

Tevez deal imminent

INTERNET, undated

Agent Kia Joorabchian believes Carlos Tevez's future could be resolved as early as next week.

The Argentina forward's drawn-out transfer to Manchester United from West Ham had seemed unlikely to be completed before the start of the Premier League season after Joorabchian issued High Court proceedings against the London club in a bid to resolve the thorny issue of the player's ownership.

However, according to the Daily Star, an out-of-court settlement could be reached soon.

"There is a possibility it may get resolved early next week," Joorabchian told the newspaper.

Tevez is registered as West Ham's player but Joorabchian claims he owns the player's economic rights and is therefore entitled to any transfer fee, which is at odds with the Premier League's stance.



PHOTO: AFP

Triumphant Spanish players celebrate their win over Greece in the final of the European Under-19 football Championship in Linz on Friday.

Benitez unperturbed

Football

AFP, Hong Kong

Rafael Benitez shrugged off concerns over new-look Liverpool's firepower after they failed to find the net in the Asia Trophy loss to Portsmouth.

Benitez blooded record signing Fernando Torres and Ryan Babel against Premiership opposition but Liverpool passed up multiple chances before going down 4-2 on penalties.

Torres and fellow newcomer Yossi Benayoun both missed from the spot but Benitez backed the summer signings to gel in time for the new Premier League season on

August 11.

"It's very difficult to analyse the physical condition of the players because it's too warm, but you could see positive signs," said the coach.

"They were all trying to do positive things and also the understanding with their teammates is something they will improve."

Benitez is under pressure to land the 18-time English champions' first league title since 1990 after a big-spending summer as Liverpool bid to keep pace with Manchester United and Chelsea.

But it was a depressingly familiar story for Liverpool fans as the Reds laid siege to the Portsmouth goal without breaking through.

Dutchman Dirk Kuyt and Torres

both found ex-Liverpool keeper David James in electric form, although Babel and Jermaine Pennant almost capitalised on a pair of blunders.

Torres, 23, showed an eye for goal and Babel looked dangerous in a double-Dutch combination with Kuyt, despite recently arriving from the under-20 World Cup.

"We have time and also the conditions will be different. Today I couldn't tell whether they were fit or not," Benitez said.

"They were maybe a little bit below the others but not too much. One or two weeks will be enough.

"It's clear we need to improve but we played well, we created chances and we had plenty of

possession and good ideas. I think we are okay but we need to be a bit fitter."

Benitez also praised a rejuvenated Harry Kewell, who joined the team after Australia's disappointing Asian Cup campaign and played 50 minutes before giving way to Torres.

"We know he has the pace and quality we need. To play two games in a row was difficult so I decided to change him, but I was really pleased with him," Benitez said.

Liverpool beat Hong Kong's South China 3-1 in the semifinal but were outscored by Fulham who put four past the minnows in the match for third place.

Blackburn snap up Santa Cruz

AFP, Munich

Bayern Munich have sold Paraguayan striker Roque Santa Cruz to English Premier League side Blackburn Rovers in a deal believed to be worth five million euros, it was announced on Saturday.

The 25-year-old, who has 46 caps and scored 16 goals for his country, will join the English side on August 1 and has signed a four-year contract.

"Santa Cruz is a young national player with a good reputation, who comes to us from a top European club. He is very dangerous in the air", said Blackburn boss Mark Hughes, the former Manchester United striker who spent a season on loan at Bayern in the 1980s.

ECB assesses SL security

CRICINFO, undated

An ECB delegation, led by director of England cricket John Carr, has flown to Sri Lanka to make a security assessment ahead of England's winter tours to the country.

A security advisor is also part of the trip to Colombo to report back on the current climate. Sri Lanka's civil war continues to cause problems to daily life in the capital, where England will be based on various stages of their one-day and Test tours.

England head to Sri Lanka for a five-match one-day series straight after the Twenty20 World Championship in South Africa. They then return at the end of November for three Tests in Kandy, Colombo and Galle.

Gilberto still skipper

Football

AFP, London

Arsene Wenger says midfielder Gilberto will continue to wear the captain's armband for Arsenal this season.

The veteran Brazilian is away on an extended break following his exploits in the Copa America this summer, and is set to sit out the start of the new domestic season as a result.

In his absence, William Gallas and Kolo Toure are expected to be the most likely candidates to lead the side who will compete this weekend in the Emirates Cup, which also features Inter Milan, Valencia and Paris St Germain.

Gilberto, 31, stood in for Thierry Henry when the then skipper was out last season.

With his talisman now moved on to Barcelona, Wenger is more than

happy to allow the experienced Brazilian to continue leading by example.

"The captain last year was Gilberto and there is no reason to take it away from him," said the Arsenal boss.

"At the moment in some games it is Gallas and some games it is Kolo because I feel that the centre-back position is the best one from which to captain the teams.

"Those three will be leaders of the team for the season and whoever plays will captain the team.

"We are a very young side and the experienced players have a big part to play, that is why I try to multiply the influence of the big players."

Toure is more than happy to step into the role when needed.

The Ivory Coast defender said: "I have spent a lot of years here with Mr Wenger, and he is building a fantastic squad.

"I am really happy to be one of the leaders of the team.

"I am 26 now and have played for the club for a long time, and we have some great things to do still with this club and we are all looking forward to it."

Toure added: "Last season, we played the football, but sometimes did not get the results. I think next season will go much better.

"We have learned from what was wrong and we are really focused for all those trophies and know we can make it."

Wenger revealed he will also be tapping into the experience of men like goalkeeper Jens Lehmann, at 38 the oldest member of the squad.

"Jens could be an interesting choice for club captain because he has a weight inside the squad and is a massive winner," said the Gunners boss.

"Players like Kolo listen to him, and it is kind of a moral leadership as well, because we are a very young side."

Wenger cool on contract talk

Football

INTERNET, undated

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger has insisted that he will discuss his future at the Emirates Stadium when the time is right, but not before.

Wenger, who arrived at the club in 1996 and has since proven the most successful manager in the club's history as well as the longest-serving, said that he should be admired for his loyalty to the Gunners.

"I have shown since I've arrived

here that I'm very faithful to the club," he said. "I think I've always shown my commitment for the club.

"[I] come out at the right moment to speak about the future, especially about my [own] future.

"I cannot announce things when they are not signed, not done, not discussed.

"If I had signed for one year when I arrived, everyone would have thought that was a long time. There's still one year to go."

The Frenchman also said that he was yet to choose a new director of football after vice-

chairman David Dein was frozen out in April, leaving Wenger to push through transfers himself.

"I was busy during the summer because we've signed some young players," Wenger continued.

"What I hate more than anything else is the paperwork. The rest is time consuming.

"I've not found anybody and, at the moment, I'm not on the verge of signing anybody as director of football."

Arsenal qualified for the Champions League last season, but finished a disappointing fourth in the Premiership table.

12x3

3x2

4x2

12x3

5x2