

Tevez switches to City

Hits out at Ferguson

Football

SOCCERNET

Carlos Tevez completed his move to Manchester City on a five-year contract on Tuesday, and rubbished claims made by Sir Alex Ferguson that he had shunned calls from his former manager.

The Manchester United boss claimed he had attempted to contact Tevez on a number of occasions to persuade him to remain at Old Trafford, but was blanked. But Tevez has now claimed that is not true.

Tevez, who cost the club a fee in the region of £25m, said: "I was there for two years and Sir Alex never called or sent any text messages in that time."

"The only time he talked to me was after a match against Roma to discuss a situation about going to play for Argentina."

"It doesn't seem that this is the way to treat a player in two years at the club. It doesn't seem there is a line of communication."

The 25-year-old did go on to thank United, adding: "David Gill (United chief executive), Alex Ferguson and the club's fan base I thank you for the time I spent there, but this is a new life for me and I am happy to be at Manchester City."

Sir Alex also believed that Tevez had agreed to join City as long ago as January, something else the 25-year-old denies: "It is United people talking about signing a contract (in January) but it is not true that it was decided then."

Meanwhile, Mark Hughes confirmed that City are still looking for further signings and that talks are on-going with Emmanuel Adebayor of Arsenal, and he is a firm admirer of Chelsea skipper John Terry.

Hughes said of his future summer transfer dealings: "There may well be opportunities that present themselves. There are areas of the team we still want to strengthen."

"We would like to obviously be in a position at the beginning of the season to have a team in place that we think can challenge this year."

"If opportunities present themselves we could possibly buy more players."

"I think there's been discussions between ourselves and Arsenal (for Adebayor) but, as is my usual response about players that we haven't signed, really it's not the right time or place to discuss that - only in as much as yes there has been contact."

"There's a deal to be done possibly but it's not been concluded as we speak. Until it actually happens, really it's not the time or the place to discuss it here."

When asked about Terry, he replied: "I have fantastic respect for John Terry, ever since I saw him as a young player when I was at Chelsea as a player myself."

"He's a great player and an outstanding captain. But he's very much a Chelsea player at this moment in time."

"I have huge respect for him. I think any manager would covet a player of the type of John Terry, but at this moment in time he's a player for Chelsea so we have to respect that."

When asked whether Tevez represents good value for money, Hughes said: "Absolutely, for Manchester City, it's absolutely good value."

"From our point of view, where we are in our development, to be able to bring one of the top strikers in world football to our club is a fantastic thing for us as a club, for our fans and everybody connected with Manchester City."

"We're absolutely delighted that Carlos is here."



PHOTO: AFP

Manchester City's new signing Argentine striker Carlos Tevez (R) holds his team shirt with manager Mark Hughes at the City of Manchester Stadium on Tuesday.

No 'C' for Ronaldo

Football

INTERNET, undated

Cristiano Ronaldo is already giving the Real Madrid money men a headache by apparently refusing to play ball with their marketing strategy.

The Spanish giants pay him £200,000 after tax and give him a 50 per cent share of shirt-sale profits after his £80million transfer from Manchester United made him the world's most expensive player.

But the 24-year-old world record transfer from Manchester United is proving he will not be pushed around by a club who have a long-standing tie-up with German sportswear firm adidas.

Ronaldo has already raised eyebrows by wearing a massive Nike logo on the T-shirt he wore to his well-publicised Madrid medical.

And it has emerged he rejected a plan to have 'C. Ronaldo' on his new No 9 shirt, which would have distinguished him from plain old Ronaldo - the Brazil legend who wore the same shirt until just over three years ago.

It is feared that dropping the 'C' means thrifty fans can use their old Madrid merchandise rather than help fund the eye-watering transfer, though it hasn't stopped next season's jersey flying out of the shops.

Club president Florentino Perez has reportedly tried to talk Ronaldo into signing with Madrid adidas once his association with Nike has ended, to little avail.

Perez prefers his star signings to be adidas affiliated - such as Kaka and Karim Benzema, plus Zinedine Zidane and David Beckham in the past.

But Nike saw his transfer as an ambush marketing oppor-

tunity rather than a threat and neither they nor Ronaldo intend to tone down their relationship.

While Ronaldo's 50-50 sharing of image rights means he must share half the proceeds of new commercial deals, it is understood the Spaniards do not get their hands on earnings from his lucrative pre-existing contract with Nike.

The Portugal forward has already shown his marketing savvy. He trademarked 'CR7' while at Manchester United and earlier this year added 'CR9' and 'CR10' to his portfolio

ahead of the expected move to Spain.

Meanwhile, arguably Madrid's most famous No 9, Alfredo di Stefano is in no doubt who is the best player in the world and it's not the Bernabeu newboy.

Ronaldo may be the current FIFA World Player of the Year and Ballon d'Or holder, but Di Stefano believes he has been surpassed by his compatriot Lionel Messi of deadly rivals Barcelona.

"Those who argue don't know anything about football, and I am a lover of football," he said.

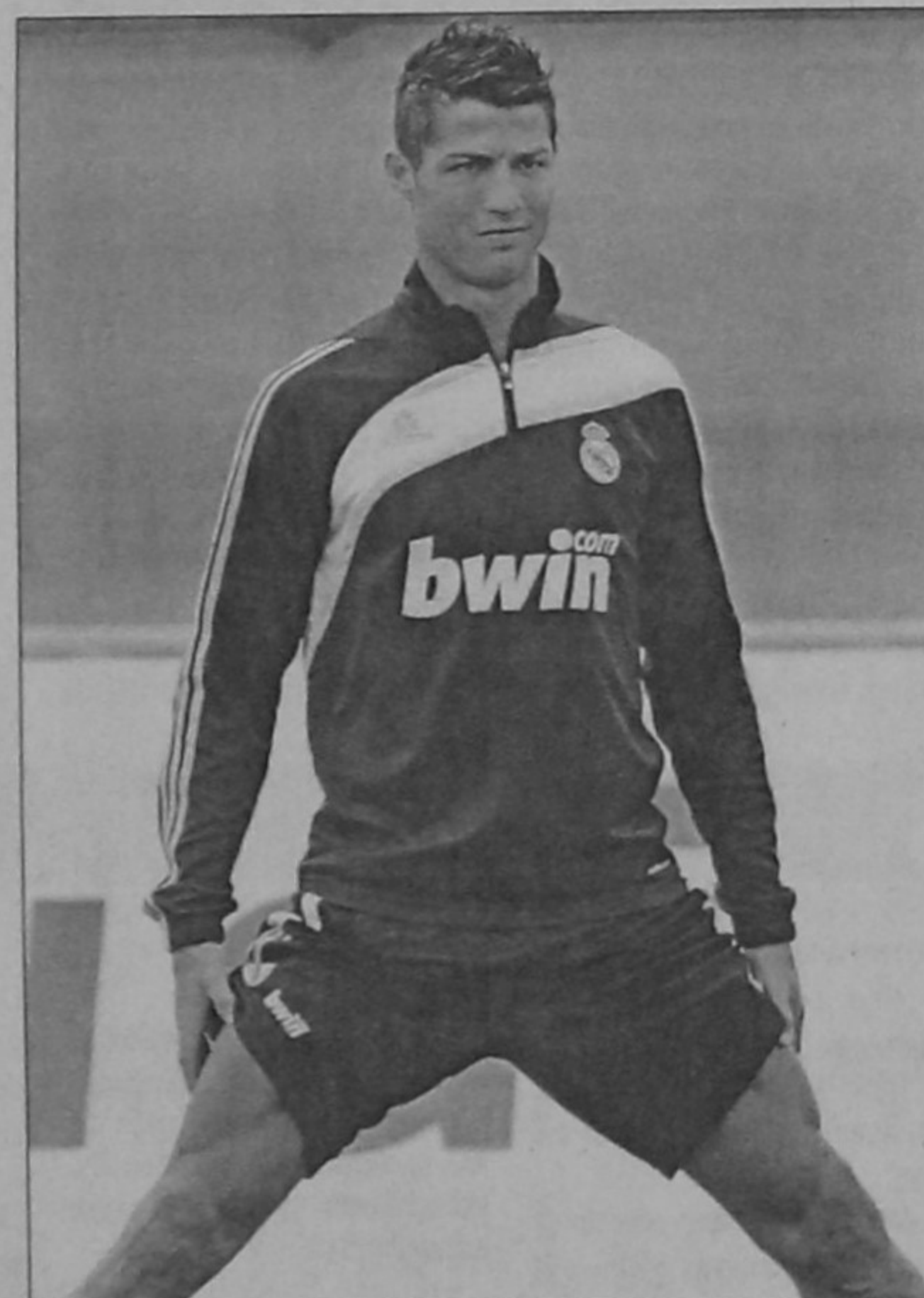


PHOTO: AFP

Real Madrid's Portuguese winger Cristiano Ronaldo stretches during a training session at the Carton House Hotel in Maynooth on Wednesday.

Raul all-praise for Ronaldo

AFP, Maynooth

Real Madrid captain Raul heaped praise Tuesday on his new teammate Cristiano Ronaldo, calling the Portuguese international winger "super nice" and a "hardworking".

"He is super nice, normal and very hardworking," he told a news conference in Maynooth, Ireland where the club began a nine-day pre-season training camp on Tuesday.

"He is integrated. He seems very happy. In the media it seems like everything he does and says, every gesture, has a lot of meaning but he is much more normal than people think," the 32-year-old added.

Real signed Ronaldo from Manchester United last month on a six-year deal worth around 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.

The 24-year-old, was officially unveiled before some 75,000 ecstatic Real fans on July 6 at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium, is being protected by several security guards during his stay in Ireland.

Real will play a friendly match against current Irish champions Shamrock Rovers on July 20, two days before its training camp in Ireland ends.

Premier Asia Cup not doing well

AFP, Beijing

Slow ticket sales for a tournament involving three English Premiership teams and China's Beijing Guoan are causing concerns among sponsors, according to state media.

So far only 20,000 of the 120,000 tickets available for the July 29 and 31 knockout tournament at Beijing's Worker's Stadium have been sold, with most fans buying the cheap seats, the Beijing News said.

Reports that Guoan will field a team of substitutes as it rests its best players for a crucial China Super League match against rivals Chongqing on August 2 are also hampering sales, the papers said.

The pre-season tournament, backed by Premier League sponsors Barclays, has previously been staged in Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and Hong Kong and is becoming a regular showcase for the world's most popular league.

The Beijing tournament pits Guoan against Hull, while West Ham face Tottenham, with the winners and losers to face off against each other two days later.

Beijing sponsors are asking China's Super League to postpone the Beijing-Chongqing match until later in August so that Guoan can field its top players, the newspaper said.

Hoeness warns against clause

Football

INTERNET, Hamburg

Bayern Munich general manager Uli Hoeness on Tuesday warned Real Madrid and other top clubs not to attempt a cheap hiring of French star Franck Ribery through a special rule. Hoeness was talking about little-used article 17 from the world governing body FIFA, in which a player aged 23-28 can get out of a four- or five-year contract after three years for a compensation fee if he moves to another country.

The article is known as the "Webster" rule, in reference to a landmark ruling through which Scottish player Andy Webster forced a transfer in 2006, after which FIFA had to bring its rules up to date with the European Union's freedom of movement for workers.

The compensation is based on the player's salary at his former club, his value and the transfer fee it originally paid for him.

Ribery, 26, will have completed three seasons next year and he could leave for around 20 million euros (27 million dollars), less than the 25 million Bayern paid for him in 2007 and far less than the 80 million they are demanding now.

However, the major clubs, formerly in the G-14 group and now in the European Club Association (ECA), reportedly have a gentleman's agreement not to use article 17 in transfers between them.

"So far none of the big clubs has ever made use of paragraph 17. And if any one of the big ones tries to use it all hell will break loose. I would advise the clubs not to do this," Hoeness said.

Hoeness said that agreement has so far "worked well ... And I expect that to be the case

in the future as well."

Real are said to be ready to pay 55 million euros for Ribery now, but the Spanish media suggested on Monday that they may wait 12 months to use article 17 for a much cheaper hiring.

While Bayern are fiercely opposed to such a move, the Players' Association FIFPro mentioned Ribery in a statement on Sunday and said it is bringing the case to the attention of the European Commission and FIFA.

The statement said that Munich and ECA chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge had mentioned that the ECA clubs have agreed not to use article 17.

"If the clubs are free to push aside the FIFA rules which are applicable worldwide, it will henceforth be impossible to maintain the international rule of law within football," said FIFPro lawyer Wil van Megen in the statement.

"Mutual agreements within the ECA point towards cartel formation and are unacceptable. In view of the tough stance taken by European Commissioner Kroes with regard to previous cartel agreements, I also expect there to be strong intervention in this case." Ribery himself is currently injured. He has been quoted as saying that he wants to leave for big-spending Real and no other club - which Chelsea and others reportedly interested in him as well.

The Frenchman has not made himself popular with his wish to depart, and coach Louis van Gaal and captain mark van Bommel also want the issue settled before the Bundesliga starts on August 7.

But Hoeness also came to the defence of Ribery, saying that Munich had no personal problems with him and wanted him to stay.

"He didn't do anything that was not correct," Hoeness said.

Zlatan, Melo hold the key

AFP, Rome



It may seem unlikely but a Brazilian and a Swede hold the key to Italy's Serie A's sense of self-esteem and well-being.

Italian football, on a high with the 2006 world title, has been getting used to knocks in recent years and they have been aplenty, both on and off the pitch.

Not so long ago, Serie A was the strongest league in Europe; now it is almost a secondary league.

