

Chelsea midfielder Frank Lampard (R) practises with the ball during a training session in Guangzhou on Tuesday.

# Scolari assures Lampard

## Football

INTERNET, undated

Frank Lampard has been told he is an integral part of manager Luiz Felipe Scolari's plans - and his former boss Jose Mourinho has conceded the Chelsea midfielder is unlikely to move to Inter Milan this season.

On a day of Chelsea activity that saw goalkeeper Petr Cech pledge his future to the club, confirmation from chief executive Peter Kenyon of their interest in Real Madrid forward Robinho and the departures of Claude Makelele and Khalid Boulahrouz, Scolari chose to speak in glowing terms about Lampard, despite the continued uncertainty over his future.

It remains to be seen whether his manager's support will be enough to convince Lampard to commit to Chelsea by signing the four-year, £140,000-a-week contract on offer, or move to Inter next summer if his demands for an additional year and an extra £10,000 a week are not met.

But, following Lampard's inclusion in Chelsea's summer tour squad, Mourinho conceded the chances of his being reunited with the England man at the San Siro in the coming season are diminishing. "For Lampard, it will be easier to play with Chelsea until the end of his contract rather than break it now, all of a sudden," admitted Mourinho. "It seems to me difficult for him to be able to come here now. It's easier that he comes next season."

Scolari would seem to agree and, speaking here in China, he insisted the lines of communication remain very much open with Lampard.

"We are talking every day about Chelsea: what's the best way for Chelsea to play and about the positions that are best for him at times in the games," said Scolari. "Not about anything else, only the way Chelsea win games with Lampard. The most important thing is that he is here with us."

Kenyon reiterated the club's stance regarding Lampard's contract situation, adding: "It is an important statement he is on tour with us. We have always said we want Frank to stay and we are confident he will. But if we cannot agree he will honour the last year of his contract. We do not sell our best players."

Speculation is rife that Didier Drogba could be leaving Chelsea and his non-inclusion in the tour squad did little to dampen rumours in Spain that he is bound for Barcelona. Scolari, however, was adamant his absence was down to a long-standing knee problem.

"Didier's future is at Chelsea because he has a contract with us and I think he is happy," said Scolari. "He is injured and the doctor and our medical staff put together a recuperation plan for him and he will be out for three weeks, maximum four weeks."

Kenyon confirmed negotiations are continuing with Real Madrid over Robinho, despite more contradictory messages from the Brazilian who said yesterday that he wants to stay with the Spanish champions.

# Lothar sees a Bayern stroll

INTERNET, undated



22nd Bundesliga title next season.

The Bavarians cruised to the crown last year under Ottmar Hitzfeld and, despite not spending a euro this summer, Matthias feels Bayern have taken a further step forward under new coach Jurgen Klinsmann.

"On paper, it should be a stroll (for Bayern)," he told Eurosport. While Bayern have added just free-transfer signings Tim Borowski and Hans-Jorg Butt to their squad this summer, their rivals have been spending a little more money - particularly Schalke, who Matthias tips to push them closer than last year.

"All of the opponents are going to be highly motivated against Bayern," continued Matthias - currently coach of Israeli team Maccabi Netanya, who are touring Germany during pre-season training.

Bremen have a strong team, but I would reckon on Schalke, too, due to their transfers.

Leverkusen have always got a strong squad, and then there are Hamburg and Wolfsburg who will

be the six teams playing for places in the Champions League or UEFA Cup while you should not forget Stuttgart either.

"The Bundesliga is certainly not going to be boring." Matthias also feels Bundesliga clubs will have a thing or two to say in Europe next season.

Last year, Schalke reached the quarter-finals of the Champions League while Bayern made the last four in the UEFA Cup, but no German side has triumphed in Europe since Bayern lifted the Champions League in 2001.

Both Stuttgart and Bremen crashed out of the Champions League in the group stage last year and no German representative has made the last four since Bayer Leverkusen lost the final in 2002.

That could be about to change, though, according to Matthias.

"Bayern always managed to have a team which belongs to the favourites while the others have strengthened in a way that they can represent German football better than in recent years," he said.



Former France international midfielder Claude Makelele (L) and new PSG president Charles Villeneuve pose with Makelele's new jersey during a press conference at the Parc des Princes Stadium in Paris on Monday.

# Podolski pledges Bayern future

AFP, Munich

Bayern Munich's German international star Lukas Podolski on Monday scotched rumours about his departure from the German champions, after talks with new coach Jurgen Klinsmann.

