

Looking down the barrel



AFP, Paris

Arsenal's latest European adventure will come to another premature end on Wednesday if they lose their crucial Champions League clash against Dynamo Kiev at Highbury.

Despite leading the English Premiership, where they haven't been beaten all season and have dropped just six points from 33, they have been struck down by stagefright on European nights and have now gone eight matches without a win.

They are propping up Group B with one point from three matches and have lost twice including a 2-1 defeat to Dynamo Kiev who are the visitors on Wednesday.

They are already five points behind joint leaders Dynamo and Inter Milan.

"I think our record in the Champions League should be better," said Arsenal striker Dennis Bergkamp.

"You can't keep saying you are one of the best teams in Europe, you have to show it. If we do that then we can say it but at the moment we haven't proved that in Europe.

"We take some risks in Premier League games. We go forward, we know our opposition and we play as we know we can play. Sometimes in Europe we play with the handbrake on and we don't know what we can achieve or what we can do."

Group leaders Inter Milan, who crashed 3-0 at Lokomotiv Moscow two weeks ago, will edge closer to the knockout phase if they clinch a revenge win at the San Siro.

"We'll do everything we can to win. If we do it means we'll be very close to

qualifying for the last 16," said Inter coach Alberto Zaccheroni.

"It's going to be tough as Lokomotiv are a team in form."

Like Arsenal, Celtic too are propping up Group A with three points but they are still in contention thanks mostly to the indifferent form of their rivals.

Bayern Munich lead the table, but are just two points ahead of Martin O'Neill's men having drawn 1-1 with both Anderlecht and Lyon in their last two matches.

FIXTURES	
Champions League group phase fixtures on Wednesday:	
Group A	At Munich Bayern Munich (GER) v Lyon (FRA) At Glasgow Celtic (SCO) v Anderlecht (BEL)
Group B	At London Arsenal (ENG) v Dynamo Kiev (UKR) At Milan Inter Milan (ITA) v Lokomotiv Moscow (RUS)
Group C	At Monaco Monaco (FRA) v Deportivo La Coruna (SPA) At Endhoven PSV Eindhoven (NED) v AEK Athens (GRE)
Group D	At Athens Olympiakos (GRE) v Galatasaray (TUR) At San Sebastien Real Sociedad (SPA) v Juventus (ITA)

Celtic striker John Hartson believes home advantage will be key when they face Anderlecht at Parkhead having lost 1-0 to the Belgians last timeout.

The Welsh striker acknowledged that Celtic need to beat both Anderlecht and Bayern at home - before going to Lyon - to have any chance of qualifying.

"I am a little bit surprised that they are not further away," admitted Hartson.

"It's been lucky for us in that when we have dropped points other results have gone in our favour.

"We are still right in the group and the good thing is we have two home games to come so it's in our own hands."

German champions Bayern Munich host French counterparts Lyon hoping to hit back after a 2-0 league defeat to Schalke 04 over the weekend.

It will be an emotional night for Giovane Elber who is returning to his former club having left Germany to make way for Roy Makaay in the summer.

Lyon are in fine form and hammered Nice 5-0 in their last league match, with 31-year-old Elber on the score sheet.

The Brazilian striker fears a backlash from his wounded former club who he knows all too well after six years in Bavaria.

"This team reacts when they have their backs to the wall," warned Elber. "Bayern showed their true colours at difficult times like this."

Group C also sees a top of the table clash with Deportivo La Coruna travelling to Monaco with a one-point lead over their French counterparts.



JUST REHEARSING! Inter Milan striker Christian Vieri executing a side-volley during training at the Appiano Gentile on November 3.

Turks get strict



AFP, Ankara

The Turkish government is planning to introduce a series of measures, including jail terms, to punish troublemakers at football matches, a senior government minister said Monday.

Under the draft plan, troublemakers will be barred from stadiums for a specific time for a first-time offence, Anatolia news agency quoted deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Ali Sahin as saying.

A repeat of the offence will bring about a life ban, he added. The measures also envisage prison terms for troublemakers, Sahin said, giving no details.

His remarks came in the wake of a tense league match on Friday between leading Istanbul clubs Besiktas and Galatasaray at the former's home ground which was marred by crowd trouble.

Before kick-off, Galatasaray coach Fatih Terim came under a barrage of

abuse and swearing from Besiktas fans, who also threw missiles at the Galatasaray benches.

The game, which ended in a goalless draw, was stopped twice by the referee when Besiktas spectators threw flares at opposing fans and when Galatasaray supporters tore down fences separating them from the pitch.

After the match ended, Galatasaray's midfielder Ayhan was slapped by a man thought to be a security official, sparking a brawl in the tunnel.

