Real dominate Barcelona

AFP, Madrid



The 2007/08 Spanish league season will be remembered as the season when Barcelona performed the guard of honour at the Santiago

Bernabeu to applaud the title success of their arch rivals Real Madrid.

Real clinched a league double over Barcelona and the guard of honour followed by a 4-1 thumping of their foes in 'El Clasico' will live long in the memories of Real

Under new coach Bernd Schuster Real retained the league title for the first time since 1990 with an impressive 85 points.

For Barca it was a second consecutive year without a trophy and Frank Rijkaard paid the price when he was axed after five years at the helm.

It was a season when Barca took the headlines for all the wrong reasons with Ronaldinho's party antics and Thierry Henry's complaints about being forced to play on the wing.

In stark contrast it was a season table. to remember for Villarreal who

direct entry to the Champions

Sevilla and Valencia were safety. expected to push for the title but they were to have topsy-turvy seasons allowing Villarreal and Atletico Madrid to break into the top four and qualify for the Champions League.

Sevilla's season started with seconds of the match. the death of Spanish international defender Antonio Puerta just three days after their opening day 4-1 win over Getafe on August 25.

Puerta, who was only 22, collapsed on the field after suffering a heart attack and later died in hospital.

The incident took its toll on Sevilla who struggled and Juande Ramos, who led the club to backto-back UEFA Cup wins, jumped ship to Tottenham Hotspur at the end of October.

The club picked themselves up sion. to finish fifth and seal a place in

Valencia started well but the football of coach Quique Sanchez Flores was deemed too negative and he was dismissed at the end of October with his side fourth in the

finished runner-up with an went on to lift the Kings Cup but attacking brand of football to seal Valencia got dragged into the relegation battle and Koeman was sacked as the club struggled to

> Getafe, under new coach Michael Laudrup, lost to Valencia in the cup final and suffered heartbreak against Bayern Munich in the UEFA Cup quarterfinal losing to the German giants in the dying

> It was to be a bad season all around for Spanish teams in Europe with no trophies as Real Madrid lost to Roma in the last 16 of the Champions League while Barcelona reached the semifinals before crashing out to Manchester United.

> Real Zaragoza, sixth the previous season, had hoped to be mixing it with the big boys but ended up being relegated on the final day of the season joining Real Murcia and Levante in the second divi-

Real Mallorca's Daniel Guiza edged Sevilla's Brazilian Luis Fabiano for the Pichichi crown Luis Fabiano and Christian with 27 goals.

Guiza was the bad boy of Spanish football renowned for his late night partying but he had his best ever season although his Ronald Koeman took over and goals were not enough to get leaving Getafe.

Mallorca in Europe as Racing qualified for the UEFA Cup for the first time in their 95-year history.

Along with Real duo Iker Casillas and Raul, Guiza was one of the stars of the season while Barcelona's 17-year-old Bojan Krkic was the real gem unearthed.

Krkic belied his years to force his way into the Barca first team and turned down the chance to go to the 2008 European championships with Spain due to fatigue. A hectic summer is expected

with a mass exodus of managers and players. Guardiola replaces Rijkaard at Barca who are set to sell Deco,

Ronaldinho and Samuel Eto'o in the summer. Champions Real want to strengthen -- with Didier Drogba and Cristiano Ronaldo the top two

targets -- to try and secure a third straight league title. Villarreal and Atletico will have to fight off interest in Guiseppe Rossi and Kun Aguero while Sevilla could see a mass exodus with Seydou Keita, Daniel Alves,

Poulsen all targets for big clubs.

Racing are set to lose promising coach Marcelino - with Valencia and Sevilla interested - while Laudrup has confirmed he is



PHOTO: AFP

Real Madrid captain Raul Gonzalez displays a matador's cape as he celebrates winning the Primera Liga title after beating Levante 5-2 at the Santiago Bernabeu on Sunday.

