



Schalke 04's Hamit Altintop (C) is the toast of his teammates Eduardo Alcides (bottom) and Christian Poulsen after Altintop's first goal against Borussia Dortmund at Gelsenkirchen on August 2.

# Mark the name Altintop

Football

AFP, Gelsenkirchen, Germany

Schalke 04 midfielder Hamit Altintop is the talk of the Bundesliga Sunday after a fantastic double in the 2-2 draw with Borussia Dortmund on Saturday.

The Turkish starlet was making his Bundesliga debut in the Ruhr derby against Dortmund and delighted the 61,000 crowd at the Arena Auf Schalke in the 39th minute with his fierce shot from 25 metres out flying into the top corner.

The strike is an early contender for Bundesliga goal of the month and more was to come from Altintop who doubled his tally on 58 minutes with a solo effort.

It was a dream Bundesliga debut for the 20-year-old Turk only soured by the fact that he inadvertently set

Marcio Amoroso up for Dortmund's equaliser in the final minute.

"I am just disappointed," stated Altintop.

"I would have preferred to have scored no goals and we had won."

However, the midfielder was happy with his bow in the German top-flight and dedicated his brace to his family.

"I have high expectations and that was a good start," added Altintop.

"I am dedicating those goals to my family, above all my mother Meryn.

"She sat at home because it is too lively in the stadium."

Schalke 04 manager Jupp Heynckes, who has had great players under his wing in the past, heaped praise on the three-time Turkish Under-21 international after the match and compared the player to German legend Lothar Matthaus.

"His solo runs and change in tempo remind me of Lothar Matthaus," enthused Heynckes.

"However, we should not praise the youngster too much.

"He still has to learn things in different areas and stabilise his performance."

It is a meteoric rise to fame for Altintop, 20, who has been playing in the north German regional League with Wattenscheid 09, until The Royal Blues signed him in the close season.

Bayern Munich and Dortmund were interested in his services but Altintop, who was born in Gelsenkirchen, opted to join neighbours Schalke 04 in a 1.8-million-euro deal and is contracted at the club until June 2007.

Altintop's brother Halil, also plays in the Bundesliga with Kaiserslautern.

# Bundesliga Amoroso saves Dortmund

Football

AFP, Berlin

Marcio Amoroso prevented Jupp Heynckes' return to the Bundesliga from ending in victory Saturday, as a late strike from the Brazilian helped Borussia Dortmund to share the spoils with local rivals Schalke 04 in a 2-2 draw at the Arena Auf Schalke.

A brace from Turkish youngster Hamit Altintop (39, 58) had put Schalke 04 in the driving seat but substitute, and Bundesliga debutant Flavio Conceicao, levelled for Dortmund thundering home a 20-yard free-kick on 65 minutes.

Schalke 04 looked set to win the 122nd Ruhr derby thanks to Altintop's double before Amoroso struck late on to snatch a point for the visitors and disappoint most of the capacity 61,000 the crowd.

Heynckes was disappointed to concede the late goal but lauded the effort of his charges.

"To have a game such as this on the opening day of the season is extraordinary," he said.

"My team played good football in patches but obviously I am disappointed to lose two points at the end."

Dortmund coach Matthias Sammer conceded his side were second best in the first 45 minutes and was glad to escape with a point.

"We could not handle the tempo of Schalke in the first half," said Sammer.

"You could see that we had

people missing."

Bayer Leverkusen were indebted to their Brazilian connection for a 4-1 triumph over newcomers SC Freiburg at the BayArena.

Brazilian midfielder Robson Ponte seized the initiative for Bayer coolly slotting home on 17 minutes but Sascha Riether equalised three minutes later.

However, Bayer restored their lead through Brazilian World Cup winner Lucio on 28 minutes before compatriot Juan made it 3-1 heading into the interval.

German international Oliver Neuville netted a fourth just after the hour mark to cap a stellar display from Bayer who forgot about all their woes of last season.

Leverkusen fans will now have hopes of resurrecting their days of challenging Bayern Munich for the German championship.

The reigning champions started the defence of their Bundesliga title with a 3-1 win over newly-promoted Eintracht Frankfurt on Friday.

Goals from Ze Roberto (16), Bosnian international Hasan Salihamidzic (20) and Peruvian striker Claudio Pizarro (42) underlined why Bayern will be the team to beat this season.

Hannover upset League Cup champions SV Hamburg coasting to a 3-0 victory in front of 53,000 spectators at the AOL-Arena.

The two sides locked horns in the opening match of last season with SV Hamburg running out 2-1 winners but it was a different story for Hannover on Saturday.

Czech Jiri Stanjer stunned the

home crowd netting in the 11th minute and second half strikes from Thomas Brdaric (76) and Mohammadou Idrissou (79) clinched the points for the visitors.

Werder Bremen put their embarrassing 4-0 Intertoto Cup defeat by SV Pasching behind them with a 3-0 win over Hertha Berlin at the Olympic Stadium.

Enigmatic Brazilian Ailton, who has been at loggerheads with the club in the close season, was the star grabbing a brace on 18 and 65 minutes.

Frenchman Johan Micoud notched the other goal after 21 minutes.

Kaiserslautern's hopes of wiping out their three-point deficit, imposed after they were found guilty of illegal payments, were dashed as 1860 Munich took the spoils with a 1-0 win at the Fritz-Walter Stadium.

A missed penalty from Miroslav Klose on 26 minutes and the dismissal of Bill Tchato - the first red card of the new season - after a rash challenge ensured an entertaining first period.

1860 Munich made their numerical advantage count with Markus Schroth scoring the all-important goal shortly before the interval.

VfL Wolfsburg, for whom record-signing Andres D'Alessandro was making his Bundesliga debut, came out on top in a see-saw battle with VfL Bochum, triumphing 3-2 at the Volkswagen Arena.

# Just one showstopper

Football

AFP, Narita

Superstar David Beckham arrived in Japan Sunday with Spain's champion side Real Madrid, drawing frantic screams from some 1,200 fans at the country's main international airport.

"I feel like I'm dreaming," said Chiho Kawabata, a dazed 14-year-old school girl, after seeing the football glamour boy.

The star-studded Spanish club, which includes Zinedine Zidane, Luis Figo, Ronaldo, Roberto Carlos and Raul, landed at Narita airport at around 4:00 pm (0700 GMT).

The centre of the frenzy was the team's most recent addition, Beckham, who enjoys the kind of frantic celebrity usually reserved for the most famous pop stars in Japan.

"He is so cute. I took many pictures," said triumphant 18-year-old high school girl Teruyo Izawa.

Beckham attained iconic status here during last summer's World Cup finals jointly hosted by Japan

and South Korea.

Real Madrid will hold a press conference and a practice session later Sunday.

The team will spend three days in Japan during which they will play a friendly match with J-league side F.C. Tokyo on Tuesday.

Some 55,000 tickets for the game were sold out in one week in mid-June, even before Beckham signed on with the Spanish club.

"Real Madrid is a high quality team with a strong brand identity," said a spokesman for the game's organisers last week.

"Even though the game will be a pre-season event, it has attracted a lot of interest among Japanese football fans and the general public," he said.

Real Madrid is in an Asia-wide promotional tour, playing exhibition games in Kunming and Beijing in China, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Bangkok.

The Spanish club is expected to pull in some eight million euros (9.1 million dollars) from their jaunt through Asia.



David Beckham on arrival at the New Tokyo International airport in Narita yesterday.

# Eto'o linked to Chelsea

The Sun, London

Samuel Eto'o is closer to a dream move to Chelsea after storming out of Real Mallorca's pre-season tour to England.

The Cameroon ace blew his top when new boss Jaime Pacheco refused to let him swap his shorts for tracksuit trousers.

Striker Eto'o, 22, claimed he was freezing as Mallorca trained in Birmingham on the first day of their 12-day stay.

He walked straight out of the training camp and the row will only speed his exit from Spain.

SunSport revealed on Tuesday that Chelsea have made a £15million bid for Eto'o although Mallorca's La Liga rivals Valencia are also interested.

