

Eng clubs on a repair job

AFP, Paris



Manchester United and Arsenal will try to rescue English football from its post-Zagreb depression when they resume their Champions League campaigns on Tuesday.

Less than a week after Steve McClaren's over-hyped and under-performing team were humbled in Croatia, attention switches back to the continent's premier club competition where all four English sides are flying.

United lead Group F with a maximum six points from two games and face FC Copenhagen at Old Trafford while Arsenal takes Arsenal, last year's runners-up, to icy Russia to face CSKA Moscow.

The Gunners also have six points from two matches in Group G after wins over FC Porto and Hamburg. England's other representatives, Chelsea and Liverpool, who lead Group A and C respectively, are in action on Wednesday.

Wayne Rooney, one of

England's many flops in their doomed Euro 2008 trip to Croatia, is certain to face the Danes at Old Trafford despite not having scored in the tournament since his hat-trick against Fenerbahce in September 2004.

"I am surprised he has not scored in the Champions League for two years," said United boss Sir Alex Ferguson. "We had a bad campaign last year, so you have to put that aside but nonetheless, I am surprised."

Rooney was in sparkling form on Saturday as United maintained their place at the top of the English Premiership with a 3-1 win at Wigan.

He failed to improve his record, run of just two goals in his last 17 games for club and country, but Ferguson claimed he has no worries about the youngster.

Ferguson said: "Wayne back to his best. He and Louis Saha are a real handful up-front and, with the experience of Ryan Giggs and Paul Scholes behind them, you are always going to have a real chance."

Copenhagen will have one face familiar with former Everton man Tobias Linderoth, who left

Merseyside in June 2004, pulling the strings for a Danish side which has just one point so far.

Wenger takes Arsenal to chilly Moscow where temperatures are expected to hit zero.

The last time the Londoners went to the Russian capital six years ago, they were humiliated 4-1 by Spartak.

"CSKA are a good side," said Wenger. "They have some good Brazilians and also seven players from the Russian national team. A victory would nearly qualify us, so of course we will really go for it."

TONIGHT'S FIXTURES

GRUPE
Dynamo Kiev v Lyon
Steaua Bucharest v Real Madrid

GROUP F
Celtic v Benfica
Man Utd v FC Copenhagen

GROUP G
CSKA Moscow v Arsenal
FC Porto v Hamburg

GROUP H
Anderlecht v AC Milan
Lille v AEK Athens



Manchester United winger Cristiano Ronaldo performs tricks with the ball during a training session at the team's Carrington training ground in Manchester on Monday.

Real's royal reception

AFP, Bucharest

Real Madrid have been given a royal welcome for their Champions League match against Steaua Bucharest, Romanian media reported on Monday.

Madrid stars such as Roberto Carlos, David Beckham and Ronaldo were able to use the presidential lounge at the airport, normally reserved for heads of state, plus were lodged in the city's top hotel with tight security arrangements.

For Steaua Bucharest supporters, Tuesday's match, which will have 1,300 police deployed, is their top fixture of the year.

CSKA buoyant

AFP, Moscow

CSKA Moscow coach Valery Gazzaev expressed his optimism on Monday ahead of his side's Champions League showdown with English Premiership side Arsenal.

"We do not have any problems ahead of the match with Arsenal. We are all in good spirits," Gazzaev told a news conference.

"We have some objectives for the match, which we are set to solve according to our plan. My players are full of ambition and are ready to do their best to win the match on Tuesday."

Gazzaev added that CSKA respect Arsenal but nevertheless have firm intentions to add three points to their balance after Tuesday's match.

"Arsenal are a strong and well-rounded squad. They play wise and combative football but, like any other team, they have their weaknesses and we aim to use them to win the match."

CSKA skipper Sergei Ignashevich also expressed his confidence, saying he and his teammates were ready for the confrontation with Arsenal.

"We don't feel any pressure," Ignashevich said. "We are preparing for Tuesday's match like for any other match of the season."

"Of course, (Thierry) Henry is a great forward but we're not going to change anything. We're going to play like in any other match."

Abusive entertainers!

Football

REUTERS, London

Twin teenage female singers providing entertainment at an English second division match were arrested and fined after abusing fans.

Francine and Nicola Gleadall, 18, made obscene gestures and swore at Barnsley supporters after performing their debut single -- a cover of Slade's 1970s hit "Cum on Feel the Noise" at halftime during Sheffield Wednesday's derby with their local rivals.

