



Paraguayan forward Roque Santa Cruz (R) eludes Colombian goalkeeper Miguel Calero to score the first of his treble during their Copa America clash at Pachenco Romero Stadium in Maracaibo on Friday.

Fabio bids farewell

INTERNET, undated

Fabio Capello has taken his sacking from Real Madrid well, even going so far as to thank the Spanish club.

The Pieris-born Coach led the Merengues to their first Liga title in four years, but this was not enough to save his place on the bench.

It is likely that he will be replaced by Bernd Schuster after he was released from his contract with Getafe on Thursday.

"Now that the decision by the Board of Directors has been made public, I would like to thank Real Madrid for allowing me to guide this great side for a second time, when I was able to contribute to winning La Liga," said Capello.

"I am grateful to the squad, the coaching team, the staff, the managers and sporting director Franco Baldini for all their support," added the tactician, who will be joined by Baldini in his departure.

"I would also like to mention the fans in Spain and around the world - without a doubt the best around - to whom I would like to reiterate my thanks for their unconditional support."

The former Juve boss, who had never been fired in his career and recently stated that this job might be his last one in football, was contracted until 2009.

He is expected to receive 4.2m pounds from Real Madrid -- which is his salary for the 2007-08 season -- plus the bonus promised for the Liga win.

The amount of the transfer was not revealed.

Tudor has played 55 matches for Croatia's national side and scored three goals.

Hajduk Split have won the national title six times since Croatian independence in 1991. The club, founded in 1911, also won eight championships while playing in the former Yugoslav league, between 1946 and 1991.

This season they finished runner-up to Dinamo Zagreb.

Croatian international defender Igor Tudor on Thursday signed a two-year contract with Hajduk Split, where he started his career 12 years ago.

Tudor arrives from Juventus, whom he joined in 1998.

In the 2005-2006 season Tudor was loaned out to Siena, but his 2007 season was blighted by an ankle injury which meant he failed to play any games.

The amount of the transfer was not revealed.

Tudor has played 55 matches for Croatia's national side and scored three goals.

Hajduk Split have won the national title six times since Croatian independence in 1991. The club, founded in 1911, also won eight championships while playing in the former Yugoslav league, between 1946 and 1991.

This season they finished runner-up to Dinamo Zagreb.

Redknapp after Makelele

AFP, London

Portsmouth manager Harry Redknapp said on Friday that he wants to sign Chelsea's France midfielder Claude Makelele.

"We could do worse than signing Makelele," said Redknapp. "If he's available, I'd love to have him in my team."

The 34-year-old holding midfielder, who used to play for Real Madrid, joined the Londoners in 2003.

Although once one of the first names on the team sheet, last season he saw his playing time reduced due to the glut of talented midfielders at the disposal of Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho.

Makelele, who is known to crave regular first team football during the twilight of his career, has also attracted the interest of Paris St Germain and Villarreal.

Cruz rocks Colombia

AFP, Maracaibo

 Roque Santa Cruz slammed a hattrick as Paraguay humiliated

Colombia 5-0 in the opening match of Group C of Copa America 2007 on Thursday evening at the Jose Encarnacion 'Pachenco' Romer Stadium.

Santa Cruz scored on 30, 46 and 80 minutes while substitute Salvador Cabanas added the rest on 85 and 88.

Colombia missed the opportunity of opening the score after 25 minutes when midfielder Alvaro Dominguez squandered a penalty, striking the ball too lightly to the right of goalkeeper Justo Villar, who made the save with ease.

This fight set the Paraguayans into action and they began to pile the pressure on the Colombians.

As a result of this change, Santa Cruz managed to take the lead after being teed up by Edgar Barreto.

This goal did not change the attitude of the Colombians, who continued to set a slow pace in midfield, despite the efforts of David Ferreira, the only player to try his luck against the Paraguayan goal.

The Paraguayans began the second half in top speed and two minutes after the break, striker Santa Cruz grabbed a brace to make it 2-0.

The Colombians tried to hit back playing deep, but left gaps behind for their opponents, who played on the counter. That was how Santa Cruz claimed a hattrick with a header.

The third goal dismounted the Colombian team. The players did not know what to do to react to the unexpected 3-0 score, and the Paraguayans made the most of

their indecision to add a fourth with Cabanas, who replaced Oscar Cardozo, on 70 minutes.

The same Cabanas closed the scoring two minutes before the end of the match to seal the victory.

TEAMS

Paraguay: Justo Villar, Dario Veron, Julio Cesar Caceres, Paulo da Silva, Carlos Bonet, Edgar Barreto, Cristian Riveros, Claudio Morel, Jonathan Santana (Enrique Vera, 79), Roque Santa Cruz (Dante Lopez, 84) and Oscar Cardozo (Salvador Cabanas, 70).

Colombia: Miguel Calero, Gerardo Vallejo, Ivan Cordoba, Mario Yepes, Javier Arizala (Vladimir Marin, 63), Alvaro Dominguez (Macnelly Torres, 56), John Vafara, Fabian Vargas, David Ferreira, Hugo Rodallega (Luis Gabriel Rey, 76) and Edixon Perea.

Referee: Jorge Larrionda (Uruguay).

Schuster poised for Real hotseat

 Football

AFP, Madrid

Bernd Schuster, the German coach of Spanish top flight outfit Getafe, said in an interview with sports daily AS on Friday he expected to be installed within days as Fabio Capello's successor at Real Madrid.

"I am sure all will be sorted out next week," said Schuster, 47, a former Real star who also played with distinction in Spain with Barcelona and Atletico Madrid.

Angel (Torres, the Getafe chairman), has made me very happy. He knows I have given my all for Getafe these past two years and he will not stand in the way of me fulfilling my dream.

Schuster corresponds perfectly to that description, having spent most of his playing and indeed coaching career in Spain, where he arrived as a young midfielder in 1980 for the

Capello was sacked on

Thursday despite leading Real to a record 30th league title.

He also won the league in his first one-season spell in charge at the Bernabeu in 1997 but the Real board did not like his sometimes pedestrian style of play.

Fans were also overwhelmed by Capello, despite his landing the club its first silverware since 2003.

Sporting director Predrag Mijatovic said Thursday that Schuster was a candidate but noted he was under contract at Getafe, a modest side just outside Madrid which he took to the Spanish Cup final.

Schuster would be Real's eighth coach since 2003 after two-time Champions League winner Vicente del Bosque, Portugal's Carlos Queiroz, stop-gaps Antonio Camacho and Mariano Garcia Remon, Brazilian Wanderley Luxemburgo, another caretaker in Juan Ramon Lopez Caro and Capello.

Last week, following the Cup final loss, Torres insisted that "Schuster will be Getafe's coach next season," but all the signs were that Real would get their way and appoint him.

Schuster would be Real's eighth coach since 2003 after two-time Champions League winner Vicente del Bosque, Portugal's Carlos Queiroz, stop-gaps Antonio Camacho and Mariano Garcia Remon, Brazilian Wanderley Luxemburgo, another caretaker in Juan Ramon Lopez Caro and Capello.

They recently checked into a clinic in Igls, near Innsbruck, that costs 10,000 euros (13,500 dollars) per week for the two of them, their physiotherapist and personal friend Kurt Waltl told AFP Friday.

The twins are expected to spend another eight weeks in the clinic, he added.

They are currently in a

Spurs break bank for Bent

 Football

AFP, London

Tottenham smashed their transfer record on Friday to sign England striker Darren Bent in a 16.5 million pounds deal from relegated Charlton.

The 23-year-old cost the club 5.5 million pounds more than Ukraine forward Sergie Rebrov when he joined from Dynamo Kiev in 2000.

Bent's signing will also provide a windfall for his first club Ipswich Town, who like Charlton will play in the Championship next season, as they will receive 20 percent of the fee due to a clause in Bent's contract when he left the Suffolk club to join Charlton.

Bent was delighted to sign for one of the few clubs capable of challenging the big four in the English Premiership.

"Tottenham have a lot of young English players and it's a young squad, it's a squad going forward and that's the direction I wanted to take.

"They seem to be getting better and better every season and I would love to be part of that."

"It helps a lot that I know a few of the lads from England internationals and I'm sure they will help me settle in."

"It's exciting times for me and the club, hopefully I'll show what I can do at Tottenham and we'll go on to win things."

Bent scored 15 goals last season but that was not enough to save Alan Pardew's men from relegation and his move from The Valley had been anticipated since Charlton's demotion was confirmed.

West Ham made the first move for Bent but he turned down the chance to be reunited with Alan Curbishley, who brought him to the Premier League from Ipswich two seasons ago.

He bolsters a Spurs attack that scored more than 60 goals last season -- and that without Egyptian Mido who is expected to leave White Hart Lane.

Dimir Berbatov and Robbie Keane were Joe's first choice for the big games, with Jermain Defoe adding 18 goals as the third striker. The form of Berbatov and Keane means Bent will face a tough battle to get into the first team.

Spurs sporting director Damien

Comolli said: "The two signings we've completed so far in Darren and Gareth Bale offer us massive improvement in terms of the squad, players with great potential whose best days are in front of them."

Charlton chairman Richard Murray added: "Realistically, it was always going to be difficult to hang on to a player of his quality following relegation, but we feel we have negotiated the best deal possible for the club and, after a payment to Ipswich, it's a sum of money that will cushion the effects of relegation for the club."

Charlton chief executive Peter Varney admitted that Bent was always going to leave the club once relegation from the Premiership had been confirmed.

"He's done a great job for us here

and we wish him all the best but, being an England international, he's keen to stay in the Premiership."

"That's the reality when you get

relegated," he told Sky Sports. "I know fans will be disappointed but I think they are also realistic. The Premier League is the place to be if you want to play for your country."

Barca secure Abidal

AFP, Barcelona

Catalan giants Barcelona's spending spree continued on Friday as they signed French international defender Eric Abidal from French champions Lyon for 15million euros on a four-year contract.

Abidal -- who was part of the French team that reached the World Cup final last year -- had been at the six-time French champions since 2004 and had been the subject of several bids by Barca all of which had been rejected.

However, Barca president Joan Laporta finally secured his target after upping a 14million euros bid by another million and with other bonuses for Lyon included in the deal such as 500,000 euros should Barcelona win the Champions League.

Abidal will join compatriot and former Arsenal striker Thierry Henry, who signed for the deposed 2006 Spanish champions last week, and Barca have also netted Ivory Coast international Yaya Toure from Monaco.

Becks joins Galaxy on the 13th

AFP, Los Angeles

English football star David Beckham will take his place as a member of the Los Angeles Galaxy next month on Friday the 13th, a day notorious in American culture for bad luck.

The Major League Soccer club announced here Thursday that Beckham, whose contract with Real Madrid expires Sunday, will make his official debut with the team at a news conference on that morning at the team's home stadium.

Beckham has signed a five-year contract worth as much as 250 million dollars in total income, although the playing portion for league salary cap purposes will be only around 25.7 million dollars.

Since playing for Real Madrid in a Spanish league title-clinching 3-1 triumph over Mallorca on June 17, Beckham has been resting and rehabilitating an ankle injury.

The former England captain is expected to make his debut for the Galaxy in a match against English Premiership club Chelsea here on July 21 but his fitness will decide when he sees his first action for the US club, whose season is nearly half over.

"I'm taking one year at a time

Rolling back the years

WIMBLEDON

AFP, London

and going to try to see what happens through this year, and if my ranking is still decent, it's an Olympics coming up next year that I never really believed I would be close to.

"But since it's only one year away, it's something that I'm starting to look at a little bit. But it all depends if my ranking stays up and if my body is holding up."

And the Swede reckons the enjoyment of defying their ages keeps him and Arthur interested.

"For both of us it's something -- an excitement in us, a little thrill inside the body that we can still go out and compete with the youngsters who are just under 20 or just past 20 and still show that we can still play some good tennis," he said.

"I think these days we play so different to the rest of them, but sometimes we can take benefits of that. We've got a different style, and when we play our best tennis, it's still possible to beat these guys. That helps us to keep going a little bit."

Australian qualifier Arthur is already the oldest man to reach the third round of Wimbledon since a 38-year-old Jimmy Connors in 1991.

The oldest of all time was Australia's Frank Sedgeman, who made it aged 43 back in 1971.

And should he make it through to the round of 16, he will be the sixth oldest to do so and the oldest since Yugoslavia's Niki Pilic in 1976.

Bjorkman would be the 11th oldest and the oldest since Connors in 1988. Pancho Gonzales of the United States holds the record, making the fourth round aged 41 in 1969.

World number 195 Arthur admits he gets stiff hips these days and takes anti-inflammatory pills.

"I came off the court, and there's a couple of Aussie guys in the locker room who manage the locker. I was standing out the front here and they had a wheelchair with my name on the back," he said.

Though friends of the court, the pair have "a bit of history" on it, as Arthur puts it.

"He hit me pretty hard in the nether regions in Davis Cup and there's been a few on-court incidents."

Bjorkman hopes Arthur will not attempt to reply in kind