

# Carlo Ancelotti the latest to José Mourinho's shoes hard

## Chelsea's Italian manager cut a helpless figure as his side tumbled in the Champions League



While José Mourinho prowled his technical area, urging and cajoling his Internazionale players, five yards away Carlo Ancelotti stood helplessly as Chelsea's 2010 Champions League ambitions evaporated. That image will live long in the memory, containing all the confusions and misroutings that have hindered progress at Stamford Bridge since Mourinho was sent on his way in September 2007, only a handful of games into a new season.

In the glare of Inter's triumph on Tuesday night it is easy to forget that Mourinho's last European game in charge at Stamford Bridge was a drab 1-1 draw with Rosenborg of Norway in front of a restless crowd of 24,973. Having lost the Community Shield on penalties to Manchester United, the Portuguese coach's record in the opening eight matches that season was three wins, three draws and two defeats. And the backstage mood music had been growing more discordant for a year.

But as Roman Abramovich walked across the pitch at the conclusion of this latest catastrophe, he must have been asking himself some awkward questions about his subsequent decisions. Avram Grant, Mourinho's replacement, was a widely derided figure whose success in taking the club to their first Champions League final was generally ascribed to the work done under his predecessor. Luiz Felipe Scolari, despite a more promising CV, never got to grips with the demands of players at a top Premier League club.

And now Ancelotti, in theory the best qualified manager of all the five (including Claudio Ranieri) employed on a permanent basis by Abramovich, appears to stand revealed as not up to the job of realising the owner's ambition to dominate Europe.

Mourinho's performance on Tuesday could hardly have been better calculated to show up Ancelotti's deficiencies. The Portuguese was at his most pertinently proactive, ensuring that the formation he devised in order to exploit Chelsea's current defensive weaknesses and nullify their attacking threat was maintained in perfect working order throughout the match. Inter scored almost immediately after his first substitution – Dejan Stankovic for Goran Pandev in the 75th minute – and his two remaining switches were made purely to use up time, in the 85th and 92nd minutes. Ancelotti, by contrast, started off with a strategy that his players were unable to execute and subsequently appeared powerless to alter the shape or the course of the evening.

The Italian coach's one big intervention, the replacement of Michael Ballack by Joe Cole in the 62nd minute, misfired badly. Cole flitted and fluttered, incapable of influencing the match. He looked a player hamstrung by his own desire to impress a manager whose failure to restore him to a starting place after an eight-month injury lay-off, along with the club's reluctance to discuss a new contract, must have undermined his confidence.

Cole's future now seems likely to lie away from Stamford Bridge – just as Wesley Sneijder's lay away from the Bernabéu stadium at the end of last season, when Real Madrid restocked their pool of superstars and he was deemed surplus to requirements. Yet Sneijder has proved to be the buy of the season, his arrival the most significant of a group – including those of Lúcio, Samuel Eto'o, Diego Milito and Thiago Motta – that transformed Internazionale from perennial underachievers in Europe into genuine Champions League contenders.

As for Ancelotti, a secure future at Chelsea, with whom he accepted a three-year contract worth £9m last summer, surely depends on his ability to emulate Mourinho by winning the Premier League. Even if he manages to fend off the challenge of Manchester United and Arsenal, it is hard, however, to envision him taking the initiative to rejuvenate the side in a way that certainly began to look necessary as Cole and his colleagues struggled to make an impression on Inter.

During Ancelotti's seven years with Milan he was not responsible for player recruitment and so can hardly be given the credit for the arrival of two genuine prodigies during that era, Kaká and Pato. He was good with the club's many battle-hardened veterans but it says something about his approach that the player he tried hardest to take with him from San Siro to Stamford Bridge was Andrea Pirlo. He was willing to offer \$12m (£8m) and Claudio Pizarro to bring a

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