The singing twins, who hail from Sheffield, spent two hours at a police station and were each fined 60 pounds (£111 dollars).

A spokesman for the singers said they had been "intimidated" after

being jeered by Barnsley supporters, who numbered some 7,000 in the 29,000-strong crowd at Hillsborough.

"They were in tears and very upset afterwards but what they did was totally out of character and have apologised for any offence they have caused," the spokesman told the Daily Mirror.

The incident prompted Sheffield Wednesday to issue a statement "apologising unreservedly" for any offence caused.

"The girls had been fully briefed by club officials not to interact with supporters during their performance," a spokesman said.

As well as being abused by the twins, it was a miserable day all round for Barnsley fans who saw their side lose 2-1 with Wednesday scoring a last minute winner.

The game could also see teenager Theo Walcott play some sort of role having been handed his first start in the 3-0 win over Watford on Saturday which elevated the Gunners into fifth place in the Premiership.

Celtic, second to United in Group F, entertain Benfica at Parkhead with a win and a defeat under their belts so far.

The Scottish champions have an injury crisis which could see teenager Evander Sno handed his Champions League debut in the absence of the injured Thomas Gravesen.

"Evander is a bit like (Cesc) Fabregas at Arsenal, people need to remember how young he is," said coach Gordon Strachan.

Real Madrid, who crashed to a 1-0 defeat to Getafe in Spain at the weekend, face Steaua Bucharest in Group E where they are second to Lyon having collected one win from two games.

On Saturday, they had Ronaldo sent off while club captain Raul and defender Ivan Helguera suffered injury problems which could keep them out of the match against the tough Romanians.

Real are already without their right back options Cicinho and Michel Salgado.

Spanish international winger Jose Antonio Reyes will also miss the match so former England captain David Beckham is likely to start.

AC Milan, labouring in the Italian league after their points' penalty for match-fixing, lead Group H after a win and a draw and travel to Belgium to face Anderlecht.

Milan have had problems finding the net in recent times drawing their last four matches. But international striker Pippo Inzaghi believes Milan just need a change of luck.

"The right spirit is there, we just aren't getting the breaks. But if we play like we know we can, we'll get back to winning ways," he said.

Elsewhere on Tuesday, Group E leaders Lyon travel to pointless Dynamo Kiev, FC Porto face Hamburg in Group G with Lille welcoming AEK Athens in Group H.

Ancelotti calls for speed

AFP, Rome

AC Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti has put his team's run of four draws down to their slow play.

Speaking at Milan's Malpensa airport ahead of Tuesday's Champions League clash away to Anderlecht, the 47-year-old said: "We have to play with more pace. That's all it is down to, the slowness of our game."

"There's no point in looking to blame individuals, the whole team has to do it together."

Milan have drawn their last three Serie A matches and their last Group H match in the Champions League away to French side Lille.

Ancelotti, whose side still top Group H with four points, is warning his players to raise the tempo against Anderlecht, whom they play in back-to-back games.

"These two games with Anderlecht are very important because winning them both would see us through to the next stage. That would allow us to concentrate a bit more on Serie A," he said.

Milan's hopes of lifting the Italian league title have been seriously hampered by an eight-point penalty for match-fixing.

However, their punishment could be reduced if their final

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Barcelona forward Ronaldinho (L) twists past Sevilla midfielder Christian Poulsen during their Primera Liga clash at the Nou Camp on Sunday.

Barcelona break free

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona, Spanish champions for the last two years, opened up a three-point lead at the top of the Spanish first division on Sunday after their nearest rivals all faltered.

The Catalan club beat last season's UEFA Cup winners Sevilla 3-1, helped by two first half goals from two-time World Player of the Year Ronaldinho, while second-placed Valencia went down 3-2 at Celta Vigo.

"Real Madrid, Valencia and Sevilla may all have lost but there is still a long way to go in the league," said coach Frank Rijkaard.

Argentine winger Lionel Messi scored Barcelona's third goal 10 minutes from the whistle to seal victory.

"Messi was excellent but just as important was the way the goal was created. I have to congratulate our midfield of (Thiago) Motta, Xavi (Hernandez) and (Andres) Iniesta," added Rijkaard.

"This was a game where tactics were important and they were working hard to help out the wingers."

Sevilla slip one place to fourth after the loss.

Valencia's defeat ends their unbeaten streak in both La Liga and the Champions League.

