

## Gago agrees personal terms

AP, Madrid

Boca Juniors midfielder Fernando Gago has agreed to personal terms with Real Madrid and is waiting for the clubs to reach an agreement on his transfer.

Madrid sports director Predrag Mijatovic has asked Gago's agent, Marcelo Lombilla, to press Boca Juniors president Mauricio Macri to allow the player to move during January's transfer window, sports daily As said Thursday.

Macri, who is reportedly asking for \$34.2 million for the 20-year-old midfielder, wants him to remain until June so he can play in the Copa Libertadores.

Madrid president Ramon Calderon hopes to complete Gago's transfer before the club's general assembly on Sunday.

Calderon is said to believe the Argentine's arrival would help him resist calls for new elections from members annoyed by the freezing of postal votes in the July poll.

However, Macri ruled out the imminent transfer of Gago, who has been compared with former Argentina midfielder Fernando Redondo, who won the Champions League in 1998 and 2000 with Madrid.

"It's impossible for Madrid to present Gago on Sunday or announce his signing because there is no deal between the clubs," Macri told Radio La Red.

Madrid recently signed 18-year-old left back Marcelo from Fluminense, and is said to be aiming to sign another teenager, River Plate striker Gonzalo Higuain.

## Perrotta ready for 'World Cup Final'

INTERNET, undated

Roma midfielder Simone Perrotta believes that the derby against Lazio is just as big as the World Cup Final.

The former Chievo man, of course, was in the starting line-up for Italy's stunning triumph at Germany '06 against France, and he is now keen to add the Scudetto to his collection.

The Giallorossi have won their last six Serie A matches and are aware of the importance of the game with their Biancocelesti cousins if they want to close in on leaders Inter.

"A derby is like a World Cup Final, it is very exciting to see the entire stadium coloured by both the Biancocelesti and the Giallorossi supporters," said Perrotta, who has a slight ankle knock.

"I am feeling better and I think I will make it, and I hope that is also true for Francesco Totti. I don't think we will play the derby without him, we all know how much he wants to be part of it."

"The derby is a very special match and the strongest team isn't always the winner. The mental aspect is equally important – If you keep a serene state of mind you are sure to play better."

"Totti said that he would be glad to have Angelo Peruzzi on his side? I agree, he is an excellent goalkeeper, but ours is just as good and is playing very well this year."

"In fact, I wouldn't take anyone from Lazio," added the midfielder, who revealed why the club have opted for a pre-match training camp.

"We will go on this retreat because we do not want to give anyone the chance to speak about things that have nothing to do with the football we play on the pitch," concluded Perrotta.

## Cafu ready for action

INTERNET, undated

Marcos Cafu has recovered from injury and could be ready to return to playing as early as Sunday.

The Rossoneri defender has been out since the match with Empoli on November 18, but has been training well and surprised everyone by going through an intense fitness session on Thursday.

"I am fine, really fine and I hope to be available for the Coach on Sunday, if needed," said the Brazilian to Milan Channel, confirming his hopes of making an appearance against Torino.

"This is not a great moment for us, but we have to shrug it off as soon as possible and return to being the Milan fans deserve, a team which can always make them dream," added the 36-year-old.

The Rossoneri have been under increasing pressure to turn their season around and were again handed an embarrassing defeat on Wednesday as they were beaten 2-0 by underdogs Lille in the Champions League.

"Maybe the defeat was due to the fact that we had already qualified, whereas they were playing a crucial game," explained Il Pendolino, who was forced to watch on from the stands by his injury."



Brazilian club Internacional's forward Fernando (C) leads his teammates at a training session in Tokyo on Friday. They will take part in the World Club Cup that starts on Sunday.

## Barca favourites for Club Cup

### Football

REUTERS, Tokyo

European champions Barcelona may have to tame a prodigious Brazilian teenager known as "Alex the Duck" in order to lift the Club World Cup this month.

The Catalans are red-hot favourites to go one better than Johan Cruyff's flamboyant side of the early 1990s by returning to Spain with an historic first world title.

South American champions Internacional are expected to provide Barca's stiffest test in Japan despite losing several key players since winning the Libertadores Cup in August.

Seeded teams Barcelona and Internacional are scheduled to meet in the final of the competition involving the world's six continental champions.