Maradona on celluloid

Football

AFP, Buenos Aires

director Emir Kusturica's docuthe Cannes Film Festival, was a status even before he starred in Barcelona. their 1986 World Cup success.

other side of the fame/infamy coin as he became addicted to drink and drugs, while his weight ballooned.

Despite his excesses, Diego Armando Maradona, born in 1960 in Buenos Aires, continues to enjoy the adulation of millions in his shirt he always wore after bursting on the international scene while still a teenager.

through the England defence in the ach stapling operation. 1986 World Cup quarterfinals to net the winner after his controversial a level only with Pele, the Brazilian vision presenter. widely accepted until then as the best player ever.

Maradona continually courted controversy, his drug use leading to a pair of bans - notably after the 1994 World Cup finals in the United States where he failed a dope test for ephedrine.

for cocaine in Italy, where he had and dramatic health downturns become a cult hero with Napoli,

He started playing professionally days before his 16th birthday Diego Maradona, star of Bosnian with Argentinos Junior but switched in 1981 to Boca Juniors, mentary to be released Tuesday at where he would stay barely a year, thrilling a packed and shaking footballing genius upon whom Bombonera stadium before head-Argentina fans bestowed godlike ing to Europe and joining

Three years later he switched But retirement brought the again to Napoli and won two league titles before the drugs controversies overwhelmed him, though he would have a short spell with Spain's Sevilla before heading back to Argentina and winding down his playing days aged 37 in 1997.

homeland and embodies the leg- remains the Pibe de Oro, the end of the "diez," the number ten Golden Child, who had made good after an upbringing on the wrong side of the tracks.

His extraordinary talents, as against him as his drug and weight evidenced by his slaloming run problems mounted prior to a stom-

He has battled hard to beat cocaine and in the meantime "Hand of God" opener, put him on enjoyed successful stints as a tele-

When he was still pitchside national teammate Jorge Valdano said of him: "I wanted to stop play-

But Valdano also cautioned against anyone emulating his later

Since the turn of the century

For Argentines he was and

But the wheel of fortune turned

ing and just watch him."

off-field lifestyle.

In 1991 he had been suspended Maradona's life has comprised a for 15 months after testing positive helter-skelter of brash celebrity

he was hospitalised at the Uruguayan resort of Punta del Este whom he had joined in 1984. in 2000 with a heart attack brought on by drugtaking. He recovered and headed to Cuba for a treatment - the island's

> longstanding friend while the player also admired late revolutionary Che Guevara. Maradona spent the next four years shuttling between the Communist Caribbean state and Argentina battling his ongoing

former leader Fidel Castro is a

cocaine addiction. In 2004, a further heart attack saw him come within an ace of death and once more he left for treatment in Havana.

But he rallied and lost some 50 kilos after undergoing gastric bypass surgery in a Colombian clinic in March 2005.

In March, 2007, Maradona was readmitted to an Argentine hospital for treatment for hepatitis and the effects of alcohol abuse, then released and re-admitted. He was discharged two months later and a year ago insisted his drinking and drug abuse were behind him.

Two years beforehand he had invited Pele onto his television show to reminisce, only to slide towards the abyss once more.

Since his last brushes with poor health Maradona has increasingly sought to make a political impact, praising Castro and Hugo Chavez, Venezuela's left-wing president, while deriding the United States.

Ronaldinho set

Brazil's two-time World player of the Year Ronaldinho is set to leave Barcelona, the club president Joan Laporta has said.

station that the midfielder, who struggled with injuries and poor form last season, needed new challenges. "When the wheel turns, it's

normal that the key figures leave," Ronaldinho to leave like (coach) Frank Rijkaard and that we can keep the memories of a player who helped us win two league titles and one Champions League trophy."

Barcelona, who failed to win a trophy for the second straight year in the 2007/2008 season, announced on May 7 that Rijkaard would leave at the end of the season and be replaced by former player Josep Guardiola.

to the capital city.

"I prefer to spend my time talking about things that have some bearing to reality," he told a press conference late on Sunday.

that Real were still interested in buying Ronaldo who has put off all talk of his future until after Wednesday's Champions League final in Moscow against Chelsea.

up Garay

AFP, Madrid

Spanish champions Real Madrid moved swiftly on Monday to secure their first recruit for next season as they outlayed a reported 10million euros for Argentinian defender Ezequiel Garay from Racing Santander.

Both sports newspapers Marca and AS agreed on the fee whilst Marca said the 21-year-old Argentinian had signed a six year contract.

Garay, who had also been much sought after by Barcelona, joined Santander in 2005 and for a central defender had an extremely productive season in 2006-07 when he scored 10 goals.

release Kaka for Olympics

AFP, Rome

AC Milan have told Brazil that they will not release star midfielder Kaka to take part in the Beijing Olympics football tournament in August.

its website that while it would agree to release players such as Alexandre Pato and Rodrigo Digao, who are both under 23 years, it would never agree to release players who were older than that.

Each country qualified for the Olympics tournament has the right to select three players who are older than 23 years in their squad.

that Kaka, who is already part of the Brazilian national team is included for official game in the Olympic squad," AC Milan said. The 25-year-old World foot-

baller of the Year in 2007 has signed a new deal with the Italian giants which will see him stay at the club | standings which leaves us out of the until 2013.

Van der Sar wants winners' medal

CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar has hinted that als. he could retire when his current Old Trafford contract expires in 12 months time - and he is determined to bow out with at least one more Champions League winners' medal to his name. The 37-year-old former Ajax and

Juventus man lines up in his third Champions League final when Sir in Moscow on Wednesday. Van der Sar won European foot-

ball's biggest club prize as a 24-yearold when he helped Ajax defeat AC Milan in Vienna in 1995. A year later he reached the final again but experienced the bitter taste

penalties to Juventus in Rome. Twelve years on from his last appearance in the final, he is looking to help United repeat their feat of 1999 when they were crowned cham-

Real Mallorca's

Daniel Guiza is

the recipient of

this season's

Pichichi crown

for the top scorer

in the Spanish

first division

with his tally of

27 goals three

AFP, Madrid

pions of Europe after winning the Premier League. He admitted facing Chelsea in the Russian capital could be his final

chance to become a member of an exclusive set of players to win two Champions League winners' med-Van der Sar's United contract expires next summer and the longserving Holland international admit-

ted that his opportunities are runningout. 'Maybe in 1995 (when I won it) I felt I was going to get more opportu-

nities," he said. Alex Ferguson's United face Chelsea more years so my opportunities are running out. I might as well take this

> "It is a great competition and I am really pleased to reach the final and have another chance again.

"I know what it is like to win and to lose the final. I know what it is like to of defeat when his Dutch club lost on have the high and the lowest point

you can possibly get. "It is massive. All the players know what they have to do. They know

Ferguson in Moscow for giving him the chance to shine on the Champions League stage again.

already indicated he would be keen The Dutchman thought his to stay on at the club and Rooney opportunities of appearing in the competition were gone when he joined Fulham from Juventus in 2001 | should not be the case. after an unhappy spell in Italy. But Ferguson's decision to sign

him three years ago presented the player with a chance to bow out on a "During my time at Fulham I went to watch Chelsea a couple of times in

the Champions League," he recalled. "I went to see them against "I'm going to play one or two Barcelona and Bayern Munich. I remember seeing Oliver Kahn doing the warm-up and thinking, 'I used to be doing this' and 'what must I do to

> get there again?' "You hope that you get the chance and that someone will give you the

opportunity to do it again. "At Fulham, that was going to be difficult.

"That's why I am very grateful to get this opportunity with United. I'm enjoying it, I'm taking it all in and I'm concentrating on helping us get the trophyonWednesday."

succeed but was known as one of

Spain's party animals that put foot-

ball second and has become some-

Xerez, Barcelona B, Recreativo

Spanish celebrity Nuri Bermudez

Bermudez is the mother of Guiza's

child and a UEFA-licensed football

squad for this summer's Euro 2008

Guiza is competing with Fernando

Torres and David Villa but if he can make

an impact a huge summer transfer

He has admitted that Barcelona

championships.

could be on the cards.

sure to be a number of suitors.

who is an actress famous for taking

her clothes off on television.

agentwhoused to represent him.

Huelva, Getafe and now Mallorca.

Wednesday. "Carlos is a great player and works really hard for the team. I had no doubts at all we could play

> "From his first day in training with us, you could see the qualities

"I couldn't wait to play alongside him. He's been brilliant, he's a battler, he works so hard for the

childhood sweetheart Coleen McLoughlin next month says that beating Chelsea on Wednesday and getting a winners' medal would be a perfect early gift.

With a new family Guiza has flourished on the pitch and was called up to the Spain squad for the more if I win. first time in November last year and he has made it into Luis Aragones'

"However it wouldn't be unbearable if we lost because you have your football and your family life. They are two different things and you can't really let it upset you too much.

around you and you don't want to be sitting around grumpy.

would be a dream move but there are "When I am with my family, football doesn't get mentioned that much."

Denisov refused Hiddink's call

AFP, Moscow

Russia's coach Guus Hiddink said Monday that Zenit St Petersburg midfielder Igor Denisov had

Euro-2008 finals but he has refused," Hiddink said. "It's his decision and we have to respect it. I'm not set to invite

anybody else. We need to avoid any negative elements in our preparations for the final stage."

on May 14.

Zenit won 2-0 with Denisov scoring the winning goal, Hiddink phoned the midfielder to invite him to join the national side but Denisov

Greeks fancy their chances

AFP, Athens



Greece's triumph in the 2004 Euroships was a shot in the dark but the proud Greeks will be dead set on one-off when the

present edition gets underway in Austria and Switzerland on June 7. Seldom could the term punching above their weight have been more appropriate than when Greece saw off then titleholders

France, flamboyant Czech

Republic and hosts Portugal in the

knockout stages to take the crown of European champions. They looked to have been the equivalent of one hit wonders when they failed to make the 2006 World Cup finals but under the shrewd stewardship of German Otto Rehhagel they rebounded from a 4-1 home defeat in the Euro

Turkey to top their group. Rehhagel has since been rewarded with a contract worth

2008 qualifiers to historical rivals

80,000 euros a month. With a group comprising perennial underachievers Spain, Sweden and the unpredictable Russians, the Greeks will fancy their chances

of progressing to the last eight. Whether they are better or at the same level as last time round, up front they do look to be a more potent force with Euro 2004 final scoring hero Angelos Charisteas, on-loan Celtic marksman Georgios Samaras and the player who has really supplanted them in recent years Theofanis Gekas, who has become an effective goalscorer in the Bundesliga.

There is not much artistry in their midfield, more blood sweat and tears than piercing visionary passing movements, but if they are to flourish then Bolton Wanderers' playmaker Stelios Giannakopolous will have to be on his game and back up his skipper Panathinaikos'

great shot stopper.

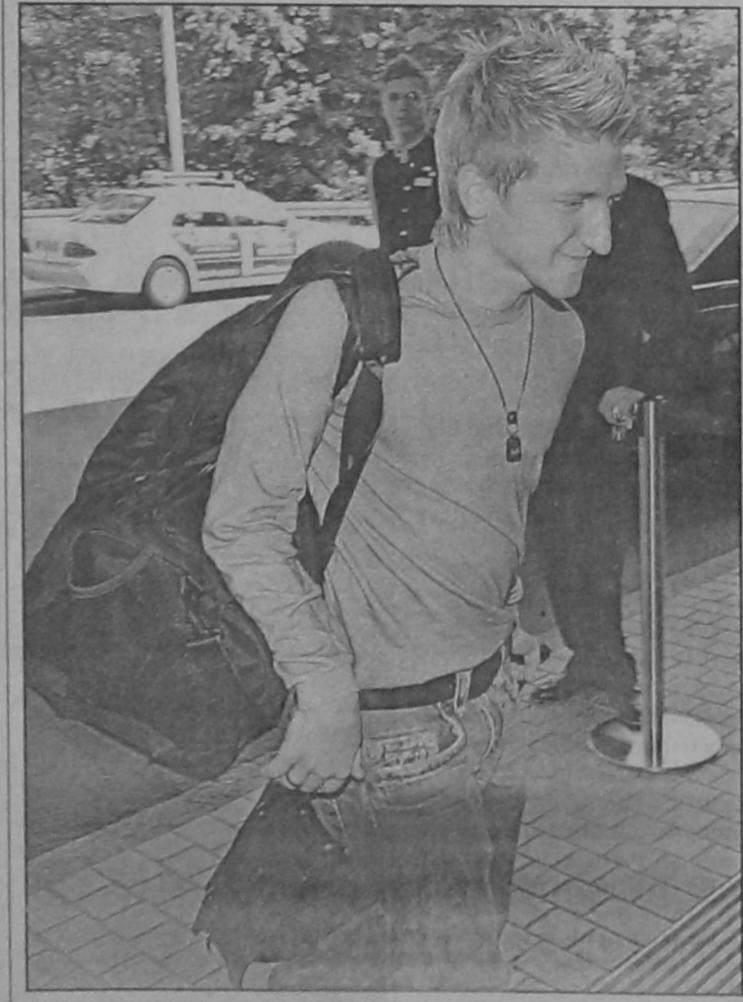
Georgios Karagounis. They will have to fill the not inconsiderable boots of Theo Zagorakis, who was named man of the tourna-

caps in the national side with 120. Defensively they are solid with Atletico Madrid's Giourkas Seitaridis especially important and possess in Antonios Nikopolidis a

ment in 2004, and holds the record for

In what must be a good omen in a land historically linked with gods and omens, Karagounis struck twice in a friendly in late March to see off the Portuguese 2-1 and give the champions a timely boost.

Greece may not be easy to the eye but they are certainly no-one's punch bag and their rivals will be fooling themselves if they go into their games underrating them.



German teenage midfielder Marko Marin is seen arriving in Frankfurt yesterday where the national football team members meet to get their Euro outfits.

to leave Barca AFP, Madrid

Laporta told the Catalan TV3

he said. "I would very much like for

Bernd Schuster, the coach of league champions Real Madrid, meanwhile, scoffed at press reports that he was preparing to launch a mega-deal to bring Manchester United winger Cristiano Ronaldo

Marca sports daily had reported

Real snap

Milan won't

The club said in a statement on

"The club feels that it is unfair

coveted fourth spot. "We have to accept the final the league. Before we thought about reaction, Champions League," said Ancelotti.

Van der Sar is desperate to repay Guiza finally delivers

> Real Madrid coach Bernd Schuster, who coached Guiza at Getafe, describes the target-man as one of the best finishers in the league and his finish in the 3-2 win over Barcelona last weekend was an

European championships represent

a terrific year for the enigmatic Guiza.

example of his instinct in front of goal. Guiza always had the talent to

TOP SCORERS Leading scorers in the Spanish first division after the final weekend's round

Sunday although it was not enough to secure a place in Europe with Racing Santander holding onto the 19 - Kun Aguero (Atletico Madrid) final UEFA Cup berth. 18 - Nihat Kahveci (Villarreal), Raul But for Guiza it has been his best Gonzalez (Real Madrid), David Villa ever season as he shows signs of

putting his wild partying days behind him to fulfil his undoubted potential at the age of 27. A Pichichi title, an international call-up and a place in Luis Aragones's

Spain squad for this summer's

AC Milan coach

season in purga-

them after missing out on

Milan had spent most of the

season playing catch-up after getting

off to a dreadful start and due to their

involvement in both the European

qualification position - only to lose 3-

1 at Napoli last week and hand the

Milan finished their campaign

Supercup and Club World Cup.

initiative back to Fiorentina.

