### Primera Liga preview

## Mission defeat Bilbao



AFP, Madrid

Only two words will be heard in the dressing room of league leaders Real Madrid before Sunday's game against Athletic Bilbao and they will not be David Beckham.

Real coach Vicente Del Bosque in what some pundits believe could be his last game in charge of the club, instead will be urging his squad to forget all thoughts of the imminent arrival of the England captain and concentrate on the winning the trophy that has 'campeonato nacional' - national championship - inscribed on it.

Madrid have 75 points from their 37 games and are two ahead of their only rivals Real Sociedad.

The mathematics are simple. If Real Madrid beat their Basque visitors, they are the Spanish champions for a record 29th time.

However, if they can only muster a draw against Athletic, who have everything to play for as they are vying with Barcelona for a UEFA cup place, then they have to hope that Sociedad do not win at home to Atletico Madrid.

The San Sebastian club, who are unbeaten at home this season, have better results in the head-to-head contests between the two protagonists for the league title, and under Spanish league rules, if the points are equal then Real Sociedad will win the league for the first time in 21 years.

There has been no denving that signing of Beckham on Tuesday has been a distraction.

"But from now until Sunday night,

Spanish club Barcelona, outma-

noeuvred by Real Madrid for David

Beckham, are determined to snatch

Brazil World Cup star Ronaldinho

from under the nose of Manchester

president on the back of his pledge

to bring England captain Beckham

to the club, was reported Friday to

have instructed his sports director

Sandro Rosell to clinch a deal with

Rosell met Ronaldinho's brother

Assis, with whom Manchester

"But it won't be until the final of

Barcelona were also reported to

be chasing Leeds United's

Australian international Harry

Kewell who is wanted by

Manchester and Arsenal, but

Ronaldinho was top of their wish-

"Kewell is on our list but he is not

a priority," Rosell told Spanish

media Friday. "Our priority is

and agent Roberto Assis in Paris on

provisionally agreed a contract two

months ago, confirmed Barcelona

the Confederations Cup on June 29

that we'll announce a decision.

Paris St Germain for Ronaldinho.

Joan Laporta, elected Barcelona

Football

AFP, Barcelona

United.

Thursday.

Assis said.

had made an offer

David Beckham does not exist, said Real's Spanish international right back Michel Salgado

"It was an inopportune time for the news (of Beckham coming to Real Madrid on Tuesday) to come out but the squad have listed to the explanations of the club and accepted them. The club were also aware it was not the best time to release the news but felt there was no alternative.

'However, if we can win the title in the last game and in front of our own fans it will be fantastic," added Salgado, letting his hard-man facade drop for once.

Real Sociedad believe that the furore over Beckham will work in their favour.

"They have got to be distracted because it's all that has been talked about," said Sociedad's Xabi Alonso

"This league is far from over and we have still plenty of chances to snatch the title. The Bernabeu is a difficult place to play but Athletic are one of those teams that don't seem to show their nerves there and they are playing for a place in the UEFA Cup," added the Spanish international playmaker.

"As far as we are concerned, we are playing for our pride after last Sunday's defeat at Celta Vigo."

Athletic Bilbao have pride and dignity at stake as well, following a umatic week.

Coach Jupp Heynckes announced on Tuesday that he was not going to renew his contract for next season and issued a withering attack on the club's directors and fans for not supporting him and his players in the manner he wanted.

Tragedy was added to the emotional mix on Wednesday when the

Barca's priority No. 1

The French sports daily l'Equipe

Laporta, left by the previous

board with debts of 98 million euros,

has pledged to restore Barcelona to

their glory days, when they won the

1992 European Cup with their so-

**RONALDINHO** 

And he believes Ronaldinho

Laporta has also to decide what

called Dream Team under coach

would prefer the Catalan lifestyle to

to do about Dutch striker Patrick

Kluivert who has been linked with a

match-up with countryman Ruud

van Nistelroov at Manchester.

Johan Cruvff

northwest England.

reported Friday that Paris were set

to do a 35 million euro deal with

Barcelona for Ronaldinho.

Ronaldinho.

club president Javier Uria died of throat cancer at the age of just 41.

"We will be playing for Javier on Sunday and want to win for him. It was his dream to see us back in Europe." said striker Ismael Urzaiz on Thursday.

Athletic have gone nine games unbeaten and lie sixth with 55 points, two points and one place ahead of Barcelona, who are the only club that can stop them returning to European competition after a hiatus of four years.

In the event that Athletic draw in the Bernabeu and Barcelona beat Celta Vigo - who can relax as they are secure in fourth and will playing in the Champions league for the first time next season - the Catalan club will finish ahead as they have a better record in their two meetings this season.

Barcelona could get a boost by the return of their inspirational Brazilian midfielder Thiago Motta, who is fit to play again after an absence of nearly two months due

#### **FIXTURES** Saturday (kick off GMT): Rayo

Vallecano v Recreativo Huelva (1700). Real Mallorca v Malaga (1800), Sevilla v Valencia Alaves v Valladolid (1800), Deportivo La Coruna v Espanyol (1845), Racing Santander v Osasuna (1900) Sunday: Villarreal v Real Betis (1700), Barcelona v Celta Vigo Malaga (1900), Real Madrid v Athletic Bilbao (1900), Real Sociedad v Atletico Madrid

His contract does not expire until

In return, Kluivert's transfer fee

2005 but a clause in his contract

allows Barcelona to halve his

annual salary, reportedly six million

would be slashed from 36 million

euros to 1.8 million euros, smooth-

ing the way for him to negotiate

persuading Dutch coach Guus

Hiddink taking over at the club.

Hiddink, the former South Korean

World Cup coach, steered PSV

Eindhoven to the Dutch league title

but he's not the only option," Laporta

Seville coach Victor Fernandez.

appear set to dump Serbian coach

Radomir Antic whom former presi-

dent Enric Reyna appointed in

February to replace Louis Van Gaal.

Martinez refused to get involved in

the transfer talk

Barcelona's website.

Barcelona captain Luis Enrique

"Nothing that goes on in football

"People want to see fresh faces

Laporta was reported to have

also agreed terms with Fenerbahce

goalkeeper Rustu Recber, who was

a key figure in Turkey's third-place

finish at last year's World Cup.

surprises me any more," he told

when you don't get good results."

"I'm confident he will reconsider

Barcelona, also linked with Betis

Laporta has also not ruled out

better terms with a new club.



Tuncay Sanli (R) of Turkey rounding off US goalkeeper Tim Howard on way to scoring at the Geoffroy-Guichard stadium in Saint-Etienne on June 19.

## Sanli steals the show



AFP, Saint Etienne

Turkey, called up as stand-ins for the stay away Germans, took the honours in a lively Confederations Cup Group B encounter against the United States here on Thursday.

The World Cup semi-finalists came out 2-1 winners thanks to a first half penalty from Okan Yilmaz and a second half effort from Tuncay Sanli on his first ever appearance in a Turkey shirt. The States, who made it through

to the 1999 Confederations Cup semi-finals, had opened the scoring via midfielder DaMarcus Beasley. Sanli had a memorable game, earning rave reviews not from his

coach Senol Gunes but his US counterpart, Bruce Arena. "I thought the number nine was remarkable," said Arena, sipping a can of his country's most famous

SOTT ARINK IN IOW CAIORY FORM. "But we didn't play well as a team," said Arena, who guided the States to the World Cup quarter-

finals last year. "You can get away with having one or two important players not perform, but we had a bunch under-

"I thought Turkey were the better team overall, we didn't play well and we'll have to go away now and prepare for Brazil (on Saturday)."

Arena suggested plenty of changes ahead of the States' clash with the World Cup champions.

Gunes, speaking through a

translator, added: "Over the 90 minutes we controlled the game, and could have won by a bigger

"It's important to get off to a good

start, I was happy with the new players I tried. They all played their part today. Sanli thanked Gunes for allowing

him to take his chance on the international stage

"It's a great opportunity not only for me but the other new players

Gunes' men must have felt like they were playing back home in Istanbul such was the support they got from the almost entirely Turkish crowd in the half-full stadium - a crowd that were not averse to booing during the States' national

"You get used to it if you've been to a Mexico v States game. I didn't concentrate on that side of things,"

A scrappy start produced little in the way of decent goal scoring opportunities although the Stars and Stripes' keeper Tim Howard did well to block what looked a giltedged chance from Turkish striker Yilmaz who was unmarked when picking up the ball in the box in the eighth minute.

Ahmet Yildirim then went close to putting Turkey ahead with a 20m free kick approaching the half hour mark - the ball safely skirting the States' wall only to hit the cross bar.

The set piece had been awarded when Uruguayan referee Jorge Larrionda booked German league player Gregg Berhalter for a foul on Gokdeniz Karadeniz.

Then, with less than ten minutes to go till the break and against the run of play Beasley, who at 57 kilos is the lightest player in the whole competition, landed a heavyweight punch when he picked up a cross from the left wing and slammed the ball at close range past the shaven headed Omer Catkic.

