



PHOTO: AFP
Newly appointed Real Madrid coach Bernd Schuster (C) is presented with a jersey by Real president Ramon Calderon (R) and honorary president Alfredo di Stefano at the Santiago Bernabeu in Madrid on Monday.

Topsy-turvy transfer scene

Football

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM

26.5 million dollars and a farewell press conference will see Fernando Torres bid the Primera Liga and Atletico Madrid goodbye. Ten million quid less and an emotional open letter saw Thierry Henry swap dank London for sunny Spain. Two landmarks in Spain and England respectively swap places trying their luck in newer pastures.

For while El Nino will spread his phenomenon in the hallowed turf of Anfield, Henry will be showcasing his dazzling ball skill in the equally revered Nou Camp.

The balance, however precarious, is therefore still maintained. Not so in Bayern, previously a synonym for prudent spending splashing out 69 million Euros to

rope in seven new players. Madrid is surprisingly quiet, unlike Manchester who spent 50 million pounds on three players.

But who got the bargain of the season? Why Chelsea ofcourse, roping in four players at the princely sum of one dollar (yes you read that right 1 dollar). Which permutes to 25 pence a player. Not bad for the likes of Claudio Pizarro and Alex.

And yes, your guess is right. Transfer season is in full flow. The biggest deal cut this summer is undoubtedly that of Thierry Henry and his move to Barcelona. On the cards last season, a scathing post match interview following Arsenal's loss to Barcelona in the Champions League final made it clear that Henry would not be swapping to the famous Catalan kit. That and reassurances that he would 'end his career at the club.'

A year on all that has changed and Henry will now terrorize defences across Europe alongside the already formidable trio of Ronaldinho, Messi and Eto'o. Provided they all stay it's not a bad forward line.

But if Spain gained one formidable name, they certainly lost another as Fernando Torres bids his childhood club goodbye. He once famously said that if he ever swapped clubs it would be to 'Barcelona and Barcelona only.' But a princely cut of the 26 million pound transfer fee stuck a cloth into that promise. Along with the chance to be an Anfield hero and in the process solve Rafa Benitez's search for a proven goalscorer.

However Benitez may have been forced into a panic buy. For if goalscoring is his criterion, Torres, as quick and skilful as he is, averages

SEE PAGE 18 COL 6

Materazzi reignites rivalry

AFP, Rome

Italy defender Marco Materazzi may have ended up a World Cup winner last year, but the Inter Milan hardman still has some unfinished business with the French.

The Italians, who beat France on penalties in the 2006 World Cup final, play 'Les Bleus' in a crunch Euro 2008 qualifier in Milan in September, in what will be the teams' second meeting since the Berlin showpiece.

France coach Raymond Domenech blamed Materazzi for provoking Zinedine Zidane into a headbutt which brought the French midfield genius' career to an infamous end in the final last July.

Zidane was shown the red card in the second period of extra-time after he butted Materazzi in the chest, apparently for an insult by the Italian centre-back.

Materazzi picked up a two-match ban, forcing him to miss the Euro 2008 qualifier in Paris last September which the French won 3-1.

But Materazzi will be available for the San Siro clash, and he can't wait to get at the French.

"I wasn't allowed to play the match in September, and I felt that was unfair when you compare what I got to what Zidane got," the 33-year-old was quoted as saying in the Gazzetta dello Sport on Monday.

"But now for the return leg and I look forward to seeing Signor Domenech and all the others who have expressed their opinions about me.

"I will look them in the eyes with a fixed stare, and I won't look away."

Laudrup takes over at Getafe

AFP, Madrid

Danish legend Michael Laudrup will take over from Bernd Schuster at Spanish top flight side Getafe for the coming two seasons, the club said in a statement Monday.

Laudrup 43, won a host of honours with Barcelona - he was in their 1992 Champions League-winning side - and was also a champion with Juventus in Italy.

Getafe said they would present the former Danish international officially next week.

In 2000, Laudrup moved into coaching as assistant to Danish national team coach Morten Olsen and following the 2002 World Cup Laudrup took the head coach post at top Danish side Brondby, where he won several domestic honours before leaving at the end of the 2005-06 season.

After rumours he could even take the Real job and amid reported approaches from other Spanish sides Getafe moved to bring him in following Schuster's appointment, confirmed earlier Monday, at the Bernabeu.

Real appoint 'Blond Angel'

AFP, Madrid



Real Madrid confirmed the worst kept secret in Spanish football Monday by unveiling German former player Bernd Schuster as coach to replace sacked Italian Fabio Capello on a three-year contract.

Real chairman Ramon Calderon unveiled Schuster, 47, at a pre-lunchtime news conference amid media reports the German had agreed to pay up 480,000 euros (650,000 dollars) to get out of his contract at Getafe, the modest outfit from the suburbs he led to the Spanish Cup final last season.

"It's a very happy day for me. A great opportunity. If there are three or four great teams in the world one is Real Madrid," said Schuster, clad in smart open neck sky blue shirt and dark blue jacket. "I am sure things will go just perfectly," he added, holding up a white Real shirt with "Schuster 1" emblazoned on the back.

