



Ex-Chelsea manger Jose Mourinho drives away from Stamford Bridge on the early hours of Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

Give me a job: Jose



Football

THE TIMES

Jose Mourinho yesterday agreed a 12 million pound payoff as compensation for his dramatic departure from Chelsea, but he is already planning his return to football. Mourinho told The Times he is waiting by the phone and hopes to get back to work as soon as possible.

Tottenham Hotspur have already privately declared their interest in a man who won six trophies during three unforgettable years at Stamford Bridge, although it is unlikely that the Portuguese would accept an offer to stay in London at White Hart Lane. "I'm going to enjoy my life, I'm going to wait for the telephone calls," Mourinho said. "I want to work."

He later released a statement that read: "I am very proud of my work at Chelsea. I want to thank all Chelsea supporters for what I believe is a never-ending love story. I wish great success to the club." Mourinho went on to thank the players and even his children's teachers.

Chelsea acted swiftly to move on from the controversy surrounding Mourinho's exit, along with the bulk of his coaching staff by announcing Avram Grant as his replacement on a full-time basis. It is understood that

they are also considering offering Jamie Redknapp a coaching position. The club are conscious of the need to regain some goodwill from fans angered by Mourinho's departure and believe that Redknapp, the former England midfield player, would bring some glamour and Premier League experience. But it may take more than that to appease those who gathered outside Stamford Bridge last night to register their protest at the departure of the "Special One".

Chelsea's main problem will be rebuilding the confidence of players who are shocked and saddened by the treatment of Mourinho and Grant has much work to do to win over a sceptical dressing-room. Although enjoying a close relationship with Roman Abramovich, the owner, the Israeli has not developed a rapport with the players since arriving as director of football in the summer and many are disillusioned by his appointment.

As the 52-year-old has not held a club job for five years and never managed a team outside Israel, such doubts over his suitability are understandable. However, having been on 1 million pounds a year, he will enjoy a healthy salary increase in his new role, though he will have to go into his first match, against Manchester United at Old Trafford on Sunday, without Didier Drogba and Frank

Lampard, who were ruled out yesterday.

Grant is bound to suffer in comparison with the youthful and energetic Mourinho, who was given an emotional send-off after his final visit to the training ground early yesterday. Lampard and Drogba were moved to tears when it came to saying goodbye.

Not all of Chelsea's squad will be sad to see him go, however, with Andriy Shevchenko understood to be positively delighted and Joe Cole experiencing an element of relief. Interestingly, John Terry was not as upset as many had expected. The England captain had clashed with Mourinho over his fitness before the manager's final game in charge, against Rosenborg on Tuesday.

Chelsea did their best to portray Mourinho's departure as having been mutually agreed, but their statement could not disguise the acrimonious nature of the split. "What is clear is we had all reached a point where the relationship between the club and José had broken down," a statement read. "This was despite genuine attempts over several months by all parties to resolve certain differences."

The breakdown had "started to impact on performances", Chelsea added.

Players defend Ronaldinho

AFP, Madrid

Ronaldinho's teammates at Barcelona have rushed to defend the Brazilian striker after he was jeered by fans earlier this week and accused once again by the Spanish press of being underform.

The 27-year-old ace was whistled by a section of the Nou Camp as he was substituted during the second half of the 3-0 Champions League home win against Lyon because of what they felt was a lacklustre performance.

Ronaldinho did not look pleased about being replaced for the third straight match by Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard.

"I don't understand why they whistled him. He's the best in the world and a key player in the team," said Argentine striker Lionel Messi.

"He's an incredible player," added Barcelona's new recruit Thierry Henry who acknowledged that Ronaldinho had not been in top form during the team's recent away matches.

The Spanish sports press appear unanimous on their appraisal of Ronaldinho's dip in form, but some appear to believe his star is on the wane.

El Mundo daily on Friday said Ronaldinho is no longer "untouchable" while Barcelona-based La Vanguardia said the player was "in torment".

Ronaldinho could be paying the price for his reported behaviour off the field too.

Catalan newspaper La Vanguardia added that 48 hours before Barcelona's goalless draw against Osasuna at home on Sunday Ronaldinho was seen at a famous nightclub in the city.

"No one understands" the decline in form of the 2005 FIFA World Player of the Year award, conservative daily newspaper ABC added.

World Cup wide open

AFP, Hangzhou

Brazilian coach Jorge Barcellos believes the World Cup is wide open with no favourites and any of the eight teams remaining capable of winning the title.

