

Juve snap up Llorente

REUTERS, Madrid

Athletic Bilbao's Spain forward Fernando Llorente will join Juventus at the end of the season after signing a four-year deal, the Italian club said on Thursday.

"The future of Fernando Llorente is black and white," Juve said in a statement on their website.

The 27-year-old Llorente, whose deal with Bilbao expires in June, has signed a contract with the Serie A side to June 2017 and will stay at Bilbao until the end of the season.

The powerful centre forward, nicknamed the Lion King for his mane of blond hair, turned down the offer of a new contract with Bilbao during the closed season and said he wanted to leave.

Bilbao initially refused to negotiate with interested parties and coach Marcelo Bielsa relegated last season's top scorer to the bench, despite him having helped them to the 2012 Europa League and King's Cup finals by scoring 29 goals.

The Pamplona-born Llorente came up through Bilbao's youth academy before making his first-team debut in January 2005 and became their leading figure over the following seasons.

His relationship with some home fans has soured since his request to leave became public, and he has had to watch from the sidelines while new signing Ariz Aduriz has led the line for the side this season.

Llorente was a member of the Spain squad that won the World Cup in 2010 and Euro 2012, and has scored seven goals in 21 international appearances.



Channel 9

BPL

Dhaka Gladiators v Sylhet Royals

Live from 2:00pm

Khulna Royal Bengals v Rangpur Riders

Live from 6:00pm

STAR Sports

Australian Open

Men's Singles Semifinal

Live from 2:30pm

(SATURDAY)

Serie A

Lazio v Chievo

Live from 11:00pm

Juventus v Genoa

Live from 1:40am (Sunday)

ESPN

Sportscentre India

Sports News

Live at 8:30pm

(SATURDAY)

FA Cup

Stoke City v Man City

Live from 6:40pm

Brighton v Arsenal

Live from 9:00pm

Man United v Fulham

Live from 11:30pm

TEN Cricket

South Africa v New Zealand

Third ODI

Live from 6:30pm

STAR Cricket

(SATURDAY)

Australia v Sri Lanka

Casillas breaks his hand

Football

MAIL ONLINE

Iker Casillas is a major doubt for Real Madrid's Champions League double-header with Manchester United after breaking a bone in his hand.

The World Cup winner suffered the injury in his side's Copa del Rey quarterfinal victory over Valencia on Wednesday when teammate Alvaro Arbeloa kicked Casillas while clearing a ball in the area.

Madrid will assess the injury before deciding what treatment is required while Adan Garrido is likely to deputise for the Spanish No 1.

Casillas will miss Sunday's La Liga clash with Getafe and the second leg against Valencia next week.

He is also struggling to recover in time to face United at the Bernabeu on February 13.

"When I tried to close my fist it hurt. It's just the thumb. The fact that it has nothing to do with the wrist is good," Casillas said.

Meanwhile, the club said in a statement: "After carrying out initial x-rays... it has been confirmed that the footballer Iker Casillas has suffered a fracture at the base of the first metacarpal on his left hand."

"It will be assessed again by a specialist later today to decide what treatment will be followed."

The injury to a key figure comes at a delicate time for Mourinho with Europe's elite club competition resuming in just over two weeks.

Casillas has just been restored to the starting line up after the manager controversially dropped him for the league games either side of La Liga's winter break.

The decision provoked angry reactions from home fans and fuelled media speculation about possible dressing room rifts even though Real's defence has started to tighten up of late.

The 2011 Copa del Rey winners will face a high-profile clash with great rivals Barcelona if the holders can beat Malaga in their quarter-final second leg at the Rosaleda.

Alvaro Arbeloa kicked Casillas while clearing a ball

Casillas was controversially dropped by Mourinho



Real Madrid goalkeeper Iker Casillas has broken a bone in his hand, making him unlikely to face Manchester United in the Champions League next month

Madrid deny Jose rift

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid denied Thursday a report that top players had demanded coach Jose Mourinho leave before next season, warning the club: "It's him or us."

