



ONLOOKER: Mourinho's men leave for the airport

We will not turn away from China

THE two Manchester clubs will carry on visiting China for pre-season tours despite the shambles surrounding the cancellation of their derby game here last night.

Jose Mourinho and Pep Guardiola have voiced their frustration over various issues on the tour leading to fears both clubs would decide to go elsewhere in future summers.

But senior figures at both clubs were quick to confirm that China and the Far East region remain strategically vital to them in terms of fan base and commercial sponsors.

China has become a marketing battlefield and neither club want to concede territory.

In a hasty damage limitation exercise, both clubs issued apologies from their chief executives as well as star players following the cancellation of the match because of the state of the pitch in the Bird's Nest Stadium and the concern over injuries



From **Richard Tanner** in Beijing

just three weeks before the start of the Premier League season.

Ferran Soriano, City's chief executive, said: "We understand that this bad weather is beyond anyone's control, and that the rain has made it totally unsafe to play on this pitch."

United and City's appearance fees for the tour – believed to be about £3million each – will not be affected by the cancellation.

Even though United are expected to go to the USA next summer, Ed Woodward, the club's executive vice-chairman, promised Chinese fans they will be back.

"We know our fans in China will, like the players and staff, be saddened by the cancellation of the match," he said. "But I am sure they appreciate that player safety has to be the top priority."

"I am also sure we will return to the Bird's Nest to give them the chance to see the team in action."

China's importance to City was underlined when their Abu Dhabi owner Sheikh Mansour sold a 13 per cent stake in the club to China Media Group last season.

United flew home last night to prepare for their next friendly against Turkish club Galatasaray in Gothenburg on Saturday.

City have remained in China and fly to Shenzhen in the south of the country for Thursday's game against Borussia Dortmund which, the organisers say, is not in any danger.

ONWAYBACK: But Luke Shaw missed out on meeting City



NEIL SQUIRES

reports

SAM ALLARDYCE went for smart casual on his first day as the England manager yesterday. Brown brogues with red tongue, dark suit open at the neck and crisp white shirt underneath.

Modern yet stylish – a good look when seeking to make the right initial impression.

It was only when he reached out his arms to stress a point he was making that something odd became apparent – blue lettering on the cuffs of the shirt. Closer inspection showed an 'S' and an 'A' stitched in.

What to make of a man whose shirts have his own initials embroidered upon them?

There was no questioning Allardyce's pride in landing the England job yesterday.

It seeped from every pore.

To reach the top of such a competitive profession is a commendable achievement for a dyslexic kid raised on a Dudley council estate.

There was also, though, a striking degree of self-regard.

"I think I fit the chair," he said, without the slightest scintilla of self-doubt at the FA's St George's Park base yesterday.

He has his own swivelling recliner already, having evicted FA technical director Dan Ashworth from his office on day one in the job. There are plenty of critics who believe he is fortunate to have landed the post. Some were asking him the questions yesterday.

"I've dreamed about this job," said Allardyce. "I am a lucky man because nearly every dream I've had I have fulfilled, so I am exceptionally lucky. Or am I exceptionally good? You'll decide that along the way."

His own opinion was obvious through his response to a question on why he had not been judged good enough to be made manager when he applied 10 years ago. He said: "I was good enough so I don't know."

The self-justification continued with a boast about managing more clubs in the

Pride amid prejudice is Big Sam's strong suit



NEW BOSS: Allardyce meets staff at the FA's base

Premier League than anyone else – curious crowing given the number of sackings it implies.

If Brian Clough was Old Big 'Ed, Allardyce could rightly be described as the New Big 'Ed. Allardyce would no doubt enjoy

the comparison and think it just that he be mentioned alongside a man who won the league and European Cup with Nottingham Forest.

Never mind that Allardyce's trophy cupboard resembles



'I am exceptionally lucky. Or I'm exceptionally good'

Old Mother Hubbard's – he has never won a domestic trophy and never even coached in the Champions League.

In one sense, Allardyce's bountiful self-assurance is good news for England. Self-doubt is highly contagious in a team environment and if a leader is suffering from it, his team are doomed from the start.

England's players need a figure capable of rebuilding their shattered morale after their Iceland checkout at the Euros and he will not fail on that front.

Bluster will only take a manager so far, however.

Allardyce's assumption is that his personality and

'Wayne still has a massive part

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got my feet under the table," said Allardyce of the captaincy.

