



Inter Milan players celebrate after winning the Coppa Italia by beating AS Roma in the two-legged final at the San Siro Stadium in Milan on Thursday.

Entire Juventus board resigns

AFP, Rome

The entire board of Serie A giants Juventus resigned Thursday over the phone tap scandal that has rocked Italian football.

A statement issued by the Turin club said: "The board has handed its mandate to the shareholders and called an ordinary assembly for June 29."

The decision comes after transcripts of telephone conversations involving Juventus board members Luciano Moggi and Antonio Giroudo with high-ranking Italian football federation (FIGC) officials were leaked to the press last week.

In the conversations, part of an inquiry by Turin prosecutors, Moggi tells Pierluigi Pairetto, head of the Italian referees' association and a member of the UEFA's referees' commission, which referees he would like assigned to several of his team's Serie A and Champions League matches.

The scandal prompted an investigation by the Italian football federation (FIGC), but it was later revealed that FIGC president Franco Carraro was given the transcripts back in February and had failed to take action.

Carraro quit his post on Monday.

Adriano Galliani, the vice-president of Juve's fierce Serie A rivals AC Milan and president of the Italian football league (Lega-Calcio), said the scandal was getting out of hand.

"Every day there are new allegations and we can't tell the real investigations from the false ones," he said.

"I don't know what's going to end, but like everything, there is a beginning and an end."

"Those guilty will have to be punished and football will have to pick itself up."

"I hope things are not serious, and I have total faith in the judicial system to sort it out."

The influential Agnelli family owners of Italian car manufacturers FIAT and the major shareholder of Juventus, have been under increasing pressure to repair their tarnished image since the scandal broke.

Last Sunday, after the 2-1 win over Palermo which left Juve needing a point from their final match of the season this Sunday to retain the title, FIGC vice-president John Elkann said: "These events have not left us indifferent. There is a time and a place to act."

On Thursday, Juve's share price fell by 9.3 percent.

Moggi has been at Juve for 12 years, during which time the club has won six league titles.

Inter retain Coppa Italia

Football

REUTERS, Milan

Inter Milan won the Italian Cup on Thursday after a 3-1 second-leg win gave them a 4-2 aggregate win over AS Roma.

First-half goals from Argentines Esteban Cambiasso and Julio Cruz gave Inter a clear advantage before Nigerian Obafemi Martins added the third in the 76th minute. Congolese forward Shabani Nonda pulled a goal back for Roma in the 80th minute.

Inter's fifth Italian Cup win follows their triumph in the competition last season and offers some compensation for another season in which they failed to mount a serious bid for the league title they have not won since 1989.

"I'm glad for the lads, there have been a few disappointments in the last few months and they deserve this," said Inter coach Roberto Mancini, who claimed his 10th Italian Cup as a player and coach.

"Francesco didn't have a full game in him yet and unfortunately when he came on it was already very difficult for us. He looked sharp though," said Roma coach Luciano Spalletti.

Roma were without Brazilian forward Rodrigo Taddei and midfielder Simone Perrotta, who were suspended, and were also missing several players through injury.

However Inter's fans did not appear to agree with their coach – the "ultras" walked out of their home in the North stand before the end of the game leaving behind a giant slogan declaring: "Half of a little Cup does not restore your dignity".

Roma's consolation came in the return to action of their captain Francesco Totti who had not played since he broke his ankle in a Serie A game against Empoli on Feb. 19.

The Roma forward, a key part of Italy coach's Marcello Lippi's World Cup squad, came on as a 53rd-minute substitute but by that time Roma were already 2-0 down on the night.

"Francesco didn't have a full game in him yet and unfortunately when he came on it was already very difficult for us. He looked sharp though," said Roma coach Luciano Spalletti.

Roma were without Brazilian forward Rodrigo Taddei and midfielder Simone Perrotta, who were suspended, and were also missing several players through injury.

Cambiasso opened the scoring in spectacular fashion in the sixth minute with a thundering volley from the edge of the area after he had been picked out by compatriot Javier Zanetti.

Just before the break, Cruz made it 2-0 with a fine solo goal, dribbling into the area and rounding Roma's Brazilian keeper Doni before slotting into the unguarded goal.

Totti's return almost brought a goal when the Italy international drove just wide in the 68th minute but Inter extended their advantage when, after some confusion in the Roma defence, Cruz set up substitute Martins who slotted past Doni.

Nonda's headed goal was far too late to prompt a genuine revival and Roma now have to focus on the final game of the season, back at the San Siro, where they need to beat AC Milan and hope Fiorentina lose at Chievo if they are to get fourth place and a spot in the qualifying round of the Champions League.

