

# Oswaldo close to Juve move

AFP, Milan

Southampton striker Dani Osvaldo moved closer to signing for Juventus on Friday as the Serie A champions announced the player was undergoing a medical in Turin.

Osvaldo, who quit Roma last summer to sign for Southampton in a four-year deal worth a reported £12.8 million (\$21.2 million, 15.8 million euros), is expected to sign for the Serie A champions on loan until the end of the season.

The deal would include an option to buy set at between 18 and 20 million euros.

Juventus announced on their official website: "Italian international striker Pablo Daniel Osvaldo is currently undergoing examinations at Turin's Istituto di Medicina dello Sport, after which he will complete his medical at the Isokinetic and Clinica Fornaca di Sessant centres."

Osvaldo's return to Serie A would come as little surprise, given the Argentinian-born Italian's turbulent season at the southern English club, for whom he has made only 12 appearances to date, scoring three goals.

Southampton recently suspended him for two weeks following a training-ground clash with team-mate Jose Fonte, while he

was given a three-match ban by the Football Association for his role in a brawl at Newcastle United last month.

And, when asked if Osvaldo could play for Southampton again after the incident with Fonte, manager Mauricio Pochettino said: "Your question answers itself, if you know what I mean; meaning no. It's clear."

On the reported interest from Juventus, Pochettino added: "We have to wait. There is still a day and a half left and he is suspended at the moment and we shouldn't get ahead of ourselves."

"As soon as anything happens about this matter, the club will make it public. It's clear this is something that no one expects. It's completely unpredictable and something we did not expect."

"In light of that, there is no explanation I can give."

On Thursday Juventus striker Fabio Quagliarella, used sparingly by coach Antonio Conte, reportedly turned down the chance of a move to Premier League side Cardiff City.

However the expected arrival of Osvaldo, which would add to an already ample forward line which notably features Fernando Llorente, Carlos Tevez, Mirko Vucinic and Sebastian Giovinco, could help change Quagliarella's mind.



## Aguero out for a month

AFP, London

Manchester City's leading scorer Sergio Agüero is likely to be sidelined for around a month due to a hamstring injury, manager Manuel Pellegrini revealed on Friday.

The Argentina international, who recently missed eight matches with a calf problem, was forced off in the first half of City's 5-1 victory at Tottenham Hotspur in the Premier League on Wednesday.

"The doctor is seeing him -- maybe one month, but we are not sure absolutely," Pellegrini told reporters.

The injury to Agüero, who has scored 26 goals this season, arrives at an unwelcome juncture in City's campaign, with the 2012 English champions having just taken over from Arsenal at the top of the league table.

He stands to miss the first leg of City's Champions League last 16 tie with Barcelona, as well as key league and FA Cup games against Chelsea.

However, with City having already amassed 115 goals in all competitions this season, Pellegrini believes that his team can cope with Agüero's absence.

"It is very difficult. Sergio is a top player for us, but I think we can replace him," said the Chilean.

"All the other strikers -- Alvaro Negredo, Edin Dzeko and now Stevan Jovetic -- replace him."

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## Hernanes set for Inter

AFP, Milan

Brazilian Hernanes edged closer to completing a move from Lazio to Inter on Friday, a day after an emotional exit from the Roman club marked by tears and gifting his football boots to waiting fans.

The 28-year-old midfielder, who did not train with Lazio on Friday morning, is expected to be confirmed as an Inter player later in the day.

However his exit from Lazio, where he was hugely popular with the Biancocelesti fans, was not without emotion.

Hernanes was pictured on television on Thursday in emotional exchanges with fans who had waited for him to leave the club's training ground.

Sitting at the wheel of his car, Hernanes broke down in tears before turning to the passenger seat, taking his boots and handing them to a waiting supporter.

On Friday around 200 fans were camped outside the residence of Lazio president Claudio Lotito hoping to convince the club chief not to sell the Brazilian international.

The player later explained on his Facebook page: "I cried, not because anyone is forcing me to leave the club, but because I'm leaving a club, a city and a people I love."

## 3.5m World Cup tickets requested

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

More than 3.5 million requests from 199 countries were made for World Cup tickets in the second sale phase, FIFA said Thursday.

"With a little more than three million tickets available at the 12 (host) stadiums, the requests are at least 10 times more than the inventory we have available," said Thierry Weil, FIFA marketing director in charge of ticketing.

A FIFA statement said nearly 80 per cent of requests came from Brazilians, who asked for more than 2.6 million tickets for 62 of the 64 matches on offer.

Tickets for the opening match in Sao Paulo on June 12 and the final in Rio's iconic Maracana stadium scheduled for July 13 are temporarily unavailable.

## Imran slams ICC revamp

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan legend Imran Khan slammed controversial plans to reform cricket's governing body on Friday, saying they would take the game back to the days of colonialism.

Khan, who captained Pakistan to their sole World Cup win in 1992, said the proposals harked back to the days when England and Australia had effective right of veto at the ICC.

