

United moving for Tevez

THE INDEPENDENT

Manchester United are reportedly planning a move for Carlos Tevez, but could lose out to Internazionale in the race to sign the West Ham striker.

United's manager, Sir Alex Ferguson, has asked the club's chief executive, David Gill, to look at the possibility of a move for the Argentina striker. It is thought, however, that the Italian champions would be prepared to pay up to £34m for Tevez, bettering the £12m that United are willing to pay.

The United full-back Gabriel Heinze has said he would consider leaving for Barcelona. The 29-year-old Argentine said he will not make a decision until after this summer's Copa America, but would be tempted by a move to the Nou Camp.

"Barcelona is a super-club, like Manchester United. If a formal offer is tabled, I'll need to study it calmly," he said. "Nobody at United has told me I'm not wanted next season."



German left-back Philip Lahm visits the worksite of Soccer City in the township of Soweto on the outskirts of Johannesburg on Monday. Soccer city is the main stadium for the South African 2010 World Cup football tournament – the first time Africa will host the event, which is expected to attract up to half a million foreign visitors.

Liverpool target Forlan

TIMES ONLINE



The clarity with which George Gillett Jr and Tom Hicks have carried out most aspects of their takeover of Liverpool does not appear to have extended to the transfer market, with Rafael Benítez, the manager, thought to be revising his list of forward targets. He has apparently concluded that he does not have the funds to compete for players such as Samuel Eto'o and Carlos Tévez.

Barring any sudden indication from the Americans that Eto'o falls within the club's price range, Benítez is likely to pursue a series of alternative targets who would cost about half the 35 million pounds Barcelona want for their sought-after Cameroon striker. How a player who struggled to make the grade at Manchester United would be received by Liverpool supporters is open to debate, but Diego Forlán, the Villarreal and Uruguay striker, is believed to figure prominently in

Benítez's thoughts.

Diego Milito, who scored twice in Real Zaragoza's 2-2 draw against Real Madrid on Saturday, has also been considered, while Benítez retains an interest in David Trezeguet, of Juventus, and Darren Bent, who will leave Charlton Athletic after their relegation from the Premiership last season.

Forlán was scarcely given a chance to prove his worth by Sir Alex Ferguson at Old Trafford, the vast majority of his appearances during his 2½-year spell coming as a substitute, but he did achieve cult status after scoring twice in the 2-1 Premiership win over Liverpool in December 2002.

The qualities that convinced Ferguson to pay Independiente 7.5 million pounds for Forlán have come to the fore again in Spain, however, with 54 goals in 106 league appearances for Villarreal since his move in August 2004. Roy Keane, the Sunderland manager, has been tracking his former United teammate, but while the North East club are thought to have balked at the 24 million Euro (about 16 million

pound) release clause in Forlán's contract, that would not be an issue for Liverpool.

Forlán, 28, who is preparing for the Copa America with Uruguay, is contracted at El Madrigal until 2010 but is understood to be enthused about the prospect of a return to England, where he feels he has unfinished business.

"There has not been any offer from Liverpool and it's very difficult to talk about what might happen when there isn't an offer there, but things can change every day," Daniel Bolotnicoff, Forlán's agent, told The Times last night. "If he received a very good offer then he will think about it, but it will also depend on whether Villarreal are happy."

Milito, the Argentina forward who turns 28 tomorrow, would cost about the same as Forlán and has a similarly impressive strike record, with 37 goals in 72 league matches for Zaragoza. Benítez is understood to have had him watched against Real, when he will have done his chances of a move no harm after coming close to giving Zaragoza a memorable victory.

Benítez's budget will be bolstered if he can offload Craig Bellamy, Harry Kewell and Djibril Cissé, who together could fetch about 20 million pounds. West Ham United are keen on Bellamy, although Benítez, who is also looking to sign a winger, will probably have to accept less than his 12 million pounds asking price for the striker.

Blackburn Rovers, who offered Bellamy 65,000 pounds a week to keep him at Ewood Park before his move to Liverpool last summer, also want him back, while Martin O'Neill, the Aston Villa manager, has been contemplating signing Bellamy and Kewell.

More talks between Liverpool and Marseilles regarding the future of Cissé are expected this week. The French club are understood to want to take the striker on loan for another season, but Liverpool are holding out for a sale, with Bolton Wanderers and Manchester City also interested.

Of divine intervention

INTERNET, undated



An apocalyptic storm. Leo Messi's hand of God goal and another Lazarus comeback for Real Madrid: no wonder David Beckham was talking about divine intervention after he went to within 90 minutes of the Spanish title in an extraordinary night of football in La Liga.

"Someone is watching us up there because in the last few games we've had a lot go our way," said the England man as for the fifth time in the last seven games Real Madrid turned things around at the death.

In the 89th minute of their away fixture with Real Zaragoza, Beckham's title dream was in tatters. He was limping on the left ankle he injured on midweek England duty, and with Barcelona leading 2-1 at home to Espanyol and Real Madrid trailing 2-1 the title was slipping away.

A hand of God goal from Messi who has now done the "Diego double" this season scoring replicas of both the goals Maradona scored against England at the 1986 World Cup in Mexico had helped

give Barcelona the edge in the Catalan derby. The pitch was rain-soaked after the electric storm before kick-off and the outlook was grim for Beckham.

But in 18 seconds everything changed. First, in the 89th minute Real Madrid's Ruud van Nistelrooy scored his 25th league goal of the season and then in the same minute of Barcelona's match at the Nou Camp Raul Tamudo equalised to put Real Madrid and Beckham back on top of the league.

"I have never lived through anything like this in my career," said Van Nistelrooy afterwards. The Dutchman is having a season beyond his wildest dreams. He now needs just one goal in next week's final game to share the Golden Boot for Europe's leading goalscorer with Roma's Francesco Totti.

"I saw people celebrating my goal and I ran back towards the halfway line to not lose any time thinking that we needed another one" added the Netherlands international. "But then I saw that people were still celebrating. That's when I knew that something else had happened. I looked up at the Barcelona score on the scoreboard and I just can't describe how I felt."

Around two thousand travelling Madrid fans celebrated first Van Nistelrooy's goal and then news of Tamudo's as players on the Madrid

bench signalled to the pitch to inform teammates they did not need to go all out for win because Barcelona had conceded. When the final whistle went in both matches Real celebrated as if the title had been secured. With a Madrid scarf around his neck, Beckham ran to celebrate with jubilant fans. "I want to thank them because their support has been incredible and I'm sure it will be again on Sunday," he said.

But both Beckham and Van Nistelrooy stressed afterwards that there was still work to be done to seal the title.

"We need to play better next Sunday than we have done against Zaragoza," Van Nistelrooy said. "We were very lucky this weekend. But with an enormous amount of determination and desire we have managed to get the draw and with Barcelona drawing it's a great result for us."

"Now we have a great opportunity to win the league and we have to take it. This team just never ever gives up and it's incredible that we equalised and then the Espanyol goal went in just seconds later. This league is just not normal and it's still not over. We have to wait to see if we end up as Champions, there is still one more game to go."

Beckham added: "We have got to win on Sunday and that's all that matters. I think the most important

thing is that we don't get carried away because it's not over yet. We haven't won the league but we have put ourselves in a great position."

Beckham had been the architect of all of Madrid's best chances in the first half when only poor finishing from his service by Van Nistelrooy and Robinho had prevented Madrid from taking the lead.

Real paid for that sloppy finishing when Diego Milito converted a first-half penalty to send Madrid in a goal down at half-time. In the second period the England man began to feel his ankle and was struggling at the end, with Madrid having made all their substitutions.

"It's painful but I've got a week to get over it so we'll see," Beckham said afterwards.

Barcelona play relegated Gimnastic and are clear favourites to pick up three points. But Madrid remain ahead of their rivals courtesy of a better head-to-head record and if they beat Mallorca then Beckham's last game in Spain will be the one in which he claims his first trophy.

United stand to gain

INTERNET, undated

Manchester United stand to collect up to two million pounds from Real Madrid if David Beckham wins the league next Sunday and Ruud van Nistelrooy finishes top scorer in Spain.

Real are a win away from the title and Van Nistelrooy is two goals clear in the scoring charts in La Liga. Now thanks to a clause in Beckham's 2003 transfer to Spain, Madrid will owe United another one million pound if he picks up a league winner's medal.

And a further one million pounds will be on its way to Old Trafford thanks to the small print in the deal that saw Van Nistelrooy make the switch to Spain last season. Sir Alex Ferguson's team should earn one million pounds more from the Dutchman finishing leading scorer and winning the title.

Football

AFP, Rome

Unsettled striker David Trezeguet seems set to leave newly-promoted Juventus after revealing his contract negotiations are at a standstill.

The 29-year-old France international, whose contract runs out in 2008, is currently in talks over a new deal but is deeply unsatisfied with what the Turin club - whom he has been with for seven years - are offering him.

"There is no more hope of staying with Juventus - I feel they have little faith in me," Trezeguet told SKY Italia on Sunday after the Serie B champions lost 3-2 at home to Spezia.

"The offer they have made me

tells me everything I need to know. "I've given my best, just as the club asked me this season, but I feel they have made other choices."

"Now I am going on holiday and I will wait for a call from the board. It's up to them to decide what to do with me."

"It's a shame because I wanted to carry on, but they don't seem to want me anymore."

Trezeguet was one of the few star players to stick with Juve following their demotion to the second division for match-fixing last summer, and helped them win promotion back to Serie A after just one season.

However, Trezeguet was criticised by many for his performances and scored just 15 goals, a poor return for such a proven striker in a

lower division.

Juve CEO Jean-Claude Blanc wasted no time in hitting back at Trezeguet.

"It's too easy to blame everything on the club," said the Frenchman. "We made David offers in September, October and November, but he didn't want to sign."

"The time has come to talk about it again, but David has to remember that to wear the Juventus shirt is an honour. We hope he wants to stay and is willing to give the maximum in every match."

"Our objective is to keep all of our best players, but only if they are motivated."