

Sergio wants Leo to stay

GOAL.COM

Sergio Busquets is convinced Lionel Messi will still be a Barcelona player next season and admits the club can't afford to lose him.

Messi, 27, lost out to Cristiano Ronaldo in the race for the Ballon d'Or on Monday evening, finishing in second place, but stole the headlines by revealing he didn't know where he would be playing next season.

However, Busquets was quick to calm fears his teammate could be set for a shock departure, but did admit the club couldn't afford to sanction his exit.

"The owner of his future is himself, he's not thinking about leaving and for us is very important that he stays," the midfielder said at a press conference on Tuesday.

"He said what everybody says in the football world, you don't know what will happen in the future, you don't know what can happen but, he also said that he doesn't want to leave the club.

"Leo is a common guy, he said the other day that he's just another part of the team, we know he makes the difference, he offers different things but he's just another player in the team.

"When there's a debate, everybody can see it in different way, the fans only know what they see in the media, not what really happens."

Pogba set to leave?

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Paul Pogba's agent Mino Raiola has revealed that the France international could leave Juventus in the not too distant future.

The 21-year-old recently signed a new deal with the Serie A champions until June 2019, but his representative has stressed that his long-term future does not lie in Italy.

"He will not stay in Italy much longer," Raiola told Sport Mediaset.

"It all depends on Juventus to be honest. We have just signed a new deal and we are happy, but if the right moment comes along to leave we will not let it pass."



Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi speaks on stage during the FIFA Ballon d'Or award ceremony at the Kongresshaus in Zurich on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

'Don't know where I'll be next year'

AFP, Zurich

Lionel Messi saw arch-rival Cristiano Ronaldo beat him to the Ballon d'Or in Zurich Monday and then reignited speculation over his own future by saying: "I don't know where I'll be next year."

Barcelona and Argentina superstar Messi appeared to row back on his own comments made 24 hours earlier that rumours that he could leave the Camp Nou for Chelsea or Manchester City were "all lies".

"I always said that I would finish my career at Barcelona and then at (his home town club in Argentina) Newell's," Messi told reporters after Real Madrid's Portuguese icon Ronaldo lifted the world footballer of the year title for the second year in succession at a glittering FIFA awards ceremony.

"But I don't know where I'll be next year. As Cristiano (Ronaldo) said recently, football has many twists and anything can happen," added the Barca talisman, who himself won the Ballon d'Or four years in a row from 2009.

After a superb performance in Barcelona's 3-1 win over Spanish champions Atletico Madrid on Sunday, Messi had angrily dismissed talk that he wanted to

leave after clashing with Barca's manager Luis Enrique and the club's board.

"I have never demanded anything to ensure that I stay because I never had any intention of leaving," he told Barca TV after the match.

Messi's relationship with Enrique had come under scrutiny after the forward was benched for the 1-0 defeat at Real Sociedad a week earlier. The rumours grew after Messi missed the first training session after that match, citing a stomach bug.

"I have heard it said that my dad has spoken to Chelsea or Manchester City. It is all lies. I have taken this chance to deny it so that everyone knows the truth," Messi said Sunday.

But his latest comments are sure to regenerate interest from a number of cash-rich English Premier League clubs.

Manchester United are reportedly one of the few that could afford the buyout fee from his contract, reportedly set at 250 million euros (195 million pounds, \$296 million), without falling foul of UEFA's financial fair play rules.

With Messi commanding a reported salary in the region of 20 million euros a year the total cost of acquiring his services on a five-year deal could be a world record-shattering 350 million euros.

Turan's votes were changed!

ESPNFC.COM

Atletico Madrid and Turkey midfielder Arda Turan says he voted for his club boss Diego Simeone to win the World Coach of the Year award and not Chelsea's Jose Mourinho, as FIFA had announced.

FIFA's official document showing the voting for the prize has Arda giving his first choice to Mourinho, with Low in second place, and then Simeone third, but the 27-year-old immediately took to Twitter to insist that was not the case.

"About the Ballon d'Or and choosing the best coach, I have received many questions," he tweeted.

"So to explain well I want to say again: when the staff asked me, I chose Simeone as the best coach and Cristiano as best player. I said it exactly like that.

"For me, Simeone is the best coach in the world. If he had won the prize I would have been as happy as if I had won it myself. I want the press, and everyone, to know this."

Germans disappointed with Ballon d'Or vote

REUTERS, Berlin

Germans, who had hoped for a clean sweep at the FIFA Ballon d'Or, expressed disappointment on Tuesday after their World Cup-winning goalkeeper Manuel Neuer came third in the vote for the 2014 world player of the year.

Portuguese Cristiano Ronaldo won the award on Monday for the second year running and third time in total.

The Real Madrid forward polled more than twice as many votes as his bitter rival and four-time winner Lionel Messi, who only just edged Bayern Munich's Neuer into third place.

