," the Spaniard said.

At the other end of the table, struggling Norwich, Southampton and Crystal Palace all lost and it now seems inevitable that the relegation battle will be between those three and bottom side West Brom, who play at Fulham on Sunday.

Aston Villa accounted for Norwich, goals from Liam Ridgewell, Lee Hendrie and Nolberto Solano securing a convincing 3-0 win.

Palace went down 3-1 at Manchester City for whom Shaun Wright-Phillips claimed a brace either side of a goal from the impressive Robbie Fowler. Darren Powell scored for the visitors.

Alan Shearer marked his return to the Newcastle line-up by scoring the 400th goal of his career as his side beat Southampton 2-1. The Newcastle captain converted a ninth-minute penalty and Titus Bramble doubled the lead before Peter Crouch pulled one back for Saints minutes before the break.

Blackburn pulled away from the drop zone with a 1-0 win over Portsmouth, who finished the match with only nine men after having African duo Lomana Lua Lua

and Andy Foy sent off. Norwegian winger Morten Gamst Pedersen made the difference with a well-taken 55th-minute strike minutes after Lua Lua was ordered off for violent conduct. Foy was ordered off after picking up a second yellow card in stoppage time.

Charlton produced a late surge to beat Birmingham 3-1 in the day's other game.

Birmingham defender Mario Melchiot had cancelled out Talal El Karkour's early strike for Charlton with a powerful header ten minutes after the break.

But the home side sealed the points with goals from South African international Shaun Bartlett and former England midfielder Danny Murphy.

TOP SIX

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

Chelsea	23	18	4	1	45	8	58
Arsenal	23	14	6	3	52	25	48
Man Utd	23	13	8	2	34	13	47
Everton	22	13	4	5	27	23	43
Liverpool	23	11	4	8	36	23	37
Boro	22	10	5	7	34	28	35

Romario says sorry

Football

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Former World Cup forward Romario apologised to Pele on Saturday for telling him to put a shoe in his mouth.

"I would like to take this chance to apologise to Pele for what I said," he told reporters before taking part in a friendly match in Rio de Janeiro. "I didn't mean to say what I said. He's still the King."

The controversy began earlier this week when Pele was reported as suggesting that Romario, who will be 39 at the end of this month, should retire now to avoid blighting a career which includes winning the 1994 World Cup.

On Friday, Romario hit out at Pele and said he was 90 percent certain to sign a deal with Vasco da Gama, the club where he began his career.

"When Pele's quiet, he's a poet," Romario told reporters on Copacabana beach after training for a beach soccer match. "But he just talks shit."

"On the field, he was the greatest player in history, he was our king. But he should put a shoe in his mouth."

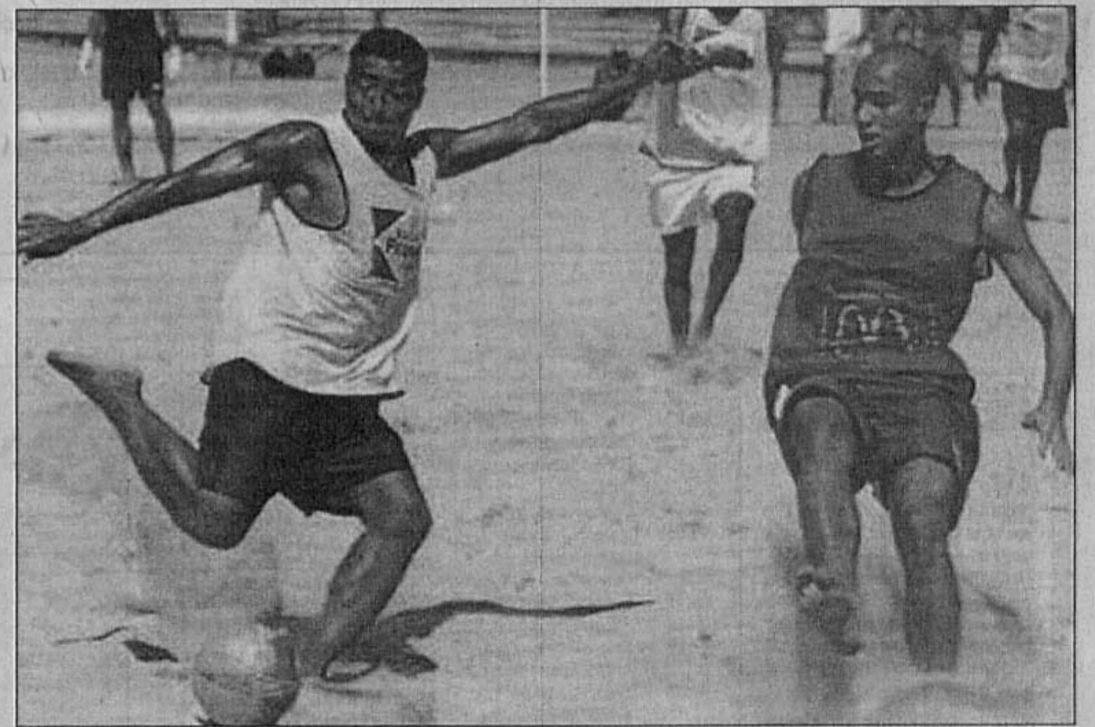
Romario has been without a club since he was fired by Fluminense in October, following a season in which he has struggled for match fitness, clashed with his coaches and been involved in controversy about his much-publicised privileges.

Earlier on Saturday, Pele tried to defuse the situation.

"I'm a Romario fan," said Pele from Spain where he spoke before Real Madrid unveiled their Danish signing Thomas Gravesen.

"I don't know what they told him but it's true that I was asked in an interview when the time to retire was and I said when you are at the top of your career," he said.

"Although I could have played on longer I left Cosmos, Santos and Brazil when I was a champion. Romario misunderstood what I said and got upset. I apologise if he took it the wrong way. He's small and highly strung, but I've got nothing against him."



Former Brazilian striker Romario (L) practices on Copacabana beach in Rio de Janeiro on January 15. Romario is training for a beach soccer tournament that begins this weekend in Rio.



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