"We were the antithesis of what we normally are: solid, conceding few opportunities. Today you saw the other side: a vulnerable team,

giving the opponent plenty of chances," said Valencia coach Quique Sanchez Flores.

David Navarro opened the scoring for Valencia with a header after 39 minutes but Fernando Baiano levelled for the hosts just seconds before halftime.

Goals shortly after the break from Iniesta and Canobbio put Celta well ahead although Fernando Morientes reduced the deficit after 63 minutes.

Athletic Madrid are third, level with Valencia on 13 points but with an inferior goal difference after beating Recreativo Huelva 2-1 on Saturday.

At the other end of the table, struggling Athletic Bilbao and Racing Santander both won away from home for their first victories of the season.

Athletic triumphed 3-2 at Gimnastic Tarragona but made their supporters fret after almost blowing a 3-0 lead and despite their opponents playing most of the game with 10 men.

"At 3-0 we were well on top of the game but we almost gave it away," admitted Athletic coach Felix Sarriguarte.

Francisco Yeste opened the scoring after 10 minutes with a penalty, after Gimnastic defender

TOP SIX

Team	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Barcelona	6	5	1	0	16	5	16
Valencia	6	4	1	1	12	5	13
Athletic Madrid	6	4	1	1	10	5	13
Sevilla	6	4	0	2	13	8	12
Real Madrid	6	3	2	1	8	3	11
Deportivo	6	3	2	1	8	5	11

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Belletti out of Chelsea clash

INTERNET, undated

Barcelona right back Juliano Belletti is almost certain to miss Wednesday's UEFA Champions League match against Chelsea at Stamford Bridge after dislocating his shoulder in Sunday's 3-1 win over Sevilla.

The 30-year-old, who scored the winner in last season's Champions League final against Arsenal, fell awkwardly when he was brought down in the area to earn his side a penalty in the 29th minute and was replaced by Gianluca Zambrotta.

Barcelona said that the defender would undergo tests on Monday to determine the precise extent of the injury.

The European champions are second in Group A with four points from two games, two behind leaders Chelsea who have won both their matches.

Wiese stokes up Bayern

AFP, Bremen

Werder Bremen goalkeeper Tim Wiese has lit the blue torch paper ahead of Saturday's title duel with Bayern Munich telling the reigning champions they could be on the wrong end of a heavy scoreline at the Weserstadion.

Bremen crushed VfL Bochum 6-0 over the weekend to go top of the Bundesliga -- ahead of Bayern on goal difference -- and Wiese issued a warning shot to Bayern.

"If we play like we did against

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Stankovic fires Inter atop

AFP, Rome

Dejan Stankovic admitted his Inter Milan side were pushed all the way by Catania in Sunday's hard-fought 2-1 victory which lifted them to the top of Serie A.

The dynamic Serbian midfielder scored twice after the Sicilian visitors had taken the lead at the San Siro as the Scudetto favourites bounced back after their disappointing draw at Cagliari two weeks ago.

Despite a missed Julio Cruz penalty, Inter claimed top spot after previous leaders Palermo and Roma both lost. Palermo went down 3-2 at home to Atalanta and Roma lost 1-0 at Reggina.

"It was an important to return to winning ways, even though we did suffer at times," Stankovic said.

"I have to compliment Catania. They were brave and came here to play, not just boot the ball away at every opportunity."

"Now we must keep up the momentum as there will be many tough games ahead. We have to believe more in ourselves and the quality we have."

Inter coach Roberto Mancini insisted his team deserved the three points, despite their early hesitancy.

"In the first half we conceded a goal and that unsettled us, but in the second it went much better for us," he said.

"We had loads of chances and it would have been an injustice had we not won."

Inter top the table on 14 points, two clear of Palermo and Roma and three ahead of Udinese, Siena and Livorno.

Vincenzo Iaquinta scored twice in Udinese's 3-0 victory at Parma, while Livorno won 2-0 at Ascoli. Siena beat Messina 3-1 on Saturday.

Elsewhere on Sunday Fiorentina, forced to start on minus 19 points for their involvement in the match-fixing scandal, won 2-1 at Tuscan rivals Empoli.

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Roma	6	4	0	2	10	3	12
Palermo	6	4	0	2	14	12	12
Udinese	6	3	2	1	9	4	11
Siena	6	3	2	1	8	6	11
Livorno	6	3	2	1	6	4	11

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Inter Milan midfielder Dejan Stankovic celebrates the first of his double strike in their Serie A match against Catania at the San Siro on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP