



Real Madrid superstar Cristiano Ronaldo gives a thumbs-up during a visit to the town of Lorca on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP FILE

## C'Ron worth £1b

Football

INTERNET

If moneybags Manchester City really want to sign Cristiano Ronaldo, they will have to fork out an awful lot more than the £150m quoted yesterday.

It emerged last night that the Real Madrid superstar has a buyout clause in his contract worth a jaw-dropping £874m.

And, should the Spanish giants refuse to waive that clause, City would have to make Ronaldo the world's first £1bn footballer.

He's already the most expensive player on the planet, with Real having paid Manchester United a world record £80m for him two years ago.

That massive fee was bulked up by the hefty buyout clause United had insisted on when the Portuguese signed his last contract at Old Trafford--and Madrid demanded a considerably bigger one when he signed for them.

Abu Dhabi-backed City, now the world's richest football club, are of course the only ones who could afford Ronaldo, but even they will balk at the amount the deal would cost--even if Real waived the staggering buyout clause.

The 26-year-old's wages alone would have to be at least £300,000 a week--which, after UK tax is paid, would match what he's currently earning at the Bernabeu.

City claim they are not interested in Ronaldo, but they said the same thing about Carlos Tevez and Wayne Rooney, landing the

former and nearly poaching the latter.

And they do need a 'marquee signing' to replace club captain Tevez who, despite manager Roberto Mancini's insistence that he would stay, now looks likely to leave Eastlands for Italian club Inter Milan.

After Tuesday's 3-0 Premier League win over Stoke City, in which Tevez scored two goals, Mancini said that the Argentinian striker had told him he wanted to stay.

But within 24 hours, Tevez's representatives were claiming in private that the striker had said nothing of the sort.

Tevez was subsequently reported to have told an Argentinian radio station that he wanted to leave and even senior figures at City now wonder if Tevez's trusted adviser, Kia Joorabchian, is trying to find a club willing to pay the vast transfer fee and wages the striker would command.

Mancini is not entirely convinced about the quotes emerging from Argentina, attributed to Tevez that indicate that the player wants to go.

"Sometimes I have spoken to journalists in Italy and when the comments come back here, it is something completely different. I understand it can happen because of the translation," he said.

Mancini laughed at suggestions that he might be interested in signing Ronaldo. "We have signed Cristiano Ronaldo for £200m," joked the Italian.

"I said after the FA Cup final that I would like to sign Ronaldo, Messi, Fabregas and Iniesta, but I don't think it is possible."

## CL places up for grabs

AFP, Rome

With the title long secured and the bottom three already decided, the only outstanding issues in Italy surround the minor European finishes.

Four teams still have something to play for and all eyes will be on their four matches late on Sunday.

The most crucial prize up for grabs is fourth place and the final Champions League qualification position.

It is one that looked set to go right down to the wire with potentially four teams involved, but instead seems almost already decided.

Udinese currently hold that fourth place and need just a draw at home to champions AC Milan to ensure their place in August's play-off round for the group stages of Europe's premier competition.

Lazio need to beat Lecce away and hope highly-motivated Udinese fall against celebratory Milan.

If Udinese drew, a win would suffice for Lazio, but only if it was by at least nine goals, an unlikely scenario.

However, Udinese boss Francesco Guidolin is not taking any chances and insists that avoiding defeat to the best team in the league can hardly be considered a formality.

"On Sunday we will be engaged in overcoming the highest obstacle given

### FIXTURES

Sunday

Bologna v Bari, Brescia v Fiorentina, Cagliari v Parma, Genoa v Cesena, Inter Milan v Catania, Palermo v Chievo (all 1600 GMT), Juventus v Napoli, Lecce v Lazio, Roma v

we are playing Milan, the best team in the league," said Guidolin.

"I don't agree with those who say we've almost arrived at our objective and that we don't have any more obstacles to overcome.

"Of course we're in good shape and we'll do our best to combat Milan but we're not taking anything for granted.

"I repeat, the team coached by

(Massimiliano) Allegri is the toughest adversary we could have."

In any event it is perhaps surprising that the unfancied pair are playing for such high stakes while two far more illustrious teams are playing for a pittance in comparison.

The only other undecided element in the league is who finishes sixth and takes the last Europa League spot.

Whoever misses out on the Champions League between Udinese and Lazio is guaranteed a Europa League finish, alongside Cup finalists Palermo.

Which leaves Roma and Juventus squabbling over scraps.

