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Klinsmann relishes Italian “dolce vita”

By Gideon Long

COGNE, Italy, July 25 (Reuters) - Juergen Klinsmann says he has no regrets over the two seasons he spent in the Bayern Munich gossip kitchen but is glad to be back in free-and-easy Italy.

"It feels good to be here again," the former Internazionale Milan striker said. "This is a beautiful country and I feel very comfortable here."

Klinsmann, who has signed a one-year contract with Genoese side Sampdoria, said Italy would probably be the final port of call on a brilliant footballing journey which has taken him to Stuttgart, Inter, Monaco, Tottenham and Bayern.

He confirmed he would retire from international soccer after next summer's World Cup finals and had no intention of playing in the Bundesliga again.

"I won't play in Germany," he said after a training session at Sampdoria's summer camp against the peaceful and spectacular backdrop of the Italian Alps.

Asked whether he regretted moving to Bayern in 1995 from London side Tottenham he said: "No. I went back to Germany to see if I could live there...I'm glad I did it because it was an experience and I won the title there, but I realised it's tough.

"Here in Italy people seem happy to let you be who you are. In Germany they always want you to be the same as they are. You always have to justify yourself. I didn't want to always have to do that."

Klinsmann often found himself sucked into the bickering and back-stabbing which characterised Bayern's championship-winning 1996-97 season and which led Lothar Matthaeus to describe the club as "a kitchen of gossip".

Matthaeus and Klinsmann had numerous public disputes and Klinsmann was also frustrated by the defensive tactics of Bayern's Italian coach Giovanni Trapattoni.

"I had problems with sections of the media and with some people at the club," he said. "But at least I could leave with a clean conscience. I scored my goals and helped them win the championship and I'm pleased about that."

He said his decision to return to Italy had more to do with personal than professional priorities.

"It was a family decision above all," he said. "Time is running out for me. I have maybe another two or three seasons to play and I have to think about afterwards."

"I still have many friends here, I kept my house on Lake Como from my days at Inter and now I have a three-month old son to think about, too."

He said a move to Sampdoria had appealed to him for some time, especially after the club appointed former Argentine World Cup winning manager Cesar Menotti as coach.

"I always had my eye on Sampdoria," said Klinsmann, who was also linked with clubs in Spain and England before signing for the serie A side in May.

"It's a club with a reputation for its relaxed friendly atmosphere but on the other hand it's an ambitious club. They like to play attacking football. It's a good place for a striker to be."

"There's a very English atmosphere here in some ways -- a family atmosphere similar to Tottenham."

Asked which other clubs he had spoken to after announcing he would leave Bayern, Klinsmann, 33 next Wednesday, said: "I had a very serious offer from Parma."

"They were the only other Italian club I talked to... I also talked to Tottenham but really, by then, I was already waiting to see what would happen at Sampdoria."

Klinsmann said he was curious to see how world footballer of the year Ronaldo would perform in serie A next season after his much-publicised \$27.0 million transfer from Barcelona.

The Brazilian, who arrived in Italy on Friday, will play the centre forward's role at Inter that Klinsmann filled in the early 1990s.

"I think Barcelona is one of the best clubs in the world to play as a striker because they always seem to produce sides which move the ball forward so quickly.

"Inter play a very different type of football. You have to give (Ronaldo) time to get used to it."

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