



Arsenal consider appealing

Football

AFP, London

Arsenal were surprisingly considering an appeal after the English Football Association fined the club 175,000 pounds (298,000 dollars) and banned four of their players for a total of nine matches.

The Premiership leaders were thinking about contesting the punishments although they have publicly admitted their players were in the wrong following clashes that erupted at the end of their draw with Manchester United last month.

Defenders Lauren and Martin Keown were banned for four and three matches respectively while skipper Patrick Vieira and Ray Parlour will each serve one-match bans for their role in the ugly post-match fracas at Old Trafford.

The players also received individual fines: 40,000 pounds (68,000 dollars) for Lauren, 20,000 (34,000) for Keown and Vieira, and 10,000 (17,000) for Parlour. Ashley Cole was also fined 10,000 pounds but escaped a ban.

A statement from Arsenal, who have had 52 players sent off in manager Arsene Wenger's seven-year reign, read: "The club are currently considering their position as far as the penalties are concerned. Arsenal require their players to behave properly at all times, both on and off the field.

"The club accept what occurred

during and immediately after the match fell well below the required standard.

"Arsene Wenger strives to ensure his players do not cross the line which divides committed play and improper or violent conduct.

"The players are instructed not to allow themselves to be provoked and are reminded their triumphs have come when they have not allowed themselves to be distracted from the game."

The suspensions will be served from Monday, November 17, meaning Wenger will have to do without all four players for the Premiership match at Birmingham on November 22.

Overall however the timing of the ban means the impact of the suspensions on Arsenal's season will not be as severe as first feared.

Although Vieira will be badly missed for the trip to Birmingham, the match is around the time he is due to come back from a thigh injury, so he may have missed out in any case.

Keown and Lauren will also miss the home match against Fulham the following weekend and the League Cup clash with Wolves with Lauren serving the final match of his ban when Arsenal travel to bottom side Leicester on December 6.

Arsenal had pleaded guilty to the charges in the hope this would encourage the FA to be lenient.

The hefty bans for Keown and

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A file photo of some Arsenal players jostling with their Manchester United counterparts after their Premiership match on September 21.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Kahn puts off retirement

Football

REUTERS, Berlin

Germany goalkeeper Oliver Kahn may postpone his planned retirement beyond 2006 because he still feels fit and eager to improve his game.

Kahn told Bild newspaper on Thursday he had originally planned to end his playing career and possibly move into management at Bayern Munich after the 2006 World Cup in Germany.

"But I get the feeling that I can still keep improving and that my body is in supershape," the 34-year-old said.

Kahn's contract as a player with Bayern runs to 2006 and includes an option to take over a management position with the club after that, possibly replacing commercial manager Uli Hoenes who is planning to retire in 2006.

Just last month Kahn said he would quit if he felt he was no longer compet-

itive after he was criticised for several poor showings.

"I accept one percent of the criticism but I will not take the remaining 99 percent because it comes from people who have no idea what goalkeeping is about," the

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OLIVER KAHN

Premiership Gunners aimed at Leeds

Football

AFP, London

Leeds manager Peter Reid could find his job on the line again if his side fail to avoid defeat at home to unbeaten Premiership leaders Arsenal on Saturday.

Back-to-back defeats by Manchester United and Liverpool have left Reid's side teetering on the edge of the abyss at second from bottom of the table.

Barely a month after he was granted a reprieve from the sack following a humiliatingly public consultation exercise by Leeds chairman Sir Roland McKenzie, Reid knows another defeat will reopen discussion of his future.

McKenzie virtually confirmed as much earlier this week when he admitted: "At any time when you are near the bottom of the table, any board is going to have a look at the situation."

Relegation would threaten Leeds

Primera Liga Atletico sink Sociedad

AFP, Madrid

Atletico Madrid provided their long suffering fans with both a trick and a treat on the night before Halloween by giving Real Sociedad a 4-0 thrashing.

The home side's second goal, which put them firmly in the driving seat, was highly controversial but there could be no complaints about the rest, which gave Atletico their third consecutive victory.

It was the first time Atletico had managed to string together three victories since their return to the top flight of the Spanish first division at the start of last season.