Mallorca are due to play Derby at Pride Park tomorrow and also have games at Bolton on Wednesday and Birmingham on Saturday.

Eto'o banged in 19 goals last season, including two in Mallorca's 3-0 Spanish Cup final win over Recreativo.

# Veron decision Wednesday

Football

AFP, London

Manchester United have confirmed they are considering an official offer from Chelsea for their prize Argentine midfielder Juan Sebastian Veron.

The admission by United chairman Peter Kenyon in Sunday's Mail On Sunday came after a week of denials from coach Alex Ferguson, on tour with the Premiership champions in the United States, that Veron could be on the move to Stamford Bridge.

Kenyon told the paper: "There has now been an official offer from Chelsea for Veron and it is under review. We should be delivering a reply to the bid by Wednesday."

The significance of the Wednesday deadline lies in the fact that Chelsea will want to tie up any deal before Thursday's Champions League cut-off point.

According to Kenyon Veron has already agreed personal terms with Chelsea, who reportedly tabled a formal offer last week of around 11m pounds.

A second higher offer has since been made. United are believed to value the player at around 15m pounds.

"It would appear they (Veron's advisors and Chelsea) have reached agreements on personal terms," Kenyon said.

"But they have not spoken to Seba at this stage."

Veron arrived at Old Trafford from Lazio in 2001 on a 28.1 million pound transfer, and starred in United's 4-1 defeat of Juventus in New York on Thursday.

After watching Veron collect the man of the match award Ferguson said: "People keep seeing him on this tour and people still keep saying he is going. Unless he is going to be whisked from right under my nose they are wrong."

"Seba is a marvellous player. He has wonderful imagination, he

always wants the ball and has a great engine. He was outstanding tonight."

Ferguson was dismissive of Chelsea's chances of lifting the Premiership title this season.

"Maybe you can buy the title with the purchase of good players and sound judgment, but I don't think they will do it right away," he told the Mail On Sunday.

Chelsea have gone on a 36.9m pound (41.9m dollars) spending spree since Russian oil billionaire Roman Abramovich bought the west London club for 86m euros (97.5m dollars).

Their four new recruits are Southampton's Wayne Bridge (7m pounds), Blackburn Rover's Irish winger Damien Duff (17m pounds), Real Madrid's Cameroon midfielder Geremi (6.9m pounds) and West Ham's teenage full-back Glen Johnson (6m pounds).

# Ligue 1 Bright Nonda start

Football

AFP, Paris

Shabani Nonda kicked off Monaco's season in style by grabbing both goals in a deserved 2-0 French league triumph over Bordeaux, while Marseille left it late against Guingamp and Paris Saint-Germain froze at home against Bastia.

Congolese forward Nonda, the division's top scorer last season with 26 goals, gave the Monegasques the lead on 32 minutes with a right-footed free kick curled from 20 yards out.

Nonda, who was captaining the side in the absence of suspended Ludovic Giuly, doubled the advantage on 57 minutes with a penalty after Mauricio Pochettino had fouled Jaroslav Plasil in the box.

The victory was particularly welcome for Didier Deschamps' Monaco after a summer of problems which saw last season's runners-up demoted for financial irregularities before being re-instated on appeal.

Marseille dominated the match at Guingamp, but it took them until injury time to crack last season's surprise package.

Ivory Coast striker Ibrahim Bakayoko raced onto a through-ball and slotted home, the ball going in off the goalkeeper's inside post.

It was hard luck on home keeper Ronan Le Crom who had performed heroics throughout, earlier denying Bakayoko with his legs and somehow tipping over from Egyptian striker Mido, both from close range.

Paris Saint-Germain were held to a 0-0 draw at home to Bastia in coach Vahid Halilhodzic's first game in charge.

With Brazilian star Ronaldinho sold to Barcelona and new signing Portuguese hitman Pauleta suspended, PSG failed to find the breakthrough at the Parc des Princes against a solid Bastia outfit led by old stager Benoit Cauet.

"We're still not ready, this result is not what we hoped for," said Halilhodzic.

