



## Martino in Argentina talks

AFP, Buenos Aires

Former Barcelona boss Gerardo Martino was in talks to take over the Argentina national team hotseat, the new president of the country's football federation, Luis Segura said Thursday.

Martino, 51, who was in charge at Barcelona last season, won the Argentine league title with Newell's Old Boys in 2013 and is seen as the favourite to succeed Alejandro Sabella who stood down after the World Cup.

"We haven't decided anything. When we have a coach, be it Martino or another, we will announce it," said Segura, who has just taken over from Julio Grondona who died last week.

## Reina seals Bayern deal

AFP, Berlin

Liverpool's Spanish international goalkeeper Pepe Reina has joined Bayern Munich on a three-year deal, the Bundesliga champions announced on Friday.

The 31-year-old spent last season on loan from the English Premier League runners-up with Serie A side Napoli.

Reina will be second choice behind German World Cup-winning goalkeeper Manuel Neuer.

"I'm thrilled to come to one of the biggest clubs in the world, it's a huge moment in my life," said Reina after his reported three-million-euro move.

## Women's team bounce back

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's chess team bounced back to winning ways in the 41st Chess Olympiad in Tromso, Norway as they defeated Chinese Taipei by 3-1 points in their sixth round match yesterday. WIM Rani Hamid beat Taipei's Jo-Yu Liao, WIM Shamima Akter Liza beat Taipei's Yu-Tong Lin, WFM Sharmin Shirin Sultana beat Taipei's Hung-Ling Cho. However, WFM Nazrana Khan lost against Taipei's Yi-Pang Gao.

The men's team were tied at 1-1 points against their sixth round opponents Singapore when this report was filed. GM Ziaur Rahman lost his board against Singaporean GM Zhang Zhong before GM Niaz Murshed won his board against unrated Aung King Lee to restore parity.



Barcelona striker Luis Suarez (C) signs autographs for young fans after he pleaded his case before the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) to halve his four-month FIFA ban for biting in Lausanne yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Class of 92 outclassed

AFP, Manchester

Former Manchester United stars Ryan Giggs, Paul Scholes, Nicky Butt and Gary and Phil Neville, playing in a "Class of 92 and Friends" team, suffered a 5-1 loss Thursday against a club they own.

Non-league Salford City, purchased by the former Premier League stars last year, put their famous visitors in their place although a series of pitch invasions put a dampener on the occasion.

The star-studded team also featured former United players from different eras such as Robbie Savage, John O'Kane, Raimond van der Gouw, Mikael Silvestre and Quinton Fortune.

Ex-England cricketers Michael Vaughan and Steve Harmison and other former United players in Tomasz Kuszczak, David May, Ben Thornley and Danny Webber all played in the second half.

Little Salford were 2-0 ahead inside 30 minutes through Paul Linwood and Nicky Platt.

Giggs pulled a goal back just before the interval from the penalty spot, but Salford added further goals from Phil Marsh and substitutes Gareth Seddon and Mike Oates.

# Suarez appeals ban

REUTERS, Lausanne



The world players' union FIFPro called for Luis Suarez's ban for biting to be reduced on Friday as the Uruguay and Barcelona forward's appeal was taking place at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

FIFPro said that the ban was excessive and that Suarez had been "tried and vilified in public" for biting Italy defender Giorgio Chiellini during their World Cup match in June.

The 27-year-old has been banned from all football activity for four months and suspended for nine competitive internationals by FIFA following the incident which shocked audiences worldwide.

The Uruguayan Football Association (AUF) took the case to CAS, sports highest tribunal, on Suarez's behalf after losing an appeal at FIFA.

The hearing, expected to last all day, was being held behind closed doors and CAS said in a statement that "the final decision is likely to be rendered some days after the conclusion of the hearing."

FIFPro said in a statement that "the sanctions are a disproportionate response to the offence."

"The four-month ban from all football-related activity... is unfair for Suarez as it infringes his right to work at club level," it said.

"In the international arena, where the offence was committed, a nine-match ban for Uruguay is also too strong as it effectively equates to a two-year sanction."

"The educative nature of the sanction

mentioned by FIFA in the ruling can be much better achieved by making it partially conditional, including the obligation for Luis Suarez to receive treatment."

FIFPro added that Chiellini himself had called for the bans to be reduced.

"That Luis Suarez has been trialed and vilified in public, ever since the incident, is a sanction in itself," said the Dutch-based association.

"On the other hand, it has been remarkable to see the response from his fellow professionals and the victim himself, Giorgio Chiellini. Many agree the sanctions are excessive. This is an important signal for the CAS panel to consider."

Suarez, wearing a checked shirt, brushed aside photographers and refused to make any comment as he arrived by taxi at the CAS headquarters in a Lausanne suburb.

Banned twice before for biting, he initially denied sinking his teeth into Chiellini but then apologised for the incident one week later.

The ban means that Suarez will not be able to make his Barcelona debut until the end of October and will miss the whole of next year's Copa America in Chile, when Uruguay play their next competitive matches.

Uruguay will play a minimum of three and maximum of six matches at the Copa, meaning that Suarez will also miss between three and six matches of the 2018 World Cup qualifying campaign.

"The biggest issue is the nine matches because it could mean, depending on the performance of Uruguay in the Copa America, that Suarez could be prevented from playing (for Uruguay) until 2016," said Daniel Cravo, a lawyer representing the AUF.

