



Tottenham's Dimitar Berbatov (C) scores the opening goal after receiving a cross from Aaron Lennon (L) during their UEFA Cup match against Bayer Leverkusen in the BayArena Stadium in Leverkusen on Thursday.

PHOTO: INTERNET

## Magpies baffle Roeder

AFP, Newcastle



Manager Glenn Roeder admitted he was baffled as to why Newcastle's form should be so much better in Europe than in the Premiership. His team came from behind on Thursday to beat Celta Vigo 2-1, recording a third straight victory in the UEFA Cup and securing their progression to the knockout phase. Newcastle only climbed out of the Premiership relegation zone with a 1-1 draw at Arsenal on Saturday, but, after being rattled by Ernesto Cannobio's eighth-minute opener, they took advantage of their opponents' diffidence and ended up worthy winners. "It's mystifying why we are getting results in the UEFA Cup and

the League Cup, but not in the Premiership," Roeder said.

"It's frustrating for everybody involved in the club, not just me, but for the players, the chairman and the spectators. I don't think we are playing any differently in the Premiership, but we are the only ones who can turn it around, and I believe we can, starting against Portsmouth on Sunday."

This was a victory made all the more impressive by the injury problems that left Newcastle down to the bare bones.

That was in part self-inflicted as Scott Parker and Obafemi Martins were rested and started on the bench, while Kieron Dyer, having made a scoring comeback at Arsenal, was left out altogether.

But even had all three started, Roeder had no option but to play winger Nolberto Solano at right back.

Antoine Sibierski filled in for Martins as a lone centre-forward, and it was his header from James

Milner's cross that levelled the scores nine minutes before half-time.

"I feel a little bit disappointed because we played well but lost," said Celta coach Fernando Vazquez.

"I felt we could have done well, but when the ball was played in the air our players stopped playing, and so they lost."

"We were good in open play, we defended well and looked dangerous on the counter attack, but we needed to be better defending dead balls and we've conceded 11 goals in that sort of scenario this season."

That eleventh came with four minutes remaining, as Steven Taylor headed the winner from an Albert Luque corner.

It was his first goal for the club, and he celebrated with an exuberant and extended sprint.

"Some of the lads were calling him Forrest Gump," Roeder revealed in reference to the Tom

Hanks' film character.

"He made sure everybody knew it was his first."

Tottenham are the only other side to have won three out of three in the group stage, a statistic of which Roeder is understandably proud.

"It's very satisfying," he said. "Especially beating a team of the calibre of Celta Vigo, who've won away at Real Madrid and Deportivo la Coruna recently."

This, he hopes, will be the spur to confidence that can lift their Premiership form.

"The manner in which we won the game, coming from a goal down, could be very important," he said. "This is a fantastic victory."

Having taken just one point from two games, Celta have it all to do if they are to progress to the last 32.

"The solution is to win the next game at home to Fenerbahce," Vazquez said.

"If we want to continue we need to win that."

## Beckham's jeep at auction

AFP, Skopje

A jeep stolen from former England skipper David Beckham has been found in Macedonia and will be sold at an auction, Macedonian television reported Thursday.

The vehicle, worth around 100,000 euros (130,000 dollars), had been confiscated from a Macedonian citizen in November 2005, the private Channel 5 TV station said.

It had been stolen in the Spanish capital, where Beckham plays for Spanish giants Real Madrid, before being transferred to Greece then Macedonia, said the report, quoting police sources.

The jeep had been driven for a while by two Bulgarian members of a human trafficking network and was later found in a police operation near Macedonia's border with Albania.

The Macedonian man who was arrested during the operation was later convicted for human trafficking.

Contacted by AFP, Macedonian police neither confirmed nor denied the report.

But an official of the Macedonian Automobile Club who requested anonymity told AFP that the jeep, which was within its parking grounds near Skopje airport, was most likely to have been Beckham's.

The official was also unaware of any plans to auction the vehicle, as reported by local media.

## Fabregas not yet content

AFP, London

Arsenal's teenaged midfielder Cesc Fabregas has made a major impact since his arrival in the Premiership three seasons ago but he insists there's still plenty of improvement to come.

The 19-year-old Spaniard, who has recently penned a new eight-year deal with the Gunners, said Friday: "I am still very young and I have to improve."

"I am working in the gym, doing extra things because it is impossible to be perfect. I would like to improve my passing in the final third and make more assists."

After leaving Spain to come to Arsenal in July 2003, Fabregas is now comfortably settled into London life.

Despite interest from foreign sides, including former club Barcelona and Real Madrid, Fabregas insists there has only ever been one team for him.

He told his club's official website: "I finally found the stability: living in England and playing for a big club."

"I am playing lots of games and I want to keep enjoying the game for the team -- that is why I had to take this contract because I am really happy at this moment and because the boss is really confident in me as well."

The Gunners are lying fourth in the Premiership, 12 points behind leaders Manchester United but with a game in hand.

They face Bolton on Saturday before United host second-placed Chelsea on Sunday.

Fabregas added: "It is a big weekend for us, especially if we can get three points in a difficult stadium."

"This year we are physically much stronger, we are playing so well and I think we can do something."

"We need to be ready from the first minute, have to do our best and score first -- even if that is in the last minute."

## Pakistani boxers get doping ban

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's Asian Games medal hopes were badly hit when two of their leading boxers were banned for six months after testing positive for cannabis, officials said Thursday.

Meherullah Lassi, who won a gold medal in the 2002 Asian Games at Busan, South Korea, and Faisal Kareem tested positive during the South Asian Federation (SAF) Games in Colombo, Sri Lanka in August this year.

They appeared before a disciplinary committee of the SAF Games in Colombo on Wednesday. Both were found guilty of using the banned drug cannabis for enhanced performances during the Games where both won gold medals.

"The Pakistan Sports Board has informed us that the two boxers have been banned for six months, which is bad news for us," Pakistan Boxing Federation spokesman Shakeel Durani told AFP.

"But their absence will definitely hit our chances in the Doha Asian Games next month," he added.

"We had kept them in the Asian Games squad in the hope that they would be cleared but now they have been banned we will replace them with other boxers."

## F1 getting new star

AFP, London

Lewis Hamilton, a 21-year-old Briton, will become Formula One's first black driver when he joins world champion Fernando Alonso at McLaren next season.

Hamilton, regarded as one of the most talented drivers of his generation, joins the British stable after winning this year's GP2 series.

His arrival on the grid comes at the expense of Pedro de la Rosa who raced for McLaren after Juan Pablo Montoya's departure for the last eight races of 2006.

De la Rosa will return to testing duties for the 2007 season.

Hamilton, whose parents moved to Britain from Grenada in the 1950s, described the news as a dream come true.

"To be racing in Formula One with McLaren has been the ultimate goal for me since I was very young and this opportunity is a fantastic way to end what has been the best year for me," the son of a railway worker said.

It was at the age of 10 Hamilton first approached team principal Ron

Dennis at an awards dinner and informed him he wanted to race for McLaren in Formula One.

Seduced by Hamilton's enthusiasm, the youngster was inducted into the McLaren and Mercedes-Benz Young Driver Support Programme from its inception in 1998.

Hamilton showed his promise by winning the McLaren Mercedes Champions of the Future karting series that year. He went on to dominate the 2003 British Formula Renault Championship, winning 10 of 15 races.

After winning the Formula 3 Euro series in 2005, Hamilton followed up by becoming GP2 Series champion this year, leading to his first test for McLaren in September.

"I have grown up with McLaren and Mercedes and wouldn't be where I am today without their continued support and guidance."

"However I'm aware that this will be a challenge and I know that there will be a lot of attention on me."

"But the team has told me just to relax, do the best I can and enjoy the opportunity. I will work hard to get

good results."

Dennis is confident Hamilton will live up to his rich promise.

"Since 1998 Lewis has formed an important part of our long-term strategy, and we are pleased that we are able to help him take another step and achieve his dream of becoming a Formula 1 racing driver," said Dennis.

He added: "Pedro (de la Rosa) has done an outstanding job for us this season but we felt it was the right time to provide Lewis with this opportunity."

"It's obviously going to be the biggest challenge of his career so far, but it's one we are sure he will be able to meet."

"He is coming into the paddock for the first time as a Formula 1 racing driver and will have to familiarise himself with the pressures of a grand prix weekend."

"However, the confidence we have in Lewis' abilities and talent is clear from our decision to give him the chance."

## Bleak winter for big guns

AFP, Paris



Struggling French side Auxerre would be forgiven for wishing they had the weekend off, ahead of their hosts

of runaway league leaders Lyon on Sunday.

Then again, the Burgundy side, who were held 2-2 at home by Rangers in a crucial UEFA Cup on Thursday, need only glance around them to see they are one of a growing number of league sides struggling to make the weight.

This season, many of the French footballing 'heavyweights' are struggling. Lyon sit top with 12 wins from 14 matches, and with a 12-point lead on Lille, Lens and Nancy.

Trailing that trio by less than two points are St Etienne, in fifth, and Marseille, who have steadily dropped out of title contention following their bright start to the campaign.

Auxerre, Paris St Germain and Monaco -- who in recent years have all been in contention or thereabouts -- are languishing in 13th, 14th and 16th places respectively and must be worried about finishing among the European places.

Things are particularly desperate for Monaco, Champions League finalists in 2004.

Monaco travel to on-form Lille on Saturday hoping the form which helped them to a 4-0 away defeat of Troyes two weeks ago makes a timely re-appearance against a side on the cusp of qualification for the Champions League's last 16.

PSG coach Guy Lacombe could find out on Sunday, after their trip to Nantes, whether he has a future at the club.

The Paris side's 2-0 league

defeat at home to Bordeaux was followed by fans chanting for Lacombe's sacking, which could be forthcoming after Thursday's shock 4-2 UEFA Cup home defeat to Israeli side Hapoel Tel Aviv.

Nantes, the Champions League semi-finalists in 1996, are in a dire situation of their own. They last won the league title in 2001, but are now in the relegation zone.

The goalkeeper who replaced Mickel Landreau, who now plays for PSG, 23-year-old Serbian international Vladimir Stojkovic, wants to leave as soon as he can after being benched.

Landreau feels sorry for his former club, but he claims he has only one thing on mind.

"I will never forget my years with Nantes, not just on the sporting front but in human terms as well," said the France number two keeper.

"I'll probably run into so many people that I know and who will want to talk to me, but my priority will be helping PSG get a result."

Lyon will be glad they are playing on Sunday, five days after their 2-2 draw away to Real Madrid secured them top place in group E of the Champions League.

In the Rhone valley, Lyon coach Gerard Houllier is a hero.

However, the former Liverpool manager said he has simply kept to a strict recipe for success.

"My credo is work, work, work

### FIXTURES

**Saturday**  
Lille v Monaco, Nice v Sedan, Lorient v Sochaux, Troyes v Marseille, Toulouse v Rennes, Bordeaux v St Etienne  
**Sunday**  
Lyon v Auxerre, Valenciennes v Nancy, Nantes v Paris St Germain, Le Mans v Lens

## Inter up against Palermo

AFP, Rome



Palermo may not consider themselves as genuine contenders for the Serie A title, but they are confident of undermining Inter Milan's challenge when the teams meet in Sicily on Sunday.

Leaders Inter, who reached the Champions League's knockout stages on Wednesday, top the table on 30 points after 12 matches, followed by Palermo on 27 and Roma on 26.

Inter go into the match on the back of an eight-match winning streak in all competitions, while second-placed Palermo are licking their wounds after last week's 1-0 defeat Cagliari.

Palermo president Walter Zamparini admits Inter are red-hot favourites to retain the Scudetto, but feels his side are capable of upsetting the title-holders on home soil.

"The championship is Inter's

to lose because they are stronger than all the other teams, but I am convinced that Palermo can fight for second place. That's why we need to win on Sunday and I feel we can do it," he told the Corriere dello Sport.

Inter Milan midfielder Dejan Stankovic is expecting a frosty reception for him and his team at a sold-out Renzo Barbera stadium.

"It's going to be hostile, but you know you're going to get that when you play down there," he said.

Zamparini believes Palermo are a better bet than third-placed Roma for the runners-up spot.

"Perhaps Roma play the best football, but I don't think they have enough quality on the bench to last such an intense season," he said.

"I feel that we are more of a team, but there's no doubt that Roma have great quality."

Palermo, who fielded a second string side in Thursday's 3-0 UEFA Cup defeat away to Fenerbahce, will be without suspended Brazilian midfielder

Fabio Simplicio but captain Eugenio Corini returns after serving a one-game ban.

Roma, who still need a point from their final Champions League first phase match to secure a place in the Champions League's last 16, visit Sampdoria.

Roma have won their last four games, including last week's 7-0 thrashing of Catania.

AC Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti faces a selection headache for his side's match at home to Messina on Saturday due to a growing injury list.

Keeper Nelson Dida was ruled out for at least two months on Thursday after damaging the quadriceps tendon in his left knee in Tuesday's Champions League defeat at AEK Athens.

The 33-year-old Brazil international joined Italian World Cup-winning midfielder Gennaro Gattuso, Georgian defender Kakha Kaladze, Brazilian wingback Serginho and experienced central defender Alessandro Costacurta on the treatment table.

Australian Zeljko Kalac, Milan's second choice keeper whose performances in the Italian Cup recently were far from convincing, will deputise for Dida.

Milan, who started their Serie A campaign with minus eight points for their role in the Italian match-fixing scandal, are suffering in the league.

The six-time European champions have just eight points, 22 less than leaders Inter Milan, but they are through to the knockout stages of the Champions League.

### FIXTURES

(all 1400GMT unless stated)  
**Saturday**  
AC Milan v Messina (1930), Chievo v Udinese (1700)  
**Sunday**  
Atalanta v Torino, Catania v Parma, Empoli v Cagliari, Lazio v Ascoli, Palermo v Inter Milan (1930), Reggina v Livorno, Sampdoria v Roma, Siena v Fiorentina

## No quarters to be given

AFP, Berlin



Bayern Munich defender Daniel Van Buyten admits he is sad to see his old club SV Hamburg embroiled in a relegation battle but insists there will be no room for sentiment when the two teams meet at the AOL-Arena on Saturday.

Hamburg sold the Belgian international to Bayern for ten million euros in the summer and he has been sorely missed with the club, third last season, languishing second from bottom of the table.

"I had two good years at Hamburg and we reached the Champions League so it makes

me said to see what is going on there," Van Buyten said.

"But the points are important for us as we want to get to the top and be crowned champions."

"I hope Bayern are champions at the end of the season and Hamburg reach a UEFA Cup spot."

Bayern, fourth in the table and already qualified for the knockout stages of the Champions League with one group match to go, are in the unusual position of playing catch-up with table-toppers Schalke 04 three points clear.

Schalke face local rivals VfL Bochum on Friday hoping to put the pressure on their rivals.

"We want to defend top spot and if possible build on our lead," explained Schalke manager Mirko Slomka

Hamburg did a league double over Bayern last season so the

Munich players will be out to end that series as they target top spot heading into the six-week winter break.

If Bayern gain their revenge Hamburg could face the prospect of propping up the table should Mainz win at Hannover on the same day.

"We will be out of there (the relegation zone) by Christmas," promised Hamburg coach Thomas Doll.

Werder Bremen are the talk of the German media after defeating Chelsea 1-0 in their midweek Champions League match and hope to transfer their European form to the domestic arena.

Bremen, two points behind Schalke, host Arminia Bielefeld on Saturday looking for an improvement on their sole point from the last two matches.

On Sunday third-placed VfB

Stuttgart, two points behind the leaders, host troubled Borussia Monchengladbach.

Fallen giants Gladbach have the worst away record in the division with just one point from their seven matches.

Manager Juup Henyckes, a legendary Gladbach player after winning four league titles in the 1970s, is feeling the heat with the club fourth from bottom.

### FIXTURES

**Saturday**  
Werder Bremen v Arminia Bielefeld, SV Hamburg v Bayern Munich, Hertha Berlin v Alemannia Aachen, Hannover v Mainz 05, Eintracht Frankfurt v Borussia Dortmund, VfL Wolfsburg v FC Nuremberg  
**Sunday**  
Bayer Leverkusen v Energie Cottbus, VfB Stuttgart v Borussia Monchengladbach