



Bayern Munich midfielder Hasan Salihamidzic makes a sliding tackle on Bochum's midfielder Tomasz Zdebel during their Bundesliga match at the Allianz Arena in Munich on Tuesday.

Heynckes quits M'gladbach

AFP, Berlin

Former Germany international Jupp Heynckes has quit as coach of Borussia Monchengladbach after the team's failure to win a Bundesliga match in nearly four months.

The club announced Heynckes' departure with immediate effect Wednesday, although president Rolf Koenigs had only good things to say about the former Monchengladbach player who was on his second spell at the club.

"We are really sorry Jupp has decided to take this decision. We've always had a good working relationship and he will always be part of this club," said Koenigs after the side's 0-0 league draw with Nuremberg.

The statistics don't lie, however. With Heynckes at the helm Monchengladbach are now in the relegation zone having won their last match on October 14, when they beat Wolfsburg 3-1.

He will be replaced by his assistant, Jos Luhukay, for the team's next league game against Bielefeld.

As a feared centre-forward Heynckes played in the Monchengladbach side which dominated German football and starred in Europe in the 1970s, winning four league titles, a German Cup and the UEFA Cup, in 1975.

Heynckes also played 39 times for Germany, scoring 14 goals and helping his country win the European Championships in 1972 and the World Cup in 1974, although he did not play in the final against the Netherlands.

Bayern slip up again

REUTERS, Berlin



Bochum on Tuesday.

Bayern started the day six points behind co-leaders Werder Bremen and Schalke 04 and needing a win to stay in the hunt for a third successive title.

Mark van Bommel missed two clear chances in the first half but otherwise the Bavarians offered little threat against their relegation-threatened opponents.

Bayern's second setback in five days — they lost 3-2 at Borussia Dortmund in their first match in 2007 — means they will fall eight points off

the title pace if one or both of Werder and Schalke win on Wednesday.

Werder, who lead the table on 39 points, are away at Bayer Leverkusen. Schalke, who trail on goal difference, are at home to Alemannia Aachen.

Stuttgart climbed into third place at 35 points following a 3-2 win at home to Arminia Bielefeld, with Bayern dropping a place to fourth on 34, outside the Champions League places.

"We're very disappointed, obviously," Bayern goalkeeper and captain Oliver Kahn told Arena TV. "We have to realise we don't have a season ticket for first place."

"It all looks very bad at the moment."

Bayern had been warned by coach Felix Magath that anything less than victory would spell the end of the title chances.

They started as if weighed down by those words, with passes going

astray continually.

They eventually started to threaten with 10 minutes to go in the first half.

Bastian Schweinsteiger played a brilliant first time through ball into the path of Van Bommel. The Dutchman had time and space to pick a spot but instead shot hastily and far too close to the keeper.

Philip Lahm cut in from the left and whacked a shot wide before Van Bommel missed his second excellent chance, failing to content with an attempted header after being picked out by a cross from the right.

Bayern came close again in the second minute of added time at the end of the first half, with Schweinsteiger bringing the ball forward and bringing a fine save from Jaroslav Drobny with his swerving low drive.

They started as if weighed down by those words, with passes going

Blades cut down Fulham

AFP, Sheffield



Blades took another huge step towards Premiership survival by

beating Fulham 2-0 here on Tuesday.

Stead, a 750,000-pound signing from Sunderland earlier this month, ended a ten-match goalscoring drought to give Neil Warnock's side the lead mid-way through the first half.

Midfielder Michael Tonge

added a close-range second five minutes later and, with Fulham's away day sickness resurfacing, the home side never relinquished control of the contest and they have now opened up a seven-point cushion between them and the relegation zone.

There was one bright note for Fulham boss Chris Coleman with goalkeeper Antti Niemi back between the posts for the first time since he fell dangerously on his head against Watford on New Year's Day.

Niemi was in the thick of the action inside a minute when former Leeds United ace Rob Hulse got clear of his back four.

The goalkeeper's speed off his line was sufficient to force the United striker into a rushed finish that drifted beyond the post but it also resulted in him suffering a cut mouth as he was caught on the follow through.

After lengthy treatment, Niemi was able to continue and he denied the home side the lead by touching Stephen Quinn's flick wide of the post before producing another good save to keep out a volley from the Ireland midfielder.

