

## Gravesen ends int'l career

AFP, Paris

Celtic midfielder Thomas Gravesen has announced that he will no longer be available to play international football for Denmark.

The 30-year-old Gravesen, who recently joined the Scottish champions after a brief stint with Real Madrid, told the Ritzau news agency that he wanted to fully concentrate on playing for his new club.

"With my transfer to Celtic, I think it is the right moment to end my international career. I just don't have the energy I had two or three years ago," he said.

Gravesen played 66 times for his country and scored five goals.

National coach Morten Olsen said he had been aware of Gravesen's intentions for several months and had tried to persuade the player to change his mind but with no success.

The loss of Gravesen will be a body blow for the Danes as they try to qualify for the Euro 2008 finals in Austria and Switzerland.

## Lennon injured

REUTERS, Prague

Tottenham Hotspur's winning return to European action was soured on Thursday by the news that England winger Aaron Lennon could be out for up to six weeks with a knee injury that will require surgery.

Lennon, who missed Tottenham's 1-0 UEFA Cup first round, first leg victory at Slavia Prague, suffered a slight tear in the cartilage of his right knee in training last Friday.

The teenager, who made a big impact at the World Cup, will almost certainly miss England's Euro 2008 qualifying ties against Macedonia and Croatia next month.

Tottenham's Dutch coach Martin Jol said he had been hoping Lennon could avoid an operation.

"He is a young guy and we thought he might be able to get away without surgery but he has had more pain and the doctors have decided he will go in for an operation on Saturday," Jol told reporters.

"He could be out of action for six weeks."

Midfielder Jermaine Jenas scored the only goal in Prague to make Tottenham favourites to progress in their first European campaign since 1999.

## Rosicky expects baptism of fire

THE GUARDIAN

Arsenal players have been known to suffer chastening first experiences of Old Trafford, as Jose Antonio Reyes can testify, but Tomas Rosicky is relishing Sunday's trip to Manchester United. The midfielder expects a physical encounter and his insistence that he is unafraid of being hit by powerful tackles will delight Arsene Wenger ahead of a game that, even at this juncture, looks pivotal for his squad.

Defeat would leave Arsenal 13 points behind Sir Alex Ferguson's team, a forlorn situation even with a game in hand. Wenger's side have lost their past two Premiership matches at Old Trafford, including the infamous "Battle of the Buffet" in October 2004 when their long unbeaten league run ended.

Wenger claimed Reyes was "kicked off the park" that day but the slightly built Rosicky is not afraid of what his inaugural taste of the occasion might bring. The teams' past few meetings have been relatively tame, with United largely holding the upper hand, but Rosicky anticipates a bruising match. He recalls the ugly scenes in 2003 provoked by Arsenal's reaction to a penalty miss by Ruud van Nistelrooy.

"I know it will be physical at Old Trafford," Rosicky said. "I remember the game at Old Trafford with what happened with Van Nistelrooy. Everyone remembers that one. I'm looking forward to it. I know it will be tough but I said when I joined Arsenal that you will never see me jump when the tackles come in. I'm not as strong as some but I'm not scared either."

The 25-year-old emphasised after Wednesday's win at Hamburg that he had been aware what to expect when he left Borussia Dortmund in May. "England is tough, more physical," he said. "I knew it would be very physical and I was prepared for that."

"I played in Germany and I'm used to that. I had a very hard time in Germany at the start of my career because teams would play with a man-marker on me and it was difficult, so it was good preparation for England. The Manchester United game will be very difficult for us. We haven't started well in the Premier League but I hope this win will make us more confident and then we can win at Manchester."



Liverpool and England striker Peter Crouch (R) takes part in training drills at Anfield on Thursday ahead of their titanic clash against Chelsea in the English Premier League on Sunday.

# Feud at rest, battle still raging

AFP, London



Rafael Benitez has sued for peace in his long-running feud with Jose Mourinho, insisting he will gladly shake the Chelsea manager's hand at the end of Liverpool's match at Chelsea on Sunday.

But the diplomatic gesture will not prevent the Liverpool manager from doing his utmost to upset Mourinho in a match Liverpool badly need to take something from after a stuttering start to the season.

With Manchester United kicking off against Arsenal half an hour after hostilities have ended at Stamford Bridge, the balance of power in what has the potential to be the most intriguing Premiership title battle in years should be much clearer by Sunday night.

It will also be clear whether Mourinho has accepted Benitez's offer to draw a line under the unseemly spat between the two managers which resulted in them failing to shake hands at the end of either last year's FA Cup semi-final or the Community Shield last month.

The Iberian feud dates back to Liverpool's defeat of Chelsea in the 2005 Champions League semi-

final, with the help of a controversial goal by Luis Garcia at Anfield.

Mourinho, it seems, has been unable to forgive Benitez for wrecking his chance of claiming back-to-back European Cup triumphs with different teams following his 2004 victory with Porto, and has been sniping at the Liverpool boss ever since.

Relations were not helped when Jose Reina was sent off at Stamford Bridge after Arjen Robben theatrically fell to the ground in response to a featherweight touch from the Liverpool goalkeeper, prompting Benitez to brand Mourinho's Dutch winger a cheat.

Now however, the Spaniard insists he wants to create a more amicable relationship. "For me it is time to finish with this situation," said Benitez. "At the end of the

game I will wait and see if he offers his hand. If he does then I'll shake it."

After a traumatic 3-0 hammering from local rivals Everton last weekend, Liverpool appeared to have rediscovered their defensive solidity in a goalless Champions League draw at PSV Eindhoven in midweek.

But recent history suggests a victory at Stamford Bridge, where Mourinho has yet to lose a league match, could be beyond them. Like Liverpool, Arsenal can ill-afford to come away from their Sunday appointment empty-handed. Arsene Wenger's men having secured only two points from their opening three fixtures.

Wenger however has taken heart from his side's first win of the season, a 2-1 success at Hamburg in the Champions League on Wednesday, and struck a bullish tone in the aftermath of that success.

"It was important to win so we can go into the Manchester United match knowing how to win as we have not managed to do it in the league," he said. "I think you will see an interesting game on Sunday."

United will have to do without Ryan Giggs, who has been sidelined for three weeks with a hamstring strain, but Cristiano Ronaldo will return after missing the midweek win over Celtic through suspension.

United boss Alex Ferguson will be looking for more of the same from Louis Saha and Paul Scholes, both outstanding in midweek, and an improvement from Wayne Rooney, who made a lacklustre return to action in the same game.

By the time the big guns go head to head on Sunday, either Portsmouth or Everton could be sitting on top of the table.

Both clubs are within two points of United after winning three and drawing one of their opening fixtures.

Everton will expect to take all three points from near neighbours Wigan at Goodison Park while Harry Redknapp's Portsmouth travel to Charlton looking to extend their run of clean sheets to five matches.

## Three match ban for Dabo

AFP, London

Manchester City's French defender Ousmane Dabo must serve a three-match suspension after his sending off in the 1-0 Premiership defeat at Reading earlier this week.

The 29-year-old was shown a straight red card for serious foul play after being involved in an aerial challenge with Steve Sidwell on Monday and City's appeal against the sending off was thrown out.

# Lyon focus on league

AFP, Paris



After their classy Champions League win over Real Madrid in midweek Lyon renew their assault on a sixth successive French title in Brittany on Saturday against Lorient.

Gerard Houllier said his side's stellar performance at the Stade Gerland had made him proud to be sitting in the dugout as Lyon manager, and it wasn't hard to see why as Lyon blew Real apart.

"Our play in the first half was sublime," said Houllier. "The side has grown in both experience and maturity, and it will continue to make progress. I was very proud to be Lyon's manager tonight," the former

Liverpool boss added.

Such was Lyon's superiority Gregory Coupet was left twiddling his thumbs in goal for much of Wednesday's game.

The long-haired France international said: "The team made me dream against Real. Today Lyon commands respect. With my warriors in front of me I didn't have a lot to do. (Jeremy) Toulalan is getting better and better."

Given this imperious display Lorient, lying seventh, five points off the leaders, look to be in for a torrid time of it when Fred, who came up with the first goal in the 2-0 win over Real, and company slip into town.

