REUTERS, Valencia

Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson predicted more success for English and Spanish clubs after watching his side claim a goalless draw with Valencia in their Champions' League group A clash on Wednesday.

United, the 1999 European champions, had to be on their guard against Valencia, beaten in last season's final by Real Madrid. as the home side attacked with everything they had at the start of the second half.

Ferguson's team succeeded in following Leeds United and Arsenal in claiming positive results from the first round of Champions League matches after the winter

"I'm pleased with the result tonight," said Ferguson, whose side stay top of group A, two clear of Valencia in second.

'I'm satisfied to be leaders with seven points. "I was pleased with the way we defended. We were well organised throughout the game and managed to close down the shooting of Gaizka Mendieta."

United's draw with Valencia followed a 1-0 win for Arsenal against Lyon and a 2-1 success for Leeds against Anderlecht in a good week for Premier League sides.

"I thought the Leeds result was very good after they were behind in the game for so long.

"Arsenal also did well, although their game was maybe not so hard. "Maybe ourselves and the Spanish sides are just at the point

where we're starting to do well." Ferguson put the high entertainment factor of the match down to the poor playing condi tions during the match, wich was

played under heavy rain. "It was very heavy and passing was difficult," he said. "The imprecision meant the game was

more exciting." Valencia coach Hector Cuper also praised the United defence and promised them another tough

battle in the rematch next week. "The game at Old Trafford will be very similar," said Cuper.

"We played a great game against a great side tonight. "I have the feeling we could have won but we lacked a cutting edge.

"I still believe we have every chance of qualifying for the next round."

Houllier to leave it late for Heskey

AFP, London

Liverpool coach Gerard Houllier said on Wednesday that striker Emile Heskey will be given until the very last minute to prove his fitness for Liverpool's UEFA Cupfourth round, first leg tie away to AS Roma on Thursday.

The big English international striker's importance to Houllier's plans to confront the Serie A leaders was underlined by the fact that he travelled with the squad to the Italian capital - despite not training for several days.

"Emile did not train on Monday at all. But he's with us and a final decision will be taken on the day of the match," Houllier said.

The 23-yeqr-old has been suffering from an ankle injury received in the 1-1 draw at Sunderland last weekend and Houllier desperately wants him to lead the line against the talented Romans in front of a full-house at the Stadio Olympico.

Houllier will be without midfield duo Steven Gerrard and first half Danny Murphy through injury but the Frenchman was encouraged half, Deportivo striker Diego Trisby the fact that Nick Barmby, Jamie Carragher and Czech star Vladimir Smicer have all been but misfired in the best of several passed fit to play after weeks on wasted chances by the Spanish the sidelines.