Top sports daily Marca splashed on the front page its claim of an ultimatum delivered to chairman Florentino Perez on Tuesday.

"President, it's Mou or us," headlined the paper in its account of the meeting between captains Iker Casillas and Sergio Ramos and the club management.

According to the paper, they told Perez that several players were ready to leave the club if the self-anointed "Special One" remained in charge for the next season.

But the club said the claims were false.

"The meeting took place but not the topic of conversation described by Marca," said a spokesman. "What Marca said is false."

Potts in hospital

AFP, London

West Ham United revealed on Thursday that defender Daniel Potts is due to undergo further tests in hospital after he was knocked unconscious during the 5-1 Premier League loss at Arsenal.

The 18-year-old fell to the ground after an aerial collision with Arsenal right-back Bacary Sagna late in Wednesday's game and hit his head on the pitch, leaving him temporarily unconscious.

Potts received lengthy treatment from medical staff on the pitch and was fitted with a neck brace before being carried off on a stretcher and taken to a nearby hospital.

Hazard apologises to ball boy

Football

AFP, London

Eden Hazard has apologised after his extraordinary dismissal for kicking a ball boy during Chelsea's League Cup semifinal second leg at Swansea City.

Wednesday's match finished 0-0, giving Swansea a 2-0 aggregate victory, but the game was overshadowed by an incident 10 minutes from full-time that saw Hazard sent off for an altercation with a ball boy.

The Belgian international seemed to get annoyed when the boy failed to return the ball promptly after it went out of play for a Swansea goal kick.

After a tussle, the youngster ended up lying on top of the ball and Hazard appeared to kick him as he tried to retrieve the ball from underneath him.

Following a brief delay, during which the grimacing boy was attended to by Chelsea's players, referee Chris Foy showed Hazard a straight red card.

"The boy put his whole body onto the ball and I was just trying to kick the ball and I think I kicked the ball and not the boy. I apologise," Hazard told Chelsea TV.

"The ball boy came in the changing room and we had a quick chat and I apologised and the boy apologised as well, and it is over. Sorry."

South Wales police have

announced that they will investigate the incident, but Swansea said the boy had told police he did not want to press charges.

"The police have interviewed the boy and his father and there are no charges going to be pressed. As far as they are concerned, that is the matter closed," said a Swansea spokesman.

"The ball boy has been into the Chelsea dressing room after the game and shaken hands with Eden Hazard. The likes of John Terry and Frank Lampard were exemplary in their behaviour in welcoming him into the dressing room."

"Chelsea asked if he could come in and our kit lady took him in and they shook hands, he is fine."

"As far as we are concerned,

the matter is closed. He has been a ball boy here for six years with no incidents here at the stadium."

Chelsea interim manager Rafael Benitez initially said the ball boy was "wasting time", but he reacted angrily to claims he had condoned Hazard's behaviour.

"I do not know what you expect from me," he told reporters.

"Do you think we are not disappointed with the situation, that we do not regret what happened? Do you think they have not apologised?"

He added: "We will deal with this internally. We will analyse and wait to see if there is any action from the FA (Football Association)."

Advantage Roma

AFP, Rome

AS Roma defeated Inter Milan 2-1 in the Italian Cup semifinal first leg on Wednesday, but face a wait of almost three months to play the second leg.

Four days after the two sides drew 1-1 in Serie A, Roma were worthy winners creating a host of opportunities.

Both Roma's goals came in the first half with Alessandro Florenzi heading in a cross from Ivan Piris in the 13th minute before the Paraguayan also teed-up Mattia Destro for another scoring header after 33 minutes.

But Inter grabbed a lifeline when Rodrigo Palacio latched on to an Esteban Cambiasso free-kick and headed home just before the interval.

500m euro Real

Football

AFP, London

Real Madrid have become the first club in any sport to generate more than 500 million euros in revenue in a single year, according to the business advisory firm Deloitte.

