

Rio's Chelsea warning

Football

AFP, London

Rio Ferdinand has warned Chelsea that Manchester United will use Sunday's Community Shield clash to prove that they can cope without Cristiano Ronaldo and Carlos Tevez.

While neither United boss Sir Alex Ferguson or Chelsea's new manager Carlo Ancelotti will read too much into the result of the traditional curtain-raiser to the English season, it is safe to say the focus will be on whether the English champions look a less dominant force now Ronaldo and Tevez are gone.

A world record 80 million pounds fee for Ronaldo softened the blow of his exit to Real Madrid, but Tevez's defection to Manchester City still leaves a bitter taste at Old Trafford.

Ronaldo's goals and incisive wing play helped Ferguson's team to Premier League and Champions League glory, while Tevez's price-less ability to snatch a crucial goal after coming off the bench turned countless matches in United's favour.

Yet England star Ferdinand has already seen star names like David Beckham and Roy Keane depart Old Trafford with little damage to the team and he expects a similar scenario this time.

"A lot of us have been around a few years and

seen so many come through the doors and go," Ferdinand said.

"This club moves on from any individual coming and going and that's the same in this instance."

"The team is more important than one single player. That has always been the case and will always remain."

Anderson, United's Brazil midfielder, is one of those charged with stepping up now Ronaldo has gone and, like Ferdinand, he has no doubts about his team's ability to rise to the challenge.

"To win the Community Shield will have a double value. It will be a blow in the face for Chelsea and will also show there is life after Cristiano Ronaldo and Carlos Tevez," he said.

Ferguson has signed England striker Michael Owen and Ecuador winger Antonio Valencia to reduce the damage caused by the exit of United's two emotional leaders.

Valencia had been on Ferguson's radar for several years, yet the 17 million pounds signing from Wigan will have to improve his goalscoring record dramatically to fill in for Ronaldo.

In truth, Ferguson knows it is almost impossible to buy replacements for unique talents like Ronaldo and Tevez. Instead he will tweak his tactics to bring the best out of Wayne Rooney, Dimitar Berbatov and the likes of Anderson and Nani.

Ferguson must also decide whether Ben

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Real in deal with Ribery's agent

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid have reached a deal with Franck Ribery's agent to sign the Bayern Munich star in 2010, it was reported here on Saturday.

Real missed out on Ribery this summer in the face of fierce opposition from Bayern but according to Spanish daily As the highly-sought after France international will be moving to Madrid in one year's time.

As suggest a five year deal has been reached between the player's agent, Alain Migliaccio, with Zinedine Zidane, who acts as an adviser to the club and who is also close to Ribery, playing a central role in the negotiations.

The As report, without naming sources, suggests this deal is similar to the one set in place for Cristiano Ronaldo back in 2008, with the Manchester United winger finally moving to Real this summer for a record 94 million euros.

Real Madrid's new president Florentino Perez has splashed out over 250 million euros on the likes of Ronaldo, Kaka and Karim Benzema as he seeks to make the Spanish side world beaters once again.

Milad held for Ronaldo

SPORTS REPORTER

A group of six die-hard fans of Brazilian great Ronaldo hosted a Milad for the early recovery of El Phenomena from a hand surgery at the Rampura Ulan Road Mosque in Dhaka on Friday after Juma Prayers.

The six friends Nafiz, Shayek, Shakhawat, Sarwar, Shaon and Antu are fanatic followers of Ronaldo and they plan to travel to Brazil for the 2014 FIFA World Cup.

Ronaldo was enjoying a good spell at Corinthians scoring 17 goals in 27 matches before his hand injury.

Zafar masters Hawaiian waters

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Zafar Alam of Cox's Bazar became sixth amongst 130 international surfers at the International Freedom Surfing Contest that was held recently in the island state of Hawaii in the USA.

He was awarded with a trophy by the Governor of Hawaii Dukaiyana. President of international surfing organisation "Surfing the nation" Tom Bauer introduced Zafar as the first Bangladeshi surfer to the cheering crowd.

Zafar asked the other competitors to come to Bangladesh to take part in the upcoming 4th surfing competition to be held in Cox's Bazar in October and enjoy the hospitality of the Bangladeshi people.

There have been news reports on Zafar and his surfing in various newspapers of the USA.

Zafar said all these while talking to this reporter upon returning home after three months of surfing in Hawaii and Bali of Indonesia.

Zafar left home for Hawaii on 26th of April where he was involved in two months of practice before taking part in the original competition where he eventually came sixth. He also participated in various training programmes on how to save drowning people in the sea.

After surfing for two months in Hawaii, Zafar went to Bali in Indonesia where he was joined by two of his proteges Abdul Aziz and Shahadat Hossain who are members of the organisation called "Surfing Bangladesh" set up by Zafar to popularise the sport in Bangladesh.

After a month-long training in Bali, the three surfers returned to Bangladesh on the 4th of August only to find themselves being harassed by the local customs officials who seized their surfboards calling the equipment as illegal. This incident has left them without any equipment to surf.



