

TV MONEY LURES HENRY AWAY FROM BELOVED GUNNERS

LONDON: France and Arsenal legend Thierry Henry ended his association with the English Premier League club yesterday preferring to focus on his burgeoning media career.

The 38-year-old former striker-part of the 1998 World Cup and Euro 2000 winning teams-could have coached the Gunners' under-18 side but declined the offer when Arsene Wenger told him he would have to give up his lucrative Sky Sports TV contract for which he is reportedly paid £4 million (\$5.2m, 4.7m euros) a year. Henry, Arsenal's all-time leading scorer with 174 goals in 254 appearances from 1999 to 2007, had

been working with Arsenal youth players as part of his UEFA A Licence course.

Another former Arsenal legend, Tony Adams, 49, will take the role with the under-18s. Adams's former central-defensive partner Steve Bould is Wenger's assistant manager while another ex-player, Freddie Ljungberg, will work with the under-16s.

Henry must now find a team to coach to complete his Pro Licence. Reviews of Henry's performances as a pundit for Sky have been largely critical, but critics agreed that he was far better on the BBC during Euro 2016.

Noted sports TV critic Giles Smith

said in The Times newspaper yesterday: "One puzzle we're nowhere nearer solving: how can the same Thierry Henry who is so open and engaging on the BBC be such a lump of wet wool on Sky Sports?" Meanwhile, Hull City boss Steve Bruce has said he is flattered to be linked with the vacant England manager's job, following the departure of Roy Hodgson.

Hodgson quit in the wake of England's humiliating exit from the European Championship at the hands of Iceland and Bruce is one of several managers who have been linked with the post by the British media.

"It's highly flattering and I'm honoured to be linked with it," Bruce, who led Hull back into the Premier League after one season in the Championship (second-tier), told the local media.

"Whether or not it goes any further than that... It's the pinnacle isn't it? To manage your country, there's no bigger job. It's all speculation. There's a lot of people who have written nice things and I'm grateful for that."

The names of United States manager Juergen Klinsmann and Sunderland boss Sam Allardyce are also doing the rounds for the job. Bruce said he had not been contacted by the English Football

Association and was focused on building a Hull squad capable of competing in the Premier League in the coming season. "With the players that we let go at the end of last season, and the two injuries we've subsequently picked up, we might now be looking at five or six new faces," he added. "We'd like to add to the squad quickly if we could, but when you have European Championships going on there hasn't been any really significant movement (in the transfer market) just yet. A lot of clubs are being patient and we have to do the same. "We have a good base of players here." — Agencies



SAINT-DENIS: This file photo taken on July 3, 2016 shows France's defender Samuel Umtiti controlling the ball during the Euro 2016 quarter-final football match between France and Iceland at the Stade de France in Saint-Denis, near Paris, on July 3, 2016. Barcelona have agreed a 25-million-euro move for France defender Samuel Umtiti from Lyon, the Spanish giants announced yesterday. — AFP

BARCA COMPLETE DEAL FOR LYON'S UMTITI

BARCELONA: Barcelona have completed the signing of France defender Samuel Umtiti from Lyon in a deal worth 25 million euros (\$27.7 million), the Spanish champions announced yesterday. Umtiti, 22, will pen a five-year contract with Barcelona which includes a buy-out clause of 60 million euros, the club said in a statement. Barcelona president Josep Maria Bartomeu confirmed last month that the two clubs had reached an agreement over the transfer while Umtiti was on international duty for France at Euro 2016.

The Cameroon-born centre-back made his France debut in the quarter-finals against Iceland and retained his place in the team for the next two matches, including Sunday's 1-0 defeat by Portugal in the final. Umtiti, who can also play at left-back, will be officially presented as a Barcelona player on Friday after undergoing a medical at the Camp Nou. He will compete for playing time with Gerard Pique, Javier Mascherano and France team-mate Jeremy Mathieu, whose injury prompted Didier Deschamps to call up Umtiti for the European Championship.

Umtiti, an under-20 World Cup winner in 2013, becomes Barca's second signing of the summer after the Catalan giants exercised a buy-back clause to re-sign midfielder Denis Suarez from Villarreal last week.

In Glasgow, Mark Warburton's success in steering Scottish giants Rangers back into the Premiership earned him a much improved three-year contract yesterday.

The 53-year-old Englishman-who took

over at Rangers last year after a successful stint at unfashionable English side Brentford-had his present contract, which had two years remaining on it, ripped up and replaced by a three-year deal. His assistant, former Rangers and Scotland defensive pillar, David Weir-who worked with him at Brentford-was also rewarded with a similarly improved offer.

"Our decision to reward Mark and David with significantly improved contracts was primarily driven by our recognition of their role in transforming the football department at all levels throughout the club and their desire to continue with that project in the seasons ahead," said Rangers managing director Stewart Robertson.

"We have sold more than 41,000 season tickets and, like everyone at the club, our supporters are looking forward to seeing the team compete in the top flight once again - both domestically and in Europe."

Warburton, who has forged a successful managerial career despite never playing in league football, said it was a privilege to be in such a prestigious job.

"I have said this many times since moving to Glasgow but it really is a huge honour and privilege to be manager of Rangers Football Club and I am thrilled to agree a new contract," said Warburton, who also guided Rangers to the Scottish Cup final last term after a sensational semi-final victory over bitter city rivals Celtic. "Our debut campaign in Scotland was certainly a positive one but we are all working tirelessly to deliver continued success for our fans." — Agencies

GERMANY'S LOEW TO STAY ON DESPITE EURO DISAPPOINTMENT

BERLIN: Germany's Joachim Loew said he would stay on to lead the World Cup winners to their title defence in Russia in 2018 despite an initial hesitation on whether to continue after a disappointing semi-final defeat to France last week at the Euro 2016.

Loew, who has coached Germany for 10 years and to five straight semi-final appearances at World Cups and Euros, said in a statement yesterday he planned to continue, ending some speculation that the 56-year-old might step down.

"Despite our disappointment, the team didn't disappoint," said Loew, who was Juergen Klinsmann's assistant coach for two years before taking over the reins in 2006.

"It was the youngest team in the tournament and I continue to see great potential," added Loew, referring to his team's average age of 25.4 years, which was next to England the youngest at the tournament. Italy had the oldest team with an average age of 29.4 years.

"I'm sure that they'll give us plenty of joy in the future and that's why I remain enthusiastic about continuing to work with these players and accompany their developments going to the 2018 World Cup in Russia."

Loew had triggered speculation that he might step down right after Germany lost to France 2-0 in the semi-final when he was asked about his future.

"I don't know," he told ZDF television just minutes after the final whistle. "It'll take a while (to make a decision)." Those non-committal comments prompted a wave of support for Loew and an opinion poll by the Emnid polling institute for Bild am Sonntag newspaper showed that 84 percent of Germans wanted the man they call "Jogi" (pronounced 'Yogi') to continue.

Also known as the "Bundestrainer", Loew has led his team to at least the semi-finals in every tournament they have played in since he took over after the 2006 World Cup, where Germany



AUGSBURG: This file photo taken on May 29, 2016 shows Germany's head coach Joachim Loew prior to the friendly football match between Germany and Slovakia in Augsburg, southern Germany. Loew confirmed yesterday that he will perform his contract with the German Football Federation (DFB) and stay as coach of the German national football team until the end of the Football World Cup to take place in the year 2018. — AFP

under Klinsmann also reached the semi-final before losing to Italy.

Loew also led Germany to the 2014 World Cup title-the country's fourth after 1954, 1974 and 1990. Loew's record stands at 137 matches with 90 wins and 23 defeats.

