Moratti to be quizzed

AFP, Milan

Inter Milan owner Massimo Moratti will be quizzed by Italian football federation (FIGC) investigators next week on the club's role in the Serie A matchfixing scandal, according to press reports here Friday.

Gazzetta dello Sport reported that Moratti himself requested the FIGC hearing which will take place next Tuesday to reaffirm that Inter Milan had no part in phone tapping allega-

"I know what Inter has done and what I did and I'm a bit astonished reading certain things and the credence that is given to certain theories,

the Interboss told Gazzetta. Moratti has denied allegations that the club hired private investigators to spy on disgraced referee Massimo De

De Sanctis was given a four-match ban by FIGC for his part in the matchfixing scandal and has since accused Inter of tailing him in 2002.

The FIGC have not ordered an investigation into De Sanctis' claims, but according to Italian media reports, Francesco Saverio Borrelli, head of the FIGC's match-fixing investigation, is considering doing so.

Inter, who finished third in Serie A last season but were awarded the title after Juventus and AC Milan were penalised for rigging matches, were not implicated in the match-fixing

The scandal involved clubs, referees and high-ranked FIGC officials and resulted in the relegation of Juventus to the second division with a 17-point penalty.

The four other clubs found guilty of fraud -- AC Milan, Lazio, Fiorentina, and Reggina -- kept their status in Italy's top division but were all deducted points.

Asamoah sidelined

AFP, Berlin

Schalke 04's German international striker Gerald Asamoah will miss most of the season after suffering an horrific double lea fracture during his side's 3-1 UEFA Cup defeat at Nancy on Thursday night.

A second-half substitute, Asamoah was the victim of a tackle by Nancy's Senegalese defender Pape Diakhate after 64 minutes of play.
The 27-year-old World Cup player

was stretchered off the pitch and underwent surgery in the northeastern French city overnight where he will remain for a few days.

Schalke confirmed Friday that the 27-year-old would be out of action "for at least several months".

"The break is clean, the operation went well, but Gerald will be out until at least early 2007," said team doctor Thorsten Rarreck.

"I've never seen anything like it," said Schalke captain Marcelo Bordon. "I don't understand why they (Nancy) only received a yellow card for

Wenger concerned about English clubs

AFP, London

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger on Friday expressed his concerns about the number of foreign owners of Premiership clubs.

The Frenchman lined out a first XI in the Champions League on Wednesday without an British player Wolfsburg," Kahn said. in the line-up.

But he believes that something is being lost as a result of the takeover of top clubs by non-British owners.

This trend (of foreign ownership) does worry me. Generally you want the clubs to be in control of their own destiny. If you suddenly have 20 foreign investors who buy 20 English clubs you are in danger." Wenger told Arsenal's magazine

"The manager is foreign, the players are foreign, you need to draw a line. England doesn't control it any

"I feel the soul of football in this country is first granted by the owners of the clubs. Here, for example, at Arsenal I feel I am really at an English

"Traditionally the people who owned the clubs were first and foremost supporters. If that ceases to be the case then the clubs lose some-

Gourcuff out for three weeks

REUTERS, Rome

AC Milan midfielder Yoann Gourcuff is expected to be out of action for about three weeks after badly bruising a rib, the Serie Aclub said on Friday.

The 20-year-old France under-21 international, bought from Rennes during the transfer window, suffered the injury during training for Tuesday's 0-0 Champions League draw against

He will miss Serie A matches against Siena and Sampdoria, but should be ready to return for Milan's home game against Palermo on

Romario to play for Adelaide

Football

AFP, Sydney

Brazilian superstar Romario will play a four-match guest stint with Adelaide United, the club said Friday, in a coup for Australia's A-

The 40-year-old former World Player of the Year, the secondhighest goal-scorer of all time, will make his Australian debut away against Central Coast Mariners on November 25, a club statement

Romario has scored 977 career goals and is looking to hit 1,000, a mark which has only been achieved by Brazilian great Pele

He comes to Adelaide after playing with United States League club Miami FC this year.

Romario scored 55 goals in 74 internationals for Brazil, won three championships with Dutch team PSV Eindhoven and another title with Spanish giants FC Barcelona.

As part of the agreement, Romario will also be involved in a game between Adelaide United and Miami FC in Adelaide on October 17 with Miami FC also taking on South Australia two days later.

Romario's other matches with Adelaide United will be against Melbourne Victory on December 1. New Zealand Knights on December 10 and Newcastle Jets on December 15, all at the club's Hindmarsh Stadium. Adelaide United coach and

former Arsenal striker John Kosmina said Romario's age was not a concern. "He's got an art you can't coach.

vou're born with it." Kosmina said in Adelaide.

"The skill and grace he's got doesn't dissipate with time while he's still practising. He's never been renowned for his work rate but his box and that's all that counts.

"He's won World Cups, he's played for some of the best clubs in the world. There will be a long term benefit in this for everybody and that's the important aspect of the

Romario's guest stint follows Sydney FC's announcement this week that it has contracted Italian Benito Carbone to a four-match deal, commencing on Monday against Adelaide United.



Bayern's time to cash in



son the table has a familiar look about it with reigning champions Bayern Munich staring down at

the rest of the division. Bayern have a habit of turning on the power when they reach the summit -- something they did last season -- and the double winners have the perfect opportunity to turn up the heat on Saturday with an away trip to bottom side VfL Wolfsburg.

Wolfsburg, managed by former Bayern defender Klaus Augenthaler, have yet to win this season and few would bet on that changing with Bayern expected to go home with the three points.

After defeating Inter Milan 2-0 in their midweek Champions League fixture Bayern will be full of confidence but captain Oliver Kahn issued a word of warning.

"We have seen that we are up there with the best teams but we need to underline that against VfL

Bayern coach Felix Magath has a selection dilemma up front with German international Lukas

Pride will be at

stake for

French giants

Marseille who

turn their atten-

tion back to

domestic duty

after their

humiliating exit from the UEFA Cup

by little Czech side Mlada Boleslav

threw away a one-goal advantage

from their first round match as four

goals at home gave the Czech

minnows a 4-3 aggregate victory

Coming after last weekend's

shock 2-1 defeat, their first of the

season, to struggling Nantes in the

French league, Marseille need a

win if they want to keep in touch will

But they face a potentially tricky

task at home Sunday to fifth-

placed Toulouse, the only side to

have taken points from Lyon this

Lyon stand aloft with a three-

And the five-time French cham-

pions will be looking to build on

their winning streak by pulling

further ahead of the pack by

achieving their sixth win on the trot

Lyon coach Gerard Houllier has

at midtable Sochaux on Saturday.

point advantage of second-placed

and a place in the next round.

The southern French outfit

on Thursday.

high-flying Lyon.

only behind on goals scored.

midweek UEFA Cup commitments.

VfB Stuttgart on Sunday. It is a crucial weekend for Werder Bremen, lying down in ninth spot. with the 2004 champions desperate not to allow Bayern to open up an

early lead in the championship race. Bremen, three points behind Bavern, were minutes away from defeating European champions Barcelona in the Champions League on Wednesday but a late Lionel Messi goal salvaged a 1-1

FIXTURES

Monchengladbach, FC Nuremberg v Mainz 05, Arminia Bielefeld v Energie Cottbus, Eintracht Frankfurt v SV Hamburg, VfL Wolfsburg v Bayern Munich, Alemannia Aachen v VfL **Bochum**

Berlin v VfB Stuttgart

conclusion if the team play like they did against Barcelona.

"We almost beat the best team in the world. If we play like that against Borussia Monchengladbach on Saturday we will tear them apart," Wiese said.

SV Hamburg are not concerned with routing the opposition -- they just want to record a first win of the

The dark horses for the title are one of only two teams -- the other being Wolfsburg -- vet to win this season and a 1-0 Champions League defeat at CSKA Moscow has deflated spirits even more.

Hamburg travel to Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday with manager Thomas Doll calling for an end to a miserable run that has seen them exit the German cup, lose twice in the Champions League and pick up four points from five games in the league.

"The sequence is already long and the time when opponents feared us is over." Doll said.

"The football gods are not on Hamburg's side at the moment but we have to accept it like men."

Bates cleared in 'race' row

AFP. London

But, after studying evidence, the FA have confirmed Bates has no

Chelsea claimed last month's comment was an attack on the race, religion and nationality of Russian billionaire owner, Roman

However, Bates slammed their interpretation, saying: "Me - anti-Semitic? Thirty years ago when living in Ireland, I rang the leader of the local Jewish community and offered 5,000 pounds (a lot of money in those

sold to Abramovich three years ago began when Leeds accused Chelsea of trying to poach three academy youngsters. Tom Taiwo and Michael Woods, both 16, left Flland Road for London but a third voungster --Danny Rose -- stayed in Yorkshire.

The FA and Premier League are currently investigating allegations that Chelsea approached all three illegally last season.

Boro ban 'bung' agent

AFP, Middlesbrough

England coach Steve McClaren's agent Colin Gordon has been banned by Middlesbrough for the last five years, according to the English Premiership club's chief executive Keith Lamb.

Lamb expressed his surprise at claims made by Gordon that the practice of 'bung-taking' is rife in the "I'm staggered by the accusa-

tions made about agents by Colin. He's been banned from Middlesbrough FC for the last five years," Lamb told The Sun newspa-

McClaren, who left Boro to take up the England job this summer, and Arsenal teenager Theo Walcott are two of Gordon's high-profile clients. Gordon admitted to the newspa-

per: "My relationship with Steve Gibson (Middlesbrough chairman) broke down and I'm sad it happened -- but that's life. "As for the ban, that's news to me

but I do accept the relationship broke down. My company still represents Boro players and I'm proud of the relationship my employee in that area has with Keith Lamb.' Gordon has been criticised by the Association of Football Agents

(AFA), who have demanded an

apology for his comments, while the

Football Association said they would be writing to Gordon to ask him to back up his remarks. A statement from the AFA's head Mel Stein read: "The Association have read the statement made by

"The Association and our members consider the statements made by Mr Gordon to be not only reckless and inappropriate but also potentially defamatory and are considering their position in that respect.

Colin Gordon with great regret and

"They will be contacting Mr Gordon personally to seek a retraction and an apology."

Premiership start

AFP, London

consign the acrimony that preceded his move to Chelsea to history by starting a Premiership match for the first time when Aston Villa visit Stamford Bridge on Saturday.

The 19-year-old finally became a Chelsea player in June after 18 months of wrangling over his future between the English champions. Manchester United and Norwegian club Lyn Oslo.

pended, the midfielder looks set to retain his place in Jose Mourinho's starting line-up after impressing in the midweek Champions League win over Levski Sofia in Bulgaria.

"Before I joined Chelsea was a difficult time in my life but I've settled well and I fell as if I stood a big stride

Mikel's move to Chelsea finally went through after the London club agreed to pay a total of 16 million pounds to secure his registration, 12 million going to Manchester United and the balance to Lyn Oslo.

Make or break for Inter

AFP, Rome

at Cagliari.

Scudetto.

Leeds chairman Ken Bates escaped a misconduct charge for his comments about former club, and English champions, Chelsea.

Chelsea had filed a complaint with the Football Association (FA) accusing Bates of bringing the game into disrepute after he branded the Londoners "a bunch of shysters from Siberia", which the Stamford Bridge outfit slammed as a racial slur.

Abramovich, who is Jewish.

days) in their hour of need."

His war of words with the club he

Serie A leaders

Inter Milan can

ease some of the

pain caused by a

second succes-

sive Champions

League defeat

by taking three

points from Sunday's league match

A demoralising 2-0 defeat at

home to Bayern Munich on

Wednesday left them with no points

at the bottom of Group B and in

serious danger of early elimination

from Europe's premier club compe-

They now have four matches to

revive their hopes of reaching the

knockout stages, but cannot afford

to let their minds stray too far from

their primary objective -- the

With Juventus relegated and AC

Milan weighed down by an eight-

point handicap following the match-

fixing scandal. Inter are strong

favourites to retain the title that was

One club is the table-topping overwhelming favourite in Serie A, home of the world champions (well, any other non-Abramovich backed

