

Tevez waiting for Real Madrid

West Ham's Argentina striker Carlos Tevez has been contacted by Real Madrid, but is still awaiting a concrete offer from the newly-crowned Spanish champions, his agent Adrian Ruocco claimed Monday.

Tevez helped West Ham stay in the Premier League with a string of match-winning displays, but as the controversy over who actually owns him continues he has been linked with most of Europe's top clubs this summer.

But it appears that the 23-year-old, valued at around 30 million pounds (59 million dollars), would prefer a move to the Santiago Bernabeu.

"There's been contact with Real Madrid," Ruocco told The Sun.

"We've been patient but if Real don't make a concrete offer then Carlos has a lot of options.

"He has offers from Europe's biggest clubs. But there's no need to rule out anything - including staying at West Ham where he is settled and wanted."

Borgetti lifts Mexico

Jared Borgetti scored in extra time as Mexico advanced to the semi-finals of the CONCACAF Gold Cup with a 1-0 win over Costa Rica at Reliant Stadium on Sunday.

Four minutes into extra session, Borgetti accepted Adolfo Bautista's cross into the box and headed the ball past diving Costa Rica goalkeeper Jose Francisco Porras for the lone tally.

Borgetti's second goal of the tournament sent Mexico into Thursday's semifinal match in Chicago against the winner of Sunday's late match pitting Honduras and Guadeloupe.

Costa Rica's best chance in extra time came off a corner kick, but Gabriel Badilla's header went just over the crossbar.

Costa Rica's Allan Aleman was awarded a red card in the 42nd minute and played a man down for the remainder of the match.

After Borgetti's goal, Costa Rica's Alvaro Saborio also received a red card and was ejected.



PHOTO: AFP  
Barcelona captain Carles Puyol (L) takes an acrobatic dive to celebrate scoring against Gimnastic Tarragona during their Primera Liga encounter at the Nou Estadi in Tarragona on Sunday.

'We threw it away'

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona had to settle for second best on Sunday in the first Spanish title race to finish level on points since 1994, despite handing a 5-1 thrashing to bottom club Gimnastic Tarragona.

The Spanish champions for the last two years handed over their title to Real Madrid on the basis of their bitter rivals, who beat Real Mallorca 3-1, having a better head-to-head record after both teams finished level on 76

points.

It was an anti-climactic end to a season that had started with so much promise for Barcelona, who had also won the Champions League in 2006.

"This should serve as a lesson for the coming year. After winning La Liga and the Champions League in 2006, I think we were over-confident and that has been our principal problem," admitted Barca playmaker Xavi Hernandez.

"We threw away the league. I think this group of players still has plenty to offer but that now doesn't depend on the players."

Barca goalkeeper Victor Valdes said: "It's a tragedy that Mallorca couldn't hang on for a draw."

"Real Madrid had everything in their favour so it was normal they came out on top. What a way to go if this was to be my last game with Barca," said Brazilian defender Thiago Motta, who could move in the summer.

It could also be the last game at Barca for coach Frank Rijkaard,

despite his successes in the last two seasons.

Rijkaard has lost the confidence of many Barca fans despite his achievements, although losing key players Samuel Eto'o and Lionel Messi for several months in the middle of the season through injury didn't help.

"The people who are responsible for this situation are the players. Throughout all the season we have been very erratic," said Rijkaard's main ally in the dressing room, club captain Carles Puyol.

"I have to congratulate Real Madrid though, they had a lot of confidence, a lot of faith and in the end they got their prize.

"I have always said that the league goes to those that deserve it," added Puyol.

"But we can return to the heights (of previous years) if we learn from our errors."

Hamilton's second in a row

EUROSPORT, undated

Britain's Lewis Hamilton has played down his chances of becoming Formula One's first rookie world champion, despite an extraordinary start to his career.

The 22-year-old McLaren driver won his second race in a row in the United States to increase his championship lead to ten points over his Spanish team-mate Fernando Alonso and has finished on the podium in every one of his seven races.

But with over half the season still to go, including an intensive four races in five weeks in September and October, he is keeping his expectations in check.

"Yes, we're seven races into the championship, I have to be smart and realise that I'm running at the

front and there is a possibility of winning the championship," Hamilton said.

"But I still think it's far, far too early to even think about it or get any hopes up."

"Anything can happen during the season, I just have to try and remain consistent and try to keep on winning."

"But, you know, as many points from each race is good for the team and also for me. So I'm sure that's what me and Fernando are going to try to do."

McLaren's one-two finish at Indianapolis was the team's third of the season, making this their most successful season since 2000 when Mika Hakkinen and David Coulthard locked out the front positions four times.

