



DREAM COME TRUE: Real Madrid's new signing Portuguese superstar Cristiano Ronaldo (R) waves to a record 80,000 fans standing next to Portuguese legend Eusebio during his official presentation at the Santiago Bernabeu on Monday.

## 80,000 fans welcome C'Ron

Football

AFP, Madrid

Cristiano Ronaldo said on Monday he had fulfilled a "childhood dream" as he was officially unveiled as a Real Madrid player before a record-setting capacity crowd of nearly 80,000 people at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium.

"I am very happy to be here," the 24-year-old Portuguese winger told cheering fans at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in the Spanish capital after completing his long desired move to the club from Manchester United.

"For me it is the realization of a childhood dream, which was to play for Real Madrid. I never expected the stadium would be full just to see me. It is impressive," he added.

Club officials said the event had smashed the previous record for attendance at the unveiling of a footballer set in July 1984 when Diego Maradona was presented at Naples after signing from Barcelona before 75,000 people.

Real acquired the player from Manchester last month on a six-year deal worth 94 million euros (131 million dollars) and he will reportedly be paid 13 million euros each season, making him the most expensive player in the world.

Ronaldo, the 2008 FIFA world player of the year, said he was "proud" to be the world's best paid footballer and would do

all he could to help the team win the Champions League.

"I want to prove that they paid the right price for me," he told a lengthy news conference after he was unveiled where he fielded questions in English, Spanish and Portuguese.

"We have a great team, a great coach, and we have to take it step by step. We have a really good chance to win the Champions League," he added.

Real, Spain's historically most successful team, last won the Champions League in 2002.

Ronaldo wore the black and white Number 9 jersey once sported by club legend Alfredo di Stefano during his unveiling.

The Argentine striker, Real's honorary president, was present at the unveiling as was Portuguese legend and former Real player Eusebio.

The number 9 jersey was recently vacated by Argentine striker Javier Saviola who joined Portuguese side Benfica last month.

While Ronaldo wanted to keep the number 7 which he used during his six years at Manchester, that number is already taken by Real captain Raul.

"Nine is a mythical number at the club. The numbers don't play. It is me who is going to play and I am going to play well," he said.

Ronaldo arrived in Madrid on Monday afternoon on a private flight from his native Portugal where he was on holiday

to undergo medical tests before he was unveiled.

The head of Real's medical services, Carlos Diez, said Ronaldo was "in perfect condition" after the player underwent medical tests.

"His cardiac and lung capacity is extraordinary," he added.

Fans, many equipped with food and drinks to ease a lengthy wait, starting gathering at the stadium hours before the official presentation, which lasted about 30 minutes, got underway at 9 pm.

Real president Florentino Perez praised Ronaldo's "professionalism and talent" who is capable of taking the club to "the peak of world football".

Ronaldo will team up with Kaka, the 2007 FIFA world player, who signed with Real from AC Milan for 65 million euros from AC Milan in early June.

Kaka was officially unveiled on June 30 before 55,000 fans. He was the first big name who Perez signed since he returned in June for a second stint as president of Real.

Perez, who brought Luis Figo and Zinedine Zidane to Real during his first term as the club's president between 2000 and 2006, is seeking to rebuild a squad which trailed arch rivals Barcelona last season by reviving his policy of signing football superstars.

Among Real's other signings is French striker Karim Benzema from Lyon and defender Raul Albiol, who joined from Spanish side Valencia.

## Milan spring Onyewu surprise

AFP, Rome

AC Milan sprung a transfer surprise on Monday, although not one likely to appease disgruntled fans, by signing United States defender Oguchi Onyewu from Standard Liege.

The 27-year-old centre-back had come to the end of his contract in Belgium but holds a Belgian passport so will not be counted as a non-EU player on Milan's roster.

He signed a three-year deal just a couple of weeks after starting for the US in the Confederations Cup in South Africa, where they were shock finalists and even led mighty Brazil 2-0 before eventually succumbing 3-2.

He has played 38 times for his country, scoring five goals.

"This transaction shows once again the excellent friendly relationship between our club and Standard Liege, particularly their executive vice-president Luciano D'Onofrio," said a statement on Milan's official website.

The six-foot four-inch player was born in Washington DC to Nigerian parents but began his club career at Metz in France in 2002.

