

Galaxy hold Milan

Football

AFP, Los Angeles

David Beckham received a rocky reception from disgruntled Galaxy fans in his return to Los Angeles Sunday as his Major League Soccer club played to a 2-2 draw with his recent Italian club AC Milan.

The English star, who missed the first half of the MLS season while on loan to AC Milan, was booed during introductions and again on his first several touches of the ball.

Leaving the pitch at halftime he approached a section of stands where anti-Beckham banners were displayed and appeared to shout something.

A fan jumped down and was restrained by security personnel and escorted off the pitch.

"One of the guys was saying things that wasn't very nice. It was stepping over the line," Beckham said. "I said, 'You need to calm down and come shake my hand,' and he jumped over."

But Beckham insisted the fan reaction didn't bother him.

"It doesn't affect me," he said. "You can't be liked by everyone."

AC Milan manager Leonardo indicated he thought the fans were unfair, and if some Galaxy supporters don't want Beckham, he said he'd be glad to have him back at AC Milan.

"Sometimes the supporters don't understand the situation," Leonardo said.

"We would be happy if he came back because he did really well. He's incredible," he added. "The precision he has is something very, very special. He never missed the ball."

"He controlled the ball. The way the Galaxy plays is very, very important. They see that every ball begins with him."

Indeed amid the jeers, Beckham played a role in both Galaxy goals.

After Thiago Silva gave Milan a 1-0 lead in the 16th minute, the Galaxy equalized in the 30th through Alan Gordon, set up by Landon Donovan after a cross from Beckham.

Milan went ahead again in the 61st, when Filippo Inzaghi timed a run perfectly into the

area to score.

The Galaxy responded again, earning a corner kick in the 65th minute.

Beckham, who stayed in the match amid a string of Galaxy halftime substitutions, walked deliberately over to take the corner kick, near the fan section that had given him the most grief.

His sent a precise kick into the area and Bryan Jordan headed it in to knot the score at 2-2, after which Beckham turned and faced his critics.

Beckham left the game in the 75th minute, waving to a group of supportive fans en route to the bench.

"The cheers in the end drowned out the boos, which was nice," Beckham said.

After spending an impressive second half of last season with AC Milan, Beckham returned to the Galaxy in Thursday's 3-1 victory over the New York Red Bulls, his first match since the end of the Serie A campaign.

Not only was Beckham's delayed return to the MLS seen by many as a slap in the face to US football, but a squabble with Galaxy teammate Landon Donovan further sullied his return.

Donovan sparked the dispute with disparaging remarks published in a new book "The Beckham Experiment." But he was full of praise for Beckham on Sunday.

"He was integral in both goals," Donovan said. "There's not another player on a team in this league that can make those plays. It was an exciting game."

The friendly against AC Milan was Beckham's first match in Los Angeles since his return, and coincided with a swirl of speculation on his future plans in England.

According to the Mail on Sunday, Chelsea and Tottenham are ready to bring the 34-year-old former England captain home, although Beckham said in midweek he was eyeing an eventual return to Italy. That would apparently suit Leonardo.

"If it's possible, I think it could be a very good thing for us," Leonardo said of the chance that Beckham could land back at AC Milan. "He knows everyone. Everyone loves him in our club."



Milan defender Alessandro Nesta (L) is challenged by Alecko Eskandarian of the LA Galaxy during their friendly match at the Home Depot Stadium in Los Angeles on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Guardiola wants Eto'o to leave

Football

AFP, Barcelona

Barcelona coach Josep Guardiola admitted Monday that it would be better if Cameroon striker Samuel Eto'o, who is linked to a move to Inter Milan, were to leave the Spanish club.

"I fully understand that people ask why. He is a wonderful player. Everyone knows there are no 'football' reasons. So why? It is a question of feeling," Guardiola told a news conference as Barcelona resumed training.

"I feel that it is the best for the team, for the club, but I don't dare say that it is best for Samuel. I am very grateful to Samuel, not for this year but for the five years he has spent here."

Eto'o is currently negotiating with Inter Milan as part of a proposed deal that would see him join the club while Inter Milan's Swedish striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic would move to Barcelona.

The 28-year-old, who joined the Catalan side in 2004, has a year left in his contract with Barcelona. He was the club's top scorer in the Spanish league last season, with 30 goals.