Neuer, who was outstanding at last year's World Cup in Brazil and also helped Bayern clinch a domestic double, has let in just four goals in 17 league games so far this season.

"I think this is unfair," said Germany's former World Cup-winning captain and coach Franz Beckenbauer. "It seems that in this vote success does not count as much as appearances."

"Keepers are in a difficult spot. People want to see goals, not the people stopping the goals."

Germany had been hoping for a clean sweep of awards after coach Joachim Loew won coach of the year award while VfL

Wolfsburg coach Ralf Kellermann was voted best coach in women's football.

Wolfsburg's Germany midfielder Nadine Kessler was voted female player of the year.

"I am a bit disappointed for Manuel," Loew told reporters. "Because at the World Cup Manuel showed a completely different goalkeeping game and that is something that has never happened before."

Neuer was voted goalkeeper of the year in 2014 after a string of outstanding performances at the World Cup, where he also ventured out of his box more often than others in the past.

But he did not even get support from all his Bayern teammates with Robert Lewandowski, the Poland striker, voting instead for the Portuguese.

"It was a mistake from me to vote for Ronaldo," Lewandowski told reporters. "Today I would vote for Manuel but I voted some time in August. I would vote differently today."

For the easy-going Neuer, however, the evening was a success even without the trophy.

"I am leaving this building with a big smile on my face. It was a winning day for me and it was a success just being in the top three," he said. "2014 was a year with a lot of success and it will forever stay in my memory."

Ruthless Soccerroos in last eight

AFP, Sydney



Ruthless Australia smashed four unanswered goals past Oman on Tuesday to reach the Asian Cup quarterfinals with room to spare and also ensure a berth for South Korea.

Goals from Matt McKay and Robbie Kruse and a Mark Milligan penalty put Australia 3-0 up at the break and cruising before substitute Tomi Juric completed the 4-0 rout.

The emphatic result, following Friday's 4-1 win over Kuwait, leaves no doubt about Australia's ability to win a first Asian Cup as

they size up the knock-out stages.

South Korea's 1-0 win over Kuwait earlier means they are also six points clear in Group A. The Taeguk Warriors face Australia on Saturday to decide who finishes top.

"I thought the players were fantastic tonight in terms of their commitment, but also they worked really, really hard," said Australia coach Ange Postecoglou.

"But also the quality of our football was outstanding I thought, right from the first minute against a tough opponent."

Australia changed three players from last week's win in Melbourne but any concerns about the outcome in Sydney vanished in a

first-half blitz.

The Soccerroos took time to settle at an expectant Stadium Australia and Raed Saleh nearly gave Oman a shock lead when his powerful drive was tipped away by goalkeeper Mathew Ryan.

But Australia were soon finding space down the left and after Tim Cahill's header into the net was chalked off for a debatable foul, the opener looked only a matter of time.

The breakthrough came from a corner, when slack Omani defending allowed Trent Sainsbury at the far post to knock down for McKay, who gratefully swept in from close range.

Just three minutes later, on the half-hour,

Kruse controlled Massimo Luongo's ball on his knee and steered his shot under the body of the diving Ali Al Habsi.

Australia had the ball in the net for a fifth time when Milligan buried Kruse's cross, but Japanese referee Ryuji Sato instead pointed to the spot for a foul on Cahill.

And Milligan put his frustration at the decision aside to coolly convert the spot-kick and put Australia 3-0 ahead and cruising at half-time.

Cahill came off for Juric after the break and the Western Sydney Wanderers striker slid in on Mathew Leckie's cross for Australia's fourth on 70 minutes.



Australia midfielder Mark Milligan (C) celebrates his goal with teammates during their Asian Cup encounter against Oman in Sydney yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Diego receives letter from Fidel!

REUTERS, Caracas

Fidel Castro sent a letter to Diego Maradona, Venezuelan-based TV reported in an interview with the Argentine soccer great on Monday, quashing rumours that the former Cuban leader had died.

The elder Castro had not been heard from nor seen in public since his brother Raul's historic U.S.-Cuba rapprochement last month, and the silence has re-ignited speculation about his health.

"Fidel is doing very well," Maradona told the regional Telesur station, as he held up the letter.

"Here's the signature ... I'm showing it to you so you can show it to the world."

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Ronaldo casts doubt on future

GOAL.COM

Cristiano Ronaldo says he is happy at Real Madrid and aims to win more titles at the Spanish side in 2015, but admits he does not know what the future holds.

Speaking ahead of the Fifa Ballon d'Or ceremony on Monday when he is expected to claim the prestigious prize for a third time, the Portuguese was asked if - at the age of almost 30 - he would be tempted to take on one last challenge before the end of his career.

"Nobody knows," he said. "Only God knows the future, but I'm very happy at Real Madrid. I signed a new deal one year ago, but in the future you never know."