

## Inzaghi warns Ronaldo

AFP, Yokohama

Goal-machine Filippo Inzaghi has told fellow AC Milan striker Ronaldo not to make a premature comeback from injury as the Rossoneri gear up to win their first Club World Cup.

"I know what he is going through. I hope he can recover soon. Having one like him, for us, is an extra weapon," Inzaghi said of the 31-year-old Brazilian, whose career has been plagued by injury.

"However, he must only return if he is 100 per cent, and it's fair that he thinks it so," the 34-year-old Italian said on Milan's website.

Ronaldo has missed every training session with the squad since the European Champions League and Super Cup winners arrived Thursday, a week before their first match in the annual tournament of continental champions.

He has played in just one match this season, when he started against Cagliari two weeks ago on his return from a thigh injury. But he picked up a knock to his left calf in training.

"I'm happy to do well as I've been training for a long time without any pain. For my type of game, being physically fit is fundamental," said Inzaghi, who scored a record 63rd goal in European competition when Milan beat Celtic 1-0 in the Champions League last week.

"My objectives are the same as Milan. I hope to win this cup because for this group it would really be the best thing," Inzaghi said of the Club World Cup.

Milan and Argentina's Boca Juniors, who beat the Italian side in the 2003 Intercontinental Cup final, are semifinalists in the tournament with the final here on Sunday.

Both sides won the South American-European Intercontinental Cup three times but never the three-year-old Club World Cup.

## Jose to say no to England

INTERNET, undated

Jose Mourinho would reportedly turn down the chance to be England manager if he was offered the position by the Football Association.

The former Chelsea boss was installed as the bookmakers' favourite to succeed Steve McClaren after he refused to rule himself out of the running for the vacant role last week.

Reports also suggested his agent had held preliminary talks with the FA about taking charge of England.

However, according to Sky Sports News, Mourinho's interest in the position has cooled in the last few days after receiving an offer from a mystery club.

It's believed the 44-year-old has set his sights on a return to club management and even if the FA made him an offer to replace McClaren he would reject it to take up the proposal from the unnamed club.

Italy's World Cup winning coach Marcello Lippi and Fabio Capello are both believed to be in the frame for the England job with the duo expressing an interest in the role.

According to the Daily Mirror and the Daily Telegraph, Lippi has issued a 'come and get me plea' and FA chief executive Brian Barwick is hoping to talk to him later this week.

A source close to the 59-year-old said: "He is only interested in them going to him direct. He does not have an agent so the only contact would be direct to him."

"He believes England has the players and potential to get to the World Cup and do well when they get there."

Meanwhile former Real Madrid, AC Milan and Juventus boss Capello, who has previously expressed his desire to get the job, is also expected to have talks with the FA this week.

## Nasri fit for crunch tie

INTERNET, undated

Samir Nasri returns to the Marseille squad for Tuesday's crunch Champions League tie against Liverpool.

The France playmaker missed Saturday's 2-0 victory over Monaco in Ligue 1 as he was recovering from an ankle injury suffered during his side's 2-1 defeat to Besiktas in matchday five.

Defender Ronald Zubar is also back in the squad after recovering from injury and could start at right-back, but forward Salim Arrache is missing.

Striker Djibril Cisse and midfielder Boudewijn Zenden, who both left Anfield last summer to join Marseille, are named in coach Eric Gerets' 20-man party for the Stade Velodrome clash.



WELCOME RETURN: Barcelona striker Samuel Eto'o (R) shimmies away from the challenge of Deportivo centre-half Fabricio Coloccini during their Primera Liga clash at the Nou Camp on Sunday.

## All to do for Real, L'pool

AFP, Paris



Liverpool and Real Madrid, with an astonishing 13 European titles between them, face the humiliating prospect of being dumped out of the Champions League on Tuesday.

Liverpool, who have lifted the continental crown five times, are in the most precarious position having to travel to France where only a Group A win will suffice against 1993 winners Marseille in the imposing Stade Velodrome.

Eight-time champions Real are in a better position. They tackle Lazio at the Bernabau needing only a draw to make the knockout rounds but wary that a heavy defeat could send them heading for the exit from Group C.

In Group B, Chelsea, who have already made sure of their place in the last 16, welcome struggling Valencia who can only hope to aim for a UEFA Cup place.

Liverpool, runners-up last season and champions for the fifth time as recently as 2005, suffered the worst possible preparation for their trip to the south of France when they were beaten 3-1 by Reading in the Premiership at the weekend.

FIXTURES	
Group A	FC Porto (POR) v Besiktas (TUR)
	Marseille (FRA) v Liverpool (ENG)
Group B	Chelsea (ENG) v Valencia (ESP)
	Schalke 04 (GER) v Rosenborg (NOR)
Group C	Olympiakos (GRE) v Werder Bremen (GER)
	Real Madrid (ESP) v Lazio (ITA)

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## Ronaldinho staying put

AFP, Barcelona

Barcelona president Joan Laporta said Sunday that Brazilian superstar Ronaldinho was not for sale and quashed reports that the club was negotiating with English giants Chelsea or European champions AC Milan.

Speaking after Barcelona's 2-1 win over Deportivo La Coruna on Sunday Laporta said: "We are not going to sell Ronaldinho. We are not in contact with Chelsea, Milan or any other team."

"We are counting on Ronaldinho and you could see tonight that he fought like all the rest of the players."

Chelsea, bankrolled by Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich, have been mooted as potential suitors along with Milan who have several of Ronaldinho's Brazilian international teammates in their ranks.

Ronaldinho has cut a forlorn figure this season with the 27-year-old Brazilian, contracted until June 2010, struggling to recapture his form and Barcelona's demanding fans have jeered their idol.

There have been reports that Ronaldinho's penchant for late-night partying is behind his below-par displays although the club have tried to keep a lid on the whole affair.

Ronaldinho, the 2006 Ballon d'Or winner, started for Barca against Deportivo on Sunday and converted a penalty, his sixth goal of the season, as his team moved to within four points of leaders Real Madrid with a 2-1 win at Camp Nou.

## Pato will play in January

AFP, Rome

Highly-rated young Brazilian forward Pato should make his move to AC Milan official on January 9 or 10, the club's vice-president Adriano Galliani said on Monday.

Speaking to the club's website from Yokohama, where Milan are taking part in the Club World Cup, Galliani said he expected the 18-year-old's registration to be finalised at the beginning of next month.

Pato joined Milan from Internacional in August but as he was only 17 years-old at the time, Milan were not allowed to register him in the Italian league. Non-EU players must be 18 to be granted an Italian registration.

He turned 18 in September but by then had missed the end of the August transfer window. But once the mid-season window opens on January 1, Milan will be able to apply for a registration.

"We hope to see Pato in Italy on January 9 or 10," said Galliani.

Pato is due to go to Brazil to sort out papers for his registration while Milan take part in a winter training camp in Dubai from January 2-10.

The young forward is already front page news in Italy where television cameras film him training and the country's main sports newspaper, Gazzetta dello Sport, even discusses the goals he scores in training.

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## Barca reduce deficit

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona showed real character to stay within four points of leaders Real Madrid with a 2-1 win over struggling Deportivo La Coruna on Sunday maintaining their flawless home record.

Cristian put Deportivo ahead after just two minutes to stun the home crowd but a 40th minute penalty from Ronaldinho restored parity and Xavi struck the winner to make it a perfect eight home wins in the league.

Barcelona, who welcomed Samuel Eto'o and Deco back from injury, stay second and coach Frank Rijkaard will want to stay close to Real ahead of 'El Clasico' at Camp Nou on December 23.

"It was not a brilliant game but we won and Eto'o and Deco came back from injury so it was very important," explained Rijkaard.

"We are slowly getting players back from injury and we have a lot more options now and the team is gaining confidence."

"We want to win and play well but we are not at our best at the moment."

Atletico Madrid are a point behind Barcelona in third after a hard-fought 1-0 win over derby

rivals Getafe.

Uruguayan international Diego Forlan settled a game full of incident with four sending-offs in 14 minutes.