Parreira picks Juninho

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Brazil coach Carlos Alberto Parreira caused a surprise by picking Lyon's Juninho for two South American 2006 World Cup qualifiers next month.

Parreira preferred Juninho to Manchester United's Kleberston, who has only just come back from injury, against Peru in Lima on November 16 and at home to Uruguay in Curitiba three days later.

The Brazil coach had high praise for the new call-up.

"I selected Juninho as he is an excellent player who is in fine form physically and technically and with great experience," Parreira said.

Brazil's established stars Roberto Carlos, Ronaldinho, Ronaldo and Rivaldo were also called up in a 17-man squad from players at clubs outside Brazil.

Brazil won their first two matches in the 10-nation group, a 2-1 victory over Colombia and a 1-0 win over Ecuador.

SQUAD

GOALKEEPER: Dida (AC Milan/ITA)

DEFENDERS: Cafu (AC Milan/ITA), Belletti (Villareal/SPA), Lucio (Bayer Leverkusen/GER), Juan (Bayer Leverkusen/GER), Edmilson (Lyon/FRA), Roque Junior (Leeds United/ENG), Roberto Carlos (Real Madrid/SPA), Junior (Parma/ITA)

MIDFIELDERS: Emerson (AS Rome/ITA), Ze Roberto (Bayern Munich/GER), Gilberto (Arsenal/ENG), Juninho (Lyon/FRA), Kaka (AC Milan/ITA), Ronaldinho Gaucho (Barcelona/SPA)

STRIKERS: Ronaldinho (Real Madrid/SPA), Rivaldo (AC Milan/ITA)

Primera Liga Sweating over Becks

Football

AFP, Madrid

Concerns over the fitness of David Beckham continue to plague Real Madrid, who may be without the England captain for their successive game when they face Athletic Bilbao on Saturday.

Beckham suffered a hamstring injury against Partizan Belgrade in the Champions League nine days ago.

The reigning Spanish champions managed to pick up four points from their outings at Racing Santander and Real Zaragoza but they looked rather less than the Real deal without Beckham.

Beckham trained lightly on Thursday but called it quits after just an hour. "Keep your fingers crossed that I'm going to be OK for Saturday," he said afterwards.

The other Real fitness doubt, as they bid to grab the league leadership from Deportivo La Coruna, is over Ivan Helguera.

The Spanish international has back problems, which leaves Real coach Carlos Queiroz with holes to fill both in midfield and defence due to the absence of suspended Francisco Pavon, who was sent off during Real's 0-0 draw at Zaragoza on Tuesday.

Queiroz called up seven reserve team players to train with the first team on Thursday and several of them could be on the bench on Saturday.

Nevertheless, Real should not be overly worried by the visit of Athletic, who have not won away from home this season despite lying sixth.

It has been just over four months since the Basques were last in the Santiago Bernabeu and they were easily

dispatched 3-1 in the final game of last season as Real clinched their 29th Spanish league title.

Athletic also have injury worries of their own, with their influential midfielder Tiko Martinez suffering from a badly-bruised right leg which may mean he misses the trip to the Spanish capital.

Deportivo are on top 21 points from

Club medical officials later said he was suffering from gastro-enteritis and was doubtful for Saturday.

Third-placed Valencia are also just one point behind Deportivo despite stumbling on Wednesday when they could only draw 2-2 at home to Celta Vigo.

"I wasn't satisfied which went on out there," said Valencia coach Rafa



DAVID BECKHAM

their nine games, one more than second-placed Real, will be out to bounce back at struggling Murcia after crashing 2-0 at home to Real Mallorca on Wednesday, arguably the shock result of the season.

"I think that will be a kick up the backside to all of us," said Deportivo midfielder Sergio Gonzalez on Thursday.

Deportivo's Spanish international striker Diego Tristan, was clearly out of sorts against Mallorca and did not train on Thursday.

Benitez and they will be looking to do better at Mallorca on Sunday.

However the 2001/2002 champions will have to do without their Spanish international midfielder Vicente Rodriguez, who suffered a sprained left ankle on Wednesday.

