

Moyes steps up Cesc bid

AFP, Tokyo



Manchester United manager David Moyes on Monday revealed he has stepped up his pursuit of Cesc Fabregas after making a second bid for the Barcelona midfielder.

United confirmed last Monday that they had made an initial approach for the former Arsenal star, but that offer of £25 million (\$38 million, 29 million euros) was swiftly rejected by the Spanish champions.

Moyes is determined to do everything he can to lure Fabregas back to the Premier League as he seeks a marquee signing to mark his arrival at Old Trafford.

And the former Everton boss, appointed as Alex Ferguson's successor at the end of last season, said at a press conference in Japan on Monday that a second improved offer, believed to be in the region of £30 million (\$46 million, 34 million euros), has now been lodged.

United executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward returned to England ahead of schedule last Wednesday to lead the Fabregas negotiations, and Moyes said: "As I understand it, Ed had a response (to the first offer). We have made a second offer but Ed is dealing with it rather than me."

Moyes has yet to bring in a major signing, with his only deal so far the capture of Uruguay Under-20 star Guillermo Varela.

But, with reports from Spain suggesting Barca will not make a decision on Fabregas until they appoint a successor to cancer-stricken coach Tito Vilanova, Moyes acknowledged there may come a time when he has to turn to other targets.

"I think a point does come," said Moyes. "But when you are interested in good players you want to give it every opportunity to materialise."

"I will hope things will continue to move forward."

"At this moment in time I can only tell you Ed Woodward is working hard to try and make the deals happen. We hope some of them will fall into place shortly."

Moyes has also been linked with moves for Real Madrid forward Cristiano Ronaldo and Tottenham winger Gareth Bale, plus raiding his old club Everton for Leighton Baines and Marouane Fellaini.

So far though he has been frustrated, with new Madrid boss Carlo Ancelotti on Sunday making it clear he doesn't expect Ronaldo to rejoin United.

And Moyes, who is also fighting to persuade Wayne Rooney to snub advances from Chelsea, admitted he can understand why some fans are nervous about the lack of fresh faces as the champions gear up for the first season of the post-Ferguson era.



PHOTO: AFP

Real Madrid superstar Cristiano Ronaldo (L) is about to score his second goal against Bournemouth during their pre-season friendly match at the Goldsands Stadium on Sunday.

Real enjoy seaside romp

AFP, Bournemouth



Cristiano Ronaldo and his Real Madrid teammates enjoyed their trip to the seaside on Sunday as the Spanish giants romped to a 6-0 victory in a pre-season friendly against English minnows Bournemouth. Real's visit to the English holiday resort was one of the more unlikely warm-up fixtures in recent memory, but the presence of such a star-studded line-up sparked a frenzied response in the usually sleepy south-coast town.

When Bournemouth announced details of the glamour friendly at the end of last season, the club were criticised for charging £60 for tickets, but the sell-out 12,000 crowd, many of whom had queued overnight when seats went on sale, demonstrated Real's pulling power.

A new temporary stand was erected at the Goldsands Stadium especially for the occasion, and those fans crammed in for a once in a lifetime chance to see some of the sport's biggest names were rewarded as Real boss Carlo Ancelotti sent out a strong side.

Former Manchester United forward Ronaldo was the star attraction, while Luka Modric, Karim Benzema and Mesut Ozil all started, as did recent signings Daniel Carvajal and Isco.

With nine European Cups and 32 Spanish league titles to their name,

Real are one of the most decorated clubs in the world and would never usually dream of occupying the same pitch as a team like Bournemouth, whose solitary honour of note is the third tier championship.

Real were reportedly paid around £1 million as an appearance fee, but Bournemouth's chairman Eddie Mitchell and Russian co-owner Maxim Demin, likely to make a loss despite their ticket price hike, were determined to go ahead with the match in an attempt to raise the profile of one of the English game's lesser lights.

Unsurprisingly given the quality in Madrid's team, Eddie Howe's Bournemouth, promoted to the second-tier Championship last

season, were quickly overwhelmed by the visitors.

Cheered by all four sides of the ground throughout, Ronaldo, the world's most expensive player at £80 million, was clearly enjoying himself as he showcased his repertoire of flicks and tricks.

It was no surprise to see Ronaldo break the deadlock in the 22nd minute with a trademark dipping free-kick into the bottom corner, prompting ironic chants of "sign him up" from the Bournemouth fans, whose club's record signing Matt Tubbs cost just £800,000.

Ronaldo grabbed his second in the 40th minute, rounding goalkeeper Darryl Flahavan and rolling the ball home.

