



Deportivo La Coruna players Juan Rodriguez (R) and Manuel Pablo (L) celebrate with the Teresa Herrera Trophy after their victory over Real Madrid in Coruna on Thursday. PHOTO: AFP

Lamps delays negotiations

AFP, London

England midfielder Frank Lampard has told Chelsea he intends to delay further contract talks until the end of the season.

But the 29-year-old, who has two years left to run on his current deal at Stamford Bridge, insists that he wants to stay at the club until the end of his career.

"I have always expressed my desire to stay at the club," said Lampard.

"Unfortunately we have had problems with the negotiations. They have gone on a long time. Now the season has started, I have told the club I do not really want to get involved in negotiations which are not going to end well while I am playing football, because this is a big season for me and for the club.

"My intention is to stay. I have got two years left on my contract.

"I want to stay for the rest of my career. It is as simple as that.

"I hope it gets sorted and that it gets sorted soon, at the end of the season, or the next time (we talk) - and the club know that.

"The club know my intentions, and it is certainly not a money issue."

Lampard - who has often been linked with a move to Barcelona - believes it is better to delay discussions, rather than risk him losing focus for the new campaign.

Bayern wary of rivals

AFP, Munich

Germany's double World Cup winner Franz Beckenbauer insisted on Friday that winning the Bundesliga will not be a mere formality for Bayern Munich despite their 69 million euros summer spending spree.

After their worst season for more than ten years, Bayern splashed out over the summer to bring the likes of French midfielder Franck Ribery, Italian World Cup winner Luca Toni and German striker Miroslav Klose to Munich.

"This season's Bundesliga (which begins on Friday) will be enthralling," said Bayern's president Beckenbauer, in his weekly column in German newspaper Bild.

"VfB Stuttgart, Werder Bremen and also Schalke 04 will have their say in the title race.

"They did not have to be reinforced like Bayern had to be this summer, because they already had solid teams.

"Of course, I hope Bayern's enormous investment will pay off. It is an interesting experiment.

"I am curious to see how (Bayern coach) Ottmar Hitzfeld will work with this team.

"Franck Ribery is dynamic, (Brazilian midfielder) Ze Roberto brings his class, (German defender) Marcell Jansen is very quick down the left side, while Luca Toni and Miroslav Klose should, hopefully, provide plenty of goals."

Beckenbauer, a self-confessed fan of Germany coach Joachim Loew, says he thinks the Germans are capable of winning the Euro 2008 title in Switzerland and Austria next summer.

Germany face away trips to Wales and the Republic of Ireland in September and October respectively. "The title is possible. Joachim Loew's team should qualify without the problems facing Italy and England," said Beckenbauer who captained Germany to World Cup success in 1974 and coached them when they won again in 1990.

"At the moment, I don't see a better side in Europe."

Real fall to Deportivo

INTERNET, undated

Midfielder Julio Baptista's 47th minute goal was not enough as Deportivo la Coruna picked up a 2-1 win over Real Madrid through goals from Riki and Joan Verdu to win the Teresa Herrera Trophy on Thursday.

Bernd Schuster opted to field a shadow starting team as he kept one eye on the first leg of the Spanish Super Cup against Sevilla this weekend.

Despite that, the German will know that things will have to improve but his opposite number, Miguel Angel Lotina will have been pleased with Depor's strong display.

Only Sergio Ramos retained his place in the side from the previous game as Fernando Gago and Ruben De la Red played together in the centre of midfield and Julio Baptista and Roberto Soldado played up front.

As the Madrid side looked to settle, the opening minutes of the

game belonged to the hosts and Joan Verdú and Alberto Lopo went close to breaking the deadlock early on.

The visitors' first clear chance came when Ramos met a free-kick to head into the hands of Gustavo Munúa, soon after Sebastián Taborda had gone close at the other end.

Just as half-time approached, Schuster's team had begun to clamber their way back into the game but fell behind when Taborda picked out Riki and the former Getafe striker steered the ball past Jerzy Dudek.

Whatever was said in the dressing rooms during the interval saw both sides come out with a renewed vigour and it was Madrid that first made it count. Baptista fired home an equaliser with a shot that beat Munúa and went in off the post in the 47th minute.

Within 60 seconds, however, Depor had regained their advantage when Verdú's free-kick clipped the wall and beat Dudek.