Liverpool fan stabbed

AFP, Rome

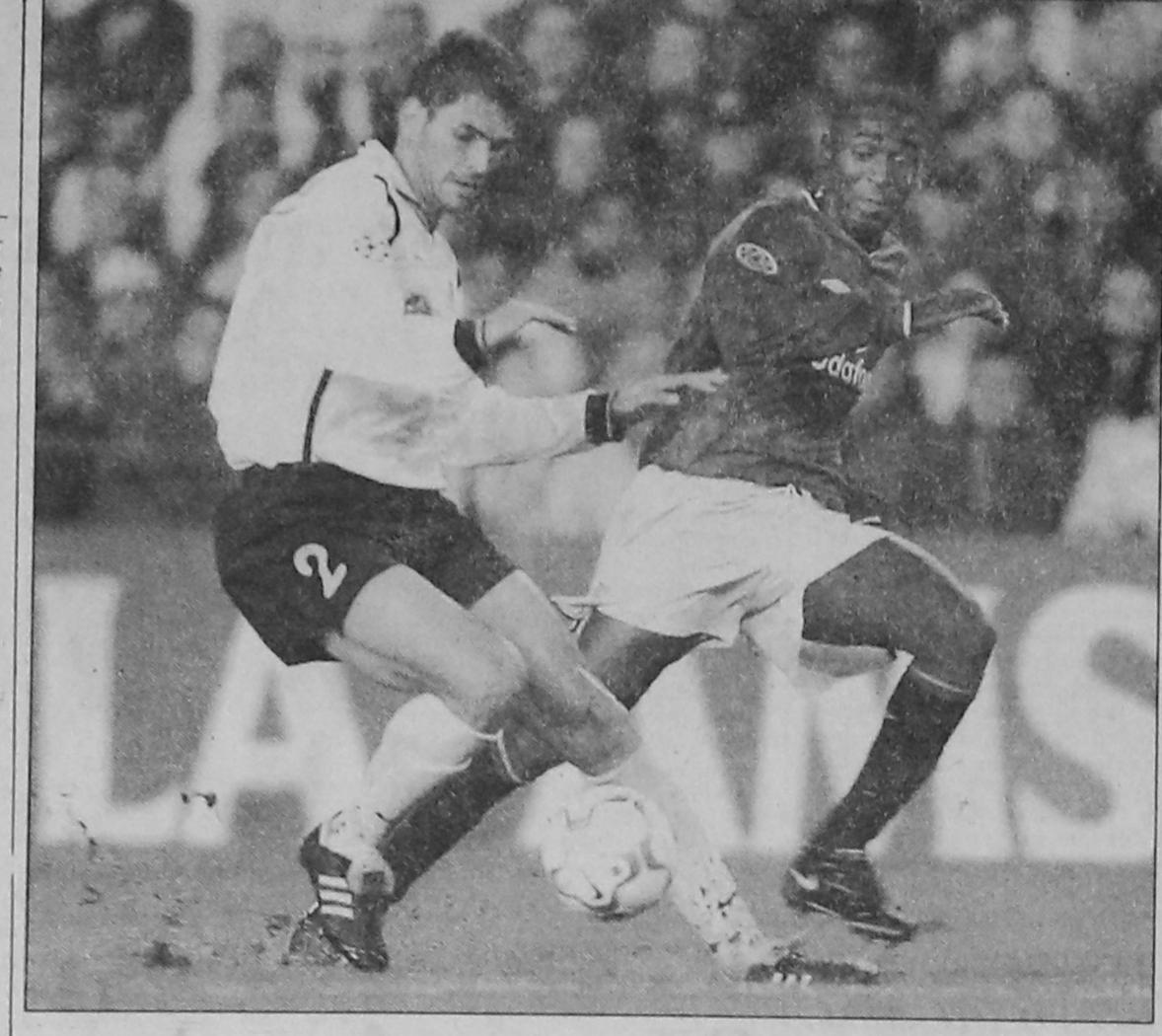
An English football supporter was stabbed on Wednesday night in important than putting on a show the centre of Rome on the eve of Thursday's UEFA Cup tie between English outfit Liverpool and home favourites AS Roma, Italian police said.

The life of the fan, named by police as 27-year-old Gerard Collins, was not in danger and he was treated in the Fatebenefratelli Hospital after being found injured in the city centre.

Three people were seen fleeing the scene.

Two Liverpool fans were slightly injured during an altercation with Roma fans in a separate

incident. A heavy security cordon was in ond half and will miss the away leg place and an alcohol ban imposed of the match on February 20, make ahead of the match with up to it too early to look ahead to the 4,000 Liverpool fans expected at next round. the game which is a rematch of the 1984 European Cup Final won on | phere there to what we showed penalties by the English side after the match - also at Rome's Olympic Stadium - finished 1-1.



Andy Cole of Manchester United (L) and Valencia's Mauricio Pellegrino fight for the ball during their Champions'

League fixture on February 14.

Champions' League

Honours shared

Football

REUTERS, Valencia

Manchester United have survived a furious spell of second-half pressure from Valencia to earn a 0-0 draw that keeps them top of group A in the Champions' league second phase.