"I have got to leave that until we reach all the players and get the coaching staff together and plan for the internationals in September

"Will I wait until I meet the players? I think so. Put it this way – I still think Wayne Rooney has a massive part to play in the England side. I don't think there is any doubt about that." Last week

Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho gave the 30-year-old a cast-iron guarantee that he retains the role at club level but Allardyce has left him with a nervous wait.

And Allardyce would also not say whether he thinks Rooney, right, is better in midfield or as a striker, and plans to follow Mourinho's lead on how he is deployed.

"What's Rooney's best position? I'm not saying.

I think Jose will determine that," said Allardyce.

"Because if Jose says he is not going to play him in centre-midfield and he's playing up front

and scoring goals for Manchester

United, then it would be pointless me bringing him into England and playing him in centre-midfield."

However, Allardyce does acknowledge that he will find himself at loggerheads with

Premier League managers now he has crossed over from club to international management.

He was asked, in particular, about his sometimes fractious relationship with Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger and accepts there are bound to be clashes with club bosses.

He said: "The demands on Premier League managers and the demand on me as England manager is bound to cause some conflict down the line

because the pressures are far greater than ever before.

"They are bound to want to protect their players and that is what I have to try to overcome with a little bit of give and take, hopefully."

Allardyce, who consulted his wife Lynn about whether to take on a job which comes with such intense scrutiny before he signed a two-year contract, has also vowed to make the England camp a "fun" place to be. "We don't have to make it too

Pictures: MARTIN RICKETT and OLI SCARFF



THE BIG TIME: Sam Allardyce poses with fans and, below, signs a wall at St George's Park



attention to detail will win them over. As well as his emphasis on cutting-edge sports science, he is not averse to some old-school fun – he once asked his Bolton players to race toilets around a field in the Lake District.

"I'm pretty all right to get on with, you know? I'm not that bad," he said. "I want the players to feel comfortable in my presence. I have to earn their respect and ultimately I can do that pretty quickly.

"It's the greatest challenge I've ever had and I look forward to it so much, even with all the pitfalls that there might be. It's my time, my chance and I've waited a long time for it. At 15,

I never thought when I left school I'd be sat here."

If he had followed in his father's footsteps, he would have ended up as a policeman rather than a football manager and there is something of the lawman about his manner. At 61, he looks as if he is capable of handling himself.

The five security men deployed at St George's Park for his unveiling were entirely

unnecessary. If England are to be built in the image of their new boss, Slovakia – their first opponents – had better invest in helmets and padding.

He knows he carries baggage over the bull-in-a-china-shop football his teams have played – his detractors would have you believe he would have pulled the blind down rather than watch the visiting Barcelona side train at St George's Park

yesterday – but while he acknowledges he is a "pragmatic" manager, he says he will use the talent available.

"What tactics will we use? There won't be massive changes. There will be subtle changes," he said.

Subtle Sam? That one will never stick but there will be other, less generous sobriquets when the inevitable banana-skin games arrive.

"I'm tough enough to take it, so bring it on," he said.

What would he call himself? He laughs. "I don't call myself anything. I'm Sam Allardyce, manager of England."

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'It's the greatest challenge I've ever had. It's my time'

to play in the side'

monotonous when we are actually together," he said.

"My style is very much in terms of man-management and having a good relationship with the players. Not being distant. That's not my style. I like to be in among the banter."

Martin Glenn, the FA's chief executive, said that Allardyce was the only candidate who was offered the England job and that the appointment had received a ringing endorsement from Sir

Alex Ferguson. "The single biggest [thing Ferguson said] was he's a winner. He's got the edge.

"Winners can sometimes be a bit awkward. That was his phrase. He's a winner," said Glenn.

Sammy Lee, Allardyce's former assistant at Bolton, will be part of his back-room staff while Glenn also confirmed that the FA are "in discussions" with Bayern Munich assistant coach Paul Clement over a part-time role.



RESERVOIR JOBS: England have placed great store in Allardyce, Ashworth, left, and Glenn, right

Conte tries to tempt Tevez

CHELSEA have made a surprise move for Carlos Tevez, as their search for a new striker widened last night.

New Chelsea boss Antonio Conte knows him well from his two seasons at Juventus, when Tevez scored 50 goals in 95 outings, helping the club to two Serie A titles and a Champions League final.

Tevez's future at Boca Juniors is in doubt, and Conte, growing frustrated at the delays in signing £60million-rated striker Alvaro Morata from Real Madrid, was prepared to offer the ex-Manchester United and City star a one-year deal. But Tevez, 32, above, said: "I'm fine at

By **Tony Banks** in Los Angeles

Boca. It is true, Chelsea and Napoli want me, but I repeat what I said before. My desire is to stay with Boca until I retire."

