

FROM CRAZY TO OBSCENE City increase Kaka bid

Football

AC Milan's Brazilian star Kaka will Monday examine the megadeal which Premiership big-spenders Manchester City are dangling in front of him before deciding if he wants to make the most expensive move in footballing history...

Injury trouble for MU

Just as it seemed things could not be going better for Manchester United, a sudden flurry of injuries threatens to derail the champions' drive for a third straight Premier League title...

Sir Alex Ferguson's side head for Bolton on Saturday knowing three points will allow them to leapfrog Liverpool and top the table for at least the 48 hours before their rivals entertain Everton in Monday's Merseyside derby...

Patrice Evra (ankle) and Rio Ferdinand (back) will both definitely miss Saturday's match and Ferguson's defensive headache has been exacerbated by the injury suffered by back-up centreback Jonny Evans in Wednesday's 1-0 win over Wigan...

The win over Wigan was United's ninth consecutive clean sheet and Ferguson

hailed Vidic's outstanding form as the key to that run. "His reading of the game is excellent and he is as tough as nails," the Scot said of big Serb...

Chelsea's morale was revived by a 4-1 FA Cup win at Southend in midweek but the mental scars created by last weekend's 3-0 demolition at Old Trafford could be reopened when Stoke visit Stamford Bridge...

FIXTURES

Table with 2 columns: Day and Match. Saturday: Bolton v Manchester Utd, Chelsea v Stoke, Hull v Arsenal, Manchester City v Wigan, Sunderland v Aston Villa, West Brom v Middlesbrough. Sunday: Tottenham v Portsmouth, West Ham v Fulham. Monday: Liverpool v Everton.



French striker Sylvain Wiltord (R) poses with his new jersey during a press conference in Marseille on Thursday after he signed on a six-month loan from Rennes.

Calderon steps down

Football

Real Madrid president Ramon Calderon stepped down on Friday following allegations that he rigged voting at the club's last annual general assembly, which approved its financial accounts, Spanish media reported...

delegates to get the club's annual accounts for 2008 and its budget for 2009 approved by a slim margin. He fired two club officials over the affair on Wednesday but he rejected calls at that time that he step down, saying he had done nothing wrong...

Juande Ramos was made coach in December and are preparing to face Liverpool in the Champions League knockout stages in February and March. While the defending Spanish champions are in second place, they still trail the Catalan side in the Spanish league by 12 points.

WHY KAKA MIGHT MOVE...

- (1) Kaka and fellow Brazilian Ronaldo, signed last summer from Barcelona, have not gelled as twin three-quarter players behind the striker in coach Carlo Ancelotti's favoured 4-3-2-1 formation; (2) Milan want to bring back the 22-year-old Yann Gourcu, who is on loan to Bordeaux, and plan to play him in Kaka's role; (3) Milan intend to extend David Beckham's contract through to 2010 and want to use the Englishman in a more advanced role; (4) Kaka is no longer the golden boy at Milan, the mantle having passed to Brazilian striker Alexandre Pato and the tactical approach will be about getting the ball to him as quickly as possible.

Rafa rejects new deal

Liverpool manager Rafael Benitez has rejected the terms of a new contract offer with the English Premiership leaders, the Liverpool Echo reported on Friday. Benitez explained he wanted a new deal to give him more control over football matters instead of having to answer to a club chief executive.

The Echo said that Benitez, stressing money was not the issue, had informed American owners Tom Hicks and George Gillett...

"The owners feel that the manager's decisions need to be subject to the chief executive. But I know that I am subject to results and to our fans and they are the best judges I will ever have," Benitez said.

Benitez, 48, had earlier indicated that "we have agreed the length of contract and we have agreed the salary" but still had to reach agreement on "my role and my responsibilities as manager of the club."

Assistant Sammy Lee takes charge in his absence.

Kaka bid bemuses Fergie

Manchester United's neighbours have lodged a bid of more than 100 million pounds for the Brazilian playmaker, having paid 32.75 million for Robinho in September.

The offer for Kaka is a signal of City's intent and while Ferguson is still dismissive of the Eastlands clubs' short-term threat, he is surprised at the level of investment. He said: "I find it hard to get my head around it to be honest. It's amazing but football is football and sometimes you get shocks and surprises and I think it's surprised everyone."

Ferguson refused to be drawn into commenting on reports that his old rival Real Madrid president Ramon Calderon has resigned but said: "Good luck".

Palacios going to Spurs

Wigan manager Steve Bruce on Friday confirmed there is virtual agreement with Tottenham for the Latics' Honduran midfielder star Wilson Palacios in a deal worth around 14 million pounds (18 million dollars).

"The two clubs have virtually agreed a fee. It is how that fee should be paid," Bruce said. "It is up to us as a selling club to demand what we want in terms of how we should be paid and how we should be structured. We will see what happens."

Elena takes Sydney title

Tennis



Elena Dementieva of Russia displays her trophy after defeating compatriot Dinara Safina in the Sydney International final on Friday.

Elena Dementieva will head into next week's Australian Open riding on a wave of 10 straight wins this year after downing Dinara Safina in an all-Russian final at the Sydney WTA International Friday. The world number four finished strongly to register a 6-3, 2-6, 6-1 win for her 13th career WTA title.

Becks set for home debut

and bitter city rivals Inter Milan.



David Beckham will reveal in the limelight and he enjoyed plenty of it ahead of his AC Milan debut last weekend but he has had to take a backseat behind teammate Kaka ahead of this weekend's visit of Fiorentina.

Beckham will make his first appearance for Milan at the San Siro in a crucial clash that the Rossoneri must win if they are to harbour any hopes of claiming the Serie A title this season. But Brazilian superstar Kaka's on-off transfer to Manchester City has been more than a simple distraction from the Italian giants' preparation.

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Eto'o warns Barca

good thing." Depor are enjoying a great season lying seventh, five points behind Real Madrid, and will hope to get over their midweek Kings Cup exit to Sevilla by becoming only the second team to defeat Barca in the league.

Barcelo face Deportivo La Coruna at Camp Nou on Saturday with a 12-point lead over Real Madrid and Sevilla. "We can't afford to rest on our laurels because we've thrown away big leads before," said Eto'o. "We can't afford to get tired of winning."

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KAKA WORTH FOUR F16s

Manchester City's 197-million-dollar offer for Brazilian superstar Kaka would be a world record transfer if the deal was to go through. The fee could also come in useful in other parts of the world. - It could buy almost four F16 fighters which were priced at 55 million dollars each in 2008. - It could cover the GDP of a host of nations. For example, in 2005, the Cook Islands's estimated GDP was 183,200,000 dollars, the Marshall Islands 115,000,000 and Anguilla 108,900,000. - It could buy as many models of the world's most expensive car as you desire. In 2008, the Bugatti Veyron, at 1,192,057 dollars, was the top-priced on the market. - It could cover the annual operating costs of the USS Nimitz, the world's most expensive aircraft carrier in 2006.

Manucho joins Hull

Hull on Friday agreed to take Manchester United's Angolan striker Manucho on loan until the end of the season. Manucho has made one Barclays Premier League appearance to date for United, who last season loaned him out to Greek side Panathinaikos. Hull still have to secure a work permit for the 25-year-old. The Tigers are also chasing former Liverpool right-back Steve Finnan from Espanyol.