"It is three vital points," said Atletico manager Javier Aguirre. "Sometimes you can't win 4-0 playing beautiful football and you need to fight and get physical."

Villarreal slip to fourth after as the wheels appear to be starting to come off their title bid following a 1-0 home defeat by Real Betis.

"Beti's did not deserve to take the three points," lamented Villarreal coach Manuel Pellegrini. "We played well against a team that scored with their only chance in the match."

"We tried everything but it is difficult against a team with ten men behind the ball."

With Thierry Henry still out due to a back complaint Barca coach Rijkaard started with Eto'o, Ronaldinho and Lionel Messi in attack.

For Cameroon striker Eto'o it was his first match since badly injuring his knee on August 28.

With Real defeating Athletic Bilbao on Saturday the pressure was on Barcelona and they had a horror start with Cristian firing La Coruna ahead after just two minutes to stun the home fans.

Barcelona had won all seven league matches at Camp Nou and responded with all-out attack. Five minutes before half-time

Messi was adjudged to have been brought down in the area and Ronaldinho converted the subsequent spot-kick.

Xavi then popped up with the decisive goal on 71 minutes to guide Barca back to within four points of Real.

Atletico are also emerging as potential title contenders but they needed to fight their way to the points against Getafe in a stormy encounter.

On 64 minutes, Atletico saw Argentine Kun Agüero sent off for two yellow cards - one for diving and the other an intentional handball.

Seven minutes later Getafe defender Lucas Licht was issued his marching orders and his goalkeeper Pato joined him minutes later after handling outside the area.

Seconds later Atletico winger Jose Antonio Reyes was shown a straight red for a crude tackle as emotions ran high.

Finishing in the top four looks a tall order for Sevilla although they got back on the right track with a 3-1 win over Real Murcia on Sunday.

Brazilian Luis Fabiano moved into double figures for the season, to top the scoring charts, with a brace (4, 89) and Italian Enzo Maresca converted a 58th minute spot-kick.

Sevilla move ninth but just qualifying for Europe is the aim for the back-to-back UEFA Cup winners although they are still in the Champions League.

## It's Inter versus the rest

AFP, Rome



It may be only 15 games into the 38-match Italian season but already fans and media here are branding Inter Milan as unstoppable.

The gap between the champions and second-placed Roma is only five points but already Inter have an air of invincibility about them.

Yet the coaches of the three main title rivals have been at pains to calm down the fear that the champions will romp away to another Serie A title.

Last season they finished more than 20 points clear of Roma in second while also setting a new record of 17 league wins in a row.

Inter further added to those fears of domination at the San Siro on Sunday by drubbing Torino 4-0 while Roma dropped two points in a 1-1 draw at Livorno.

Third-placed Juventus needed a Pavel Nedved stunner four minutes from full-time to beat Atalanta 1-0 at home to avoid falling further behind than the eight-point gap they already have to Inter.

Roma's goalscorer Daniele De Rossi spoke of his frustration at Inter's ability to churn out wins after his team's draw in Livorno but his coach Luciano Spalletti said people should stop getting carried away.

"I know my players, they will keep going until the final match. We're not frustrated," he insisted. "We're determined to stay the course."

It is fans and media that seem to have already hung the winners' medals around Inter's collective neck but nerazzurri coach Roberto Mancini is wary about complacency.

"We're not even halfway

through the season and although it's better to have a five-point gap than a three-point one, every match we play is difficult and we have to stay focussed," he told Sky Sport.

"I think Roma are just as strong as Inter, Juve too, even if they have changed a lot, they are dangerous

because they're not playing in the Champions League. We want to stay in front but the championship is a long race."

Juventus are a much changed outfit from the one that was dominating Serie A before their demotion to Serie B for match-fixing.

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Inter Milan striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic laps up the applause after scoring from a penalty during their Serie A clash against Torino at the San Siro on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP



TURKISH DELIGHT: Middlesbrough striker Sanli Tuncay (R) disappears into the crowd to celebrate his winning goal against Arsenal during their Premier League encounter at the Riverside on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP