



PHOTO: AFP

Bayer Leverkusen's new signing German star Michael Ballack controls the ball during a training session at the BayArena yesterday.

## City name Robinho in squad

REUTERS, Manchester

Brazil striker Robinho has been included in Manchester City's 25-man squad list for the new season despite his long-held desire to remain at Santos where he has been on loan.

Roberto Mancini confirmed Robinho's inclusion at a news conference on Friday. "He came back yesterday, he is very tired but he is on the list," said City's manager.

Robinho, who cost a British transfer record fee of 32.5 million pounds (\$50.91 million) when he joined from Real Madrid in September 2008, has had an unhappy time at Eastlands and returned to former club Santos on loan in January.

Wales striker Craig Bellamy, who cost City 12 million pounds when he joined from West Ham United in January 2009, was not included in the squad list.

Bellamy has been linked with a move to Premier League rivals Fulham who are managed by his former City boss Mark Hughes.

Mancini also said he expected a deal for Mario Balotelli to be completed "today or tomorrow", with the Inter Milan striker on his way to Manchester for a medical on Friday.

## Iceland team star on YouTube

AFP, Reyjavik

An Icelandic football team that became a global Internet hit after a fun goal celebration admitted they now felt under pressure to make fans laugh.

Millions went online to watch the video on YouTube of Halldor Orri Bjornsson and his teammates celebrating a goal during a league match in July by pretending to fish and bringing in a player on an imaginary line.

"We did not expect celebrations from a team in a premier league in Iceland to get all this attention", Bjornsson said about Stjarnan FC's newfound stardom.

"Now we are under a lot of pressure. It was hard to do better than 'The Angler', but since then we came up with 'The Bicycle' and 'The Birth'... we are trying to stay fresh", he said, as his club sits 6th in the 12-team league.

Ideas for novel celebrations came after training, Bjornsson explained. "We decided to do something funny, there is a good morale in the squad and we kind of took it from there."

The video can be seen on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xEDmKoukRqU&NR=1>

## Paris St. Germain hope to keep form

AFP, Paris



Paris St. Germain go into this weekend's second round of the French championship hoping they can maintain the form they showed in last weekend's opener against St. Etienne.

Last season's French Cup winners produced an impressive performance to win 3-1 although the game was overshadowed by crowd violence which looks likely to result in 250 of their notorious fans being banned from their Parc des Princes home.

On Sunday, they face a stiff challenge at Lille where former PSG goalkeeper Mickael Landreau admits that there is an air of excitement ahead of the game.

"There is no particular pressure in this match but it is our first real test," says Landreau who played in Lille's opening 1-1 draw with Rennes.

"You can sense that the supporters really want to

beat Paris and we are desperate to win our first game at home."

Landreau, however, is in no doubt about the task ahead of them against a PSG side that is itself desperate to land its first league title since 1994.

"Paris have rebuilt well since I left. The team has shown it wants to live up to the attacking ideals it showed in pre-season," he said.

Promoted Caen were the surprise package of the opening round as they travelled to Marseille and beat the champions 2-1 - the winner coming four minutes from time from the impressive Youssef El-Arabi.

However, coach Franck

Dumas is not getting carried away by thinking his side can emulate Montpellier's front-running performances last year.

"We have won one match, it would be madness to say that," he said. "We beat Marseille which is wonderful for those who don't really know the Velodrome or Ligue 1."

"I hope they really enjoyed but now we have other things to think about. The objective remains staying up."

The downside of the win was a broken toe for their influential midfielder Benjamin Nivet which rules him out of another tough match at home to a Lyon side that was held to a goalless draw at home to Monaco.

The visitors, however, are also likely to be missing a key player as winger Ederson tweaked his hamstring two minutes into his debut for Brazil against the USA in midweek.

Marseille, meanwhile, hope to pick up the pieces as they head to Valenciennes while Jean Tigana's Bordeaux - beaten by Montpellier - are at home to Toulouse.

FIXTURES	
<b>Saturday</b>	Brest v Auxerre, Lorient v Nice, Monaco v Montpellier, Nancy v Rennes, Saint-Etienne v Sochaux, Valenciennes v Marseille (1700GMT), Arles-Avignon v Lens (1900GMT)
<b>Sunday</b>	Bordeaux v Toulouse, Caen v Lyon (both 1500GMT), Lille v Paris St. Germain

## Santos angry over Neymar pursuit

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Santos president Luis Alvaro de Oliveira Ribeiro has warned he intends to complain to FIFA as Chelsea continue to show interest in starlet Neymar.

Chelsea have already seen a bid of £20 million rejected for Neymar, 18, but the player is apparently keen on a move to Stamford Bridge and reports have claimed personal terms have already been agreed.

