



Guardiola in a rush to history

Third-year coach would be first to lead Barcelona to 12 titles with victory over FC Porto on Friday

PARIS — Josep Guardiola can become the most decorated coach in Barcelona's history when the reigning European champions take on FC Porto in Friday's UEFA Super Cup showpiece in Monaco.

Guardiola, 40, has needed just three years in charge of the club he represented with such distinction as a player to equal Johann Cruyff's record tally of 11 titles at the Camp Nou.

SOCCER

It is a remarkable statistic, and such is the Catalans' dominance of the European game right now that it would be a huge surprise if Guardiola was not celebrating title number 12 come Friday night at the Stade Louis II.

Of course, Barca has already won silverware this season, beating Real Madrid 5-4 on aggregate after two pulsating legs to claim the Spanish Super Cup.

The Spanish domestic season was due to begin last weekend until a strike by the players' union wiped out the entire opening round of fixtures, but the intensity of their double-header with Jose Mourinho's side helped the Catalans get into shape.

They were in fine form on Monday, hammering Napoli 5-0 in the annual Joan Gamper Trophy at the Camp Nou.

Now they head to the principality looking for a repeat of their Super Cup triumph in 2009, when Pedro scored the only goal of the game in extra-time to beat Shakhtar Donetsk.

Barca is also hoping to win the trophy for Spain for the third year running, after Atletico Madrid saw off Inter Milan 2-0 last year.

However, while Barcelona's attacking options appear stronger than ever after the signings of Cesc Fabregas and Alexis Sanchez, Guardiola's decision not to bolster his defence may present a problem with Carles Puyol and Gerard Pique having been ruled out for the next three weeks.

Puyol has a knee problem, while Pique suffered a calf injury in training on Tuesday, meaning Javier Mascherano should partner former Monaco man Eric Abidal at the heart of Barca's back four.

Porto also enjoyed a memorable 2010-11 campaign, in which they beat domestic rivals Braga to win the Europa League in Dublin, and completed a league and cup double at home.

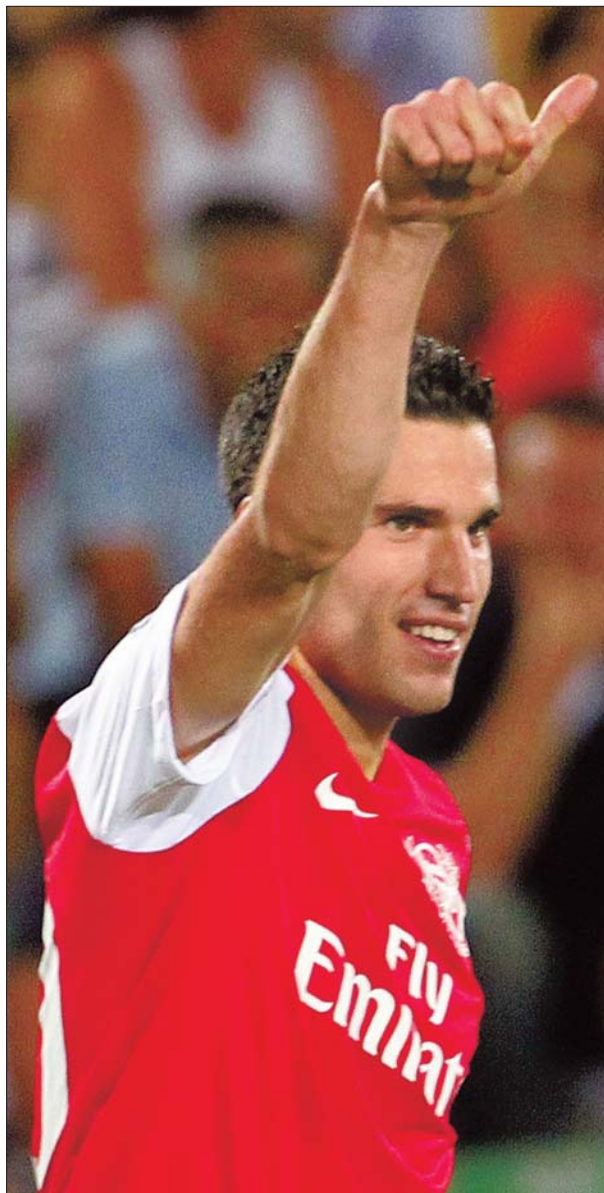
Since then, coach Andre Villas-Boas has been lured away to Chelsea, while Colombian striker Radamel Falcao — who scored 17 goals in the Dragons' triumphant Europa League run — has been sold to Atletico Madrid along with midfielder Ruben Micael for a combined fee that could reach an astonishing 52 million euros (\$75m).