He was loaned out to La Louviere in Belgium in 2003 and his form there earned him a move to Liege, where he won two Belgian titles.

He spent a short time on loan at Newcastle in the English Premier League in 2007, playing 11 league matches.

However, with star player Kaka having left in a 67 million euro deal, this signing of a relative unknown is unlikely to please Milan's hardcore support.

## Bayern to sell Ribery for 80m euros

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich have set a price tag of 80 million euros on French midfielder Franck Ribery, tabloid daily Bild reported on Tuesday.

The German giants have been insisting all summer they intend to hang onto Ribery, who insists he wants to join Real Madrid.

According to Bild, Bayern have given the Spaniards an ultimatum of July 16, the day when the squad begin pre-season training, to decide if they are ready to stump up the cash or not.

The paper did not divulge their source.

With Real having prized Cristiano Ronaldo from Manchester United for a world record 94 million euros and also snapped up Kaka from AC Milan for 65 million euros, Bayern's general manager Uli Hoenes is determined to get top dollar, Bild stressed.

Bayern's new coach Louis van Gaal indicated on Sunday he wanted to see an end to the uncertainty over Ribery's future.

## 'Not a one-man band'

Football

SOCCERNET

Cristiano Ronaldo has talked down suggestions he will single-handedly lead Real Madrid to European glory next season.

However, the world's most expensive player at £80 million did admit his ambition is to once again win the Champions League trophy he claimed with Manchester United last year and will be doing everything he can to achieve it.

Madrid have been crowned champions of Europe a record nine times during their illustrious history but have badly underachieved recently, falling at the last-16 stage in each of the last five years.

Those failures have wounded Madrid and claiming that elusive 10th European crown has turned into something of a Holy Grail for the Spanish giants now, especially with next summer's final being held at their Bernabeu home.

Madrid are desperate to be in that match, and that is what returning president Florentino Perez will be demanding after splashing out an astronomical amount of money on new signings this summer.

The club have spent almost £200 million already on just four new signings - Ronaldo, Kaka, Karim Benzema and Raul Albiol - and more big-name arrivals are believed to be in the pipeline as well.

Of all of those players, the capture of reigning FIFA World Player of the Year Ronaldo is the piece de resistance for Perez and his Madrid revolution, and expectations will be high that the Portuguese ace can help deliver the trophy they so covet.

Ronaldo preferred not to see himself as the club's sole saviour in their European quest though, saying: "I'm not the only one that plays."

"In the games there are many players. I will be part of the team and I will give my best to win the Champions League."

"We have a great team and a great coach (Manuel Pellegrini). We are going to take it step by step, taking it calmly, and then we can think about winning the Champions League. We have

a decent chance, but we need to take it slow and work hard."

Ronaldo played a key role in helping previous club United reach the last two Champions League finals, which saw the Red Devils win the first against Chelsea before losing 2-0 to Barcelona in this year's showpiece.

Even without the Portugal winger in their ranks, United will again be among the favourites to reach the final next season - and Ronaldo admits he would love to meet Sir Alex Ferguson's side at the Bernabeu next May.

"It would be fantastic. He (Ferguson) joked with me, saying that he hoped to be in the final against Madrid and me, and he would put (Patrice) Evra against me to stop me, to kick me," Ronaldo said following his Madrid presentation last night.

"It will be interesting. This is now my club, but I have a good relationship with Manchester United and I wish the best for Alex Ferguson and his team."

Ronaldo, who will wear the number nine shirt at Madrid next season, was also quizzed about his side's chances of knocking arch rivals Barcelona off their throne next season.

Barca swept all before them both domestically and on the continent during the last campaign to become the first Spanish side to win the treble of Primera Division, Champions League and Copa del Rey.

Ronaldo admits he would love to repeat Barca's success, but again insisted Madrid must take it one step at a time.

"It's an ambition of mine, but two titles would be good. La Liga and the Champions League," he said.

"We need to work hard, build an organised team and then we can think of winning important things."

"With this team, this coach, and the structure of the club, combined with our ambition and hard work, we will have a good chance (of success)."

Regarding Madrid being favourites for the league, he added: "We'll see at the end of the campaign. We have a chance of winning the title, as do Barca, but there are more teams, the league is not only made up of two. I hope we will be the best."

## Fans jeer Milan

Football

AFP, Rome

AC Milan began pre-season training at their Milan base just outside the city on Monday with jeers rather than cheering ringing in their ears.

A group of about 300 of the club's ultras -- the most hardcore supporters -- gathered outside the training base to vent their fury at the club's officials.

The supporters are angry that star player and 2007 world player of the year Kaka was sold to Real Madrid while no big name signings have arrived, despite the club banking 67 million euros over the sale of the Brazilian.

Fans let off bangers and smoke bombs while chanting against the club's bosses.

But vice-president Adriano Galliani hit back against the fans by claiming they should be happy about what the club have already won.

"No-one else has won as many titles as Milan in Europe or the world," he said at Milan's first press conference of the new season, during which he also unveiled Massimo Ambrosini as the club's new captain.

"It's normal that some people protest because in life it's allowed. Season tickets are down by only 20 percent with respect to last year so that shows that 80 percent of fans are right behind the club."

Galliani was referring to Milan's record 18 internationally recognised titles but among

those there are five European Supercups and three now-defunct Intercontinental Cups.

It means that eight of Milan's world record international trophy haul were won in one-off matches against single opponents, whilst they have also won the Club World Cup once, beating just two teams to earn that honour.

Those successes have still not appeased fans who feel they should have won more than a single Champions League crown (plus Club World Cup and European Supercup) in the last five years.

"No compromise: think first about Milan and then your own interests," read one banner alluding to the fact that Milan's president Silvio Berlusconi, the Italy Prime Minister, has spent little on the team in recent seasons.

Milan finished third in Serie A last season, 10 points behind city rivals and champions Inter Milan.

But since then they have sold their best player, lost talisman Paolo Maldini to retirement and seen former England captain David Beckham return to Los Angeles following the end of his loan spell.

And yet no recognisable signings have been made in return.

Milan have not won the title since 2004 and last season were oft criticised for being over the hill.

And yet while all their thirty plus players remain, 27-year-old Kaka, in his prime, has been sold.

But Galliani remained defiant.

"Milan are not breaking up. This is a period of renewal, we want to be more careful with the balance sheet and steer towards youth," he said.

## Pele calls for salary caps

THE GUARDIAN

Pele has urged Fifa to introduce a salary cap for players and warned that the vast sums of money changing hands in the game could taint its image for future generations.

Pele, in Nigeria to promote Rio de Janeiro's bid to host the 2016 Olympic Games, said he was concerned the game had changed with the influx of money from billionaire owners.

"My time was a little different we did not have the big sponsors," he said. "Today they have big sponsors, big companies to support football. But in my point of view and the point of view of Fifa, these [players' salaries] must be controlled."

"You get a player today that they announce in Manchester United, Real Madrid or Milan or any other team, and they kiss their shirt," added Pele. "The next day, he goes to another team and he kisses that shirt. This, I think, is something we have to pay attention to for the next generation."

Pele, along with other members of Rio de Janeiro's delegation, are expected to make their pitch to the International Olympic Committee members in Nigeria's capital Abuja later today. Fellow candidates for the 2016 Games Chicago, Tokyo and Madrid will also make their case for hosting the event to IOC members. A winner will be chosen in October in Copenhagen.

"You have had a lot of Olympics in the United States, in Europe, but in South America we don't have," Pele said. "Everybody knows Brazil is prepared. Not only Brazil, but the whole of South America."

Brazil will also host the football World Cup in 2014.

## Carvalho wants out

Football

AFP, Rome

Portugal centre-back Ricardo Carvalho has reiterated his desire to leave Chelsea in an interview published in Tuesday's Corriere dello Sport.

The 31-year-old former Porto defender had a miserable season in London last time out, largely due to injuries which saw him lose his place in the Chelsea team.

And now he has set his heart on a move away from Stamford Bridge with Inter his preferred destination, although the two teams cannot agree on a fee.

"I want to start a new cycle in my career, I feel ready to do so," he said.

"I have spoken to Chelsea's bosses and they know what I want, we'll see what happens now."

"I've been in London for five years and I've had some great times. I won many things and the only thing that was missing was the Champions League, which last year (2008) escaped us only on penalties."

"The first four seasons were fantastic but the last one was really difficult. It's only right that our paths (his and Chelsea's) separate."

Carvalho has a very clear idea of where he wants to go to and more or less ruled out a move to moneybags Manchester City, who have reportedly offered three times more than Inter to try to secure his services.

"My agent Jorge Mendes knows what I want. If I leave Chelsea I only want to play for a top club, otherwise I'll stay in London and respect my contract," he added.

"I'm not saying that because

I'm being presumptuous but because over the last few seasons I've played at a certain level and I can still do so."

"Inter are a top club, even a 'special' one. I've heard great things about them," he said alluding to Inter boss Jose Mourinho's self-proclaimed nickname: The Special One.

Carvalho played under Mourinho for two years at Porto, winning the Champions League together in 2004, and his countryman even brought him to London when he moved to Chelsea.

Carvalho is keen to secure a reunion.

"I don't need to speak with Mourinho because he knows me well. When he arrived at Porto we started winning."

"They were two and a half unforgettable years and then we went together to England."

"Playing for someone who does everything to win is an important stimulant."

As well as rejoining his former boss, Carvalho hopes that Chelsea team-mate Deco follows suit and another fellow Portugal international Ricardo Quaresma stays put in Milan.

Both players, also formerly of Porto, are coming off seasons to forget with Deco failing to find his best form at Chelsea and Quaresma struggling likewise during his first season in Milan.

In January he then opted for a loan move to Chelsea but that too turned sour and he hardly ever played.

"Rest assured that he's a special player and I'm not just saying that because he's my friend and we played together in the national team and at Chelsea."

"His first five months at Inter were difficult but he's quality and you don't lose quality in half a season."

"Deco is fantastic and even if he didn't play as he can in London, he's still one of the best midfielders in Europe."

## Benayoun extends with Reds

AFP, London

Liverpool's Israeli midfielder Yossi Benayoun on Monday signed a new two-year extension to his contract which will keep him at the club until 2013.

The 29-year-old told www.liverpoolfc.tv: "I am very happy that we have reached an agreement. Of course, to be at a club like this is a dream come true and I want to keep playing here."

"Hopefully now I can concentrate on the hard work that needs to be done and try to play better and better and win some silverware."

Benayoun, who moved to Anfield from West Ham in July 2007, scored nine goals in 42 appearances during the 2008-09 campaign, including the late winner against Real in the Champions League last 16 at the Bernabeu stadium in February.

He follows Steven Gerrard, Fernando Torres, Daniel Agger and Dirk Kuyt in committing his long-term future to the club.

Boss Rafael Benitez said: "You know that our idea was to extend the contracts of some players and Yossi was one of these players."

"He has been really good for us over the last year, scoring crucial goals and getting assists, so we wanted to keep him and I'm really pleased with the extension."

## Blues seal Zhirkov deal

Football

SOCCERNET

Chelsea have completed the signing of Russian international Yuri Zhirkov from CSKA Moscow for a reported £18m fee.

The 25-year-old completed his medical in London on Monday and has agreed a four-year deal, believed to be worth £80,000-a-week.

Zhirkov, who was hugely impressive at Euro 2008, can play on the left wing or at left-back and was given a ringing endorsement by temporary Blues boss Guus Hiddink, who

has since returned to his job as coach of the Russian national team.

New Chelsea manager Carlo Ancelotti confirmed the Zhirkov deal was complete during his inaugural press conference at Stamford Bridge on Monday morning and said he was looking forward to exploiting the Russian's versatility.

"Zhirkov is naturally on the left, Ancelotti said. "I think he can do all the work and can play in defence and in between."

During his time with CSKA Moscow, Zhirkov helped the Russian Premier League club win the UEFA Cup and has

been dubbed the "Russian Ronaldinho".

The former Spartak Tambov player is Chelsea's third signing of the summer, following the arrivals of goalkeeper Ross Turnbull and striker Daniel Sturridge.

Ancelotti would not be drawn on any other transfer targets linked with Chelsea and also refused to confirm if Deco and Ricardo Carvalho would be leaving west London.

"Carvalho and Deco are Chelsea players," the Italian said. "If in the future a player wants to go they have to speak with the club and we take the right decision for the player and for us."



Bayern Munich's French star Franck Ribery controls the ball during a training session in Munich on Monday.