## 2014 WC final rematch on September 3

AFP, Berlin

Germany, in a quirky twist of fate, face Argentina in a friendly on September 3 less than two months after seeing off the South Americans to be crowned world champions in Rio de Janeiro's Maracana.

Joachim Loew's world beaters meet Argentina in Dusseldorf in a Euro 2016 qualifier warm-up arranged back in March.

The game takes place four days before Germany get their Euro 2016 qualifying campaign underway against Scotland.

Before facing Argentina, Loew is due to name his new captain, with 30-year-old Bastian Schweinsteiger favourite to succeed Phillip Lahm.

The midfield general became a symbol of Germany's charge to a fourth World Cup crown, battling on through the final over Argentina despite taking an elbow in the face.

Lahm announced he was quitting international football five days after the Maracana heroics.

## Drogba quits int'l scene

REUTERS, Cape Town



Ivory Coast striker Didier Drogba announced his international retirement on Friday after scoring 61 goals in 103 appearances for his country.

"It is with much sadness that I have decided to retire from international football," the 36-year-old said on his website (www.didierdrogba.com).

The Chelsea forward was a fixture in the national side for 12 years, playing in three World Cups and twice helping the team finish runners-up at the African Nations Cup.

"These past 12 years in the national team have been full of emotions. From my first call up to my last match I have always tried to give my best for my country," Drogba added.

"I am very proud to have been captain of this team for eight years and to have contributed to placing my country on the world stage of football."

Drogba, who was brought up in France, was an emerging striker at Guingamp when he won his first cap against South Africa in 2002.

He played in eight international tournaments but never as part of a winning team.

Drogba helped his country qualify for the 2006 African Nations Cup in Egypt, but had a penalty saved in the post-match shootout as the Ivorians lost.

In the 2012 final against Zambia, he squandered a second-half penalty that would have probably given the Ivorians the continental title but they went on to lose on spot-kicks.

He was also in the Ivorian side which gave up a last minute goal to Greece at this

year's World Cup in Brazil to miss out on progressing past the group phase for the first time.

During the last 18 months Drogba's talismanic role in the team has been reduced by the decision of coach Sabri Lamouchi, with whom he had a strained relationship, to bench him for key matches and leave him out of others.

Drogba's decision came just days after the Ivorians appointed Frenchman Herve Renard as their new coach.

It was expected that Drogba, who has signed a one-season deal to return to the English Premier League with Chelsea, would agree to stay on for a final tilt at a major title at next year's African Nations Cup finals in Morocco.

It is likely, however, that his deal with Chelsea prevented him from spending a month away on national team duty at a crucial stage of the season.

"I cannot convey enough thanks to the fans for all the love and support during these years. All my goals, all my caps, all our victories are for you - I love you," Drogba said.

"I also owe much gratitude to my team mates - the players with whom I have shared all these emotions and I wish you all much success for the future and a very warm welcome to the new manager," he added.

Drogba, whose parents sent him to France as a child to improve his education, is also a French citizen and might have played for Les Blues, although he had already been capped by the Ivorians when he burst into the limelight with Olympique Marseille.

# Deja vu Down Under

REUTERS, Sydney



Patrice Evra is with a new club this year but still finds himself in Australia for a pre-season friendly - and that is not the only similarity the French defender has noticed after making the switch from Manchester United to Juventus.

The 33-year-old left back moved to Turin for 1.2 million pounds (\$2.05 million) in July after eight years at Old Trafford in which he won five English Premier league titles, the Champions League and the Club World Cup in 2008.

He joins a Juventus side under the new management of Massimiliano Allegri, as United were last year when they came to Sydney at the start of David Moyes's ill-fated reign, but with expectations of silverware still sky-high.

"Now I am a Juventus player, it's a massive club with a big history," he told reporters at a news conference on Friday.

"We are a strong side, we have some great champions in the team.

"It doesn't change from when you are with Manchester United, when you arrive you have the same number of fans. It shows you how big a club this is, how many trophies they have won.

"And that's why I chose to come and play for this club, because I know all that matters is winning, this is the winning mentality and I love that."

The challenge for Juventus this season is to win the Italian league title for the fourth successive season as well as try and turn around their miserable recent record in European football.

Evra said it was that kind of high stakes challenge that had attracted him to the club.

"It was very difficult to leave Man United because it was like my second family," he added.

"But as soon as I knew there was interest from Juve, I knew it would be a new challenge for me because I have to repay the faith they showed in me.

"I have to show more as a Juventus player because we have to win four times in a row. It's never easy to win

four times in a row.

"I won it with Man United three times but four times is really difficult. And we have to do much better in the Champions League."

Evra made his Juve debut in an 8-1 humbling of an Indonesia XI in Jakarta on Wednesday but is expecting a much tougher match against an A-League All Stars XI led by Juventus great Alessandro del Piero in Sydney on Sunday.

"Last year when we came with Man United, we won 5-0 but it was not that easy a game," he recalled.

"That's why I told my team mates it would be a different game from that we played in Jakarta. Because Australia I think they played a great World Cup, they deserved to win the game against Holland."

Sydney's mild winter weather was another reason why he was happy to be back.

"The weather is much better than Jakarta, where it was really humid," he said.

"The weather here reminds me of Manchester, for me it's perfect."



Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon (R) speaks alongside teammate Patrice Evra during a press conference in Sydney yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP