



South Korea midfielder Lee Chun Soo (C) is shackled by Japan midfielder Kengo Nakamura (2nd R) during their third-place play-off match of the Asian Cup at the Jakabaring stadium in Palembang on Saturday.

'Totti is a closed book'

AFP, Pelabang



Roberto Donadoni does not regret the fact he won't have Francesco Totti in his Italy side. "How can I miss someone who was never here?"

The Roma star had Donadoni on tenterhooks for a year after the World Cup triumph, but last week finally confirmed he would not be returning to international duty.

"Totti is a closed book now, there is nothing more to talk about," the Italy boss told the 'Gazzetta dello Sport.'

"After all, I can't even miss his presence seeing as since I took over the Nazionale he has never been here. So nothing changes as far as I am concerned."

The 2007-08 campaign kicks off on August 25 and Donadoni gave his view on the first post-CalcioPoli Scudetto race.

"Inter are not unbeatable. Even if they are without doubt the favourites for two reasons -- their squad and the conviction that they are a great side."

"I believe that Milan, Roma and Juventus can challenge them. The Bianconeri are in there too because they have extra motivation to be back among the elite. They remind me of those sides who, after a long time in Serie B, make an incredible impact on the top flight in their first season."

One of the revelations of the last campaign and Italy's Euro 2008 qualifiers has been Fabio Quagliarella, who has joined Udinese after a tug of war with Sampdoria, but he was expected to be picked up by one of the giants.

"It is surprising and a cause for

Korea third

INTERNET, undated

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Sir Alex Ferguson has warned Gabriel Heinze that Manchester United remain confident they will not be forced to sell him to Liverpool -- despite the Argentinian's decision to enlist Anfield solicitors in a bid to force the move.

Ferguson, speaking after United wrapped up their Far East tour with a 3-0 win against Chinese outfit Guangzhou Pharmaceutical on Friday, insists that United intend to stop Heinze moving to Liverpool.

The Argentinian full-back believes he has the right to negoti-

ate the hour.

Their Dutch coach Pim Verbeek and two of his assistants also were ordered to the stands for disputing the red-card decision.

Eleven spot-kicks were converted in the shootout before Lee, who won his team their penalty shootout against Iran in the quarterfinal in Kuala Lumpur last Sunday, saved Hanyu's kick one-handed.

Japan will rue their missed chances to claim victory in extra-time with two great late opportunities to snatch the match.

Substitute Hanyu blasted into defender Kim Chi-gon on the line and Hisato Sato forced Lee into a smothering save.

It was brinkmanship yet again for the Koreans, who battled with 10 men after defender Kang Ming-soo was sent off for a second yellow card on

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shattering 3-2 semi-final loss to Saudi Arabia in Hanoi on Wednesday.

Both teams had their chances in their end-to-end opening half as the Koreans tried to break their run of firing blanks.

Goalkeeper Yoshihiko Kawaguchi was angry with his defenders when Yeom Ki-hun was allowed to fire in a long-range attempt which whizzed past the post in the 15th minute.

Defender Kim Chi-woo got his boot to clear the danger from lurking substitute Satoru Yamagishi moments later.

But the Koreans went to the other end and Yeom's free kick was punched clear by Yamaguchi and Lee Chun-soo had a short-range

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move from Rome to Inter Milan on Friday, bringing to an end the most protracted transfer saga in Serie A this summer.

In addition to the money, Roma also received half ownership of Inter's Italy under-21 international Marco Andreoli.

Chivu, 26, gave an emotional farewell at a press conference at Roma's Trigoria training ground.

"I've spent four wonderful years here, full of satisfaction," said the

'Real need a Ballack'

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid need a Michael Ballack type player in midfield to help them defend their Spanish title, coach Bernd Schuster believes.

"That's the sort we need, someone of that quality," said Schuster of his fellow German in comments that suggest Fabio Capello's replacement is not entirely satisfied with his existing attacking midfield, Gutti.

While Schuster acknowledges that stars like Chelsea's Ballack "are all under contract with big teams" he is hoping to finalise the move of Ballack's teammate Arjen Robben next week, according to Marca on Saturday.

The newspaper also identified Marseille's young midfield star Samir Nasri as another target for Real ahead of the upcoming season. Schuster, who was appointed manager to replace Capello after the Italian's sacking, got his reign at Real off to a good start with a 2-0 friendly win over English Championship side Stoke city on Friday.

"Now it's time to look forward to

Terry pens new deal

Football

AFP, London

Chelsea and England captain John Terry expressed his relief on Friday at signing a new five-year contract with the London club after talks had collapsed towards the end of last season.

"I'm really happy this has now been concluded. There has been a lot of speculation but these things take time and I never had doubts that I wanted to stay at Chelsea and that the club wanted me to stay," said the centre-half, who had two years left of his contract, which is now superseded by the new one.

"I hope the fans can see that we are all trying to build something special here, both for now and for the future, and I want to be a part of that. I have been at Chelsea all my career and have the privilege of being captain.

"Now it's time to look forward to

the new season which we are all very confident about."

Chelsea's chief executive Peter Kenyon echoed Terry's relief at the long-term commitment, which keeps the player at the club until 2012, and added: "This is an important day for Chelsea. This was the right deal for us and for John."

"As a club we are committed to try and keep our players together on long term deals and this was a natural progression from last season when other players also committed themselves for the long term."

"As captain, John is clearly a key player for Chelsea and also a great symbol of the club so naturally we are pleased this has been agreed."

Terry, who is now reported to be England's highest paid player on wages of around 130,000 pounds (194,200 euros) a week, has been at the club since joining the youth system at age 14.

He was voted the club's player of the year for the 2001-02 season and has led the club to two Premier

League titles, two League Cups and an FA Cup triumph.