The company's Football Money League, published for the 16th time on Thursday, sees Spanish champions Madrid retain their hold on first place ahead of perennial rivals Barcelona.

In an unchanged top six, Manchester United remain third, Bayern Munich fourth, European champions Chelsea fifth and Arsenal sixth, but English champions Manchester City soar five places to seventh.

AC Milan fall one place to eighth, with Liverpool remaining ninth and Italian champions Juventus rising three places to complete the top 10.

Madrid's revenue rose by seven percent to 512.6 million euros in the 2011-2012 season, equivalent to £414.7 million or \$644.7 million at June 2012 exchange rates.

It enabled the nine-time European champions to hold onto top spot in the ranking for an eighth successive year, matching United's record from 1996-1997 to 2003-2004.

"It is an impressive achievement for Real Madrid to have surpassed 500 million euros in revenue in a single year," said Dan Jones from Deloitte's Sports Business Group.

"Real have led the way in the phenomenal rate of revenue growth achieved by the game's top clubs, with the double-digit

(10-per cent) increase by the top 20 clubs representing continued strong performance in these tough economic times.

"The combined revenues of the top 20 clubs have quadrupled since we began our analysis in 1996-1997."

Madrid triumphed in the Spanish Liga in 2011-2012, ending three years of dominance by arch-rivals Barcelona, but lost

out in the Champions League after being beaten by Bayern in the semifinals.

Overall, the combined revenue of the world's 20 highest-earning football clubs grew by 10 percent on the previous year to reach 4.8 billion euros.

City's climb of five places was matched by German champions Borussia Dortmund, who rose to 11th, and Italian side Napoli (15th).

"Manchester City's Premier League title-winning season, combined with participation in the UEFA Champions League, helped drive 51-percent revenue growth to 285.6 million euros, the largest absolute and relative growth of any Money League club," said Deloitte's Austin Houlihan.

"The club's progress to the top of the English and European game means that they are set to remain a top 10 Money League club for the foreseeable future."

The only new entry in the list was English side Newcastle United, who moved into the top 20 at the expense of Spanish club Valencia after a surprise fifth-place finish in the Premier League last season.

The English top flight remains the most well-represented league in the ranking, with seven of the 20 clubs hailing from the Premier League.



Chelsea winger Eden Hazard was sent off for kicking ball boy Charlie Morgan during their League Cup semifinal second leg against Swansea at The Liberty Stadium on Wednesday.

PHOTO: INTERNET

Giroud silences critics

AFP, London



Olivier Giroud helped Arsenal silence their critics as the France striker's double inspired a much-needed 5-1 victory over West Ham on Wednesday.

Arsene Wenger's side had been subjected to scathing criticism from fans and pundits after successive defeats against Manchester City and Chelsea seriously damaged their bid to finish in the Premier League's top four.

Wenger was reported to have held crisis talks with his players this week and the Gunners looked set to hit a new low when Jack Collinson gave West Ham a shock first-half lead at

the Emirates Stadium.

But Arsenal bounced back in emphatic fashion, equalising through Lukas Podolski and then taking the points after Giroud sparked an astonishing spree of four goals in 10 second-half minutes, with Santi Cazorla and Theo Walcott on the scoresheet before Giroud completed the rout.

Arsenal remain in sixth place but their first league win in four matches moves them within four points of fourth-placed Tottenham in the race to qualify for the Champions League.

Arsenal had been warned but, given their defensive frailties this season, it was no surprise they didn't learn the lesson as West Ham took the lead in the 18th minute.

Giroud, attempting to head clear a corner, could only reach the edge of the penalty area, where Collinson, left completely unmarked, had time and space to control and lash a fierce strike past Wojciech Szczesny.

Often accused of lacking the character to deal with that kind of momentum-changing moment, Wenger's players for once showed impressive spirit and hit straight back to equalise within four minutes.

Cazorla and Jack Wilshere were the architects, working the ball across midfield to Germany forward Podolski, who advanced unchecked before drilling a long-range strike past Jussi Jaaskelainen for his 11th goal of the season.



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