

Milan in for Adebayor

Football

SOCCERNET

AC Milan vice-president Adriano Galliani has revealed he has talked to Arsenal about the possibility of signing Emmanuel Adebayor.

The Rossoneri's first choice remains Wolfsburg star Edin Dzeko but with the Bundesliga club remaining firm that he is not for sale, Milan are starting to look at alternatives.

Galliani indicated on Thursday that they might be interested in Adebayor and it now appears that the Serie A side have stepped up their interest in the Togo international.

"We don't have any agreement with Dzeko," said Galliani. "He is a Wolfsburg player. Dzeko has expressed his liking for a move here but at this

moment there are no negotiations yet.

"We wrote to Wolfsburg and they responded that he is not for sale. If Wolfsburg change their minds we have agreed they will call Milan. If they do I am ready to immediately leave and go there.

"There's no fee yet, at the moment Dzeko is not for sale. If he becomes for sale then we will start talking sums.

"Adebayor and (Sevilla striker) Luis Fabiano are the alternatives. For Adebayor there has been a telephone call, during which (Arsenal manager Wenger) Wenger was friendly."

Speculation has been rife that midfield duo Andrea Pirlo and Gennaro Gattuso would be joining former coach Carlo Ancelotti at Chelsea.

However, Galliani reiterated that no offers have been made for Pirlo, while Gattuso has offered to take a pay cut to

extend his stay at the San Siro.

Galliani said: "There have been no offers for Pirlo and Thursday night with Ancelotti was just a dinner between old friends, seeing as Carletto was in Milan for his daughter's graduation.

"Wednesday night I was at dinner with Gattuso who told us that he was ready to reduce his salary. He still has two years left on his contract, so it will move to three years, reducing the salary.

"Gattuso is an example, a true man, extraordinary."

Meanwhile, Davide Di Gennaro returns from Genoa after Milan won a blind auction to buy out the other club's half of the players' rights.

The Rossoneri also confirmed that they have beaten off competition from several other Serie A clubs to the signature of 18-year-old Treviso striker Gianmarco Zigoni.

Barca confirm City offer for Eto'o

INTERNET, undated

Samuel Eto'o could be on his way to Manchester City after Barcelona president Joan Laporta revealed the Barclays Premier League club had made the striker a "stratospheric offer".

Speculation has been rife about where Eto'o will be next season as, with his contract set to expire next summer, Barca were keen to either tie him to a new deal or cash in on the Cameroon striker.

Reports suggest the Catalan giants have accepted a 30 million euro bid from City and Laporta believes the temptation of a mega salary would prove too much for Eto'o.

Eto'o has a stratospheric offer from City, which would convert him into the best paid player in the world," he told Catalan radio station iCat FM.

"It's starting to become clear that he has this monster offer. He wants to stay but an offer like this is very difficult to refuse.

"If Eto'o accepts this stratospheric offer we will have to bring in someone."

Eto'o contributed 36 goals last season as Barca claimed an unprecedented Primera Division, Copa del Rey and Champions League treble.

Should the 28-year-old leave the Nou Camp, Barca would likely step up their efforts to land Spain and Valencia striker David Villa.

Matthaus pulls out of Hungary job

AFP, Budapest

German football great Lothar Matthaus will not become the head coach of Hungarian side FC Fehervar after talks between the parties broke down, the club announced on Saturday.

"The negotiations did not bear fruit," the club said in a statement, declining to give further details.

"The parties consider the details of the failure of the negotiations to be confidential, therefore will not disclose more information."

The 48-year-old former head coach of the Hungarian national team came to Hungary last Friday to discuss the terms of his employment at Fehervar after a prior agreement was reached on June 10.

Matthaus, who represented Bayern Munich and Inter Milan with distinction in his playing career as a sweeper and midfielder, was the captain of the West Germany team that won the 1990 World Cup.

As a coach, he took charge of the Hungarian national side but left the post after failing to secure qualification for the 2006 World Cup in his homeland.

He spent the 2008-2009 season in charge of Israeli side Maccabi Netanya, with whom he parted company in April after a lacklustre campaign.

Located in Szekesfehervar, FC Fehervar finished sixth in last season's Hungarian first division championship.

Dzeko staying at Wolves

SOCCERNET

AC Milan target Edin Dzeko has revealed he will be staying at Wolfsburg.

The Bosnian international was Milan's top transfer target this summer as they look to bolster their attacking options following the sale of Kaka to Real Madrid.

Dzeko has attracted the interest of a host of clubs after inspiring Wolfsburg to the Bundesliga title last season with 26 goals in 32 games.

Milan have not hidden their desire to sign Dzeko, but Wolfsburg have remained adamant the player would be staying at the club.

Dzeko held talks with Wolfsburg officials over the weekend and they have informed him he will be going nowhere, much to the dismay of the 23-year-old.

"I am staying at Wolfsburg," Dzeko told Sky Sport 24. "But I am not happy. I would like to join Milan, but I am tied to a contract and the club have decided not to release me."