With the Terry issue wrapped up there now remains the question mark over the futures of England international midfielder Frank Lampard and Dutch international Arjen Robben.

Lampard has two years left to run on his current contract and Robben's anticipated move to Real Madrid still hangs in the balance.

Negotiations with the Dutch international over a new contract at Chelsea are understood to be at an impasse with Madrid merely awaiting the green light from the Londoners before completing a transfer they have talked about for most of the summer.

Mourinho wants Lampard, who has been linked with Barcelona, to stay and will be hoping that Terry's decision can provide the midfielder with the initiative to follow suit before both players decide to move on.

Chivu saga ends finally

AFP, Rome

Romanian international defender Cristian Chivu finally completed his 13-million-euro move from Rome to Inter Milan on Friday, bringing to an end the most protracted transfer saga in Serie A this summer.

In addition to the money, Roma also received half ownership of Inter's Italy under-21 international Marco Andreoli.

Chivu, 26, gave an emotional farewell at a press conference at Roma's Trigoria training ground.

When Real made their offer, Inter withdrew their interest only to re-ignite it once Chivu had turned down the chance to join the

Spanish champions.

"It was flattering that Real wanted me, but I wanted to remain in Italy," Chivu said.

Chivu started his professional career with Romanian clubs CSM Resita and FC Universitatea Craiova before joining Dutch side Ajax in 1999.

He spent four years in Holland, during which time he helped Ajax reach the quarterfinals of the Champions League in the 2002-03 season.

A dead-ball specialist, Chivu joined Roma in the summer of 2003.

The versatile Romanian helped Roma finish second in Serie A last season, as well as reach the quarterfinals of the Champions League.



Saudi Arabia captain Yasser al Qaqtani (L) shakes hands with his Iraqi counterpart Younis Mahmoud, with the Asian Cup on display, prior to their meeting in the final to take place on Sunday.

Clash of contrasting styles

AFP, Jakarta

The best defence takes on the best attack in the tournament as Iraq and Saudi Arabia play off for the region's premier football crown in the Asian Cup.

There was, thankfully, no repeat of the mass brawl which marred their Champions League encounter in March and saw several players handed lengthy bans as well as the clubs heavily fined.

The tournament which also awards bonus points per goal and will later see hosts Arsenal take on Paris St Germain kicked off in what was rare summer sunshine in north London.

Valencia beaten in the quarterfinals of the Champions League last season by Chelsea started brightly.

Impressive winger David Silva flashed an angled drive just over from the right side of the box, and it was no surprise when the Spaniards took the lead on 13 minutes.

Ruben Baraja sent over a deep cross from the right, which picked out Jamie Gavilan at the far post.

From a tight angle, the midfielder squeezed his first-time shot under Francesco Toldo and into the bottom corner.

Inter wearing a change kit of white with a St George-style red cross - struggled to get out of first gear.

Captain Marco Materazzi, the former Everton defender, was somewhat harshly jeered by the Emirates Stadium crowd, presumably for his part in the dismissal of France legend Zinedine Zidane in the World Cup final.

Veteran Portugal midfielder Luis Figo felt he should have been given a penalty when he appeared to be tripped by Ivan Helguera in the corner of the box. Referee Alan Kelly, though, was unimpressed.

On the half-hour mark, Valencia keeper Santiago Canizares saved well at the near post from Julio Cruz as Inter found some life.

Brazilian Maxwell saw his low angled drive come back off the inside of the post, with Canizares beaten.

Moments later, however, and it was 2-0.

Inter gave away a free-kick just to the left of centre, 20 yards out, in the 39th minute.

Villa's effort was well struck and took a slight deflection as the ball flew past Toldo into the right-hand corner.

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The Saudis have the best attack with 12 goals and we have the best

defence with only two goals conceded," Iraq coach Jorvan Vieira said Saturday.

"That does not mean we haven't scored goals, it just means we have scored the necessary goals to win to be in the final, sometimes it's quality not quantity."

"My boys in my point of view deserve to be in the final, they have worked very hard and we have so many problems in all sectors but the prize is tomorrow, I hope."

"The most important thing is that we have reached the final for the first time in the history of Iraqi football and all Iraqi people are very happy."

The final brings together two

Brazilian coaches, Vieira and his Saudi counterpart Helios dos Anjos, who has taken the Saudis to their seventh final at the last eight Asian Cups.

"I have spoken to my players about keeping their feet on the ground, this game will not be easy, it will be very hard, it's the final and they are always different," dos Anjos said Saturday.

"There are no favourites in this game, both teams have the same chances. We have our dream to win and Iraq have the same dream."

Dos Anjos said his Saudi team had overcome tough challenges in the tournament -- they drew with eventual semi-finalists South Korea, needed an injury-time winner to douse co-hosts Indonesia, had luck against Uzbekistan and overcame three-time champions Japan -- but Iraq presented a huge challenge.

"Iraq will be very tough opponents," he said. "With the qualities they have, the emotion over the social problems in their country, they will be very motivated to win."

Dos Anjos, coaching outside

"Some of us play in Arab football leagues and we receive many offers from Arab teams," he said.

"But I think many of the Iraqi players also have the ability to play

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Striker Younis Mahmoud believes many Iraqi players are good enough to play in Europe, with their run to the Asian Cup final proof that they have what it takes.

A handful of the Iraqi team play outside their war-torn home country, largely in Arabic leagues, but none have so far made the big switch to Europe.

Mahmoud, who plays for Al Gharafa in the competitive Qatari league, winning this season's Golden Boot award, said some players were ready.

"Some of us play in Arab football leagues and we receive many offers from Arab teams," he said.

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