

Sheva deal long way off: Kenyon

AFP, London

A deal to take Andriy Shevchenko from AC Milan to English champions Chelsea is still a long way off, the Londoners' chief executive Peter Kenyon said Sunday.

The Ukraine striker has been linked with the Blues ever since the acquisition of the club by Russian owner Roman Abramovich.

A move to Stamford Bridge appeared more likely after the striker announced in the week he wanted to leave Milan.

While admitting the clubs have spoken about the player, Kenyon insists there is a long way to go before any negotiations could be concluded.

"I think Shevchenko the type of player we would like. We have shown our interest in him the last two seasons and had dialogue with Milan," said Kenyon.

"At the end of the day to improve what we have got, it has to be a great player and Shevchenko certainly comes into that class.

"You stand a chance but you don't put it any more than that. There is a long way to go in the summer.

"It has got to be 50-50 but I wouldn't say any more than that."

Galatasaray clinch Turkish title

AFP, Istanbul

Galatasaray claimed their 16th Turkish league title on Sunday when they beat Kayserispor 3-0 while city rivals Fenerbahce could only draw 1-1 with Denizlispor.

The two Istanbul giants had gone into the final round of matches locked on 80 points after 33 matches.

But it was Galatasaray, led by Belgian coach Eric Gerets, who held their nerve on the final day.

Fellow Istanbul side Besiktas finished in third place, a huge 27 points behind Fenerbahce.

Juve shares nosedive

Reuters, Rome

Shares in Italian soccer champions Juventus dived on Monday as one of the club's key officials faced prosecutors in a match-fixing probe that stunned the nation.

Juventus won the Italian league for the second season in a row on Sunday but Franco Carraro, the former head of the Football Federation who resigned last week amid the scandal, said the title may be only provisional due to the various legal probes underway.

Fears that Juventus, one of four top clubs whose officials are under investigation, may be stripped of the title and be demoted from Serie A devastated shares which were indicated down 26 percent after they were suspended for excessive losses.

If found guilty of involvement in match-fixing -- even attempting to influence results -- Juve could be stripped of their last two titles and demoted to Serie B.

Financial daily Il Sole 24 Ore has estimated the club could lose 120 million euros in television and sponsorship income if forced out of the top league.

Thousands greet Liverpool

AFP, Liverpool

Tens of thousands of jubilant fans jammed the streets of Liverpool for the second time in 12 months to welcome home their triumphant football team on Sunday.

Just a day after claiming the FA Cup after a thrilling final against West Ham in Cardiff, which Liverpool won on penalties after a 3-3 draw, the players took off for a 10-mile tour of the city in an open-topped bus.

Dressed all in matching club tracksuits, the Liverpool team set off in the bus flanked by mounted policemen while children ran alongside their heroes.

It was only a year ago that Liverpool brought home the European Cup, for the fifth time, after an equally thrilling final, also won on penalties after a 3-3 draw.

Although there were fewer supporters there to see the team than had been the case when an estimated 750,000 turned out when the Reds brought home the Champions League trophy last May, that did not seem to affect the atmosphere.

Children were lifted onto their parents' shoulders as the crowds grew thicker with others perched on top of bus shelters, lamp-posts and street signs.

Man of the match Steven Gerrard, who is due to fly out to England's World Cup training camp in Portugal on Monday and scored the crucial last minute equaliser on Saturday to send the game into extra-time, was one of the calmest figures on the top deck, preferring to stay seated unlike many of the other players.



Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho (R) speaks with newly-recruited German midfielder Michael Ballack at Stamford Bridge in London on Monday.

Ballack unveiled at Chelsea



AFP, London

Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho has outlined plans to rebuild his side around Michael Ballack after the Germany captain signed a three-year deal to play for English champions.

Ballack, who has signed on a free transfer from Bayern Munich, was unveiled as a Chelsea player at a Stamford Bridge press conference on Monday.

He revealed that he had decided to come after consulting Germany teammates Jens Lehmann, the Arsenal goalkeeper, and Robert Huth, who is already at Chelsea.

"I am very happy to be here," he said. "They are very friendly people and London is a nice city."

"It is very special and I have good impressions."

"I asked some players about England - Robert Huth, Jens Lehmann - and they told me good things about this country and I am happy to be here."