"It's simply the chance now to do what I've always wanted to do," he said. "I can remember when Uli Hoeneß said 'Come here, we're a top club. When you're 29 you can go abroad.'

"That time has come now," Ballack said.

Asked if there were any lingering doubts about whether he would move to Chelsea, Ballack said: "No, no doubts." He added: "Nothing has been signed yet."

Warne to deliver FA Cup final ball

REUTERS, London

Australian cricketer Shane Warne will deliver the FA Cup final ball to referee Alan Wiley on Saturday in Cardiff.

Warne will travel by helicopter from London to Cardiff before handing over the ball in the centre circle of the Millennium Stadium before the match between Liverpool and West Ham United.

"I'm told I'm the first Aussie in history to deliver the ball and being the 125th FA Cup it makes it even more special," Warne said in a statement from sports good manufacturers Mitre.

Leg-spinner Warne, the most successful wicket-taker in the history of test cricket, is playing county cricket for Hampshire during the English summer.

Ballack's mind on Chelsea

REUTERS, Berlin

Germany captain Michael Ballack has "no doubts" that he will move to Chelsea after finishing his fourth season at Bayern Munich on Saturday.

"I think my decision should be accepted and I shouldn't be kicked around anymore about it," Ballack, 29, said in an interview with Premiere, Germany's pay-TV network. "That has actually been annoying me."

Ballack has been jeered by Bayern fans in recent weeks. He declined to sign a contract extension with the champions that would have made him the best-paid Bundesliga player ever.

"I'm glad that Bayern are angry if I go," he said. "That shows I did a good job and that I'm an important player. That is also reflected in the offer that they made to keep me."

Playmaker Ballack is expected to announce his move to English champions Chelsea after Bayern's last match on Saturday against Borussia Dortmund. He has long wanted to play abroad and recalled how Bayern commercial manager Uli Hoeneß lured him to Munich four years ago from Bayer Leverkusen.

"It's simply the chance now to do what I've always wanted to do," he said. "I can remember when Uli Hoeneß said 'Come here, we're a top club. When you're 29 you can go abroad.'

"That time has come now," Ballack said.

Asked if there were any lingering doubts about whether he would move to Chelsea, Ballack said: "No, no doubts." He added: "Nothing has been signed yet."

Shearer ends with a goal

AFP, Newcastle

Alan Shearer brought the curtain down on his playing career on Thursday by doing what he has always done -- scoring a goal.

The 35-year-old scored a penalty with the final kick of the game as Newcastle beat Celtic 3-2 in his testimonial match at St James' Park.

A knee injury suffered three weeks ago prevented him playing a proper role, but he kicked the first and last balls of the match.

A crowd of 52,275 swelled the ground and generated about around one million pounds for charity.

It was the final appearance of a Newcastle career which began when Shearer joined for a then world record 15 million pounds from Blackburn in July 1996 and included a club-record 206 goals.

Juve to bring back Platini

INTERNET, undated

Juventus legend Michel Platini will have a part to play in the future of the club, according to reports in Italy.

The Italian giants are on the verge of starting a new era after the whole board of directors resigned on Thursday in the aftermath of the telephone interception saga which has rocked the Italian game.

As a result, the Old Lady are looking for a replacement for chief operating officer Antonio Giroudo and director general Luciano Moggi.

Jean Claude Blanc and Carlo Sant'Albano are in contention to step in for Giroudo, but there are concerns that their lack of experience in the football world could be a handicap.

Yet John Elkann, an Agnelli whose family hold a controlling share in the outfit, wants Platini to be of assistance.

Although the Frenchman can't be handed a full-time position as he is in the race for the top FIFA job, Elkann reportedly wants Platini to act as an advisor.

It's unclear at this stage whether the Frenchman would accept such an option even if the close relationship he had with Gianni Agnelli, Elkann's grandfather, could be a decisive factor.

PRIMERA LIGA

Sevilla target Champs League

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

this is not just a one-off, and to see if we can improve on what we have achieved this year," he said.

Barcelona wrapped up their second consecutive league title last week and are likely to be more concerned about avoiding injuries ahead of next Wednesday's Champions League final against Arsenal in Paris.

At the other end of the table, the Andalucians, fifth on 62 points, claimed their first European trophy on Wednesday with a comprehensive 4-0 win over Middlesbrough and can draw level with fourth-placed Osasuna with a victory in the Sanchez Pizjuan.

The original fixture was abandoned on April 23 due to a water-logged pitch leaving Sevilla with a game in hand over Osasuna.