Atletico Madrid are still putting pressure on Chelsea to sell striker Diego Costa, but Conte's club are resisting.



Chelsea's hopes of signing Napoli centre-back

Kalidou Koulibaly received a big boost as his agent, Bruno Satin, said: "We discussed a contract renewal, however we are not at the point of reaching an agreement.

"The desire of the player is to leave the club, not renew.

WALES midfielder Joe Allen last night completed a £13million, five-year move to Stoke.

Allen, right, leaves Liverpool after four years to seek regular first-team football. He was interested in staying beyond the year left on his contract, but could not get assurances on game-time. Stoke have also signed Egypt's Ramadan Sobhi, 19, from Al Ahly, for a fee which could rise to £5m.



Bruce could quit the game

STEVE BRUCE is considering whether to quit football after his shock exit from Hull.

Despite being in the running for the England job last week, Bruce, inset, is weighing up his future in the wake of leaving the Tigers.

And that could see him bring the curtain down on four decades in the game and almost 20 years in a coaching career, stretching towards 1,000 games and spanning spells in charge at seven clubs.

But the lure of taking a back seat to spend more time with his wife Janet at the couple's

property in Portugal is a very real one. That, coupled with occasional stints as a TV pundit, is a way of life that would appeal to the former Manchester United skipper.

Bruce ended a roller-coaster four years at Hull after the breakdown of his relationship with club supremo Ehab Allam. In an open letter to fans, he wrote: "My biggest regret is having to walk away from Hull, but it was a decision I had to make for the sake of the club."



JASON MELLOR

WEST HAM'S Aaron Cresswell will miss a big chunk of the season after being ruled out for up to four months with a knee injury. The 26-year-old left-back, left, one of the Hammers' most consistent performers last term, suffered ligament damage in a pre-season friendly win over Karlsruhe in Austria on Saturday. Cresswell will see a specialist next week to see if he requires surgery.

● LIVERPOOL have been fined 16,000 euros (£13,400) and Sevilla 17,000 euros (£14,200) by UEFA following crowd trouble at May's Europa League final in Basle.

Wiggins backs golden Froome

By Rob Maul

SIR BRADLEY WIGGINS yesterday endorsed Tour de France winner Chris Froome to become Olympic champion in Rio on Saturday week.

Froome secured a third Tour de France crown on Sunday in Paris but rather than put his feet up and savour the glory, he is now setting his sights on the task of winning both the men's road race and individual time trial in Rio.

Wiggins famously won the Tour in 2012 – the first British rider to do so – and then 10 days later secured Olympic gold on the streets of London. And while he accepts Froome has a more challenging proposition on his hands – specifically

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BIG SPLASH: Rebecca Adlington poses with a giant sculpture of herself in Hyde Park as part of an Olympics campaign



SAM PLAYS IT HIS WAY

Boss chops match and leaves Rooney nervous

By Timothy Abraham

SAM ALLARDYCE laid down the law on his first day as England manager when he scrapped his opening match – and left Wayne Rooney sweating over the captaincy.

The Football Association had lined up a fixture against Croatia at Wembley on September 1, three days before the World Cup qualifier away to Slovakia.

But Allardyce has shelved those plans and will instead work with his players at their St George's Park training base before going straight in at the deep end in Trnava.

Allardyce has also refused to give Rooney assurances over whether he will keep the armband.

Rooney has spoken of his desire to continue as Three Lions skipper, despite criticism following England's disastrous Euro 2016 campaign.

"I don't want to put myself out in the open just yet. It's a decision that I'll make once I've

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BIG CALLS: Allardyce has already shown he's in charge

Hit and miss for England

By Gideon Brooks

ALASTAIR COOK said Ben Stokes will be "a big miss" after the all-rounder limped out of contention for the third Test at Edgbaston with a calf muscle tear.

England completed a 330-run victory over Pakistan to level the Investec Series 1-1 with two to play.

And while England remain hopeful the injury to Stokes is not as bad as it first appeared when he pulled up, they appear to have already ruled him out of

Birmingham.

Cook, left, said he was confident England can win next week's Test without him.

But he said:

"Ben is a tough nut and a true athlete – a player who plays on that edge, never taking a backward step and one who drags people with him. He is a big miss.

"Ben will have an MRI scan and hopefully the scan will be a good one but he said he felt something go and it would be a big risk to play him at Edgbaston."

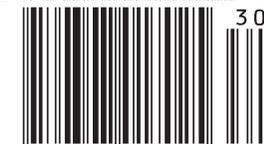
Cook was pleased with a comprehensive victory that

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