

Tardelli to quit Juventus board

AFP, Rome

Marco Tardelli, a World Cup winner with Italy in 1982, said on Thursday he is to resign from the board of newly-promoted Juventus.

The 52-year-old, a former Juve player, was appointed as a director of the Turin club one year ago.

A former coach of the Italy under-21 side, Tardelli cited differences with other board members as his reason for leaving.

"I agreed to join with the hope that I could make many changes, but I understand that was not possible," he said.

Tardelli, who is currently in Holland watching the under-21 European Championships, said he will formerly hand in his resignation as soon as he returns to Italy.

Last month Juventus won promotion back to Serie A after spending a season in the second division following their demotion for match-fixing.

At the end of the campaign, Didier Deschamps quit as coach and was replaced by Claudio Ranieri.

Reds in for Yossi, Tal bound for Blues

AFP, London

Liverpool have confirmed that they would like to sign West Ham's Yossi Benayoun in a surprise development that has prompted the Israeli playmaker to stall on signing a new deal at the east London club.

Benayoun reportedly agreed a new five-year-deal at Upton Park verbally three weeks ago, but he has yet to put pen to paper.

Liverpool chief executive Rick Parry confirmed the bid for the Israel captain, although he dismissed reports that Liverpool had offered over three million pounds (\$9 million dollars) for the player.

"I can confirm we have made an approach for Yossi Benayoun, but the figures quoted are completely wrong," he said. "Other than that we don't want to say any more."

Benayoun's international teammate Tal Ben Haim meanwhile appears to be on his way to Chelsea after Newcastle conceded defeat in their efforts to sign the Bolton centreback.

Former Bolton boss Sam Allardyce, now in charge of the Magpies, had attempted to persuade the 25-year-old to rejoin him at St James' Park.

But Allardyce revealed Thursday that the Israeli was set on a move to Chelsea, who made a bid for him during the January transfer window.

"It's looking like Tal will be going to Chelsea, unfortunately," Allardyce said. "We have had a long, hard go, but I think the lure of the (former) champions has perhaps just pipped me at the post."

Hitzfeld expects clash of personalities

AFP, Munich



After the biggest spending spree in Bayern Munich's history, coach Ottmar Hitzfeld admitted on Wednesday he expects a few personality clashes within his German 'dream team'.

Having missed out a Champions League place for the first time since 1996, Bayern have recruited French midfielder Franck Ribery, Italian World Cup winner Luca Toni and German defender Marcell Jansen.

So far striker Jan Schlaudraff, midfielder Hamit Altintop and Argentinian Jose Ernesto Sosa have also signed and more players are expected to join.

Brazilian winger Ze Roberto is

set to return after a year with Santos FC and Miroslav Klose, the top-scorer at last year's World Cup, could also be tempted to Munich from Werder Bremen.

But after the German giants spent a reported figure of 57 million euros so far this summer, Hitzfeld says he expects a few personality clashes from his team of stars.

"Of course there will be a few personality clashes, that is natural," Hitzfeld told German daily newspaper Bild.

"And it is better to have them as it shows the team has some fighting spirit and although we face some big challenges, we have a great chance to do well this season."

After a miserable season by their high standards when the 20-times German champions finished fourth in the Bundesliga, Hitzfeld expects to pick up some titles next season and congratulated Bayern's board

for the players recruited.

"They have recruited well and a high standard has been set, but it was urgently needed."

Hitzfeld -- who has won the Champions League on two occasions with Borussia Dortmund and Bayern -- has been given the thumbs up by Munich's chairman of the board Karl-Heinz Rummenigge.

The former German international said: "Ottmar Hitzfeld is exactly the right man for the job. One of his big strengths lies in the integration of his players."

Hitzfeld's contract expires at the end of the coming season and the veteran admitted he is not thinking past the start of the Bundesliga in August.

Vieira feels for pressured refs



Football

AFP, London

Inter Milan star Patrick Vieira believes referees are becoming too scared to make crucial, match-turning decisions because of the pressure put on them by fans and media critics.

