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T-shirt gaffe embarrasses Bayern

AFP, Berlin

Germany midfielder Mario Goetze got off on the wrong foot with his new employers Bayern Munich when he posed for the cameras at the European Champions in a T-shirt displaying the brand of a rival sponsor.

For the last decade, Bayern have a lucrative sponsorship contract with Adidas, which runs until 2020, and the German sportswear giants own a 9.4 per cent stake in the Champions League winners, which is worth 77 million euros (US\$100m, £65m).

Goetze, 21, who has signed from Bundesliga rivals Borussia Dortmund, held his first press conference as a Bayern player on Tuesday, but wore a T-shirt with a huge logo of his private sponsor Nike on the chest, which left Bayern red-faced.

Adidas spokesman Oliver Brueggen has said the company were "unpleasantly surprised" by Goetze's choice of attire and Bayern were quick to apologise with media director Markus Hoerwick promising "such a thing will never happen again".

"We immediately called Adidas to apologise, the T-shirt passed us by in the general hustle and bustle," explained Hoerwick.

Goetze's management also contacted Adidas to apologise for the error, while Nike spokesman Olaf Markhoff told Munich daily Abendzeitung that Goetze's choice of T-shirt was nothing to do with them: "Our influence doesn't go that far!"



Real Madrid's latest signing Isco gives the thumbs up as he poses during his official presentation at Bernabeu yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

'A great opportunity'

REUTERS, Madrid



Real Madrid's first signing of the Carlo Ancelotti era, Isco, said he hoped joining the nine-time European champions would boost his chances of making the Spain squad for next year's World Cup finals.

The Spanish Under-21 playmaker, who was joined from Malaga for some 30 million Euros, completed a medical and signed a five-year contract before being presented in front of around 5000 cheering fans at a sun-soaked Bernabeu on Wednesday.

"It's a great opportunity that is always in your head, and if I do things well here, I might have an opportunity to be in Brazil," Isco, who will wear the number 23 shirt, told a news conference.

Isco, 21, helped Malaga to a club best fourth-placed finish in La Liga two years ago and to the Champions League quarter-finals last season in their debut campaign.

He caught the eye with a series of impressive performances in the European Under 21-championships in Israel last month, scoring a penalty in Spain's 4-2 final victory over Italy.

The talented midfielder was voted by coaches the 'revelation player' of La Liga two years ago and he won the 'Golden Boy' trophy as the best Under-21 player in Europe in 2012.

Isco was also a target for Manchester City and their new coach Manuel Pellegrini who worked with him at Malaga the last two seasons.

"I had offers from other clubs in Europe but it is impossible to say no to Real Madrid," Isco added, when asked why he reportedly changed his mind from signing for City to join Real.

"I couldn't let the opportunity pass me by." Isco will have to fight for a place in the Real starting line up but he was unperturbed.

"I have a lot of confidence that I will be able win myself a place here," he said. "No one will gift me minutes but I hope with hard work I will carve myself a niche."

There has been much speculation in the local media that Isco is a fan of Real's arch-rivals Barcelona, fuelled by the fact he has a pet dog called Messi, named after Barca's World Player of the Year.

While he juggled the ball on the pitch at the Bernabeu, fans chanted for him to kiss the Real badge, which he failed to do, and he deftly sidestepped the question in the news conference.

"It's true I have been a Malaga fan, now I am the biggest Madrid fan there is. I will give my all for this shirt," he said.

When asked about his dog, he replied to much laughter: "Yes. But I also had one called (Luis) Figo. It is nothing more than an anecdote."

Abidal eyes Nice move

SOCCERNET



Eric Abidal has admitted he is increasingly likely to join Nice after Monaco ended their interest and provoked the ire of the French international defender's agent.

Abidal, 33, has been seeking a new club, most likely the last of his career, since Barcelona decided not to extend his contract at the end of last season. The former Lyon and Lille man revealed last month he had held talks with Monaco sporting director Vadim Vasilyev and even undergone a medical with the principality club concerned about his fitness following a liver transplant last year.

However, having heard nothing more from the Stade Louis II and with reports emerging in France of an agreement between Monaco and Lille on a €15 million fee for another left-back, Lucas Digne, Abidal told Nice Matin a reunion with former coach Claude Puel is now a serious option.

"In my situation, it's logical to leave the door open to this club," Abidal, who started his professional career under Puel at Monaco before joining him at Lille, said. "If I sign for Nice, I'll be one of the oldest in the squad. Claude will be able to count on my experience. It'll allow me to feel younger...You can do a lot with young players. The more time goes on, the greater the likelihood [of signing at Nice]."

Despite the player's optimism, Nice

president Jean-Pierre Rivere was reported as saying "the bar was too high" in terms of Abidal's wage demands for a move to be completed just yet.

While Abidal appears to have taken Monaco's rejection in his stride, his agent, David Venditelli, told RMC he was angered by the newly-promoted club's behaviour following their initial approach.

"I haven't heard from Monaco," he said. "The manner in which they have dealt with this matter is disturbing, disrespectful even. Monaco had the chance to show that they're not just a club of money by taking a player on a free, which they didn't do. I respect their choice in sporting terms not to take Eric Abidal, but I don't accept the way in which they treat people."

Leonardo appeals ban

AFP, Paris

Paris Saint Germain sporting director Leonardo on Wednesday will seek to overturn the nine-month ban he picked up for pushing a referee.

The Brazilian was found guilty on May 31 of deliberately shoving referee Alexandre Castro in the tunnel following PSG's 1-1 Ligue 1 draw against Valenciennes on May 5, with the incident being caught on camera by Canal Plus television.

The ban, handed down by the disciplinary commission of the French Football League (LFP), applies to all official duties as well as stopping him from standing on the touchline during PSG games.

Leonardo will make his case to appeal the suspension in front of the French Football Federation's appeals commission.

Umpires' hockey underway

SPORTS REPORTER

Walton Umpires' Five-a-Side Hockey tournament got underway at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday. In the day's matches, Abdul Malek Smriti side beat Nazimuddin Mollah Smriti by 14-9 goals while Saber Ali team defeated Sheikh Nurul Islam team 10-7.

Sudden death on Daily Star

SPORTS REPORTER

The Daily Star suffered a sudden death on Wednesday. The popular English daily was not struck by lightning but became the latest victim of the shootout after Italy's defeat against Spain in the just concluded Confederations Cup.

Appearing in the second semifinal of the Kool BSJA Media Cup on the artificial turf adjacent to the BFF House, the former champions played out the regulation 30 minutes goalless draw debating whether the tiki-taka instead of the conventional long passes they had adopted could have earned them the desired goal against eventual winners RTV.

The debate might go on whether tiebreaker is the best solution to decide a winner. But it were RTV that held their nerves better than The Daily Star in the shootout which produced a 4-4 deadlock in the first five regulation spot-kick.

In the sudden-death shootout it was left on the shoulders of young Daily Star captain Tushar to amend the gaffe of the other day's hero Fahd, who missed the decisive fifth spot-kick that could have taken The Daily Star into the final. But Tushar, with butterflies in his stomach, hit the side post sending RTV to set up a final showdown against Channel 24 today.

Channel 24 also won their semifinal against Channel 1 with a 3-0 tiebreak victory.

Kaka wants to stay

SOCCERNET



Kaka has said that he wants to stay at Real Madrid and play under his former AC Milan boss Carlo Ancelotti next season.

The Brazil international, who has seen his influence wane at the Estadio Santiago Bernabeu in recent times, has been linked with a summer exit from the club, with his old side Sao Paulo reportedly interested.

However, Kaka, 31, has suggested he will still be around at Madrid come next term, and has plans to discuss his future with Ancelotti, who first brought him to Milan in 2003.

