



Wolverhampton Wanderers defender Ronald Zubar (3rd from L) celebrates with teammates after scoring the second goal against West Ham during their Premier League encounter at Upton Park on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Sevilla sack Jimenez

AFP, Madrid

Spanish Primera Liga club Sevilla confirmed Wednesday they have sacked under-fire coach Manolo Jimenez following a string of poor results.

"Sevilla's administrative board dismissed Manolo Jimenez on Tuesday night," the club said in a statement, adding that Ramon Tejada, the club's reserve team coach, will stand in until a replacement has been found.

Sevilla drew 1-1 at home to bottom side Xerez on Tuesday, meaning they have failed to win any of their last seven matches in all competitions and sit a point behind fourth-placed Real Mallorca having played one game more. Jimenez, who took over from Juande Ramos in October 2007, was fearing for his job following the Champions League exit to CSKA Moscow and some poor league performances but failure to beat basement boys Xerez at home was the final straw.

According to Spanish public radio RNE, Jimenez could be replaced by former Spanish national coach Luis Aragones.

Messi, Mourinho richest

Football

INTERNET, undated

Barcelona star Lionel Messi has overtaken David Beckham as the highest earner in world football.

The 22-year-old Argentine forward, who scored a second successive La Liga hat-trick in Barcelona's 4-2 win over Real Zaragoza on Sunday, has ended Beckham's two-year

reign as the world's best-paid footballer, according to France Football.

Messi pockets an estimated £29.6 million annually, closely followed by Beckham at £27.3m, while Real Madrid hotshot Cristiano Ronaldo sits in third place with his estimated earnings having hit the £27m mark.

A £3.6 million bonus earned by Messi for winning the treble last season with Barca took him ahead of the England star, according to the rich list.

Messi was also ranked as the fourth highest-earning sportsman in the world, behind golfers Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson, and basketball star LeBron James.

Carlos Tevez takes the title of highest earner in English football, coming in seventh place overall at £13.8m.

Jose Mourinho, whose Inter team last week knocked his former club Chelsea out of Europe, saw his stock rise further as he topped the list of football's highest-earning managers.

The Portuguese manager and self-proclaimed 'Special One' earns £11.7m a year, with

Manchester City boss Roberto Mancini in second place making £10.8m. Former Chelsea manager Luiz Felipe Scolari, now coaching at little-known big spenders Bunyodkor in Uzbekistan, comes in third at £8.5m.

Ominously, no Englishman made it into the top 10 highest-paid managers in the world.

Fabio Capello edges past Guus Hiddink into fifth, the pair being the only two national team coaches on the top 10 horizon.

PLAYERS

1. Lionel Messi (Barcelona) £29.6m
2. David Beckham (LA Galaxy/Milan) £27.3m
3. Cristiano Ronaldo (Real Madrid) £27m
4. Kaka (Real Madrid) £16.9m
5. Thierry Henry (Barcelona) £16.1m
6. Ronaldinho (AC Milan) £15.5m
7. Carlos Tevez (Manchester City) £13.8m
8. Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Barcelona) £13m
9. Frank Lampard (Chelsea) £12.8m
10. Samuel Eto'o (Inter Milan) £12.4m

MANAGERS

1. Jose Mourinho (Inter) £11.7m
2. Roberto Mancini (Manchester City) £10.8m
3. Luiz Felipe Scolari (FC Bunyodkor) £8.5m
4. Juergen Klinsmann (ex-Bayern Munich) £8.1m
5. Fabio Capello (England) £7.5m
6. Guus Hiddink (Russia) £7.1m
7. Sir Alex Ferguson (Manchester United) £6.5m
8. Pep Guardiola (Barcelona) £5.8m
9. Arsene Wenger (Arsenal) £5.7m
10. Louis Van Gaal (Bayern Munich) £5.4m

IN BRIEF

Lionel wants to become a legend

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona's goal-scoring sensation Lionel Messi, who has won a host of titles at club level, wants to win the World Cup with Argentina "to become a legend".

"To become a legend, to become great, you have to also win the World Cup," he said in an interview with El Mundo newspaper.

The 22-year-old has scored 25 league goals this season, including back-to-back hat-tricks in his last two league outings.

He is now being compared to compatriot and legend Diego Maradona, who won the World Cup with Argentina in 1986.

"Everything is happening so fast and I must stay calm," the 2009 Golden Ball winner told El Mundo.

Messi has already won the World Club Cup with Barcelona, two European Champions League cups, three Spanish league championships and one Spanish Cup.

Werder in German Cup final

AFP, Berlin

Holders Werder Bremen beat Augsburg 2-0 on Tuesday to seal their place in the German Cup final.

Goals in either half from the first division club's Marko Marin and Claudio Pizarro put paid to their second division rivals and set up a meeting in the May 15 final with the winners of Wednesday's second semi-final between Schalke 04 and Bayern Munich.

FA rejects Vermaelen appeal

AFP, London

Arsenal's appeal against the red card shown to defender Thomas Vermaelen in Saturday's win against West Ham was rejected by a disciplinary commission on Tuesday, the Football Association announced.

Vermaelen will now serve an immediate one-game suspension, meaning he will miss Saturday's trip to Birmingham City.

The Belgian was sent off shortly before half-time at the Emirates Stadium for bringing down the Hammers' Guillermo Franco inside the penalty area.

Arsenal were leading 1-0 at the time and went on to win the Premier League match 2-0, with West Ham's Alessandro Diamanti missing the penalty which followed Vermaelen's red card.

Wolves move up

AFP, London



Wolves took a huge step towards securing their Premier League status with a 3-1 win away to fellow strugglers West Ham at Upton Park here on Tuesday.

Victory left Mick McCarthy's men seven points clear of the bottom three with seven games left but this defeat left the Hammers just three points above the relegation zone.

Kevin Doyle sent Wolves on their way before two goals in three second-half minutes from Ronald Zubar and Matthew Jarvis sealed victory.

Guillermo Franco came off the bench to score for West Ham in injury time but the result had long since ceased to be an issue.

"We played well," Wolves manager McCarthy told Sky Sports. "I think the pressure was on them at home. It's a

game they expected to win. "We've not let them play, we've kept the ball and we managed to score three goals in what I thought was a terrific performance."

West Ham manager Gianfranco Zola reflected on a "very, very painful" defeat which saw some Hammers fans chant "you're not fit to wear the shirt" during the course of the match.

West Ham 1 (Franco 90)
Wolves 3 (Doyle 28, Zubar 58, Jarvis 61)

"I think that chant is a little unfair because the players they tried everything," said Zola.

"The players did their best but in a disjointed way and it made it very difficult for us. They played as individuals."

"That is very, very painful for me because it is my duty to correct it. The team is not playing very well and I take

responsibility for that.

"If (the fans) want to pick up on somebody they must pick up on me because I am responsible," the former Italy striker added.

"If they want to chant something they must chant about me. They have to leave the players because they belong to West Ham, they are working for West Ham and they are committed to West Ham."

"If they want to pick up on somebody they must pick up on me."

Wolves striker Doyle, asked what the Midlands side need to stay up, replied: "Another couple of wins."

"But from Burnley away to today has made a big difference and has really put a bit of daylight between us and the rest."

Doyle added: "The second one (goal) at the start of the second half really killed them off. It was nice to get three goals, we haven't scored too many this season."

Ribery eyes Spain move

Football

AFP, Berlin

French midfielder Franck Ribery admitted Wednesday he is deciding whether to prolong his Bayern Munich contract or to join either Barcelona or Real Madrid, but has ruled out a move to Chelsea.

The 26-year-old playmaker has a contract in Munich until June 2011, but Bayern are keen for him to sign an extension this summer, rather than risk him leaving on a free transfer when his contract expires.

Ribery has frequently been linked to European giants Manchester United, Real Madrid and Barcelona.

"If I decide not to extend my contract with Bayern, I will go to Spain for sure, although Chelsea is, of course, also a big club that in footballing terms is not far behind Real or Barcelona," Ribery told German magazine Sport-Bild on Wednesday.

"I can assure you no decision has been taken yet. I need time."

"I must take several factors into account, not just what is good for me, but what is good for my wife and children."

Ribery said he wants to sign a five-year contract - whether that is in Germany or Spain.

Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge has said he expects a decision on Ribery's

future may not come until after this June's World Cup in South Africa and the Frenchman insists he needs time to decide.

Bayern face Manchester United in the Champions League's quarter-finals first-leg next Tuesday at Munich's Allianz Arena and Ribery, who has struggled with injury this season, is respectful of his present club.

"Bayern is a large club, who want to offer the best conditions," he said.

"I get plenty of love and respect here."

And the Frenchman said it is not a matter of money.

"The money will not be the deciding factor," he said.

"The difference between the clubs is not very big, so the decision will not be governed by the bank account, but by the head."

Having put in some dazzling performances since joining Bayern in 2007, Ribery asked Munich fans for some understanding of his situation.

"I am only human. If you have an offer from a club, then you must be allowed to think about it."

"Some of the best players in the world are playing in Spain."

One key factor could be decisive is the better weather on the Iberian peninsula compared to Munich, which Ribery's wife would favour.

"She is a woman of the south, but that is not to say that we do not feel good in Munich," said Ribery.

Quevilly continue run

Football

AFP, Paris

Fourth division Quevilly upheld their giant killing reputation with a 3-1 French Cup quarterfinal win over topflight Boulogne on Tuesday.

Quevilly were joined in the semifinals by Paris Saint Germain, who beat Auxerre 6-5 on penalties after their tie ended goalless after extra time.

Quevilly, finalists in 1927 and semifinals in 1968, shot into an 11th minute lead courtesy of Florian Coquio.

In-form winger Anthony Laup doubled their advantage just before the half hour only for Damien Marq to cut the deficit in first half stoppage time with a header.

Any hopes the visitors may have entertained of getting back into the tie were dashed in the 67th minute when Abdel Majide Ouahbi grabbed the high achieving Normandy club's third goal.

This was a huge result watched by Quevilly's 10,000 fans at the Stade Robert

Quevilly 3 (Coquio 11, Laup 29, Ouahbi 67) Boulogne 1 (Marq 45+2)
Auxerre 0 Paris Saint Germain 0 aet
PSG won 6-5 on penalties

Diochon in Rouen as their own ground was deemed too small against the team that had knocked out Cup holders Guingamp in the previous round.

Regis Broaurd's men are the first amateurs to make it to the last four since Montceau-les-Mines three years ago.

"We thoroughly deserved the win," said Broaurd.

"To knock out a team from the first division is always a feat. We scored three goals from open play so there's not a great deal to say except 'bravo' to the players. What we've done is enormous."

"Now we're one match away from a trip to the Stade de France..."

"The best team won," concurred Boulogne manager Laurent Guyot.

Boulogne president Jacques Watez was less maganimous in defeat, saying: "Tonight I am ashamed to be 'Boulonnais'."

Later PSG's winning spot kick against Auxerre was converted by Claude Makelele after Julien Querchia had missed Auxerre's first 'sudden death' spot kick at 5-5.

Seville keep struggling

AFP, Madrid



Under-fire Sevilla coach Manolo Jimenez could not get the win he craved to alleviate the mounting pressure on his job with a last minute equaliser from Leandro Goida cancelling out Frederic Kanoute's penalty as Sevilla drew 1-1 at home to bottom side Xerez on Tuesday.

The 32-year-old Kanoute came off the substitutes bench to score a second half penalty for Sevilla but Goida equalised in the dying seconds of the game for Xerez meaning Sevilla have failed to win any of their last seven matches in all competitions and sit a point behind fourth-placed Real Mallorca having played one game more.

Xerez continue to prop up the table seven points from safety with games running out but celebrated their point as it were a victory.

Injuries had ravaged Sevilla with winger Jesus Navas - the star performer this season - out for a month with an ankle injury joining Luis Fabiano, Aldo Duscher and Sebastian Squillaci on the sidelines.

Ivory Coast midfielder Koffi Romaric almost put Sevilla ahead on eight minutes but they also had a scare on the quarter hour mark as a cross from the left was almost deflected in by back-peddalling Sevilla defenders.

The injury curse struck again for Sevilla with Argentine winger Diego

Perotti and midfielder Didier Zokora both going off injured in the first half.

Mario Bermejo missed a good chance for Xerez early in the second half to draw jeers from the home crowd but they turned to cheers in the 63rd minute when Adriano won a

Sporting Gijon 2 (Bilic 30, Castro 90-pen) Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Adrian 65)

Sevilla 1 (Kanoute 63-pen) Xerez 1 (Gioda 90)

penalty after a foul from Sidi Keita.

Kanoute was the model of composure side-footing his spot-kick down the middle as the goalkeeper dived to his left.

There was some hairy moments for Sevilla and Goida scuffed in from outside the area to deny Sevilla victory and heap the pressure on Jimenez whose side have not won since a 3-1 triumph at Real Mallorca on February 20.

European hopefuls Deportivo La Coruna saw a brave fightback come to nothing as they crashed to a 10th defeat of the season at Sporting Gijon on Thursday with a stoppage time penalty from Diego Castro sealing a 2-1 win.

Depor had to play 80 minutes of the game with ten men after goalkeeper Daniel Aranzubia was sent off in the 10th minute for a professional foul but looked set for a point when Adrian (65 min) cancelled out Mate Bilic's opener on the half hour mark.

However, defender Alberto Lopo conceded a penalty in stoppage time and Castro made no mistake to convert as Depor, who have not won away since November, stay seventh three points behind Sevilla.

Lopo was sent off for giving away the penalty while coach Miguel Angel Lotina was also dismissed for complaining to cap a miserable night for the club.

Real travel to derby rivals Getafe on Thursday targeting a 10th straight league win although they will be wary of their opponents having lost the corresponding fixture 3-1 last season.



PHOTO: AFP

Xerez defender Leandro Gioda (R) celebrates his equalising goal against Sevilla during their Primera Liga clash at the Sanchez Pizjuan Stadium on Tuesday.