

Chelsea rocked by Drogba outburst

By Alex Hayes and John Ley

Didier Drogba last night revealed he is determined to leave Chelsea because of the brutal manner of Jose Mourinho's departure and accused several of his teammates of "deception". "Something is broken at Chelsea," he said. "Broken

The Ivory Coast striker also launched a stinging attack on Roman Abramovich, the Chelsea owner, for sacking Mourinho so early in the season and admits "the damage to team morale is immeasurable".

Chelsea immediately issued a terse statement last night insisting that the striker, who joined the club for £25 million from Marseille in July 2004, would have to see out his contract.

"Didier Drogba signed a new four-year contract last year," the club said. "As a top professional we are sure Didier is committed to Chelsea and intends to honour that contract."

Drogba, however, insisted that his decision is irrevocable even though he has been summoned to the club today to explain his comments to Avram Grant, Chelsea's new manager.

"We now know exactly what happened [to Mourinho, who left Chelsea on Sept 20, reportedly by mutual consent] and also who caused Jose's departure," said Drogba. "During the days that immediately followed I found it hard to look certain players in the eye without getting angry."

The 29-year-old striker said he now felt like "an orphan who has lost his spiritual father". "Certain things were done that went against everything that this group had stood for before," he added. "I can understand that some players wanted to see the coach get sacked because they hoped to play a little more under a new manager. But some of the behaviour in this case went well beyond the classic scenario. Things went much too far."

"It is perhaps too strong to talk of treasons, but these were real human deceptions. And I can now understand much better why the coach, who was very close to many of his players, told us when he left, 'I want you to know that I am very happy to be leaving this place.'"

Drogba revealed that he was informed of Mourinho's departure by the Portuguese himself during a phone call in which he was told exactly why the divorce occurred. He refused to reveal the details of that conversation, but rebuked Abramovich for the head coach's departure so early in the Premier League season.

"When you give your backing to a coach [as the Chelsea board did at the end of last season], you have to then give him until December unless there is a major crisis," Drogba said. "But it seems that Abramovich has since altered his philosophy."

Since arriving at Stamford Bridge just over three years ago, Drogba has gradually won over his critics and last season he was the first Chelsea player to score 30 goals in a campaign since Kerry Dixon in the 1980s and almost single-handedly dragged the club to the FA and League Cup double with winning goals in the finals against Manchester United and Arsenal.

But he now says that his future lies elsewhere. "I have got to the point where I feel that I have nothing left to prove here in England," he said. "I need to leave and go taste new experiences. It took me a while to like Chelsea and I feel that the time is right to go elsewhere."

Few clubs, however, would be interested in taking the player in January's transfer window. Drogba will be involved with the Ivory Coast in the African Cup of Nations, which begins on Jan 20 and finishes on Feb 10. As he will have to leave for international duty possibly a fortnight before the tournament begins, and as his country are one of the favourites, the striker can expect to be missing for anything up to six weeks.

Another factor which suggests he will not leave until next summer at the earliest is the fact that he has already played in this season's Champions League for Chelsea, ruling him out of the competition if he was to move to one of the bigger clubs in Spain or Italy.

Drogba, though, remains undeterred and named Barcelona, Real Madrid, AC Milan and Inter Milan as his preferred destinations before saying that he is so desperate to leave that he would even consider a return to Marseille.

"As soon as I arrived at Chelsea I struggled because it was never my choice to come here," he confessed. "I've always had strange relations with the club. Right from the first day, I wanted to leave and then again every summer. I've done what is right for the club until now, but the time has come for me to think about myself and put my interests first."

He added that even the mooted signings of Ronaldinho, from Barcelona, and Kaka, from AC Milan, would not make him go back on his decision to leave Stamford Bridge.

"I know that Ronaldinho and Kaka are linked to come next season but even that won't change my mind," he said. -The Telegraph.uk

Drogba: Jose was betrayed



By Andrew Dillon

DIDIER DROGBA has lifted the lid on Jose Mourinho's shock exit from Chelsea and how the boss was betrayed.