But three minutes later the Turks had drawn back level, Yilmaz converting a low penalty into the left hand corner of the goal, the spot kick awarded by Larrionda for a foul on Sanli. World Cup veteran Landon Donovan was handed a vellow card for contesting the decision.

In a fiery end to the first half States defender Danny Califf also suffered Larrionda's wrath for a foul on Ahmet Yildrim.

As both coaches struggled with injuries and the absence of older stars being put out to grass after last summer's exertions in Asia there were more new faces on the pitch than you'd expect to find in a television talent contest. And one of their number.

Karadeniz, had his head in his

hands in frustration five minutes into

the second period after watching his shot beat the States' keeper only to edge right of the post. The 23-year-old had his head in his hands again shortly after but this time it was in agony after a foul by

Greg Vanney, who received the States' fourth yellow card. Then Sanli, another newcomer, sealed the States' fate with a sub-

Volkan Arslan fed him the ball and he knocked it on past Howard, charging round the keeper to flick an angled shot into the empty net.

The States counter attacked hitting the bar, but Turkey held on for a win that was all the more worthy given they were missing stars like Hasan Sas, Ilhan Mansir, Hakan Sukur, Emre, and Nihat Kahveci who is remaining in Spain to help Real Sociedad's push for the title.

"He'll join us next week," promised Gunes as he stole away to watch Brazil play Cameroon.

#### **USA VS BRAZIL**

## Win or lose face



AFP, Lyon

World Cup winners Brazil and the United States square up against each other here Saturday with one goal in mind - to restore some pride after painful reverses in their opening Confederations Cup ties.

Brazil were stunned by Cameroon in their first match Thursday to place Carlos Alberto Parreira's team last in Group B while the Americans, World Cup quarterfinalists last year, put up a below par performance losing 2-1 to Turkey to put them third.

The first two in each group qualify for next week's semi-finals.

This Brazil side is a pale imitation of the one that took last year's World Cup by the scruff of the neck and want-away Paris Saint Germain striker Ronaldinho failed to make an mpression against Cameroon.

Parreira had likened the opening match in a competition like this to giving birth.

'You don't know whether the baby's going to be beautiful or not. It's the same with your first match, you don't know whether you're going to give birth to a decent team or not." After Thursday's defeat the panel's still out on Parreira's pup-

He is however under no illusion as to what lies ahead for his Selecao.

"We must go on to win our next two matches if we have a hope of getting to the final. We can't lower our heads.

The States spluttered and misfired against Turkey at St Etienne on Thursday, with coach Bruce Arena bemoaning the fact that "a bunch of important players" put up below par

"There'll be several changes for Brazil," predicted Arena, who singled out keeper Tim Howard who has been linked to Manchester

United for special mention

#### TURKEY VS CAMEROON

Saturday's second Group B match sees Turkey take on Cameroon at the Stade de France for what effectively is the honour of topping the

Olympic champions Cameroon had the 22-year-old Real Mallorca striker Samuel Eto'o to thank for their narrow win over Brazil, his wicked 83rd minute volley sealing The African champions are

looking to the Confederations Cup to restore morale after a disappointing first round exit at the World Cup. German coach Winfried Schafer

remarked: "We've worked hard in training to build a more solid group and we have to maintain that ahead of our match against Turkey."

The toast of Turkey at Saint Etienne was undoubtedly Sanli Tuncay, the 21-year-old Fernebahce player who wreaked havoc every time he got the ball on his first appearance for his national He produced a fine second half

winner to cap a memorable night

and was later described as "remarkable" by Arena. Gunes, like Arena one of the few coaches to remain in situ after the World Cup, elected to turn out a host

of fresh faces, leaving established names like Bayer Leverkusen's Yildiray Basturk on the bench. "That wasn't a gamble - football's not about gambling, it's a tactical game," he reasoned when quizzed

about his tactics. "I tested some new players, and we controlled the match. The most important thing is to succeed in this competition."

Gunes and his team may well take another step towards achieving that ambition against Cameroon.

#### Libertadores Cup

# **Boca lesson** for Cali



REUTERS, Cali

Striker Carlos Tevez, 19, scored twice on Thursday to guide Boca America of Colombia which put his side into the final of the South American Libertadores Cup.

The Argentines, whose other two goals in the semi-final second leg came from penalties by Rolando Schiavi and Marcelo Delgado, completed a 6-0 aggregate victory and now face Santos.