Vieira spoke out in favour of referees as the subject became the latest topic to go under the microscope on a website.

The former Arsenal midfielder was no stranger to controversy in his time at Highbury, and was often at the heart of clashes with opponents.

He told Feel Football: "We are human beings, we have feelings, and of course sometimes we regret the way in which we have acted."

"I've been in that situation before in England when I reacted badly, but

when you see it replayed on the TV, you think 'That's not me -- that's unbelievable!'"

But Vieira feels that mounting pressure from several sides has now left referees scared to stand their ground: "I feel now as if the referee is going on to the pitch afraid to make a decision -- afraid even to be a referee."

"There is negative pressure on the referees and I really get the feeling that they don't get any help from players or from the football authorities."

"The referee is under too much negative pressure. Because of this, I think they lack spontaneity and passion. Being a referee should be like being a player -- you should go with your heart, enjoy it and not have to think."

"If you think it's a free kick, you give the free kick. But at the moment it's less spontaneous."

Vieira believes the problem is

down to a lack of effort from the players and a lack of interaction with the referees -- but he admitted that so many players answer back and so many fans voice their opinion aggressively that the referees are losing confidence.

"Referees are quite isolated in comparison to players," he added.

"There is pressure they receive from the fans, the public and the players, so the job of the referee is becoming really hard. We, as players, have an important role to play, to really accept the referee's decisions."

"There should be more interaction of the pitch between referees and players, players and fans, fans and referees, so that everybody feels more comfortable and we understand each other."

"It's true that we have interactions with them but only on the pitch. We don't know them and they don't know us."

Saha out till November



Football

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United striker Louis Saha has undergone knee surgery in the United States to repair an injury that kept him sidelined for much of last season.

The surgery was revealed by the agent who helped engineer Saha's 12.8-million-pound move from Fulham, Ranko Stojic, who claimed his former client would be out until at least November.

"Louis has had surgery in America and he won't be on the field now for a few months," Stojic told Tuesday's edition of the Manchester Evening News.

"I don't know when he will be able to start training again but he is looking at being back around November or December. But it is going to be a while."

A spokesman for the Stellar Group, which has represented the player since the end of last year, confirmed the surgery but insisted Saha was on track to be fit for the start of next season in August,

claiming Stojic had no authority to speak on behalf of the Frenchman.

Injuries are a sensitive subject for Saha as United boss Sir Alex Ferguson has made no secret of his frustration with the amount of time he spends in the treatment room.

United have already moved to bolster their attacking options for next season by signing Portugal winger Nani and agreeing terms with FC Porto for their Brazilian playmaker Anderson.

England forward Alan Smith meanwhile appears to be moving towards the exit door at Old Trafford after failing to break into the first team since making his comeback from a year-long injury lay-off.

In comments to the Sun newspaper, Smith hinted that he had become frustrated with the uncertainty over his future.

"If they are going to sell me, I'd like to know," Smith was quoted as saying. "But I won't find out unless I get to speak to the manager."

Smith was a seven-million-pound signing from Leeds two years ago and has two years left on his current deal, but United have made no move to extend that contract.

Tottenham, Aston Villa and Rangers are among clubs believed to be monitoring Smith's situation.

West Indies doubts over Zim tour

CRICINFO, undated

The West Indies Players' Association has expressed concern over the forthcoming A-team tour of Zimbabwe which is due to get underway in early July.

Dinanath Ramnarine, the WIPA chief executive, said that the doubts "resulted from discussions with various stakeholders and persons with intimate knowledge of the existing situation in that country". He added: "They have spoken of security treats, violation of human rights and a highly volatile situation that could threaten the safety of the players."

"WIPA has been placed in a further quandary by media reports that a team has already been selected and that a decision to proceed on this tour will be contingent on the advice the WICB receives from the CARICOM Secretariat. Furthermore, under the Memorandum of Understanding between the WICB and WIPA both parties are required to agree on the tour."



PHOTO: AFP  
Gilberto Silva (L), Fred (C) and Elano, of the Brazilian national team, jog during a training session at Granja Comary in Teresopolis on Wednesday. Brazil are preparing for the Copa America which starts on June 26th in Venezuela.

