



Manchester United players pose at a photocall showcasing their new kit during a promotional event at Niketown in Chicago on Wednesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Bayern for life: Mueller

SOCCERNET

Bayern Munich striker Thomas Mueller has indicated he would be happy to remain at the club for the rest of his career.

Mueller, 20, made a major impact at club level last season as Bayern won the Bundesliga and DFB-Pokal before reaching the Champions League final. At international level, he helped Germany to third place at the World Cup, winning the Golden Boot after scoring five goals and providing three assists as well taking the Best Young Player Award.

His performances have led to reports the likes of Chelsea and Real Madrid could look to make an approach, but Mueller insists he has no intention of moving on.

"For me it is most important that my personal development continues," Mueller told Sport Bild. "I have the perfect conditions for that at Bayern and, if I continue to get better, it means that Bayern are also successful."

"Therefore I am not even thinking about a transfer. It cannot be taken for granted that you will always be allowed to play for Bayern. For a start, you have to keep this level up for years. If someone said to me that I would play for Bayern for the next ten years I would say: 'I will sign immediately!'"

Bayern director of sport Christian Nerlinger has already said Mueller is to be offered a new contract.

"Everyone is glad when their boss wants to give you a wage increase, but what I like most is that such a statement makes me feel highly regarded after my first season," Mueller said. "That is an honour."

## Oezil might be sold, say Bremen

SOCCERNET

Werder Bremen general manager Klaus Allofs has hinted the club may consider selling Mesut Ozil this summer if they cannot convince the playmaker to sign a new contract.

Ozil, 21, was nominated for the Golden Ball award after enjoying a tremendous World Cup campaign for Germany in which he scored against Ghana and acted as the creative pivot for Joachim Low's side.

His displays in South Africa have naturally led to speculation that some of Europe's top clubs are hoping to lure Ozil away from Bremen and the Bundesliga side are not in a strong bargaining position as the player only has one year remaining on his contract.

Allofs previously said he would rather see Ozil's contract expire in 12 months than lose the player now, but with the midfielder potentially commanding a fee in the region of 25 million, that stance may be reconsidered.

"We would like to extend Mesut medium or even long term," Allofs told Bild. "But if this is not possible and it results

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## Rooney will be back

Football  
THE GUARDIAN

The Manchester United manager, Sir Alex Ferguson, has said Wayne Rooney will soon shake off the frustration of his World Cup performance, adding that Rooney would be disappointed to have missed an opportunity to impress on the world stage.

Rooney is not with Manchester United on their summer tour of North America, which will begin with what Ferguson has called a "particularly difficult" opening fixture against Celtic tomorrow night. He is being allowed to rest following an extended season which ended with England's second-round defeat by Germany in South Africa.

Ferguson is confident the 24-year-old striker will not dwell on his ineffective displays.

Ferguson told sportsnet.ca: "I don't expect a hangover. I think there'll still be a bit of disappointment in the lead."

"I think all the players coming back from the World Cup who didn't do well, who didn't reach their expectations may I say, will feel that they've missed something. That's because the World Cup's only once every four years. That's the horrible part of that tournament."

"We have several players who have come back very, very disappointed. We've Patrice Evra for instance, Wayne Rooney of course, and Nemanja Vidic."

"I think one player who will come back quite positive because he had a good World Cup was young Javier Hernandez from Mexico. I think he did very well and he surprised a lot of people. So whereas we've got some disappointments from players like Wayne, Nemanja and Patrice, I think we're going to have a positive effect from Javier."

## Heskey ends int'l career

SOCCERNET

Emile Heskey has announced his retirement from international football after winning 62 caps and scoring seven goals for England.

Heskey announced his decision after a disappointing World Cup campaign for the country as Fabio Capello's side were defeated 4-1 by Germany in the second round, with Heskey making an appearance as a 71st-minute substitute in Bloemfontein.

"That would prove to be the last international contribution for a player who has at times been a divisive figure amongst supporters of the national side."

"I have enjoyed every moment of my England career and worn the shirt with pride every time I have been fortunate enough to have been selected," Heskey said.

"I would like to thank every manager I have played under, everyone at the FA and the fans for all their support over the years. I wish the management team and the playing squad all the best for the future."

Heskey made his debut for England in April 1999 during a friendly against Hungary in Budapest. Perhaps the highlight of his international career came in 2001 when he scored England's fifth goal in a 5-1 rout of Germany in Munich.

The Aston Villa striker appeared at the European Championships in 2000 and 2004 and also featured in the 2002 World Cup campaign as England were eliminated by Brazil in the quarter-finals.

But although he proved an effective foil for both Michael Owen and Wayne Rooney across his international career, Heskey's contribution was often questioned by supporters who highlighted his poor strike-rate in the England shirt.

## Aduriz signs for revamped Valencia

REUTERS, Madrid

Valencia have agreed to sign striker Aritz Aduriz from Real Mallorca subject to a medical, the Spanish club said on their website (www.valenciacf.com).

The powerful 29-year-old was Mallorca's top scorer with 12 goals last season and local media reported he will move for around four million euros. (\$5.1 million)

Valencia have had to restructure their side after selling high-profile players such as Spanish internationals David Villa and David Silva to Barcelona and Manchester City respectively, to help pay off debts of more than 500 million euros.

Aduriz will become their sixth reinforcement after Roberto Soldado, Portuguese Ricardo Costa, Turk Mehmet Topal, Argentine Tino Costa and French midfielder Sofiane Feghouli.

"We hope to have it all sealed (soon) but we are very satisfied and I think we have completed a large squad that is competitive and with many options," club technical secretary Braulio Vazquez was

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## Silva finally Man City's

Football  
REUTERS, London

Spain's World Cup winning winger David Silva completed his move to Premier League club Manchester City from Valencia on Wednesday.

The 24-year-old underwent a medical on Wednesday having agreed a four-year contract. City's website did not disclose the fee but the Abu Dhabi-owned club are reported to have paid around 24 million pounds for Silva.

City, who announced the signing of Silva in June, finished fifth in the Premier League last season but will be expecting a top-four finish this season and a place in the Champions League.

"I will be happy if at the end



PHOTO: INTERNET

David Silva poses with his Manchester City shirt yesterday.

we are in the Champions League - or if we win a trophy," Silva told the club's website.

"My first target is to get into the team, and then to fight for the league and the other com-

petitions."

Silva is City's third signing during the close-season, following Roberto Mancini's capture of Hamburg's

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## Becks not a manager

Football  
INTERNET

David Beckham insisted on Thursday he has no plans to go into management.

The former Manchester United, Real Madrid and AC Milan star is winding his career down in MLS with LA Galaxy, and accompanied the England squad in South Africa.

But in a Yahoo webchat he denied that was the start of a move into management.

"It's something I have never been interested in," he said. "It's not a passion of mine to be a manager of a football team."

"I'm passionate about the game and being there and obviously I was wearing the suit so people have looked and thought I could be going into that."

"But coaching a team, being a manager, at this point in my career I don't want to do that and in the future I don't think that will happen either." Beckham refused to lay the blame for England's second-round exit with Capello. "He did everything that he could have done," he said.

"He prepared us right. He worked the players to the right amount and he set everything up for the players, but obviously the players know it was disappointing. We didn't



PHOTO: REUTERS

France striker Thierry Henry poses for a portrait wearing a New York Red Bulls uniform in this undated handout photograph.

perform and as players you know that - you know when you don't perform, you know when you don't play well."

"The manager can do so much and then it's down to the players. The players go on to the pitch and they know if they don't perform

they don't win games. The players are honest about that but it's not about individuals, it's not about how individuals play - it's about how we played as a team. It's a cliché but you win as a team and you lose as a team."

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## Ready for more Diego?

Football  
JOEL RICHARDS

Four years ago, Jose Mourinho was in charge at Chelsea, Tony Blair was British Prime Minister, Esteban Cambiasso had hair, Leo Messi was an unused substitute and Carlos Tevez was playing his club football in Brazil.

A vuvuzela, meanwhile, sounded like a rare species of antelope only seen with David Attenborough's accompanying whispery voice.

By the time the next World Cup swings around in four years time, there will have been just as many seismic managerial and political changes, players will have changed their look, made a name for themselves and changed club allegiances several times over. And of course, there will be a fresh set of annoying plastic gimmicks to prize money from punters' pockets.

But also come Brazil 2014, in normal circumstances we should be reminiscing about that grey suit, that greying beard, those taps on the bum, the pre-match kisses and the Pelé-baiting with nostalgia.

The Diego Maradona era as Argentina coach should be a sepia-tinged memory.

These are not normal circumstances, however, for the simple reason that AFA and Diego Maradona are involved.

Leading a chaotic, controversial and almost disastrous qualifying campaign wasn't enough. He had time to prove everyone wrong. An eccentric squad selection, last-minute tactical dabbling and whimsical demands for creature comforts wasn't even enough. The critics waited for the fall, which under Maradona, duly came in the form of a 4-0 drubbing at the hands of Germany.

Yet despite that defeat, the fingers are not pointing at Diego. And rather than someone else taking the blame, there are simply no fingers pointing, and Maradona retains his position centre stage.

In the aftermath of the World Cup exit, first came the brazen idea of one Argentine politician, who is more often associated with human- and workers'- rights campaigning than meddling in sporting matters, to suggest that now, just weeks after the World Cup exit, was the time for a statue of Maradona.

In some years time there will, rightly and deservedly, be a bronze effigy of Diego Armando Maradona in Argentina. But after a humiliating exit from football's biggest stage, which doctors have had to deny has sent the

coach back to the drugs, hardly seems an appropriate moment.

Next up came Julio Grondona, AFA president, who via his spokesman announced that there is a four-year contract offer on the table for Maradona. Sure, Diego will have to explain what happened in South Africa and come up with a plan for the next few years, but the offer is there to take.

Leo Messi, Sergio Romero, Martín Palermo and Gabriel Heinze all want Maradona to stay (although in the case of the last two its fairly obvious that a change in coach would signal an end to their time in blue and). Angel Di Maria was one player who admitted he didn't feel comfortable in the role Maradona played him in at the World Cup, and Veron Jr blamed Maradona for Veron Jr failing to perform in South Africa.

While opinion is divided on whether Maradona should carry on, there will be no developments till next week. The meeting between Maradona and Grondona will happen 'not after Wednesday and not before Tuesday' in the strangely-chosen words of AFA.

With commitments i.e. dollar-generating friendlies just on the horizon, however, a deal should be brokered soon. Maradona will make fresh demands regarding the make up of his back room staff, meaning Grondona may finally have to budge over the addition of Oscar Ruggeri to the set up.

While the prospect of Maradona coaching Argentina at a World Cup in Brazil is just too tempting for the polemicists and marketing people out there, it still doesn't address the real issues.

Germany highlighted the deficiencies in Argentine football from the physical and tactical, to the technical.

Changing coach will change relatively little. Argentine football requires a revolution in terms of organisation, in terms of priorities, in terms of coaching and in terms of its philosophy to avoid a repeat of the 2010 World Cup performance.

Maradona is not the sole reason for the embarrassing performances in South Africa, even if he didn't exactly help things. Maradona is, however, the perfect fall guy to deflect criticism away from AFA.

Failure at next year's Copa America would be a bridge too far for him to stay on, but avoiding that, don't be surprised to see Maradona in a sharp suit at Brazil 2014.

Joel Richards is a free-lance sportswriter

## Is Khedira the Real deal?

Football  
SOCCERNET

"There is still no contact between Real Madrid and VfB Stuttgart," spokesman Oliver Schraft told Deutsche Presseagentur. "That the transfer will be finalised in

Jorg Neblung said: "There will be no big news regarding Sami in the next two to three weeks, as Sami is on holiday over these weeks."

Khedira is out of contract at the end of the coming season and Stuttgart coach Christian Gross recently admitted the club will struggle to retain the midfielder.

"It is foolish not to think about a transfer when Sami's contract ends in June 2011," he told Kicker. "Also, if we want to strengthen with new players we need money. We must consider the option of selling, although it would be a shame to lose him."

Madrid-based daily AS also reports on Thursday morning that the agent of Khedira's international colleague Schweinsteiger has instructed

Bayern Munich to listen to any offers from Real for his client.



SAMI KHEDIRA

the next few hours is something we can clearly rule out."

Khedira's representative

## Inter not selling duo

Football  
REUTERS, Milan

Striker Mario Balotelli does not have a price and right-back Maicon is also not on the market, Inter Milan sporting director Marco Branca said on Wednesday.

Media reports say the 19-year-old Balotelli, who repeatedly clashed with former boss Jose Mourinho during Inter's run to the treble last season, is being tracked by Manchester United and Manchester City while Mourinho wants Brazil's Maicon to follow him to Real Madrid.

"We are in a very privileged position having won so much and it's true that every day we are receiving calls because everyone wants at least six or seven of our champions," Branca told reporters at the unveiling on Inter's new kit.

"Maicon and Balotelli? Our two players have never been on the market, when and if there are requests we will kindly examine them but they are

not on the market. Balotelli does not have a price."

Balotelli's agent, Mino Raiola, had revealed that both Manchester City and Manchester United were keen on securing the signature of the striker.

The 19-year-old has been widely linked with a move to either Old Trafford or Eastlands, and Raiola confirmed the rumours were not without foundation.

"The interest in Manchester is real, and both clubs [Manchester United and Manchester City] confirmed this. Balotelli is pleased that Sir Alex Ferguson is chasing him, but we cannot exclude the possibility he will stay at Inter or join a different club," Raiola told Calciomercato.it

"We will move calmly and evaluate the situations step by step."

While Balotelli himself, while remaining coy about his future, admitted that he was flattered by the interest of both United and City.

"When I talk about my future I always say 'I don't know' because next season I want to play consistently. I need that," he told Corriere dello Sport.



PHOTO: REUTERS

USA stalwart Landon Donovan (L) and actress wife Bianca Kajlich arrive at the 2010 ESPY Awards in Los Angeles on Wednesday.