Boca also met Santos in the 1963 final won by the Pele-inspired Brazilian team. America, who have reached four Libertadores finals and lost them all, were hit by a spate of injuries and suspensions

and never looked capable of overturning their 2-0 deficit from the first

Tevez opened the scoring in the 13th minute when he stabbed the ball in from close range after being left unmarked.

It was curtains for the Red Devils nine minutes later when Tevez broke clear to score with a shot which went through the legs of

goalkeeper Robinson Zapata. Boca, who won the title in 1977, 1978, 2000 and 2001, added a third before halftime from a Schiavi penalty. The spot kick was awarded when Delgado went tumbling following what appeared to be nothing more than a tap on

Delgado completed the scoring with another penalty in the 77th

the shoulder by a defender.

### Becks' 'chocolate' side!



AFP, Tokyo

Football and marketing phenomenon -- and loving father -- David Beckham declared Japan "amazing" Friday as he unveiled a huge chocolate statue of himself and visited an elementary school.

"This is the third time I've been here in Japan, it gets more amazing every time I visit this country," Beckham told an invited audience of mainly young female fans in a televised appearance to promote a major chocolate manufacturer.

Foreign media were barred from attending the televised event on the second full day of his Japan visit.

"I think the first time amazed me, the second time astonished me and the third time. I just ... I'm just lost for words," said the football superstar.

Hugely popular here for his image as a loving husband and father, Beckham, dressed in a crumpled v-neck white tee shirt with "goal" emblazoned on the chest, then unveiled his even sweeter alter ego -- a larger-than-lifesize chocolate statue of himself.

"It looks absolutely amazing, I'm sure it tastes absolutely delicious," he said.

Later, Beckham visited Kyobashi City Elementary School to receive pupils' paintings of him. He also briefly kicked a ball in the playground with six boys after being presented with a bunch of red flowers by Haruka Takasaki who greeted him in flawless English.

"Thank you, this is an amazing welcome for me," Beckham said after giving the lucky girl a kiss on the cheek to the squeals of hundreds of onlookers who blocked the street beyond the playground's chainlink fence and crowded every overlooking balcony and window.

'To come and see the children is the fun part of the trip for me. As a father I love my two sons and it's beautiful for me to come and see children like you and I thank you all so much for the wonderful drawings," Beckham said.

While arguably football's most image-conscious star, Beckham held up one of the children's pictures of him to the cameras and declared himself delighted with all the youngsters' efforts.

"They're all just absolutely amazing," he said.

The 325 children, lined up in the schoolyard and given flowers to wave at the England captain, showed remarkable composure as the massed Japanese media trained their cameras on them, including from two helicopters overhead, and Beckham's female Japanese fans went wild -- again.

Dressed in red England shirts with Beckham and the number seven printed on the back, finance company workers Kimiko Uchida, 30, and Shihoka Kurosawa, 32, had

raced to the school after seeing their idol at the chocolate promotion, for which they had spent about 15 hours queuing since Thursday evenina

"We took the day off saying that

we were sick -- which is rather true

because we are suffering from

lovesickness," Uchida said. "He

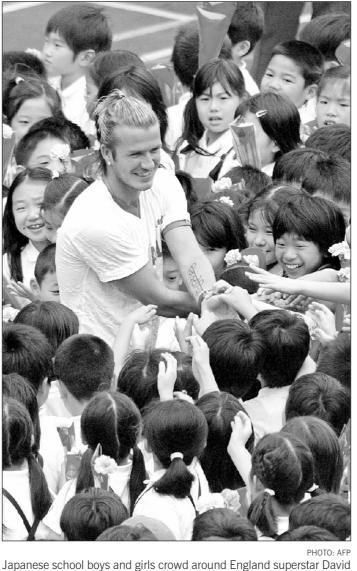
was really, really cool and hand-"He was on his own. I was so excited to see him in the flesh," Kurosawa added.

Beckham's popstar wife Victoria had her own programme, attending the opening of a jewellery store in the swanky Aoyama shopping district, where she was presented with a diamond bracelet worth two million ven.

Beckham went on to record a series of television appearances which dominated the afternoon schedules of the major networks.

Football's glamour boy and his wife will also visit Vietnam, Malaysia and Thailand on a week-long Asian tour, which will earn the couple an estimated one million pounds according to British media reports. The Beckhams' two-year adver-

tising contracts with the confectionery company and a beauty treatment company are estimated to be worth some 500 million ven (4.2 million dollars) each, according to advertising industry sources.



Beckham (C) as he visits a Tokyo elementary school yesterday.