



# Neymar staying put

AP, Sao Paulo

Brazil striker Neymar has again dismissed reports he has reached a deal with Barcelona or Real Madrid, saying Monday he will stay with Santos at least until next year's Olympics in London.

Neymar said he feels honoured to be linked with the Spanish powerhouses but is happy for now to be playing in Brazil, near his family and friends.

"It has already been decided," he said at a news conference. "I won't leave Santos in the next transfer window, I will stay until the Olympics. I have not reached a deal with any club."

Neymar said he was looking forward to playing for Santos next year because the club will be celebrating its centenary.

By staying at Santos, Neymar will also be able to play with the team in FIFA's Club World Cup in December, a tournament that also includes Barcelona. Santos qualified by winning the Copa Libertadores earlier this year, when Neymar was a key player.

Santos hadn't won Latin America's biggest club competition since the era of Brazil great Pele in the 1960s.

"Hopefully in next year's (summer) transfer window, we will have these same two great clubs interested in acquiring me again, or maybe other clubs," Neymar said. "Until then, I have a lot of time to think about it."

The 19-year-old striker has been touted as a future Brazil star and is expected to lead the team in the 2014 World Cup on home soil.

There have been daily reports, particularly in Brazil and Spain, speculating about his future. One report by the reputable Estado de S. Paulo newspaper on Monday said Real Madrid has already reached a deal to sign Neymar when he leaves Santos next year, saying the player even underwent a medical examination over the weekend so the contract could be finalized.

"I'm tired of this," Neymar said. "Every day I'm being sold to a different club. Today I'm saying once and for all that I'm not leaving Santos right now."

Neymar rejected a multimillion-euro offer from Chelsea last year and extended his contract with Santos until after the World Cup in Brazil.

Santos said earlier this year that five European clubs--Real Madrid, Barcelona, Chelsea, Manchester City and Anzhi Makhachkala--had made contact to try to sign the speedy striker and were willing to pay the \$45 million (\$62 million) buyout clause in his contract.

Neymar became well known after helping Santos win the traditional Sao Paulo state championship and the Brazilian Cup last year. Interest grew after good performances for Brazil and he established himself for good after leading Santos to the Copa Libertadores title.

## Hernandez to resume training

AFP, London

Manchester United striker Javier Hernandez is set to resume training this week after avoiding serious injury in a late tackle by Ashley Cole in Sunday's defeat of Chelsea, the player's agent has confirmed.

Eduardo Hernandez said the Mexican international had suffered no more than a "bump" after the challenge by Cole which left United manager Sir Alex Ferguson demanding a red card.

Ferguson had initially stated Hernandez was likely to be sidelined for two weeks following Cole's tackle.

However, scans have revealed no serious damage, the striker's agent said.

## Wenger's job safe

AFP, London



Arsenal chief executive Ivan Gazidis rubbished criticism of under fire manager Arsene Wenger on Tuesday and ruled out any moves to replace the Gunners boss.

Wenger is currently enduring the most difficult period of his 15-year reign at Arsenal, having seen the club suffer a humiliating 8-2 defeat at Manchester United and winning only one of their first five games.

A 4-3 defeat at Blackburn on Saturday left Arsenal in 17th place, just one point above the relegation zone.

However Gazidis issued a rallying cry in defence of Wenger at the Sport Industry Breakfast Club meeting in London on Tuesday.

"He is not broken...he did not suddenly become a bad manager or somebody who became out of touch with the game. It is complete nonsense," Gazidis said.

"(Sacking him) is a route we are not going to go down."

Wenger has been criticised for Arsenal's strategy during the last transfer window, when the 11th hour departures of both Cesc Fabregas and Samir Nasri left the club scrambling to make a flurry of late signings.

Wenger has also been criticised for an apparent unwillingness to sign players with large price tags, but Gazidis said the club was united in support of the Frenchman's stance.

"Our strategy continues to be to focus on young players. We know we can't go out and compete with the spending that's out there and frankly, if we did, it would just push the spending to another level so it wouldn't be a successful strategy," Gazidis said.

Arsenal owner Stan Kroenke was also squarely behind Wenger's policy, Gazidis added.

"He is very supportive of the self-sustaining model and of Arsene Wenger," Gazidis said.

"Throughout the transfer window, he was intimately involved in the discussions that we were having, understanding the strategy and giving his support to it."

"I think Arsene and I and the people at the club are very well supported by a good experienced owner."

## Real duo sidelined

REUTERS, Madrid



Real Madrid's Portuguese internationals Pepe and Fabio Coentrao picked up leg muscle injuries in Sunday's shock 1-0 defeat at Levante, the club said.

In a medical bulletin posted on their website (www.realmadrid.com),

Real did not say how long centre back Pepe and midfielder Coentrao would be sidelined, although local media reported they would both be out for around two weeks.

Jose Mourinho's side, fifth with six points from three matches, play at Racing Santander on Wednesday (1800).

Real need to improve their performances playing away against teams like Levante otherwise their bid to end Barcelona's three-year grip on the Spanish title will falter, according to left back Marcelo.

"Against these kinds of teams, like Levante, and at stadiums like theirs, we fail too often," the Brazilian said in an interview published in Tuesday's As sports daily.

"The worse thing is that those points are those that make the difference at the end of the season," he added.

Champions Barca may have Gerard Pique available for Wednesday's match at early pacesetters Valencia (2000) after the Spain centre back returned to full training on Monday following a calf injury.

Midfielder Andres Iniesta and forward Alexis Sanchez, who have muscle tears, trained apart from the rest of the squad and are not expected back for several weeks.

Pep Guardiola's side have scored 15

goals in their opening three games, including an 8-0 humbling of Osasuna on Saturday.

Victory at Valencia, who have won their opening three games, would put Barca top, at least until Thursday when surprise joint leaders Real Betis, promoted at the end of last season, host Real Zaragoza (2000).

Barca's Spain Under-21 midfielder Thiago Alcantara does not believe La Liga is a two-horse race between wealthy giants Barca and Real, who each earn close to 500 million euros (\$683.3 million) a season.

"The 'League of Two' is a big lie," he told a news conference on Monday. "It has never been like that and it never will be. Teams come with a lot of desire, they get the best out of themselves and they come to win."

Valencia must not be scared of going after Barca on Wednesday and need to play to win, midfielder Sergio Canales, on loan from Real Madrid, said on Monday.

"Barcelona are perhaps the team who have made the least mistakes, but we have to search for them," the Spain Under-21 international told a news conference. "We must not be afraid of suffering a heavy defeat. We have to play knowing we can win."

Sevilla coach Marcelino has warned his players against underestimating Osasuna when they play there later on Tuesday (1800) as he believes the Pamplona-based side will be smarting after their thrashing at Barca.

"They are a team that use their weapons very well, with very engaged supporters, and they know how to eke out results at their stadium," he told a news conference.

Sevilla are fourth, level with Barca on seven points.

## Gerrard set to return



AFP, Liverpool

Steven Gerrard is poised to make his long-awaited comeback as Liverpool look to forget their Premier League problems by beating Brighton in their third round League Cup clash on Wednesday.

Gerrard has not played since suffering a groin problem in March which required surgery, but manager Kenny Dalglish is set to use the game to ease his influential captain back into action after six months on the sidelines.

Two successive league defeats, including a 4-0 hammering at Tottenham on Sunday, have marred Liverpool's solid start to the season, but the return of the England midfielder will lift spirits.

"I've said all along, he's done fantastically well to get where he is," said Dalglish when asked about the imminent return of Gerrard.

"We'll just monitor him and pick the right moment for him and us before we get him back. It's natural everyone wants to chase Stevie, especially after you have lost 4-0."

"But we'll monitor it, take it how it goes and when both parties agree he'll play."

Gerrard has not been seen in action since helping Liverpool defeat Manchester United 3-1 at Anfield on March 6.

He resumed full training two weeks ago and emerged unscathed after taking part in a practice match last week.

"Now I'm back in with the boys, it's a completely different ball game - it's a lot tougher, quicker and I've struggled the last two days, so I'm really tired at the moment," said Gerrard earlier this month.

"But I'm back in full training and looking forward to being involved with the lads in games in the coming weeks."

Teenagers Danny Wilson, John Flanagan and Jack Robinson are also expected to feature in a much-changed side from the one on duty at White Hart Lane, where Liverpool finished with nine men after Charlie Adam and Martin Skrtel were sent off.



## Mandanda berates Marseille

AFP, Marseille



Marseille captain Steve Mandanda pulled no punches here Monday, berating his teammates for not trying hard enough to reverse the club's freefall to the foot of the French league.

Mandanda was speaking 24 hours after Sunday's 2-0 defeat to league leaders Lyon deepened the 2010 champions' woes to leave them 11 points behind Lyon and

winless after six games.

"What's certain is that we are not putting in the effort to get out of this position, both in training and in matches. We have to make more of an impact, show more willing, more aggression," said the France international.

"As for the title, we can completely forget about it for the time being, if we don't you'll think I'm just taking the mickey..." he told local media.

"Today we don't scare any team."

Mandanda defended Didier Deschamps, dismissing the notion that the under fire Marseille coach had lost the confidence of the changing room.

"We've won with him, we're experiencing difficult times with him, we'll get out of this with him."

Deschamps himself conceded his team's plight hurt him deeply and the man who captained France to the 1998 World Cup title appealed to his team's "character, self-esteem and pride".

"To pull ourselves out of this we need a great deal of "moral and mental strength," insisted Deschamps after a meeting with the Marseille board who offered him their full support.

"I'm a believer, I'm not giving up," Deschamps said ahead of Marseille's midweek date with newly promoted Evian, who unlike their illustrious rivals on Wednesday have managed one win and are placed in midtable with seven points, four more than hapless Marseille.



Marseille coach Didier Deschamps (C) conducts a training session at the Dreyfus training centre on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

### SPORTS POLL

Who should be the Bangladesh cricket captain?

Shahriar Nafees 46.7%  
Shakib Al Hasan 23.9%  
Mushfiqur Rahim 9.3%

TOTAL VOTES: 1412

### WEEKLY QUESTION

Do you think Mushfiqur Rahim is a good choice as skipper?

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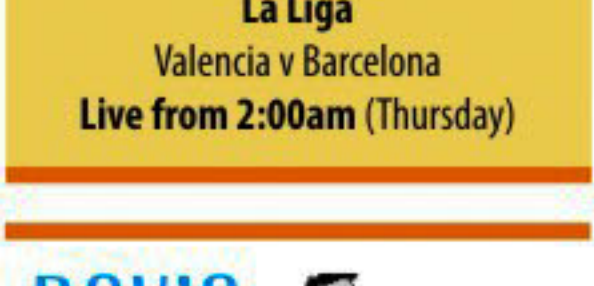


BTV  
BCB Cup Final  
Bangladesh v Bangladesh A  
Live from 1:30pm

ESPN  
Sportscentre India  
Sports News  
Live at 11:30pm

TEN Sports  
La Liga  
Racing v Real Madrid  
Live from 12:00am (Thursday)

TEN Action+  
La Liga  
Valencia v Barcelona  
Live from 2:00am (Thursday)



BCB Cup Final  
Bangladesh v Bangladesh A  
One-Day Match (D/N)

Time: 1:30pm  
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National  
Cricket Stadium, Mirpur