But there was nothing he could do about Stead's opener. After combining with Nick Montgomery on the edge of the area, the striker wriggled past Zat Knight before smashing a left-footed drive high into the net.

Five minutes later, United doubled their lead after Fulham's defence failed to clear a cross decisively. Tonge found Quinn at the back post and the Irish youngster sent the ball into the goalmouth, where Tonge arrived in time to fire home.

Coleman took off in-form on loan Italian striker Vincenzo Montella just after the half hour mark and sent Heidar Helguson into the fray but it made little difference as United continued to dominate.

Hulse headed an inviting chance wide in first-half stoppage time and came close to finding the net in the dying minutes of the match when he sent an overhead kick off a Stead flick-on crashing against the bar.

Liverpool get Mascherano go-ahead

REUTERS, London

West Ham United's Argentine midfielder Javier Mascherano has been given special permission by FIFA to join Liverpool.

Under FIFA rules a footballer cannot play competitively for two clubs between July 1 and June 30 the following year and Mascherano has already appeared for both Corinthians in Brazil and West Ham in England during that period.

FIFA have ruled, however, that the 22-year-old, who only completed two full matches for West Ham in a total of just seven appearances, was an exceptional case.

In a statement FIFA explained their ruling was determined partly because the South American and European seasons overlapped.

"FIFA looked at this from a global perspective and the overlapping aspect of the seasons was taken into account," added a spokesman.

A statement said: "The FIFA single judge ruled that Javier Mascherano is eligible to play in official matches with Liverpool with immediate effect."

Mascherano, who played in every minute of all of Argentina's five matches in last year's World Cup finals, signed for West Ham with international team mate Carlos Tevez on the final day of the summer transfer window last August.

He last started a match for the Hammers in the 1-0 defeat at Tottenham on Oct. 22 and since then has only made one six-minute appearance as a late substitute in the 2-0 defeat at Everton on Dec. 3.

He is expected to sign an 18-month deal at Anfield with Liverpool coach Rafa Benitez telling the club's Web site: "He will give us options and is a very good character."

Zlatan snubs Sweden again

REUTERS, Stockholm

Inter Milan striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic has been left out of the Sweden squad to face Egypt in a friendly next month while Henrik Larsson has refused to change his mind about retiring from the national side.

Ibrahimovic has not played for Sweden since being sent home from the squad in September last year for staying out too late ahead of a European qualifier against Liechtenstein.

Arsenal's Fredrik Ljungberg, who has just begun training after being injured, is another absentee from the squad but goalkeeper Andreas Isaksson of Manchester City has returned.

The game, marking the 50th anniversary of the founding of CAF, the African Football Confederation, is the last match for Sweden before a Euro qualifier against Northern Ireland in March.

Coach Lars Lagerback said he had spoken with Ibrahimovic, who had said he did not want to be back in the squad, without giving a reason.

"We do not believe in trying to persuade people if someone is not 100 per cent committed. But neither we nor Zlatan have closed any doors," Lagerback said in a statement.

He said the ball was in Zlatan's court.

Lagerback said he had also spoken with Larsson, whose form while on loan to Manchester United has sparked calls for him to return to the national side.

Lagerback said Larsson was sticking to his decision.

Maccarone's Siena switch completed

REUTERS, Rome

Siena have signed striker Massimo Maccarone from Premier League club Middlesbrough on a free transfer, the Serie A club said on Tuesday.

The 27-year-old has signed a three-and-a-half-year deal.

The move represents a return to familiar territory for Maccarone, who spent four months on loan at Siena during the 2004-05 season.

Maccarone made his name in Italy's Serie B with Empoli and he guided them to promotion into Serie A in the 2001-02 season.

His performances at the small Tuscan club prompted then Italy coach Giovanni Trapattoni to field him in a friendly against England in March 2002 — the first time a Serie B player had received an international call-up in 20 years.

Middlesbrough then paid a club record fee of 8.15 million pounds (\$16.01 million) when they signed him at the start of the 2002-03 season.

He struggled in England but the high point came in last season's UEFA Cup, when he scored late winners in the quarterfinal against Basel and semi-final with Steaua Bucharest to help Middlesbrough reach the final.

WINTER TRANSFER WINDOW CLOSES

Big moves dominate

Football

REUTERS, London

David Beckham's move from Real Madrid to LA Galaxy in a package that could be worth up to 250 million dollars to the player dwarfed every other transfer in the January window which closes on Wednesday.

Although Beckham, 32 in May, could remain at Real until the end of his contract in June, the sporting, cultural and financial aspects of the deal made headlines worldwide.

Other significant moves included Brazilian striker Ronaldo, also leaving Real, for AC Milan and Swedish scoring machine Henrik Larsson arriving on loan at Manchester United.

The moves of Beckham and Ronaldo ended the 'galacticos' era at the Madrid club during which Real bought some of the world's most famous players — but won nothing significant with them.

Real will not get a transfer fee for Beckham and only received 7.5 million euros for Ronaldo, less than half the sum Milan offered them last August.

As usual Real were also the biggest spenders as they splashed out some 45 million euros on rejuvenating their squad with three South American youngsters — Argentine duo Fernando Gago and Gonzalo Higuain and Brazilian fullback Marcelo.

Of the other top Primera Liga sides, Sevilla look to have made another astute purchase in Russia's Alexander Kerzhakov, while Atletico Madrid have strengthened their already miserly defence with Brazilian centre back Fabiano Eller.

Ronaldo's return to Italy overshadowed all the other transfers in Serie A.

The arrival of the three-times FIFA World Player of the Year, along with Italy right back Massimo Oddo

from Lazio, would "ensure Milan remain among the elite in Europe" said the club's vice-president Adriano Galliani.

Parma's battle against relegation was boosted when they picked up Italy under-21 striker Giuseppe Rossi on loan from Manchester United. The 19-year-old marked his debut by scoring the winner in a 1-0 victory over Torino.

While league leaders Inter made no moves in the market, second-placed Roma bolstered their squad with Swedish midfielder Christian Wilhelmsson and Valencia striker Francesco Tavano.

Siena also strengthened their attack by signing Massimo Maccarone from Middlesbrough until June 2010.

England's Premier League is awash with cash but the biggest move, with just hours to go before the window closes, involved the fairly modest sum of 9.65 million pounds (18.86 million dollars) Aston Villa paid Watford for 21-year-old winger Ashley Young.

Most of the other transfers in England were between one and three million pounds, although a signing who cost nothing could be the most astute.

Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson secured a loan deal for prolific striker Henrik Larsson from Helsingborg last November and the 35-year-old Swede marked his arrival with a goal on his debut against Aston Villa in the FA Cup.

Argentina midfielder Javier Mascherano's move from West Ham to Liverpool was due to be completed later on Wednesday after FIFAsanctioned the deal.

Soccer's world governing body waived, on a technicality, their own rule which states a player cannot feature for more than two clubs between June 30 in one year and July 1 the following year.

Werder Bremen were the biggest movers in the Bundesliga, bringing

in Swedish striker Markus Rosenberg from Ajax Amsterdam for an estimated four million euros.

Werder, in turn, sold Egyptian striker Mohamed Zidan to struggling Mainz for 2.5 million euros, while signing defender Peter Niemeyer from Twente Enschede for 500,000 euros.

Bayern Munich looked in urgent need of reinforcements but contented themselves with a deal to sign Jan Schlaudraff from Alemannia Aachen at the end of the season.

Struggling Hamburg moved for experienced goalkeeper Frank Rost from Schalke 04, while VfL Wolfsburg took a 2.75 million euros gamble on Brazilian Marcelinho from Trabzonspor.

Title hopefuls VfL Stuttgart, delighted with the form of Mario Gomez, were happy to let Denmark striker Jon Dahl Tomasson join Villarreal on loan after a disappointing 18 months.

The major deal in France was Aston Villa's Czech Republic forward Milan Baros joining Olympique Lyon in exchange for Norway striker John Carew, while former France keeper Fabien Barthez came out of retirement to help Nantes avoid relegation.

Lyon have also hired Brazilian defensive midfielder Fabio Dos Santos from Cruzeiro on a 3-1/2 year deal for 4.2 million euros to make up for the absence of injured France international Alou Diarra who is not expected to return before mid-March.

River Plate playmaker Marcelo Gallardo has joined Paris St Germain on a 2-1/2 year deal while Olympique Marseille have strengthened their defence with Rangers's Julien Rodriguez.



AS Roma coach Luciano Spalletti receives his award as best coach in Italian Serie A from the national team coach Roberto Donadoni during a ceremony organised by the Italian Soccer Players Association (AIC) and dubbed "Soccer Oscar 2006" in Milan on Tuesday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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