Barcellos sees no weak links among the sides left - Australia, Brazil, China, England, Germany, North Korea, Norway, and the United States.

But in a warning to the others, he said the only reason Brazil was in China was to take home the trophy for the first time.

"Brazil came here to make history," he said after his team beat Denmark 1-0 to set up a quarterfinal in Tianjin against Australia.

"As for whether we're favourites, I think every team left in the tournament is capable of winning the title." Brazil came into the tournament hoping to steal some of the limelight from their more famous male counterparts, like Ronaldinho and Ronaldo, with a breakthrough success.

Barcellos believes the corner was turned for the fleet-footed Canarinha with their success at the Pan American Games on home soil this year, when they downed a young United States side 5-0.

And their attractive style of football has won over the fans in China, with the 40,000-strong crowd here on Thursday chanting "Brazil, Brazil."

Even Danish coach Kenneth Heiner-Moller was forced to admit the South Americans are looking formidable.

"Brazil are a great side," he said. The South Americans, who have played in every World Cup since the tournament's inception in 1991, stormed to a third-place finish in 1999 only to crash out in the first round in 2003.

Mourinho shadow hangs heavy

AFP, London



Jose Mourinho is likely to be far from Old Trafford on Sunday but the former Chelsea manager will still cast a long shadow over his former club's showdown with Manchester United.

Mourinho's dramatic departure has hardly sunk in and already the London club have to regroup for a match they cannot afford to lose.

If Chelsea are beaten by Sir Alex Ferguson's side and Arsenal defeat Derby on Saturday, the Blues will enter the post-Mourinho era five points behind the league leaders.

A trip to the Premier League champions would be a daunting start for any new manager, but the circumstances of Mourinho's departure and Avram Grant's promotion as his successor puts the Israeli coach firmly in the spotlight.

Roman Abramovich's decision to appoint his friend has only added to the feeling that Mourinho's days were numbered from the moment Grant arrived as director of football in the close season.

So Grant has plenty to prove.

The fans will wonder whether this anonymous 52-year-old has the ability to maintain Chelsea's position as one of the English's game pre-eminent forces.

But a bigger challenge could await the former Portsmouth director of football in the visitors' changing room at Old Trafford.

Several of Chelsea's players, with Didier Drogba among them, were in tears when Mourinho said his farewells at the club's training ground on Thursday morning.

Mourinho's charisma and proven track record inspired the likes of Drogba, John Terry and Frank Lampard to reach new heights and they are likely to wonder what Grant can add to their games.

If the players feel Mourinho has been harshly treated it must be questioned whether they will feel like putting their bodies on the line for Grant. Even if they do well, it will be interpreted as a salute to Mourinho rather than anything to do with Grant.

One thing is certain; Ferguson will be determined to take advantage of Chelsea's moment of weakness.

The Scot relished his duels with Mourinho, describing the Portuguese as the "new gunslinger in town", but he will be secretly delighted to see Chelsea in disarray.

Chelsea's problems run deeper than their three-match run without a win, but United's captain Ryan Giggs insists form goes out of the window in a situation like this.

"I don't think you can take form into account whenever the big teams play each other," Giggs said. "They have a lot of special players. It has been close between us over the past few years. It always is and it will be again."

While Chelsea face an uncertain future, their London rivals Arsenal are enjoying a surprising

renaissance.

Arsene Wenger's side go into the home clash against Derby top of the table for the first time since November 2004.

The Gunners have won four of their first five league matches and built on that feelgood factor by demolishing Seville in the Champions League.

After two years without silverware and the close-season departure of Thierry Henry, Arsenal were widely written off as also-rans this season.

But Wenger has infused his young side with the confidence to ignore the doom merchants and, inspired by the brilliant form of Spanish midfielder Cesc Fabregas, they are currently playing the most eye-catching football in Europe.

With everything looking so easy, Arsenal must avoid falling prey to over-confidence.

Robin van Persie is cautioning patience. "I know what this team is capable of," he said. "But I don't think we have to be the champions this year."

"Let's say for example within three years we have to win a few trophies. That is a better idea, a bit more realistic."

Juve come to Rome

AFP, Rome



Leaders Roma host Juventus in a top-of-the-table clash this weekend between two clubs who could easily go on to claim this season's 2007/08 Serie A title.

Roma beat Dynamo Kiev 2-0 in Wednesday's Champions League action; have an intense rivalry with Juventus which has gone on for years and the capital city club will be anxious to win having lost their last two home matches to the Turin club.

One of those two defeats was an embarrassing 4-1 setback two years ago though a 4-0 defeat a year and a half previous to that still rankles Roma to this day.

Roma are sitting on top of the table for the first time in four years and are the only team with a 100 per cent record of three wins out of three.

Coach Luciano Spalletti has Marco Andreoli doubtful for the match though better news was that Juan, Simone Perrotta, David Pizarro and Christian Panucci are over their injury problems.

Juventus coach Claudio Ranieri could be tempted to make changes following their 1-0 home defeat by Udinese in their last match.

Youngsters Giorgio Chiellini, Domenico Criscito and Antonio Nocerino are expected to feature in the match as Jonathan Zebina is sitting out a four-match ban, plus injured players include Marco Marchionni, Jean-Alain Boumsong, Zdenek Grygera and Hasan Salihamidzic.

Early strugglers Livorno face a tough match when hosting Inter at the Stadio Armando Picchi stadium.

While the away side are hot on the tail of leaders Roma, Livorno have got off to a nightmare start that sees them at the bottom of the Serie

A table.

The Nerazzurri have bounced back from their opening day disappointment in style. Since conceding a late equaliser to Udinese at the San Siro, Roberto Mancini's side have two consecutive wins to their name and that own goal by Ivan Cordoba in Week 1 is still the only time the ball has made its way into the Inter net.

Confidence is so high at Inter at the moment that Mancini had no reservations in resting key players like Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Dejan Stankovic and Javier Zanetti for last week's win over Catania.

FIXTURES	
Saturday	AC Milan v Parma, Udinese v Reggina
Sunday	Atalanta v Lazio, Cagliari v Palermo, Catania v Fiorentina, Empoli v Napoli, Livorno v Inter, Roma v Juventus, Sampdoria v Genoa, Torino v Siena

Bayern start with a win

AFP, Paris



Overwhelming favourites Bayern Munich began their assault on the 2007/08 UEFA Cup title on Thursday with a 1-0 victory over Portugal's Benfica.

while English clubs had a mixed night.

Tottenham thrashed Cypriot side Anorthosis Famagusta 6-1 with England striker Jermain Defoe on target, Blackburn fell 2-0 at Greek club Larissa, while Everton and Bolton both had 1-1 draws.

It's 11 years since the Bavarian club won this competition, beating Bordeaux in the final, and for many of their supporters just appearing in this second-tier European competition is a disappointment as since then they have appeared in every Champions League competition, winning it in 2001.

Bayern fielded all their stars

except Miroslav Klose who had a one-match suspension for a sending off hanging over from last season.

Though Bayern dominated the match, their 1-0 result was hardly awe-inspiring and they still have work to do in the second leg in Lisbon on October 4.

Bayern went ahead in the 35th minute when Luca Toni found the net after good work from Mark van Bommel.

The Italian striker, still handicapped by a right thigh injury, notched up his fourth goal in five competitive matches since arriving at Munich.

England striker Jermain Defoe was on the score sheet twice as Tottenham had a goal feast against Anorthosis Famagusta, hammering the Cypriot side 6-1 in the first leg of their first-round clash at White Hart Lane.

Younes Kaboul opened the scoring early on and Michael Dawson, Robbie Keane and Darren Bent put Spurs within sight of the group stages before the break.

Defoe who has not started a game this season and was not in

the squad against Arsenal, scored with his first touch after coming on in the 63rd minute before the visitors ploughed a goal back through Anton Zlogar.

But no-one could snatch the headlines from Defoe as he added his second in stoppage time, curling home from 25 yards out.

Blackburn suffered a potentially disastrous defeat to Larissa, going down 2-0 in Greece.

Mark Hughes' side were caught cold just after the half-hour as the Greek Cup winners struck twice in 90 seconds.

Former Everton striker Ibrahima Bakayoko fired Larissa in front with a deflected 30-yard strike which looped over Brad Friedel, before Cleyton curled home the second after Brett Emerton gave the ball away in midfield.

Bolton drew 1-1 at Macedonia club FK Rabotnicki with Abdoulaye Meite of the Ivory Coast hitting an equaliser for the visitors in the closing stages while Everton also drew 1-1 at home to Ukrainians' FC Metalist Kharkiv with defender Joleon Lescott on target for the Toffees.

Real, Barca on a high

AFP, Madrid



Spanish giants Real Madrid and Barcelona head into their weekend La Liga matches buoyed by wins at home earlier this week in the Champions League.

