



USA players celebrate with the Gold Cup trophy amidst a sea of confetti after beating Mexico in the final at Soldier Field in Chicago on Sunday.

Eto'o staying put

INTERNET, undated

Barcelona have moved quickly to rubbish claims that Samuel Eto'o could replace new recruit Thierry Henry at Arsenal.

Henry is on the verge of putting pen to paper with the Catalan giants and his departure from the Emirates Stadium has left Arsene Wenger with a huge hole to fill.

Eto'o would fit the bill in north London, but Barcelona vice-president Ferran Soriano has insisted the Cameroon goal ace is going nowhere and will start the season in a mouth-watering partnership with Henry.

"He wants to stay and we want him to stay," Soriano told BBC Five Live.

"If things go right we will have him playing with Thierry Henry next season. Definitely, he is going to be staying."

Both Liverpool and Milan are also believed to be interested in securing the services of the 26-year-old, but despite a falling out with coach Frank Rijkaard last season, Eto'o seems set to stay at the Nou Camp.

Rijkaard's position in the Catalan capital has also been subject to intense speculation since Barca conceded the title to arch-rivals Real Madrid on the final day of last season, with Wenger mooted to follow Henry to Spain.

But Soriano confirmed the Dutchman will be in charge come the start of next season, despite having failed to win any silverware last time out.

He said: "You never know in the future but not now. We have a coach, Frank Rijkaard, and we are very happy with him. We hope he will stay with us for many more years."

Crouch in Torres deal?

INTERNET, undated

Atletico Madrid have reportedly told Liverpool they will only do business over Fernando Torres if Peter Crouch comes as part of the deal.

The Daily Star claims the two clubs are 8 million pounds apart in their valuation for Spain international Torres, and while the Reds are believed to have offered Luis Garcia in part-exchange Atletico would favour the arrival of Crouch.

Officials from Anfield are apparently set to travel to Madrid this week in the hope of completing a deal for the highly-rated 23-year-old, who has also been linked with Manchester United.

Atletico coach Javier Aguirre is said to be a big fan of England star Crouch and believes the 6ft 7in frontman would be a big hit in La Liga.

However, Liverpool chief Rafa Benitez wants a pool of four top-class strikers as he bids to challenge on all fronts next season, and would prefer to lose Garcia over Crouch.

The battle begins

INTERNET, Caracas



Brazil's Kaka, Ronaldinho and Zé Roberto have all pulled out of the Copa America, and Luis Jimenez made himself unavailable for Chile.

But plenty of South America's stars are in Venezuela for the tournament that gets under way on Tuesday.

Argentina's Lionel Messi tops the bill, but many other big name players from the top European clubs have made the trip back across the Atlantic.

It is the strongest line-up that the Copa America has had for some time.

That's not just because this year's tournament is taking place in a land famous for producing beauty queens.

It has more to do with the timing of the competition in relation to the main event in South American international football - the World Cup qualifiers.

Eleven years ago a new era began when the continent adopted the marathon format of World Cup qualification, with all 10 nations playing each other home and away.

At last it gave the South American teams the type of structure that European national sides take for granted.

Until this point international football in South America had

tended to take place in quick bursts, with huge gaps in between.

Expanding the World Cup qualifiers meant that there would be regular competitive matches, thus allowing the traditionally weaker countries to keep a side together and grow in confidence and tactical awareness.

The rise of the likes of Ecuador and Venezuela is directly attributable to this change. But as a consequence the Copa America inevitably became devalued.

In recent Copas, a country's approach to the tournament was heavily influenced by where they were standing in the World Cup qualification table.

Those doing well tended to send experimental squads in order to look at fringe players. Those doing badly used the Copa as an opportunity to regroup.

That criteria does not apply to this tournament in Venezuela.

No-one is doing either well or badly because we are not in the middle of a qualification campaign.

The next one is due to get under way in October, which makes this Copa America the perfect opportunity to prepare a team for the battles ahead.

This explains why the squads in Venezuela are stronger than they have been for recent tournaments.

A new cycle is beginning, and a fresh set of coaches want to have a look at what they have.

Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia and Paraguay are playing their first

competitive matches under their current coach. Argentina, Uruguay and Peru have re-appointed men who were previously in charge - well over a decade ago in the case of the first two.

For their coaches, these are the first competitive matches of their second spell.

The only coach who remains from the last Copa America, held just three years ago, is Venezuela's Richard Paez.

That is precisely because he has been building towards this tournament. Everyone else is primarily concerned with preparing for World Cup qualification.

This is important for Venezuela, too. But as hosts they have a responsibility to put on a good show in the Copa.

History is against them. Venezuela's only win in the competition came in 1967, 40 years and over 40 games ago.

But they have made great strides in recent years and their task is eased by the fact that they have been placed in the easiest of the three groups.

The home crowd are expectant - it will be fascinating to see how the team cope with the pressure.

In a sense, though, Venezuela will win the 2007 Copa America no matter what happens on the field.

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Brazilian midfielder Diego (L) tries out some cheeky moves in training, watched intently by teammate Robinho during a training session in Puerto La Cruz on Sunday.

Barca interested in Toure

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona are in talks with Monaco over the French first division club's Ivory Coast midfielder Yaya Toure, the Spanish club said Sunday.

The 24-year-old international, the younger brother of Arsenal defender Kolo Toure, arrived in Barcelona on Sunday morning from Paris for talks with the club, Barcelona said in a statement on its Internet site.

"It's a great opportunity for me," the club quoted him as saying on his arrival at Barcelona's airport.

"Barcelona is one of the best teams in the world."

Toure could sign for four years with Barcelona for an annual salary estimated at 1.8 million euros (2.4 million US dollars), AS Monaco sources said Saturday.

He joined AS Monaco in August 2006 from Greek side Olympiakos on a four-year contract.

The player began his career with Asec in Abidjan before signing for Beveren in Belgium as a 19-year-old where he spent two seasons before moving on to Metallurg Donetsk of the Ukraine.

Barcelona are seeking to strengthen their squad after losing the Spanish title race to Real Madrid.

French striker Thierry Henry is set to arrive in Barcelona later on Sunday to finalise his transfer from Premiership side Arsenal in a four-year deal believed to be worth 24 million euros.

Newcastle receive Owen compensation

INTERNET, undated

Newcastle United will receive compensation in the region of 10 million pounds from FIFA and the FA over the injury sustained by Michael Owen at the 2006 World Cup.

The 27-year-old striker was out of the game for almost a year after suffering knee ligament damage in England's final group game against Sweden, and only returned on May 1st this year in the Premiership match against Reading.

Newcastle believed it to be unjust that they were obligated to pay Owen's wages during the whole of his recuperation, for an injury sustained while he was under the care of the domestic and international governing bodies.

A club source told the Evening Chronicle: "We have finally reached a compromise with FIFA and the FA regarding Michael Owen, and when you take into account the fact that his wages have been paid in full for two years and the compensation we have received, it'll amount to around 10 million pounds.

"And let's just say we are happy, and it has been well worth Freddy Shepherd's fight."

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USA win Gold Cup

Football

AFP, Chicago

The United States used two second-half goals to rally for a 2-1 victory over Mexico here Sunday in the final of the CONCACAF Gold Cup regional football tournament.

Benny Feilhaber scored the match-winner in the 73rd minute, as he volleyed a deflection off a corner kick from the top of the arc past Mexican goalkeeper Oswaldo Sanchez into the far upper corner of the goal.

Landon Donovan had taken the corner, bending a kick in front of the goal that went straight toward Feilhaber off a Mexican defender.

"As the ball came towards me in the air, I just thought about getting good contact on it," Feilhaber said. "I had two chances like it in the El Salvador game and didn't hit them very good."

"On this one, I knew when I hit it, it was going in. That felt great - a great

goal at a big time and against Mexico in the Gold Cup, unbelievable."

Donovan had converted a penalty in the 62nd minute to pull the USA level at 1-1.

US goalkeeper Tim Howard preserved the win with a point-blank save of Nery Castillo's effort in the 89th.

Donovan's penalty was his 34th career international goal.

Jonny Magallon took down Brian Ching in the penalty area to give the US the attempt from the spot.

"I would have a great shot, but the guy put his leg out and tripped me, so they can think what they want and complain all they want," Ching said.

