

Carvalho wants Real move

SOCCERNET

Chelsea defender Ricardo Carvalho says he is desperate to reunite with Jose Mourinho at Real Madrid this summer as he wants to play for the "best club in the world".

Carvalho has enjoyed success under Mourinho at both Porto, where he won the 2004 Champions League, and Chelsea, where the Portuguese defender won the 2005 and 2006 Premier League titles.

Carvalho also picked up a third winners' medal last season but fell behind Alex in Carlo Ancelotti's pecking order and was restricted to 22 Premier League starts.

It appears the 32-year-old is now seeking a new challenge and the lure of playing for Mourinho at the Bernabeu is too much for Carvalho to resist.

"If there was a possibility to sign with Real Madrid, I would go there right now swimming or running," Carvalho told AS.

"It would be a dream to be able to play for Madrid, which I consider to be the best club in the world, and follow the orders of the best coach in the history of football.

"With Mourinho I experienced two marvellous stages at Porto and Chelsea. To have the opportunity to win another Champions League with him at Real Madrid would be tremendous."

Raul, Guti to leave Real

AFP, Madrid

Veteran Spanish internationals Raul and Guti will announce their departure from Real Madrid next week, Spanish media reported Saturday.

Striker Raul will on Monday announce that he is joining German side Schalke on a two-year contract while midfielder Guti will join Turkish side Besiktas, sports dailies AS and Marca reported.

The two players, who are both 33, have spent their entire careers at Real Madrid but they were little used last season. New Real coach Jose Mourinho has indicated that he does not count on them for next season.

Raul, who has played for Real since 1994, has "broken all records" at the club according to Marca, having won six La Liga championships and three Champions League titles during his time with the Spanish giants.

He has scored 323 times in 740 appearances for the club.

Guti, a product of Real's youth system who made his pro debut in 1995, said repeatedly over the last season that he would like to leave the Spanish club.

France suspend all 23

REUTERS, Paris

The 23 members of France's World Cup squad have been suspended for the country's next game following their first-round exit from the tournament in South Africa, the French Football Federation (FFF) said on Friday.

The decision was taken during a meeting of the FFF's Federal Council on the recommendation of new coach Laurent Blanc.

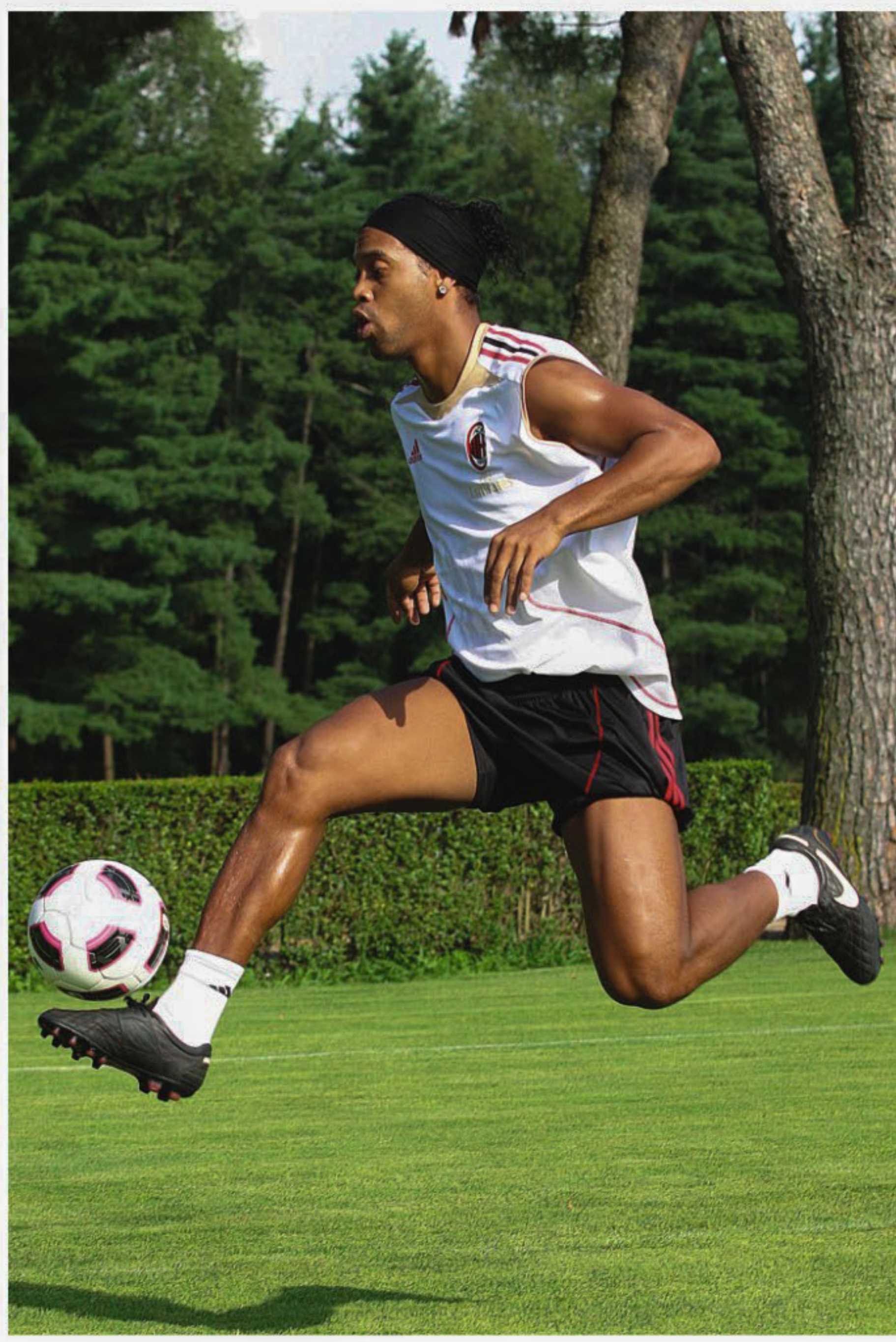
"Laurent Blanc proposed, and the council accepted, to retain for the friendly against Norway on Aug. 11 in Oslo none of the 23 players selected by the French Federation for the World Cup in South Africa," a statement said.

