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Bayern Munich players attend a training session in Arco, northern Italy yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Centenary WC in Argentina and Uruguay?

REUTERS, Buenos Aires

FIFA wants the centenary World Cup in 2030 to be jointly staged by Uruguay and Argentina, who met in the final of the inaugural tournament, Argentine FA (AFA) president Julio Grondona said on Thursday.

In 1930, Uruguay, then the double Olympic champions, beat Argentina 4-2 in the showpiece match at the Centenario stadium in Montevideo in front of a crowd of more than 80,000.

"FIFA wishes to celebrate the World Cup's 100 years in Argentina and Uruguay, I can confirm that," said Grondona, the senior vice-president of world soccer's governing body.

"(An agreement) has been signed by the two associations (AFA and Uruguay's AUF). What will we do?... We'll see but surely something of quality," Grondona told Argentina's Radio 10.

The only co-hosted World Cup finals were organised by Japan and South Korea in 2002.

Toni joins Verona

REUTERS, Rome

Former Italy striker Luca Toni has signed a one-year contract with Hellas Verona, the promoted Serie A club said on their website on Friday.

The 36-year-old's deal with Fiorentina ended at the start of this month.

Toni has played for some of Europe's biggest teams, including Juventus and Bayern Munich where he won two German league and cup doubles.

Last season he scored eight Serie A goals for Fiorentina in his second spell at the club as they just missed out on a Champions League place.

Anelka's last stop

AFP, London

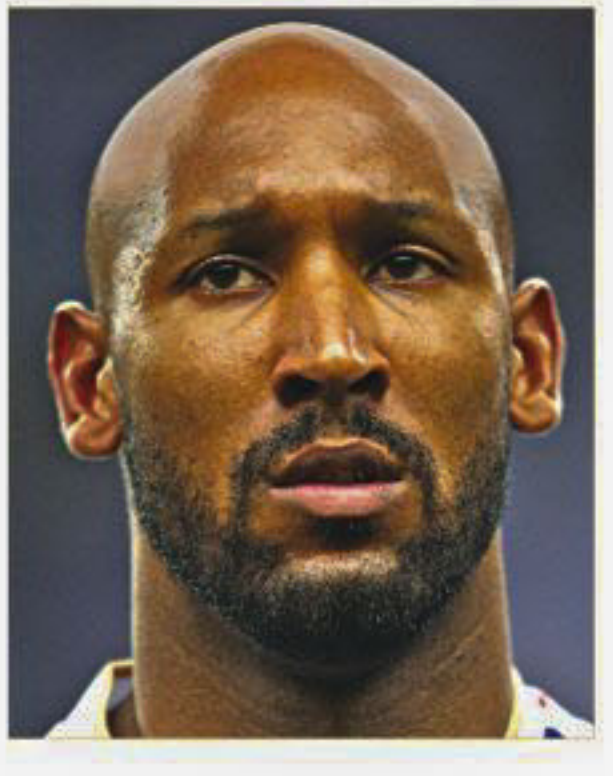
Nicolas Anelka is ready to end his nomadic career at West Bromwich Albion after joining the Premier League club on an initial one-year contract, the French striker said Friday.

The 34-year-old former France international numbers Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, Paris Saint-Germain and Real Madrid among his previous clubs, but says he is ready to settle down at The Hawthorns.

"I think I will finish in England. I'm happy here. I also hope that it will be with this club. I think this is the right club for me," he told the club website.

"I'm 34 years old now and I want to enjoy my football. I hope everything will be perfect. I hope we will be successful this year and hopefully we will reach Europe. We will try to do better than last season."

Anelka previously worked with West Brom coach Steve Clarke at Chelsea and he said their relationship played an important role in his decision to come back to England



after a brief stint at Juventus.

"I know the club and I know the head coach, which was very important for me," Anelka said.

"He knows how to use me on the pitch, which is important later on in your career. I know he likes to play football and that's why I signed here. He knows me and I know him. I also have friends in the changing room."

West Brom finished a creditable eighth in the Premier League last season and Anelka hopes to bring further success to a club against whom he has scored five times in seven career appearances.

"I've always liked West Brom," he said. "I have a lot of good memories of playing against West Brom, and now I have to do my best to score for West Brom. When I was playing for Chelsea, it was always tough to beat Albion."

"The team plays good football and I know I will be able to play my game here. Hopefully I will be able to help the team win more games."

"I don't know which position I will play. As long as I'm playing and enjoying my football, I'm happy."

Lahm backs Gomez

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich captain Philipp Lahm on Friday backed Mario Gomez to show what he can do for the European champions after the Germany striker's potential move to Italy's Fiorentina looked to have fallen through.

"We know that he is very valuable to us," Lahm said at Bayern's pre-season training camp in north Italy.

"He will play an important role, because he is an absolute top striker."

While Bayern becoming the first German team to win the treble of Champions League, Bundesliga and domestic cup, Gomez spent an unhappy last season on the bench after losing his first-team place to Croatia's Mario Mandzukic.

Reports had suggested a move to Fiorentina was imminent but the

Italians claim to have withdrawn their interest.

"Gomez is a very strong player who costs a lot. We are not in a position to acquire him," Daniele Prade, Fiorentina's director of sport said Thursday.

Bayern want at least a reported 20 million euros (\$26 million, £17 million) for the striker they paid 35 million euros for in 2009 and who has scored 118 goals in 236 Bundesliga matches for Munich and Stuttgart.

Gomez has a contract until 2016 and Bayern's director of sport Matthias Sammer told SID, an AFP subsidiary, that he expects Gomez to stay.

New coach Pep Guardiola, who took over from Jupp Heynckes a fortnight ago, said he has been impressed with Gomez.

"I have worked with Mario for a week, he is very professional and behaves very correctly," said the 42-year-old, who won 14 titles in four

years at Barcelona.

"Mario is my player, I need to be able to do the best for him."

While Guardiola's arrival has been nothing but positive so far, the Spaniard faces some tricky decisions before the new season starts, not only with regards to Gomez.

He has said he is toying with changing Bayern's 4-2-3-1 formation, which won them the treble, having played with a 3-3-3-1 system at Barcelona, using a 'False Nine' striker, who can drop into midfield.

The arrival of Germany midfielder Mario Goetze, from rivals Borussia Dortmund, means Guardiola will have to choose which stars to leave out from a group that includes Franck Ribery, Arjen Robben, Toni Kroos and Thomas Mueller.

Bayern's first competitive game is the German Super Cup final on July 27 and the new season starts on August 9.

Hand of Henry referee quits

REUTERS, Stockholm

The Swedish referee who missed a Thierry Henry handball before the goal against Ireland that sent France to the World Cup in 2010 is to quit his full-time post.

"There is no drama in it," Martin Hansson told the Kvalsposten newspaper. "I wanted a job with greater security, workmates and not to stand or fall because of football."

The 42-year-old has been a full-time referee since 2009 and said he would continue on a part-time basis.

Hansson faced severe criticism when he failed to see a handball by France's Henry in the lead-up to their extra-time equaliser against Ireland. The draw in the World Cup playoff second leg in Paris sent France to the finals in South Africa.

Hansson has officiated in Sweden's Allsvenskan since 2001 and became one of six full-time referees in 2009. A part-time firefighter even when refereeing, he now has a job with the emergency services.

"It will be like it was before we were employed full-time, when one had a normal job," Hansson told Kvalsposten.

Aubameyang Dortmund's

AFP, Berlin

Champions League finalists Borussia Dortmund confirmed on Thursday they have signed Gabon striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang from French Cup winners Saint Etienne on a five-year deal.

"We're pleased to have got our dream signing in Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang," said Dortmund's director of sport Michael Zorc.

"He's extremely versatile in the forward positions, has exceptional speed and is a real goal-threat."

The 24-year-old scored 19 goals and created 14 assists as Saint Etienne finished fifth in the French league last season, while Zorc says he can be used on either wing or up front as a striker.

Neither club have revealed the transfer fee as Aubameyang, reported to have cost 13 million euros (\$16.8m, £11m), becomes Dortmund's second new signing after Greek defender Sokratis, who cost 9.5 million euros from Werder Bremen.

"Our plan is not to play football in the shadow of Bayern Munich, we want to be stronger than last season," said Borussia coach Jurgen Klopp, referring to Bayern winning the treble of European Cup, league and domestic cup last season.

Aubameyang helped Saint Etienne win their first trophy for 31 years last season and has made 30 appearances for Gabon.

Dortmund are in training at Kirchberg, Austria, until Saturday and take on Bayern in the German Super Cup final on July 27, while CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke has laid out their goals for next season.

"We want to qualify for the Champions League again (meaning a top four finish in the German league), to qualify from the Champions League group stages and go as far in the German Cup," said Watzke.

Poland striker Robert Lewandowski, who has openly admitted he wants to leave Dortmund, returns to training for his honeymoon next week and Klopp has called on Borussia fans to show him some respect, despite his want-away position.

Rooney staying put, says Moyes

REUTERS, Manchester

New Manchester United manager David Moyes was adamant on Friday that striker Wayne Rooney was not for sale but stopped short of saying the player had changed his mind about wanting to leave.

The issue dominated the Scot's first news conference since he took over from the retired Alex Ferguson. His predecessor said in May that the England international had asked for a transfer.

"I've had a chance to speak to Wayne ... the fact of the matter is Wayne is not for sale," Moyes said at Old Trafford, home of the Premier League champions.

"He is a Manchester United player and will remain a Manchester United player. I've known Wayne since he was 16 ... he's training very well, he's come back in good shape and I really look forward to working with him."

Moyes was repeatedly asked about Rooney, including direct questions such as: "Has he told you he would like to stay at Manchester United?" but each time failed to give a 'yes' or 'no' answer.

"As far as I'm concerned, the way he's working I'm more than happy to work with him and make sure we get success," said the former Everton manager.

Moyes's answers will have done little to extinguish the media speculation about the future of Rooney who suffered a dip in form following the arrival of Robin van Persie.



Real Madrid full-back Carvajal (L) poses with club president Florentino Perez during his official presentation at the Bernabeu yesterday. Carvajal returned to Madrid after a loan spell at Bayer Leverkusen.

PHOTO: AFP

Cameroon slates FIFA

AFP, Yaounde

Cameroon's football federation (FECAFOOT) on Friday criticised the sport's world governing body FIFA, after it was provisionally suspended from all competitions over governance issues.

FECAFOOT spokesman Junior Binyam told AFP the suspension was "deplorable" and would damage the prospects of young footballers, including the best who wanted to play abroad.

"If a young Cameroon footballer is courted by a club such as Arsenal, he will not be able to go because the Cameroon federation will not be in a position to give him an international transfer certificate," he added.

Cameroon were due to play Gabon on Saturday in the qualifying round for the African Nations Championships (CHAN) but the match will not now go ahead because of the ban.

"If this suspension is not lifted by September, Cameroon will not be able to play in the World Cup qualifiers," added Binyam.

"We can only hope that the normalisation committee will start work without hindrance so the suspension can be lifted."

FIFA on Thursday said it had provisionally suspended FECAFOOT from international competition because of "government interference" in its running.

The decision came a week after the re-election of the outgoing president of the federation, Iya Mohammed, was declared void following his imprisonment for alleged misappropriation of funds.

FIFA said Cameroon, who are competing for a place in the World Cup finals in 2014, will not be able to play in any competition for the duration of the suspension.

The ban will be lifted only when the Cameroon authorities allow a special committee to run FECAFOOT and be able to run its affairs without hindrance.

Sevilla sign Pareja

AFP, Madrid

Spartak Moscow's Argentine international defender Nicolas Pareja will join Sevilla on loan next season, the Spaniards said on Thursday.

"Centre-back Nico Pareja will play for Sevilla FC next season, all that's needed is the agreement and a signature on the contract," Sevilla said on their website.

The 29-year-old has spent three years in Moscow after joining from Spaniards Espanyol in 2010.

Pareja was part of the Argentine gold medal winning squad at the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008, the same year he joined Espanyol from Anderlecht.