



Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho (L) gestures as his Dutch striker Arjen Robben walks past during a training session at the club's training facility in Cobham on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

The new Galacticos

Football

INTERNET, undated

Having resisted calls to sign superstars, Jose Mourinho now admits he needs them to win the Champions League.

Mario Rosenstock, an Irish comedian, does a better Jose Mourinho impersonation than Mourinho himself. In March he brushed the Top 40 with a skit single, Jose and his Amazing Technicolor Overcoat, then released a follow-up, I Sign a Little Player or Two. It goes to the tune of Aretha Franklin's I Say a Little Prayer, and here's a sample verse:

While I'm eating my sandwich I call Roman Abramovich Sign a little player or two. And if he doesn't work hard I'll probably tell Frank Lampard We'll sign another player or two.

After clinching the Premiership title against Manchester United last season, Mourinho spent his victory press conference weeping about how people focused too much on Chelsea's wealth and not enough on his own genius, so you might expect him to view Rosenstock as just one more annoyance. But Mourinho has invited the comic to England to entertain his squad and chuckles along to Rosenstock's CDs when he is in the car with his children. Again, Chelsea have signed a little player or two this summer. Again, contrary to expectation, Mourinho is laughing.

His club's habit of bulk-buying young players from all over the world and placing them with feeder clubs has allegedly caused Sir Alex Ferguson to say Chelsea are "hell-bent on ruining football", but it is the champions' activity at the top end of the transfer market that has most intrigued Mourinho watchers. He sports a new crewcut do the purchases of Michael Ballack and Andriy Shevchenko suggest that, like Samson, he has lost his power along with his hair? Ballack and Shevchenko's arrivals undoubtedly

demonstrate movement in Chelsea's transfer policy, but those people looking for an accompanying shift in power at Stamford Bridge might be disappointed.

When Abramovich hired Mourinho two years ago and handed him a shopping list crammed with gilded names, The Special One remarked, "I'm the only star you need," and it's true that Mourinho had previously refused to use his patron's riches to make galactico signings, but at the launch of Chelsea's new kit on Thursday he made it clear the change in emphasis is down to him. Ballack and Shevchenko are here not because of Abramovich and his love of football glamour, not because of Peter Kenyon and his commercial strategising, and certainly not because of director of football and would-be rival Frank Arnesen.

"We went with them (Ballack and Shevchenko) not because we want to sell shirts, not because we think Ballack or Shevchenko will give us money in terms of merchandising. We did not bring them to the club to increase the number of supporters in Germany or Ukraine," said Mourinho. "We brought them because we feel the team need these two superstars to improve. That is the point."

The arrival of two of the world's most marketable footballers has hardly disappointed Kenyon, and Abramovich had pushed long and hard for Shevchenko, his fellow former Soviet. Abramovich's fascination with celebrity players was seen when, no sooner had Fabio Cannavaro become a World Cup-winning captain than he was invited to Abramovich's private yacht.

Mourinho, though, has football reasons for being happy with his haul. He was asked whether he felt he had needed one or two world-class improvements to take a talented squad to the next level. "Yes, yes," was his reply. "Ballack was at the end of his contract, and there was no need to negotiate with a club, just the player. We just had to push him into changing his life. It

was not easy. He is married, with three children, living in Germany, adapted to everything around him. But we had a big opportunity to bring a world-class player here.

"With Shevchenko, we always felt the need for a goalscorer. We were champions twice and the top scorer did not get 20 in the Premiership. We needed somebody with a strong goal record."

Ballack and Shevchenko were hardly signed with Sheffield United and Reading in mind. Mourinho primarily seeks improvements because, like all of the top men of his ilk, it satisfies an emotional imperative born of perfectionism. But there are also pragmatic reasons, and they do not involve the Premiership. His original squad of young, hungry players constantly seeking to improve themselves and willing to submit to the team ethic was sufficient to power Chelsea to two domestic titles, but more has been required at the higher level of European competition. Mou-rinho's Champions League record with Chelsea (won nine, lost six, drawn five) verges on pedestrian. His team scored just nine times in eight games there last season, hence the need for Shevchenko. Against Barcelona and Liverpool in successive years they lacked that extra class and nous required to outmanoeuvre super-motivated opponents: hence Ballack.

Even Special Ones can do with special players. With Asier del Horno heading to Valencia, Mourinho plans to sign a left-back, and he may be about to recruit a third big-timer. Ashley Cole is the top target; Roberto Carlos (who would be the most surprising Mourinho signing of all), is the back-up. Both would bring further star quality. But we are seeing evolution, not revolution, the man in the centre maintains.

"The team cannot be built around one or two stars," said Mourinho. "Ballack and Shevchenko arrive into a team of champions, not a team that needs them to be champions. We are already champions twice.

When I arrived at Chelsea, nobody had titles. John Terry had nothing. Lampard nothing. Makelele did in Madrid, and the Portuguese boys did in Porto. Otherwise, nobody did.

"You can imagine if you bring one or two stars in at that time to build around them, it is completely different. Now the big boys are coming, but big boys are waiting. The status is not different. If you look at Lampard or Ballack, I don't think there is a difference in status (now)."

Mourinho was keen to project his authority and remarked of his new shaven head: "I am ready for the war." He remains the general, and with his outlay on players hovering at about 185 million pounds, the battle to quell his doubters will be harder than ever. Even when Chelsea sign an unproven player, as with John Obi Mikel, they can afford 16 million pounds, and Abramovich's wealth gives his manager extraordinary advantages. But Mourinho is back to not caring. Does he still want to be more respected and loved by people? "No," he replied. "I want to be loved by my people. I want Chelsea supporters to love me. If I go to another English stadium and the crowd love me, it is because I am a loser at Chelsea. I am not waiting for that."

He continued in with-me-or-against-me vein when talking about Damien Duff, whose departure to Newcastle for whom he signed a five-year deal last night was prompted by the arrival of Ballack and Shevchenko. With them, Mourinho is likely to adopt a diamond midfield and two up front, meaning there will be fewer opportunities for wingers, and Duff had to leave in search of a guaranteed place.

Is Mourinho surprised? "It depends on personalities. I have to accept you cannot change a player's mentality. The important thing is that he (Duff) did so much for us in the past two years as a player, as a person. I want him to be happy."

Sign a little player or two, sell a little player as long as there are smiles all round.

Czech players plead innocence

AFP, Prague

Jiri Homola, Jiri Masek and Zdenek Senkerik, three players involved in a Turkish football federation (TFF) match-fixing investigation, pleaded their innocence to Monday's Czech press.

Denizlispor allegedly paid the three Czech players from Malatyaspor, another club facing relegation to the second division, to make their team lose the final match of the season on May 14, popular daily Hurriyet reported on Friday.

Malatyaspor lost 1-0 to Gaziantepspor and were demoted, leaving Denizlispor in the first division.

Masek, currently with Austrian side FC Tyrol, told daily newspaper Dnes: "The easiest thing is to blame the foreigners. I have already spoken with my lawyers and I will defend myself."

Senkerik, the only one of the three still at Malatyaspor, said: "I saw this lie in a television report and I'm shocked. It's absurd and foreigners are an easy target."

And defender Homola, who joined Sparta Prague in the pre-season, said the accusations were "total nonsense."

The Hurriyet newspaper backed up Friday's report by publishing what it said was a copy of a fax sent by a Turkish businessman living in Prague to Denizlispor officials demanding 400,000 euros (507,000 dollars) for bribes owed to the three players.

Soldado to join Osasuna

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid reserve team striker Roberto Soldado is set to complete a season-long loan deal with Osasuna.

The 21-year-old scored two goals in 11 Primera Liga appearances last season and netted the winner in Real's 2-1 win over Olympiakos in the Champions League group stage.

"The idea is to leave and have a good season with a Primera Liga team scoring goals, and to develop as a footballer," Soldado told Real's website.

"The following year I want to return to the Real first team. I chose Osasuna because it gives me the chance to play in the Champions League."

Osasuna finished fourth to earn a place in the third qualifying round of Europe's elite competition.

Zola, Casiraghi set for Azzurrini

INTERNET, undated

Reports from Italy suggest that ex-Chelsea duo Pierluigi Casiraghi and Gianfranco Zola are set to be unveiled as the new Italy Under-21 coaching team.

Claudio Gentile was controversially axed from the Azzurrini role last week after a poor showing in May's UEFA Under-21 Championship despite having won the tournament on two of the last three attempts.

Casiraghi and Zola would be a surprise appointment given their lack of coaching experience but could prove popular with fans and players alike.

Mauro Tassotti, Ciro Ferrara and Beppe Bergomi had been linked with the job, but it seems that Italian Football Federation chief Guido Rossi wants to opt for the two former Azzurri strikers.

Ex-Monza, Lazio and Juve striker Casiraghi's playing career was cut short by a cruciate ligament injury sustained while representing Chelsea.

Zola was revered at Napoli, Parma and Chelsea before joining his hometown club Cagliari in 2003.

Since his retirement last year 'Magic Box' has worked for Udinese in a scouting role.

While Casiraghi has some management experience with Serie C2 side AC Legnano, Zola has no experience in a coaching role despite constant rumours linking him with the Cagliari job.

Drogba issues Sheva challenge

INTERNET, undated

Chelsea forward Didier Drogba has thrown down the challenge to new record signing Andriy Shevchenko.

Former Marseille hitman Drogba has openly declared his expectation to be leading the Chelsea attack next season, despite the arrival of the 30-million-pound Ukrainian.

"I've proven I'm a champion in the last two seasons so I don't see why I won't be leading the attack," said the Ivory Coast international.

"There will obviously be a lot of competition now with the arrival of a new striker but that doesn't bother me. I've got two Premier-ship winners' medals."

Magpies look to take flight

Football

INTERNET, undated

Newcastle unveiled new signing Damien Duff on Monday and intend to announce more transfer market coups before the start of the season.

Manager Glenn Roeder has 'a list of players' he would like to bring to St James' Park and could reveal details of his progress at the stadium this afternoon.

Duff has joined Newcastle after winning two Premiership titles with Chelsea in back-to-back seasons, and has signed a five-year contract.

The Republic of Ireland winger is one of the players Newcastle intend to build their future around, but they are looking to strengthen in other departments too, and a striker is a priority after Alan Shearer's retirement and Michael Owen's serious knee injury.

Shola Ameobi's two goals against Lillestrom in the InterToto Cup match

on Saturday showed that he is capable of contributing, while Duff also has a decent scoring record.

Roeder has not ruled out making a move for Miroslav Klose - but fears the World Cup Golden Shoe winner may not be tempted by the Magpies.

Apart from Klose, West Ham's Dean Ashton and Holland international Dirk Kuyt have also been linked with Newcastle.

Roeder is a fan of Werder Bremen star Klose, who scored five goals as Germany claimed third place in the World Cup.

"Miroslav Klose is a top-drawer player, the leading scorer at the World Cup finals," said Roeder in the Newcastle Journal.

"I think I will say what the chairman says, that I'm not ruling anyone in or out." However, Roeder added: "Klose could possibly be looking for a Champions League club after winning the Golden Shoe."

"We perhaps don't fit his remit if he were to move. But you can't help but admire his ability."

He was reluctant to discuss signings after Saturday's match in Norway, preferring to leave such issues for today's press conference when Duff - who is understood to have cost a fee in the region of 10 million pounds - will speak for the first time about becoming a Newcastle player.

"Then we can start talking about the next player", said Roeder. "But we've got a list of players now that we want to start working our way through."

Newcastle beat Tottenham to the signature of Duff, who spent three seasons at Chelsea but may have feared being squeezed out of the first team in the coming season due to the limited number of first-team places and the swelling numbers of midfielders in Jose Mourinho's squad - Michael Ballack having become the latest recruit.

He has been bought to inject pace, invention and quality into the Magpies' midfield, the sort they have been lacking of late.

Roma line up Trezeguet

INTERNET, undated

Reports suggest that Roma are set to make an audacious bid to lure David Trezeguet to the Stadio Olimpico.

Juve President Giovanni Cobolli Gigli had been hoping that Trezeguet would join Alex Del Piero and Pavel Nedved in agreeing to stay in Turin.

But the French ace could now be set to stay in Serie A with a move to the Capital club.

Giallorossi tactician Luciano Spalletti has already stressed that he aims to make two or three signings before the start of the season and admits that Trezeguet is on his wish list.

"Trezeguet is capable of changing the face of a side and everybody wants that, I'd love to have him in the squad," said the Tuscan boss.

It is believed that Spalletti has put Trezeguet above his other attacking targets, Vincenzo Iaquinta and Mirko Vucinic, and is ready to table an offer of around 10-million-pounds.

Trezeguet signed for Juve in 2000 and has found the net 95 times in 151 outings for the Bianconeri.



PHOTO: AFP

New Bayern Munich recruit Belgian Daniel van Buyten (L) and Owen Hargreaves in full flow at a pre-season training session in Rottach-Egern on Monday.

NFL billionaire linked with Villa

INTERNET, undated

Billionaire Randy Lerner, who owns the franchise to NFL side Cleveland Browns, is believed to be preparing to enter the race to buy Aston Villa.

Sources close to Villa are indicating 44-year-old Lerner is understood to be ready to make an offer for the Midlands club to chairman and major shareholder Doug Ellis on his return from holiday later this week.

Lerner is chairman of credit card giants MBNA and took over the running of the Cleveland team following the death of his father in October 2002.

Ellis put Villa up for sale in October but the West Midlands club have received no concrete bids and the interest of a consortium including Irish property developers the Comer brothers has fizzled out.

Life-long Villa fan Michael Neville was also part of that consortium and he indicated over the weekend he was confident of obtaining mystery backers to make a fresh bid.

Bergkamp wants Vieira return

Football

THE GUARDIAN

Dennis Bergkamp began a new Arsenal era at the Emirates Stadium on Saturday and urged a past master to return to the club.

Patrick Vieira, who left Highbury a season before Arsenal made their move to the Ashburton Grove site, featured in a red-and-white shirt in the one-off "Legends" match set up for Bergkamp's testimonial. Vieira evoked memories of his commanding displays of years gone by and Bergkamp hinted that, while the midfielder's successor as captain, Thierry Henry, has committed to remain at Arsenal, Vieira's move to Juventus had not worked out.

Real confirm Calderon's interim position

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid have said president Ramon Calderon only holds his position on a provisional basis pending the outcome of a legal ruling on the validity of the postal vote from the club's election.

"Real's electoral commission... have agreed to consider the naming of Calderon and his board as provisional as requested by Juan Miguel Villar Mir," the club said in a statement on their website on Monday.

Villar Mir was one of the four rival candidates in the presidential election held on July 2.

Two days before the vote a judge backed complaints from two candidates that the postal vote should be temporarily suspended due to the lack of controls in place to guarantee their legitimacy.

Calderon was named president of the nine-times European champions on July 3, beating Juan Palacios by 246 votes and third-placed Villar Mir by 1,642.

"As a player it is sometimes not easy to stay with a club because you might have a better future somewhere else," said Bergkamp, hoping that Vieira might decline a 9-million-pound move from Juventus to Internazionale this week to return to London.

"We've got a team that can challenge for trophies, so there's no need to go somewhere else and I think they realise that now. Patrick left but he was here for years with that on his mind and I'm so happy that Thierry decided to stay."

"Dozens of people have said to me that Patrick should have another year here and I hope he shall. Maybe that's not the right thing to say in football but everyone saw what he did in the World Cup and, if he could get to that level with Arsenal again, that would be fantastic."

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CRYPTOQUIP

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B X H N P J H C Y O C L D O R " J U
J U U H D N H P U U R J U U H D ! "

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF A GENTLEMAN WERE TO WED A GLEEFUL MS. POPPINS, I GATHER HE WOULD MARRY MERRY MARY.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: U equals O

The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 R followers? 4 Org. that overseas media 7 Jet forth 12 Grecian vessel 13 "Eureka!" 14 Japanese-American 15 Moment 16 Punish 18 Holbrook or Linden 19 Bar legally 20 Notion 22 Aviv preceder 23 MP's quarry 27 Deli loaf 29 Argue 31 "You Light Up My Life" singer 34 Enthusiasm 35 Money-back deal 37 Florist's qty. 38 Four Corners st. 39 --- Beta Kappa

41 Wild and crazy 45 Nutritionist's recommendations 47 Catch sight of 48 Chew 52 Half a dance 53 Gibson garnish 54 Wade opponent 55 Bob of CBS News 56 Pack to the future? 57 Recipe amt. 58 Cistern

2 Tire pattern 3 "I give up!" 4 Confront 5 Pure 6 Societal level 7 Use scissors 8 Wilbur, in "Charlotte's Web" 9 Cold War nation (Abbr.) 10 Emeritus (Abbr.) 11 Dead heat 17 Related 21 Ball co-star 23 Full of excitement chatter

24 Existed 25 Mel of Coopers-town 26 Writer 27 Busscaglia 28 Nevertheless 30 "I" strain 31 Lingerie buy 32 "--- the fields we go" 33 Sapporo sash 36 Grand story 37 Pre-photo-copy copies 40 Essence 42 Neckwear 43 Indira Gandhi's father 44 Long 45 Force 46 Leak gradually 48 Witticism 49 Japanese airline 50 Round Table address 51 Additionally

Solution time: 25 mins.

P	I	T	M	E	S	A	W	R	A	P
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Yesterday's answer 6-16