The two sides produced the same result in the second phase of the competition last

draw that put through to the last

repetition as the second half exploded into life and both sides attacked until the 90th minute.

Kily Gonzalez twice forced early in the second period on Wednesday, and the French keeper had to save at the feet of both Kily and substitute Diego Alonso with his defence nowhere.

As Valencia tired in the last few minutes, United pressed forward

Football

Galatasaray's Suat Kaya scored the

only goal of the match as the

Turkish side beat Deportivo

Coruna to stay top of group B in

Champions' League second phase

on Wednesday and in the hunt for

only goal of the match, rocketing

under the crossbar from just out-

side the box 11 minutes into the

tan caught Galatasaray goalkeeper

Claudio Taffarel out of position

Midfielder Kaya scored the

Shortly before the end of the

Galatasaray coach Mircea Lu-

cescu acknowledged the match of

midfield harrying from both teams

was less than pretty, but said the

three points earned from such

victories were as important as

very good team. I said before the

match that winning was more

of good football," he said after the

with long periods of pressure

against Galatasaray that produced

nothing but a couple of easy saves

for goalkeeper Claudio Taffarel.

seven points, two clear of AC

clear path to the quarterfinals.

Deportivo will be disappointed

The win puts Galatasaray on

Milan, who drew with Paris St

Lucescu warned that the loss of

Germain, and with an apparently

midfielder Emre Belozoglu and

forward Hasan Sas, who picked up

their third yellow cards in the sec-

"We expect a similar atmos-

them here, but we're without

some important players. I hope we

will not lose any more," he said.

"We won three points against a

those from stylish games.

REUTERS, Istanbul

a quarterfinal berth.

Champions' League

Andy Cole was denied only by a off the line. last-gasp tackle from Fabian Ayala to the right of the area on 83 minutes and then substitute Ole Gun- . before Gaizka nar Solskjaer sent in a cross that was cleared off the line.

The draw kept United on top of the group A standings with seven points from their three games, with Valencia in second place with The pattern of the match was

established early on, with Valencia season in a game that started pushing forward trying to pin brightly only to peter out into a United back, and the English champions looking to hit on the

Kily had the chance to stun This time there was to be no United in the first minute as he fired wide after John Carew had got in behind Jaap Stam on the right.

Valencia right-back Jocelyn smart saves from Fabien Barthez Angloma was pushing forward at every opportunity and leaving space for Ryan Giggs.

On six minutes the Welsh winger nipped in to the Valencia area, rode challenges from both Angloma and Ayala and crossed dangerously across the face of

Galatasaray dump Deportivo

during the match. Lucescu said thigh strain.

goal, forcing a desperate clearance

Miguel Angel Angulo then had a goal ruled offside on 12 minutes Mendieta missed the best op-

portunity just past the half-hour. But the Valencia skipper hesitated and after three attempts to make space by turning inside, his shot was eventually blocked.

Valencia were let down in the first half by the lack of understanding between Norwegian forward John Carew and new signing Pablo Aimar, who showed neat touches throughout but often failed to find the final ball.

In the second half, Kily had more success down the left flank and he was a consistent thorn in the United side.

But for all their chances in the second period, Valencia could have lost the game in the closing stages, as Ayala's desperate challenge on Cole appeared a good case for a penalty.

Only in the final two minutes of injury-time did United settle for the point, which leaves them on course for a place in the quarterfi-

He also has injuries threaten- their injuries would become

ing midfielders Hakan Unsal and clearer on Thursday but that

Umit Davala, both carried off Umit's was an apparently serious

Galatasaray's Georghi Hagi (L) and Romero of Deportivo de La Coruna

are locked in an aerial duel during their Champions' League encounter

STANDINGS

Tables after European Champions League matches on Wednesday

(played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):

at Istanbul on February 14.