It also saw their lead in the constructors' championship increase from 28 to 35 points over nearest rivals Ferrari.



PHOTO: AFP  
British McLaren-Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton celebrates after winning the United States Grand Prix at Indianapolis on Sunday.

Kaka is the best: Pele

INTERNET, undated

Pele has dubbed AC Milan midfielder Kaka 'the best player in the world', ahead of Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo.

Real Madrid target Kaka, 25, was in sparkling form in Europe this season and won Pele's admiration after leading AC Milan to a seventh Champions League/European Cup crown.

The Brazil international finished as top scorer in the competition with 10 goals, including three in the Rossoneri's 5-3 aggregate semifinal win against United.

"Kaka is the best player in the world, without a doubt," said Pele in Italian sports daily La Gazzetta dello Sport.

Kaka and Portugal international Ronaldo have arguably been the stars of European football this past season, with the media and pundits alike clamouring to have their say on who is the more talented of the two.

Ronaldo, 22, recently won the English PFA Players' Player and Young Player of the Year awards, and walked off with the 2007 Portuguese Footballer of the Year gong in the wake of his starring role in United's successful Premiership campaign.

But for Pele, compatriot Kaka has the edge over the talented winger.

"Cristiano Ronaldo is the best player in England," he added. "But from that to being the best player in the world there is still some way.

"Kaka is a player with great quality and that makes him stronger than Cristiano Ronaldo and that will help him become one of the best players ever."

Nakamura in Japan squad

AFP, Tokyo

Celtic midfielder Shunsuke Nakamura, the most valuable player of the 2004 Asian Cup, will return to defend Japan's title next month, spearheading the squad announced here Monday.

Frankfurt striker Naohiro Takahara - who scored five goals in the 2000 championship -- was also named in the squad alongside Nakamura.

Japan coach Ivica Osim named 30 players in the bid to win a third straight continental title thanks to a new regulation that includes seven reserve players to take account of injuries.

Osim, who guided the former Yugoslavia to the 1990 World Cup quarterfinals, plans to decide on the 23 starting players only days before the team's opening match on July 9. J-League games continue until the end of June.

"We have more time to make selections. I must think about that as we have three more games in the J-League and players may get injured," said Osim.

"Among the participating countries, Japan are the only one where a league competition is still being played and we don't have enough time to prepare. It's a big disadvantage."

Of other Europe-based players, Osim did not call up Basel's Koji Nakata or Frankfurt's Junichi Inamoto, but he denied it was because their poor performances in the Kirin Cup two weeks ago.

Japan will play 2006 Asian Games gold medalists Qatar on July 9, the United Arab Emirates on July 13 and minnows Vietnam on July 16 in the Asian Cup co-hosted by Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand.

Blatter in SA for inspection

AFP, Johannesburg

FIFA president Sepp Blatter arrived in South Africa on Monday for talks with organisers of the 2010 football World Cup and for his first on-site inspection of work to build and upgrade the stadiums.

"He arrived this morning and we are expecting him at SAFA (South African Football Association) House where he will hold a meeting with the 2010 board," said Tim Modise, spokesman for the Local Organising Committee (LOC).

"He will be in Cape Town tomorrow to inspect some 2010 projects, including the Green Point Stadium, and also meet government officials, including President (Thabo) Mbeki."

This will be the Swiss's first visit to the 2010 World Cup hosts since work began to build and upgrade stadiums.

Blatter said last September he wanted to see "pickaxes and shovels" swing into action but he appears to have been reassured by the start of work at all the sites since then, saying last month that "everything is going smoothly" and only a "natural disaster" could stop South Africa from hosting the tournament.

The tournament will be the first time that Africa has hosted the event, which is expected to attract up to half a million foreign visitors.

A Real fairytale

AGENCIES, Madrid

David Beckham brought the curtain down on his Real Madrid career on Sunday and described the team's Spanish title triumph as one of his greatest achievements.

Beckham, watched by wife Victoria and Hollywood pals Tom Cruise and the actor's wife Katie Holmes, admitted the championship win made up for some difficult times since he arrived in the Spanish capital in the summer of 2003, both on and off the pitch.

"I couldn't have dreamt it any better. It's been about winning the title for the last six months, and we've deserved it tonight," said Beckham, who left the pitch after 65 minutes on Sunday when Real were losing 1-0 to Mallorca.

His replacement Juan Antonio Reyes then scored twice as Madrid battled back for a 3-1 win.

"It's been an incredible experience but all I remember now is the great things. Winning this tonight now puts to bed everything else."

"It's amazing to have my family here. They have been with me for four years in Spain. They've been through the ups and downs and

they've felt the euphoria tonight.

"It meant the world to have everyone that supported me throughout my career: my whole family, my wife, my mum and dad, my sister and children. It's incredible," a delighted Beckham told Sky Sports.

Meanwhile, Real coach Fabio Capello admitted two mistakes in his handling of the former England captain.

"I was wrong about two things this season. Firstly, not renewing Beckham's contract. Secondly, keeping him apart from the team," admitted Capello, when asked whether he would have done anything different in the wake of Real winning a record 30th league title.

Capello had advised Real president Ramon Calderon last autumn that Beckham didn't figure in his long term plans and, with his contract coming to an end this season, Beckham started negotiations with American side LA Galaxy.

Beckham then stunned the world by announcing in January that he had signed a five-year deal, worth up to 250 million dollars, with the Major League Soccer side.

In return, Capello said Beckham would never play for Real again but injuries and public clamour forced the Italian to change his mind a month later.

The player then went on to play a crucial role in Real's run over the final stages of the season.

He even regained his England place.

"He was and still is a great player. Over the past two months he's regained all his physical condition and without a doubt is one of the best players I've ever coached," said Capello on Saturday.

Beckham's teammate Roberto Carlos also bid the club he has spent more than a decade in, farewell.

"I'm calm. I prefer to be like this so I can see the fans and my Real Madrid teammates enjoying this success," said the full-back.

"They deserve everything. I believe that it is the most important day for all the Madridismo and it is the moment to enjoy yourself."

"I am happy for everything I've achieved at Real Madrid, although a little sad to be now leaving. But I'm not the only who's going away, there's also Becks (David Beckham), (Francisco) Pavon, Diego Lopez ..." said the Brazilian legend who is leaving to pursue his career at Turkey.

Real finished on equal points with rivals Barcelona but won on a better head-to-head record, despite Barca thrashing Gimnastic Tarragona 5-1 on the final day of the season.

Scuffles mar celebrations

AFP, Madrid

Pitched battles between police and some Real Madrid supporters marred the Spanish football club's league title celebrations in the early hours of Monday.

Some Real Madrid fans who gathered at the traditional meeting place after the club wins a trophy, the Cibeles fountain in the centre of the Spanish capital, threw bottles, fireworks and other objects at the police.

Spanish television pictures on Monday showed police baton charging sections of the crowd, injured fans and making arrests.

Spanish sports daily Marca estimated on Monday that approximately 500,000 people had initially been crowded into the square, which is at the cross roads of several main roads in Madrid, after the game.

The numbers had diminished by 0145 in the morning when the fighting between police and fans seemed to start.

A spokesman for Madrid's SAMUR ambulance service said that 108 people had been treated in the area close to the fountain, most for bruises and broken bones, and a further 22 people were taken to hospitals for further treatment.

Real scarf on the statues.

The rest of the Real squad, including David Beckham, stayed on an open-top bus.

The Madrid authorities decided to restrict the number of players climbing Cibeles this year after recent incidents when Real squads have damaged the statues.

For many years, the city paid for repairs but the last two mayors of Madrid have also presented Real with the bill for damage sustained by the monuments.

The arrival of the Real squad - decked out in jerseys saying Campeones (Champions) with the number 30 on them - seemed to be the catalyst for the crowd disturbances.

Sheringham arrested

INTERNET, undated

Veteran striker Teddy Sheringham was arrested after allegedly giving false details about a speeding offence.

Sheringham, 41, who won 51 caps for England, is one of three footballers who have been questioned over similar allegations.

The former England striker, awarded an MBE last week, was freed on bail after being questioned by officers on suspicion of perverting the course of justice.

A Scotland Yard spokesman said: 'A 41-year-old man was arrested on May 15 on suspicion of perverting the course of justice when he attended, by appointment, an east London police station.

'He was bailed to return on a date in July pending further inquiries.

'It is alleged he gave false details regarding an alleged speeding offence.'

West Ham striker Bobby Zamora, 26, was arrested last Wednesday over allegations he gave false details in relation to police camera footage of a car apparently speeding.

A third player, 31-year-old West Ham midfielder Shaun Newton, was also questioned on suspicion of perverting the course of justice, two days after Sheringham - released by the Hammers at the end of last season - was interviewed.

All three were released on bail to return to a police station on a date in July.

Last week Sheringham received an MBE in the Queen's Birthday honours for services to football, honouring a professional career dating back 23 years and around 950 matches for club and country.

He played a central role in Manchester United's unprecedented treble in 1999, scoring in both the FA Cup final and the Champions League final.