Uruguay full-back Alvaro Pereira could be on his way out too, with Villas-Boas keen to take him to Chelsea.

With his future at the Estadio do Dragao in doubt, Pereira is not with the squad, but he and Falcao aside, the other nine men who started in May's Europa League final were named by new coach Vitor Pereira.

Pereira, 43, was Villas-Boas' assistant last season, but this is his first season as a coach at the top level.

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GIORGIO BENVENUTI / REUTERS

Arsenal's Robin van Persie celebrates after scoring against Udinese during their Champions League second round qualifier match on Wednesday.

Arsenal can finally breathe easy after win

UDINESE, Italy — Arsenal will compete in the Champions League for the 14th consecutive season after its beleaguered side came from behind to record a brave 2-1 win at Udinese on Wednesday.

Leading 1-0 from the first leg of the **SOCCER** playoff tie, Arsenal was menaced throughout by the threat of an elimination that would have been unthinkable in both sporting and financial terms.

In the 39th minute, Udinese's irrepressible talisman Antonio di Natale guided a header inside the right-hand post that levelled the tie on aggregate and took the Italians to within a goal of the group phase.

Arsenal captain Robin van Persie equalized 10 minutes into the second half, but the host was handed a chance to re-establish its advantage shortly afterwards when referee Olegario Benquerencia awarded a penalty against Thomas Vermaelen for handball.

Wojciech Szczesny excelled himself in the face of Di Natale's spot-kick, however, plunging to his right and somehow palming the ball over the crossbar despite the power and precision behind the Italian's rising shot.

The shock of spurning such an opportunity drew the host's sting and Theo Walcott put Arsenal out of sight in the 69th minute by racing into the box and cool-

ly beating goalkeeper Samir Handanovic at his near post.

"We showed that, under pressure, we can respond with football and remain calm and composed on the ball and play like we know how to play," Arsenal coach Arsene Wenger told ITV.

"There are many questions around our club. If we'd gone out tonight it would have been worse for the team to play in a serene way. "It was important tonight. Not financially, as some people have said, but more because we want to play at the top level."

On the day that Samir Nasri completed his move from Arsenal to Manchester City — and just nine days after Cesc Fabregas returned to Barcelona — it was a timely victory for Wenger, whose methods had been called into question with greater zeal than ever before as his squad collapsed around him.

His starting line-up contained five players aged 21 or under and two 19-year-old Champions League debutants in the shape of right-back Carl Jenkinson and holding midfielder Emmanuel Frimpong.

Frimpong was replaced by Tomas Rosicky at half-time but this remained a stirring performance by a young team scarred by the trauma of recent departures and bereft of Jack Wilshere, Laurent Koscielny, Kieran Gibbs, Abou Diaby and Nicklas Bendtner due to injury.

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winespecial

Nation's first 'history-themed' wine investment

By WANG QIAN AND JU CHUANJIANG

The taste for fine wines among Chinese investors may find a new outlet as Changyu Pioneer Wine Co Ltd launches the country's first history-themed wine investment product.

One of China's top wine producers, Changyu has teamed with the Bank of China (BOC) and Zhonghai Trust Co Ltd to issue a new financial product backed by Century Cellar Ping Zhong Li Quan wine.

The vintage is named after an inscription by Sun Yat-sen, founder of China's Kuomintang party.

The wine-based financial instrument, offered only to VIP clients of BOC, has a 1.08 million yuan (\$168,804) minimum investment that is locked in for 18 months.

After a year and a half investors can sell the financial instrument at a promised annual return of 7 percent — twice the current benchmark one-year bank deposit rate of 3.5 percent — or take possession of the wine itself.