Roma are in pole position and need only avoid defeat at home to relegated Sampdoria, while Juve must beat Napoli -- guaranteed a third place finish -- and hope for a Roma loss.

But it is a measure of both teams' abject failure this season that having begun the campaign aiming for the title, they have been reduced to a straight battle for sixth place, with the losers missing out on Europe altogether.

## Kenny coy on new signings

AFP, Liverpool



Liverpool manager Kenny Dalglish insists he will only recruit this summer if any potential new signings are stronger than his current side.

Dalglish takes his squad to face Aston Villa on Sunday with Luis Suarez and Andy Carroll expected to lead the line against Gerard Houllier's men.

The former Liverpool manager is not expected at Villa Park for the visit of his old side as he continues to recover from a health scare.

He is therefore likely to miss watching Liverpool's January signings wreak havoc with the £57.8m the club paid for Suarez and Carroll in January starting to look like a bargain.

That has raised hopes that a frantic summer of buying is about to commence at Anfield but Dalglish has dampened down any idea that he will spend ridiculous sums of money once the close season arrives.

"If we're bringing anyone in they've got to be better than what we've got

and that's going to be a big ask," he said.

"The people we'll be looking at are of the highest calibre, because the players here have done really well since January.

"It would be disrespectful to them for us not to be looking at a higher level.

"We've had a great end to the season. There will be lots of work done in the close season and we'll take it from there."

Dalglish acknowledges that bringing in a plethora of players can cause a dressing room to wobble until the new arrivals settle in but that is a price he is willing to pay -- if the right man comes along.

"Although it might affect them, players themselves expect new faces to come in and give the place a lift. It'll happen and they know it'll happen," he added.

"If we get some quality people in to go along with the people already here that will help everyone - it always helps to freshen up the dressing room."

Villa's preparations for this encounter

have been added a sombre touch by the fact Jean Makoun has had to fly back to his native Cameroon on Friday after his family were in a car accident.

The wife of Makoun, 27, and one of his five children were involved, however neither suffered any injuries.

The former Lyon player has been given permission to fly back to Yaounde.

Villa assistant manager Gary McAllister said: "Jean has been forced to go back to Cameroon because his wife and one of his children have been involved in a car accident.

"They are both fine but just in a wee bit of shock. But Jean has asked for permission to go back to home which we've given him and obviously he can stay over there because the season is at an end after this weekend."

"They have been to hospital and they are fine, and there are no injuries, but they are just a wee bit rattled.

"So Jean will be the only one who is missing against Liverpool and we will be picking from a full pack of players otherwise."

### SPORTS POLL

#### WEEKLY QUESTION

Do you think the BCB can hire the new head coach by June 15?

Visit the sports page of [www.thedailystar.net](http://www.thedailystar.net) to cast your vote

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### What to WATCH

#### SET Max

Indian Premier League  
Bangalore v Chennai  
Live from 4:30pm  
Kolkata v Mumbai  
Live from 8:30pm

#### ESPN

F1 World Championship  
Spanish Grand Prix  
Live from 5:45pm  
English Premiership  
Man United v Blackpool  
Live from 8:55pm

#### TEN Cricket

West Indies v Pakistan  
Second Test, Day 3  
Live from 8:00pm

#### STAR Sports

French Open Tennis  
Opening Day's Play  
Live from 3:00pm  
English Premiership

### DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh League  
Sk Jamal v Farshganj  
Time: 4:15pm  
Venue: Bangabandhu

## EPL reaches climax

AFP, London



Five teams will be fighting for survival on Sunday as the English Premier League reaches its climax with what is poised to be one of the most fraught relegation battles in years.

With Manchester United wrapping up a record 19th title last week, the final day of the 2010/2011 season will be dominated by events at the foot of the table, where only one point separates five teams.

West Ham were the first side to be relegated after they slumped to a dramatic defeat at Wigan last weekend.

The Hammers' exit has left Blackburn, Wolves, Birmingham, Blackpool and Wigan facing a nerve-jangling finale.

For Wolves and Blackburn, who face each other at Molineux, the equation is simple: victory will guarantee their Premier League status for another season.

The two clubs sit just above the relegation zone with 40 points, followed by Birmingham, Blackpool and Wigan, who all have 39 points.

Wolves had looked doomed for much of the year but have climbed out of the drop zone after a draw with Birmingham that was followed by back-to-back wins over West Bromwich Albion and Sunderland.