Neymar has a R\$ 80 million (£28.75 million) release clause in his contract and Santos would not be able to stand in his way should the Blues meet it, but their president feels they may be guilty of tapping up the player.

"The club had sent us a formal transfer proposal, which was rejected immediately, but the harassment continues," he told a press conference. "Considering the ethics which clubs are supposed to adhere to, this is completely intolerable, and Santos will go to defend its interests in FIFA."

"Yesterday [Wednesday], there was a telephone enquiry. [Chelsea] got in contact with my secretary and asked for our fax number. This does not mean that they have opened negotiations. Santos are not interested in selling Neymar for any amount of money."

"The contract between player and club contains a clause that is a compensation payment in the case that either party wants to break the agreement. If they meet the terms of that clause there is nothing we can do."

## Villa include Milner

AFP, Birmingham

Aston Villa midfielder James Milner has been named in his club's squad for Saturday's clash against West Ham even though he is close to joining Manchester City.

Milner could be a City player by next week after Eastlands boss Roberto Mancini revealed a deal was close.

The England international has not featured in any of Villa's pre-season matches. But caretaker manager Kevin MacDonald, in charge since Martin O'Neill quit earlier this week, has decided to include Milner in his group for the Premier League opener against the Hammers at Villa Park.

MacDonald said: "The latest about Milner is that talks are still ongoing. Nothing can be done today (Friday) in terms of him being signed in time to play tomorrow (Saturday)."

"James has been put in the squad and will be available to play for Aston Villa against West Ham."

MacDonald also revealed Villa owner Randy Lerner had asked him to be ready to take charge for another week.

"Would I like to be a manager? What will be will be. Mr Lerner told me to prepare the team for West Ham," MacDonald said.

"I spoke to him today and he also asked me to make preparations for next week just in case. That's all I'm doing."

## City agree Mario fee

AFP, Manchester



Manchester City manager Roberto Mancini revealed on Friday that he expects to sign Italian striker Mario Balotelli from Inter Milan within the next 24 hours.

Reports in England claimed Balotelli was flying to Manchester to have a medical with the Premier League club on Friday and Mancini confirmed that a deal should be done soon after City agreed a fee for the youngster.

"We are close with Balotelli. Hopefully today or tomorrow, Mario is on his way here today," Mancini said at a press conference ahead of Saturday's Premier League opener at Tottenham.

Balotelli has been a long-term transfer target for Mancini and it is believed he will cost City around 24 million pounds (29 million euros).

The 20-year-old will become City's fifth big-money signing since the end of last season, taking their spending to over 100 million pounds (121 million pounds) after the arrivals of Jerome Boateng, David Silva, Yaya Toure and Aleksandar Kolarov.

Balotelli, who has Ghanaian parents, had endured a stormy spell at Inter.

He fell out with former manager Jose Mourinho last season and was left out of the squad for a European tie against Chelsea.

He also angered fans of the European champions by allowing himself to be photographed in the shirt of their arch rivals AC Milan and was racially abused by Juventus fans during a match in 2009.

Despite all the controversy, Balotelli remains an incredibly gifted player, with pace, power and the ability to score spectacular goals.

While Balotelli seems to be on his way to Eastlands in time

for the new season, another of Mancini's targets, Aston Villa midfielder James Milner, may not get his wish to join City until next week at the earliest.

Mancini's club have been negotiating with Villa over England international Milner for several weeks and the Italian said: "We need another two or three days for this situation. We need everyone to be happy."

It is believed City are ready to sell midfielder Stephen

Craig is out of the list," Mancini said.

"Bellamy can talk but it is not important because it is false. Last year Craig played all the games with me. This year I have chosen other players. I am the manager. I make this choice."

Bellamy, 31, has played for new Fulham manager Mark Hughes several times in his career and also had a loan spell at Celtic five years ago.

Hughes, who has signed the



MARIO BALOTELLI

Ireland to Villa as part of the deal but the Republic of Ireland international is still discussing a pay-off before agreeing to leave.

Mancini also admitted Wales striker Craig Bellamy's time at Eastlands is over after accusing him of false statements to the media.

Bellamy has been fined after claiming Mancini was trying to force him out of Eastlands and had stopped speaking to him.

He will not be included in City's 25-man squad for the coming season, with Fulham and Scottish club Celtic ready to fight it out for his services.

"I have to choose 25. The rest must find another team.

former Liverpool player on three occasions, was quick to declare his admiration for Bellamy, saying: "He was one of the top players in the Premier League and if he comes on the market, and if we're in the position where we can conclude a deal for Craig Bellamy, then yes we would be very interested."

"At the end of the day the way the situation seems to be forming for Craig that Manchester City won't use him at Premier League level, so from Craig's point of view it is very important that he makes the right decision for his career because a wrong decision at this point in time could hurt him."