The injury was bad enough for the club to admit that there was a question mark over whether he would recover in time for international duty in two weeks' time, when

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UEFA punishes England, Turkey



REUTERS, Nyon

The English and Turkish Football Associations have been given what amounts to a "slap on the wrists" by UEFA following a halftime fracas between their players during their European Championship qualifier in Istanbul on October 11.

The FA were fined 10,000 Swiss francs (3,845 pounds) by UEFA's Disciplinary Committee on Thursday for their part in the tunnel melee while the Turkish FA were fined 30,000 Swiss francs for the lack of order in the Suku Saracoglu stadium in Istanbul where

missiles were thrown during the game.

The Turkish FA were also cited, like England, for the "improper conduct" of its players, and additionally, for the behaviour of one of its security officers during the tunnel brawl.

UEFA's Disciplinary Committee reviewed video evidence of the incident and also dealt with the match reports of the referee Pierluigi Collina and the match observer as well as taking statements from both FAs. No individual players were charged. Collina did not mention any specific players in his report.

Video pictures of the fracas, broadcast by TV channels in both Turkey and England, do not show

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Serie A Champs League final revisited

Football

AFP, Rome

Leaders AC Milan host Juventus in a repeat of last season's Champions League final at the San Siro on Saturday as the top two teams in Italy clash in domestic league action.

Milan lead the table from Juventus on goal difference after seven matches but the Old Lady of Turin captain Alessandro Del Piero said he was

confident they could regain top spot.

Del Piero, who is likely to be sidelined through injury, said: "I'm confident we can get the three points. It will be a very open game where both sides will look to implement their very own brand of football.

"History tells us that Juventus and Milan will look for the win. They are two great clubs in every single department."

Del Piero, who signed a four-year

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Workers paint a 3-D advertisement of sponsor TVS on the ground while securitymen stand guard at the Wankhede Stadium in Bombay yesterday. India and Australia meet in a TVS Cup match here today.

PHOTO: AFP

Ronaldo unhappy

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid striker Ronaldo has made it clear that he is unhappy about being substituted by coach Carlos Queiroz on so many occasions this season.

"I don't like being taken off," the Brazilian international told Spanish state television on Thursday.

"But I have no choice but to accept it. I can't do anything because it is the coach's decision and I have to abide by it."

Ronaldo, who is the World and European Player of the Year, has been substituted in the nine of the 11 domestic and European games he has played this season but he says he wants to stay on the pitch for the full 90 minutes.

"I haven't analysed whether the substitutions were right or not but I know for sure that, just like any other player, I want to play all the time.

The 27-year-old, who joined Real in a deal worth up to 45 million euros (\$52.68 million) in August 2002, was the club's top scorer last season with 23 goals and has set himself a target of 35 in all competitions for the present campaign.

He is Real's leading scorer so far this term with six goals and, although he has gone three games without getting on the scoresheet, he believes he still has plenty to offer this side.

"I know that even when I'm not playing well I can score goals and win games," he said.

Barthez deal vetoed

Football

AFP, Zurich

Fabien Barthez's loan deal to Marseille from Manchester United has not been authorized, football's world governing body FIFA said.

The French football federation, which had handed the transfer request to FIFA, was told on Thursday to inform the player and the two clubs concerned.

Marseille can still contest the decision, according to FIFA rules, but this course of action would likely take some time.

English Premiership champions Manchester United had reached agreement with Marseille for the one-year contract for France's 1998 World Cup winning goal keeper earlier this month but the move had needed to be ratified by FIFA because it occurred outside the transfer window.

Barthez, who has two and a half years left on his United contract, had dropped down the pecking order at Old Trafford since manager Alex Ferguson signed American keeper Tim Howard in the summer with Northern Ireland's Roy Carroll as Howard's deputy.

Marseille keeper Vedran Runje said:

"I'm a bit sad for Fabien. I respect him a lot and I get on with him well in training. Unfortunately the club are going to have to look for a new keeper.

"I think Fabien has a role to play at Manchester United. I wish him all the luck."

Marseille striker Steve Marlet said: "We're a bit surprised by the decision. This news is going to be well covered in the press which

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FABIEN BARTHEZ