Wolfsburg are thought to be offering Dzeko a new improved deal to keep him at the club and it could mean Milan step up their interest in Arsenal ace Emmanuel Adebayor as an alternative to Dzeko.

Door open for Ronaldinho

Football

SOCCERNET

Ronaldinho, the former World and European Player of the Year who was left out of Brazil's squad for the Confederations Cup, still has a role to play for Brazil, coach Dunga said on Saturday.

Dunga omitted the out-of-form playmaker for both Brazil's recent World Cup qualifiers and this tournament. But he told a news conference before Sunday's final against the United States that Ronaldinho could yet return to the squad.

"I would like him to come back," said Dunga, "but whether he will come back I don't know."

"I think you must address that question to him directly. He obviously has that responsibility on his shoulders, it depends more on him than on me, but I would like him to come back."

Before the tournament started Dunga said he wanted Ronaldinho to return to full form before he picked him again.



RONALDINHO

Ronaldinho has failed to settle at AC Milan since his move from Barcelona last year and has recently been confined mostly to the bench.

He was substituted in Brazil's 1-1 World Cup qualifying draw in Ecuador last March after one of his worst performances at international level and found him-

self among the substitutes for the following game at home to Peru and came on late in the match with Brazil already leading 3-0.

However, Brazil have not exactly missed him in South Africa over the last two weeks, despite his impressive international record of 32 goals in 87 international appearances.

Brazil scored 10 goals in their three opening matches against Egypt (4-3), U.S. (3-0) and Italy (3-0) in the qualifying group and, although they only beat hosts South Africa 1-0 in Thursday's semifinal, they still created 23 scoring opportunities in the match, according to FIFA's official statistics.

Dunga also rejected a remark made by Franz Beckenbauer on Friday that Brazil's attack of Robinho, Luis Fabiano and Kaka, was not potent enough to win the World Cup next year.

"Anyone can have an opinion," said Dunga. "So let's just look at the number of goals we scored here."

"We had the best attack in the group stages and scored 10 goals and you can't argue against the numbers and the facts."

Bayern can keep Ribery

Football

SOCCERNET

Bayern Munich sporting director Christian Nerlinger believes the club can convince Franck Ribery to stay by matching his lofty ambition.

Ribery has made no secret of his desire to play for the likes of Real Madrid or Barcelona while Chelsea and Manchester United are also tracking the Frenchman, who Bayern claim is one of the best three players in the world at present.

However, Nerlinger is convinced he can help build a team around Ribery; one that he can be proud of and one which will not only convince him to fulfil the remaining two years of his contract, but stay with them even longer.

"We have got to provide Franck with the perspective of being on the same level as Europe's elite," he said. "That is what he wants and then he will be happy in Munich."

Bayern have already splashed the cash in the transfer market this summer,

giving new coach Louis van Gaal several new players to work with next season, including 30m euro striker Mario Gomez and former Zenit St Petersburg midfielder Anatoliy Tymoshchuk.

Yet Nerlinger has not ruled out spending even more to ensure Bayern can challenge in the Champions League as well as the Bundesliga in the coming seasons, if only to satisfy the Frenchman.

"In the mid-term, we will have very, very positive conditions here," he added in the Bild am Sonntag newspaper. "We have got to offer him a top European club."

Ribery will report back for pre-season training with Bayern on Wednesday, barring a last-minute change of heart by the Bavarian club's management as Real maintain their interest in the 26-year-old, aided by their new transfer advisor Zinedine Zidane, who appears to be doing all he can to convince Bayern to part company with the winger.

A sale is still possible until the end of August, though, and Bayern's bosses may well change their minds if they get the impression Ribery is no longer committed to their club.

"Obviously Ribery himself is decisive: what does he want and how does he behave," added Nerlinger, who will be keeping a close eye on the Frenchman in the build-up to the new season.



FRANCK RIBERY

Real sounding out Benzema

Football

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid have offered 32 million euros for Lyon striker Karim Benzema after switching their attention to the France international from Valencia forward David Villa, Marca sports daily reported on Sunday.

Marca said the French have yet to respond to Real's offer but last week Bernard Lacombe, adviser to Lyon chairman Jean-Michel Aulas, told Marca that "nothing is impossible and if we receive a good offer we will not close the door to anyone."

Lyon's director of communication Olivier Blanc said merely that "the only news is Real Madrid contacted Olympique Lyon a few days ago to discuss Karim Benzema."

"Benzema and Olympique Lyon confirmed

his initial desire is to stay another year with Lyon," Blanc said, adding that was also the club's preference.

Manchester United are also admirers of Benzema but Real have decided to swoop now given the reluctance of Valencia's new chairman Manuel Llorente to sell them Spain striker Villa.

Real chairman Florentino Perez, who has already landed Cristiano Ronaldo and Kaka this summer for huge fees, has twice met with Benzema's agent Karim Djaziri, first in Madrid then Geneva, Marca reported last Wednesday as the chase heated up.

