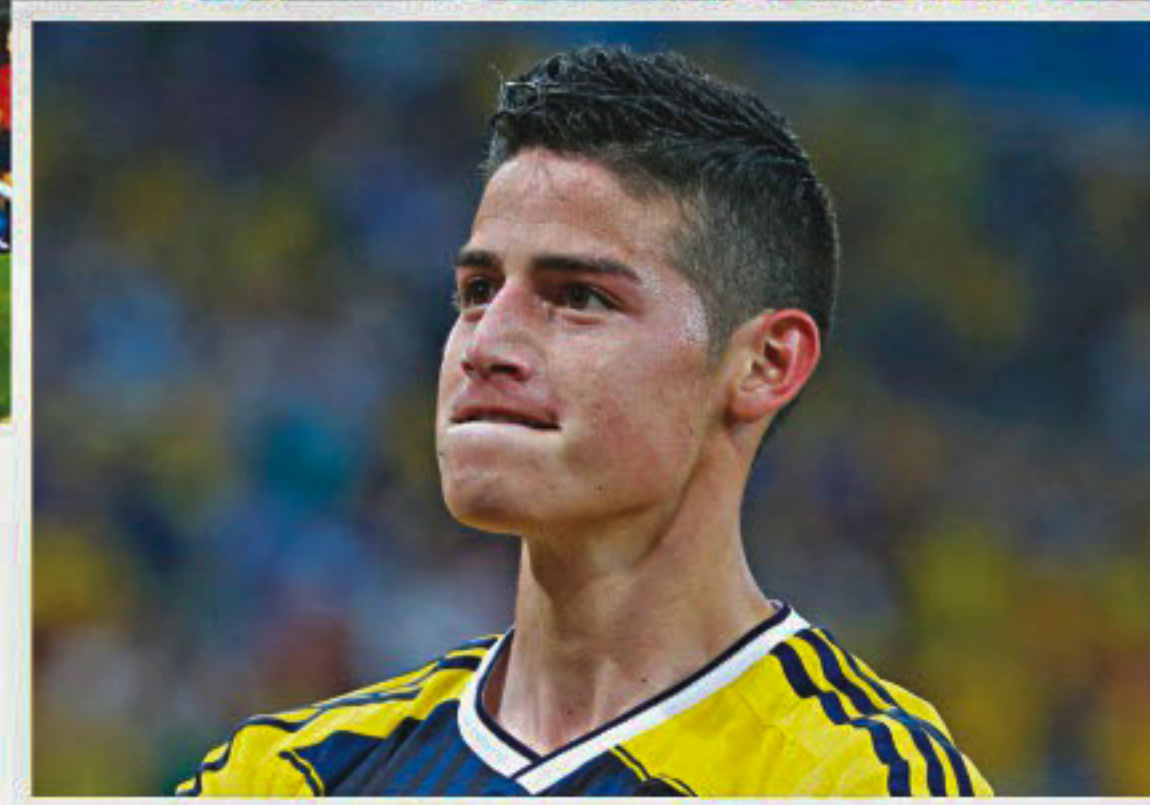




The just-concluded FIFA World Cup 2014 in Brazil produced 171 goals. Among them Colombia's James Rodriguez's magnificent left-foot volley against Uruguay in a Round of 16 match on June 28 at the Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro has been voted by users of FIFA.com as the Goal-of-the-Tournament. Here is the goal and a celebrating Rodriguez, who also won the golden boot for scoring highest 6 goals in the showpiece event.

PHOTOS: REUTERS FILE



Real close in on Rodriguez

GOAL.COM



Real Madrid has apparently reached an agreement with Monaco for the transfer of James Rodriguez, Goal International reports.

In an overall deal that should see the Colombia international become the third most expensive player in the history of the game, Madrid will meet the French club's 88 million-euro valuation — the same fee

Barcelona paid for Luis Suarez — including performance-related variables.