Germany's World Cup defence starts on

September 4 with a qualifying match against Norway. Loew is one of the longest-serving national team coaches anywhere but ranks only third in Germany after 10 years at the helm. Sepp Herberger coached the national side for 20 years and Helmut Schoen served in the role for 12 years. — Reuters

WEST HAM PIN £50M PRICE TAG ON PAYET

MARSEILLE: Dimitri Payet is worth not a penny less than 50 million pounds (\$65.3 million), West Ham United co-chairman David Gold has said, but even that might not be enough to prise the France midfielder away from the London club. Payet, who joined West Ham from Marseille in June last year, scored 12 goals in all competitions in his debut season in England and was instrumental in helping France reach the European Championship final, scoring three times. His performances for club and country have prompted speculation about a possible move to Chelsea, Manchester City or Paris St Germain, but Gold said West Ham would be reluctant sellers even if someone matched the huge fee.

"We wouldn't even listen to any offer under 50 million pounds and even then we need to keep our best players so we just don't welcome any offers at all for Dimitri," Gold told the BBC. "He's instrumental, he's important to us, the team is built round him and he's not for sale. He's settled in London with this family, the fans adore him and we're going to the Olympic Stadium."

"We've done everything we possibly could do. I'm hoping that will be enough (to keep him)."

Meanwhile, Paul Pogba may stay put at Juventus despite talks about the French midfielder's possible move to England or Spain, his agent Mino Raiola has said.

The 23-year-old Pogba, who played a pivotal role in France's run to the Euro 2016 final, has been strongly linked with a return to English Premier League club Manchester United with Champions League winners Real Madrid also eyeing him.

However, a fee touted to be around a world record 100 million pounds (\$130.65 million) could see Real priced out of a move for Pogba, according to British media reports.

"There is a lot of talk about Paul's future, but maybe he will not leave Juventus," Raiola told The Times.

"He is in no rush to leave, and Juventus do not want him to go. They want him to renew his contract. Paul is not desperate to move. We are very happy at Juventus and they are a club that want to keep their star players."

Pogba's contract at Juventus runs until 2019, while Raiola has worked closely with United during the close season as he wrapped up deals for his clients, midfielder Henrikh Mkhitaryan and striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic. — Reuters

ANCELOTTI PLANS TO BUILD ON GUARDIOLA'S FOUNDATIONS

MUNICH: New Bayern Munich manager Carlo Ancelotti has no plans to rip up the foundations laid by predecessor Pep Guardiola and says he will look to continue the club's tradition of attacking football when the season kicks off in August. The Italian has large boots to fill as Guardiola, who switched to English Premier League side Manchester City this month, won three straight Bundesliga titles during his tenure at the Allianz Arena. "I know very well that the style of Bayern Munich is to play attacking football and we want to play attacking football. I love to play attacking football," Ancelotti told reporters on Monday.

"I'm not here to make a revolution because the job that Guardiola did here was fantastic and I would like to follow his style. I don't think our style is going to change a lot compared to last year. The system will be more or less the same."

Despite the domestic dominance, Guardiola's three-year spell at Bayern was not deemed entirely successful having missed out on the Champions League title.

Ancelotti said it was impossible to predict whether he would do any better. "Of course everybody wants to win the Champions League, but only one team wins it," added Ancelotti, who is the only manager to have won the Champions League three times.

"I know that Bayern have a fantastic history in the Bundesliga and in the Champions League. The only thing that we cannot control is the result-if I could control that too I would be a magician, but I'm only a manager."

Having managed AC Milan, Paris St-Germain, Chelsea, Juventus and Real Madrid, Ancelotti said he had become accustomed to the pressure that comes with taking up a job with clubs targeting Champions League success.

"A lot of people ask about the pressure-I am used to it. I had the luck in my career of coaching top teams-all top teams who want to win, but honestly I don't feel the pressure because I'm used to it," the 57-year-old said.

Bayern kick off their title defence against Werder Bremen on Aug. 26. — Reuters



SEVILLA: New Sevilla's Argentinian midfielders Matias Kranevitter (R) and Joaquin Correa play with balls as they pose on the pitch during their official presentation at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan stadium in Sevilla yesterday. — AFP