



The Spaniards celebrate on the podium after claiming the European Under-19 football championship in Poznan, Poland on Saturday. They defeated Scotland 2-1 in the final.

Real prepare De Rossi bid

INTERNET, undated

Reports from Italy suggest that Real Madrid are lining up an audacious swoop for Roma midfield prodigy Daniele De Rossi.

Fabio Capello seems keen to build a Serie A dream team at the Bernabeu and has already added Juve pair Fabio Cannavaro and Emerson.

Now it has been suggested that the Spanish giants are willing to table a bid of around 13.5 million pounds for De Rossi's services.

While the Giallorossi have declared the Azzurri midfielder as not for sale, they may struggle to turn down an offer that is considerably greater than expected.

However, Luciano Spalletti's side are looking to buy rather than sell as they prepare for Champions League football.

Amongst the capital club's alleged targets are Vincenzo Iaquinta, Mirko Vucinic, Stephen Appiah and David Trezeguet.

De Rossi is a product of the Roma youth system and at 22 is already seen by many as the heir to Francesco Totti's throne.

After a superb 2005-06 campaign, the young Roman let himself down at the World Cup when he was dismissed for an elbow in the USA's Brian McBride in the Group stages.

Ledley King out injured

REUTERS, London

Tottenham Hotspur captain Ledley King will miss the start of the season after picking up a knee injury in training, the Premier League club said on Saturday.

"Ledley is out with suspected cartilage problems and he could be out for six to eight weeks," manager Martin Jol told the club's Web site. "It is a big blow for us."

It is a big setback for the 25-year-old defender who missed the end of last season and England's World Cup campaign in Germany with a fractured metatarsal in his left foot.

Tottenham face newly-appointed Italian champions Inter Milan in a pre-season friendly at White Hart Lane on Sunday.

Hamburg, Schalke in League Cup semis

AFP, Dusseldorf

Hamburg qualified for the German League Cup semifinals on Saturday after a 1-0 win over Hertha Berlin here.

Belgian striker Vincent Kompany scored the only goal of the game on 52 minutes.

Schalke 04 joined them in the semifinals after a dramatic 9-8 penalty shoot-out victory over Bayer Leverkusen, following a 1-1 draw in the second quarterfinal play-off.

Leverkusen took the lead on 28 minutes through an own goal by Uruguayan defender Dario Rodriguez but Brazilian striker Marcelo Bordon replied for Schalke just nine minutes later.

Hamburg will play at Werder Bremen in the semifinals on Tuesday while Schalke will travel to Bayern Munich in the last four a day later.

The final is due to be played in Leipzig on August 5.

Bayern and Bremen qualified automatically for the semifinals by virtue of finishing in the top two last season, while the teams placed third to sixth played off for last four spots in one-off matches in Dusseldorf.

Spain claim Euro U-19 title

Football

INTERNET, undated

Antonio Bueno ended Scottish hopes of glory with a double strike for Spain in the European Under-19 Championship final in Poland.

The Real Madrid striker hit a sublime effort over Hibernian goalkeeper Andrew McNeil from 20 yards in the 50th minute.

He was again on hand to turn a low Gerard Pique cross past McNeil 21 minutes later.

Livingston striker Graeme Dorrans, who had been introduced to the game as a second-half substitute, grabbed a consolation three minutes before the end.

Dorrans could have equalised in the final minute but shot straight at Spain goalkeeper Antonio Adan.

Scotland Under-19 coaches Archie Gemmill and Tommy Wilson had been forced into one change from the team which defeated the Czech Republic in the semifinal.

Hibernian striker Steven Fletcher was unfortunate to miss out after receiving a second yellow card of the tournament for diving in the semi, despite television evidence proving he merely stumbled in a challenge.

His natural replacement Robert Snodgrass was also suspended after earning his second caution after coming on for Fletcher in the last-four clash.

Instead, Celtic striker Charlie Grant returned to the starting 11

after missing the semi through a ban.

Norwich wing-back Andrew Cave-Brown was an early threat for the Scots, but it was not until the 12th minute before they forced Adan into action.

Hearts striker Calum Elliot made space for himself on the edge of the area before firing goalwards but the Real Madrid keeper palmed the effort away.

Spain's first real chance came on the half-hour mark but a flurry of Scottish defenders managed to block Antonio Calvo's effort.

Atletico Madrid midfielder Mario Suarez almost took advantage of a poor defensive clearance eight minutes later.

But his dipping 20-yard shot clipped the top of the crossbar and flew to safety.

Elliot almost troubled Adan again in the 42nd minute but his glancing header from a Cave-Brown cross was seen early and the goalkeeper collected comfortably.

Just a minute later though, Lee Wallace was grateful to see Calvo's ball along the six-yard box not followed up after the Spanish youngster got in behind the Hearts defender.

But, five minutes into the second period, the Spanish youngsters broke the deadlock with a sublime finish from Bueno.

The Real forward played a clever one-two with Suarez to outmanoeuvre the Scotland defence before chipping McNeil from 20 yards, leaving the Hibernian

youngster flailing.

Two minutes later, McNeil saved the Scots with a tremendous save from Calvo, who was just five yards out.

Scotland were reeling and McNeil and his defence were rescued by the woodwork when a Pique header bounced off the ground and on to the crossbar from six yards.

In the 66th minute, Grant escaped the attentions of the Spanish defence but Adan was swift to spot the danger.

The Celtic man earned the first caution for a foul in the 71st minute but a greater punishment was to follow as a result of the set-piece.

Juan Mata floated the ball to Pique at the far post and he found Bueno inside the six-yard box to pock home Spain's second.

Elliot was looking for a 77th-minute penalty but the match official waved away his appeal.

An 84th-minute free-kick from Brian Gilmour had Adan scampering across his line but the strike flew just wide before Simon Ferry hit an effort straight at the keeper moments later.

Three minutes before the end, though, Scotland pulled a goal back.

Elliot chased a through to the by-line and pulled it across the six-yard line where Livingston forward Dorrans, who had replaced Greg Cameron in the 74th minute, was on hand to head home.

Dorrans almost claimed an equaliser in the final minute but his strike from a Jamie Adams ball was aimed straight at Adan.

New injury for Valeron

AFP, Madrid

Deportivo La Coruna's Spanish international playmaker Juan Carlos Valeron faces a four-month injury lay-off after suffering a knee injury during a pre-season friendly, the club said Sunday.

Valeron, 30, underwent surgery in Madrid on Saturday for a ruptured meniscus and torn ligaments. The veteran playmaker had only just returned after an operation on the same knee six months ago.

"We anticipate that he will be able to return to playing in around four months' time," a club statement said.

Valeron suffered the injury on Saturday as he attempted to control the ball in his team's match against Portuguese side Benfica.

'Ribery no-show a mix-up'

AFP, Canet-en-Roussillon, France

France winger Franck Ribery's agent quashed fears Saturday that his client had walked out on Marseille after the player failed to turn up for a pre-season friendly.

Ribery has been the subject of transfer interest from some of Europe's biggest clubs including Real Madrid, Manchester United, Arsenal, Bayern Munich and Lyon.

And when he failed to show up for Marseille's friendly against Toulouse, fears mounted that Ribery had walked out on the Mediterranean giants.

But Bruno Heiderscheid insisted his absence was merely a misunderstanding.

"There is perhaps a misunderstanding over the term weekend, whether that's Saturday or Sunday," he said.

"I assure you, he will respect his contract with his club and will not do anything wrong."

A statement from the Marseille management said they were not worried about Ribery's no-show.

"His return was expected this weekend, that could be Sunday or even as late as Monday morning."

"If he was not here Monday, we would start to ask questions."

The talented 23-year-old is currently contracted to Marseille until 2010 after signing a contract extension in March but was quoted as saying in June that he favoured a move to Lyon.

Premiership duo consider Fiore

INTERNET, undated

Both Charlton and Manchester City are closely monitoring Italian playmaker Stefano Fiore.

The two have been aware of Fiore's situation for a number of months, but now his future is set to be decided.

Like with Bernardo Corradi, who coincidentally has just joined Man City, Valencia want to sell.

Fiore spent last season on loan at Fiorentina and both Torino and Palermo were keen on new loans -- but Valencia want him off their wage bill permanently.

That has given the opportunity for both City and Charlton to possibly snatch the Italian international for a nominal fee.

