

Klasnic surgery unsuccessful

REUTERS, Berlin

Croatian international striker Ivan Klasnic's kidney transplant carried out last week was not successful and he will be out of action for at least six months, his attorney said on Monday.

In a statement published on his club Werder Bremen's Web site, Klasnic's attorney K.-Peter Horndasch said the kidney transplant on Thursday had failed, dashing hopes he might be back playing within six to eight weeks.

"Unfortunately the transplanted kidney was rejected by his body," Horndasch said. "The exact reasons for that are now being analysed by the doctors. The investigation will take about six weeks."

"The time will be used to perform preliminary tests on other people related to Ivan Klasnic with the goal of attempting another transplantation in about six to eight weeks."

Klasnic, 26, has played for Werder since 2001 and scored 42 goals in 135 matches. He has played 26 times for Croatia, scoring eight goals.

Ancelotti has Azzurri dream

INTERNET, undated

Milan boss Carlo Ancelotti has admitted that he dreams of one day sitting on the Azzurri bench.

The Rossenro, who is contracted to the Via Turati club until 2008, endured a difficult start to the season and was paired with an exit in June.

The San Siro outfit has now managed to return to winning ways and are only three points shy of a Champions League spot.

"I hope I can someday coach the Azzurri, I would enjoy a spell with the Nazionale," said Ancelotti to Radio Anchi's Sport on Monday.

"I know it might not sound nice, because Roberto Donadoni is a friend of mine, but this is a dream I have," continued the former midfielder.

"In any case, I hope Donadoni does well in the next European Championship and the 2010 World Cup."

The tactician then moved on to comment on Ronaldo's likely arrival, as Adriano Galliani will fly to Madrid on Monday to finalise the details of the Brazilian's transfer.

"Ronaldo fat? I don't think so, he is just sturdy and has an imposing figure. He is very motivated and I think he has proved that by choosing to come here even if he might earn less."

"He's a great striker and is very fast. He hasn't trained much after being dropped at Real Madrid, but he remains an excellent player, who scored almost 100 goals with the Merengues in five years."

The coach is also aware that achieving Champions League qualification is the club's primary objective, although it will not be an easy target to reach.

"The Champions League has always been important for us and it is even more so this year, also from an economic point of view," he said.

"We are struggling and are not at our best, due to the summer scandal. We had to change our plans and this has caused many injuries, which did not allow us play the first half of the season as we could have."

C'Ron quiet on Madrid link

INTERNET, undated

Cristiano Ronaldo has admitted that he knows about Real Madrid's interest in him, but is under strict instructions not to comment on it.

Ronaldo was approached by two Spanish journalists from AS on Sunday and asked to comment on Real Madrid's interest.

Ronaldo was diplomatic with his answer, and refused to give anything away.

"I know about Real Madrid's interest but I cannot speak about it," he said.

"I have discussed the matter with Alex Ferguson and Carlos Queiroz and they have prohibited me from talking about Real Madrid; you must understand because I do not want any problems."

Later the journalists tried again to squeeze a soundbite out of the Portuguese star by asking him if he was privileged to be linked with Real, but again Ronaldo refused to take the bait.

"I have said to you that I cannot say anything about Real Madrid, you must respect me because I can say no more."

Real have been linked with a 35-million-pound move for the player, but United insist he is not for sale at any price.



PHOTO: INTERNET
Werder Bremen forwards Hugo Almeida (L) and Miroslav Klose (R) hug teammate Per Mertesacker after the defender scored a goal during their Bundesliga clash against Hannover at the Weser Stadion in Bremen on Sunday.

Werder reach summit

AFP, Berlin



BUNDES
LIGA

Hanover.

Tim Borowski, Hugo Almeida and Per Mertesacker scored the goals that sunk the visitors as Werder moved back above Schalke 04 - who won 3-1 at Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday - on goal difference.