It added to its already impressive line-up, bringing in two guys who started in the World Cup final last June and an outstanding Brazilian fullback, plus two highly rated strikers. One is the centreforward for Argentina, a man who has regularly scored goals in Serie A and the English Premiership. The other is an inconstant but hugely gifted forward who was instrumental in leading Juventus to the Italian crown the past two seasons.

table in its league, although it's a country whose game -- despite booming in terms of attendances -has struggled in terms of results over the past few seasons.

join Chelsea over the summer, its United and its top transfer target

In fact, over the summer, the only significant arrivals were a talented (if raw) German forward, a big Belgian central defender and a Dutch midfielder who was surplus to requirements at Barcelona.

new to this sport, you've probably figured out who we're talking about. Well, guess who won when they played each other on Wednesday Calciopoli'.

And Inter owner Massimo Moratti sees no reason why his expensively-assembled squad shouldn't become kings of Italy and Europe.

"The Champions League is marvellous, an international stage that we are not leaving," said Moratti.

"But we are in a privileged situation to win the title and the players have to think about winning both

Inter, who are unbeaten in Serie A with three wins and a draw and are a point clear of Roma and Palermo

FIXTURES

(1300 GMT kick-off unless stated) Saturday Atalanta v Reggina (1600 GMT), Torino v Lazio (1830 GMT)

Sunday AC Milan v Siena, Cagliari v Inter, Roma v Empoli. Chievo v Palermo (1830 GMT), Sampdoria y Parma, Fiorentina y Catania, Messina v Livorno, Udinese v

face a Cagliari side still looking for their first win.

AC Milan, who lead Group H in the Champions League despite dropping two points in a 0-0 draw away to Lille on Tuesday, host Siena

at the San Siro on Sunday. Milan quickly erased their points

penalty with three straight wins. But last week's goalless draw at Livorno slowed their momentum and left them eight points behind their city rivals.

Two of the other teams stung by points deductions for their roles in the match-fixing scandal are in action on Saturday against newlypromoted clubs.

Reggina, who started on minus 15 points, play away to Atalanta, while Lazio, handicapped by an 11point penalty, face Torino.

Fiorentina, stung by a minus 19point start, entertain Catania on Sunday. The Florence club have lost three of their opening four matches and face an almighty battle to avoid relegation.

A study in contrasts

Football

GABRIELE MARCOTTI

most of them anyway). It's a club that spends heavily year after year and this summer spent more than team in Europe

The other club also tops the

It's a club with a glorious history, which struggles to compete financially (in fact, its TV revenues are about half of the first club's). That's part of the reason why its marquee player left on a Bosman transfer to highly rated holding midfielder (who is now injured anyway) attempted to engineer a move to Manchester

By this point, unless you're really

Bayern Munich came away with

a 2-0 victory over Inter Milan. But what struck me as I watched the game unfold at the San Siro wasn't so much that Bayern played better -- had Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Hernán Crespo not fluffed their chances, the game could have taken a different turn -- it was just how different the philosophy and management styles of the clubs

Inter is a wealthy club bankrolled by owner Massimo Moratti, which enables it to sign some of the best players around. The flip side of course is that, over the past 15 vears, it has shown about as much foresight as a guy who paddles a rowboat in the direction of a hurri-

Couple that with a seeming inability to correctly evaluate talent (this is, after all, the club which axed Roberto Carlos back in 1996 and has had some 30-odd left backs since), a penchant for making rash decisions (Marcello Lippi, Hector Cuper and Gigi Simoni were all famously sacked less than 10 games into the season) and a general instability and insecurity and you go some way toward explaining just why it hasn't won a title (on the pitch, forget the one it was handed by the courts last summer) since 1989.

Not coincidentally, Inter's official club song features the line Amala! Pazza Inter, amala!, which means, "Love her! Love that crazy Inter!" It sounds like a demented fans know that their club is "crazy" and yet, cursed by their football allegiance, they nevertheless soldier on, hoping in vain for a Contrast this with Bayern. Yes,

it dominates German soccer,

cherry-picking the best players

from other clubs, but that's not

much in the way of consolation. It's

like being told you can walk into a

car you like while knowing that your competition on the big stage is driving Ferraris. And Bayern can't afford the Ferraris anyway -the last marquee player it bought from Primera Liga, Serie A or the Premiership was Roy Makaay three years ago. So instead. Bayern mastered the art of building long-term stability. It

Hyundai dealership and have any

rarely makes more than two or three significant signings a year (Lukas Podolski, Daniel van Buyten and Mark van Bommel this summer, Philip Lahm and Valerien Ismael the year before, Lúcio and Torsten Frings the year before that).