PHOTO: AFP

Wolfsburg striker Grafite celebrates his goal against Stuttgart during their Bundesliga encounter in Wolfsburg on Friday.

Flying start for Wolves

AFP, Berlin



Wolfsburg launched their defence of their German league title with an impressive 2-0 win over Stuttgart on Friday, striking an early blow against a team tipped as potential successors to the crown.

The departure of title-winning coach Felix Magath to Schalke 04 showed no signs of eating into Wolfsburg's confidence as late goals from Bosnian playmaker Zvezdan Misimovic and Brazilian striker Grafite secured the points.

Grafite and Bosnian striker Edin Dzeko, who grabbed 54 goals between them last season, were quickly out of the blocks on Friday against Stuttgart.

In the 19th minute, Dzeko pounced on a defensive error by Frenchman Matthieu Delpierre, but former Arsenal goalkeeper Jens Lehmann turned the Bosnian's shot around the post.

Grafite was then thwarted

by Lehmann, who still looked sharp despite his approaching 40th birthday, on the half-hour mark.

Stuttgart had some opportunities in the first half with Sami Khedira seeing a shot saved on the line by Wolfsburg goalkeeper Diego Benaglio and new signing Pavel Pogrebniak also having a header saved.

But Wolfsburg's pressure finally told in the 71st minute when a drive from Misimovic beat Lehmann before Grafite added a second, eight minutes from time.

"It was a very good night for us," said Grafite, the league's top scorer last season.

"We could have won by more, but we know that every match in the championship will be tough."

Wolfsburg coach Armin Veh, who was in charge of Stuttgart, said his side were worthy winners.

"After a very equal first half, where either side could have scored, we then dominated the second half and deserved the victory."

On Saturday, midfield tough-guy Mark van Bommel leads Bayern Munich into their new season determined to stamp his authority and

that of new coach Louis van Gaal on the Bavarian giants.

The two Dutchmen are key to Bayern's hopes of wresting the title back from Wolfsburg after finishing an agonising two points behind the shock champions last season.

Van Gaal, who has followed the sacked Jurgen Klinsmann into the Bayern hotseat, believes van Bommel is the right man for the skipper's armband as another marathon league and European Champions League season beckons.

"I saw that Mark has a huge influence on the team," said van Gaal. "He's a big supporter of my philosophy, my methods and my values. That matters to me. I need someone to represent me on the field."

Bayern begin their campaign away at Hoffenheim, the unfashionable side who led the top flight for long spells in 2008-2009 before they fell away.

Striker Mario Gomez, signed for a club record 30 million euros from Stuttgart, has a groin strain, but should start for Bayern although question marks remain over French international Franck Ribery, who has been dogged by knee trouble.

Italy select uncapped trio

AFP, Rome

Italy coach Marcello Lippi has included two newcomers, Genoa defender Domenico Criscito and Juventus midfielder Claudio Marchisio, in his 20-player squad for the international friendly against Switzerland in Basel on Wednesday.

This is the world champions' first outing since their first round exit from the 2009 Confederations Cup in South Africa.

Azzurri regulars like Juventus' back Nicola Legrottaglie, Alessandro Gamberini, Liverpool's Andrea Dossena, Riccardo Montolivo, Luca Toni (injured), Daniele De Rossi and Gennaro Gattuso are all missing from this warm-up for the autumn's World Cup qualifiers.

Italy lead Group 8 on 14 points with a game in hand from the Republic of Ireland on 13 points.

They face Georgia in Tbilisi on September 5 followed four days later by Bulgaria in Turin with a trip to Dublin to face the Republic of Ireland in October.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Gianluigi Buffon (Juventus), Federico Marchetti (Cagliari)

Defenders: Salvatore Bocchetti (Genoa), Domenico Criscito (Genoa), Fabio Grosso (Lyon/FRA), Fabio Cannavaro (Juventus), Giorgio Chiellini (Juventus), Davide Santon (Inter Milan), Gianluca Zambrotta (AC Milan)

Midfielders: Andrea Pirlo (AC Milan), Mauro Camoranesi (Juventus), Claudio Marchisio (Juventus), Angelo Palombo (Sampdoria), Gaetano D'Agostino (Udinese), Simone Pepe (Udinese)

Forwards: Antonio Di Natale (Udinese), Alberto Gilardino (Fiorentina), Fabio Quagliarella (Napoli), Vincenzo Iaquinta (Juventus), Giuseppe Rossi (Villarreal/ESP)

Messi to earn 9.5m euros

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona and striker Lionel Messi have reached an agreement on an improved contract which will make the Argentine star the squad's highest paid player, Spanish television TVE reported Friday.

Under the terms of the new deal Messi will earn 9.5 million euros per year, compared to nine million euros which Zlatan Ibrahimovic, who joined the European champions from Inter Milan last month, will make, it said citing club sources.

The 22-year-old will sign the new contract, which will also see him stay with the Spanish champions until 2014, when the squad return from their pre-season tour of the United States.

Messi is currently under contract with Barca until 2010. His salary is estimated at eight million euros per year.