When Guardiola took over from Frank Rijkaard last year he made it clear that he wanted Eto'o along with Ronaldinho and Deco to leave, reportedly because of problems that the African striker had caused in the dressing room.

Ronaldinho was sold to AC Milan, Deco went to Chelsea but Eto'o stayed at the club because Barcelona did not receive any convincing offers for him.

Boro reject Alves offer

AFP, Middlesbrough

Middlesbrough have rejected a three million pounds bid from an unnamed United Arab Emirates club for Brazilian striker Afonso Alves.

The 28-year-old has struggled to make an impact at the Riverside Stadium since his club record 12 million pounds transfer from Dutch team Heerenveen in January 2008.

His lack of goals contributed to Middlesbrough's relegation from the Premier League last season, but boss Gareth Southgate has no intention of selling Alves on the cheap.

Southgate told the Northern Echo: "We have had a bid for Afonso, but it wasn't something we deemed to be acceptable. To be honest, it wasn't anywhere near what we would accept."

Meanwhile, Southgate confirmed that stay-away striker Mido will continue to be fined as long as he fails to report for training.

The Egypt international did not arrive back for training with the rest of his team-mates a fortnight ago, and has been fined two weeks wages.

Lamps unsure on Terry

Football

AFP, London

Chelsea midfielder Frank Lampard admits there is no guarantee John Terry will snub Manchester City's big-money bid to lure him away from Stamford Bridge.

City have already had two offers rejected for England captain Terry, but boss Mark Hughes is planning a new 35 million pounds bid for the defender this week.

Although Terry has spent his whole career at Chelsea and remains the club's most talismanic figure, it is believed City's offer to raise his wages to 200,000 pounds a week has forced the Blues skipper to consider his future.

A host of Chelsea players have made it clear they want Terry to stay but Lampard, who was close to agreeing to a reunion with former manager Jose Mourinho at Inter Milan last season and is one of Terry's closest friends, is more concerned.

"I don't know what he will do," Lampard said in The Times on Monday.

"I've been in John's position, but everyone at the club wants him to stay."

"I had an option to leave last year, to go with a manager who I love, but it came at a time in my life that, maybe, just wasn't right."

"But the situation made me think an awful lot. It wasn't an easy decision, either, and I don't think people should criticise John."

"The fact is you can never take away what he's done for Chelsea. He'll always be a legend. I hope and I'm confident that, whatever happens, he will continue to be considered a legend here."

Lampard insists that Terry shouldn't be condemned as a mercenary if he does accept City's massive offer.

"People should respect his right to choose," Lampard said. "When you're a successful player this kind of thing is going to happen and then you have to make a decision. John's a very honourable man and it doesn't come down to money and things like that."

"I know John. I know he'll be thinking about what's the right thing to do as a player and, in the longer term, for his career."

"No one should doubt that John Terry wants to be successful. No one should doubt that John Terry is a winner. This is not just about the money and people shouldn't try to make it that black and white."

"It's understandable because it's Manchester City who have come in, but it's up to John what happens. All I can say is that I'm very proud each time I play with him and, as a club, you want to keep players like John Terry. It's as simple as that."

Nakamura ready for any role

AFP, Tokyo

Japanese midfielder Shunsuke Nakamura, already labelled "football crazy" by the Spanish media, says he will play any position to get a regular place at his new club Espanyol, reports said Monday.

"It's not easy to get a position at a new club," the former Celtic star told Japanese media in Barcelona on Sunday, recalling that he was used as a defensive midfielder when he was with Italy's Reggina from 2002-2005.

"I played any position. I am confident of playing any position."

The 31-year-old, who moved from Celtic last month, usually played an attacking role on the right side of midfield for the former Scottish champions and for Japan.

But Espanyol manager Mauricio Pochettino said earlier Nakamura, a left-footed dead ball specialist and a key man in Japan's World Cup campaign, could be used anywhere in midfield.

Meanwhile, the Spanish daily AS has called Nakamura a "loco de futbol (fool for football)".

"I don't drink and I never go to bed without doing a stretch," Nakamura, a father of two, was quoted as saying in an interview with the AS's Sunday edition, according to the Nikkan Sports daily.

"I sign up with pay-television channels as soon as I move to a new club so I can see football matches any time I turn on the television," he said.

"Aren't you really a loco de futbol?" the article's author was quoted as telling Nakamura.

Nakamura faces formidable competition at Espanyol from talent such as Ivan de la Pena and Luis Garcia, in a cut-throat league where a spring-kick of Japanese players have not fared well in the past.

On Sunday he played as an offensive left midfielder for a team of regulars in a training match, Japanese media said.

Bolivian team fields 12 year old

AFP, La Paz

Bolivian top flight side Aurora handed a debut on Sunday to new starlet Mauricio Baldivieso - just 12 years old - in a 1-0 loss to FC La Paz.

Mauricio came on six minutes before the break, sent into the fray by proud father Julio "Emperor" Cesar Baldivieso, who coaches the club from the central city of Cochabamba.

Mauricio had a somewhat brutal introduction to the professional game as he picked up an ankle knock within five minutes from ferocious tackle by La Paz's Henry Alaca.

But to the delight of Aurora's fans, who gave him an ovation, the youngster was able to resume after treatment pitied.

"I am proud - he has a lot of talent," said his father.

Inter lose on penalties

Football

AFP, Stanford

Oscar Rojas scored the shootout winner as Mexico's Club America defeated Inter Milan of Italy 5-4 on penalties Sunday in a friendly club match.

The teams had finished regular time 1-1. Ivan Ramiro Cordoba scored a goal in the 60th minute for Inter to knot the score after Club America took the lead in the 51st minute through Juan Carlos Silva.

The match was part of the World Football Challenge, a series of friendlies featuring England's Chelsea, Italy's AC Milan and Inter Milan and Club America.

The next match in the series is at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, where Chelsea will play Inter. Club America faces AC Milan Wednesday at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, then on Friday

Chelsea and AC Milan play in Baltimore.

"I'm very happy because scoring a goal against such a big team is very exciting," Silva said, although the Italian champions weren't fielding their best.

Inter's Julio Cesar wasn't with the team Sunday, and his backup Francesco Toldo wasn't available to play, leaving 19-year-old Vid Belec in goal.

Two of Inter Milan's biggest stars, Argentinian defender Javier Zanetti and Swedish forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic were not in the starting lineup. Ibrahimovic entered the game early in the second half, while Club America was missing star goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa.

"We're very happy with the way the game went," Inter coach Jose Mourinho said. "We're very happy no one got injured."

The players weren't even aware that the challenge called for shootouts, and started exchanging jerseys at the end of regular time.



Inter Milan star Zlatan Ibrahimovic (L) fights for the ball with Aquivaldo Mosquera of Club America during their friendly encounter at the Stanford Stadium in California on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Brazil tops tragic list

Football

INTERNET, undated

Brazil, with 42 fans dead during ten years of football violence, tops the world's tragic list, according to a study released Sunday. The study's authors said the numbers were of major concern, especially with Brazil's role as host to the 2014 FIFA World Cup.

The study included deaths that occurred in or around the stadium during violent clashes with other fans, said Mauricio Murad of the University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ). The study, called "A Sad, Perverse Achievement," covered the time frame 1999-2008.

"As we began the study, Brazil was in third place in comparison to other countries. Italy topped the list, followed by Argentina and Brazil," Murad said Sunday in an interview with the state news agency Agencia Brazil.

Today, ten years after the study began, Brazil leads the list. The violence is according to Murad a major concern for the country, espe-

cially with its role in 2014. Public security is a major issue at the World Cup events.

One reason for the disturbing trend is that Brazil in the past has failed to enact laws to address violence between rival fan groups, the scientists said.

Italy had taken such reform steps, the authors noted.

"In Brazil, there has unfortunately been insufficient substantive reactions," he said.

He said it was unsettling that the number of dead has climbed in the course of the years.

On average, 4.2 Brazilian fans were killed over the ten-year period. Between 2004 and 2008, the average was 5.6 deaths per year, and in 2007 and 2008, there were seven killed each year.

"The violence in football is growing because overall violence in the country is increasing. Violence is on the increase because of lack of punishment for crimes and corruption," Murad charged.

The study was based on newspaper and other media reports, which were later confirmed by court forensics specialists and police officials.



Victoria Beckham (C), her son Romeo (L) and Hollywood superstar Tom Cruise (R) watch the friendly match between LA Galaxy and Milan at the Home Depot Stadium in Los Angeles on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP