

## Brooding Gattuso may consider a farewell to AC Milan

His motto, quoted from his own website, states that he would play at AC Milan even as a goalkeeper.

But Gennaro Gattuso, international midfielder who turns 32 in January, may be close to bidding farewell to the club where he won one Serie A scudetto and two European titles - let alone the World Cup with Italy in 2006.

After 10 seasons spent growling at forwards ahead of the Devils' defence package, Ringhio, or Growl, as he is known, seems to have problems finding a spot in the line-up designed by new coach Leonardo.

Gattuso has not yet commented on the rumours of a possible departure during the January transfer window, but for sure he is not the kind of player who enjoys spending time on the bench.

'Rino is a great champion,' Milan vice-president Adriano Galliani said this week, 'but it's clear that, at the moment, one among (Massimo) Ambrosini, Gattuso, or (Mathieu) Flamini can play.'

The lack of room for more than one defensive midfielder stems from Leonardo's choice for a spectacular, attack-geared layout that was in full display Sunday as the Devils edged gritty Cagliari 4-3 in one of the season's most entertaining games.

'All four forwards (although Clarence Seedorf is more of a midfielder) scored,' a beaming Leonardo said. 'It's true that we had difficulties defending and covering, but it's something we know.'

Defending and covering, assaulting opponents always on the verge of fouling them, is Ringhio's forte. Very few other Italian midfielders are as good at that, which should still guarantee him a spot in Marcello Lippi's Italy squad when the World Cup kicks off next June.

But, meanwhile, Ringhio wants to play. As Stefano Scacchi noted on *la Repubblica*, his worst moment this season came earlier this month, watching from the bench the home game with Real Madrid, a classic match he must have hated to miss.

The day after, in what looked like a case of somatization in a player not prone to muscular injuries, he pulled a flexor while training and has since been confined to the stands.

As Milan denied his possible departure, rumours hinge on Manchester City, always on the lookout for tough, reliable elements, Chelsea, where Gattuso would rejoin his former coach Carlo Ancelotti, or some Arab club ready to lure seasoned players with beefy contracts.

Milan fans, who no doubt would hate to see Ringhio go, hope that his mood changes as it did in 2008, when he seemed close to a transfer to Bayern Munich as he sought news stimuli. At that time, though, his place in midfield was a certainty.

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