Besiktas president Serdar Bilgili told a press conference in Istanbul on Monday that he deeply regretted the incidents and vowed to track down those responsible.

"We failed to show the hospitality that is a trademark of our club," Bilgili said.

"We will now evaluate the incidents as a club. We will sanction those responsible accordingly and take measures to avoid a repeat of such trouble," he added.

The club, which is currently leading the league with 29 points, could face sanctions from the Turkish football federation over Friday's incidents.

Premiership Holland breaches St Andrews



AFP, Birmingham

Republic of Ireland midfielder Matt Holland opened his scoring account for Charlton when he grabbed both goals in a 2-1 win at Birmingham City as the Midlands lost their nine-month unbeaten home record at St Andrew's on Monday.

But the Londoners' win, their third away success in a row, was also achieved with some stunning saves from their goalkeeper, and man-of-the-match, Dean Kiely.

The win took Charlton to seventh in the Premiership table while Birmingham stay in fourth spot, eight points behind leaders Arsenal after 11 games.

"I made some good saves," said Kiely. "Birmingham are a hard working side and this is a difficult place to come and get a result."

Birmingham went behind after just 11 minutes when Holland, who moved from Ipswich in the summer, headed in a corner from Claus Jensen.

They made it 2-0 just before the hour mark when another Jensen corner fell for Graham Stuart to shoot at the target. His drive was blocked but the ball came back to Holland who scored easily from six yards.

Despite the win, Holland said Charlton won't be getting carried away.

"It was a tall order for us to come here as they had eight clean sheets in ten games," said Holland.

"We said at the start of the season that our target was to get to 40 points to be safe. Last season we finished in 11th place, now we hope to finish higher."

French international striker Christophe Dugarry gave Birmingham hope with a fine headed goal after 64 minutes.

He thought he had scored again three minutes later but his bullet header was brilliantly saved at point-blank range by Kiely and the keeper was on his toes again in the closing minutes to deny Mikael Forssell.

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TOP SIX	
English Premiership table after Monday's match (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):	
Arsenal	11 8 3 0 23 9 27
Chelsea	11 8 2 1 21 9 26
Man Utd	11 8 1 2 21 6 25
Birmingham	11 5 4 2 10 7 19
Man City	11 5 3 3 22 12 18
Fulham	11 5 3 3 21 15 18



MR. HOLLAND'S OPUS! Charlton Athletic forward Matt Holland is over the moon after scoring one of his two goals against Birmingham City at the St Andrew's Stadium in Birmingham on November 3.

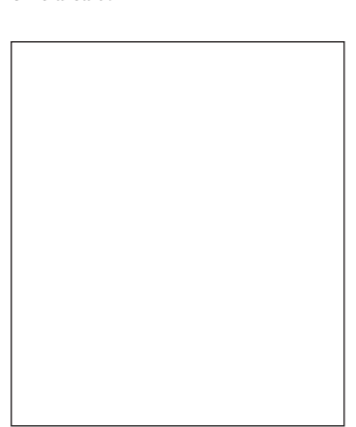
Eagles reconsider Robson deal

AFP, Lagos

Nigeria's sports ministry has postponed the arrival of former England skipper Bryan Robson to take charge of its national team while it re-examines his proposed pay deal, an official source said Monday.

"Robson has been ordered to stay back in England," an official familiar with arrangements for the former Premiership coach to be appointed to lead the Super Eagles to next year's African Nations Cup.

"He was to have arrived Monday to formalise his short-term contract... but the Nigeria Football Association (NFA) are yet to get an approval from the supervising sports ministry," the official said.



The official said that sports ministry officials were particularly concerned about the cash-strapped NFA's ability to pay Robson's reported 300,000 dollar wage-bill for six months' work.

Robson had been expected to arrive in Nigeria on Monday to sign his contract and present his plans for the Tunisia 2004 African Nations Cup to the NFA board and the media on Tuesday.

Morris back in training

AP, Leeds

Jody Morris has been cleared by Leeds United to return to training even though he remains under police investigation in connection with two alleged sexual assaults.

Leeds said Monday that the midfielder, who has been suspended or on leave for nearly a month, had fulfilled the terms of unspecified disciplinary measures brought against him by the club. He is to resume training Tuesday.

"Disciplinary proceedings against Jody Morris were concluded this morning in accordance with the procedures set out in his contract of employment," a club statement said.

"It should be noted that these proceedings did not relate to matters forming the subject of the on-going police investigation."

Morris, who moved to Leeds from Chelsea over the summer, was suspended on Oct. 9 by the club for two weeks pending an internal investigation after he was arrested and released on bail without charge in connection with an alleged sexual assault on a 20-year-old woman.