Javier Saviola was given a chance to add to his pre-season

tally in the second period, but it was Pepe that came closest to levelling matters, but his effort was ruled out 14 minutes from time for offside.

Depor sat back soaked up the pressure and secured a victory that will have lifted their spirits ahead of the new campaign, while Madrid will be hoping for a strong display against Sevilla.

The post-match focus was more on signings, as Bernd Schuster said he felt "as happy as with a Christmas present" after receiving confirmation of Royston Drenthe's capture.

"I hope that more players can come," he continued. "The club are working hard to achieve that, though we all know that sometimes things do not go according to plan."

On the defeat to Deportivo, Schuster was optimistic.

"We were able to draw many conclusions. We took an important look at the players, and I am happy with their efforts. There were many things I wanted to see, and I am reasonably satisfied."



Milan midfielder Kaka (C) tries to break free between Real Betis players Miguel Angel (R) and Fernando Vega (L) during a friendly match at the Ruiz de Lopera stadium in Sevilla on Thursday. PHOTO: AFP

Betis scalp Milan

INTERNET, undated

A 47th minute penalty from former Liverpool winger Mark Gonzalez saw AC Milan slump to a 1-0 defeat to Real Betis as the Spanish club celebrated their centenary in style on Thursday.

What was particularly surprising was that Milan sent out pretty much their strongest team - nine of the players who had started the Champions League final in May (all except Inzaghi and Maldini).

They did have their share of chances, but it was former Inter coach Hector Cuper who had the last laugh through a 47th minute penalty from Mark Gonzalez.

Milan may have felt that they deserved more from the game after a bright first half display, but once they had fallen behind Betis closed up shop at the back and held on.

Despite the visitors' dominance for long periods, it was Dida who was called into action in the opening exchanges when the Brazilian was forced to save from David Odonkor.

At the other end Clarence Seedorf and Alberto Gilardino had fine chances to put Carlo Ancelotti's side ahead as Betis' new keeper, Ricardo looked set for a busy evening.

Just two minutes after the break the only goal of the game arrived when Betis were awarded a disputable penalty, which Gonzalez had no qualms about converting from 12 yards out.

Betis donned a replica shirt from their first match 100 years ago, complete with collar and buttons down the front and may fans would want them to wear it during the season if it would bring them so much fortune.

Milan again had the better of the play in the second 45 minutes and Seedorf again came close to netting for the Italians, but his free-kick was turned over by Ricardo.

In the closing minutes, the patient approach play from Ancelotti's side looked doomed to end in failure as the hosts sat back in numbers to defend their lead.

The tactic paid off and Real Betis were able to celebrate their centenary in style as they defeated the reigning European champions.

Tevez completes transfer

AFP, Manchester

English champions Manchester United on Friday finally completed the transfer of Argentine striker Carlos Tevez.

The Red Devils confirmed the 23-year-old forward had joined on a two-year loan.

A club statement said: "Manchester United is delighted to announce that Carlos Tevez has been registered as a member of its first-team squad by the Premier League."

Tevez, who has been the subject of a long-running Premier League investigation into third-party ownership, has been training with United all week.

However, he is extremely unlikely to be involved in United's opening game of the season against Reading on Sunday despite being cleared to play by the Premier League.

Instead United boss Sir Alex Ferguson has scheduled Tevez's United debut for next weekend's derby clash at Manchester City.

Real confirm Drenthe deal

AFP, Madrid

Feyenoord midfielder Royston Drenthe agreed a five-year deal with Real Madrid on Thursday, the Spanish champions confirmed.

"The player will undergo a medical in the coming days before signing a contract for five years," said a Real statement.

Sports newspaper AS said that the Spanish champions would fork out 13 million euros for the player with Marca quoting the figure at 14 million euros.

The 20-year-old, who was also rumoured to be a transfer target for Chelsea, had been putting pressure on the Dutch club to let him leave for one of Europe's glamour teams.

Real are also still said to be chasing Chelsea's Dutch international winger Arjen Robben ahead of the new season, which gets underway on August 25.

Domenech face sanctions

AFP, Paris

UEFA president Michel Platini on Friday demanded that France coach Raymond Domenech provide proof of his allegations of match-fixing or face sanctions from European football's governing body.