At the same time, it integrates youngsters as they come through the youth ranks -- witness Bastian Schweinsteiger and Andreas Ottl -- all the while not allowing itself to be pushed around in the transfer market, as evidenced by its refusal to sell Owen Hargreaves and the fact that, this time last year, there were as many as 10 players due to go out of contract at the end of the

In short, Bayern is run properly, while Inter ... well, let's just say it could be better. Much better. Wednesday night proved, once again, that what happens upstairs heavily impacts events on training ground. Taken as individuals, the only Bayern players who could make the Inter line-up are Lucio and, arguably, Lahm and Oliver Kahn. Yet, taken as a team, it's a

different story. This doesn't necessarily better. It does mean however that, if and when Bayern gets knocked out of the Champions League, it will most likely be because it was beaten by a better opponent. On the other hand, Inter-- as it did on Wednesday, when it finished with nine men -- will most

likely have beaten itself. (Gabriele Marcotti writes for SI.com)

Werder host Borussia Podolski's goal against Inter putting Monchengladbach on Saturday and more pressure on out of form Dutch With just five forward Roy Makaay. goalkeeper Tim Wiese said the Bayern can not afford a slip as games gone in the three points would be a foregone Schalke 04, level with ten points, are Bundesliga sea-

Schalke travel to Bayer Leverkusen on Sunday due to their Third-placed Hertha Berlin, one point behind the joint leaders, host

Saturday Werder Bremen v Borussia

Bayer Leverkusen v Schalke 04, Hertha

Lyon look to pull clear

warned that the best has yet to come from the champions already flying high in European and

domestic league action.

qualify from Group E.

Everything seems to be going their way in recent weeks. But Houllier is convinced that his side have yet to peak. Unbeaten in league action Lyon followed their 4-1 win over Lille last weekend by a convincing 3-0 victory at Steaua Bucharest in the

Champions League Tuesday,

which puts them on course to

And to underline their superiority a record eight Lyon players were selected by France coach Raymond Domenech among his 20-man squad for Euro 2008 qualifiers against Scotland and the Faroe Islands next month.

only beginning to click into gear. "We won atBordeaux (2-1), FIXTURES

(all 1800 GMT kick-off unless stated)

Houllier warned that his side are

Saturday Sochaux v Lyon (1515GMT) Valenciennes v Bordeaux. Lorient v Troyes, Monaco v Le Mans, Lille v Nice. Sedan v Rennes Sunday

Auxerre v Nantes(1600 GMT), Nancy v Lens(1600 GMT), Marseille v Toulouse(1600 GMT). St Etienne v Paris Saint Germain (1900 GMT)

against Lille (4-1), Real Madrid (2-0) and at Bucharest (3-0) and it wasn't just luck or close calls. The team is a close-knit unit and developing all the time," said the former Liverpool boss Lens, Nancy and Auxerre all

Cup successes. Third-placed Lens travel to Nancy, one point behind them in

attack the weekend on a wave of

confidence following their UEFA

Both sides netted three goals to overcame first leg deficits in European action with Nancy advancing past German side Schalke 04, and Lens seeing off

Greek side Ethnikos Achnas.

their last three league games while Nancy have drawn their previous Midtable Auxerre, meanwhile, secured a comfortable 5-2 aggregate win over Dinamo Zagreb at

home and host Nantes on Sunday.

Lens have the psychological

advantage however having won

At the other end of the table tailenders Nice travel to Lille looking to build on last week's 2-0 win at home to Valenciennes which gave them their first points of the

Mikel braced for

Jon Obi Mikel is hopeful he can

And with Michael Ballack sus-

"It was a big relief to get the first start, I've been through a lot," Mikel

forward against Levski. "I think I played well and the manager was happy with me. It is up to him whether I start the next