Calderon, who thanked Schuster in passable German for

agreeing to be the new man in charge of the club which has won a record nine European Cups, said a new era had begun with the arrival of the new coach who personified 'madridismo' values including courage and passion, as well as ability.

"We have had the luck to be able to sign a person who possesses all these qualities. He was a great player and is a great coach and above all is an excellent person. Schuster needs no presentation.

"Real Madrid is more than just a team which wins titles. It has to set an example," Calderon added in welcoming "one of the most brilliant players the club ever had."

Real sacked Capello on June 28, even though he had led the club by a whisker to a record 30th league title barely ten days earlier.

Capello had performed a similar feat a decade earlier in his first spell with the club, only to leave of his own accord.

After Capello left the first time, in 1997, Real appointed Jupp Heynckes for the club's first German coach and now have turned teutonic again, having also just landed German international defender Christoph Metzelder.

Heynckes won the Champions League in 1998, but that was not

enough for a club that has since ditched no less than nine coaches.

Now it falls to Schuster, who comes to the helm after two years establishing Getafe as a solid top flight side, to prove his mettle.

Nicknamed "The Blond Angel," Schuster served Real with distinction as a player, winning the league title in 1989 and 1990 before surprisingly heading across the city to Atletico Madrid.

Between 1980 and 1988 he had starred for Barcelona, with whom he also won the Spanish league title.

In all, in 13 years playing in Spain, Schuster won three league crowns and six Spanish Cups.

He also won the 1980 European Championship with Germany, but then quit international football after a row with the German Federation and the coaching staff.

Sporting director Pedja Mijatovic described Schuster as "a coach who can achieve the things we want" who would bring the club "much happiness in the years ahead."

"He is a coach who knows the house of Real well."

Schuster has yet to land honours as a coach following several

stints in Spain and Germany with second division sides and Shakhtar Donetsk in Ukraine, while last season his Getafe lost the Spanish Cup final to Sevilla after first eliminating Barcelona.

Real have won nine European Cups yet have rarely hesitated to chop and change the man on the bench.

Capello, despite his two short spells in charge, is the ninth-longest serving coach in the club's history by league matches served.

The all-time record-holder with 424 matches is the legendary Miguel Munoz, who won nine league titles after taking over in 1955 as well as a pair of European Cups having also won four leagues and two European titles as a player.

Only five men have managed to serve a century of league matches on the touchline with Real.

The last was Vicente Del Bosque, who won two league titles and two Champions Leagues but still got the boot in 2003, presaging a four-year trophy drought that Capello ended but to no personal avail.

Schuster may possess the cultural imprint of the club but he will be judged, and quickly, on how many titles he can put in the trophy cabinet.

Schuster remains grounded

AFP, Madrid



Real Madrid's new coach Bernd Schuster said Monday he was under no illusions as to the task ahead of him, namely winning trophies by playing a strictly 'beautiful game.'

The man nicknamed the Blond Angel has been given clear orders by president Ramon Calderon to inject the style that was in short supply under short-lived Italian predecessor Fabio Capello.

If Capello was effective when it came to ending a four-year trophy drought and weeding out top names past their peak, such as Ronaldo, many saw his brief tenure as a willingness to win ugly.

That's not enough for Real -

whose recent unsuccessful strategies involved going Brazilian for the top down three years ago under Wanderley Luxemburgo - and Schuster said on day one he knows it.

"I know here the club will demand the maximum (in terms of cups) along with football which will win over the fans," said the 47-year-old former Barcelona, Real and Atletico Madrid star who spent the bulk of his playing career in Spain.

With former club Barca intent on regaining the title Real snatched from them on the final day of the season, Schuster said he was not worried about the Catalan challenge and was at ease with the challenges facing a man who has yet to land a top honour as a coach.

"I'm not worried. The squad we will have this year I can have total confidence in from day one. We all know it won't be easy (but) for me nothing difficult exists," said

Schuster.

Noting his ten years experience of coaching in Germany, Spain and the unlikely surroundings of Shakhtar Donetsk in Ukraine, Schuster said: "Every day I like it more. I think it's something I have within me."

With Barca having broken the bank to land Thierry Henry and add to a fearsome frontline, Schuster now has to indulge in some teambuilding of his own.

So far only compatriot Christoph Metzelder is in the bag, the defender arriving Sunday to complete a move from Borussia Dortmund.

AC Milan's Brazilian jewel Kaka remains the man Real covet, but Schuster said that might remain a pipedream.

"He's a big dream. I don't know if it can be realised," the German stated.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 6

Metzelder's dream come true

INTERNET, undated

Christoph Metzelder has said that joining Real Madrid is like a dream come true for him after he landed in the Spanish capital to be presented at the Bernabeu.

The German international defender has penned a three-year deal with los Merengues after moving from Borussia Dortmund under the Bosman ruling.

After agreeing the deal in April, the 26-year-old has only just arrived in Spain and cannot wait to meet up with his new teammates and start pre-season training.

"I am very excited to be here," he said. "I signed my contract a few days ago and I can't wait to get started."

"It is an honour and a great challenge for me to have joined Real Madrid, especially after they

SEE PAGE 18 COL 8

Qatar snatch Japan draw

AFP, Hanoi



Qatar stunned defending champions Japan with a late equaliser to earn a 1-1 draw in their Asian Cup opener Monday, but it ended on a sour note with Hussain Yaser and coach Dzemailudin Musovic sent off.

It was an uninspiring start to Japan's bid for a third straight continental title.

They looked to have three points in the bag after Frankfurt striker Naohiro Takahara broke the deadlock in the 61st minute when he slammed home a cross from the

right by utility man Yasuyuki Konno.

But dangerous Uruguayan-born forward Sebastian Soria equalised two minutes from time when he stroked home a 20-metre free kick through a tight wall after he was bundled over by Yuki Abe.

It means unfancied hosts Vietnam find themselves at the top of Group B after upsetting Gulf Cup champions United Arab Emirates 2-0 on Sunday.

The game boiled over in injury time with Yaser controversially given a straight red card by Australian referee Matthew Breeze for a clumsy challenge on midfielder Yasuyuki Konno.

It should have been a yellow and Musovic stormed off the bench to

protest, only to find himself heading back to the dressing room early.

Both sides lacked punch in the first half with Japan dominating possession but they were woeful in their passing and produced only feeble shots.

Their first attempt on goal came from midfielder Yasuhito Endo who fired straight at Qatar goalkeeper Mohamed Saqr three minutes into the action at a sparsely-crowded My Dinh National Stadium.

In the ninth minute, Soria led a counter-attack but his cross from the right of the penalty area failed to find a teammate.

Qatar came close to taking the

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5



PHOTO: AFP
Japan forward Naohiro Takahara (L) takes a shot at goal past the tackle of Qatar player Talal Al Bloushi during their Asian Cup group match in Hanoi on Monday.



PHOTO: AFP
Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson (C) is flanked by his two recent acquisitions, midfielders Owen Hargreaves (R) and Nani at their training ground in Carrington on Monday.

Malouda set for Chelsea

AFP, London



France international Florent Malouda will complete his transfer from Lyon to Chelsea on Monday before joining his new teammates in the United States.

Jose Mourinho's squad are heading out to Los Angeles after confirming that a fee had been agreed with the French champions leaving just a medical and agreement on personal terms to seal the deal.

"Chelsea can confirm it has agreed a fee with Olympique Lyonnais for the transfer of Florent Malouda," Chelsea announced in a statement.

The fee is undisclosed but Malouda has been valued at upwards of 13million pounds (20million euros) in the French media since impressing for his country at the World Cup last year and featuring in the Champions

League for Lyon.

Malouda, 27, was signed by Lyon in 2003 from Guingamp for 4.5m euros having begun his playing career with Chateauroux in 1996. Last season he scored 10 goals as Lyon won the title for the sixth straight time.

He won the first of his 30 international caps in November 2004 and was part of Raymond Domenech's side that made it through to last year's World Cup final against Italy.

Chelsea's new recruit won the French championship four times with Lyon and was voted the best player in the French first division in 2006-07.

Lyon president Jean-Michel Aulas confirmed after his team's friendly with Lille last night that an agreement had been reached.

A statement on Lyon's official website added: "The transfer will only be made official after confirmation from the medical."

There was less good news for Chelsea fans on the fitness of German midfielder Michael Ballack

who is set to miss the pre-season tour of the United States after ankle surgery.

Ballack, 30, has not been ruled out of the entire tour but will not be with the squad for the first week following his operation in Europe last week.

"A decision will be taken later, depending on progress, about whether he will join the squad for the latter part of the tour," said Chelsea in a statement.

Malouda is Chelsea's latest summer purchase following Steve Sidwell, Claudio Pizarro and Tal Ben Haim.

Alex is tipped to join from PSV Eindhoven, and chief executive Peter Kenyon has stressed that Malouda's arrival does not compromise Arjen Robben's position at Stamford Bridge.

There are also hopes of Frank Lampard and John Terry committing their long-term futures to the club by signing new contracts.

'Tevez deal close'

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United are close to signing Argentine striker Carlos Tevez from West Ham, Sir Alex Ferguson said Monday.

Tevez is currently at the centre of a major transfer wrangle with the Premier League refusing to sanction the 30 million pound (60m dollar) move even though terms have been agreed with the player's agent Kia Joorabchian.

The Premier League however insist the transfer must be "done directly" with West Ham rather than his agent Joorabchian.

But Ferguson is certain the 23-year-old former Corinthians star will finally join his squad.

"I am sure the outcome will be that we will be taking him," said the United boss.

"I thought it was going to be done by last weekend. Everything seemed perfectly okay, so the hold-up must be with the Premier League.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 5