"I've just had a meeting with Jurgen Klinsmann. For now, I'm concentrating on the coming season," said Podolski, who has recently been linked with a move away from the German giants.

Asked if he would be wearing the Bayern strip when the club take on Hamburg in the first game of the season, Podolski replied: "Of course."

He spent most of last season on the bench behind Miroslav Klose and Luca Toni - last season's top Bundesliga scorer - making just four league starts as Bayern did the German league and cup double.

"I cannot be happy with what happened last season. I didn't play much and it's normal to ask questions," the 23-year-old said on Monday.

"My goal for this season is to not be on the bench," he added.

Klinsmann was impressed by Podolski's performances at Euro 2008, where the striker netted three times and started all six games to take his international tally to 54 caps and 28 goals.

Podolski joined Bayern for 10 million euros (15.7 million US dollars) from Cologne after the 2006 World Cup.

Premier League sides Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester City and Italian side Juventus have expressed an interest in Podolski, as have German clubs Werder Bremen, Cologne and VfB Stuttgart.

# Messi awaits Olympic fate

AFP, Madrid

Lionel Messi, who has been called on to represent his native Argentina at the Olympics, remained at a Barcelona pre-season training camp in Scotland on Tuesday with the approval of Argentina's Football Federation, a Barcelona spokesman said.

The 21-year-old winger will stay in Saint Andrews while he waits for world football governing body FIFA to decide whether or not Barcelona are obligated to let him take part in the Games in China next month, the spokesman told AFP.

Messi has repeatedly expressed his desire to help Argentina defend their Olympic title but the Catalan club has been reluctant to let him go as he is needed for early Champions League matches.

Spanish media reported Tuesday that a compromise may be in the works which would see the playmaker take part in one Champions League match and then joining the Argentine squad in Beijing.

The Olympic tournament begins on August 6 with the final on August 23, but the first leg of the third Champions League preliminary round is scheduled for August 12-13.

Barcelona's pre-season training camp in Scotland, will last until July 26. The team will face Scottish Premier League side Hibs in a friendly on July 24 and Dundee United two days later.

# No loan deal for Baptista

AFP, Rome

Brazilian forward Julio Baptista's agent on Monday ruled out the possibility of his client signing a loan deal with AS Roma.

Baptista is hoping to leave Real Madrid where he has endured an unhappy time, warming the bench more often than running around on the pitch and even being loaned out to Arsenal in a swap with Jose Antonio Reyes during the 2006/07 season.

Roma have been chasing the player known as 'The Beast' but his agent Herminio Mendez said there would be no temporary deal.

"No, a loan is impossible, in this case my client would stay at Real," Mendez told Centro Suono Sport.

"He could leave but only on a permanent deal, but Real would set the price."

Newspaper speculation in Italy has been rife with rumours that Baptista will ply his trade at the Stadio Olimpico next season, but Mendez denied being in touch with the Italians.

"At the moment no-one from Roma has contacted me and I haven't spoken to Real Madrid."

"I know only what has been written in the Spanish newspaper Marca and that two representatives from Roma came to Madrid to talk to the club."

"Whatever happens Baptista can only join Roma if Real agree to sell him."

The 26 year old Baptista has spent five years in Europe since joining Sevilla from Sao Paulo in 2003.

# Terry still haunted

## Essien, Cech sign new deals

### Football

AFP, Guangzhou

Chelsea captain John Terry admitted he was still haunted by his horror penalty miss in the Champions League final as he gears up for the new season here.

Terry, who will lead Chelsea against Guangzhou Pharmaceutical on Wednesday, said mental replays of the botched spot-kick plagued him every morning.

"Every morning I wake up and it's the first thing on my mind. I still think of it," he said.

"I'm still very disappointed by it, but last season I said I'm a big man and have a big character and it's down for me to deal with it."

Terry slipped and sliced his kick against the post in the Moscow shoot-out, throwing away the chance to seal the title and handing a lifeline to eventual winners Manchester United.

It was the 27-year-old defender's last contribution for Chelsea before their pre-season tour, which includes three stops in Asia and a return to Russia for the four-team Railways Cup.

Terry said scoring for England soon afterwards helped ease the pain, but he remains desperate to atone under new coach Luiz Felipe Scolari.

"Having the England games

straight afterwards helped flush it away a tiny bit, but hopefully we will be successful with the new manager and players this season and flush away all those bad memories," he said.