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Warne quits cricket officially

AFP, Sydney

Australia great Shane Warne on Monday officially announced his retirement from the game, confirming he will not play with the Melbourne Stars in Australia's Big Bash League.

The leg-spin legend, who was Friday inducted into the International Cricket Council Hall of Fame at Lord's, was instrumental in lifting the profile of the domestic Twenty20 league in its first two seasons and was one of its biggest drawcards.

But the 43-year-old said his time was finally up.

"I think the time is right for me to hang up my Big Bash boots -- juggling business, family and commentary commitments across two continents is not easy," said Warne.

"I've always loved the game but now it's time to observe. I wish Cameron [White] and rest of the lads all the best."

White will retake the captaincy.

Melbourne Stars head coach Greg Shipperd believes his team and the league are indebted to Warne for what he has helped them achieve during the first two seasons.

"It was always a privilege to share a dressing room with Shane," Shipperd said.

"His unique and exceptional skills will remain a symbol of excellence for generations to come."

During his international career, Warne was the first bowler to take 700 Test wickets and represented Australia in 145 Tests between 1992 and 2007. In all, he took 708 Test wickets at an average of 25.41.

He also took 293 wickets in 194 one-day internationals at an average of 25.73.

Chris crowned champ

AFP, Paris



Britain's Chris Froome was crowned champion of the 100th edition of the Tour de France as Germany's Marcel Kittel powered his way to his fourth win on the 21st and final stage on Sunday.

Team Sky's Froome, the winner of three stages in this edition, claimed his maiden yellow jersey with a winning margin of 4min 20sec on second-placed Colombian Nairo Quintana of Movistar.

"I think it's going to take a while to sink in," said a triumphant Froome, who succeeded teammate and compatriot Bradley Wiggins, absent this year, as the yellow jersey champion.

"It's really has been a special edition of the Tour de France this year. Every day I woke up knowing I faced a fresh challenge... and I have to thank all my teammates for helping me achieve this dream."

Race debutant Quintana, who moved up to second place thanks to his maiden stage win at the summit finish of Anney-Semnoz on Saturday, secured the race's white jersey for the best young rider and the best climber's polka dot jersey.

He was joined on the podium by Spaniard Joaquim Rodriguez (Katusha), third at 5:04 and one place ahead of former two-time win-

ner Alberto Contador of Spain, who slipped to fourth on Saturday's penultimate stage.

Slovakian Peter Sagan of Cannondale won the points competition's green jersey for the second successive year with a tally of 409 points and a 97-point lead on former winner Mark Cavendish of Britain.

Argos sprinter Kittel ended Cavendish's hopes of a fifth consecutive win on the Champs Elysees when he outsprinted the Omega-Pharma sprinter and German Andre Greipel of Lotto in a thrilling dash for the line.

Greipel, the winner of one stage, finished second with Cavendish, a close third.

It left Kittel, with four stage wins, as the top sprinter of this year's race and allowed the German to close the race as he opened it having won the opening stage from Porto Vecchio to Bastia.

"Four! I can't believe it," said Kittel. "It was a dream of mine to win on the Champs Elysees and now I've done it. I'm so proud."

Froome began the final stage with a lead of 5:03 on Quintana -- the largest margin since disgraced American Lance Armstrong claimed his sixth win in 2004 with a lead of six minutes on German Andreas Kloden.

Froome thus becomes the second successive Briton to win the race after teammate and compatriot Bradley Wiggins, who made history as Britain's first winner in 2012, when Froome finished runner-up.



PHOTO: AFP

Tour de France winner Christopher Froome of Britain poses on the podium at the Champs-Elysee in Paris on Sunday.

Germany stun China

AFP, Barcelona

China's Olympic champions Cao Yuan and Zhang Yanquan suffered a shock defeat in Sunday's 10m men's synchronised platform final at the world aquatic championships as Germany claimed a historic gold.

Sascha Klein and Patrick Hausding claimed victory with 461.46 points from Russia's Victor Minibaev and Artem Chesakov second on 445.96 as Chinese teenagers Cao and Zhang came third with 445.56.

This was Germany's first ever synchronised diving gold at a global championships and their first world diving title since 1973.

"Crazy! I am a world champion, nothing else matters," said an elated Hausding, who hails from Berlin, after the pair's success.

"It feels like I have the adrenaline of 300 people in my blood, I can't feel much else."

Thiago nets on debut

AFP, Berlin



Bayern Munich claimed more silverware with a 5-1 win over hosts Borussia Moenchengladbach in Sunday's final of the pre-season Telekom Cup as new-signing Thiago Alcantara netted his debut goal.

Having beaten Hamburg 4-0 in Saturday's semi-final, European champions Bayern romped to another win with new signing Thiago scoring in the first-half to claim his first goal for the Bavarians.

Bayern became the first German team to win the treble of European, league and cup titles last season as they added another trophy to their collection.

Thiago made his Munich debut on Saturday against Hamburg at Moenchengladbach's Borussia Park, then the 22-year-old chested home his first goal for Pep Guardiola's European champions on Sunday.

The Spain Under-21 captain signed from Barcelona last Monday in a four-year deal with an initial fee of 20 million euros (\$26 million), plus an extra five million euros from a future friendly between Bayern and Barcelona.

Having won all six of their pre-season friendlies against minor opposition before this weekend, Guardiola's team passed their first test against Bundesliga opposition with flying colours.

In Sunday's final, which was two 30 minute-long halves, France winger Franck Ribery opened the scoring by volleying home Arjen Robben's curling cross on 17 minutes.

'Martino, Enrique both suitable for Barca'

REUTERS, Barcelona



Gerardo Martino and Luis Enrique are both suitable candidates to succeed Tito Vilanova as Barcelona coach as their philosophies chime well with the La Liga champions' playing style, captain Carles Puyol said on Monday.

Martino, 50, who recently led Newell's Old Boys to the "Final" title in his native Argentina, and the 43-year-old Enrique, a former Spain and Barca player who joined Celta Vigo last month, have emerged in local media as the front runners for the coveted post.

Vilanova, 44, was forced to step down last week as his treatment for throat cancer means he will be unable to perform his duties.

Puyol told a post-training news conference he was sure sporting director Andoni Zubizarreta and the club's board would hire a coach able to adapt to Barca's possession-based ethic.

"We know about his career, he is a very good coach," the shaggy-haired centre back said of Martino.

"He likes Barcelona's playing style," he said, adding that he remembered Spain's quarter-final against Martino's Paraguay at the 2010 World Cup, which they edged 1-0, as "a very difficult, very hard game".

On Enrique, who may be a more controversial choice given that he also had a stint playing for Barca's arch rivals Real Madrid, Puyol said: "Everyone knows that I have a very good relationship with Luis."

"I think he has what it takes but that's the same for the other candidates who have been mentioned."

"I don't know who will come... we are ready to help whoever comes in any way we can."

Barca need to move swiftly to appoint a successor as they launch their bid for a fifth La Liga title in six years in less than a month.

One reason Martino is seen as a likely candidate is that he is from the city of Rosario where Barca's World Player of the Year Lionel Messi was born.

Enrique's chances, meanwhile, may also be hampered by the fact that he only recently agreed to join Celta as well as memories of an unsuccessful stint at Serie A side AS Roma during the 2011-12 campaign.

Guus leaves Anzhi

REUTERS, Moscow

Guus Hiddink has resigned as manager of Anzhi Makhachkala, the wealthy Russian club said in a statement on their website on Monday amid reports he was favourite to take over at Barcelona.

Hiddink, former Dutch national team coach, joined Anzhi in 2012 and resigned after only two games of the current season following a defeat against Dynamo Moscow.

USA hammer El Salvador

REUTERS, Undated

Experienced forward Landon Donovan inspired national dominant United States performance on Sunday as the hosts routed El Salvador 5-1 to race into the semi-finals of the CONCACAF Gold Cup.

The victory set up a meeting with Honduras, who edged Costa Rica 1-0 to reach the last four. Mexico meet Panama in the other semi-final in Arlington, Texas on Wednesday.

The Americans were rarely challenged in the tournament's opening stages and they carried their momentum to a ninth consecutive win.

The 31-year-old Donovan, who took a four-month sabbatical around the start of the year, rallied the team with a second-half goal and three assists.

He set up Clarence Goodson's opening score in the 21st minute before Joe Corona gave the Americans a 2-0 lead just eight minutes later in front of an approving home crowd.

El Salvador's Rodolfo Zelaya converted a penalty to trim the lead before halftime but the US broke the match open after the break.

Eddie Johnson and Mikkel Diskerud added goals aided by Donovan, who netted his own score late.

Spurs sign Chadli

REUTERS, London

Belgium international winger Nacer Chadli ended speculation over his future when he left Twente Enschede for Tottenham Hotspur on Sunday, the Premier League club announced.

The 23-year-old, chased by a number of other top clubs in Europe, signed for a fee in the region of 7.0 million pounds (\$10.68 million), according to media reports.

He becomes Spurs second major signing of the close season. Earlier this month they signed Brazilian international midfielder Paulinho for a fee reported as 17.0 million pounds.