United prepare Quagliarella bid

INTERNET, undated

Manchester United are preparing a 10m-pounds offer for Sampdoria striker Fabio Quagliarella, according to the British Press.

The Blucerchiato, who is half owned by Udinese, scored 13 Serie A goals for his club this season and impressed for Italy with a stunning brace in their recent Euro 2008 qualifier against Lithuania.

The Daily Express claims that the Reds are ready to pay 10m pounds for the 23-year-old, as they search for young blood up-front after Louis Saha underwent knee surgery which could rule him out for six months.

Udinese and Sampdoria have allegedly already agreed to leave Quagliarella in Genoa, although Blucerchiati general director Beppe Marotta admitted that a high offer would be taken into consideration.

"We can't make any evaluations now, but we want to keep him here, also because of the excellent relationship we have with Udinese," stated Marotta.

"We would only consider letting him leave if we were to receive an extraordinary offer," he added.

Meanwhile, Roma are also following Quagliarella and might ask Sampdoria to buy their half of the player's ownership, offering striker Mirko Vucinic, young goalkeeper Gianluca Curci and cash in return.

The Blucerchiato, who would join Francesco Totti and Amantino Mancini to form an impressive attacking department, could reportedly be offered a 1m-pound-per-season deal by the Giallorossi.

Clark bowls Hampshire into semis

AFP, London

Australia quick Stuart Clark bowled Hampshire into the semi-finals of English domestic cricket's Friends Provident Trophy one-day competition with a dramatic haul of six for 27 against Surrey at the Rose Bowl on Wednesday.

Clark's 10-over return gave south conference table-toppers Hampshire a home semi-final against Warwickshire a week on Wednesday.

Former England batsman Mark Ramprakash won the toss and elected to bat. But Clark removed the Surrey top three while Ramprakash himself was bowled for nought by all-rounder Dimitri Mascarenhas.

At one stage Surrey were 32 for six before a stand of 122 between ex-England duo Rikki Clarke (55) and Chris Schofield (75 not out) helped them recover to 181 all out.

Hampshire captain and former Australia leg-spinner Shane Warne took one for 46 from his 10 overs.

Hampshire, who then saw former England batsman John Crawley make 55, were cruising at 165 for three before a flurry of late wickets gave Surrey the merest glimmer of hope. But a no-ball from Australia seamer Matthew Nicholson sealed the south coast county's victory.

Bundesliga coach in doping burst

AFP, Berlin



Former Bundesliga coach Peter Nuerurer admitted on Wednesday he saw players take a banned stimulant in the 1990s and claims the practice was not unusual in German football at that time.

The 52-year-old, who parted company with Hanover last August, said he saw players taking banned stimulant Captagon while he was coaching Schalke 04 in the Bundesliga's second division in the 1989/90 season.

And in an interview with magazine Sport-Bild, the German coach said stimulant abuse used to be wide spread in both tiers of the

Bundesliga.

"This was quite usual in football. It was widely known that players were using substances. Up to 50 per cent of players have consumed this drug and not only in the second league," Nuerurer told Sport-Bild, although he was not prepared to give names. Neururer said it was not difficult to know when players had taken Captagon.

"The eyes look different. The player doesn't get tired and is inclined to over-react," he said.

The German Football Association (DFB) were quick to react to Neururer's revelations and have asked for more details.

"We have written a letter to Mr Neururer and have asked him politely to produce names and facts," said DFB press officer Harald Stenger on Wednesday afternoon.

But current Schalke manager

Andreas Mueller, who played for the Gelsenkirchen-based club under Nuerurer in the 1989/90 season, accused his former manager of "dirty tricks".

"If Neururer knows something, he should name names. It is so important that we deal in facts," said Mueller.

"As for me, I can totally say I have never seen such a thing, but I can not say what has happened to others."

Doping tests have been carried out in the Bundesliga since 1988 and after every game two players are chosen at random to provide a urine sample.

Since 1995, 15 players from the Bundesliga's first and second divisions have been accused of doping offences.

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