But while Barcelona beat French side Olympique Lyon 3-0 at home on Wednesday the Catalan club have failed to click as yet in La Liga with two goalless draws and a solitary win to date to trail leaders and defending champions Real Madrid by four points.

Real Madrid meanwhile have won all three La Liga matches and scored a 2-1 win over German side Werder in the Champions League on Wednesday at the Bernabeu.

Barcelona will face second-place Sevilla on Saturday while Real Madrid visit mid table Valladolid on Sunday and after their Champions League success optimism is flowing back into the camp.

"They played as a team and we have to congratulate each and every one of the players," Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard, who has been under fire for his side's lacklustre start to the season, said after Wednesday win over Lyon.

Barcelona captain Carles Puyol trained on Thursday with the rest of the squad for the first time since he injured his knee at the end of last season during a friendly against South Africa, adding to the upbeat feeling at the Catalan club.

Their opponents are heading into the match after suffering a 3-0 loss away to Arsenal on Wednesday in the Champions League. Sevilla lie in second place in the Spanish league with six points and have a game in hand on their rivals.

Real Madrid, with their maximum nine points on the board already, will be looking to extend their winning streak when they face Valladolid.

"We have won vital games in both the league and the Champions League. I cannot ask for more. Having said that, there are still things we have

to improve upon," said Madrid coach Bernd Schuster.

Real Madrid's cross-town rivals Atletico Madrid, who spent heavily in the pre-season to sign new recruits like Simao, Diego Forlan and Antonio Reyes, will face Racing Santander at home.

Racing Santander have not lost a Spanish league match this season and currently stand fifth, a point adrift of Valencia, who travel to Betis after opening their Champions League campaign with a win at Germany's Schalke.

FIXTURES	
(all times in GMT)	
Saturday	Recreativo v Espanyol (1800), Barcelona v Sevilla (2000)
Sunday	Real Zaragoza v Osasuna, Levante v Athletic Bilbao, Villarreal v Murcia, Almeria v Mallorca, Betis v Valencia, Getafe v Deportivo (all 1500), Atletico v Racing (1700), Valladolid v Real Madrid (1900)

Lyon aim to retake top spot

AFP, Paris



French champions Lyon will be aiming to erase their midweek trouncing by Barcelona in the Champions League and

retake the top of the league with a win over Lille on Sunday.

Lille have started slowly this season and are currently on 14th position with nine points after one victory from eight matches.

They will face a tougher assignment in Lyon than last week's 1-1 draw at home last weekend against Bordeaux.

However Lyon's defence was brutally exposed in their midweek 3-0 loss to Barcelona with their French striker Thierry Henry opening his goal scoring account for the Catalonian club.

Lyon coach Alain Perrin will again be without French international keeper

Gregory Coupet and Brazilian central defender Cris for the Lille match.

However the champions attack remains potent as shown by last weekend's 5-1 mauling of Metz.

They will be hoping championship leaders Nancy stumble against ninth-placed Lorient, who lost 1-0 to Rennes last weekend, at home on Saturday.

Rennes, who have made a good start to the season and stand at fourth place, are at home on Saturday to Sochaux

Second placed Bordeaux will be looking to assert their championship credentials when they take on the improving Paris SG in the capital on Sunday.

However after a solid 2-1 victory over Monaco last week PSG will be looking to find championship momentum to take them out of the middle of the pack.

Six-placed Monaco will be looking to leap-frog the fifth placed Valenciennes, who lost 2-1 last week to Le Mans.

Le Mans, who are equal with

Monaco on 13 points, face Strasbourg who are on 12 points.

Marseille will be looking to build on their 2-0 champions league victory midweek against Turkish club Besiktas and turn around a dismal start to the season when they travel to Auxerre on Saturday. Marseille lost 2-1 last week to Toulouse, their third from eight games.

In a bottom of the table clash, last-placed Metz, who have lost six from eight, face the third-last Caen at home.

Middle of the table clash between St Etienne who walloped Caen 3-0 and Nice who lost 2-0 to Auxerre, at home on Saturday.

FIXTURES	
Saturday:	Auxerre v Marseille, Caen v Metz, Nancy v Lorient, Nice v St Etienne, Strasbourg v Le Mans, Toulouse v Lens, Valenciennes v Monaco
Sunday:	Rennes v Sochaux, Paris Saint Germain v Bordeaux, Lyon v Lille



PHOTO: AFP

Bayern Munich striker Luca Toni (C) stabs the ball past Belenenses goalkeeper Costinha (L) to score during their UEFA Cup match at the Allianz Arena on Thursday.