



Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi (L) jumps for the ball during a training session at the Ciutat Esportiva Joan Gamper in Barcelona yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# Barca reject Pep rant

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona's leaders teamed up against the club's ex-coach Pep Guardiola on Tuesday, denying his charge that the club used his successor's cancer illness to criticise him.

Club president Sandro Rosell and Guardiola's successor as coach, his old friend Tito Vilanova, both denied claims made by Guardiola of sly dealings by directors.

Guardiola, now coaching German and European champions Bayern Munich, accused Barcelona at a news conference last week of using its current coach Tito Vilanova's illness "to damage" him.

Without saying who exactly had made the accusation, Guardiola denied that he had missed a chance to visit Vilanova while he was being treated in New York for salivary gland cancer.

Guardiola was living there during a break after leaving the club.

"Pep wasn't correct, and I have to admit that what he said surprised me," Vilanova told a news conference on Tuesday. "I don't think they used my illness to attack him."

He added that on a first visit to New York he saw Guardiola but when Vilanova spent two months there later for surgery they did not meet "and it was not my fault. He is my friend and I needed him".

Rosell made a conciliatory move, denying Guardiola's claims but hailing him as the club's greatest ever coach.

# Blame it on physio

AFP, London

Jamaican sprinter Asafa Powell and his teammate Sherone Simpson are blaming their new physiotherapist after they tested positive for a banned stimulant, Britain's Daily Telegraph said on Tuesday, quoting the athletes' manager.

Both athletes have pointed to contaminated food supplements as the reason why they failed the tests, which have cast a cloud over the build-up to the World Athletics Championships in Moscow next month and put sprinting in the spotlight.

The daily quoted Paul Doyle as saying in an interview that both Powell and Simpson had only recently begun working with Canadian physio Chris Xuereb at his base in northern Italy.

US-based Doyle said he had no reason to suspect "mal-intent" on Xuereb's part and that, like the athletes, he was probably unaware of what exactly what the supplements contained.

Both athletes tested positive for oxilofrine at the Jamaican championships last month.

Italian police reportedly brought Xuereb in for questioning and raided his base on Monday, although the country's news agency ANSA said no arrest had been made.

Asafa and Sherone have been working with WADA [World Anti-Doping Agency] to arrange this police raid, so to speak," he was quoted as saying.

"Once we knew of the positive test, we realised that Asafa and Sherone were the only two athletes in the group who had been given new supplements by this physio that they are working with.

"Asafa's had probably 150 to 200 clear tests in the past. He starts working with a new physio who gives him new supplements and all of a sudden he has a positive test in his first test.

"It's obvious there's no other reason why he would have tested positive other than something being in the new supplements he's been taking.

"So we immediately asked WADA to get the police there to go in and search everything in the physio's possession as well as everything in Asafa and Sherone's possession."

Xuereb began treating Powell for a hamstring injury that flared up in March this year, according to Doyle.

He added that Xuereb gave Powell 17 supplements, three of which were administered by injection, and all were legal, he added.

Simpson checked whether any of the supplements contained proscribed substances, although did not seek independent medical verification, Doyle said.

He also accepted that Powell had not informed his coach, Stephen Francis, about the supplements.

ANSA on Tuesday said both Powell and Simpson had left Italy, quoting sources close to the investigation.

Powell, a 4x100m relay gold medallist at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, is one of the four fastest men over 100m in history.

News of his positive test emerged on Sunday with a separate positive test for US sprinter Tyson Gay.

Simpson won gold for Jamaica in the 4x100m relay at the Athens Olympics in 2004 and silver in the event last year in London. She also won 100m silver in Beijing.

# Real head Forbes list

REUTERS, Undated

Real Madrid headed a trio of European soccer clubs at the top of a list of the world's 50 most valuable sports teams released by Forbes on Monday which was dominated by National Football League (NFL) franchises.

The nine-times European champions were worth \$3.3 billion, up from \$1.88 billion last year, due in large part to increased revenue from deals with Adidas and Emirates Airlines, Forbes said in a statement.

Manchester United (3.17 billion) swapped places with Real and sit in second spot while Spanish soccer champions Barcelona (2.6 billion) moved up five places to third.

Major League Baseball's (MLB) New York Yankees (\$2.3 billion) fell one spot to fourth, followed by the NFL's Dallas Cowboys (\$2.1 billion) and New England Patriots (\$1.6 billion).

Rounding out the top 10 were MLB's Los Angeles Dodgers (\$1.6 billion), the NFL's Washington Redskins and New York Giants, and London-based soccer club Arsenal (\$1.3 billion).

# Mourinho wants all 4

AFP, Bangkok

Jose Mourinho said Tuesday Chelsea would be gunning for victory in all four competitions this season as he prepared to kick off his second spell in charge with a friendly in Bangkok.

The 50-year-old Portuguese said there were "no priorities" for Chelsea as they tackle the Premier League, Champions League, FA Cup and League Cup, following their pre-season tour of Asia and the United States.

"The next match is the important one. If our next match is the Champions League,



the Champions League is our competition," Mourinho told a press conference.

"And the same with the Cups because we know what the English Cups mean, especially the FA. And we want to play every competition with this mentality -- so for us, no priorities."

Mourinho won back-to-back Premier League trophies, the FA Cup and two League Cups during his first time in London. But the Champions League, which he has lifted with Porto and Inter Milan, remained elusive.

He named Manchester United and Manchester City, the two most recent win-

ners of the Premier League and both also under new management, as his main competition in England.

"In European football we have more candidates (to win the Champions League) and because of that it's more difficult to win, but we want to be there and we will be fighting for it," Mourinho added.

Mourinho said he would try to instil a winning culture from his very first game on Wednesday -- against the Singha All-Star XI, who shocked Manchester United 1-0 last week in David Moyes's debut game in charge.

The Portuguese, known for his meticulous attention to detail, said he had sent his assistant to scout Saturday's game and give him a tactical blueprint of the opponents, whom he rated as dangerous.

"I don't like to lose, the players don't like to lose... for sure, tomorrow my boys will try to get a result," he said. "Losing is not a drama, losing doesn't change anything in the team. But it's not nice, we don't like it."

"Winning is part of the culture and if you can do that even in friendly matches, you have to do it."

Mourinho also deflected the latest transfer speculation, which includes links with Manchester United's Wayne Rooney, Aston Villa striker Christian Benteke and even former Chelsea ace Didier Drogba, 35.

"Managers of big clubs are connected with everybody until August 31," he said, referring to the end of the July-August transfer window.

"That's the old story in football: rumours and rumours and rumours, and at the end of the day after so many rumours, something becomes true."

"But in this moment I'm so happy with the people I have here that I'm not thinking about other players."

# Cesc wants to stay: Tito

AFP, Madrid

Spanish midfielder Cesc Fabregas wants to stay at his beloved boyhood club Barcelona despite reports of an offer from Manchester United, his club coach Tito Vilanova said on Tuesday.

"I am aware that Cesc has received offers, but he wants to stay here because he wants to triumph here," Vilanova told a news conference.

"Fabregas knows he is competent. His desire has always been to triumph here and I am not worried" that he will leave, he added.

British media reported on Monday that United had made an offer worth 29 million euros (\$38 million) for Fabregas.

The player, 26, made a hero's return to Barca in 2011 after playing for Arsenal since 2003.

# Sachin to remain IAF captain

CNN-IBN, New Delhi

The Indian Air Force (IAF) on Tuesday denied reports that the force has ended its association with Sachin Tendulkar.

Sources have told CNN-IBN that Tendulkar will remain part of the IAF family and that he has not been able to spare much time for the force because of conflicting dates.

"Sachin remains honorary Group Captain in the Indian Air Force. He cannot be described as brand ambassador but remains part of Indian Air Force family," said a source in the IAF.

Earlier on Tuesday, it was reported that the cricket superstar had been dropped as its brand ambassador. But the Air Force said the rank of Group Captain conferred on Tendulkar will remain. The legend was signed on a couple of years back with much fanfare and conferred with the rank of a Group Captain as an honour for his achievements in sport.

The IAF had hoped that that Tendulkar, the first sportsman to be conferred a rank by IAF and the first personality with no aviation background to receive the honour, would motivate the younger generation to take up a career in the force but the association has fallen short on those expectations which led to the cancellation.



Atletico Madrid's latest signing Spanish striker David Villa is embraced by a fan during his presentation at the Vicente Calderon Stadium on Monday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# Villa mobbed

INTERNET, Undated

Overwhelmed by the arrival of David Villa from Barcelona for the relatively tiny fee of €2.5 million, Atletico Madrid fans could not be held by the stands at the Vicente Calderon during the striker's unveiling ceremony.

Security tried to hold back the swarming fans as they led Villa off the pitch, but like a horde of zombies going after the last living human, the crowd's desire to love on him was too powerful.

And yet, when Villa spoke to the press as he received the No. 9 shirt vacated by Falcao, he said his first choice was actually a move to the Premier League.

He told reporters: "We had a move to the Premier in mind but then Atletico appeared and within three days all my personal terms had been agreed."

"From a career point of view, they weren't lacking anything. They finished third and will play in the Champions League."

# T&T advance

REUTERS, Undated



Trinidad and Tobago took full advantage of a lacklustre Honduras performance to advance to the CONCACAF quarter-finals with a 2-0 victory in Houston on Monday.

In the first game of a Group B double-header played earlier at the BBVA Compass Stadium, El Salvador edged out Haiti 1-0 to also advance at the expense of their opponents.

Honduras had already secured top spot in the group after victories in their opening two matches, allowing Trinidad and Tobago to capitalise on their complacency with an inspired second half display.

Stoke City striker Kenwyne Jones scored a goal and added an assist to lead the way, setting his side on course for the knockout phase when he converted a penalty in the 48th minute after Orlin Peralt had fouled Cornell Glen in the box.

Jones then helped his side double their advantage in the 67th minute when he set up Kevin Molino to score from inside the penalty area.

The loss did not hurt Honduras as they moved on thanks to earlier wins against Haiti and El Salvador. Trinidad and Tobago finished in second place following the victory.

Haiti had a chance to advance earlier in the evening but a late goal sent them tumbling out of the tournament.

Rodolfo Zelaya initially missed a late penalty but poked home the rebound as El Salvador finished the group stage as one of the two best third-place finishers.

El Salvador entered the match tied for third in the group with just a single point, while Haiti, on three points, only needed a draw to advance.

The game turned late in the second half when El Salvador were awarded a penalty after Haiti's Jean Marc Alexandre was penalised for a foul in his own area.