"Laurent Blanc will announce the list of players selected for the game against Norway on Aug. 5 at the FFF headquarters.

France's World Cup exit followed a players' boycott of a training session in support of striker Nicolas Anelka, who was sent home for insulting coach Raymond Domenech.

Blanc was appointed successor to Domenech on July 2 with the mission to restore the 1998 world champions' pride.

The first official game under Blanc is scheduled for Sept. 3 when they host Belarus in a Euro 2012 qualifier.



AC Milan's Brazilian star Ronaldinho juggles the ball during training in Milan on Friday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

New deal for Rooney?

Football

AFP, London

Manchester United are set to begin negotiations with Wayne Rooney on a lucrative new contract, even though the England striker still has two years to run on his current agreement.

United chief executive David Gill announced his plans after confirming Serbian defender Nemanja Vidic had agreed a new "long-term" contract of his own.

"The current intention is to meet with Wayne and his advisors when we're back from tour (in the USA) and he's back from holiday with a view to sorting out a new deal for him," Gill told www.mutv.com.

"It's clear from what he has said and what the club have said that both parties are very keen to sort things out and secure his long-term future at United.

"Given his desires and what he means to the club we're very confident that can be achieved."

Rooney scored 34 goals for United last season and will be a key factor in Sir Alex Ferguson's campaign to snatch the title back from Chelsea when the new season starts on August 14.

Vidic had repeatedly been linked with a

move away from Old Trafford over the last 12 months and it was reported that Real Madrid manager Jose Mourinho was ready to launch a bid to sign the Serbian.

But United's offer of an improved contract has persuaded Vidic to commit his future to Old Trafford.

Vidic's current deal has two years to run and it is believed United don't usually negotiate new contracts until there is only one year left, but that rule has been changed to keep the centre-back happy.

"There was a lot of speculation about Nemanja's future, but in my view it's been the media drumming some old stories because they certainly didn't come out of the Manchester United camp and I'm confident they didn't come out of Nemanja's camp," Gill said. "We sat down with Nemanja and his advisor at the end of last season and started discussions.

"They broke up when Nemanja went away to the World Cup, but resumed when Serbia were knocked out and I'm very pleased to confirm that we agreed terms with Nemanja three or four weeks ago on a new long-term deal with the club.

"It's yet to be signed - the paperwork is now being sorted by our lawyers and being checked by Nemanja's advisors."



Ajax Amsterdam striker Siem de Jong (C) scores against Chelsea during their friendly match in Amsterdam on Friday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Chelsea fall to Ajax

Football

AFP, Amsterdam

Premier League champions Chelsea slumped to a 3-1 defeat to Martin Jol's Ajax in a pre-season friendly on Friday, but coach Carlo Ancelotti praised his side, eight of whom were under 21 years old.

"Our young players did their best and it is normal for young players to play this kind of game," said Ancelotti, whose World Cup players did not feature.