Donovan's goal tied him with Eric Wynalda atop the all-time list among American players. It was also Donovan's 12th Gold Cup goal, tying him for most along with former Mexican striker Luis Roberto Alves.

"This was a great game," Donovan said. "At halftime, we realized we were down to our last 45 minutes and we had to step it up.

Then we did the right things to win the game."

The U.S. trailed Mexico for the first time at home since 1999 after Jose Andres Guardado scored just moments before halftime. Guardado took a cross from Castillo and tapped past Howard in the 44th minute.

"We did not come out strong and Mexico put us on our heels," United States coach Bob Bradley said. "Midway through the first half, we started finding some space and kept pushing forward."

Since 2000, the United States has won nine and lost only twice with one draw against regional arch-rivals Mexico. Eight of those victories have come on home soil.

"When you lose leaving what we did on the pitch, you cannot be said," Mexico coach Bob Bradley said. "It bothers me, but we got better as we played through the tournament. The US played a more tactical game, but we deserved a better result. The team that plays best doesn't always win."

Adriano wants to stay

INTERNET, undated



linking him with a summer move to Spain.

Adriano endured a difficult season last time out, when his poor form on the pitch was exacerbated by problems off it, prompting rumours he would turf out of the Giuseppe Meazza once the season was over.

But the Italian champions have a history of sticking by the troublesome marksman, who is still only 25 and is widely regarded as still having a great

deal of potential to fulfil.

Despite his persistent misde-meanours off the pitch, newly crowned Spanish champions Real Madrid are reportedly keen on taking Il Imperatore to La Liga, while prior to their capture of Thierry Henry, Barcelona were also thought to be interested.

But Adriano claims a move abroad does not interest him and he wants to stay with Inter to have the chance to repay some of the faith shown in him by Inter president Massimo Moratti.

"If Inter agree I would like to stay at the San Siro," he told the Gazzetta dello Sport. "I consider Inter my home."

"If they were to sell me? I would set only one condition, I want to stay in Italy. I would accept their decision,

but I would also ask to decide my next destination."

"In any case, I want to stay here because Moratti has faith in me and I want to prove him right."

"If that were the case we would all sit down and discuss the issue."

Adriano's lengthy list of misde-meanours last season includes numerous training missed training sessions after evenings spent on the town and a late night brawl with an American basketball player outside a club. On the pitch, he went nine months without a goal and received for a ban for diving.

Such was his poor form, Adriano was awarded the Golden Dustbin - the dubious prize for the worst player in Serie A - and Inter sent him on an enforced two-week break to Brazil.

Henry set to be unveiled

AFP, Barcelona



four-year deal reportedly worth 24 million euros (32 million dollars).

Henry, who arrived in the Catalan capital following eight years at Arsenal, was pictured on Barca TV arriving at the stadium in black pullover and blue jeans before changing into the club's new sky blue away strip.

The 29-year-old passed morning medical tests and was due at 6pm (1600 GMT) formally to receive the

acclaim of thousands of fans who gathered pitchside at the Nou Camp.

"This morning he passed all the tests satisfactorily. There are no problems, everything is in order," club doctor Ricard Pruna told FCBarcelona.com.

"It means a lot to come here and play with some of the best players in the world," Henry told Barca TV after arriving on Sunday night on a private flight from London.

"Barca is more than a club. Everybody knows about Barca. The most important thing that has made me come is the way Barca plays, the fans and the support they give," he added.

Henry will next season link up with Ronaldinho, Samuel Eto'o and Argentine starlet Lionel Messi in a fearsome forward line which nevertheless in the opinion of some

observers cannot accommodate four such attack-minded stars.

The club earlier said on its website that there were still some loose ends to tie up before Henry's move could be finalised.

"There are still a few minor details to be sorted out between the three interested parties: Arsenal FC, FC Barcelona and Thierry Henry," it said.

Barcelona is looking to strengthen its squad after finishing runner-up in the Spanish league this season behind arch-rivals Real Madrid. It completed the La Liga and Champions League double in 2006.

Messi was among the first to hail the arrival of Henry, who is Arsenal's leading all-time scorer with 226 goals in 369 games since moving to Highbury from Juventus eight years ago.

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New Barcelona recruit Thierry Henry poses outside the Barcelona football club on Sunday prior to his medical and subsequent presentation to the press on Monday afternoon.