But while results on the pitch took a downturn, the lure of Serie A did not until now.

Which is why Brazil midfielder Felipe Melo and Sweden forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic could salvage the country's collective pride.

Melo is reportedly a target for Arsenal while Ibrahimovic has been coveted by Chelsea.

"I am aware that Chelsea want to sign me and, of course, it is very flattering. They are one of the biggest teams in Europe and the Premier League is one of the best leagues in the world," said Ibrahimovic.

"Money is not the most important thing. I will base my decision on what's good for me, what suits me. It is about asking: will I still be able to be special in the league that I am going to, to the team that I am going to?"

"Are my qualities right for the Premier League or not?"

There are other players who could be mentioned such as Sevilla's Brazil striker Luis Fabiano, but it is Fiorentina's Melo and Inter Milan's Ibrahimovic more than anyone else who could help shunt Italy back towards the top of the world football tree.

Melo is also wanted by Juventus while Inter want desperately to hold onto Ibrahimovic.

Fabiano to cost €20 million

SOCCERNET

Seville striker Luis Fabiano could sign for AC Milan for around €20m, according to the Brazilian's agent.

The Rossoneri had claimed the deal was dead after an offer of €14m was rejected by the Spanish club but, Jose Fuentes, the striker's agent, insists a agreement can still be reached.

"We are waiting for Milan to return as their first offer was a little too low," Fuentes told Tutto Mercato. "Milan must push a little more. If not, the negotiations could continue for some time."

With Seville holding out for €30m and both clubs having wildly different valuations of the 28-year-old, Milan's lawyer Leandro Cantamessa said earlier on Tuesday that the deal was virtually dead.

"We made an offer and they said no and so we had to revoke our offer," Cantamessa explained. "I don't think there will be another offer for now."

But Fabiano's representative seems desperate to revive the deal and as well as going public with the desired transfer fee the agent also revealed that Milan had been granted exclusive access to his client.

"The market value of the player is around €20m," Fuentes said. "This seems to me to be the right figure."

"Milan remain the only club we are speaking to. We have given them our word and we intend to respect that."

An added complication to the deal is that the Italian club must also negotiate with investment group RIO, who own 65% of the former Sao Paulo player's rights.

Raikkonen might quit Formula 1

INTERNET, Helsinki

Former world champion Kimi Raikkonen may quit Formula One for rally racing after the season, a Finnish sports magazine reported Tuesday. "Kimi doesn't talk about Formula One anymore. He just talks about rally," a friend of Raikkonen was quoted as saying in the sports magazine Veikkaja.

The 29-year-old is scheduled to compete in the classic Finnish rally in Jyväskylä later this month, driving an Abarth Grande Punto S2000.

Raikkonen won the Formula One world title in 2007 for Ferrari, but has not been as strong last year and in the current campaign where his best result is a third-place finish.

Another former champion, Fernando Alonso of Spain, has been frequently linked with a move to Ferrari. Alonso is currently with Renault.

'Terry wants scenery change'

Football

SOCCERNET

Mark Hughes has confirmed Manchester City could make a third bid for John Terry and said the England captain may welcome a "change of scenery".

The Citizens remain optimistic that Terry wishes to join them given the England skipper is said to be unhappy at the failure of Chelsea to sign the high-profile targets they were looking for this summer. Terry is yet to make a public statement on the matter, giving rise to speculation that he may yet join City's big-spending "project".

Hughes has been a fan of Terry since his own spell at Chelsea well over a decade ago and described him as an "outstanding player and an outstanding person" and admitted he may make another offer for the tough-tackling central defender.

He continued: "I've thought that since I first met him when he was a young boy at Chelsea and I was a player there, and if the opportunity has presented itself to bring a player of that

calibre to the club we will try our hardest to do it. We've already had conversations with Chelsea to that regard and we would like the opportunity to speak to John Terry now."

"We made an offer and Chelsea made their view plain, we have to respect that," said Hughes. "But in the future we may revisit it."

The Welshman compared Terry's potential departure from Chelsea, his sole club so far in his career, to his own leaving of Manchester United in 1995 after a near-15-year association. He said: "It is not a question of finance, or money, it is about a different challenge, and John being at a different stage in his life and his career, and maybe that is why there hasn't been a response (to commit himself to Chelsea) because John is seriously thinking in those terms. I went through that process myself as a player and I can understand if that is the way he is thinking."

Terry is due to fly out to the USA ahead of Chelsea's pre-season tour, which includes World Football Challenge matches with AC Milan, Inter Milan and Club America.

Tuesday saw City capture Carlos Tevez and make significant steps towards the purchase of Emmanuel Adebayor from Arsenal.