On Oct. 22, he was released on bail in connection with a second allegation of sexual assault. Two days later the club announced he was taking a 10-day leave of absence.

Typical US mentality!



AP, Baghdad

Iraq's soccer coach criticized the U.S.-led coalition for ignoring his team and threatened to resign unless authorities help with preparations for the Asian championships.

"In a country without any working cinemas or theaters, where people are afraid to go out at night, the successes of our team are a matter of huge national pride," Bernd Stange said Sunday.

"That's important for the return of normalcy. Doesn't the coalition, doesn't Paul Bremer understand this?"

Stange, from Germany, complained that Bremer, Iraq's chief U.S. administrator, had provided no support for the team and had not even called to congratulate the players after they qualified for the Asia Cup, the continent's most prestigious competition that will be played in China in June.

The Associated Press called coalition spokesmen several times, but they were either out of their office or would not comment.

Soccer is by far the most popular sport in the country, and the national team was considered a regional powerhouse in the 1980s. In 1986, it took part in the World Cup in Mexico.

Stange, who used to coach East Germany and Australia's Perth Glory, took over the Iraqi national team in

November. He remained outside the country during the U.S.-led invasion that ended in May with the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

Stange returned to Baghdad soon after to find the soccer infrastructure devastated by looters and the invading forces.

"I came here and found nothing, no balls, no nets, no funds, no competitions and no players," he said. "The main stadium had been turned into a parking lot for American tanks and its turf destroyed."

Stange quickly reassembled the team ahead of the qualifiers for the Asia Cup, which Iraq had to play in Malaysia and Bahrain because it was impossible to have home games.

"We started from zero and we had three months to prepare for the qualifiers, but we did it," he said. "We came ahead in our group of teams that had spent millions to get to China."

FIFA, world soccer's ruling body, and the Asian Football Confederation provided funding and equipment and are assisting in refurbishing the national stadium and the soccer federation headquarters, which was destroyed during the war.

The German Football Union paid for his team to come and train in Germany.

"Without that help we would not have been able to qualify for the Asia Cup at the top of our group," he said.

Stange lauded his "extremely talented and motivated" players as well as the leadership of the Iraqi

association, including interim president Hussain Saeed Mohamed, vice president Ahmed Rhady and other volunteers "who are working 20 hours a day without pay to revive the national league."

"But for the coalition, I only have hard words," Stange said. "I know that soccer is not the most important thing in life, but this country has always been crazy about the game and they should understand that our successes are helping boost morale and lift Iraq from the ashes."

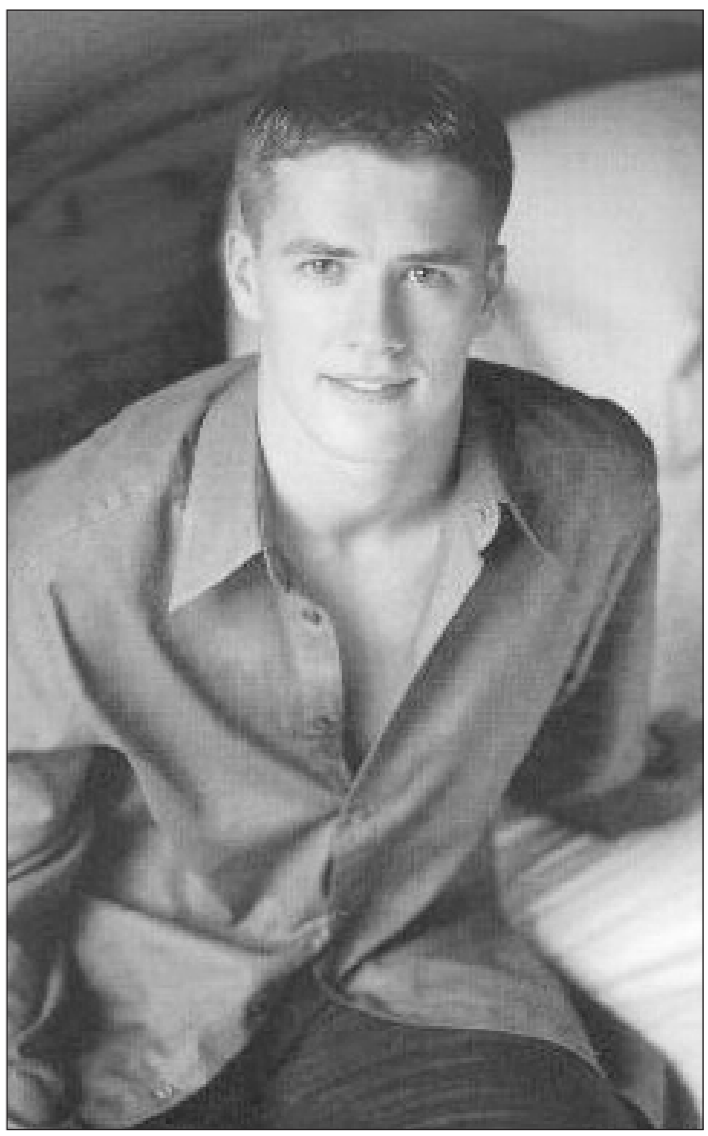
He said that without an immediate infusion of money for soccer, it will be impossible to keep the national team together because all of its members have already signed or have been offered lucrative contracts in the Gulf countries and Saudi Arabia.