Spain's fourth place in Europe's top competition will be decided on Tuesday when Sevilla play their last game against Real Madrid and Osasuna host Valencia.

"We are 90 minutes away from completing a historical season," Espanyol coach Miguel Angel Lotina said. "I hope the players concentrate on the success that awaits rather than on the possibility of relegation."

"The best is yet to come. We must continue working hard so that

be safe, but they have managed only one in their last 11 league outings.

Alaves must win and hope Espanyol draw or lose. But they take on a Depor side who are in pole position, in seventh place, to the Intertoto Cup next season.

The Basque side, who were promoted last year, have one win from their last eight games and will be without suspended first-choice goalkeeper Franco Costanzo.

FIXTURES

(2000 GMT kick-off unless stated)

SATURDAY

Atletico Madrid v Real Betis (1800), Cadiz v Malaga (1800), Celta Vigo v Getafe (1800), Alaves v Deportivo La Coruna (2000), Espanyol v Real Sociedad (2000), Real Mallorca v Real Zaragoza (2000), Sevilla v Barcelona (2000), Villarreal v Racing Santander (2000)

TUESDAY

Sevilla v Real Madrid (1900), Osasuna v Valencia (1900)

Gerrard seeks Cup tonic

Football

AFP, Liverpool

Steven Gerrard claims lifting the FA Cup for Liverpool on Saturday will give him the perfect platform for the World Cup after his marathon season at Anfield.

Gerrard, 25, will play the 59th game of his campaign when favourites Liverpool face Alan Pardew's West Ham United at Cardiff's Millennium Stadium.

The England midfielder played his first game of the season way back on July 13 when Liverpool faced Welsh club TNS in a Champions League first round qualifier.

Fears over his ability to survive such a gruelling campaign in World Cup year have proved unfounded, however, and Gerrard admits he has even surprised himself by playing so many games.

Gerrard said: "Maybe I am surprised that I am going so well after so many games because people were concerned at the beginning of the season about how many games I would be playing.

"But I always knew that if I got my body right, and everyone knows how many injuries I have had in my career, I would be fine. It has surprised me a little, but I have been looking after myself on and off the pitch and I can't wait for the final."

"If we get a good result against West Ham it will get me in the right

frame of mind for the World Cup. But I would not be doing my job if I was thinking about the World Cup this weekend and I just have to give 100 percent in the cup final and then I can turn to what I hope will be an exciting summer."

Gerrard played in the 2001 Liverpool team that beat Arsenal in the first FA Cup Final staged at the Millennium Stadium.

But after lifting the Champions

"We have beaten fantastic sides like Manchester United and Chelsea to get to the final, but it is always on your mind that after going on such a successful run you might not get over that last hurdle."

"West Ham are in the way and they have some fantastic players who will play the game of their lives, so we have got to be on our toes and play to the level we know we can."

Liverpool defender Sami Hyypia believes lifting the FA Cup will ensure a successful season for the Merseysiders, despite their failure to retain the Champions League.

He said: "This time last year we were preparing for the Champions League final and it is important for the future of the club that we play in such games."

"But we have to keep going and keep looking to achieve things at this level. The FA Cup would be a real bonus. It was a pity to go out of the Champions League, but you must realise you can't win every season."

"We have to keep going and keep looking to achieve things at this level. The FA Cup would be a real bonus. It was a pity to go out of the Champions League, but you must realise you can't win every season."

"But we have to keep going and keep looking to achieve things at this level. The FA Cup would be a real bonus. It was a pity to go out of the Champions League, but you must realise you can't win every season."

"But we have to keep going and keep looking to achieve things at this level. The FA Cup would be a real bonus. It was a pity to go out of the Champions League, but you must realise you can't win every season."

"But we have to keep going and keep looking to achieve things at this level. The FA Cup would be a real bonus. It was a pity to go out of the Champions League, but you must realise you can't win every season."

"But we have to keep going and keep looking to achieve things at this level. The FA Cup would be a real bonus. It was a pity to go out of the Champions League, but you must realise you can't win every season."

"But we have to keep going and keep looking to achieve things at this level. The FA Cup would be a real bonus. It was a pity to go out of the Champions League, but you must realise you can't win every season."

"But we have to keep going and keep looking to achieve things at this level. The FA Cup would be a real bonus. It was a pity to go out of the Champions League, but you must realise you can't win every season."

"But we have to keep going and keep looking to achieve things at this level. The FA Cup would be a real bonus. It was a pity to go out of the Champions League, but you must realise you can't win every season."

"But we have to keep going and keep looking to achieve things at this level. The FA Cup would be a real bonus. It was a pity to go out of the Champions League, but you must realise you can't win every season."