Goalkeeper Petr Cech, who has signed a new five-year deal, is another player out to erase bitter memories after his howler helped Turkey dump the Czech Republic



JOHN TERRY

out of Euro 2008.

"The European Championships are all over for me. These things happen in football and I'm here with Chelsea and looking forward to the new challenge," Cech said.

"I'm happy to be back at training. Mistakes can happen to everyone, but it's important to get over it and keep working harder and harder."

Terry was hit especially hard by his error, which left him weeping uncontrollably. He later issued an open apology to fans and revealed he had trouble sleeping for days afterwards.

Chelsea have brought a virtually full-strength side, including new signings Deco and Jose Bosingwa, as they prepare for a new era under Scolari - their third manager in the space of a year.

On Tuesday, the club announced a fresh five-year deal for industrious midfielder Michael Essien, who joins Cech and defender Wayne Bridge in committing to the club.

British media reported that the deal was worth a cool 20 million pounds (40 million dollars) with Essien banking 80,000 pounds a week.

Scolari, the ex-Portugal boss who took Brazil to the 2002 World Cup title, will be under no illusions about the expectations of billionaire owner Roman Abramovich.

His immediate predecessor Avram Grant was sacked despite taking Chelsea to their first Champions League final and finishing just two points behind Manchester United in the Premiership.

Jose Mourinho, who assembled much of the current team, left under a cloud last year despite delivering six trophies in three years and remaining unbeaten in home league matches.

# Gunners feel the strain

INTERNET, undated



Eduardo Da Silva will miss the opening two months of the new season, raising the need for Arsenal to sign a new striker this summer.

The Brazil-born Croatian, recovering from a badly broken leg, had hoped to be back playing in August but it is understood he is unlikely to resume full training before the end of September.

Arsenal have carefully monitored Eduardo's recovery - physiotherapist Gary Lewin even visited him in Brazil where he has spent the summer - and the club are now hopeful he will be back in first-team action by October.

In the meantime, manager Arsene Wenger is faced with a heavily-depleted forward line which will be further damaged if the club fail to convince unsettled striker Emmanuel Adebayor to stay

at the Emirates.

Barcelona and AC Milan are interested in signing the Togo international but Arsenal have offered him significantly-improved contract terms on his £35,000-a-week deal.

Wenger held talks with Adebayor at the club's London Colney training ground before the squad left for their pre-season tour of Hungary and Austria.

During the meeting, it is understood that Adebayor failed to commit his future to the club but did not ask for a transfer either.

Wenger this week insisted the club are 'very confident' of keeping Adebayor, but they are in the market for a new striker to join Nicklas Bendtner, Theo Walcott and Carlos Vela.

The Gunners have so far been linked with Blackburn's Roque Santa Cruz, Zenit St Petersburg's Andrei Arshavin and Ajax's Klaas-Jan Huntelaar.

So far this summer, Wenger has only made two signings - Samir

Nasri and Aaron Ramsey - but has promised at least one more significant arrival.

Eduardo suffered a double-compound fracture of the left tibia and fibula when tackled by Birmingham's Martin Taylor in February and missed the last 14 matches of the season.

His absence and that of Tomas Rosicky, who missed the same 14 games because of a knee injury, was a key factor in Arsenal's disappointing end to last season.

Rosicky is due to begin training in four weeks' time after having surgery so he, too, will miss the start of the new season.

The Czech captain does not expect to be back until September which rules him out of Arsenal's opening Premier League games against West Brom, Fulham and Newcastle as well as the Champions League qualifying round.

Rosicky said: "I know I will miss the start of the season but I should be back on the field in September."

# 'Don't make worst move'

## Football

AFP, Durban

Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson has claimed that Cristiano Ronaldo would be doing the 'worst thing' for his career if he succeeding in engineering a move from Old Trafford to Real Madrid.

The 23-year-old Portuguese forward once again refused to rule out a move to the Spanish champions over the weekend, despite Ferguson's insistence last Friday that he would not be leaving Old Trafford.

But Ferguson, in Durban ahead of United's friendly clash with Orlando Pirates on Tuesday, insisted again that Ronaldo will be staying at United.

And he also warned the player that Madrid is the last place he should be attempting to move to.

Ferguson said: "If you were asked for advice by your son, you would give him the best advice and the worst thing Ronaldo could do at

the age of 23 is to go to Real Madrid.

"He is at the right club and a fantastic football club and the future is that he has signed a five-year contract and has four years left. That's definite because I have seen his signature."

"In the modern-day, young lads can be twisted by the talk of money, but if you saw Ronaldo after the Champions League final, he was the happiest boy in the world. I genuinely believe that I know what the best club in the world is for him and that is Manchester United."

"When you have young players, you want the best for them and you want to do the best for them."

United midfielder Michael Carrick has urged Ronaldo to think again about his future after insisting United are on the verge of more glory.

Carrick said: "The best thing I have done is to come here (from Spurs). For me it is a no-brainer."

"Everything that surrounds the club is moving in the right direction and we want to build on that, but we have to use what we have achieved.

We drive ourselves on and we expect so much of each other.

"People from outside have nothing to do with us but we know what we are capable of and that means more European Cups and Championships."

Ferguson remains in the hunt for Spurs hitman Dimitar Berbatov, despite Tottenham's attempts to keep the Bulgarian at White Hart Lane.

But the United boss admits that adding new blood to his squad is not easy, despite last season's Champions League win.

He said: "We did a lot of stocking up last summer, buying four players of good ages as part of a policy of bringing in footballers who could develop and we think there is further progress there."

"I had 23 players in Moscow and they will still be there for this season because we are happy with the squad."

"It is difficult for us to buy and improve on that because we know why clubs don't want to sell their best players and we don't either."

# Chelsea deny Eto'o bid

INTERNET, undated

Chelsea have denied making a bid for Barcelona striker Samuel Eto'o despite claims from the Cameroon international he has received offers from the Blues, Tottenham and Inter Milan.

The 27-year-old, who is currently in Scotland with Barcelona, told Corriere dello Sport yesterday he has received a 'few important offers. Which ones? Chelsea, Tottenham and Inter.'

But Chelsea sources, who are currently with the club in China as part of the Blues' pre-season tour, denied making an offer for Eto'o.

A club spokesman said: "We deny making a bid or any offer for Eto'o."

Eto'o's agent, Jose Maria Mesalles, also refused to rule out the possibility of the former Real Mallorca striker remaining at the Nou Camp despite speculation over his future.

After arriving in southern China yesterday ahead of tomorrow's pre-season opener against Chinese Super League outfit Guangzhou Pharmaceutical, chief executive Peter Kenyon also ruled out a move for AC Milan playmaker Kaka, while revealing discussions with Real Madrid over fellow Brazilian Robinho were ongoing.

Portugal duo Deco and Jose Bosingwa have already arrived at Stamford Bridge this summer, while veteran French midfielder Claude Makelele and Dutch defender Khalid Boulahrouz departed for Paris St Germain and VfB Stuttgart respectively yesterday.

# Ronaldinho's number is 80

AFP, Rome

New AC Milan signing Ronaldinho will wear his number 80 shirt this season, the club said on Monday.

The Brazilian forward, twice world player of the year, chose the number because it corresponds with the year of his birth.

Ronaldinho usually wears the number 10 shirt but that is already taken by veteran Dutch midfielder Clarence Seedorf and Milan vice-president Adriano Galliani revealed that no-one at the club would force a player to relinquish a shirt number.

"We've never asked a player to give up his number and we won't do this time," said Galliani.

"That would show a lack of respect. The 10 is Seedorf's, he has it and no-one has tried to convince him to give it up to Ronaldinho."

The club's shirt manufacturer Adidas said they have already received 11,000 pre-orders for replica Ronaldinho shirts.

# Schalke try to stop Rafinha

INTERNET, undated

Schalke 04 are willing to go as far as the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in an attempt to prevent Rafinha from playing for Brazil at next month's Beijing Olympics, the German Bundesliga football club confirmed Tuesday. The Schalke defender left his club's training camp in Austria Monday in order to link up with the Brazil Olympic squad despite being refused permission to travel.

"We have written to the Brazilian Football Federation CBF and the IOC (International Olympic Committee) demanding that Rafinha be prevented from playing at the Olympics," said Schalke general manager Andreas Mueller.

"If the CBF doesn't comply with our wishes then we will take the case to CAS."

German-based Rafinha, Diego of Werder Bremen and Bayern Munich's Breno have all been selected for Brazil's Beijing squad but Breno is the only one to have received permission from his club to travel to China.

# Zaki joins Wigan

AFP, Wigan

Egypt striker Amr Zaki has joined Wigan on a one-year loan deal from Cairo's Zamalek, the English Premier League club announced on Tuesday.