Both clubs could be tempted to make moves this week as the build-up to The Premiership season continues.

Aimar signs for Zaragoza

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Zaragoza have signed Argentine international Pablo Aimar from Valencia on a four-year contract, the Primera Liga club said on Saturday.

The deal for the 26-year-old attacking midfielder, who has won 43 caps with Argentina, was reported by Spanish media to be worth around 11 million euros (13.96 million dollars).

"The club consider him the most important signing in their history," Zaragoza said on their Web site.

Aimar debuted in the Argentine top-flight with River Plate before joining Valencia in 2001 for 20 million dollars.

He went on to win two Primera Liga titles and the UEFA Cup in 2004 with Valencia, but was considered surplus to requirements for next season by coach Quique Sanchez Flores.

Zaragoza's new coach Victor Fernandez has already bought in Argentine midfielder Andres D'Alessandro on loan from Wolfsburg, and defenders Sergio Fernandez and Juanfran.

They finished 11th in the league last season and lost to Espanyol in the final of the King's Cup.

Milan firm on stars' stay

Football

INTERNET, undated

AC Milan general director Ariedo Braida insists key men Andrea Pirlo and Alessandro Nesta will be at the club when the new season gets underway.

"Without doubt, Pirlo and Nesta are staying."

Milan have already suffered one high-profile departure this summer, with talismanic striker Andriy Shevchenko joining Chelsea.

Braida admits the Ukraine forward is 'impossible' to replace and refused to confirm whether Spain star Fernando Torres was the preferred option to fill the void.

"As for substituting Shevchenko it is impossible to find one," Braida said. "We have to find other good alternatives as we have done in the past. Torres? I repeat, we are searching to maximum."

Braida also played down rumours the club might be about to swoop for Ze Roberto, who has been a free agent since his contract at Bayern Munich expired this summer.

"We haven't spoken to Ze Roberto's agent," Braida said. "He played well in the World Cup but we are covered in midfield."

"We are strong all over but as in the past this club can pull a surprise for our great fans at the last moment."

Di Canio blasts Lazio

Football

INTERNET, undated

C2 side Cisco Roma in order to prolong his playing career.

"Rossi is a liar," the former West Ham player told Radio Spazio Aperto.

"He never said he wanted me at the club, he was more interested in protecting his position. He's a great Coach, but as a man he disappointed me more than the President."

The strongest criticism, however, was saved for the controversial Lotito, who has become a hate figure for fans and players alike.

"Talking about Lotito is like

opening fire on the Red Cross," the fiery marksman explained. "He's a joker who pretends to be a moral man."

Lotito received a two and a half year ban from football for his part in the Calcio poli scandal.

Lazio will begin the 2006-07 campaign in Serie A with an 11-point deduction unless the club successfully appeal once more.

Di Canio made his first appearance for Cisco Roma in a pre-season friendly with Greek side Aris last week.

Reyes ready for Spain return

Football

INTERNET, undated

Arsenal star Jose Antonio Reyes has hinted that he is ready to leave the London side and return to Spain.

The 22-year-old has never settled in the Premiership following his 17-million-pound switch from Sevilla in January 2004, having previously been caught out in a radio hoax stating he wanted to move to Real Madrid.

This summer has seen rumours of a return to his home

country resurface, with Real's new president Ramon Calderon looking to bring in more reinforcements to join Emerson, Fabio Cannavaro and Ruud van Nistelrooy.

Whilst Gunners starlet Cesc Fabregas featured heavily in the electioneering of a number of presidential candidates, it is Reyes who has now conceded the time may be right to leave The Emirates Stadium.

The forward reiterated he has been unable to settle in North London, whilst conceding he would be open to a move to Los Merengues.

"I have always said that I am marvellous."

"It is a great club and they have given me so much support since I joined."

"But they know that I have not adapted to life in England. I have not got used to the language or the weather."

"If Real Madrid want me then that is marvellous."

"I have always said what a huge club it is and it would be an honour to play for them. Let's see what happens."



Bayern Munich and Germany midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger plays with a child during a "soccer clinic" in Urawa, Japan on Sunday. Bayern Munich will play a friendly against local club Red Diamonds U