

## Mancini eyes Grand Slam

INTERNET, undated

Roberto Mancini insists Inter can go all the way in Serie A, the Champions League and Coppa Italia, but hopes they won't draw Chelsea.

"We cannot choose between the competitions. Inter have a strong squad and can go on well in all three tournaments. The Coppa Italia will be played between January and February, so by the time the Champions League resumes we could -- if we do well -- already be in the Final," explained the tactician.

"It would be terrible to face Chelsea so early in the competition, but we'll have to see what the draw has in store for us. Aside from that, any team you take on at this stage is going to be tough," he said after the 1-1 in Munich sent them through second in Group B.

"We wanted a victory and hoped to have Esteban Cambiasso and Dejan Stankovic ready, but they tested in training this morning and were in no condition to play. I tried to play those who haven't had as much space so far to rest some of the players who've been tired. Marco Andreoli is young, but he has the quality, needed the experience and deserved to start this match."

Luis Figo was again disappointing and seemed tense as he went back to the bench, while goalscorer Patrick Vieira confronted Mark Van Bommel after the final whistle.

"If Vieira was irritable, it was because Van Bommel hit him with three terrible fouls. As for Figo, nobody likes to be substituted. He hadn't played for a few games and did his duty, but I needed fresh legs near the end of the game," explained Mancini.

He adopted an unusual system with Mariano Gonzalez -- who struck the crossbar -- Figo and Santiago Solari fanning out behind Zlatan Ibrahimovic.

"I would've played with two strikers upfront, but Alvaro Recoba was returning from six weeks out and with an important match this weekend I had to rest Hernan Crespo and Ibrahimovic. The half-time switch was planned."

## Spurs, Charlton grab late wins

REUTERS, London

Robbie Keane grabbed a late winner as Tottenham Hotspur beat Middlesbrough 2-1 in the Premier League on Tuesday while Charlton Athletic moved off the bottom with an injury-time 1-0 victory over Blackburn Rovers.

Tottenham, still stinging from their 3-0 weekend defeat by neighbours Arsenal, went ahead with a neat volley by in-form Bulgarian striker Dimitar Berbatov three minutes into the second half.

Defender Robert Huth lashed in an equaliser in the 80th minute but substitute Keane drove home from outside the box four minutes later just after coming on to edge Spurs up to 10th place on 22 points.

Both sides had a man sent off at the end as Tottenham's Didier Zokora and George Boateng of Boro wrestled on the touchline.

Talal El-Karkouri was on target with a free-kick three minutes into stoppage time for Charlton as they beat Blackburn 1-0 at the Valley.

The win took them to 12 points, two above new bottom side Watford. Blackburn and Middlesbrough both have 16 points.

Team	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Man Utd	16	13	2	1	35	8	41
Chelsea	15	11	2	2	25	8	35
Arsenal	15	7	4	4	25	12	25
Portsmouth	16	7	4	5	21	14	25
Liverpool	16	7	4	5	19	15	25
Reading	15	8	1	6	17	18	25

## Cudicini doubt for Arsenal

INTERNET, undated

Chelsea have concerns over Carlo Cudicini's availability for Sunday's big Premiership clash with Arsenal.

The Italian keeper missed Tuesday's 2-0 win against Levski Sofia in the UEFA Champions League with a muscle problem.

Hilario played, and impressed, against the Bulgarian champions but there was no substitute goalie on the bench with Didier Drogba on standby to don the gloves if required.

Magnus Hedman has come out of retirement to join the Blues and he will be on the bench against Arsene Wenger's Gunners if Cudicini is ruled out.

"If I don't have Carlo, I have Hilario and Magnus Hedman," revealed manager Jose Mourinho.

### NOTICE

Due to an unavoidable reason, we could not print the CROSSWORD today. We regret any inconvenience.

--Sports Editor



PHOTO: AFP  
Roma defender Christian Panucci (L) celebrates his goal with teammate Mirko Vucinic during their Champions League tie against Valencia at the Olympic Stadium in Rome on Tuesday.

## Ballack wary of Euro dream

AFP, London



Chelsea midfielder Michael Ballack warned his teammates not to get carried away dreaming about winning the Champions League after the Blues cruised into the knockout stages.

The Germany captain said the English Premiership champions had every chance of seizing the European crown after topping Group A, ahead of Spanish holders Barcelona, Germany's Werder Bremen and Bulgarian champions Levski Sofia.

But the 30-year-old said targeting a run to the final would be foolish, with the likes of Real Madrid, AC Milan, Barcelona and his former side Bayern Munich also among the last 16.

And Ballack speaks from bitter experience: he suffered heartbreak in 2002 when the unfancied Bayer Leverkusen's fairytale run to the final at Glasgow's Hampden Park ended in a 2-1 to Real Madrid.

"At this moment it's difficult to say how far we can go," Ballack said.

"We will see what the draw brings for us next week.

"It's not good to speak now about a target to go in the final because the Champions League is such a difficult competition.

"We have a good chance this

year to win this cup but we know it's very tough and there's a lot of good teams in the Champions League."

Chelsea will now face a team which finished runner-up in one of the other seven first-round groups, with home advantage in the second leg.

"The important thing is that we can play the second game at home. However, there are very strong teams in second place in other groups," Ballack cautioned.

He made his 60th Champions League appearance as Chelsea beat Levski 2-0 at Stamford Bridge on Tuesday.

Ukraine striker Andriy Shevchenko struck his first European-level goal for the club, and bit-part England winger Sean Wright-Phillips came off the bench to score his first competitive goal for the Blues in 52 games trying.

Wayne Bridge, who plays second fiddle to England and Chelsea left-back Ashley Cole, was handed a start by Blues boss Jose Mourinho.

The defender has every reason to be cheerful: he penned a new four-year contract last week and has recently become a father and relished the chance to make his 11th appearance of the season.

"You have to motivate yourself because they're no mugs and you could see they could play a bit, so we knew it was not going to be easy," the 26-year-old said.

"We could have had a few

more goals but we made a few defensive mistakes and they could have even sneaked a goal."

Shevchenko, a 30-million-pound (59-million-dollar, 44-million-euro) British record signing in pre-season, has been criticised for scoring just six times in 20 Chelsea outings.

But Bridge defended the 30-year-old after he overtook Portugal legend Eusebio to become the sole second-greatest goalscorer in European competition on 57 -- five short of Germany hero Gerd Muller.

"He's taken some stick in the press but we've seen him in training. We know he can do it and he took his goal brilliantly," Bridge said.

Cole, who yawned his way through the Levski match on the bench, is likely to be reinstated for Sunday's crunch visit of third-placed Arsenal, as second-placed Chelsea look to close the gap on Premiership leaders Manchester United.

With Champions League action on hold until February, Chelsea can now concentrate on overhauling United's six-point lead as the Blues chase a third straight Premiership crown.

"For us, every game is difficult and important," said Ballack.

"And definitely on Sunday, Arsenal is a big, important game. So we're not only looking towards the Champions League."

## 'Juve will come back stronger'

AFP, Rome

Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon said he is "proud" his club were punished for their role in a match-fixing scandal which rocked Italian football prior to the World Cup.

However Buffon, Italy's World Cup winning keeper in Germany, claims Juventus were made scapegoats for an affair which he feels should have led to stiffer sanctions for the four other clubs implicated.

In an interview to appear in Wednesday's edition of Grazia magazine, Buffon admitted that Juventus' punishment had been a necessary evil.

But the 28-year-old has hit out at what he sees as unfair treatment.

"I'm proud to have been punished, because it's given Juventus a chance to have a clear-out, a rehabilitation," he said.

"Now, we can hold our heads high and look everyone in the eye. I don't know if you could say the same for others."

Buffon continued: "I don't want to name names, but we've been made scapegoats for everyone who has lost out in this whole affair."

"A little bit of a clean-up in football does everyone some good, but all I've read is the (evidence from) tapped telephone calls concerning Juventus."

"How can it be possible that other clubs' top officials don't talk on the mobile phone?"

Unlike some former teammates, such as Fabio Cannavaro, Lilian Thuram and Emerson, who left to join other top flight clubs in Europe, Buffon decided to stay at the club.

But the keeper, a runner-up to Cannavaro in the European Footballer of the Year award last week, admits that may change.

"My heart told me to stay," he said. "I don't blame them (for leaving), they made a logical choice. It's me who made a totally illogical choice."

"When we were relegated I thought it was a terrible decision. But the team has given so much to me. I've become a great footballer thanks to Juventus, so it didn't seem right to just abandon the club."

## Panucci books Roma berth

AFP, Rome



An early header from stand-in skipper Christian Panucci booked Roma's spot in the last 16 of the Champions League for the first time on Tuesday with a 1-0 win over Group D rivals Valencia.

The Italians had needed just a point from the tie to secure their place in the next round behind the Spaniards, who had already qualified as group winners.

"It's an important win for us," admitted Roma coach Luciano Spalletti.

"We'd prepared well for this match and it paid off. We were also

lucky because Valencia were already through. The team worked well and we're savouring our qualification."

The hosts put the absence of skipper Francesco Totti, through an ankle injury, behind them to make most of the running at a damp Olympic Stadium.

Roma closed down the game after just 13 minutes when a Rodrigo Taddei free-kick found Philippe Mexes and the defender's cross was duly nodded home by Panucci.

Valencia, already assured of their place in the next round, sent a second string side where only defender Albiol and midfielder Joaquin feature regularly.

After scoring Roma were content to sit back and soak up the pressure with Marco Cassetti

missing a chance of a second after 60 minutes.

Roma's Brazilian goalkeeper Doni held firm after 76 minutes following a Hugo Viana effort on goal.

The on-form Serie A side preferred to reserve their energy for their weekend Serie A derby match against Lazio.

Valencia top the group with 13 points, three points ahead of Roma with Ukrainians Shakhtar Donetsk in third after a 1-1 draw at Olympiakos.

Spalletti, meanwhile, was already looking towards his next opponents.

"At this level it's no use calculating, but Chelsea and Lyon have surely something more than the others," he predicted.

## L'pool go down in Istanbul

AFP, Istanbul



Robbie Fowler's first-ever Champions League goals failed to prevent Liverpool from sliding to a 3-2 defeat in their final game of Group C against Galatasaray on Tuesday.

Fowler's two goals gave the scoreline respectability for Liverpool, but strikes from Necati Ates, Okan Buruk and Sasa Ilc secured a deserved victory for the home side.

Liverpool boss Rafa Benitez had already stated his intentions by leaving four key men, including captain Steven Gerrard, out of the squad for what had become a meaningless final group game against the Turkish giants.

In the same stadium that hosted Liverpool's Champions League Final victory over AC Milan in May 2005, Benitez used the opportunity to hand youngsters Lee Peltier and Daniel Guthrie invaluable European experience and the Spaniard also recalled Fowler and Jerzy Dudek to the starting line-up.

With the Dubai International

Capital group now undertaking a period of due diligence ahead of a proposed 450 million pound takeover of the Anfield club, the youngsters and fringe players knew this game was an opportunity to prove their value to Liverpool should Benitez be handed a major transfer fund by the DIC.

And Fowler, struggling to make an impact having dropped to fourth choice striker this season, made his mark by opening the scoring for the visitors when he bundled his first-ever Champions League goal into the net on 22 minutes.

The former England forward, a club legend from his first spell at Anfield, had remarkably never scored in the Champions League before he guided Craig Bellamy's cross past Colombian keeper Farid Mondragon with his hip.

Liverpool's lead lasted less than two minutes, though, as the home side responded with two quick goals to take the lead.

The first came from a mistake by Liverpool midfielder Xabi Alonso, whose sloppy back-pass was intercepted by Necati Ates 20 yards from goal. The Galatasaray forward then slipped the ball beyond Dudek to haul the home side level.

Another defensive failure contributed to Okan Buruk's wonderful volley three minutes later. Gabriel Paletta's poor clearing header from Sabri's corner dropped to the midfielder 25 yards out, but he beat Dudek with a stunning first-time strike into the bottom corner.

Having drawn one and lost four of their previous five group games prior to this clash, Galatasaray had already lost hope of sneaking into third spot and claiming a UEFA Cup spot.

Their sorry European campaign, and a weekend defeat at the hands of bitter rivals Fenerbahce, gave the home side an edge that Liverpool lacked and Eric Gerets' team were unlucky not to increase their lead on 53 minutes when Umit Karan headed Ergun's free-kick against the far post.

But the goal that the Turkish outfit deserved came on 79 minutes when more problems in the Liverpool defensive quarter were exposed by Mehmet Guven, whose cross inside the penalty area was converted past Dudek by Sasa Ilc.

Fowler ensured a nervous finish to the game for Galatasaray when he headed in from Jermaine Pennant's cross on 89 minutes, but the home side held on to claim the win.

### Football

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Brazil coach Dunga made clear on Tuesday that he would not offer any special treatment to Ronaldinho or guarantee him a place in the national team.

Ronaldinho has started only one international under Dunga, a 2-0 win over Wales, and was forced to sit on the bench for the games against Ecuador and Switzerland.

He has not scored for his country since the Confederations Cup final against Argentina last year, providing more ammunition for critics who say that he saves his

best for his club Barcelona.

Asked about Ronaldinho's future in the team, Dunga said the Barcelona forward would have to earn his place.

"The Brazilian national team has a squad of 22 players of whom 11 can play," Dunga told reporters. "I pick the 11 who are in the best technical and physical conditions."

Dunga also dispenses any special pep-talks with the player.

"We talk to all the players in the same way and we try to make them feel comfortable," he said.

Although he is unbeaten in five internationals since replacing Carlos Alberto Parreira following the World Cup, Dunga is already being criticised for leaving Ronaldinho on the bench.

He said that Ronaldinho's disappointing performance at the World Cup was a reflection of Brazil's overall poor display, which ended with a quarterfinal defeat against France.

"Ronaldinho had a very wearing season, didn't have any time to recover before and carried a huge weight of expectation," he said.

"When the team does well, then the individuals shine. When the team doesn't do well, neither do the individuals."

"Now that Ronaldinho has had a chance to train and find his rhythm, he's getting better. I hope he keeps improving so that he can play the same football for Brazil as he plays for Barcelona."



PHOTO: AFP  
Bordeaux midfielder Stephan Dalmat (C) is about to unleash a sublime long-range chip to score in their Champions League match against PSV Eindhoven at the Philips Stadium on Tuesday.