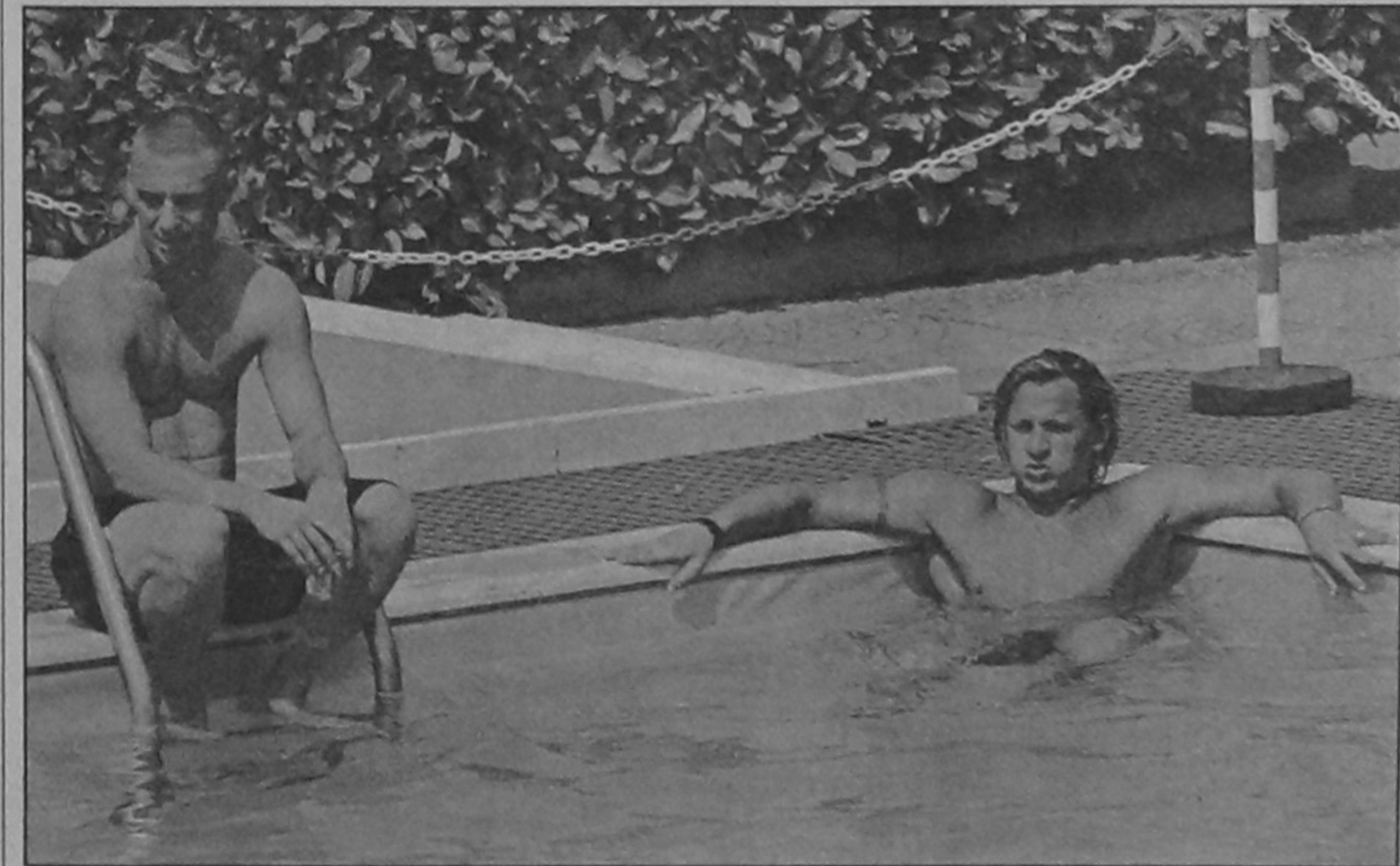
"I've come to England to score goals," Zaki said. "That's what I do. I want to show the manager and the fans of Wigan that they have made a good choice and now I am totally focused on trying to get in the squad and prove myself here."

Latics boss Steve Bruce was relieved to have finally got his man after spending ten weeks wrapping up the terms of the arrangement.

"It has been a tough deal to push through but I am delighted that Amr's finally a Wigan player and he can just get on with the job."

With 27 goals in 48 appearances for his country, the 25-year-old Zaki caught Bruce's eye with his performances on the international stage.

"Anyone with that kind of strike rate in international football knows where the back of the net is," said Bruce.



Roma midfielder Daniele De Rossi (L) and defender Philippe Mexes relax in a pool at Trigoria's training ground in Rome on Tuesday.