



LAUGHING OFF THE REAL CHALLENGE? Juventus' French star David Trezeguet finds something very amusing while on board the team bus at Barajas airport in Madrid yesterday.

## Primera Liga Deportivo just too good

### Football

AFP, Madrid

Three goals from Deportivo La Coruna's Dutch marksman Roy Makaay helped the Galicians beat hapless Recreativo Huelva 5-0 on Sunday, to keep up the pressure on league leaders Real Madrid.

Deportivo are now only one point behind the European champions while Makaay took his season's tally to 27 goals, to become the leading candidate for this season's European Golden Boot award.

Real now have 64 points from 32 games with six games to go but suffered their worst defeat in the Santiago Bernabeu for four years when they went down 5-1 to Real Mallorca on Saturday.

The loss also brought to an end a 49-game unbeaten streak at home in the league and the only redeeming factor for Real was that World Player of the Year Ronaldo celebrated the 300th goal of his career.

Deportivo and Real Sociedad are second and third respectively both on 63 points, with Sociedad maintaining their interest in the Spanish title with a 1-0 win over Sevilla on Saturday.

Recreativo's defiance at Deportivo only lasted 25 minutes and once Juan Carlos Valeron had converted Victor Sanchez's free kick the floodgates opened.

Victor himself scored less than two minutes later and shortly afterwards Makaay got the first of his three goals from the penalty spot after Recreativo defender Miguel Angel Espinola had thumped Valeron.

Eight minutes before the break, Makaay got the best of his trio, finishing off a move engineered by Enrique Romero before he completed the scoring just before the hour.

Deportivo stepped off the accelerator in the final half hour but still had several good chances to add further goals.

Celta Vigo fought out a 0-0 draw at relegation-threatened Alaves which moved them into fourth place and a Champions League slot.

"We were trying to win but that

meant that we left ourselves open at times," reflected Miguel Angel Lotina.

"But it was a chance we had to take and I think it was worth it. Alaves also played like a different side since they changed coaches this week. They might even avoid relegation," added the Celta coach.

Racing eased their own relegation fears with a 2-1 win over reigning champions Valencia thanks to two first-half goals from Rodolfo Bodipo.

Bodipo headed Racing ahead after 10 minutes but Francisco Rufete took only 40 seconds to get Valencia back on level terms.

However, Bodipo added to his tally from close range midway through the first half.

The loss means Valencia drop a place to fifth.

Osasuna's chances of returning to the second division after a three year run in the top flight increased with a 5-1 home defeat by Athletic Bilbao.

Athletic started their goal rush after 15 minutes when Aitor Ocio unleashed a thunderbolt from 30 metres and the visiting Basques were 3-0 up by the break.

Osasuna were reduced to 10 men just after the break when their Australian striker John Aloisi was sent off for manhandling Athletic goalie David Aranzubia.

Athletic's emphatic victory saw them move up to seventh.

Barcelona are now just one rung further down the ladder after a 3-0 win over bottom-club Rayo Vallecano, although all the Catalans' goals all came within the final half hour.

Patrick Kluivert turned from scorer to service provider, setting up Luis Enrique Martinez and then

#### TOP SIX

Spanish league table after Sunday's matches, (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Real	32	18	10	4	71	38	64
Deportivo	32	19	6	7	57	36	63
Sociedad	32	18	9	5	59	40	63
Celta	32	15	8	9	36	24	53
Valencia	32	15	8	9	47	25	53
Mallorca	32	12	8	12	42	47	44

Marc Overmars before Javier Saviola completed the scoring for Barcelona a minute into injury time.

Athletic Madrid's misery continued as they collapsed 3-1 at Valladolid.

Athletic seemed to run out of ideas after Fernando Sales had put Valladolid ahead after 29 minutes.

David Arganzo made the most of an Emerson error and put Valladolid further ahead after 50 minutes, and although Jose Mari Romero reduced the deficit with a header on the hour, Arganzo put the game beyond the visitors reach with his second goal 15 minutes from time.

Athletic have now gone eight games since their last victory, a miserable record in their centenary year.

#### TOP SCORERS

Leading scorers in the Spanish league after the weekend's matches:

- 27 - Roy Makaay (Deportivo La Coruna)
- 19 - Nihat Kahveci (Real Sociedad)
- 17 - Darko Kovacevic (Real Sociedad), Ronaldo (Real Madrid)
- 13 - Patrick Kluivert (Barcelona), Walter Pandiani (Real Mallorca)
- 12 - Fernando Fernandez (Real Betis)
- 11 - Raul Gonzalez (Real Madrid), Fernando Torres (Atletico Madrid), Joseba Etxeberria (Athletic Bilbao), Ismael Urzaiz (Athletic Bilbao), Javi Guerrero (Racing Santander), Samuel Eto'o (Real Mallorca), Santiago Ezquerro (Athletic Bilbao)
- 10 - Luis Figo (Real Madrid), Raul Tamudo (Espanyol), Raul Molina (Recreativo Huelva), Javier Saviola (Barcelona)
- 9 - Diego Tristan (Deportivo La Coruna), Luis Garcia (Atletico Madrid), Zinedine Zidane (Real Madrid), Savo Milosevic (Espanyol), Dely Valdes (Malaga)
- 8 - Julio Alvarez (Rayo Vallecano), Kiki Musampa (Malaga), John Carew (Valencia), Edu (Celta Vigo), Ruben Navarro (Alaves), Dario Silva (Malaga), Luis Enrique Martinez (Barcelona)



Deportivo la Coruna's Dutch striker Roy Makaay (R) celebrates one of his three goals against Recreativo Huelva at the Riazor stadium in La Coruna on May 4.

# SPORT

## SEMIFINAL FIRST LEG

# Juve scent a Real chink



AFP, Madrid

Juventus coach Marcello Lippi is coming to the Spanish capital brimming with confidence ahead of Tuesday's European Champions League semi-final first leg with holders Real Madrid.

"I'm not worried by Real Madrid," said the coach of the team nicknamed The Old Lady on Sunday.

"No real champion loses 5-1 at home to a middle-of-the-table side. It tells me there is something wrong there because it's difficult to think of any way that we could end up losing 5-1 at home" commented Lippi, reflecting on Real's 5-1 loss at home to Real Mallorca on Saturday.

"But we are under no illusion that Tuesday will be a different game and that Real will be doing their best to forget that last game," added Lippi with a conciliatory touch, lest he be made to eat his

words.

Against Mallorca, Real looked a world away from the side that dazzled in their two quarter-final outings against Manchester United but the European champions stay at the top of the Spanish first division by the slender margin of one point.

However, Real's worse league loss for four years will not have done much for morale in the Madrid dressing room ahead of arguably their most important game of the season.

By contrast, Juventus hold an eight point lead over Inter with three games to go and can expect to open the bubbly in celebration of their 27th Serie A title next weekend after Saturday's 0-0 draw at Lazio.

Lippi said that he will come to Madrid with a 21-man squad but will have to make two changes to key players from the side that started in their 2-1 win over Barcelona in the Nou Camp two weeks ago, a victory that ensured their continued progress.

Italian international defender

Paolo Montero and Juve's non-stop Dutch midfielder Edgar Davids are both suspended and their places are likely to be taken respectively by Mark Iuliano and Igor Tudor respectively.

Midfielder Alessio Tacchinardi is also serving a one match ban after picking up his quota of yellow cards against Barcelona, but the reserve midfielder's absence is less critical.

Marcelo Salas continues to recuperate in Turin from the knee injury he picked up six weeks ago, although there is a chance the Chilean striker may be ready to play in the second leg.

Real coach Vicente Del Bosque has nearly his full contingent available and is expected to be able to name the same side that started in their 4-3 loss at Manchester United two weeks ago, and that also took to the field on Saturday.

Del Bosque is only without Raul Gonzalez, who only trained with the ball at his feet for the first time in two weeks on Sunday, following his recent appendix operation.

Despite the inevitable calls from

the media for him to make changes, mainly advocating throwing the prodigious young striker Javier Portillo into the fray, Del Bosque is unlikely to tinker with his team in the wake of the Mallorca debacle.

He made it clear that he was not going to panic and make wholesale changes on Sunday, even on the back of a result as poor as that on Saturday.

"We are first in the league and in the semi-finals of the Champions League. We haven't

got anything to feel embarrassed about. It was just a bad night and Tuesday will be a different night," said Del Bosque, in his usual phlegmatic fashion.

Nevertheless, Mallorca's demonstration that the Santiago Bernabeu stadium is a far from impregnable citadel, will have given The Old Lady a little more spring in her step.

The Italians are also still smarting from their last meeting with Madrid, nearly five years ago in the final of the 1998 Champions League, when Real won 1-0, and a few survi-

vors of that encounter are looking for revenge.

"I still remember that game very clearly. To lose in such a fashion was very painful. I have won one Champions League in 1996 but after our two most recent campaigns, when we failed to live up to our own expectations, I'm eager for more success," said Juventus striker Alessandro Del Piero.

#### PROBABLE TEAMS

**REAL MADRID:** 1-Iker Casillas; 2-Michel Salgado, 4-Fernando Hierro, 6-Ivan Helguera, 3-Roberto Carlos; 10-Luis Figo, 24-Claude Makelele, 16-Flavio Conceicao, 5-Zinedine Zidane; 14-Guti, 11-Ronaldo

**JUVENTUS:** 1-Gianluigi Buffon; 21-Lilian Thuram, 2-Ciro Ferrara, 13-Mark Iuliano, 19-Gianluca Zambrotta; 16-Mauro Camoranesi, 5-Igor Tudor, 8-Antonio Conte, 11-Pavel Nedved; 10-Alessandro Del Piero, 17-David Trezeguet

**REFEREE:** Terje Hauge (Norway).

## Back with Becks rumour

AFP, Madrid

Manchester United secured the English Premiership title on Sunday but media reports persisted Monday in saying they had lost England captain David Beckham to Real Madrid.

The nine-times European Champions issued an official statement last week to say they had never approached United about Beckham but British papers insist he made his last appearance at Old Trafford in Saturday's 4-1 win over Charlton.

Beckham, 28, was said to have struggled to keep his emotions in check on Saturday as he made what is expected to be his last home appearance for United.

And he seemed on the verge of tears as he left the pitch.

The England skipper embraced each of his team-mates and shared a brief chat with injured best pal Gary Neville.

He also applauded all four sides of the ground before finally making his exit.

Then, instead of getting changed with his chums, he returned to the pitch after the stands had emptied for a half-hour kickabout with son Brooklyn, four.

He ensured the boy scored at each end before trudging off.

Beckham's relationship with boss Sir Alex Ferguson has broken down after a series of bust-ups.

After last month's Real home game he sped from Old Trafford for talks on his future with his agent.

Real president Florentino Perez, who brought superstars Luis Figo, Zinedine Zidane and Ronaldo to the club, once denied having contact with Ronaldo.

Real were reported to see Beckham, worth an estimated 60 million dollars, as the man to turn them into a global brand.

But Manchester United chief executive Peter Kenyon dismissed the reports.

Asked if he believes Beckham will be a United player next season, Kenyon told BBC Radio: "Of course we do and I'm sure David feels the same.

## Gunners are bad odds!

AFP, London

Hundreds of British punters are nursing losses in excess of 1,000 pounds (1,500 dollars) each after heavily backing Arsenal to retain their Premiership title.

Having started the defence of their title in scintillating form, the Gunners looked a sure fire bet at the start of the season and, as recently as the beginning of March, they held an eight-point lead over Manchester United.

But United's awesome end-of-season form has seen them overhaul their London rivals and Arsene Wenger's side were forced to concede the title on Sunday after a shock 3-2 defeat to Leeds at Highbury.

William Hill's reported taking at least 92 bets on Arsenal in excess of 1,000 pounds, twice the number of five-figure bets placed on United.

The trend is likely to have been repeated with other leading book-makers, who, consequently, will have been more than happy to see United prevail in the title tussle.

"United's fans have talked a good campaign but did not back that up with the level of financial support for their team demonstrated by the Arsenal fans," said Hill's spokesman Graham Sharpe.

The two biggest bets Hill's took on Arsenal were one of 50,000 pounds from a man in the swish London district of Hampstead, home to Arsenal stars Thierry Henry and Robert Pires, and one of 64,000 pounds from a man who cashed in all his shares to back the Gunners.

Both will now be left with nothing while United fans who had enough faith to back their team in November, when they were on offer at 7-1, will have double cause for celebration this week.

## Fergie always knew

### Football

AFP, Manchester

Alex Ferguson toasted what he called his greatest achievement in football with champagne on Sunday as Arsenal's 3-2 defeat by Leeds handed Manchester United their eighth English crown in 11 years and claimed he had never doubted his team would do it.

The 60-year-old Scot admitted that he had questioned the players' hunger after the 3-1 derby defeat by Manchester City in November but in the end he was satisfied that they had what it took to win the title.

"I never doubted that we could do it," said Ferguson, who has become the most successful manager in British football.

"Once you've been with a group of players for a long time you get to know them well.

"However, after the Manchester

City game I did question the hunger of the players and whether they were hungry enough.