"If there is no change, I will leave my job by the end of the year," Stange said.

In postwar Iraq, even the national coach is not immune to dangers. This week gunmen shot his driver in the leg, arm and head. On other occasion, Stange drove through a firefight between American troops and Iraqi fighters near the city of Fallujah.

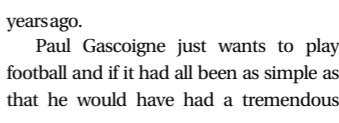
Stange says he wants to remain in Iraq because he believes the team will do well in the Asia Cup and qualify for the World Cup in Germany in 2006.

"That's my plan, I want them to play in my country as a symbol of the new Iraq," Stange said.



MICHAEL OWEN

Premiership beckons Gazza?



BBC ONLINE, London

Paul Gascoigne has received backing from long-time mentor Walter Smith in the battle to resurrect his fading football career.

Gascoigne insists he is only a fortnight away from an unlikely Premiership comeback as he works at Wolves with boss Dave Jones.

And Smith - who signed Gascoigne for Rangers and Everton and became a close confidant of the troubled star - believes he could yet make the big stage again.

He told this website that he believes 36-year-old Gascoigne could yet find a Premiership role to play, even as a wildcard.

Smith said: "I think he's capable of making a showing. I don't think at the present time he will be capable of coming back and reproducing form of five or six

years ago. Paul Gascoigne just wants to play football and if it had all been as simple as that he would have had a tremendous career

"But I still think he's got the ability, if he can get a good level of match fitness, to be a help to Wolves at certain stages of the season.

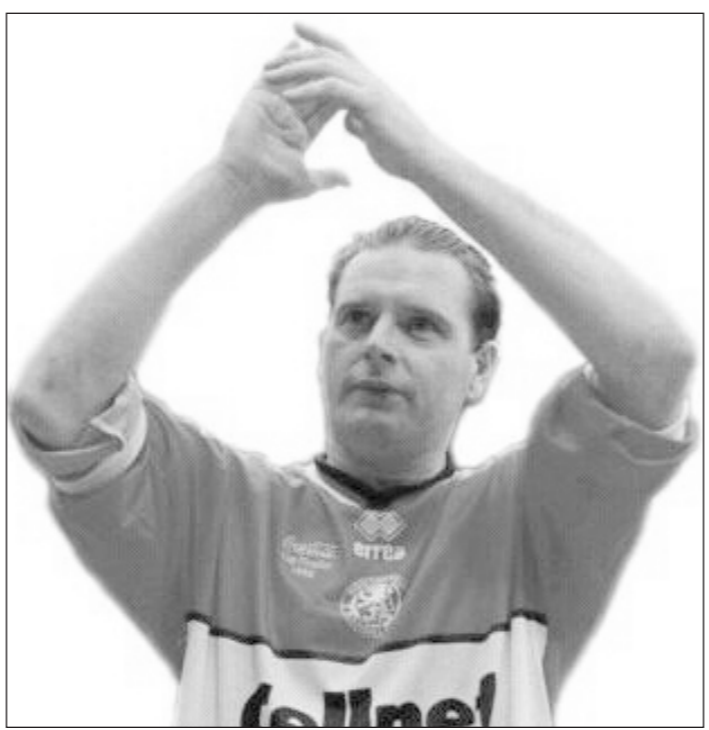
"He could be a wildcard. This is what I was hoping he would be for me at Everton - but he was actually much more than that.

"He played exceptionally well and it was only injuries in January two seasons running that upset him to a degree.

"Now that he's back after having some disappointments, and David Jones has been good enough to let him go to Wolves, I'm sure he can repay him.

"I think he can make a contribution. Maybe not in the manner he would have done a few years ago, but he can still be productive at certain stages."

Smith is delighted Gascoigne is back in



PAUL GASCOIGNE