

Barca appoint Martino

AFP, Madrid



Argentine coach Gerardo Martino has been named as Barcelona's new boss on a two-year deal, the club confirmed on Tuesday.

"FC Barcelona have reached an agreement for the hiring of Gerardo Martino as the new coach of the first team for the next two seasons," said a statement on the club's website.

The 50-year-old arrives after successful period in charge of Newell's Old Boys in his homeland but has just over three weeks to get

used to his new surroundings before the start of the Spanish league season on August 17.

Barca were suddenly forced into looking for a new boss just last week when Tito Vilanova sadly had to resign due to an ongoing battle with cancer.

Martino has no previous managerial experience in Europe, although he did enjoy a brief spell in Spain with Tenerife as a player in 1991.

However, it is his great success as a coach in both Paraguay and Argentina that has convinced the



Catalans that he is the right man for the job.

Martino won four titles in Paraguay with Libertad and Cerro Porteno between 2002 and 2006 before going onto take charge of the country's national team.

He led the South Americans to their best ever performance in a World Cup in 2010 where they were narrowly beaten 1-0 by Spain in a nervy quarter-final in Johannesburg.

Paraguay also reached the Copa America final in 2011 under

Martino's guidance, before he left to take charge of Newell's, for whom he made more than 500 appearances as a player in three spells.

Martino restored the Rosario side, where a young Lionel Messi also took his first steps in the game, to their former glory this season as they won the season-ending championship in Argentina and also reached the semi-finals of the Copa Libertadores.

The appointment will certainly be met with approval by Messi, whose father Jorge Horacio is said to have idolised Martino during his time as a player at Newell's.

MU stumble in Japan

AFP, Yokohama



Manchester United stumbled to a 3-2 defeat against Japan's Yokohama Marinos Tuesday in their second loss in three games under new manager David Moyes.

The English champions fell behind in the very first minute but they recovered to lead 2-1 heading into the second half thanks to Jesse Lindgard's strike and a Yokohama own goal.

However, Fabio Aguiar headed the scores level before Yoshihito Fujita's winner three minutes from time removed further gloss from United's pre-season Asian tour.

So far under Moyes, United have lost 1-0 in Bangkok and won 5-1 in Melbourne, and they got off to a horror start in hot and humid conditions in Yokohama.

The game was just one minute old when Brazilian striker Marquinhos latched on to a poor clearance from United custodian David de Gea to fire the hosts in front from inside the box.

The setback stung the Premier League champions and talented

Belgian teen Adnan Januzaj nearly put them level with a crisp strike which was just off-target.

Januzaj, 18, then got back to head a chance off the line but it was new signing Wilfried Zaha who orchestrated United's opener when he drifted past his man into the box.

The ex-Crystal Palace man's low cross caused mayhem and it was Lindgard on hand to net his third goal in two games, after Saturday's brace against the A-League All-Stars.

Yokohama handed United the lead when Januzaj, United's reserve team player of last season, fired a free-kick which came off the unfortunate Masakazu Tashiro and over the line.

But the hosts were back on terms after the break when de Gea failed to deal with a corner and Brazilian defender Fabio Aguiar's header moved the score to 2-2.

Shinji Kagawa drew a huge cheer when he came on just after the hour-mark, and United's Japanese playmaker nearly raised the roof when he got clear - but his shot failed to beat the 'keeper.

Ashley Young hit one into the side-netting but it was Yokohama who had the final word when Fujita swept home the winning goal in the 87th minute.



PHOTO: AFP

Yokohama Marinos defender Fabio (2nd from R) heads in the second goal against Manchester United during their friendly match at the Nissan Stadium yesterday.

Cameroon ban lifted

AFP, Geneva

FIFA on Monday lifted its suspension of Cameroon's football association, saying the organisation had addressed its concerns over government interference.

In a statement, FIFA said that Cameroon's Fecafoot association had met "conditions previously set" after a normalisation committee began running the organisation Monday.

This means Cameroon will be free to play in an all-important 2014 World Cup qualifier in Yaounde in September.

Test for Pep's Bayern

AFP, Berlin



Pep Guardiola's former team meets his current employers in a friendly on Wednesday, as European champions Bayern Munich host Barcelona with relations strained between the Spaniard and his ex-club.

After Guardiola won 14 titles between 2008 and 2012 at Barcelona, the pre-season run-out has added spice given recent events which have strained relations between the two European powerhouses.

Guardiola took charge of Bayern last month amid great fanfare, after the Bavarians lured the 42-year-old to Munich following his year's sabbatical in New York.

Guardiola has already poached Spain Under-21 captain Thiago Alcantara from

Bayern Munich v Barcelona at the Allianz Arena on (1630 GMT; 2230 BST)

Barcelona to bolster his star-studded midfield which includes Holland's Arjen Robben and France winger Franck Ribery.

Bayern's Germany stars Bastian Schweinsteiger and Mario Goetze are both recovering from injury, while neither team is expected to have their Confederations Cup stars in action.

Both Barcelona's new Brazil star Neymar and Spain's Carles Puyol, who is working his way back to fitness after knee surgery in March, are expected to sit it out.

Senior stars Javier Mascherano, Adriano Correia, Alex Song and Alexis Sanchez are likely to feature while Argentinian superstar Lionel Messi is set to play some part.

Spurs eye Soldado

AFP, Hong Kong

Tottenham manager Andre Villas-Boas said Tuesday Spurs are in talks to sign Valencia and Spain striker Roberto Soldado, but denied that a deal was imminent.

Press reports in Britain have suggested that the Londoners are close to snapping up the forward for a club record 18 million pounds (\$28 million).

If Soldado, 28, does join it could spell the end at Spurs for one or both of the club's current forwards Jermain Defoe and Emmanuel Adebayor.

No mind games: Jose

AFP, Jakarta



Chelsea's Jose Mourinho Tuesday hit back at suggestions he was trying to destabilise new Manchester United manager David Moyes after targeting striker Wayne Rooney.

The experienced Portuguese campaigner said he had done nothing but praise the English champions' incoming boss since returning for a second spell at Stamford Bridge.

Mourinho said he had called Moyes a "great coach, (who) deserves success, he deserves time to work, he didn't win trophies in Everton because it's very difficult to win trophies there".

"If to speak good about him is to play mind games, what do you say if I speak bad about him?" Mourinho told a briefing in the

Indonesian capital Jakarta.

"So the best thing is not to speak. If I don't speak, nobody says anything."

Mourinho raised suspicions that he was trying to make life difficult for Moyes after speaking glowingly about Rooney and hinting a move could improve his England chances before Chelsea's bid was made public.

Moyes, taking over from the legendary Alex Ferguson, has had trouble with the Rooney question in his early weeks in charge, and has repeatedly told journalists the unsettled striker is not for sale.

However, he flatly told Mourinho to "bring it on" when asked if he was a victim of mind games by the ex-Inter Milan and Real Madrid manager.

"If you're from Glasgow you quite enjoy those kind of things, so bring it on," said the Scot.

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