

Jose coy on future

REUTERS, Madrid



Jose Mourinho refused to add to the media speculation surrounding his future as Real Madrid coach on Monday, but failed to nip it in the bud when questioned in the run up to the Champions League visit of Ajax.

The self-styled 'Special One' agreed a two-year contract extension with Madrid which tied him until 2016 back in May, but after breaking records to win the La Liga title last season has seen his side struggle to replicate that form this year.

Madrid-based sports daily Marca said on Monday Mourinho was planning to leave the club at the end of the season, his third in the Spanish capital.

"I am not going to speak about this. Speak to your colleague about it, the one who has written the story," Mourinho countered with his standard deadpan look at a news conference.

"Organise a meal with that person. I'm not saying a single word."

Mourinho, whose side have slipped 11 points behind leaders Barcelona in La Liga, was asked if club president Florentino Perez was happy with the way he was running the team.

"Ask him," Mourinho replied. "I don't have to say when I spoke with the president, I don't have to say what we spoke about. I don't suppose the president will say anything either."

"We have a very good relationship. But I am not going to try and add to this situation."

Another journalist asked why he refused to answer questions about his contract.

"Because I don't want to add to the story. There is no story," he replied.

The journalist persisted. "Are you going to continue next year?"

Mourinho answered: "For me there is no story."

Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson has spoken about Mourinho as a possible candidate to succeed him at Old Trafford.

"Friends are like this," Mourinho said.

"Friends always speak well of each other. His succession isn't near. It should be in 10 years or so. He is getting better and better. He is stronger all the time. Why should he retire?"

Another club Mourinho has been linked with is big-spending Paris St Germain.

"An assistant of mine is going to watch PSG on Tuesday as we think they a potential rival," Mourinho replied, when asked about interest from the French club.

"In this game PSG play Porto. One will be first the other second in their group. They are both possible adversaries in the last 16. It is the only thing I am thinking about in Paris."

Real have qualified for the last 16 as the second placed side in Champions League Group D behind Borussia Dortmund. They host Ajax in their final group match on Tuesday.



Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho attends a training session in Madrid yesterday on the eve of their Champions League match against Ajax Amsterdam.

PHOTO: AFP

Badstuber to undergo surgery

REUTERS, Berlin

Bayern Munich central defender Holger Badstuber will undergo surgery on Monday after suffering a torn cruciate ligament in his right knee that will rule him out for five months, the Bundesliga leaders said on Sunday.

The Germany defender who had come back days ago from a three-week injury break, turned his right knee after a challenge with fellow Germany international Mario Goetze during the 1-1 draw with Borussia Dortmund on Saturday.

He had to be carried off the pitch on a stretcher and underwent more tests on Sunday.

"Badstuber will undergo surgery on Monday and after that will be out of action for about five months," Bayern said in a statement.

Bayern, who lead the Bundesliga table by eight points, have also qualified for the knockout stage of the Champions League.

Norwich keep unbeaten run

REUTERS, London

Norwich City extended their unbeaten run in the Premier League to eight games with a gritty 2-1 home victory over struggling Sunderland at Carrow Road on Sunday.

Defender Sebastian Bassong stretched out a leg to poke Norwich into an eighth-minute lead and Anthony Pilkington made it 2-0 after 37 minutes, calmly cutting in from the left and burying a shot low into the corner.

Sunderland halved the deficit when Craig Gardner's shot flew into the bottom corner of Mark Bunn's goal a minute before halftime and the strike transformed the match.

Norwich were forced to hang on for long periods in the second period as Sunderland piled on the pressure.

Craig Gardner struck the base of the post with a free-kick and Matt Kilgallon somehow failed to turn in the rebound, scooping his effort over the bar.

Norwich had several other escapes but showed great defensive resolve to protect the three points and move up a place to 12th in the table on 19 points, the same as Liverpool.

Napoli destroy Pescara

REUTERS, Rome



Contrasting wins for Napoli and Inter Milan kept them hard on the heels of leaders Juventus in Serie A on Sunday but Fiorentina lost ground after being held at home by improving Sampdoria.

Napoli had a thumping 5-1 win over bottom club Pescara but Inter scraped an unconvincing 1-0 victory at home to Palermo.

Two goals each by Gokhan Inler and Edinson Cavani, one from the penalty spot, helped Walter Mazzarri's Napoli side stay two points behind Juve, who defeated local rivals Torino 3-0 on Saturday.

Inter are four points behind Juve on 31 after ending a run of three games without a win thanks to an own goal by Palermo's Santiago Garcia.

Stefan Savic scored both Fiorentina goals in a 2-2 draw which earned a point after Nenad Krsticic and a Gonzalo Rodriguez own goal had seen Sampdoria equalise then take the lead.

RESULTS

Napoli 5 (Inler 9, 78, Hamsik 15, Cavani 58-pen, 63) **Pescara 1** (Birkir 18)
Siena 1 (Neto 25) **Roma 3** (Destro 63, 90+1, Perrotta 86)
Udinese 4 (Pereyra 33, Angella 39, Danilo 48, Pasquale 66) **Cagliari 1** (Dessena 80)
Genoa 2 (Said Said 40, Jankovic 56)
Chievo 4 (Paloschi 14, 22, 45+1, Stolian 89)
Bologna 2 (Diamanti 16, Gabbiadini 70) **Atalanta 1** (German 50)
Inter Milan 1 (Garcia 74-og) **Palermo 0**
Lazio 2 (Biava 25, Klose 34) **Parma 1** (Belfodil 66)
Fiorentina 2 (Savic 21, 75) **Sampdoria 2**

Savic's goals were his first in Serie A.

"Honestly I'm happy with our position, it's a shame that it's not the end of the season now, or at least within a couple of games," Fiorentina coach Vincenzo Montella told reporters.

"We came up against a Sampdoria side that caused us problems, and while we weren't brilliant we had enough opportunities to win."

Fiorentina are in fourth place, level on 29 points with Lazio and two behind Inter Milan as Samp moved up to 12th on 17.

Lazio are six points off the pace in fourth spot after beating Parma 2-1 thanks to a 25th-minute effort from defender Giuseppe Biava and Miroslav Klose's ninth league goal of the season.

Ishak Belfodil pulled one back for Parma in the 66th minute, converting the rebound after his penalty was saved.

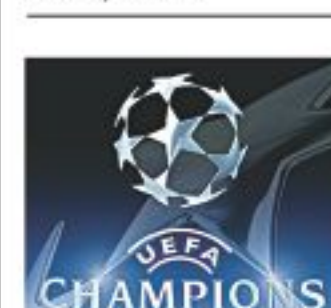


Napoli striker Edinson Cavani (C) is ecstatic after one of his two strikes against Pescara during their Serie A encounter at the San Paolo Stadium on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

Wenger eyes top spot

AFP, Paris



Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger insisted he still harbours aspirations of knocking rivals Schalke off their perch atop Group B as the final round of Champions League group stage fixtures takes place this week.

The Premier League side ensured their progression to the knockout phase for a 13th straight year with a 2-0 victory over Montpellier a fortnight ago, but the Gunners must beat Europa-League destined Olympiakos on Tuesday if they hope to avoid a seeded team, such as Barcelona, in the next round.

Schalke top the group on 11 points after five matches with Arsenal one behind, but the German side's superior head-to-head record means Wenger's charges would qualify as runners-up should the two teams finish level on points.

Despite conceding he may rest some of his fatigued players, Wenger was adamant the north Londoners would be fully focused on trying to wrest control of the group

away from Schalke.

"There is something at stake and I'll have to give a breather to some players who are on the edge, as well as go over there and win our game to make sure that we do the job until the end," the Frenchman told Arsenal.com.

"That's what I will try to achieve. I'm confident that (already eliminated) Montpellier will want to finish the Champions League well. There's

FIXTURES

Dinamo Zagreb (CRO) v Dynamo Kiev (UKR), Paris Saint Germain (FRA) v Porto (POR), Montpellier (FRA) v Schalke (GER), Olympiakos (GRE) v Arsenal (ENG), Malaga (ESP) v Anderlecht (BEL), AC Milan (ITA) v Zenit St Petersburg (RUS), Borussia Dortmund (GER) v Manchester City (ENG), Real Madrid

a chance that Montpellier can beat Schalke," he added, referring to Tuesday's other Group B fixture.

Arsenal have endured a difficult past week with successive draws against Aston Villa and Everton capped off by Saturday's dismal 2-0 defeat at home to Swansea, a result that saw them drop to 10th in the table.

Wenger believes the trip to Greece

could provide the perfect antidote.

"We hope that we get a good performance at Olympiakos. It's important for us. Away from home, I'm not too concerned. We look like we play a little bit with the handbrake on home," he said.

Manchester City's Champions League dreams were prematurely extinguished for a second year running following a 1-1 draw at home to Real Madrid last time out.

With just three points, City can finish no higher than third and must win at Group D winners Borussia Dortmund to even stand a chance of extending their European adventure.

"We will try but we need to win in Dortmund and it will not be easy because Dortmund are in a good condition," said City boss Roberto Mancini.

However if Ajax, who travel to Spain to face Madrid, match City's result, the defending Premier League champions will be left with just domestic honours to play for.

Madrid are guaranteed second place, leaving them exposed to Manchester United and potentially Bayern Munich in the round of 16 draw.

Joel shines in Spain

AFP, Madrid



Joel Campbell showed what Arsenal are missing this season with his sweetly struck shot giving Real Betis a 3-2 win over Deportivo La Coruna in La Liga on Sunday.

The on-loan 20-year-old curled a 25-yard effort into the top corner to put Betis clear in fourth place and demonstrate the talent of a winger who is still raw around the edges.

Campbell moved from Saprissa in his native Costa Rica to Arsenal in 2011 but was first loaned out to French side FC Lorient before joining Betis last summer.

Although blessed with pace and plenty of natural ability his performances have been erratic but he made the most of his chance against Deportivo with Juan Carlos injured in left midfield.

Deportivo had responded with a brace from Ivan Sanchez-Rico 'Riki' after a Ruben Castro double had put the Andalusians ahead but Campbell picked up a pass from Benat Etxebarria and fired home the winner.

In a message to the Costa Rica football federation, Betis coach Pepe Mel claimed that Campbell's development has been affected by international commitments.

"Although they may be angry with me in Costa Rica it is normal that a player doesn't settle if he is all the time in a plane," he said.

"When he is a full season with us with-

out leaving he is more in the team as he is used to our system. I think that is good for everyone: for Costa Rica and Betis and if he does well then next year Arsenal will benefit as well."

Second-from-bottom Deportivo have only two wins all season but they have played some entertaining football with a talented forward line inspired by the veteran Juan Carlos Valeron.

Riki should have put Deportivo ahead after 14 minutes but his shot from close range was parried by keeper Adrian San Miguel and then minutes later Valeron clipped the top of the crossbar with a strike from distance.

Deportivo had the majority of the ball but Betis' improved results have been largely down to a more defensive approach and the use of the wings to counter-attack especially away from home.

They took the lead after 38 minutes with full-back Ignacio Perez 'Nacho' crossing for Castro to head home and it was the same combination that doubled the advantage after the break as Castro this time side-footed the ball in.

Deportivo appeared dead and buried but an inspired Riki headed in a Laure Sanabria cross and latched onto a loose ball in the area to equalise but it was not enough with Campbell giving Betis the three points.

A late goal from substitute Roger Marti gave European chasing Levante a 1-1 draw away to Celta Vigo who went ahead through Enrique De Lucas and bottom side Espanyol under new coach Javier Aguirre drew 0-0 away to Granada.

RESULTS

Granada 0 Espanyol 0
Deportivo La Coruna 2 (Riki 56, 60)
Real Betis 3 (Ruben Castro 39, 54, Campbell 77)
Celta Vigo 1 (De Lucas 37) Levante 1 (Roger 89)
Real Mallorca 1 (Victor 85) Real



ESPN

Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

TEN Sports

UEFA Champions League
Olympiakos v Arsenal
Live from 1:45am (Wednesday)

TEN Action

UEFA Champions League
Real Madrid v Ajax



National Cricket League
(Four-day match, Day-4)
Khulna v Dhaka
Venue: Shaheed Kamaruzzaman Stadium, Rajshahi
Sylhet v Rajshahi
Venue: BKSP
Chittagong v Barisal