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Mills calls it quits

AFP, London

Former Manchester City and England right-back Danny Mills retired from football on Saturday after admitting defeat in his battle to recover from a serious knee injury.

Mills suffered the problem over a year ago and has been told it will not recover sufficiently to allow him to resume his career.

The 32-year-old, who also played for Norwich, Charlton and Leeds, won 19 caps for England and played at the 2002 World Cup.

"Unfortunately I have now got to the situation where I can no longer continue to play," he told BBC Radio Five Live. "So, really as from today, I'll be retiring from the professional game and looking to do other things."

"It has been difficult. I was fortunate it wasn't my decision in the end."

"I've been around the world - America, Germany, Sweden, London - I've been everywhere trying to get it sorted."

"I've been out for 18 months. I'm likely to have another operation in three or four months' time. Basically the knee just can't cope with it any more."

Villa snap up Beye

AFP, London

English Premier League side Aston Villa signed Senegalese international defender Habib Beye from relegated Newcastle on Friday on a three-year deal, the Premier League club confirmed.

The 31-year-old had appeared to be on the brink of joining Hull City on Thursday before Villa boss Martin O'Neill made his move.

Beye, who spent four years with Marseille before joining Newcastle in 2007, is Villa's third major signing of the summer, following Stewart Downing from Middlesbrough and Fabian Delph, who was tempted away from Leeds.

"I think Villa is a great football club," Beye told the club's official website.

"I was really happy when my agent told me Villa were interested. I just said 'Get it done'. I wanted to sign for this club."

"It's going to be great working for Martin O'Neill because Villa have a great team. I am so proud now to play here."

"It was important for me to stay in the Premier League and I am really happy I have with Villa. Newcastle are a massive club but everybody knows the problems at the moment."

Inter take Arnautovic on loan

AFP, Rome

Austrian striker Marko Arnautovic was loaned to Italian champions Inter Milan on Friday from Dutch side Twente, the Serie A giants announced.

The 20-year-old, who scored 14 goals last season, was also a target of Chelsea at the start of the summer and had carried a 15-million-euro price tag.

Arnautovic will compete for a starting place with new signing Samuel Eto'o, Argentine Diego Milito as well as Italian star Mario Balotelli.

Inter have an option to make the move permanent

Blues for life: Lampard

Football

AFP, London

Frank Lampard, on the brink of his 14th season as a professional, described himself Saturday as a "Chelsea lifer" who wants to move into management when his playing career finally comes to an end.

The durable Chelsea and England midfielder, when asked how much longer he expected to be playing, told The Times: "I've never put a figure on it but I'd like to go further than my contract is now (with four years left)."

"With the correct training and nutrition I don't see why I can't go on until I am 37 or 38."

"It might be difficult for strikers with that extra yard of pace being so important but midfield players can keep going, especially if you keep learning."

Lampard helps out with the youth team at Stamford Bridge and admits a future in management appeals to him.

"I'm a Chelsea lifer now," he conceded.

"With the news about John Terry staying, we've both been here a long time and I'd like to keep it that way."

"Management does interest me now."

"I didn't want it a few years ago but, having worked with a lot of good managers and enjoyed seeing young players coming through, I'd like to give it a go."

"I've spoken to John about it and we're looking at doing our badges together."

"I'd love to manage Chelsea one day. It's a bit of a dream as I've got such a strong affiliation to the club but John might beat me to it."

Aquilani seals L'pool switch

Football

AFP, Liverpool

Liverpool sealed a five-year deal with Roma midfielder Alberto Aquilani on Friday after the Italian international passed a medical with the English Premier League giants.

Aquilani, 25, will cost Liverpool 20 million pounds (33 million dollars) and is seen as a straight replacement for Xabi Alonso, who joined Real Madrid for 30 million pounds earlier this week.

"Liverpool FC confirmed this evening that Alberto Aquilani has successfully completed a medical and agreed a five-year contract with the club," said a Liverpool statement.

"The player will now continue his rehabilitation from an ankle operation under the guidance of Liverpool's medical team and is expected to be fully fit in approximately 4-8 weeks time."

Aquilani is expected to be at Anfield on Saturday where his new team take on Atletico Madrid in the club's final pre-season friendly before next weekend's Premier League big kick-off.

Aquilani, who has 11 caps for Italy, will earn a reported around 80,000 pounds a week.

He made just 14 league appearances last season and had surgery on his right ankle in May.

"Alberto is a very good player and I'm delighted we've reached agreement with Roma for his transfer," Liverpool manager Rafael Benitez said earlier this week.

"Alberto has a winning mentality and great experience in both Serie A and the Champions League."

"He has long been recognised as a top class talent in Italy, captaining his country at both Under-19 and Under-21 levels before establishing himself in the senior national side."



ALBERTO AQUILANI



PHOTO: COURTESY

A picture taken recently shows Bangladesh's first surfer at the international waters Zafar Alam riding the waves of the Pacific in Hawaii. Zafar competed against 130 surfers of various countries at the International Freedom Surfing Contest where he finished sixth.