

## 'La Liga is now better'

Football

THE GUARDIAN

Cristiano Ronaldo believes the Spanish league will leave the Premier League trailing in terms of quality next season, following Real Madrid's lavish summer spending spree.

Real's close-season outlay is close to breaking the £200m mark after they agreed deals for Ronaldo, Kaka, Karim Benzema and Raul Albiol. More big-name arrivals are believed to be in the pipeline.

The arrivals of Ronaldo and Kaka, the last two winners of the Fifa World Player of the Year awards, plus that of Benzema, the much-coveted Lyon striker, suggest Madrid should be a force to be reckoned with and according to Ronaldo, that means La Liga will be a cut above the Premier League.

"The Premier League is a very good competition, but I think that the Spanish league is going to have a little more quality because of the players that are arriving," said Ronaldo, who spent six years with Manchester United before his world-record £80m switch to Madrid this summer.

"Both leagues are going to be very good, but I think that with [the Real president] Florentino Pérez's signings the Spanish league is superior

to the English. It's going to be a magnificent competition in Spain this year. All the players have a lot of quality and the referees protect the players more."

Real finished a distant second to Barcelona in the league last season and were knocked out of the Champions League at the last 16 stage for the fifth year running, after being hammered 50 on aggregate by Liverpool.

"To win the Champions League in our stadium would be a great dream. I think it's possible with all the players we have," said the Portuguese international in an interview with Marca, referring to the Bernabéu's hosting of the 2010 final. "[However], you need to recognise that the champions, Barça, had a great season and played very well. They have a great team and a magnificent coach. It's going to be a very important duel for Spanish and European football and very nice for all of us. I think it will be a great season."

Ronaldo played down talk of repeating Barça's treble-winning achievement, though: "We are going to take it step by step. The priority is the league. The Champions League is very nice, but it also depends on luck and the ties that you get."

"My hope is to win at Real Madrid everything that I won during my time at Manchester United. With the structure Real Madrid have, this is possible."

## Bernie in hot water

Football

INTERNET, undated

An interview by Bernie Ecclestone in The Times newspaper, where the Formula One supremo praised Adolf Hitler for his ability to get things done, has led to a furore among Jewish groups. Ecclestone, 78, made the comments in an extensive interview with the British newspaper Friday where he praised the virtues of strong leadership and condemned contemporary politicians for their weakness.

In a lot of ways, terrible to say this I suppose, but apart from the fact that Hitler got taken away and persuaded to do things that I have no idea whether he wanted to do or not, he was in the way that he

could command a lot of people, able to get things done," Ecclestone said.

Ecclestone went on to support the concept of a government based on tyranny. Politicians are too worried about elections," he told the paper.

"We did a terrible thing when we supported the idea of getting rid of Saddam Hussein. He was the only one who could control that country."

"It was the same [with the Taliban]. We move into countries and we have no idea of the culture. The Americans probably thought Bosnia was a town in Miami. There are people starving in Africa and we sit back and do nothing but we get involved in things we should leave alone."

Ecclestone's comments unleashed bemusement and criticism from Jewish groups

with a spokesman for the Board of Deputies of British Jews calling them "quite bizarre."

Meanwhile, Stephen Pollard, Editor of the Jewish Chronicle, said Ecclestone was either "an idiot or morally repulsive".

"Either he has no idea how stupid and offensive his views are or he does and deserves to be held in contempt by all decent people," he said.

Ecclestone's remarks are certain to revive memories of the controversy around reports of a bizarre sex scene involving FIA president Max Mosley.

The head of motorsport's ruling body FIA and son of the British fascist leader Sir Oswald Mosley last year sued the News of the World for breach of privacy after the newspaper alleged he had taken part in a concentration camp-themed scene involving six prostitutes.



Indian legend Sachin Tendulkar (R) accompanied by his wife Anjali (C) watch proceedings in the final of Wimbledon between Roger Federer and Andy Roddick on Sunday.

## GOLD CUP USA thump Grenada

AFP, Seattle

The United States, who are fresh from their Confederations Cup success, got their Gold Cup tournament off to a successful start with a 4-0 blanking of lowly Grenada on Saturday.

The defending champion Americans got goals from Freddy Adu, Stuart Holden, Robbie Rogers and Charlie Davies.

The US, which was permitted to carry a 30-man roster compared to just 23 for Grenada, outshot world No. 88 Grenada 25-3.

They will also face Honduras on Wednesday and Haiti on July 11 in Washington, D.C. and Foxborough, Massachusetts.

The American are trying to become the second team to win three-straight Gold Cups. The last team to do it was Mexico which won three straight in the 1990s.

The 12th ranked US has won three of the last four events and four times since the tournament began in 1991.