"You must ask that question of very rich players who have had a lot of success," added the former Aberdeen boss.

Nevertheless Ferguson said they had shown their character and by having won it had given him his greatest achievement in football, even putting the 1999 Champions League title behind it.

"It is the greatest achievement as we were up against it.

"However we have shown perseverance and determination allied to natural ability and we never gave up," he said.

Ferguson revealed that the early part of the season had been the hardest part as his side struggled and Arsenal made an explosive start which led to their manager Arsene Wenger claiming they could win the title without losing a match.

"We had a lot of injuries at the

start of the season but we decided to bite the bullet and take the poison and wait for those players to return fit," he said.

Ferguson admitted he had kept his promise of not watching the Arsenal match as he attended his grandson's birthday party on Sunday.

"I turned my phone on at six o'clock and a friend of mine phoned me to tell me that Leeds had scored and I waited nervously for five minutes until the final whistle went," said the Scot.

However Ferguson, who only last season had revised his decision to retire from the post, said there was much still to be done particularly in the Champions League.

"It's simply not good enough for a club the size of this to have only won it twice," he said.

"It is the most important thing remaining to me in a football sense that I want to achieve - bringing in another Champions League title," he added.

## Only words left for Wenger

### Football

AFP, London

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger was adamant his side are still better than Manchester United despite letting the Premiership trophy slip from his grasp.

The Gunners have taken nine points from their last seven matches, allowing the Red Devils to surge past them, the 3-2 defeat at home to Leeds on Sunday gifting them the title to United.

"It was a very small difference between the two teams in the league," Wenger insisted.

"But if you look at the FA Cup and the championship, we are the best team in England."

It is the second time Wenger has failed to keep hold of the Premiership, but the Frenchman believes if Arsenal had beaten Bolton on April 26 they could have retained their status as champions.

"I'm bitterly disappointed," Wenger revealed. "Last week at Bolton was the turning point of the championship. We had the title in our hands with 15 minutes to go.

"If we had won, we would certainly have kept the title. This was worse than 1999 because we were so much closer."

Wenger also insisted that given United's financial superiority, finishing as runners-up was no disaster.

"We look to the future and will try to finish first next season. But with 50 per cent less budget than Manchester United, second place is not too bad.

"Last year, when United lost the championship, they responded by buying a player for 30 million pounds. I certainly won't be doing that. Our most expensive player cost 12 million."

"I don't think United were flying - they were just consistent, but their last two games were quite easy," Wenger said of United's recent run that has given them an unassailable eight-point lead.

"We can just congratulate them now. Winning the championship means you have been the best in the league. But I think it was very, very close."

The Frenchman was also quick to stress another championship tussle between his side and Alex Ferguson's men next season should not be taken for granted.

"We will do everything to win it, but we are not guaranteed at least second place. All these teams, like Newcastle, Liverpool and Chelsea, have as much money as us but we've had six years in the top two. It's remarkably consistent what we have done, it is the best ever in the history of the club."

Wenger, who boasted earlier in the title race that his side might finish the season undefeated, will reflect on what cost his side the championship.

"You have good and bad

## Kaiser fears fixing

AFP, Berlin

World Cup organising committee president Franz Beckenbauer fears that by expanding the 2006 finals by four teams to 36 could lead to match-fixing.

Beckenbauer told the Bild daily they would need nine first round groups of four teams each which would mean only seven group runners-up could qualify for the second phase.

"Some teams would have to wait a week to find out if they were eliminated. Others could agree on a result," he said.

"It's impossible to schedule all the final group matches at the same time. It could end up badly," Beckenbauer warned.

The biggest World Cup "fix" occurred in the 1982 finals in Spain when West Germany beat Austria 1-0 in a result which ensured both teams qualified for the second round.

moments in a season and recently we've been unlucky.

"The team gave everything. I think we have had difficult games lately and played against teams that really had a go at us.

"I have given every last drop of blood and energy to keep the championship. Now I have to go home and think why I did not do it. The players must ask themselves the

same."

Arsenal host Southampton on Wednesday in a dress rehearsal for the FA Cup final in Cardiff on May 17 and Wenger is desperate to salvage something from the season.

"I want to win the FA Cup but if we win it will not be a compensation. The only advantage in knowing

the title is all over is I can rest a few players against Southampton on Wednesday now."

Wenger also dropped hints that fresh faces will be brought in for next season to cover defensive frailties.

"I have faith in those I have, we have world class players, but I will strengthen the squad if I can. I will be creative and find the players with the money I have."