



HISTORIC WHITEWASH: Bangladesh players along with officials celebrate winning the third and final one-day international against the West Indies at Warner Park in Basseterre on Friday. Bangladesh won the match by three wickets to take the series 3-0.

Jose pays Bobby tribute

Football

AFP, Rome/London

Inter Milan coach Jose Mourinho has paid tribute to the late Sir Bobby Robson, the man who launched his own career in football coaching.

Robson, 76, died on Friday after a long illness.

Mourinho began his journey to coaching stardom as a translator and then coach under Robson at Barcelona in the 1990s.

From there he went on to coach the likes of Benfica, Porto, Chelsea and now Inter, winning league titles in three different countries and also guiding Porto to the Champions League crown in 2004.

"I didn't speak with him over the last two months," Mourinho told the Inter website.

"It was difficult because I didn't want to think that he was coming to the end, that wasn't the image of Bobby Robson that I wanted to always carry around with me.

"That wasn't the voice that I wanted to hear. I wanted to, and I always will, hold with me the Bobby Robson of every day, a man of extraordinary passion for life and for football, and with extraordinary enthusiasm.

"Bobby Robson is one of those people who never dies, not because of what he did during his career, because of one more victory or one less, but for everything he transmitted to those who, like me, had the good fortune to know him and be by his side.

"My thoughts are with all those dear to him."

Robson's remarkable 56-year career as a player and manager included taking England to the 1990 World Cup semi-finals, transforming unfashionable Ipswich into a European force and taking charge of major clubs like Barcelona, Porto, PSV Eindhoven and his boyhood team Newcastle.

But it was Robson's unrelenting enthusiasm

for the game and his generous personality that made the biggest impression on everyone who came into contact with the genial Geordie.

As a mark of respect, flags at the Civic Centre in Newcastle were lowered in tribute, while Barcelona, PSV and Ipswich all released statements expressing their sympathy to Robson's family and saluting his achievements with their teams.

Newcastle and Ipswich fans flocked to their club's stadiums to lay flowers and scarves and write messages in praise of Robson.

At Newcastle, fans inside the ground chanted Robson's name after the squad and staff held a minute's silence on the centre circle, while first teamers Steve Harper, Shola Ameobi and Steven Taylor carried a wreath of white lilies on to the pitch.

Inter Milan manager Jose Mourinho was given his first big break by Robson, who employed the Portuguese as a coach and interpreter during his spells at Barcelona, Porto and Sporting Lisbon.

Fabio Capello, one of Robson's successors as England coach, summed up Robson's gift for communicating with people as he revealed a recent encounter with the ailing boss.

"Sir Bobby was a wonderful man, a real gentleman," Capello said. "His spirit and courage was incredible. To fight cancer so many times really showed the strength of the man."

"I recall the tribute dinner hosted for Bobby when he wasn't planning to say more than a few words. In the end he stayed on the stage for a very long time, telling story after story, much to everyone's amusement."

Terry Venables, another former England and Barcelona coach, added: "Bobby fought everything that has been thrown at him. You thought he was indestructible."

"I spoke to him about five weeks ago on the phone and he was talking about football. He was trying hard to battle away (at his cancer). He's shown great bravery."

Bent says sorry

AFP, London

England striker Darren Bent was forced to apologise after using Internet networking site Twitter to blast Tottenham chairman Daniel Levy for failing to rubber-stamp his proposed move to Sunderland.

Bent, 25, went online to hit out at Levy as his move to Sunderland drags on.

A Twitter account in Bent's name on Thursday carried a series of scathing attacks on Levy, who is said to be playing hardball with the Black Cats over the fee for the player.

"Seriously getting p***ed off now," read the first message.

Bent then went on to add: "Why can't anything be simple?"

"Sunderland are not the problem in the slightest."

"Do I wanna go Hull City? NO. Do I wanna go Stoke? NO. Do I wanna go Sunderland YES."

It is thought Levy is attempting to recoup the 16.5 million pounds that Tottenham paid to sign Bent from Charlton two years ago, while Sunderland were hoping to pay 14 million pounds.