"If I was the PCB (Pakistan Cricket Board) head I would have strongly objected the new colonial system," Khan told AFP.

No international cricket has been played in Pakistan since 2009, when militants attacked the visiting Sri Lankan team, and Khan warned the new proposals would hit his home country hardest.

He said Tuesday's meeting at ICC headquarters in Dubai reminded him of one he attended in 1993.

"Then India and Pakistan were on the same page and they fought to end the imperialism in the ICC and wanted it to be run in a democratic way," Khan said.

"It became democratic until India, because of its big money influence and supported by Australia and England, made it back to square one."

## Ramsey blow for Arsenal

AFP, London



Arsenal midfielder Aaron Ramsey will be unavailable for up to six weeks after suffering a setback in his recovery from a thigh injury, manager Arsene Wenger revealed on Friday.

The 23-year-old Wales international has been one of the London club's star performers this season, but he has not played since December 26 due to the problem.

He returned to full training earlier this week, only to aggravate the injury, which prevented him from making a comeback in Arsenal's 2-2 draw at Southampton on Tuesday.

As a result, and with Arsenal having conceded top spot in the Premier League table to Manchester City, Wenger has revealed that he will try to sign a new midfielder before the January transfer window closes later on Friday.

"It is certainly a few weeks. It will be between four to six weeks. I count six, so I have no bad surprise," Wenger told a press conference.

"Of course it's a blow for us because we recently lost (Theo) Walcott for a long period, now Ramsey is out for a long period and it is a big setback."

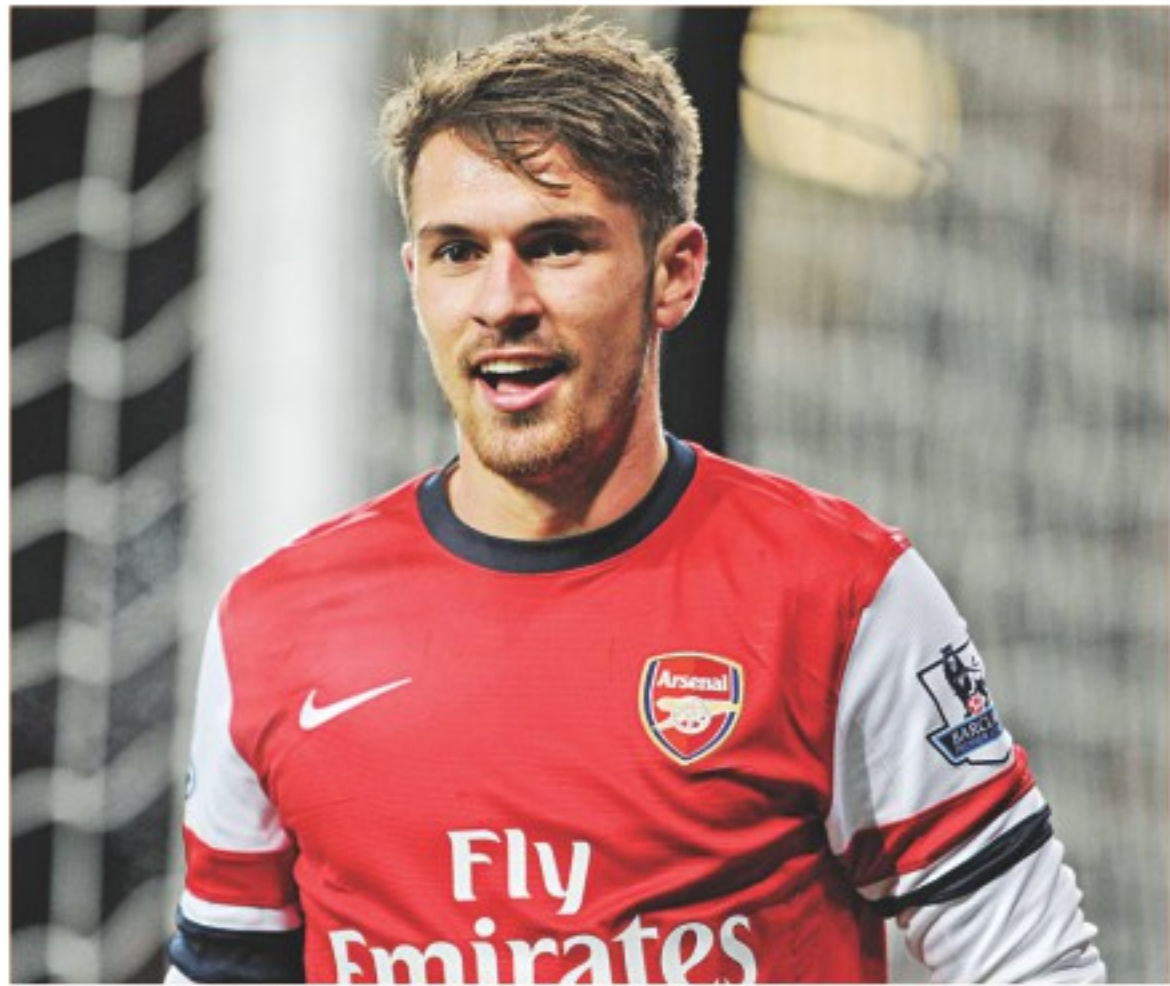
Wenger said he was "80 percent" confident of bringing in a new player before the transfer deadline falls at 2300 GMT, but he ruled out a move for Schalke's Julian Draxler, with whom Arsenal have been linked in the media.

"The Draxler situation has been created by the newspapers, not by me," said Wenger.

"You ask me, what is that situation? I say nothing is happening on that front. He will stay at Schalke."

Wenger added: "We are open-minded and active. We look at the opportunities."

"We are still trying to bring at least one body in because we are a bit hit now by the red card for (Mathieu) Flamini, the setback of Ramsey and the fact that (Jack) Wilshere is not available, which I hope will be short term."



## Chelsea's ultimate test

AFP, London



Chelsea defender Gary Cahill admits his side's crunch clash with Manchester City on Monday will be the ultimate test of their Premier League title credentials.

City swept to the top of the table with a 5-1 demolition of Tottenham in midweek, while Chelsea lost ground in the title race after being held to a frustrating goalless draw at home to West Ham.

Jose Mourinho's third-placed team trail leaders City by three points and a defeat at Eastlands would be a major blow to Chelsea's hopes of winning the English crown for the first time since 2010.

Mourinho accused West Ham of playing "football from the 19th century" after the east Londoners settled for a cautious approach in midweek, but City's dazzling array of attacking talent may force the Chelsea boss to

adopt a conservative gameplan himself.

The Blues have already beaten Manuel Pellegrini's side this season when a Joe Hart error allowed Fernando Torres to a score a late winner at Stamford Bridge in October.

But City have been in majestic form since then and their five-star display at White Hart Lane extended their unbeaten run to 20 matches in all

### FIXTURES

(1500GMT unless stated)

**Saturday**  
Cardiff v Norwich, Everton v Aston Villa, Fulham v Southampton, Hull v Tottenham, Newcastle v Sunderland (1245GMT), Stoke v Manchester United, West Ham v Swansea (1245GMT)

**Sunday**  
Arsenal v Crystal Palace (1600GMT), West Brom v Liverpool (1330GMT)

**Monday**  
Manchester City v Chelsea (2000GMT)

## Zaha loaned to Cardiff

AFP, London

Manchester United winger Wilfried Zaha has been loaned to Cardiff City until the end of the season, the Welsh club's manager, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, announced on Friday.

Zaha, 21, signed for United from Crystal Palace in a deal worth £15 million (\$24.5 million, 18 million euros) a year ago before being loaned back to the London club.

He played a starring role as Palace were promoted to the Premier League via the Championship play-offs, but has barely featured since linking up with United, making only two substitute appearances in the league this season.

## Aus take T20 series

AFP, Melbourne



Australia continued England's miserable tour with an emphatic eight-wicket victory to claim the Twenty20 series with a match to spare at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Friday.

England only posted 130 for nine after winning the toss and the home side coasted to victory with 5.1 overs left at 131 for two.

Skipper George Bailey clubbed an unbeaten 60 off just 28 balls with three sixes and seven fours, while opener Cameron White continued his magnificent series with 57 not out off 45 balls.

England will finish their troubled tour of Australia in Sydney on Sunday in the final dead rubber T20 game after losing the Ashes 5-0 and the one-day series 4-1.

Fast bowler Josh Hazlewood was named man-of-the-match with career-best T20 figures of four for 30 in England's innings, including two wickets with his last two balls.

Australian captain Bailey said his side's bowlers had set up the win.

## It's heating up in Spain

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona, Atletico Madrid and Real Madrid all face difficult games this weekend as they return to La Liga action after qualifying for the Copa del Rey semifinals in midweek.

Just one point separates the top three with Barca and Atletico leading the way on 54 points, but a five-game winning run in the league has brought Madrid right back into the hunt with 17 games still to go.

It is Real who appear to have the

### FIXTURES

(all times GMT)

**Saturday**  
Barcelona v Valencia (1500), Levante v Rayo Vallecano (1700), Getafe v Valladolid (1900), Malaga v Sevilla (2100)

**Sunday**  
Elche v Almeria (1100), Real Betis v Espanyol (1600), Atletico Madrid v Real Sociedad (1800), Athletic Bilbao v Real Madrid (2000)

**Monday**  
Villarreal v Osasuna (2100)

stiffest test of all this weekend, though, as they travel to the in-form Athletic

Bilbao on Sunday.

Athletic suffered their first defeat in 13 games since moving to the new San Mames as they bowed out to Atletico in the Cup on Wednesday night.

However, in the league Ernesto Valverde's men have been unstoppable of late, scoring 15 times in their last three matches to move five points clear in the battle for the fourth and final Champions League place.

That efficiency in front of goal will be put to the test against a Real side that set a club record in their 1-0 win over Espanyol on Tuesday by not conceding for the eighth consecutive game.

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