Barcelona begin their campaign in Yokohama on Dec. 14 when they take on the winners of Monday's clash between Mexico's Club America and South Korea's Chonbuk Motors.

New Zealand's Auckland City face Egypt's Al Ahli in the opening

game on Sunday for the right to play Internacional on Dec. 13. The final takes place in Yokohama on Dec. 17.

Inter are poised to unleash their secret weapon – 17-year-old Pato Alexandre, or Alex the Duck, who made an extraordinary debut for the club last month.

He scored with his first touch after 94 seconds and created two more goals in a 4-1 win at Palmeiras to set tongues wagging about another potential great Brazilian discovery.

"We always thought something like this would happen," Internacional president Fernando Carvalho said. "He's phenomenal. He has a huge future."

Barcelona are unlikely to be quaking in their boots, however, the Spanish champions boasting one of the strongest squads in the world and, in Ronaldinho, arguably the game's best player.

Instantly recognisable with his flowing locks and toothy grin, Ronaldinho has already dismissed talk that Barcelona will be taking the Club World Cup anything but seriously.

"Ever since I was a boy I have wanted to win this title," Barca's talismanic forward said. "I remember watching it on TV. I'd love to win it. I want to win everything."

Brazil's Sao Paulo edged out Liverpool 1-0 in last year's final to win the first edition of the revamped FIFA tournament but Barcelona are anxious to restore parity for Europe.

"We know that we could become the first Barca team to win this trophy and go down in the history books of the club," said midfielder Xavi. "That gives us extra motivation to win it."

Cruyff's Barcelona lost 2-1 to Sao Paulo in 1992 in the Club World Cup's predecessor, a one-off encounter between the European and South American champions.

Barca coach Frank Rijkaard has told his players to show humility in a tournament they are expected to win with some comfort even with strikers Samuel Eto'o and Lionel Messi out through long-term injuries.

"We must go to Japan with a humble attitude, determined to work hard... without feeling that we are better than anyone else," the Dutchman said.

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## Parma end Napoli dream

### Football

INTERNET, undated

Parma have qualified for the quarterfinals of the Coppa Italia after a Zlatko Dedic brace helped them see off Serie B side Napoli.

The first leg had ended 1-0 to the Partenopei, but Parma once again showed that their cup form is far superior to their recent showings in the League with a confident 3-1 second leg success.

The Stadio Tardini was nearly deserted as the match was originally scheduled in the evening but was moved to the afternoon for public safety reasons by Parma's head of the police, after the problems last Saturday during Napoli's home match with Frosinone. The Emiliani fielded many youngsters, while the Azzurri had Cristian

Bucchi, scorer of the decisive goal in the first leg, in their starting line-up.

The early scoring opportunities fell to Parma, with a header from Massimo Paci, who missed the target, and another one from Marco Rossi, which was saved by goalkeeper Matteo Gianello.

The Tardini outfit managed to break the deadlock with a goal just before the end of the first half, when Luca Cigarini converted a penalty after a foul on Zlatko Dedic by Ruben Maldonado.

Dedic put Parma ahead for the first time in the tie shortly after the interval, scoring after a long run on the right which Napoli defender David Giubilato was unable to stop.

Azzurri Coach Edi Reja replaced Bucchi, who failed to impress, with Sosa and this seemed to motivate the Southern outfit.

However, Parma increased their lead again through Dedic on 66 minutes, helped by a howler from Gianello, who let the ball slip beneath him.

Napoli did not surrender though and scored what eventually proved to be little more than a consolation goal seven minutes before the end thanks to Samuele Dalla Bona.

The Azzurri ended the match with 10 men after the sending off of Gyorgy Garics, as the Austrian player brought down Dedic when he was through on goal.

The end of the game was tense though, as referee Stefano Paparesta allowed six minutes of injury time, and Napoli continued to fruitlessly attack until the last second.

The Ducali therefore won the tie 3-2 on aggregate, qualifying for the quarterfinals where they will meet Roma on January 10 and 17.

### Clubs deny doping charge

AFP, Madrid

Reigning champions Barcelona and other top Spanish clubs have denied a report in Le Monde which alleged they used the services of doctor Eufemiano

Fuentes, who is at the centre of a blood doping affair involving mainly cyclists.

