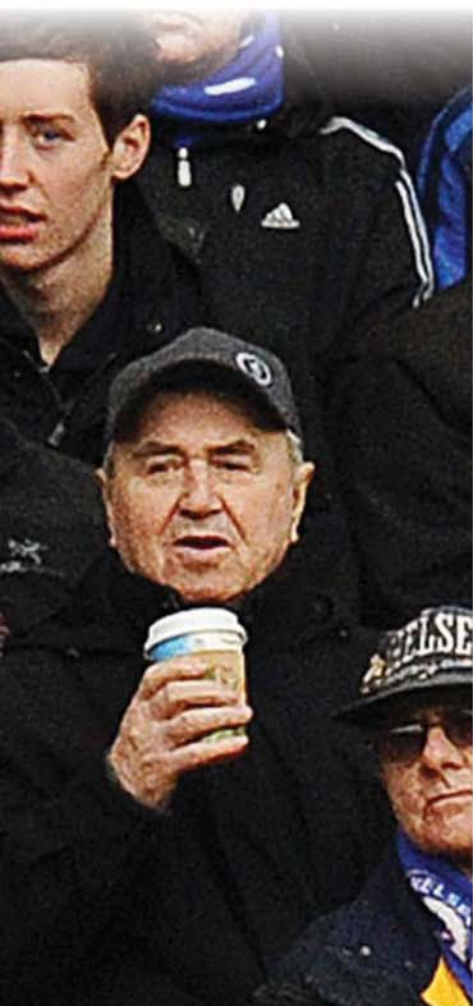


to find
l to fill
umbled out of



ld playmaker into a midfield already containing
ar-old Michael Ballack, the 31-year-old Frank Lam-
the 32-year-old Deco.
w that big tournaments are usually won by squads
ndowed with experience. It should have escaped
attention, however, that Chelsea are out of this
Champions League largely thanks to the efforts of
aman Wesley Sneijder who plays with all the fresh-
s 25 years.
t night ended with a squalid little scene at the
Stamford Bridge, a reminder of the way Chelsea's
ff the pitch may have affected their season. John
h his wife sitting beside him, peered through an
orm of camera flashes while trying to manoeuvre
e Rover through a tussling pack of paparazzi and
guards. Combined with the injuries to José Bos-
d Ashley Cole, Terry's marital problems can hardly
ed to maintain the stability of a defence that, dur-
ub's consecutive title-winning seasons, was the
on of the team's resilience.
up being patronised by José Mourinho must be
mare of all his successors. Ancelotti's phlegmatic
ment, his natural dignity and his impeccable list of
as a player and a coach make him better equipped
t to endure such an ordeal. But it is not unreason-
-magine that Abramovich is now asking himself
can unearth another special one.

Manchester United, City, Liverpool or back to Chelsea - where next for Jose Mourinho

After the dust settled on Chelsea's Champions League exit, the Blues were left to count the cost of another season without winning Europe's premier trophy.
The rest of us are left to consider life without Inter Milan boss Jose Mourinho.
Go on, admit it, a bit of you enjoyed having the Special One around, even if it was just for a short time.
And after watching his side triumph at the ground he once called home, Mourinho refused to rule out a return to England.
He said: 'Who knows, in the future I may coach another English team and I will come here again as an opponent.'
What if Mourinho did return to England, to entertain us with his brand of wit and arrogance?
Not to mention his undoubted talent as a manager.
Sportsmail takes a look at the four clubs who would lead the charge for his signature.



MANCHESTER CITY

City are the closest match to the side Mourinho joined when he first arrived in England in June 2004.
A large club, in a big city but with little success to boast about over the past few decades - now benefiting from an injection of cash from a new owner. Sound familiar?
The Abu Dhabi-based owners would certainly back the Portuguese in the transfer market, if current incumbent Roberto Mancini fails to deliver Champions League football.
And don't bet on Mourinho staying at the San Siro if Inter win in Europe this season - just ask Porto fans who saw their boss waltz out of the door, minutes after their win over Monaco in 2004.
Return rating: 7/10

LIVERPOOL

Reds alert: Liverpool manager Rafa Benitez and striker Fernando Torres
There's no doubt Mourinho would love the challenge of managing a club like Liverpool.
But, equally, there's no way he would work at a club in such disarray in the boardroom, and without the money to back him in the transfer market.
And that isn't just because the Portuguese boss likes to spend money but because the current Liverpool squad is way short of competing on domestic or European fronts.
Star striker Fernando Torres admitted as much in a recent interview.
He conceded the Reds 'need four or five top-class players to compete at the top level,' and Mourinho would have no guarantees of cash with the current owners.
Return rating: 5/10



MANCHESTER UNITED

the club's history still lurking in the corridors at Old Trafford or strutting around the training pitches at Carrington?
Return rating: 6/10

Sir Alex Ferguson has given no indication as to when he is going to retire but, at 68 years old, his exit from Old Trafford can't be too far away. And Mourinho has made no secret that he would love to take his job.
Last year he said: 'The England national team wanted me as coach and that is the biggest job in England, so I am sure when Sir Alex retires they will look at the best managers in the world and I certainly fall into the category.'
His CV is certainly good enough to be considered, he has the reputation, the temperament and charisma.
It seems like the obvious move. But when Fergie retires, he will not be leaving the club entirely.
There will surely be some kind of role on the board that will continue his day-to-day association with the club. Much like Sir Matt Busby had.
Would the Portuguese be willing to take control with the greatest manager in

CHELSEA

Mourinho's recent visit to Stamford Bridge has been an emotional one - Chelsea remains a club still very much in his heart.
On his return to west London this week, he said: 'It's the team where I worked for three-and-a-half years, the same people, the same players, the same supporters who made me feel incredible every time we played in this stadium.'
But Mourinho has never been one for sentiment. And the likelihood of the differences with owner Roman Abramovich, which marked his departure, being settled are slim.
This is a move for the romantics, those who don't take in to account Mourinho's ever-burgeoning ambition.
Return rating: 2/10