"It was more difficult but it was a good test for them. They are disappointed with the result but individually the performance of the young players was good.

"It was the second game of the pre-season, we have to improve, but I can be happy for this performance."

Ajax, coached by former Spurs boss Jol, took the lead when goalkeeper Ross Turnbull inadvertently deflected a Jeffrey Bruma header into his own net.

Daniel Sturridge levelled before Siem De Jong made the most of a Turnbull mistake to score into an empty net.

South Korea's Suk Hyun-jun sealed victory in the final minute when he beat Hilario, who had replaced Turnbull between the posts at the break.

"Ross Turnbull didn't have a good performance but it can happen," said Ancelotti of a player who was standing in for the injured Peter Cech.

"We have trust in him and it is better he has a game like this now than when there is a Premier League game."

Ancelotti also told the official Chelsea website that he hopes that Cech, who has a calf injury, and Alex (thigh) will be fit for the start of the season.

He also said he was happy with Michael Essien's progress.

The Ghanaian, who missed the World Cup with a knee injury, added 73 minutes to the 62 he played at Crystal Palace last weekend.

"Essien is very well and I think he is fit to play. The injury is behind him and this is a good thing for us," said Ancelotti.

Generous Bon Jovi

AFP, Sydney

US rocker Jon Bon Jovi will donate seats to fans as part of his association with new Australian A-League football club Melbourne Heart this season, the club said on Saturday.

Lifelong sports fan Bon Jovi has taken on the role as the club's number one international ticket holder and in a gesture has purchased four premium memberships and will donate seats for each home game to football fans.

Bon Jovi, whose band is touring Australia in December, was until recently the owner of American professional indoor football team Philadelphia Soul and is keen to help out the Heart in their inaugural season, starting on August 5.

"I like to think I pour my heart into whatever I do, so supporting Melbourne Heart FC seemed pretty natural, but I wanted to see if I could share that feeling with Heart fans," Bon Jovi said in a club statement.

Vettel on pole for German GP

INTERNET

Sebastian Vettel pipped Fernando Alonso to pole position for the German Grand Prix by just two thousandths of a second Saturday to secure his sixth pole in 11 qualifying sessions this season.

In a qualifying round delayed by a crash involving Lucas di Grassi in the first session, the Red Bull driver registered a time of 1 minute 13.791 seconds to ensure he starts from the front of the grid in Sunday's race.

Ferrari's Alonso completes the front row with teammate Felipe Massa securing third spot ahead of Mark Webber in the second Red Bull.

Defending champion Jenson Button qualified in fifth in front of McLaren teammate Lewis Hamilton.

Michael Schumacher's poor season continued as the seven-time world champion was eliminated in the second round of qualifying and will start from 11th place on the grid.

Hamilton and Button command the standings after 10 of 19 races with 145 and 133 points, respectively. Webber has 128 and Vettel 121.

Drogba to miss season start

THE GUARDIAN

Didier Drogba is set to miss next month's Community Shield and Chelsea's Premier League opener after undergoing groin surgery which will rule him out for three weeks.

The Ivory Coast international, who was troubled by the groin problem during Chelsea's double-winning campaign last season, successfully had "minimal invasive surgery" yesterday, the club said on their website.

"The decision to perform the procedure after his return from the World Cup was made to optimise his rehabilitation," read the statement. "He is expected to return to full training in approximately three weeks."

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Give Fabregas time, says Wenger

THE GUARDIAN

Arsene Wenger says that Cesc Fabregas will be not be firing on all cylinders until the beginning of September but his prediction has nothing to do with the timing of the closure of the summer transfer window.

Wenger, who has made it plain that Fabregas is not for sale, is more concerned with the midfielder's exertions in helping Spain win the World Cup, and the same holds true of his striker Robin van Persie, who played in the final for Holland. Van Persie, however, did miss five months of last season with an ankle ligament injury.

"Physically, it is an advantage when you don't play at the World Cup," said Wenger. "And mentally, when you play in the World Cup final on 11 July, it is difficult to come back with complete recovery before the end of August."

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It's Menezes for Brazil

Football

REUTERS, Rio De Janeiro

Five-times world champions Brazil offered Mano Menezes the coach's job on Friday shortly after original choice Muricy Ramalho's club Fluminense refused to release him.

If he accepts, Menezes, who has lifted two of the country's most popular clubs out of the doldrums, will have the huge task of trying to rebuild Brazil's national team and win a sixth world title when they host the 2014 World Cup.

Winning their own World Cup is seen as an obligation by Brazil's 190 million inhabitants.

The job, one of the toughest in international soccer, has been vacant since Dunga quit following the World Cup quarter-final defeat to Netherlands three weeks ago.

Ramalho, who has considerable domestic success but like Menezes is little known outside Brazil, sat down for talks on Friday with Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) president Ricardo Teixeira, who praised the gruff 54-year-old's track record.

But hours later, Fluminense said that they wanted Ramalho to see out his contract, which runs until 2012.

"Muricy is going to continue at Fluminense, fulfilling his contractual commitments," club president Roberto Horcades told reporters.

In another twist, the CBF then said in a statement that Menezes had been approached and gave the impression his appointment was a mere formality.

"Mano Menezes will announce his decision at a news conference organised by his club Corinthians, tomorrow (Saturday), in Sao

Paulo," said the statement on the CBF's website (www.cbf.com.br).

"Mano Menezes was one of a shortlist of three coaches and had his name ratified after a conversation with Ricardo Teixeira, when he showed himself to be in tune with the rebuilding project drawn up by the CBF for the 2014 World Cup."

Menezes, 48, made his name in 2005 when he led former South American champions Gremio out of the second division.

In an extraordinary decisive game, Gremio had four players sent off, survived a penalty miss by opponents Nautico and then snatched a goal to win 1-0 and clinch promotion.

Two years later, he took them to the final of the Libertadores Cup, the South American equivalent of the Champions League.

The following year he led Corinthians, another hugely popular team, out of the second division.

Former Brazil, Portugal and Chelsea coach

Luiz Felipe Scolari, currently with Brazilian side Palmeiras, was believed to be the other coach on the shortlist.

Fluminense's move is almost unprecedented as Brazilian clubs are usually happy to oblige if their coach is picked for the national team.

Ramalho took over at Fluminense in April and on Thursday night his side beat Cruzeiro 1-0 to go top of the Brazilian championship.

Club president Horcades praised Ramalho for not leaving.

"People with Muricy's standards are necessary in football," he said.

The down-to-earth Ramalho won three consecutive Brazilian championship titles with Sao Paulo between 2006 and 2008, although he was never able to win the Libertadores.



MANO MENEZES

Yaya's Man Utd snub

Football

AFP, London

Manchester City's new signing Yaya Toure claims he rejected an offer from Manchester United because he wanted to hold out for the chance to play alongside his brother Kolo.

Toure ignored United's attempt to sign him last year and opted to spend one more year at Barcelona in the hope that City would make a bid to take him to Eastlands, where Kolo Toure had just moved from Arsenal.

The Ivory Coast midfielder got his wish earlier this month as City agreed a 25 million pounds deal with Barca that will see Toure earn around 185,000 pounds a week - making him the highest paid player in the Premier League.

Yet Toure is adamant it was the opportunity to link up with his brother and not the cash that persuaded him to quit the Nou Camp for City,

who failed to qualify for the Champions League last season.

"Last year Manchester United were interested in signing me. When I was talking about renewing my contract, United asked if I wanted to sign for them," Toure said.

"United are a big club, one of the biggest in the world, but I chose City because they have not won anything for a long time. It's a very nice feeling to come in and see everything changing.

"It's an interesting challenge for me and I hope everything goes well. I saw a lot of things written about why I left but, for me, I wanted to play with my brother.

"That was very important for me. Now I've signed for City I'm very happy. Now my brother and I want to make great things happen at this club and I'm sure we'll do it.

"My motivation is to do great things with City, to finish second or third maybe, to get into the Champions League."

Higuain talks up Cole deal

Football

SOCCERNET

Gonzalo Higuain says Real Madrid are "very confident" about signing Ashley Cole and says the Chelsea left back will face less intrusion into his private life if he does move to Spain.

Cole has been strongly linked with a move to Real following their appointment of Jose Mourinho, his former manager at Chelsea. It is also reported that Cole's strained relationship with the English press and public could convince him to leave Stamford Bridge.

It is a possibility that both Chelsea manager Carlo Ancelotti and chairman Bruce Buck have been quick to dismiss in recent days, but Real do not appear to have been deterred in their pursuit of Cole.

Higuain fully expects Cole to reunite with Mourinho at the Bernabeu and believes a transfer would be beneficial both from a personal

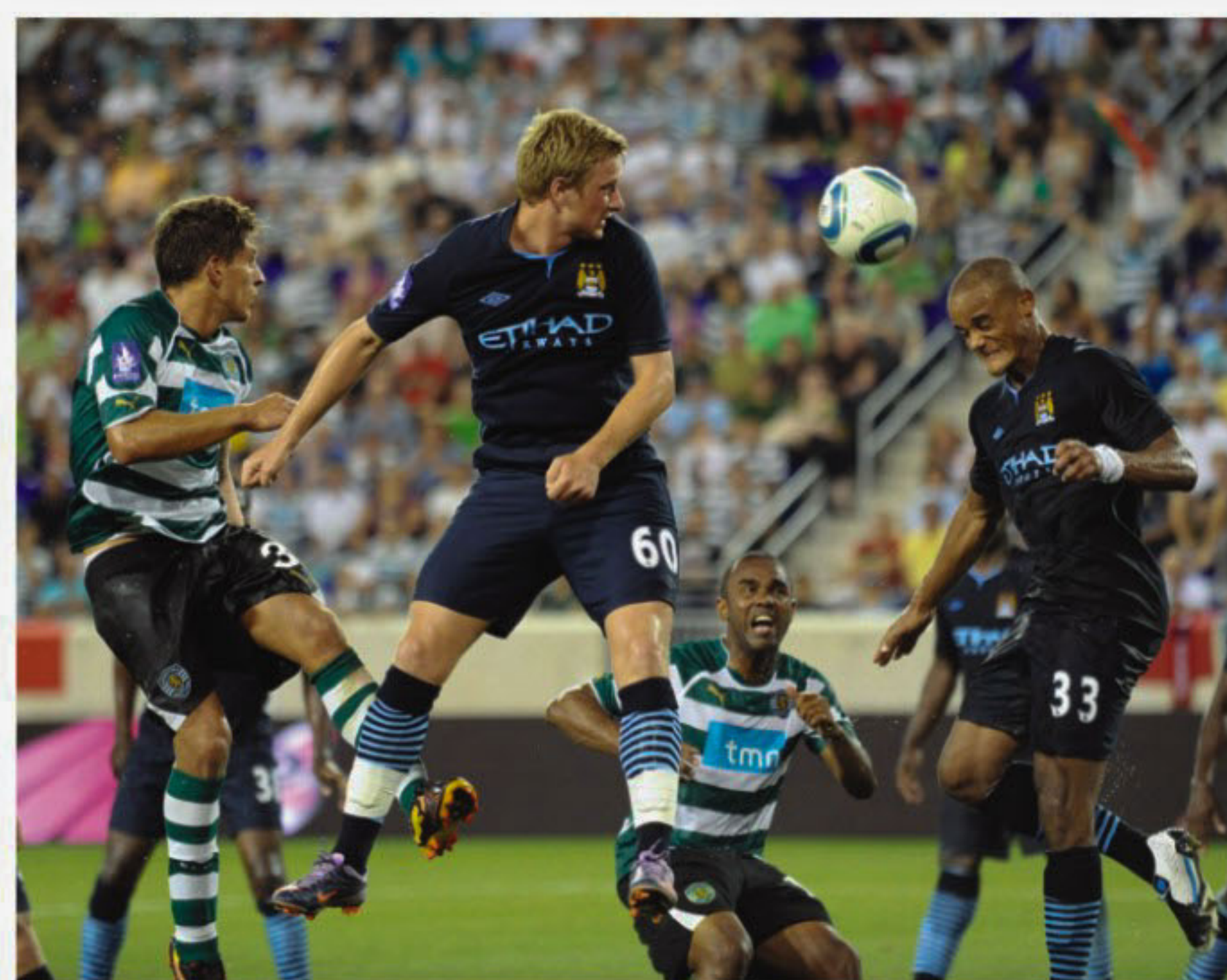
and professional perspective.

"At Madrid, Cole's football will make all the headlines, not his private life. I think that will be a big incentive for him," Higuain said in The Sun.

"I have spoken with a couple of senior players who the club confide in and they are very confident that we will sign him in the next few weeks. The vibe around the training ground is that the deal will be done. All the players are very excited about his arrival.

"It does not surprise me that Chelsea say he is not for sale. If you have a player who is the best in the world in his position then you do everything you can to try to keep him. But when Madrid want a player we usually get our man.

"I was speaking with Cristiano Ronaldo and he told me Cole is the toughest defender he has ever played against. So if Ashley Cole decides he wants to join the greatest club in the world and play for his old friend Jose Mourinho again, then I am sure the transfer will go through before the start of the season."



Vincent Kompany (R) of Manchester City gets his head to the ball in a melee while defending a freekick against Sporting during a friendly on Saturday at the Red Bull Arena in New Jersey.

PHOTO: AFP