But Bent had to issue a statement on Tottenham's official website admitting he had gone too far: "I appreciate that transfers are seldom straightforward and are often complex," he said.

"However, after a long period of waiting following my withdrawal from the plane to China, I had become incredibly frustrated by the time these things take and I posted inappropriate comments on my Twitter site."

Martins signs for Wolves

AFP, Wolfsburg

German champions VfL Wolfsburg confirmed on Saturday the signing of Nigerian international striker Obafemi Martins from relegated English club Newcastle.

The 24-year-old signed a four-year deal on Friday night to become the surprise Bundesliga champions fourth recruit for the new season. Details of the contract were not given but it is estimated to be worth two million euro.

Capped 21 times for Nigeria, Martins played for Serie A side Inter Milan from 2002 to 2006 before joining Newcastle.

He will, however, have to fight for his place on the team with Brazilian forward Grafite and Bosnian striker Edin Dzeko, respectively the top two goal scorers in the Bundesliga last season with 54 goals between them.

Juventus stun Real

Football

AFP, Seville

Juventus beat Real Madrid 2-1 Friday to reach the final of the Peace Cup as the big-spending Spanish club failed to shine in its first major pre-season test.

The Italians will meet Aston Villa on Sunday after the English Premier League side beat Porto of Portugal by the same score in Malaga.

Juventus got off to a flying start in the match in Seville when Fabio Cannavaro connected with a free kick from Alessandro Del Piero to head the ball past Jerzy Dudek in the third minute.

Real levelled the score when the world's most expensive footballer Cristiano Ronaldo scored his second goal -- and second penalty -- in a Real shirt.

The 23-year-old Portuguese star -- who cost

Real around 94 million euros when he joined Manchester United -- slotted the ball past Gianluigi Buffon in the 41st minute after Giorgio Chiellini brought down Raul.

Bosnian midfielder Hasan Salihamidzic

restored the advantage for the Italians in the 49th minute with a glancing header from a corner by Alessandro Del Piero.

The match was Real's first real pre-season test after matches against Ireland's Shamrock Rovers, Saudi side Al Ittihad and Ecuador's La Liga de Quito.

But three of the club's big new signings -- Kaka, Raul Albiol and Alvaro Arbeloa -- and Iker Casillas were not selected.

All had been allowed to extend their holidays after taking part in the Confederations Cup in South Africa in June.

But Real coach Manuel Pellegrini was able to count on French signing Karim Benzema, who had recovered from a knock picked up in the match against La Liga de Quito.

The former Lyon striker, who joined Real for 35 million euros (50 million dollars) earlier this month, was substituted in the 72nd minute by Argentine Gonzalo Higuain.

Twelve clubs took part in the prestigious

pre-season Peace Cup tournament.

The tournament began life in 2003 and FIFA recognised it as an international event in 2007.

This year is the first time it has been held outside of South Korea.



Real Madrid striker Raul (R) is tackled by Juventus defender Cannavaro (L) during their Peace Cup semifinal at the Sanchez Pizjuan Stadium in Seville on Friday.

'English are way ahead'

Football

AFP, Liverpool

Big-spending Spanish clubs Real Madrid and Barcelona are still no match for English Premier League sides, Liverpool striker Fernando Torres said Saturday.

The 25-year-old Spaniard believes La Liga can still learn much from English football despite the large sums of money being spent by them this summer.

"English football has an enormous following across the world, not just because of the players but because of its history, its tradition, the excitement, the capacity crowds," Torres, who spent six years in the Spanish top flight with Atletico Madrid, told Liverpool's website.

"The other leagues can learn a lot, even La Liga. Madrid have signed Kaka and Ronaldo, and Barcelona have Xavi and Messi but, really, the Premier League is way ahead."

The Spanish international insisted that the

only thing that interests him is winning trophies. "A player wants to be remembered for what he has won, for what he has given his club," he said.

"Ten years after you stop playing you want to have medals, trophies. You may have a fantastic car and home but it's not the same."

And winning the Premier League with Liverpool would be up there with winning Euro 2008 with his countrymen.

"Winning the league here would be like winning the European Championship with Spain last year," said Torres, who is starting his third season at Liverpool and feels completely at home in the city.

"It's because Liverpool is a working city. At the weekend people go to watch their team at Anfield and watch the best team in the country," he added.

"I had a lot of offers from a lot of clubs but I was always attracted to Liverpool because of the reputation of the people from the city, the club's supporters and their history, and I wanted help make this one of the greatest clubs in the world again."

Gascoigne devastated

AFP, London

Former England star Paul Gascoigne said Friday he was devastated by the death of Sir Bobby Robson, who he described as being "like a second dad".

Gascoigne played under Robson when England reached the semi-finals of the 1990 World Cup in Italy. The midfielder ended the tournament in tears when he was booked in the penalty shoot-out defeat to Germany.

Gascoigne told ITV News: "I'm speechless. I'm devastated. Bobby was like my second dad. I was like a son to him."

"I can't describe how much he meant to me. I've just been crying for three hours, and I've come to see my mum and my dad. It's just unbelievable."

"He gave me a chance to play in the World Cup. I can't really talk that much because I just want to cry, that's all."

"I love him. And his wife Elsie - I'll always be there for her. I'm sort of numb."

Robson, who once described Gascoigne as "daft as a brush", made a last public appearance at Sunday's charity match between an England XI and a German representative side staged to raise money for the 76-year-old's cancer charity.

Gascoigne was among the former Italia 90 stars on show at the game.

"He kept himself alive for the game and I thought after the game he might pass away. I'm going to miss him so badly."

Hammers snap up Swiss starlet

AFP, London

West Ham signed Switzerland Under-19 defender Fabio Daprela from Grasshopper for an undisclosed fee on Friday.

The 18-year-old left-back agreed a five-year contract with the Premier League club after flying to London straight from the European Under-19 Championships.

"I am very happy to come here as it is a great club," he told West Ham's website.

"I saw the team play on television last season and it is a very good team. They have a great manager and it is good to be here."

Villareal unveil Nilmar

AFP, Madrid

Spanish Primera Liga side Villareal on Friday presented their new Brazilian player Nilmar da Silva, the most expensive signing in their history.

The club signed Nilmar last week to a five-year contract from Brazilian club Internaciona de Porto Alegre for a reported fee of over 10 million euros.

"I know that my signing was one of the biggest efforts in the club's history," the 25-year-old striker told a news conference.

"I am filled with pride and responsibility... I know that I here to score and help the team and my hope is win a title."

He described the negotiations that brought him to Villareal as "difficult."

"But I was always very excited about playing in Spain because it is similar to Brazilian football," he said.

He said he already knew Villareal's Brazilian-born player Marcos Senna, "and I know that a title is needed and they will fight for it. That was an incentive to come here."

He also spoke about his time at French side Lyon in the 2004-05 season.

"It was my first experience in Europe and it was difficult to adapt because I was very young, but I still got goals... This experience helped me a lot to know what it means to play outside Brazil."

After the news conference, some 4,000 fans greeted him at El Madrigal stadium.

Villareal finished fifth in the Primera Liga last season, missing out on a Champions League spot but gaining a place in the Europa League.

Nilmar's presentation had originally been set for Thursday but was postponed by one day after he missed a connecting flight from Brazil.

De Rossi rules out Gunners switch

AFP, Rome

AS Roma midfielder Daniele De Rossi on Saturday ruled out a possible move to English Premier League side Arsenal.

The Londoners were rumoured to be interested in signing the 26-year-old but De Rossi claims he has had no contact from the Gunners and has no intention of leaving his home town club.

"Arsenal? I haven't heard anything. Roma said I'm untransferable and I want to stay here," he said.

"If they wanted to sell me everything would change but they've always shown faith in me."

De Rossi is looking forward to an improved showing from his team in the Serie A title race this season after they finished a disappointing sixth in 2008-09.

That followed three successive seasons as runners-up but Roma looked to have lost ground on the top three in the last campaign.



PHOTO: AFP
Barcelona's Argentine star Lionel Messi trains at UCLA in Los Angeles on Friday. Barcelona will take on Los Angeles Galaxy in Pasadena on Saturday.