Having scored a glut of goals - nine - in their last two clashes with Hanover, Werder were always likely to have a field day and did enough to start the second half of the campaign as they did the first - on top of the league.

But despite the result, Mertesacker was not satisfied.

"We were too lethargic. We missed far too many chances and that has to change," he said.

The big losers from the weekend's games were champions Bayern Munich who lost 3-2 at Borussia Dortmund on Friday and slipped to six

points off the pace set by the top two.

Borowski opened the scoring for Werder after just five minutes and Almeida doubled the hosts' advantage midway through the second half.

Such was Werder's comfort zone, they could even afford top scorer Miroslav Klose to miss a penalty 20 minutes from time, before Mertesacker sealed the win four minutes later.

In Sunday's other game, Bayer Leverkusen came from 2-0 down to win 3-2 at Alemannia Aachen.

Laurentiu-Aurelian Reghescampf gave the hosts the lead from the penalty spot on nine minutes and Vedad Ibisevic made it two on the half-hour.

Bernard Schneider pulled a goal back on the stroke of half-time and after striker Andriy Voronin levelled matters, the German international midfielder sealed the points on 57 minutes.

Germany striker Kevin Kuranyi scored a brace to earn victory for Schalke after Japan's Naohiro Takahara had cancelled out Gustavo Varela's early opener for the visitors in Frankfurt.

"Kuranyi was incredible. He didn't just score two goals he also did a lot of

work for the team," said Schalke coach Mirko Slomka.

SV Hamburg's miserable season continued as Marcio Borges's last minute equaliser denied them a much-needed victory at Arminia Bielefeld.

Serbian forward Daniel Ljuboja had given Hamburg a 10th minute lead but the result leaves the club rooted in the bottom three and means the pressure remains firmly on under-fire boss Thomas Doll.

"It hurts because we had chances to make it 2-0. We have to keep our self-belief, despite our position in the table," he said.

It was also a bad day for fourth-placed VfB Stuttgart who slumped to a 4-1 trouncing at Nuremberg.

Ivan Saenko opened the scoring for the hosts before Brazilian Caacau equalised for the visitors.

But further goals from Vratislav Gresko, Markus Schroth and Ludovic Magnin own goal completed a miserable day for Stuttgart, who had Serdar Tasci sent off.

Fifth-placed Hertha Berlin closed to within two points of Schalke with a 2-1 win over VfL Wolfsburg, courtesy of Marko Pantelic's penalty four minutes from time.

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Mourinho's side, who trail Premiership leaders Manchester United by six points and are still in contention for four trophies this season, progressed to the League Cup final in midweek with a comfortable win over Wycombe Wanderers.

And they disposed of League One side Forest, who were buoyed by the presence of 6,000 travelling fans at Stamford Bridge on Sunday, just as easily thanks to goals by Didier Drogba, John Obi Mikel and an early own-goal by John Curtis.

Forest have a fair chance of automatic promotion this season from the third tier of English football, though the club is sadly a shadow of the one which dominated European football under the guidance of the late

Forest.

"I have learned a great deal from this match, but I don't think I can take any positives from it," said Forest manager Colin Calderwood.

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Jose keen to stay

Football

AFP, London

Jose Mourinho said he believed he would see out his contract at Chelsea after his side secured their place in the FA Cup fifth round with three first-half goals in a 3-0 home win over Nottingham Forest.

Speculation has been rife that Mourinho is seeing out the last months of his three-year tenure after a series of off-field problems threatened to undermine his attempt to land a third straight Premiership title.

The Portuguese had been upset that the west London club were not active enough in the January transfer window market following injuries to John Terry, Joe Cole, Arjen Robben and Ricardo Carvalho.

A measure of Chelsea billionaire owner Roman Abramovich's disapproval seems to be that the Russian has not been present at recent Stamford Bridge matches.

However, after this emphatic victory, Mourinho insisted: "The owner is the owner and he does what he wants to do. He has his life and it does not matter to me that he is not at the games.

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