"I still have a contract with Real Madrid. As the new manager is taking over, I will have an exchange of ideas with him, and I think I will stay at Real Madrid," he said while on a trip to China to promote a friendly match between veteran Brazilian and Chinese players.

Kaka also went on to talk of his World Cup hopes, insisting that he still has ambitions to make Brazil's squad for next summer's tournament, despite missing out on Luiz Felipe Scolari's selection for the Confederations Cup.

"Scolari said the door of the national team is still open," he said. "There is more than a year to go before the World Cup, and the season is just starting. From my heart, I hope I can be playing in the World Cup next year."



Argentinian superstar Lionel Messi (R) and Brazil star Neymar (L) pose with the referee before an exhibition match called the "Giants Duel: Messi and friends v Rest of the World" at the National Stadium in Lima on Tuesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS



Real Madrid superstar Cristiano Ronaldo poses with his girlfriend Irina Shayek at the Universal Studios in Singapore yesterday.

PHOTO: INTERNET

C'Ron happy at Real

SOCCERNET



Real Madrid forward Cristiano Ronaldo has insisted he is "really happy" in Spain as speculation about a possible return to Manchester United continues.

Ronaldo, 28, has yet to sign a new contract with Los Blancos -- with his current deal expiring in two years -- and former club United are reportedly lining up a big-money summer bid for him.

But while the Portugal star, who has scored a remarkable 201 goals in 199 games for Madrid since arriving from Old Trafford as the world's most expensive player in 2009, once again spoke fondly of his time in Manchester, he stressed that he is content with life at the Bernabeu.

"I really miss English football. For me, it was some of the best years in my career when I was there in Manchester United," Ronaldo said as he paid a visit to a school in Singapore. "Everyone knows that. It is the club that is still in my heart and I really, really miss [United]."

"But now my life is in Spain, I'm enjoying playing there too. Part of my life is there but the future, we never know but I'm really, really happy in the Spanish league at the moment."

Ronaldo was also asked about the threat of Barcelona next season following their acquisition of Neymar, to which he replied: "I'm only thinking about my team. I don't care about Barcelona. They've signed a great player but I am focused on my team, which I think is the best in the world."

Messi outrages US fans

INTERNET, Undated



Lionel Messi might be the world's greatest soccer player but his reputation in the United States could take a dive after the cancellation of a high-profile charity match scheduled for Wednesday.

American fans have had only sporadic opportunities to see the Barcelona wizard in the flesh and the match -- billed as "Messi and Friends vs. The Rest of the World" and due to take place at the Los Angeles Coliseum -- was keenly anticipated.

That is, until a clearly frustrated press release was sent out, little more than 24 hours before the scheduled kickoff, announcing the game would not take place as Messi was refusing to take part.

"After hours of trying to convince Lionel Messi's management team to fulfil their contractual agreement and come to Los Angeles, it is clear they have no respect for these fans and this market," said a statement from Todd Graham, CEO of El Padrino, one of the primary sponsors of the event.

The match was advertised as featuring a string of world-class players, including Spanish World Cup winners Gerard Pique,

Cesc Fabregas and Sergio Busquets on Messi's team, and in-form Polish striker Robert Lewandowski, Argentina's Sergio Aguero and AC Milan star Kevin Prince Boateng on the other.

As of Tuesday night, the event website carried no mention of the cancellation, though tickets were no longer available on the Ticketmaster website.

"In all the years I've been doing live events, I have never encountered a situation like this," said Salina Shaw, vice president of public relations for El Padrino.

"It's unfortunate because the only losers in this scenario are the fans that were looking forward to the game, and the City of Los Angeles."

More information may leak out over the next few days but organizers are adamant that their part of the deal was met and that Messi's late withdrawal came as a shock.

His club team Barcelona is desperate to erase the memories of its embarrassing seven-goal deficit to Bayern Munich in the Champions League semifinals, while the 26-year-old is under pressure to deliver for his national team Argentina in the World Cup a year from now.

Tickets for Messi and Friends were selling for up to \$300.