



Hannover players celebrate a goal as Bayern Munich's Mehmet Scholl (R) walks away during their Bundesliga encounter at the Allianz Arena on Wednesday.

Much Adu about Freddy

AFP, London

Premiership leaders Manchester United have brushed off reports that they are about to take American prodigy Freddy Adu on a trial.

The DC United player has been touted to become one of the stars of the game since his earliest years and the reports said he was keen to spend a fortnight at Old Trafford in the hope of securing a permanent contract.

Chelsea have also been linked with the 17-year-old, whose Major League Soccer season has been brought to an end by DC United's failure to qualify for the end of year play-offs.

However, the United have reacted quickly to dismiss talk of Adu coming to the club, insisting they are not interested in the player.

"Major League Soccer's Freddy Adu will not be attending a trial with Manchester United as has been reported on both sides of the Atlantic," said United in a statement.

"The Washington Post ran a story this week, which was picked up by English papers with quotes from Adu claiming the Reds are still

SEE PAGE 22 COL 4

Hannover humiliate Bayern

AFP, Berlin



Bayern Munich were jeered off the pitch by their home fans after falling six points behind Werder Bremen in the German title race following a shock 1-0 home defeat to lowly Hannover on Wednesday.

Tabletoppers Bremen moved six points clear of the champions with a 2-1 win at FC Nuremberg on Tuesday but Bayern failed to respond and fell to their first home defeat of the season.

"I can understand the fans' reaction. Of course you are going to get booed when you lose 1-0 at home against Hannover," said Dutch midfielder Marc van Bommel.

"Our passing is not right and we are not playing well at the moment. We need to go on a run like Bremen and string some wins together."

Reigning champions Bayern fell to

fifth with Schalke 04 and Hertha Berlin leapfrogging them in the table.

Schalke moved third with a 2-0 win over Borussia Monchengladbach and now trail Bremen by three points, while Hertha's 2-2 draw against Arminia Bielefeld was enough to lift them to fourth.

Bayern manager Felix Magath called for a convincing home victory over Hannover, bottom of the table before kick-off, but were below-par in the first half and fell behind two minutes before the interval.

Argentine defender Martin Demichelis tried to let the ball go out of play but Jiri Stajner robbed him of possession and picked out Hungarian Szabolcs Huszti to sidestep.

Bayern struggled to break through the Hannover bottleneck and a Bastian Schweinsteiger header on 66 minutes was the best effort after the break.

"We found out once again that we have difficulties against defensive-minded teams," said Bayern boss Magath. "After the interval we put a lot of effort in but did not create any real goalscoring chances."

The breakthrough did not come and Bayern players trudged off with jeers ringing in their ears -- not for the first time this season.

"If you win everyone praises the tactics but I am just happy with some vital points to lift us off the bottom," said Hannover coach Dieter Hecking.

Asked on how poorly Bayern had played he replied: "It is not my job to comment on Bayern's performance -- I just want my team to do well."

Bayern's latest slip-up was good news for rivals Schalke who triumphed 2-0 over Gladbach courtesy of a comical own goal from Ze Antonio and a strike from Uruguayan midfielder Gustavo Varela.

"We have 20 points already and that represents a good start to the season," said Schalke coach Mirko Slomka. "We have kept a clean sheet away from home and I hope we can carry on like this."

Schalke are now just one point behind second-placed VfB Stuttgart who recorded a 2-0 home victory over SV Hamburg on Tuesday.

ITALIAN CUP

Milan stage late fightback

Football

INTERNET, undated

Milan were looking at another shock home defeat to Brescia, but scored four goals in the last half-hour to win 4-2.

The Rossoneri had a dismal start to the Coppa Italia tie after a run of poor Serie A results, falling 2-0 by half-time thanks to two Zeljko Kalac howlers.

Matteo Serafini had opened the scoring on 34 minutes by getting on the end of a Marius Stankevicius free kick and moments later Luis Alfageme took advantage of another Kalac error on a relatively simple ball to double the Serie B outfit's lead.

Fielding a weakened side, Carlo Ancelotti threw on Pippo Inzaghi at the break and it made all the difference to the team performance.

Dario Simic began the comeback on the hour mark by nodding in Marcos Catu's cross and Cristian Brocchi drew the giants level with a splendid strike from distance.

Inzaghi was very lively and put Milan into the lead for the first time 12 minutes from the end, turning a corner under the crossbar, before Marco Borriello sealed the scoreline with a chest and angled drive.

This two-goal advantage gives the Rossoneri more of a safety net for the second leg at Brescia's Stadio Rigamonti, even if they gave away two away strikes.

Vincenzo Montella's brace gave Roma victory in Trieste, while Sampdoria sunk Palermo in the Coppa Italia.

The Giallorossi got back on track in Serie A this weekend and were also successful in the Cup competition away to Triestina.

Their two injury-prone hitmen, Montella and Mirko Vucinic, combined for the opener just before the break. Goalkeeper David Dei managed to parry the first effort, but L'Aeroplanino pounced on the rebound.

The second half started in a similar vein, as Montella nodded in Amantino Mancini's cross from the left.

Triestina managed to pull one back with Lorenzo Rossetti at full stretch to meet Mattia Graffiedi's assist and give them some hope of turning the situation around in the second leg at the Stadio Olimpico.

Serie A leaders Palermo beat Sampdoria on Sunday, but the Blucerchiati took revenge at Marassi in this Coppa Italia Round of 16.

The Sicilians brought some tough saves out of goalkeeper Gianluca Berti in the first half with Andrea Caracciolo, Gianni Munari and Franco Brienza.

However, it was Emiliano Bonazzoli who broke through for the home side in the final stages, turning in Danilo Soddimo's cross

SEE PAGE 22 COL 5



AC Milan striker Filippo Inzaghi (C) is the toast of his teammates after he scored against Brescia during their Italian Cup match at San Siro on Wednesday.

Ronaldo to be Portugal captain

AFP, Lisbon

Manchester United's Portuguese winger has what it takes to shortly become a captain of Portugal's national team, Portugal coach Luiz Felipe Scolari said Thursday.

"I think during my time in Portugal he will become one of the captains of our team because he has the charisma for it, he has potential," he told a news conference to announce his 20-man squad for a Euro 2008 qualifier.

"He is young but he is learning very quickly how to lead a group," added Scolari, who is under contract with Portugal until 2008.

The Brazilian coach said Ronaldo's promotion to captain as well as the recovery from a lengthy injury of Deportivo Coruna's Portuguese defender Jorge Andrade would help make up for the retirement earlier this year of playmakers Luis Figo and Pauleta from international football.

Ronaldo, 21, has made 42 appearances for Portugal since he made his debut for the squad on August 20, 2003 against Kazakhstan.

SEE PAGE 22 COL 3

Gattuso out till January

INTERNET, undated

Milan have confirmed that Gennaro Gattuso's injury is more serious than first feared with the World Cup winner out of action until January.

Club doctor Massimiliano Sala has updated the Milan website on the injury situation regarding several of the Rossoneri's key players.

Gattuso has been examined by expert Marc Martens after suffering a knee injury and, although he does not require surgery, treatment will start this week ahead of the New Year return.

"Massimo Ambrosini is doing decidedly better," revealed Sala. "His condition and return date will be evaluated more precisely within the upcoming days."

"Kakha Kaladze (thigh injury) is also doing better."

"Giuseppe Favalli, who had a muscle strain, was already available last Sunday."

"Alessandro Nesta, out with bruising, is doing better. He trained this afternoon with the team and he is available starting today."

Chelsea try out Hedman

REUTERS, London

Former Sweden goalkeeper Magnus Hedman has come out of retirement to have a trial with Premier League champions Chelsea after Petr Cech's long-term injury.

The London club said on their Web site that 33-year-old Hedman was being considered as third-choice keeper after Carlo Cudicini and previous Hilario moved up the pecking order.

"What happens now is that I go over there and train for a couple of days so they can see how things look," Hedman was quoted as saying on Swedish TV4's Web site.

"I mean, it is one and a half years since I played soccer and that is a long time."

Hedman, a former Celtic and Coventry City keeper, has worked as a pundit for TV4 since retiring from the game in 2005.

"They (Chelsea) mainly want to see that I'm not overweight and can move well and still have good technique. It feels pretty promising

SEE PAGE 22 COL 5

Sissoko worry for Liverpool

AFP, London

Liverpool boss Rafael Benitez fears Mohamed Sissoko could be out for the rest of the season after the midfielder suffered a suspected dislocated shoulder in the Reds 1-0 League Cup win over Birmingham on Wednesday.

Sissoko was taken off on a stretcher after a challenge by Mehdi Nafti in the first half. Benitez's men went on to win the match thanks to Danish defender Daniel Agger's strike in first half stoppage time.

"We feel it is serious," Benitez said. "We just have to cross our fingers now and wait."

The Spanish coach has made no secret of the importance he attaches to Sissoko.

"We need all the players in our squad but especially Momo" because he gives us a lot of energy. I hope it is not very serious but I don't think so."

Benitez was happy however to have come through a tight encounter with Birmingham, a side Liverpool had hammered 7-0 in the FA Cup last season.

France call up Higuain

Football

REUTERS, Paris

Teenage striker Gonzalo Higuain was called up by France coach Raymond Domenech on Thursday for a friendly international against Greece next week.

Higuain, 18, who plays for River Plate in Argentina, was born in France and has Argentinian parents. He is a French national but does not speak French.

A highly promising player, Higuain is already being compared in France to another French forward with an Argentinian father, David Trezeguet, who was not on the 24-man list unveiled by Domenech for next Wednesday's match at the Stade de France.

Higuain's father, Jorge, played professional club football in France for Brest, where Gonzalo, who will turn 19 next month, was born in 1987. He was only 10 months old when he moved to Argentina with his family and has lived there ever since.

A striker with playmaking skills,

the gifted teenager has played 30 matches for River Plate, scoring 13 goals.

Higuain was listed as a midfielder on Domenech's list, which featured another uncapped teenage striker in Olympique

Lyon's Karim Benzema.

Also 18, Benzema was a France under-21 international. He has scored seven goals in 16 matches for the French champions and Ligue 1 leaders this season.

Manchester United defender Patrice Evra, who has not played for France for two years, is also in the group for the World Cup runners-up's last outing of the year against the European champions.

Missing from the list is Juventus defender Jean-Alain Bounsong, who has a groin injury.

Domenech though, has kept faith with striker Nicolas Anelka who has impressed for France recently and scored against the Faroe Isles last month. However, he has yet to score in eight league appearances for Bolton Wanderers since moving to the Premier League club in August and his only goal in England was against humble Walsall in a League Cup win almost two months ago.

Greece knocked out France in the quarterfinals of the 2004 European championship in Portugal.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Gregory Coupet (Lyon), Mickael Landreau (Paris SG)

Defenders: Eric Abidal (Lyon), Francois Clerc (Lyon), Julien Escude (Sevilla/ESP), Patrice Evra (Manchester United/ENG), William Gallas (Arsenal/ENG), Philippe Mexes (Roma/ITA), Willy Sagnol (Bayern Munich/GER), Lilian Thuram (Barcelona/ESP)

Midfielders: Alou Diarra (Lyon), Sidney Govou (Lyon), Gonzalo Higuain (River Plate/ARG), Claude Makelele (Chelsea/ENG), Florent Malouda (Lyon), Rio Mavuba (Bordeaux), Franck Ribery (Marseille), Jeremy Toulalan (Lyon), Patrick Vieira (Inter Milan/ITA), Sylvain Wilford (Lyon)

Forwards: Nicolas Anelka (Bolton/ENG), Karim Benzema (Lyon), Thierry Henry (Arsenal/ENG), Louis Saha (Manchester United/ENG)

Domenech still bitter about WC final

Football

AFP, Paris

Raymond Domenech admitted in an interview with L'Equipe on Thursday that July's World Cup final defeat to Italy still rankles the France coach.

And four months on, he said he still cannot bear to watch any of the match, made infamous by former France captain Zinedine Zidane's head-butt on Italy defender Marco Materazzi.

"Three or four weeks ago I was caught out. I wasn't expecting it, a channel showed the famous action (the headbutt)," said Domenech.

"I didn't want to watch. Otherwise I haven't seen anything, not even a single goal. I've put everything (videos of the game) in a bag and I've put the bag in a closet."

"I think that means that I haven't accepted it yet. I needed to accept it completely. But I think that will take years."

Domenech said future success may help in overcoming the pain he feels from that defeat in Berlin on July 9 but any future success will have to be achieved without talisman Zidane, who has now retired.

Since the final, the two men's paths have hardly crossed.

"We have bumped into each other and missed each other several times," said Domenech. "He has embarked on a new life that has nothing to do with me, but we will see each other some time, for sure."

The coach denied he held anything against Zidane for the act that deprived France of a vital component in the deciding penalty shootout.

Asked if he still blamed Zidane for defeat, Domenech was defensive.

"You can't say still," he insisted. "I have never said I blamed him. I blame everything that has happened since which has contributed to forgetting the French team's performance and even Italy's vic-

tory."

"But that is not against Zizou (Zidane). He cracked, he's human. It's inexplicable but it happens."

Domenech did have a pop at fellow French coaches Arsene Wenger of Arsenal and Lyon's Gerard Houllier, who both have criticised him in the media.

Both have several players in the French team.

Wenger is also a commentator on France matches for French television channel TF1.

"I think that's a strategic error," said Domenech. "How can he be objective when it is in his interests to see Titi (Thierry Henry) taken off at half time while France need him to play right to the end?"

"I have never thanked Gerard enough for what he enabled me to do: it's true it was him who brought me to the DTN (national team set-up). But that doesn't mean I have to accept his criticisms of the French team."



Arsenal's Johan Djourou jumps above Everton's Leon Osman during their English League Cup match at Goodison Park in Liverpool on Wednesday.

English League Cup Biggies avoid United fate

Football

AFP, London

Holders Chelsea, London rivals Arsenal and Tottenham and Liverpool all made it into the last eight of the English League Cup on Wednesday, avoiding the fate of Manchester United in their fourth round clashes.

A day after United crashed out at the hands of Championship outfit Southend, Chelsea established themselves as firm favourites to retain the trophy with a 4-0 win over Aston Villa at Stamford Bridge.

It was not so easy for Arsenal, who had to wait until five minutes from time before Emmanuel Adebayor struck the winner against ten-man Everton, or Tottenham, who needed extra-time before overcoming Port Vale 3-1.

Liverpool were always in control

of their match against Birmingham, which was sealed by Danish defender Daniel Agger's goal in first-half stoppage time.

Chelsea bounced back impressively from Sunday's defeat at Tottenham, thanks to a superb display from stand-in skipper Frank Lampard.

The England midfielder headed the opener in the 32nd minute and laid on the second for Ukraine striker Andriy Shevchenko in the 65th, who was making his return to the side after four games out.

Ghana midfielder Michael Essien made it 3-0 in the 82nd minute before Ivory Coast striker Didier Drogba completed the rout two minutes later.

Referee Graham Poll was in the headlines again after sending off Everton's James McFadden after 18 minutes, apparently for a remark the Scotland international made to him after the official had turned

down the home side's appeals for a penalty over a challenge on striker Andy Johnson.

Poll, who has been attacked for his handling of Chelsea's defeat on Sunday, had no hesitation about brandishing the red card.

But despite his action Everton stayed in the contest until five minutes from the end, when Adebayor rose to head home Mathieu Flamini's corner.

Birmingham regained a measure of self-respect against Liverpool, who had beaten them 7-0 in an FA Cup clash last season, but still bowed out of this competition.

Agger's strike proved decisive, the defender lashing the ball into the roof of the net after Birmingham had failed to deal with a corner from Jermaine Pennant, who spent a season on loan at the club before moving from Arsenal to Liverpool on a permanent basis

SEE PAGE 22 COL 5