Toulalan, the midfielder signed from Nantes for a reported 7.5 million euros as a replacement to Mahamadou Diarra, warned: "I don't know whether the coach is going to make any changes but we're going to Brittany to bring back a win."

"Although this match comes just after the Real game as a player it's better to play than to train. We've just got to refocus and try to recover well."

Houllier will be without his Norwegian striker John Carew, who is out for a fortnight with a thigh problem.

Lyon are lying second on goal difference to Marseille who after their resounding win over bitter rivals Paris Saint Germain last weekend will be hoping their renaiss-

sance continues when they host Bordeaux.

Marseille have an identical record as Lyon this campaign with four wins and a draw, with their success at PSG's Parc des Princes gained in no small part by the darting runs and precision passing of France international Franck Ribery.

"We deserved our win against PSG," said Marseille coach Albert Emon. "But going head to head with Lyon? I don't know whether that's possible, but we're certainly keen to do that! If we can trouble them, we won't stop that happening."

PSG have failed to cut much ice in the opening exchanges of the season and travel down to Monaco in search of only their second win from six outings.

FIXTURES	
<b>Saturday</b>	Sedan v Le Mans, Sochaux v Lens, Lille v Toulouse, Troyes v Nice, Lorient v Lyon, Valenciennes v Nantes
<b>Sunday</b>	Monaco v Paris Saint Germain, Saint Etienne v Auxerre, Nancy v Rennes, Marseille v Bordeaux

# Cannavaro bemoans lack of preparation



THE GUARDIAN

Real Madrid may have rebuilt extensively in the summer, adding a World Cup winning captain and a proven manager to their set-up, but familiar weaknesses came back to haunt them in their opening Champions League Group E pool defeat by Lyon on Wednesday. The Italy captain Fabio Cannavaro, their biggest summer signing, blamed Real's fitness levels for their 2-0 defeat in France.

"Lyon were much quicker than us, particularly in the first half," the former Juventus defender said. "I think the problem is basically a question of fitness. I see this as the important factor more than lapses in concentration."

A measure of embarrassment may underlie Cannavaro's remarks as Lyon's opening goal came after a long pass from Juninho caught the

defender out, allowing Fred to dash past him to score in the 11th minute. Sidney Govou set up Tiago through a ragged defence for Lyon's second in the 31st minute.

Uncertain at the back and ponderous in midfield, Real did not get into the game until the second half and even then rarely threatened the home goal. Worrying for the new Real coach Fabio Capello, it was the players brought in to add steel during the summer - Cannavaro, Emerson and the former Lyon player

Mahamadou Diarra - who appeared most out of sorts.

The Spaniards' best player was their goalkeeper Iker Casillas who made a number of fine saves to deny Lyon more goals. "They are a very strong team," said Casillas. "They were very quick up front and on the counter, and grew in confidence with the number of chances they created."

"They were in better shape than us and this was clear to see on the pitch. We have to look to take the

positives from the game but in all honesty there were very few."

It is the third time in as many years that the nine-times European champions have suffered demoralising defeats on the opening day of the group stages of the Champions League. Last September they lost 3-0 to Lyon under Vanderlei Luxemburgo and a year earlier a 3-0 hammering at the hands of Bayer Leverkusen was soon followed by the resignation of Jose Antonio Camacho.

**CAPELLO LES PEGO DURO: "Fuisteis un desastre"**  
**Y EMERSON ANALIZA LA DEBACLE**  
**Los jugadores piden perdón**  
**El campeón resolvió sin más florituras**  
**EL ANALISIS DE EMERSON**  
**NO QUEREMOS PERDER, PERO LA AFICION NO SE MERECE ESTO. EL BRASILEÑO SE DISCULPA EN NOMBRE DEL VESTUARIO**  
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Real Madrid's Brazilian midfielder Emerson pictured on the cover of Spanish daily Marca after he apologised during an interview with the paper saying "the supporters did not deserve the loss against Lyon. The problem is in the mind, to win we have to show personality and run a lot more. We can improve."

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