## Ronaldinho tips Pato, Coutinho to shine

AFP, Rome



Brazilian superstar Ronaldinho has tipped two countrymen to star in Serie A this season: AC Milan team-mate Pato and teenage midfielder and new Inter Milan signing Coutinho.

The 30-year-old, once the most exciting player in the world and twice world player of the year, enjoyed something of a mini revival last season following two disappointing campaigns.

While his burst of pace of old is long gone, Ronaldinho still showed flashes of the brilliance that turned him into a superstar during his Barcelona days.

And while talk surrounding Ronaldinho these days focuses more often on his expanding waistline or nocturnal activities, the former Paris St Germain star said it is his compatriots who people should keep their eyes on this season.

"Pato has great ability and he's very motivated, it will be his season, he'll score many goals," he told La Gazzetta dello Sport.

"But watch out for another young talent, he's just arrived but he's destined to make his mark: Coutinho. The future is his."

Pato was a sensation in his first year and a half at Milan, holding down a regular first team spot an impressive with his pace and finishing.

But after a good start to last term, injuries affected the second half of his season and he missed out on the Brazil World Cup squad.

Attacking midfielder Coutinho, 18, has just

been signed by Inter and is believed to be one of the main reasons the Italian champions are prepared to let Mario Balotelli leave.

Looking ahead to the new title race, Ronaldinho predicted there would be no surprises.

"Inter have lost (Jose) Mourinho, one of the best coaches in the world, but I think the fight will be the usual one," he added.

"That means between the champions (Inter), us, Juventus and AS Roma."

For Ronaldinho, who also missed out on World Cup selection, this season he wants to return to winning ways, following four trophy-less years.

"I was expecting to be picked for South Africa and maybe I deserved it, but now I'm looking forward."

"I still have a lot of desire to show Milan what I'm worth, and I haven't won anything since 2006."

As for questions about his growing stomach, and photos of him on a beach in Rio showing that he had developed something of a paunch, Ronaldinho remained defiant.

"I haven't seen this photo," he said. "I'm used to giving my replies to those who don't have faith in me on the pitch."

And that includes former Brazil great Falcao, who said recently that Milan have not seen the best of Ronaldinho.

"All I know is that in my career I've won a few things, he speaks because he is Falcao," retorted Ronaldinho, possibly in reference to the fact the unlike himself, Falcao never won the World Cup.

## Poulsen won't replace Masche: Hodgson

Football

SOCCERNET

Roy Hodgson insists Christian Poulsen was not brought to the club as a replacement for Javier Mascherano and says he does not expect the Argentina captain to leave Liverpool in the imminent future.

Hodgson brought in defensive midfielder Poulsen, 30, from Juventus this week and many believe the transfer was made as a result of the expected departure of Mascherano to Inter or Barcelona.

However, Hodgson has dismissed those rumours and said Poulsen was simply brought in to give him another option ahead of a potentially busy season.

"We've got a lot of games to play hopefully and we're going to need a lot of players," he said. "We didn't take him in to replace somebody - we took him in because we want him to improve the size of our squad and the quality of our squad."

Asked if Mascherano's statement that he had no problem with Liverpool as a club means there is hope he could stay, Hodgson said: "There's no point in me commenting on things Javier has said or supposedly said, because I've had seven or eight training sessions with him now and we talk about football."

"Since our very early meeting where he made it clear that if possible he would prefer to leave, he's been getting on with his work, training properly, playing properly and, as far as I'm concerned, he's a Liverpool player until the day somebody signs him, and that day does not seem to be imminent."

Hodgson also said he will be giving Fernando Torres and Pepe Reina tests ahead of the Arsenal game to see whether they are sharp enough to play. The duo returned late to pre-season training due to Spain's successful World Cup campaign.



Liverpool manager Roy Hodgson (R) poses with new signing Danish midfielder Christian Poulsen following a press conference at their Melwood training ground yesterday.

## Welbeck joins Black Cats

AFP, Sunderland

Manchester United striker Danny Welbeck joined Sunderland on a season-long loan, it was announced Thursday.

Sunderland boss Steve Bruce, the former United centre-half, was delighted to have secured the services of the 19-year-old Welbeck.

"He's a young man but he'll fit into our squad fantastically well."

Welbeck arrived on Wearside the day after striker Kenwyne Jones left the club to join Premier League rivals Stoke.

"It would be unfair to say that he (Welbeck) is the replacement for Kenwyne," added Bruce. "There's still a couple of weeks to go in the market and hopefully the money is there to go and spend it."

Bruce said he would be interested in Wales forward Craig Bellamy, who appears to be out of favour at Manchester City, although he could be out of the Black Cats' price range.

Bruce said: "There's a lot of clubs who would love Craig Bellamy. He's an individual and he's a fantastic player but whether it's possible, I'm not quite sure."