Champions League qualification.

achievers have a games at the San Siro.

AFP, Rome

better than Sevilla's Luis Fabiano.

last seven matches as Real Mallorca

defeated Real Zaragoza 3-2 on

Guiza scored his 10th goal in his

of matches in the 2007/2008 season: 27 - Daniel Guiza (Real Mallorca) 24 - Luis Fabiano (Sevilla)

(Valencia) 17 - Ricardo Oliveira (Real Zaragoza)

16 - Diego Forlan (Atletico Madrid) Samuel Eto'o (Barcelona), Ruud van Nistelrooy (Real Madrid)

15 - Diego Milito (Real Zaragoza) 'A season in purgatory'

> down season in which we paid for Carlo Ancelotti ourstart to the season at home." Milan failed to win a home league drawing five of their first seven

"We have to think about the

mistakes we made. It was an up and

tory ahead of year in purgatory ahead of us but we will tackle it with the same enthusiasmas always. the league to be competitive. We

won'troll over but we will graft. Milan's vice-president Adriano Galliani preferred to remind every-But with two matches to go they one about Milan's past glories rather had clambered their way up into the than dwell too long on this season's top four - a Champions League failings.

years," he said. with a 4-1 win over Udinese but it ago we won the Champions League wasn't enough as Fiorentina's 1-0 and five months ago the Club World team regardless of their results. victory at Torino gave them the Cup.

> "From August 31 we'll think about week the players have given the right other things and we achieved our objectives.

Fiorentina coach Cesare Prandelli Sunday that his match until January, losing two and admitted he was worried his team wouldn't make it over the finish line. They had to wait 76 minutes "We didn't do enough. We have a before a spectacular Pablo Osvaldo

However, he did give grudging

praise to the club's cross city rivals

"Whoeverwins is right," he said.

Inter, who won the league.

"Were we afraid not to make it? Of course, we were afraid because we "We'll concentrate our efforts on created six or seven chances and (Torino goalkeeper Matteo) Sereni was fantastic," he said.

bicycle kick secured the win.

more difficult. "Fortunately Osvaldo's goal changed the season, at least from the "We're sorry to be in the UEFA point of view of our critics.

desire to get a result, everything is

"When there is the tension and

Cup, it's (only) the second time in 10 "That's the one thing I don't like. If you want to change football you have "You shouldn't forget that a year to look at it from a sporting perspective and look at the potential of a "The path was long but week by

> "This is a team that has spirit, soul, where we've created a group."

AFP, London Wayne Rooney wants Manchester United strike partner Carlos Tevez to stay on at Old Trafford when his loan period expires next year. The Argentina international has

Rooney urges

Tevez to stay

believes there is no reason why that "I don't see why that shouldn't happen," said Rooney. "Carlos

enjoys playing his football here.

"He's got his wife and child with him, who don't live too far away from me. "He's a nice, quiet lad who gets

Tevez joined United last year after playing a major role in saving West Ham from relegation and he has been a huge hit in the northwest as the club successfully defended their title and reached Wednesday's Champions League

on with his job and he's enjoying

standing with Rooney and the respect is mutual ahead of the Champions League final against Chelsea in Moscow on

He has formed a good under-

together," said the England striker.

thing of a journeyman in spells with team - it's been unbelievable." It now appears that he has settled Rooney, who is due to marry down in his personal life with

> "Yes, it will make the wedding a bit better," said Rooney. "Of course, I'll enjoy the summer

"You've still got people there

rejected his invitation to join his squad in their preparations for the European championship's "I invited Denisov to join our team in our preparations for the

Press reports said that Denisov was offended after he was not included in Hiddink's preselection, which was announced

After the UEFA Cup final, which