With an agreement reached between the two clubs over the weekend, discussions have been scheduled for Monday to iron out the details of Rodriguez' personal terms as Madrid aims to make the midfielder its second signing of the summer following the arrival of Toni Kroos from Bayern Munich.

An understanding of the 23-year-old's salary has been in place since Madrid president Florentino Perez decided to target the player as this summer's principle Galactico signing.

Rodriguez — who pushed Monaco to allow him to leave the Ligue 1 club just a year after a big-money move from Porto — will join Gareth Bale and Cristiano Ronaldo in Madrid's star-studded attack.

The arrival of the 23-year-old could spell the end for Isco at the Santiago Bernabeu, with Liverpool among the clubs monitoring the playmaker's situation.

In addition to the acquisition of World Cup Golden Boot winner Rodriguez, Madrid has been working on a deal to bring a second Colombia star, Radamel Falcao, from Monaco and reached a breakthrough in talks at the beginning of July.

Falcao's return to Spanish soccer after a season in Ligue 1 is dependent on Madrid's medical department declaring itself satisfied with the striker's recovery from cruciate ligament surgery.

Negredo out for long

AFP, Manchester



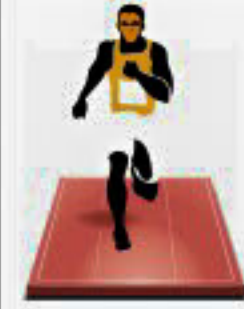
Manchester City's Spanish striker Alvaro Negredo revealed Monday he faces "months" on the sidelines with a foot injury. The Spain international, who played the first half of the Premier League champions' friendly over Hearts on Friday, has broken the fifth metatarsal in his right foot.

"I want to let you know that its going to be hard for the next few months, I fractured my 5th metatarsal and will be out a few months," Negredo wrote on his Instagram account with an accompanying picture of him wearing a protective boot.

"I will be back stronger than ever. I will return with a vengeance." Negredo limped off before the break in the 2-1 win over Hearts.

Bolt braces for hectic August schedule

REUTERS, Raleigh



Usain Bolt will return to Rio de Janeiro next month to run a special 100 metres on the beach, he said on his website on Sunday, but the Jamaican world record holder is now unlikely to race against Justin Gatlin this year.

The six times Olympic gold medallist added the Aug 17 "Mano a Mano" 100m on Copacabana Beach to three previously announced races in what he said was his

finalised schedule for 2014.

Bolt streaked to victory in a 150m race at the famous beach in March 2013 on a track specially built for the event.

He has delayed opening his season this year because of a foot injury and will start with a 4x100 metres relay with his Jamaican team mates at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow on Aug 1-2.

The eight-times world champion will also run 100m races in Warsaw, Poland on Aug 23 and at the Zurich Diamond League meeting on Aug 28.

The schedule, unless amended, means

Bolt and US world silver medallist Gatlin, who is undefeated this year, are unlikely to meet before 2015.

Gatlin, who returned from a four-year doping ban in 2010, will not receive an invitation to race against Bolt in Zurich because of the Swiss meeting's "policy to not invite athletes that have been banned for two years or more", meeting director Patrick Magyar told Reuters via email.

While the 100 metres race in Zurich is not part of the Diamond League series of events, the 200 metres race at the same meeting will be

Gatlin could therefore still race in the

longer event, because it is governed by Diamond League rules.

"If Gatlin is, by the time of Zurich, in the top three of the Diamond Race (for the 200) we will invite him for the 200m, which is our Diamond Race event," Magyar said.

Gatlin, who has won 11 consecutive 100 metres and two races at 200m this year, is currently tied for fourth in the Diamond League standings for the 200m despite running the year's fastest time at last week's Monaco meeting.

Fellow American Tyson Gay, who recently completed a one-year doping ban, already is confirmed for the 200m, Magyar said.

Evra joins Juventus

AFP, London

Manchester United's France international Patrice Evra has joined Juventus on a two year contract, the two clubs announced on Monday.

The move brings to a close the 33-year-old left back's eight-and-a-half year stint at Old Trafford.

"After a great deal of thought I have decided the time is right for me to leave Manchester United," the player told United's website.

A Juventus statement read: "Juventus football club can today announce that Patrice Evra has signed a two-year contract with the club after a fee of £1.2million.

Gerrard retires from England duty

AFP, Liverpool



England captain Steven Gerrard announced his retirement from international football on Monday after making 114 appearances for his country.

Gerrard, 34, led the national team at the World Cup where England bowed out in the group stage and the Liverpool midfielder said he had "agonised" over the decision since returning from Brazil.

"This has been a very difficult decision, one of the toughest I've had to make in my career," Gerrard told the Football Association's FA TV.

"I have enjoyed every minute of representing my country and it is a sad day for me knowing that I won't pull on the England shirt again.

"To ensure I can keep playing to a high level and giving everything to Liverpool Football Club I believe this is the right decision, and having Champions League football back at Anfield is another big factor in my decision," he added.

Gerrard, who made his international debut against Ukraine in 2000, trails just Peter Shilton (125) and David Beckham (115) on England's all-time caps list.

He appeared at three World Cup finals as well as three European championships and scored 21 goals for the Three Lions. He captained England in Brazil and at Euro 2012.

England coach Roy Hodgson paid tribute to Gerrard, saying: "While I'm disappointed in the decision, I can entirely understand Steven's situation and can have no complaints given the incredible service he has given to his country."

We are slipping behind: Neymar

AFP, Rio de Janeiro



Sifting through the ruins of Brazil's World Cup campaign, star player Neymar says his team strove hard for glory, but other countries have moved ahead and they must catch up.

While refusing to pin the blame on former handler Luiz Felipe Scolari, Neymar also warned young players to beware the damage some coaches could do to young players' development.

In an exclusive interview with Globo television broadcast Sunday, the 22-year-old said Brazil deserved at best seven out of ten for a Cup showing which ended with a 7-1 semi-final mauling by champions Germany.

Asked why Brazil failed Neymar said there were simply things that could not be explained.

"We cried because it was our childhood dream (to win it) and had fought hard to get to where we were."

He added he believed he would have chosen the same 23 players as Scolari for the roster -- but insisted Brazil must realize it has fallen down the pecking order and has no auto-

matic right to success.

"I think Brazilian football is behind. It's behind Germany and Spain. We've slipped behind and we have to be man enough to admit it."

The Barcelona star was forced to watch the semi-final from his coastal home in Sao Paulo state after he suffered a fractured vertebrae during the quarter-final with Colombia.

In that game, he was clattered in the back by Juan Camilo Zuniga in a "move that had nothing to do with football," though he accepted the Colombian's later apology.

Forced onto the sidelines, Neymar said there was no particular reason why Brazil's campaign suddenly crashed around them.

"There was no particular mistake made by the Selecao. I am not someone who understands a huge amount about tactics," he said.

And he refused to blame Scolari, Brazil's 2002 World Cup-winning coach who resigned after the tournament.

"I had a leader (who was) one of the best Brazilian coaches I've had," he said.

Neymar insisted the team were sharp from training.

"We always trained," he said. "We gave our all."

He did indicate, however, that the intensity of training in Brazil could be lower than in Europe.

"You train more, but sometimes you train with less determination. That's how Brazilians are."

Neymar revealed he felt some coaching of youngsters in the game was harmful, such as when they are told on occasion to get the ball onto their stronger foot.

"The information passed onto a player is important -- you have to ask why a player did (something in error)."

"I almost learned things wrongly. The ball would come to my left leg. The coach would say to switch it onto my right foot to kick as I am right-handed."

"So then my father corrected that and said, no, if the ball comes to your left leg then you hit it with your left."

Neymar said he would seek to fulfil his World Cup dream in four years time in Russia.

Already a father from a previous relationship, Neymar claimed that, at 22, it was too early to be thinking of marrying his 18-year-old flame, actress Bruna Marquezine.

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