In an interview with French daily Le Parisien this week Domenech alluded to "a referee being bought" during a tie between France and Italy's under-21 sides in 1999. Domenech was coach of the French team at the time.

But European football boss Platini insisted that his countryman would be charged with unsporting behaviour if he does not back up his allegations.

"We're going to send a letter to the French federation so that Mr Domenech provides us with proof of what he says, and if there is no proof we will penalize him," warned Platini.

Gallas Gunners captain

AFP, London

William Gallas was on Thursday officially named as Arsenal's captain for the forthcoming season by manager Arsene Wenger, after the club earlier said Gilberto Silva had been given the role.

Experienced France centre-back Gallas will be supported by two vice-captains, Brazil midfielder Gilberto Silva and Ivory Coast defender Kolo Toure.

Germany goalkeeper Jens Lehmann will also have a supporting role off the pitch.

Wenger needed to pick a new captain following the sale of France striker Thierry Henry, the club's greatest-ever goal scorer.

"(The captain) will be William Gallas," Wenger said. "There will also be two vice-captains, Kolo Toure and Gilberto."

"I feel centre-back is always the best position to lead on the pitch and it is Gallas who has more experience at the back.

"But Gilberto has always been a great captain and Kolo Toure has a stature too.

"As well I made a decision that I want all those experienced players, along with Jens Lehmann, to be involved off the pitch. Players like Jens and Gilberto can play the role of a club captain.

"They can have a very strong impact mentally on the team. I want them to take on that responsibility."

Gallas is set to lead the Gunners out in their opening English Premiership fixture at home to fellow Londoners Fulham on Sunday.

One of the Arsenal captain's responsibilities is to decide on the day whether the team wears long sleeves or short sleeves.

FIFA chief attacks England bid

Football

AFP, London

FIFA vice-president Jack Warner vowed he will fight to stop England from hosting the 2018 World Cup, in an astonishing attack to be broadcast Saturday.

Warner told BBC World Service radio England was an "irritant" which had a minimal impact on world football and was universally hated in Europe.

The president of CONCACAF, football's governing body in North and Central America and the Caribbean, laid into England and its chances of hosting the World Cup for the first time since 1966.

"If by chance, in 2018, the World Cup were to go to Europe, I'm quite sure, with the English luck as it is, they won't get it," the 64-year-old said.

"It'll be Italy, Spain, or it might even be France. Nobody in Europe likes England. England - who invented the sport - has never had any impact on world football.

"England at no time has had the love and support of Europe. For Europe, England is an irritant."

World Cup host countries are chosen by a vote from the representatives of FIFA's executive committee. Football's global governing body is reviewing its decision to rotate the World Cup through different continents beyond 2014.

It is expected FIFA will approve a format which only precludes the continents which held the previous two World Cup - in the case of 2018, Africa and South America - from bidding again.

England are expected to launch an official bid to stage the tournament early next year, with the government already indicating its support and appointing former sports minister Richard Caborn as World Cup ambassador.

Warner sees any England bid as being in a direct battle with one from a CONCACAF country.

"There are moves to give it to England. I must fight that," he vowed.

"I really don't believe that we should just lay down and play dead to anyone who wants to take the World Cup from CONCACAF."

"I know in FIFA there are those persons who believe the rules should be changed to satisfy Europe but I tell you this we shall fight it to the very end."

Speaking in his native Trinidad, Warner also slammed Manchester United's recent signing of nine-year-old wonder kid Rhain Davis, whose family have quit Australia for north-west England.

"It's obscene and most absurd," said Warner.

"And we have to fight that and put laws in place to prevent those things. That is almost a kind of football slavery... and we have to understand that slavery by any form is slavery."

FIFA's executive committee in December reprimanded Warner - but decided not to impose any sanctions - following the illicit resale of tickets at the 2006 World Cup.

Warner and his son were accused of making money through the illegal sales in an auditor's report, which said Daryan Warner made about one million dollars from resale of tickets through his travel agency. Resale was illegal under FIFA contracts.

The CONCACAF chief of 17 years vehemently denied any wrongdoing.

"I have never sold a World Cup ticket in my life. I sleep very soundly at nights. My heart is clear. My conscience is clear," he said.

Zidane may play Beck's Galaxy

Football

AFP, Sydney

French football legend Zinedine Zidane is in talks with Sydney FC for a one-off guest appearance against David Beckham's LA Galaxy here in November, reports said Friday.

LA Galaxy, boosted by the multi-million dollar signing of Beckham, are scheduled to face Sydney FC in a money-spinning friendly at Sydney's Olympic stadium on November 27.

The Daily Telegraph said while discussions were at an early stage, it was believed the approach from Zidane's management was serious, although money had not yet been

discussed.

The paper said while millions of dollars had already been invested by Football Federation Australia, the New South Wales state government and television broadcaster in the Galaxy visit, a hefty appearance fee for Zidane was unlikely to be a problem.

The Sydney match is likely to be televised across most of Asia and North America.

Zidane retired from football in shameful circumstances when he was sent off in the 2006 World Cup final in Berlin for head butting Italy defender Marco Materazzi in the chest.

The Frenchman claimed the Italian had taunted him and made

crude remarks about his family.

Zidane has since played in charity matches raising money towards child illness and poverty, as well as being a UN ambassador.

Beckham has struggled with an ankle injury since joining Galaxy last month and is yet to make his competitive debut for the Major League Soccer team.

Under the terms of his deal, Beckham could earn up to 250 million US dollars over the next five years, making him one of the world's highest paid sportsman.

Major League Soccer and the Galaxy's owners are banking on Beckham's presence to help give football in the United States a fresh surge of interest.

Beckham makes debut

Football

AFP, Washington

David Beckham was delighted to finally make his Major League Soccer debut Thursday, but disappointed he couldn't help his Los Angeles Galaxy to a victory.

"It was a good night, but it was also a bad night," said the former England captain, who came on in the 72nd minute of the Galaxy's 1-0 loss to DC United.

"Obviously, there's been a certain amount of pressure because everyone is talking about how I've come to MLS and not played yet. But I don't feel pressure in that sense. I feel pressure in myself to get fit and to get back playing again."

"It was a good night, but it was also a bad night," said the former England captain, who came on in the 72nd minute of the Galaxy's 1-0 loss to DC United.

"Obviously, there's been a certain amount of pressure because everyone is talking about how I've come to MLS and not played yet. But I don't feel pressure in that sense. I feel pressure in myself to get fit and to get back playing again."

A sell out crowd of 46,686 at RFK Stadium roared when Beckham,

who had been warming up on the sidelines, stepped to the touchline to come into the match.

"That cuts out all the frustration that I've had for the last few weeks, ever since I joined the Galaxy and haven't been able to play," Beckham said of the reaction.

"Stepping out there and seeing the reaction, it was great. I feel very honoured. It was great for me to be on the pitch and to kick a soccer ball around."

Beckham showed little ill effect from the left ankle injury that has delayed his official debut, limiting to just a brief appearance in a friendly against Chelsea last month.

He ran without any noticeable problem and met two tackles shortly after taking the field.

However, he said the injured ligaments in the ankle haven't completely healed.

"It was tender," he admitted. "I haven't played on it for eight weeks, I haven't trained on it for eight weeks, and it was going to be tender tonight because it was the first time I really got into anything competitive."

"But I was happy to be out there. I'm sure there will be (tenderness) for a while because it's not an injury that just heals up and is perfect right away. There will be some reaction tomorrow, but this was a big, impor-

tant step for me."

Beckham said Galaxy manager Frank Yallop had the final say on Thursday as to whether he would be able to play.

"I told him how I felt," Beckham said. "He said, 'If you are confident that you can get through the game without making it any worse, then go and do it,' and that was decided today."

The decision was made easier when a summer storm hit Washington early in the second half, softening up the turf.

"Those were the biggest rain-drops I've ever seen," Beckham said. "We don't get them like that back home. That was more surprising than anything."

"But I think it made it more fun. I'm used to that sort of weather, being from England. I like it when the ground is wet."

Beckham, an international superstar who signed a five-year deal with the Galaxy that could be worth up to 250 million dollars, was clearly cognizant of his role as an ambassador for the MLS, a minnow among US sports.

"We had 40,000-odd fans, so you know it's been a successful night," he said. "A full stadium, that's what the sport needs."



LA Galaxy midfielder David Beckham (C) jumps into tackle Clyde Simms (L) of DC United during their MLS match at the RFK Stadium in Washington DC on Thursday. PHOTO: AFP