As well as a cash deal, media reports in Spain say Real and Lyon could look at a part-exchange in the shape of either Real's Dutch striker Klaas-Jan Huntelaar or his compatriot, winger Arjen Robben.

DFB Cup Bremen at Union Berlin

INTERNET, undated

German cup holders Werder Bremen travel to newly-promoted second division club Union Berlin in the first defence of their title in the draw for the first round on Saturday. Bundesliga champions Wolfsburg are meanwhile at third-division Wehen Wiesbaden, while record league and cup winners Bayern Munich are at the amateur sixth-division side Neckarelz.

Another lower league side with a chance of a giant-killing act are fifth-division outfit Germania Wundt who have a home draw against Schalke 04.

Last season's losing finalists Bayer Leverkusen are meanwhile at fourth-division Babelsberg 03 while newly-promoted second-division side Fortuna Dusseldorf are up against SV Hamburg.

Among other ties third-division Kickers Offenbach come up against traditional local rivals Eintracht Frankfurt from the Bundesliga.

Torres wants Spaniards at Liverpool

SOCCERNET

Fernando Torres has revealed he has recommended three of his Spanish compatriots to Liverpool boss Rafael Benitez.

The Spain striker believes the Reds need "small players with quality" to finally wrest the Premier League title from Manchester United and would like Benitez to sign David Silva, Juan Mata or David Villa from Valencia.

"English football is very difficult because it's very physical and played at a high tempo," Torres said. "We have a fantastic team to play against the big teams and we are competitive."

"But maybe against those teams lower down we are not good enough. We have to improve that and I think we can."

"I think we can definitely be stronger at home. We have some very good players but maybe we need other players. I hope Liverpool will bring people like Silva, Mata or Villa. These are small players with quality like United had with Carlos Tevez and also with Paul Scholes."

"They are clever players and maybe they can make the difference. Yossi Benayoun plays like these kind of players and I hope we can bring more like that so then we have different options to play against all the sides."

The former Atletico Madrid frontman added: "It was frustrating but football is difficult against the smaller teams. We need players with quality to try to win these matches and I want Liverpool to sign players like this."

"We finished four points behind United but we are improving. We are getting more points every season. I know that every year we can finish with more points. I have recommended the names to Benitez and I hope we have the money."

Arbeloa wants out

SOCCERNET

Alvaro Arbeloa is desperate to quit Liverpool and join Real Madrid - according to his agent.

The 26-year-old's future is in doubt, with Liverpool boss Rafa Benitez confirming the signing of Portsmouth right-back Glen Johnson and Real are ready to offer up to 8 million pounds for Arbeloa, who is unlikely to figure on Merseyside next season.

Manuel Garcia Quillon, the Spaniard's agent, said: "Alvaro has a year left on his current deal and Rafa Benitez knows that it's best to let him go now."

"The career of a football player has many stages and he is qualified to play anywhere."

OPEN SECRETS

INTERNET, undated

Serena Williams could find herself a bit peckish in the Wimbledon locker room as she finally took note of the strict rules about not eating in that premises. If that is the case, the American complains on her website, why are bananas and energy bars on offer to competitors inside the locker room as well?

"I'm an athlete and my diet is very important during a tournament," said the ten-time Grand Slam champion.

"Before a match, I eat in the locker room, it's a part of my routine," Williams said that when informed she could no longer nosh in the zone, "I was in shock."

"I'm a member of the All England Club. As I am looking around the locker room a bit upset I must admit, I notice someone placing bananas and

health bars into a basket for the other players and myself."

"Why have food in a room if we aren't allowed to eat in the locker room. This rule is unfair and new. There was no warning that this new rule would be implemented and I don't agree with it."

"I totally dislike rules that do NOT make sense."

The club said that Williams got the wrong end of the stick on a regulation which has been in place for nearly a decade since the opening of the new Millennium complex in 2000.

With Williams saying she hardly ever goes into the player restaurant, ignorance of the rule may be understandable.

Less of a racket

Marat Safin left Wimbledon this week for the last time as a player, with his career-long trail of smashed rackets not

many months from its natural conclusion.

The personable - yet mercurial - Russian who retires at the end of the season takes the prize for destruction of tools, with his racket company Head surely ready for some relief after a decade or more of shipping in replacements.

Safin reckons he's gone through nearly 150,000 dollars in broken rackets, crashed and smashed in the heat of the moment on court. "Breaking all those rackets, it was worth it."

"I'd guess I have smashed 700 in my career, maybe more. That's not so many. The rackets probably cost about 200 dollars each, so 700 rackets, not so much really."

The 140,000 guess-timate comes in addition for nearly 100,000 dollars in disciplinary fines for the two-time Grand Slam winner and former number one.



PHOTO: AFP

Felix Magath, the new head coach of Bundesliga club Schalke 04, addresses the club's annual general meeting at the Veltins Arena in Gelsenkirchen on Sunday. Magath took over from Fred Rutten.