



Drogba eyes redemption

AFP, London



Didier Drogba has vowed to make amends for his Moscow misery by ending Chelsea's long wait to be crowned kings of Europe in Saturday's Champions League final against Bayern Munich.

Drogba has nothing but bad memories of his only previous appearance in the final of Europe's elite club competition after being sent off in extra time as the Blues lost the 2008 showpiece to Manchester United in the rain-soaked Russian capital.

Drogba's dismissal came late in extra-time when he slapped United defender Nemanja Vidic after a mass confrontation between players from both teams.

With Drogba unable to take a penalty in the shoot-out, the Ivory Coast striker had to watch from the sidelines as John Terry and Nicolas Anelka's spot-kick misses gifted the trophy to United.

As Chelsea laboured in vain to return to the Champions League final over the intervening four years, it seemed Drogba would never get the chance to erase that bitter memory.

But against all odds, Drogba and the rest of Chelsea's collection of aging stars have somehow made it back to the final after dramatic victories over Napoli, Benfica and Barcelona in the knockout rounds.

Now the 34-year-old plans to turn

his Moscow pain into a moment of sweet redemption when Roberto Di Matteo's side face Bayern in their own Allianz Arena in Munich this weekend.

"I've got a lot of disappointments but I've also had a lot of great moments in finals and I'm going to try to make sure for my teammates this is a good one," Drogba said.

"After Moscow, most of us thought we were going to get into the final the next year. But you can see it's very difficult to reach a final.

"It shows how much we deserve to be there this time because it's been a few years.

"We did a great job to get past Barcelona but we have to do one more. Now it's one more game to win."

Drogba has a well-earned reputation as Chelsea's man for the big occasion and he underlined the point when his eighth goal in eight appearances at Wembley helped his team beat Liverpool 2-1 in the FA Cup final earlier this month.

The Ivorian also has 33 career goals in the Champions League including the crucial winner in the semi-final first leg against Barcelona last month.

Drogba's ability to shine on the game's grandest stages should convince Di Matteo to start him rather than Fernando Torres against Bayern, but the former Marseille star insists it will take a team effort rather than heroics from any one individual to beat the Germans.

"I don't know if I'm made for finals but as far as I'm concerned,

we're going to prepare as best we can and do our best," Drogba said.

"I think everybody has got to do his work for the club and for the team."

If Chelsea do win the final it could be a dream farewell for Drogba, who is out of contract at the end of the season and yet to sign a new deal as he looks for a two-year extension rather than the one-year offer on the table from the club.

Drogba will sit down with Chelsea after the final to discuss his future, but he is adamant the unresolved situation won't be a distraction.

"It's not personal. There's nothing to say about me. The only thing we care about is the club," Drogba said.

"I'm not going there to play for me, I'm going to play for Chelsea."

Whether he stays or not, Drogba is well established as a Chelsea legend after driving the club to three Premier League titles and four FA Cup triumphs with his potent combination of power and lethal finishing.

But the Champions League remains Chelsea's holy grail and after so many disappointments in the competition is relishing one last chance to finally lift 'the cup with the big ears'.

"It's one of the biggest games. I think we've played a lot, I've played a lot with Chelsea and this one is kind of special," he said.

"It's only the second time we've reached a final for Chelsea so we're going to do everything to go there and give everything to play against this German team."

Proenca to ref UCL final

AFP, Paris

Portuguese referee Pedro Proenca will take charge of this weekend's Champions League final between Chelsea and Bayern Munich, UEFA announced on Thursday.

Proenca, 41, made his international debut in 2003 and has now officiated in more than 65 UEFA matches. This year he has officiated in five Champions League games, including the round of 16 return leg between Inter Milan and Marseille.

He also refereed two Europa League matches, including the first leg of the quarter final between FC Schalke 04 and beaten finalists Athletic Bilbao.

Bertino Miranda and Ricardo Santos, also from Portugal, will run the lines in Munich on Saturday, while the fourth official will be Carlos Velasco Carballo from Spain.

Lippi joins Evergrande



AFP, Shanghai

World Cup-winning coach Marcello Lippi was unveiled as the new coach of Chinese champions Guangzhou Evergrande on Thursday, in the latest sign of the Super League's growing financial clout.

The 64-year-old, who boasts excellent credentials after lifting the Champions League with Juventus and guiding his native Italy to World Cup glory in 2006, is the highest-profile coach to make the lucrative move to China.

The deal also confirms the soaring ambitions of Guangzhou, who last year made Argentina's Dario Conca one of the world's richest players when they snapped him up and then went on to take the Super League title.

"In accordance with the strategic needs of the club... the following decision was made: to hire Mr. Marcello Lippi as the head coach of Guangzhou Evergrande," the club in China's southern industrial city said in a statement.

"The period of hiring is two years and six months," it added, without giving details about the Italian's salary. The Gazzetta dello sport reported it was likely to be 10 million euros (\$13 million) a year.

The silver-haired Lippi will take charge for the first time on Sunday, at home against bottom-placed Qingdao Jonoon, the newspaper said.

He has not worked since leaving the post of Italian coach following the national side's ignominious performance in 2010, when they became the first defending champions to exit at the group stage.

The Guangzhou Evergrande announcement follows persistent media rumours about Lippi's highly anticipated move and comes despite manager Lee Jang-Soo this week taking

the team into the AFC Champions League knock-out rounds.

The club said Lee, a South Korean, would step down as head coach, but it was unclear whether he would stay on in another capacity.

Speaking at a press conference from Guangzhou that was broadcast live on Chinese state television, Lippi, who also won several Serie A titles, said he was first contacted by the club in May

scandal.

In December, Shanghai Shenhua snapped up ex-Chelsea striker Nicolas Anelka and they also signed France's Jean Tigana as head coach, but soon terminated his contract after a dismal start to the season.

In its statement, Guangzhou Evergrande thanked former coach Lee for his services and said the decision to let him go had been amicable.



PHOTO: AFP

Italy's World Cup-winning coach Marcello Lippi (R) and Guangzhou Evergrande chairman Xu Jiayin during an agreement signing ceremony in the Chinese province yesterday.

last year.

"I dispatched an assistant to go see the club's matches, which made me even more determined. I am very enthusiastic about coming to China," he said.

Football clubs in China have recently gone on a spending spree for foreign imports they hope will help raise the success of their teams, after the sport's reputation in the country was badly damaged by a match-fixing

Lee led Guangzhou back to China's top flight and claimed last year's Super League title after the club had been relegated over the corruption scandal, in which some officials remain before the courts.

But he became embroiled in a public row with Conca after the Argentine strongly criticised his substitution in this month's 3-1 Champions League defeat to South Korea's Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors.

Tevez won't apologise

AFP, Buenos Aires



Striker Carlos Tevez insisted Wednesday he would not apologise to Sir Alex Ferguson after waving a mocked-up tombstone of the Manchester United boss during Manchester City's Premier League title celebrations.

"It seems that Ferguson is the president of England. Because each time that he speaks badly of a player or talks nonsense about me no-one comes out to say that he has to apologise.

"When you make a joke, you have to apologise. But I'm not apologising," said Tevez on returning to Buenos Aires after helping City to their first title in 44 years.

The 28-year-old Argentina striker held up a banner designed to look like a gravestone and bearing the words 'RIP Fergie' as City celebrated their title triumph over Manchester United during an open-top bus parade.

Manchester City later released a statement apologising to Ferguson and criticised Tevez while the player - who it is believed took the banner from a fan - also said he "didn't mean any disrespect".

Owen shown the door

AFP, London

Manchester United have called time on Michael Owen's Old Trafford career after the striker revealed on Thursday that he would not be offered a new contract by the club.

The 32-year-old former England star confirmed the development in a post on the micro-blogging site Twitter.

"The Manager informed me after our testimonial match on Tuesday that the club would not be offering me a new contract," wrote Owen, whose existing deal expires this year.

The former Liverpool, Real Madrid and Newcastle striker joined United on a free transfer in 2009.

Barton pleads guilty

AFP, London



Controversial QPR midfielder Joey Barton accepted a charge of violent conduct on Wednesday but denied another one arising out of last Sunday's Premier League clash with Manchester City.

The 29-year-old -- who is also the subject of an internal investigation by his club over his behaviour in the match -- accepted the charge over his kicking of Sergio Aguero after he had been already red carded for elbowing Carlos Tevez.

However, the hot-tempered Englishman, who has been involved in several unsavory incidents throughout his career, denies trying to headbutt City captain Vincent Kompany.

"Joey Barton has accepted an FA charge against him for violent conduct against Manchester City's Sergio Aguero," the FA statement read.

"The Queens Park Rangers player has denied a second charge of alleged violent conduct against Manchester City's Vincent Kompany.

"The player has requested a personal hearing, the date of which has yet to be set.

"Both charges against Barton are in relation to Sunday's match against Manchester City at the Etihad Stadium.

"Following the player's dismissal in the 54th minute of the fixture, there followed two incidents involving Aguero and Kompany.

"As Barton had already been dismissed, both of these incidents fell outside of the jurisdiction of the referee."

SPORTS POLL

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First Test, Day 2

Live from 4:00pm

SET Max

Indian Premier League

Deccan v Rajasthan

Live from 8:30pm

ESPN

Sportscenter India

Sports News

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh Premier League

Brothers Union v Mohammedan

Time: 4:15pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National

নির্মাণকাজের ধুলোবালি বাড়ায় স্বাস্থ্যঝুঁকি

■ নির্মাণকাজের সময় চারপাশ ঢেকে রাখি ও নিয়মিত পানি ছিটিয়ে বায়ুদূষণ রোধ করি

■ ধুলোবালি কমাতে বাড়ির চারপাশে সবুজায়ন করি

বায়ুদূষণ রোধ করি

বাসযোগ্য ভবিষ্যৎ গড়ি

পরিবেশ অধিদপ্তর

নির্মল বায়ু এবং টেকসই পরিবেশ (CASE) প্রকল্প

পরিবেশ ও বন মন্ত্রণালয়