## Sarcasm suits Serena

AFP, London



Serena Williams mocked Dina Safina's status as world number one on Saturday after wrapping up her third Wimbledon title and 11th Grand Slam crown.

Williams defeated sister Venus 7-6 (7/3), 6-2 and now holds three of the four majors.

But despite her success, the 27-year-old American hit out at the current system which will still see Safina as the world number one on Monday even though the Russian has yet to win a major.

Safina's position came under renewed fire when she was humiliated in the semi-finals here when she lost 6-1, 6-0 to Venus.

"I think if you hold three Grand Slam titles maybe you should be No. 1, but not on the WTA Tour obviously," said Williams.

"My motivation is maybe just to win another Grand Slam and stay No. 2, I guess. It's shocking. I'd rather definitely be No. 2 and hold three Grand Slams in the past year than be

No. 1 and not have any."

Williams then mocked Safina's ascent to the top of the world rankings.

"I see myself as No. 2. That's where I am. I think Dina did a great job to get to No. 1. She won Rome and Madrid....," she said before making a desperate attempt to limit the damage from her remarks.

"If I'd have done better at the French Open, like got to the semifinals, maybe things would have been different. But, honestly I'm not picking on anybody. Everyone works hard."

"I think the girl, Dina, who is No. 1, you can clearly see by her physique how hard she works. You can't get anywhere by not doing the best and not working your hardest."

"So, I'm happy for her but I'm really excited that I won Wimbledon. I don't know what to do to be No. 1. I don't even care anymore. I'm just happy to be here."

Venus, who had been hoping for a hat-trick of Wimbledon titles and sixth in total, admitted she may have got her tactics wrong in the final.

"I definitely would have liked to have moved forward. A lot of times when I had the short balls, they were low.

They're really low, and it's hard to come in on those and actually hit an effective shot and come in," said Venus.

"Towards the end I was too far behind the baseline. I did realize that, but at that point I guess it was a little deep into the match."

Venus had her chances in the first set but couldn't convert two break points she had carved out in the eighth game before her younger sister proved the more dynamic in the tiebreak.

Serena then went on to break to lead 4-2 in the second set when Venus double-faulted.

"She played great, especially in the tiebreak. I don't think I did too many things wrong in the tiebreak," added Venus.

"I would just play a good shot and she'd just hit a winner off of it or put me in a position where she could hit another winner."

"In the second set I guess I had two close service games. I think I lost it from the ground. I had good serves, and then from the ground I would rush the shot."

"Instead of ending the point on two shots, I tried to end it off on one."

## Sahin extends with Dortmund

AFP, Istanbul

Young Turkish international Nuri Sahin gave Bundesliga side Borussia Dortmund a boost on Saturday when he signed a four-year extension to his present contract.

The 20-year-old - who in 2005 became the youngest player in Bundesliga history to sign a professional contract when he signed for Borussia - said he had had numerous offers but had opted to stay with the former Champions

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## Van Gaal worried by Ribery saga

INTERNET, undated

Bayern Munich coach Louis van Gaal has called for a swift end to uncertainties surrounding the future of France midfielder Franck Ribery. Van Gaal told Germany's Bild am Sonntag newspaper on Sunday that whether Ribery stayed at the Bundesliga club "depended on many factors."

However the Dutch coach admitted he wanted an end to

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## Bayern set limits

Football

AFP, Berlin

German giants Bayern Munich are considering putting a fine system in place in the wake of midfielder Franck Ribery's rebellious insistence last week that he will leave to join Real Madrid.

On Wednesday, Ribery, 26, told French sports newspaper L'Equipe: "I have decided: I want to leave. It will be Real or nothing at all" which has annoyed Bayern's bosses who

have repeatedly insisted he is going nowhere.

The French midfielder maestro sat out training last week with blisters as new Dutch coach Louis van Gaal took charge on Wednesday with the new Bundesliga season set to begin on August 7.

Now Bayern's new director of sport Christian Nerlinger wants to bring in a fine system so that a similar situation of transfer poker is not played out in the media again.

"The players need to know the borders, so they don't exceed them again," said

Nerlinger.

The tougher stance is the brainchild of van Gaal, a notoriously tough disciplinarian, added Nerlinger.

"We unconditionally support him in this," he said.

And Nerlinger says he does not expect any more public comment from Ribery on the transfer issue.

"We have told Franck clearly that we are building a team around him and a sale is not an issue for debate," said Nerlinger.

"The topic will soon take

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## 'I am no traitor'

Football

SOCCERNET

Former Manchester United striker Carlos Tevez is confident he will not be viewed as a traitor by the Old Trafford faithful if he completes a transfer to the club's cross-city rivals.

The Argentina international turned down a permanent deal at United last month following a two-year loan deal and has since been linked with a lucrative move to wealthy Manchester City.