"We're far from what we can achieve and there's plenty of work ahead."

"We missed key players like Pauleta who can bring something extra, but I'm not totally disappointed because my boys gave everything."

Nice enjoyed a 2-1 win at French Cup holders Auxerre.



Monaco's star forward Shabani Nonda (2nd R) giving Bordeaux' a torrid time at the Louis II stadium in Monaco on August 2.

# Houllier has high hopes

AFP, Amsterdam

Liverpool boss Gerard Houllier believes that new signing Harry Kewell could prove to be the key man on the team's right-hand side as the Merseysiders launch a sustained attack on the English Premiership this season.

The Australian, who moved to Anfield from Leeds in a bitter transfer deal in the summer, returned to the side against Ajax here on Friday after missing the club's Asian tour.

The match finished 0-0, but Kewell did enough to suggest to Houllier that he could have a vital role to play in the new campaign.

"I'm trying Harry Kewell in different positions at the moment and I like him in that position on the right," the Frenchman told the club's official website www.liverpoolfc.tv.

"He's quite skilful when he comes across and causes problems for defenders when he drifts inside. He needs match fitness and that's why I pushed him right until the end of the game so he can get it. He's very talented and showed some great skill on Friday night."

Liverpool are in the Dutch city to play in the Amsterdam tournament and will face Galatasary of Turkey on Sunday.

# Ronaldinho felt let down

AFP, London

Ronaldinho says he was left with a broken heart after his forecast transfer to Manchester United failed to come off resulting in his move instead to Barcelona.

"United were definitely my first choice," the Brazil World Cup winner told Sunday's News of The World.

"Originally they were very polite but they left a lot of questions unanswered. I was left with a broken heart. I met great people in Manchester and I hope the door is open for the future."

A tortuous transfer saga ended in the Paris Saint Germain star moving to the Nou Camp rather than Old Trafford in a 30 million euro deal last month.

Ronaldinho says what upset him most was that he was so close to becoming United's first Brazil player.

He added: "Throughout the negotiations, the United people showed a certain distance while Barcelona pushed for me and presented a more personal touch."

"Things took too long and Barcelona arrived at the table. I had to make a decision because United weren't contacting me."

"My physical condition was starting to get questionable and, at the stage I am at professionally, I cannot afford that to happen."

Ferguson laid the blame for the failure to agree a transfer on Ronaldinho's brother and agent Roberto Assis.

"The only frustration we had was with his brother. We never even got the chance to sit down with the boy (Ronaldinho)," said Ferguson.

"I know he doesn't speak English anyway, but we never got to know whether he wanted to come or not. In the end we withdrew. We wanted an answer there and then."

"We gave them a deadline and we walked away. So he was left with Barcelona." "He rejected us only in the sense he didn't tell us: 'I want to join Manchester United'."

# Deportivo in the dark?

AFP, La Coruna

Deportivo La Coruna insisted on Saturday that they have not received an offer for Dutch striker Roy Makaay from Bayern Munich despite the German champions earlier revealing that a four-year contract was on the table.

"The German club haven't made a written offer for the transfer of Makaay," Deportivo said in a statement.

"Bayern Munich know perfectly well the sum required by Deportivo to conclude the transfer of Makaay and we await a written proposal from the German club."

Earlier on Saturday, Bayern said that a deal had been agreed.

"We have agreed a four year contract with Makaay. The Deportivo president has our proposition on the table, it just remains for him to say yes," Bayern general manager Uli Hoeness said at the club's open day.

However, Bayern President Karl-Heinz Rummenigge also admitted that he expected the negotiations to drag on.

"We will wait patiently, it's doubtless going to be a marathon," he said on Friday after The German champions' 3-1 win over Freiburg in the opening match of the season.

Bayern have offered 15 million euros (16.8 million dollars) for the Dutch international, who top-scored in the Spanish championship last season with 29.

To play in the Champions League with the Bavarian club, Makaay's transfer must be sealed before September 1 and he must sit out Depor's third qualifying round match with Irish outfit Bohemians or Norwegian side Rosenborg on August 12 or 13.