Four of the clubs mentioned in the report categorically denied Friday's report in the French newspaper, while Barcelona and Real Madrid said they would be ready to take legal action to protect their reputation.

A statement on Real Madrid's website denied any link with Fuentes.

The club said that it "denies firmly any direct or indirect link between the club's medical services and Dr. Eufemiano Fuentes."

Real added that "in its 104-year history Real Madrid has distinguished itself through exemplary dedication to

and exaltation of human values and the defence of fair play."

The nine-times European champions said they would take "opportunity" and appropriate legal action to protect the club's reputation and the interests of its members and fans.

Their Brazilian striker Ronaldo said after a training session that he would be ready to undergo any test.

"We're available for any doping tests, including the random tests that are carried out by the federation, UEFA or whoever," said Ronaldo, who scored two goals in Real's 2-2 Champions League draw away to Dynamo Kiev.

Barcelona, who are also the European champions, said on its website: "FC Barcelona categorically denies the information published by French paper Le Monde regarding a supposed and non-existent use of the services of Dr. Eufemiano Fuentes at the club and a supposed and non-existent link with (the club's) preparation plans for the past season."

"FC Barcelona further reserves

the right to take the legal action it judges appropriate in defence of its interests."

Two other first division clubs named, Real Betis and Valencia, also issued denials.

Betis likewise issued a strong denial through the head of their medical services, Tomas Calero. "I can only categorically deny any kind of meeting (between Dr. Fuentes) and Real Betis, and indeed with myself," Calero said.

"And I absolutely doubt any Betis player had any personal recourse" to the doctor's services, Calero added.

A Valencia spokesman said he could rule out "firmly that the club ever had any kind of relationship with Dr. Eufemiano Fuentes."

Le Monde's edition dated Friday named the four clubs as using Fuentes, who is caught up in a huge blood doping scandal which has rocked cycling and embroiled top cyclists like Ivan Basso and Jan Ullrich.

"FC Barcelona further reserves

## Podolski returns

REUTERS, Berlin

Germany striker Lukas Podolski should be fit for Bayern Munich's Bundesliga match against Energie Cottbus on Saturday after six weeks off with an ankle injury.

Podolski, who was originally expected to return in mid-November, would be part of the team, Bayern Munich coach Felix Magath said on Thursday.

The 21-year-old injured his ankle in training in late October. His comeback took three weeks longer than first expected.

Podolski was named best young player at the World Cup in July. He moved from Cologne to Bayern Munich at the start of the season.

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid put their fine away record on the line on Saturday when they visit Sevilla's Sanchez Pizjuan, where the UEFA Cup holders have the league's only remaining 100 percent home record.

With five wins from six on the road Real are the league's best travellers but their cautious, counter-attacking approach has won few admirers.

Real leapfrogged Sevilla into second place last weekend with a 2-1 home win over struggling Athletico Bilbao, but Sevilla coach Juan de Ramos stopped short of joining those who criticise Real coach Fabio Capello's pragmatic methods.

"I prefer a different style of play to Real's but I don't want to say it is more effective. Playing this way they have caught up with Barcelona and gone past us. Although it isn't exciting they make the most of their chances," Ramos said.

Sevilla slipped a point behind Real into third after surprisingly

INTERNET, undated



Schalke extended their unbeaten run to six games with a 0-0 draw in Nuremberg last weekend, but they still lost top spot in the Bundesliga to Werder Bremen.

Play eventually resumed and Nancy secured a 3-0 win in their Group E tie over the two-time UEFA Cup winners to advance to the round of 32.

It is not the first time UEFA have made the club pay for the behaviour of their unruly fans.

Feyenoord were hit with a closed door ban by UEFA for clashes in Basel, Switzerland last year and an inquiry is currently underway after a Blackburn player was sprayed with beer in a recent UEFA Cup tie.

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The Spanish press hit back on Friday at reports from Le Monde newspaper that claimed four top Spanish football clubs were linked with Dr Eufemiano Fuentes who is alleged to have masterminded a vast blood-doping network.

The four clubs in the firing line are Real Madrid, Barcelona, Real Betis and Valencia.

Fuentes denied the Le Monde report, which was written after one of the newspaper's reporters procured documents containing allegations which have as yet been unfounded.

However in a separate interview with the newspaper Fuentes claimed that Barcelona, the current European champions, had tried to employ him on two separate occasions.