Chelsea are also reportedly tracking the 25-year-old's availability, but Eastlands is believed to be Tevez's likely destination this summer.

Tevez told The People: "If I play for Manchester City I don't think the United fans will feel I am a traitor."

"They have to remember that at least as far as I know I have been thrown out of the club and I have to study the best offers available."

Tevez's decision to turn down the offer of a five-year deal at United has been defended by his adviser Kia Joorabchian, and the player himself insists manager Sir Alex Ferguson left him with little choice but to move on.

"It has come about because I could not stand my sporting situation at Manchester United any longer," he continued.

"My first year was good in all senses. I played in the games and felt respected by the coach but in my second year some strange things happened that I still do not understand."



CARLOS TEVEZ

## Marseille president dies

Football

AFP, Marseille

Tributes poured in on Sunday for Marseille football club owner Robert Louis-Dreyfus who died after a long battle with leukemia on Saturday at the age of 63.

A statement on the Mediterranean club's website read: "The death on Saturday of Robert Louis-Dreyfus, majority shareholder of the club since December 1996 has flung the whole Olympique Marseille family into mourning."

Marseille newspapers meanwhile said that the French-Swiss billionaire's death would be a major blow to the club as it strives to restore its fortunes both on the domestic and on the European levels.

"Death of a boss" headlined L'Equipe sports daily while La Provence said that Louis-Dreyfus had been a "monument in the history of OM."

The head of the French Professional Football League Frederic Thiriez said that his death would be a major blow not just for Marseille but for the whole of French football.

"His love of football and his passion for OM were stronger than anything else," he said. "He is going to be sorely missed."

Born in Paris, but naturalised as a Swiss citizen in 1995, Louis-Dreyfus took over the then ailing football giants in 1996 having previously been the director of major sportswear companies Adidas and Salomon and CEO of British-based advertising company Saatchi & Saatchi.

He ploughed some 200 million euros of his own money into the club over a 12-year period but success on the pitch proved elusive as rivals Lyon entered a period of domination on the domestic scene winning seven straight league titles from 2002.

Worse was to follow in June 2006 when he was handed a 10 month suspended prison sentence and fined 200,000 euros for his role in suspect player transfers in the 1990s.

Louis-Dreyfus almost sold his shares in the club the following year, but a proposed deal with Canadian businessman Jack Kachkar fell through at the last moment.

This season Marseille came close to once again winning the French league title but were pipped at the post by Bordeaux and the club was once again flung into turmoil with the departure of Belgian coach Eric Gerets and mid club president Pape Diouf.

## Kaiser endorses Europe for 2018

SOCCERNET

Franz Beckenbauer believes Europe should host the World Cup in 2018 after South Africa and Brazil stage the next two finals.

The former World Cup-winning captain and coach with West Germany stopped short of endorsing any individual bids but said England would be capable of hosting the tournament.

"It's (the decision) too far away, it's more than one year to go," he told Australia's Sun-Herald: "(But) It will be Europe's turn (in 2018)."

"As a UEFA member, I would like to see it in Europe but it is an open race as to which country might get it."

"England could host it tomorrow because they have the stadiums, the infrastructure, the fans, everything."

"But there are a lot of other different countries bidding. Let's wait and see."

Beckenbauer is one of 24 members of FIFA's Executive Committee that will decide which countries host the 2018 and 2022 World Cups at a meeting in December next year.

FIFA have received nine bids for 2018 and 11 for 2022 although bids from the same continent as the successful host for 2018 would be ineligible for 2022.

The 2010 World Cup will be held in South Africa while Brazil will stage the 2014 event.

Beckenbauer said a country like Australia could be a strong candidate for 2022 if 2018 went to Europe.

"I think they have a good chance because the World Cup's never been to Australia," he said.

"Australia's a beautiful country, a beautiful continent."

## Fabiano pines for Milan

Football

INTERNET, undated

Luis Fabiano has reiterated that he hopes to seal a transfer from Sevilla to AC Milan this summer.

On Friday, the Brazilian's agent, Jose Fuentes, claimed that Milan have made an official approach to Sevilla for the striker.

Fabiano has pleaded with Sevilla to accept Milan's approach, despite reports suggesting the offer is below the Spanish club's asking price.

"I know that Milan have made an offer and I would like for Sevilla to consider it," he

told ABC.

"Until now I've preferred to stay on the sidelines, because Milan had not made me any proposals, but now I understand this is an incredible opportunity for me."

"I am happy at Sevilla, but I realise that at the age of 28 there will be few other chances like this for me. Milan are one of the best clubs in the world."

The Italian giants are keen to bring in an attacker for the new season as they look to replace Kaka, who has signed for Real Madrid.

Further speculation suggests Real attacker Klaas-Jan Huntelaar is also a target of Milan, with the Rossoneri eyeing a loan deal.



LUIS FABIANO