A tasting was held in the underground cellar at Changyu on Aug 21 to promote its new wine investment product.

"Although the price of the product is not cheap, it is very popular among our clients, Jing Li, head of BOC's investment department for VIP clients, told China Daily three days after the product's release on Aug 21.

"Now, almost all of the initial release has been subscribed."

Encouraged, Changyu plans to issue another Century Cellar wine product with a lower

minimum investment to a wider spectrum of investors.

With real estate investment trusts cooling after the government moved to dampen once-buoyant property markets, the wine product is drawing investors with the prospect of decent returns.

"Most of the buyers are wine lovers. Despite the decent returns, some of them do not intend to sell the product, but get the wine for collecting," said Jing.

120 years old

Almost 120 years ago, overseas businessman Chinese Zhang Bishi established Changyu wine company in Yantai, a coastal city in Shandong province. During the revolution against the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), Zhang donated money to Sun Yat-sen several times to support his campaigns.

On Aug 21, 1912, Sun visited the Changyu Grand Cellar as he traveled through Yantai. After tasting a glass of

fine wine, he was impressed by its mellow flavor and offered the inscription "Ping Zhong Li Quan", which can be traced to the *Li Ji* — or the Book of Rites — that praises Zhang's efforts in supporting revolution and depicts the wine as sweet manna from heaven.

It is the only time Sun wrote an inscription for an enterprise in his life. The original writing is rated as a national first-level cultural relic and is now at the Yantai Museum.

Changyu issued the product in honor of the 100th anniversary of Sun's inscription and the 120th anniversary of the founding of the company that will be celebrated next year.

Strict standards

As a high-profile vintage, the Changyu Century Cellar dry wine has strict standards in both grapes and production. A 20-hectare vineyard in Yantai — the only international vine and wine city in Asia — grows grapes for the wine.

To improve the quality of the



Jean Pierre, a sommelier adviser to Changyu company, decants a bottle of red wine.

grapes, the vines, all over 25 years old, are only allowed to produce a maximum of 150 tons of premium grapes, just enough for 60,000 bottles of top-level wine annually.

Grapes are picked up by hand and sent to fermentation tanks within an hour. The wine then is put in the Century Cellar to age for eight years.

Every bottle of Century Cellar wine is identified with a code on the label and the harvest year.

"Only with strict standards can make wines of high quality. The limited edition creates value and its price keeps rising annually," said Li Jiming, chief engineer of Changyu Pioneer Wine Co Ltd.

Voices from experts

A wine tasting was held for experts from both home and abroad in Changyu's underground cellar on Aug 21 to promote a newly released dry red wine.

"I am very excited to be able to drink this wine. It is a

rare fine wine and proves that Changyu is capable of rivaling any other wines of foreign bands," said Zhu Jiayi, director of China's wine and spirits quality supervision and inspection center.

"The wine has a good taste with heavy fruity flavor. The tannin is balanced. The after-taste is like jam. It has a unique local flavor which is quite different from wines produced in other areas," said Duan Changqing, director of grape and wine research center at the China Agricultural University.

Huang Yali, a wine expert from Hong Kong, was also fascinated by the wine and said it has a high collection value since it will become much smoother and taste better after maturing for 10 to 20 years.

With its top quality, Changyu's wine is frequently served at state banquets and international summits, including the welcoming banquet for US President Obama's visit to China in

2009 and the opening ceremonies of the World Expo held in Shanghai last year.

The Changyu wine financial product is not the only new venture that could boost Chinese wine purchases. China will launch its first wine investment fund, the Dinghong Fund, in September, according to Xinhua News Agency.

It plans to raise 1 billion yuan (\$156.5 million) and will invest in vintages from Bordeaux and Burgundy.

Industry insiders said Chinese wine-based investment products are beginning to take off as the wine market has boomed in recent years. It not only shows a rising taste for the good life, but offers investors a new protection from inflation.

"Changyu's new product is a good choice for investors and features decent collection value, with top-quality wine, limited production and a special historic theme," said Zhou Hongjiang, Changyu general manager.



JU CHUANJIANG / CHINA DAILY

Built in 1905, the underground cellar at Changyu company is only one in Asia more than 100 years old.