Wolves manager Mick McCarthy has urged his team to go out and finish the job in style by claiming a third consecutive victory at Blackburn's expense.

"It is going to be settled on the last day," McCarthy said. "We can't do any more than try to win our game."

Blackburn boss Steve Kean's preparations could scarcely have been worse.

The Rovers manager was charged with drunken driving following his team's 1-1 draw with Manchester United last week, and was subsequently summoned to India for an unscheduled meeting with the club's owners.

British press reports meanwhile have suggested that Kean, who took over as manager following the controversial dismissal of Sam Allardyce in December, may be sacked even if Rovers manage to stay up.

The fate of Birmingham, Blackpool and Wigan may hinge on results elsewhere.

Blackpool face the toughest task, travelling to Old Trafford to face Manchester United knowing they will need to get a result to have any chance of staying up.

Although the build-up has been dominated by talk of United fielding a weakened team ahead of next week's Champions League final against Barcelona, Seasiders manager Ian Holloway has backed his team to defy the odds.

The outspoken Blackpool manager believes the league would rather see the back of him.

"They (the Premier League) will be relieved if we lose and get relegated," he said.

Birmingham manager Alex McLeish has called on his team to be fearless when they travel to White Hart Lane for a daunting tie with Tottenham, who are chasing fifth place and a Europa League berth.

McLeish added he has no fears that Blackpool could be at an advantage in their game at Old Trafford.

"Manchester United will play a strong team whatever happens as some players didn't play last week and will need a game before the Champions League final," he said.

"I won't worry about Manchester United at all, we've got to worry about ourselves and try and get over the line. We have to get at least a point and see what happens."

### FIXTURES

Sunday

(all 1600 GMT):

Aston Villa v Liverpool, Bolton v Man City, Everton v Chelsea, Fulham v Arsenal, Man Utd v Blackpool, Newcastle v West Brom, Stoke v Wigan, Tottenham v Birmingham, West Ham v Sunderland, Wolverhampton

## Carlo relaxed about future

AFP, London

Chelsea manager Carlo Ancelotti admitted he did not fear the sack on Friday as he prepared for what could well be his final match in charge against Everton on Sunday.

Ancelotti's position at Stamford Bridge has come under intense scrutiny after a trophy-less campaign which included the club's worst run of league form in almost 15 years.

The Italian manager, who led Chelsea to the double in his first year in charge, revealed that a meeting with senior club officials to review the season would be scheduled for next week.

Ancelotti insisted however that he would accept his fate if Chelsea decided to seek a new manager.

"The club have to judge my job - be objective," he said. "If they decide to change, it's not a problem.

"You won't see me crying or doing something. I will accept the decision of the club and find another solution."

Nevertheless Ancelotti acknowledged he had never expected himself to be clinging on to his job at this stage 12 months ago, when he had won plaudits after a successful debut season in England.

"No, but this is football," he said. "I'm not surprised about this."

"When I started my experience here in England, if someone had told me that we would win the FA Cup and the Premier League in two years, I'd have been happy."



AFP, Paris



Former France striker Nicolas Anelka began his 150,000-euro libel action against French newspaper L'Equipe on Friday for their reporting of his foul-mouthed World Cup rant at former coach Raymond Domenech.

The Chelsea striker is also demanding that a front page apology be published by the daily sports newspaper.

Anelka has never denied ranting at Domenech during half-time in the World Cup group match against Mexico on June 17, which France were drawing 0-0 at the time and went on to lose 2-0. But he has said the newspaper distorted his words splashed across the front page with the expletives included.

The French Football Federation (FFF) sent Anelka home from the World Cup as a result of the story, and the following day the entire squad went on strike in protest at the decision.

Anelka's legal team presented the court

with written testimony from three players -- Thierry Henry, Eric Abidal and Patrice Evra -- who claimed their former teammate never uttered the words printed by L'Equipe: "Go screw yourself, dirty son of a whore."

Former FFF president Jean-Pierre Escalettes told the court that he was convinced that the insults were very much along the lines as those printed by the newspaper.

"I was personally convinced that very serious words had been uttered," said Escalettes. "The proof: Patrice Evra insisted throughout the press conference that there was a traitor. If there was a traitor, it was because there was something to betray."

Escalettes added that this belief had been reinforced by comments made by team member Franck Ribery.

"Ribery, who had proclaimed himself vice-captain of the team, was furious because L'Equipe had reproduced the words in full and for him they should have dotted the insulting word."

L'Equipe claim their two journalists had the exact words from four different sources.