And the Blues striker insists only one man is to blame for forcing him to follow the Special One out of Stamford Bridge — owner Roman Abramovich.

Drogba said: "I learned that the manager was going when he told me personally — before the club made it official.

"It was a shock because I literally did not believe it could happen to a guy like him.

"When Mourinho went to say goodbye for the last time in the dressing room it only lasted five minutes but it was an immensely strong moment and very moving.

"To watch him empty his locker so quickly and with such little fuss was terrible.

"Some around me were crying. It's a shame if you are sensitive. He kissed us, one by one — except a few!

"Then he said 'I wish you good luck to you and to your families and I thank you all. Even those who betrayed me'.

"Mourinho didn't stay a second longer after that because I think he would have burst into tears.

"Then it was like fireworks in the dressing room.

"I really feared that everything was going to explode.

"Finally a sense of resignation sunk over us and my initial feeling, just like a lot of players I think, was to feel alone.

"It was almost like being an orphan after the depar-

ture of a father.

"Over the following days I struggled to look at some people without getting angry.

"Things went too far. In training, during those days, you could see some players were making basic errors, forgetting the basics of football.

"Thankfully that effect didn't last too long.

"My opinion is that results were only an excuse for getting rid of him. Perhaps his honesty and his way of saying what he thinks were not appreciated by every-

one at the club.

"Mourinho explained to me what had happened in the few weeks prior to his departure and I understood why he went.

"I prefer not to share that, I just want to say that I have been really badly surprised by some people.

"I understand now what Mourinho meant when he told me 'Know that I am happy to leave this place'.

Now furious Drog blames Abramovich for crushing his own Blues dream.

It was Abramovich who signed the £24million cheque which took Drogba to Chelsea three years ago and pays him a whopping £100,000 a week.

But Drogba, 29, rapped: "Sacking Mourinho has done a lot of harm to the squad.

"I still don't know why we changed manager after just a month of competition.

There was nothing alarming.

"If the will to sack him existed, then why not do it pre-season?"

"If you trust a guy to start the season, then apart from a total catastrophe he has to get until December at least.

"But apparently Abramovich changed his philosophy.

"We players are only employees and it was out of our hands.

"I took the whole thing badly and perhaps I put too much sentiment in my relationship with the coach."

Drogba was the Premiership's top scorer last season with 20 goals and flourished under Mourinho to become one of Europe's most feared attackers.

But he cried when Mourinho left last month and feels he cannot produce the goods for new boss Avram Grant.

Drogba added: "The fire in me has gone. I need to play for a club where I am willing to break a leg in search of victory and I need to play for a club which makes me dream.

"Winning the Champions League makes me dream and I thought that staying at Chelsea for what I knew would be Mourinho's last season was my best chance of achieving this.

"When the manager left he quickly said that he would like to work with me again but in such deals nothing is simple. He knows that I dream of the Spanish and the Italian league.

"I must win either La Liga or Serie A and there are, perhaps, only five clubs in the world that make me dream.

"They are Barcelona,

Real Madrid, Inter, AC Milan and Marseille. There are not 50 clubs which can inspire my passion and my hunger to win but these ones do.

"I've been so angry and so disappointed with what happened to Mourinho that I truly thought of leaving in this winter market.

"As for leaving it's a decision I won't change, even if people tell me that Ronaldinho and Kaka are on their way in the summer.

"So I've decided I'll stay until next summer.

"I will do everything to defend my shirt loyally until the end of the season.

"I've had a strange relationship with Chelsea since my first day. Almost since that day I've wanted to leave.

"But despite this I've stayed and they are the most beautiful years of my career.

"I've wondered if this club was right for me and it took me a long time to love Chelsea.

"In the past I have never been so clear in my wish to leave. But today I really know firmly and clearly what I want.

"Experience shows that it's no good for a club to try to keep a player against his will.

"I hope I'll be able to part company with the club in a correct way.

"I acknowledge that this is a club where I was greatly helped to grow up.

"I hope people won't be too angry with me because, in the end, I'm thinking of myself."