Mourinho, who had confirmed

the 29-year-old's arrival on Sunday, said he believed Ballack would bring out the best in England star Frank Lampard, whose future had been called into question by Chelsea's signing of a similar, attacking midfielder.

"Ballack wants top players to play with him and the team want good players to improve the team," Mourinho said. "I look forward to working with them and look forward to playing both together."

Ballack is expected to be the first of three big signings by Chelsea this summer with AC Milan's Ukrainian striker Andriy Shevchenko set to follow him in to Stamford Bridge shortly.

Inter Milan's Adriano and Corinthians star Carlos Tevez have also been heavily linked with Chelsea.

Mourinho confirmed: "He (Ballack) is the first of a few because we don't need a lot of players, just two or three very good players. We have now been champions for two consecutive years and we want to be more than that."

"We have already the team, now we need two or three world-class

players to join the special team we have to make it even better than that."

"Chelsea is very happy and we think English football should be very happy he plays for Chelsea and plays in the Premiership."

"We have a team of champions and to improve a team of champions we need champions. A champion is coming here to help follow our target for next year."

Ballack will reportedly become the highest-paid player in the Premiership on a deal said to be worth 130,000 pounds/week -- more than six million pounds a year.

The move to London will be Ballack's first footballing foray outside his native Germany, something he announced he wished to experience.

Born in the former East Germany, he began his professional career at division two side Chemnitz.

He then went on to play for Kaiserslautern and Bayer Leverkusen before moving to Bayern Munich in 2002.

win Wimbledon."

Federer insisted that he learnt lessons from the match.

"It's disappointing but I improved certain things today," said the Swiss world number one.

"Each time I play him, I try to be the aggressive player and come to the net and I have to continue like that."

Federer led 4-1 in the final set and served for victory in the 12th game. Nadal stood 0-30 in that game after his only double-fault of a long afternoon on the clay.

But a pair of forehand mistakes, among 89 unforced errors off the Swiss player's racket in a match where he went to the attack from the start nullified both match points.

Nadal held serve for 6-6 to force a tiebreaker, where Federer couldn't hold a 3-1 lead.

The world number one put a backhand long on a service return to hand Nadal his victory chance, which the young king of clay converted as a Federer forehand sailed out.

The final was the second marathon here in as many years - it took Nadal just eight minutes longer to defeat Guillermo Coria for the trophy a year ago.

The teenager will head to Roland Garros riding a wave of form as defending champion.

All three of Federer's defeats this season have all come at the hands of his young rival.

The Swiss, accompanied during the clay season by legendary coach Tony Roche, is pointing his spring season towards Paris, where he is keen to lift the French Open, the only Grand Slam title which he has never won.

Federer played a solid first set, trading breaks with second seed before the set headed into a tie-breaker.

The Swiss dominated in style, sweeping it to love after 70 minutes.

But the energetic Nadal began to pull his powerful game together after the early setback.

Nadal missed on a set point in the second leading 5-4 but won a tiebreaker as Federer netted a backhand.

Nadal consolidated in the third set to take the lead after three hours on court before the Federer resurgence.

Federer, playing in his 13th straight final, had lost only three of those coming in - Dubai and Monte Carlo this season to Nadal and the Masters Cup in Shanghai to David Nalbandian last year, whom he beat in the Rome semis.

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"He's been the finalist at Monte Carlo, finalist at Rome and three times a Hamburg champion on clay, I think it will be easier for him to beat Roland Garros riding a wave of form as defending champion.

Nadal's clay affair on



AFP, Rome

Spanish sensation Rafael Nadal equalled the record of 53 straight clay-court victories as he saved two match points on his way to beating top seed Roger Federer 6-7 (0/7), 7-6 (7/5), 6-4, 2-6, 7-6 (7/5) to win the Rome Masters on Sunday.

Nadal's fourth straight victory over his world number one rival equalled the clay run of match success established by Argentine Guillermo Vilas in 1977.

It was Nadal's fifth victory over Federer in six meetings between the top two players in the world.

Nadal successfully defended his third clay title of the season after Monte Carlo and Barcelona.

"I'm very content, this was a fantastic win," said Nadal, who saved two match points in the 12th game of the final set in a match which lasted five hours, six minutes.

"The crowd was just great. I'm happy to have won a second title here. But Roger is a great player.

"He's been the finalist at Monte Carlo, finalist at Rome and three times a Hamburg champion on clay, I think it will be easier for him to beat Roland Garros riding a wave of form as defending champion.

'Akhtar has to prove fitness'

PTI, Karachi

Pakistan chairman of selectors Wasim Bari gave full marks to the attitude and approach of enigmatic fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar but refused to guarantee him a place in the England-bound squad.

"We have been told that his attitude and approach is very positive. We will invite him for a fitness camp and then monitor his progress," Bari told PTI on Monday.

He said Akhtar was an important player but the decision to include the speedster in the squad would be taken after consulting a team of trainers.

"It is a sensitive and important decision that will be taken in consultation with the team management and the team of trainers. We have a long tour of England and we know Shoaib (Akhtar) will be an important player." Akhtar has been out of action since the series against India in February.

After the 'Rawalpindi Express' underwent arthroscopy in his knees in April, he is rehabilitating under the supervision of trainer Grant Compton.

"In the fitness camp, Shoaib Akhtar will have an excellent opportunity to impress the team management. He is a senior pro and although I haven't had a chance to talk to him lately, but we have been told that he is training hard," Bari said.



Spanish teenage sensation Rafael Nadal bites the Rome Masters trophy after defeating Roger Federer of Switzerland in the final on Sunday.

Messi included in Barca squad

REUTERS, Madrid

Argentina forward Lionel Messi has been included in Barcelona's 22-man squad for the Champions League final against Arsenal in Paris despite not playing for more than two months.

The 18-year-old trained with the team on Monday but has not been given the all-clear to play by club medical staff.

It is expected that a decision about his inclusion in the team for the final will be made after Barcelona train at the Stade de France on Tuesday.

Messi tore a thigh muscle during the second leg of his side's Champions League knockout tie against Chelsea on March 7.

"The fact that Messi will be with us will make us stronger but we don't know if he will play in the final," Barca midfielder Deco told a news conference at the Nou Camp.

Moggi quizzed

AFP, Rome

Luciano Moggi, the man at the centre of a huge investigation into match fixing in Serie A, was quizzed by prosecutors here Monday.

Last week the entire Juventus board resigned following the publication of phone taps featuring Moggi, who quit as general director of Italian champions Juventus on Sunday.

In the conversations, Moggi, regarded as one of the most powerful figures in Italian football, tells the head of the referees' association which officials he wants assigned to Juventus matches.

A tearful Moggi resigned after Juventus claimed their 29th title with a 2-0 win away to Reggina on Sunday.

"Football is no longer my world," he said after announcing his departure.

"All I will be thinking about now is how to defend myself against all the wickedness that has been aimed at me. You've destroyed my soul."

The 26-year-old insists however that he has not altered his approach since his arrival at the Nou Camp, where he has thrived on the Barcelona regime of Frank Rijkaard.

"The difference is that in

Who will scale the Eiffel?



AFP, Paris

Paris will welcome the return of its two most famous footballing musketeers when Ronaldinho and Thierry Henry show down in a mouthwatering Champions League duel here Wednesday.

"Going back to Paris is like going home," said the Brazilian. "It's not my country but as soon as I step off the plane I know where I am, and where I'm going," he told French daily L'Equipe in an interview.

"I speak the language and I know

Barcelona, I'm playing," said Ronaldinho. "When I was in Paris I wasn't playing. And when I'm playing, I'm happy."

While Ronaldinho and Henry will be the best of enemies on Wednesday, they are also becoming friends off the pitch.

As speculation rages that Henry may leave Arsenal to form a dream attacking partnership with Ronaldinho at Barcelona, the Brazilian World Cup winner has

revealed that he is in regular contact with the Frenchman.

The two stars have met at several world player of the year events and through sponsorship commitments.

"I speak with Henry on the phone quite often, but I haven't spoken to him this week," said Ronaldinho. "This week we have swapped a few text messages. He is a fantastic player, one of the best in the world."

"But this is not a contest between Ronaldinho and Henry, it is a game between Barca and Arsenal and we all have to be prepared."

TIERRY HENRY

RONALDINHO

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