AFP, Paris

Group A

Valencia

Sturm Graz

Galatasaray

AC Milan

Paris SG

Panathinaskos

Manchester United

Deportivo La Coruna

RESULTS AT A GLANCE REUTERS, London

Collated summaries of Wednesday's second phase Champions' League matches:

GROUP A

In Graz: Sturm Graz 2 Panathinaikos 0 Scorers: Mario Haas 60, To-

mislav Kocijan 85 Halftime: 0-0; Attendance: 16,500

In Valencia: Valencia 0 Manchester United

Att: 40,000 GROUP B

In Milan: AC Milan 1 Paris St Germain 1 Scorers:

AC Milan - Leonardo 27 Paris St Germain - Nicolas Anelka 30 Red card: Roque Junior (AC

Milan) 42 Halftime: 1-1; Att: 50,043 In Istanbul:

Deportivo Galatasaray Coruna 0 Scorer: Suat Kaya 11 Halftime: 1-0; Att: 19,000

Champs' League latest odds

REUTERS, London

Manchester United are 11/4 second favourites to win the Champions' League following their draw with Valencia on Wednesday.

English bookmaker William Hill made holders Real Madrid 5/2 favourites ahead of United. Bayern Munich are third favourites as 11/2 ahead of AC Milan (9-1), Arsenal (10-1), Valencia (14-1), Galatasaray (16-1), Leeds (20-1), Deportiva Coruna (22-1), Lazio (28-1), Anderlecht, Lyon, Spartak Moscow (66-1), Paris St Germain (80-

Panathanaikos (100-1), Sturm Graz (125-1).

Baiano banned for four months

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Brazilian international Junior Baiano was suspended for four months by a sports tribunal here on Wednesday for testing positive in a drugs test.

The Vasco da Gama defender, who played in the 3-0 1998 World Cup final defeat against France. tested positive for benzoileconine, a substance produced by the body after cocaine has been taken.

18 after his Brazilian club had won the Brazilian championship final against Sao Caetano. Two weeks later he had been suspended for a month by the Brazilian football federation (CBF).

The player has continually protested his innocence, saying a drink of his must have been spiked in an attempt to ruin his reputa-

Ghost of Romario!

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

A dead ringer for Brazilian international Romario is running up big bills at petrol stations and newspaper kiosks, the O Dia newspaper reported on Wednes-

The comman operates mainly in the Barra da Tijuca area of Rio, where the 34-year-old star lives. He simply tells shopkeepers and petrol pump attendants to put the purchases on his account. But the real Romario is not

worried. His spokesman Marcus Vinicius said: "The conman will be unmasked once the press has brought this to light."

Best leaves hospital

REUTERS, Belfast

George Best left hospital in North ern Ireland on Wednesday after 10 days of treatment for pneumonia. Best's manager said earlier that

he had responded well to treatment and was "100 per cent bet-Best's wife Alex and several

minders met the former Manchester United player and Sky TV pundit at the hospital. They gave photographers the Jonathan Woodgate with a group slip, whisking him away in the of men.

back of a vehicle with darkened windows, local media reported. "He left the hospital this

ill-health in recent years. Last March he was rushed to hospital with liver problems and doctors advised him to stay off alcohol forever.

Champions' League

10-man Milan hold PSG

Football

REUTERS, Milan

first point in the second phase of coolly slotting the ball home. the Champions League with a 1-1 Wednesday.

But the French side will be dis- defence to race on to an Ali Benarappointed not to have won the bia through ball and confidently game after Milan were forced to fire past Milan goalkeeper Chrisplay the entire second half one tian Abbiati. man short following the dismissal

of Brazilian defender Roque Junior three minutes before the break but

for a professional foul. Milan went ahead in the 27th minute when Demetrio Albertini

found Leonardo inside the area and the Brazilian produced a bril-Paris St Germain picked up their liant turn to lose his marker before But within three minutes PSG draw against 10-man AC Milan on were level after Nicolas Anelka broke free of a flat-footed Milan

Anelka was in on goal again

AC Milan legend Paolo Maldini (R) clears with a header while Paris Saint Germain's Nicolas Anelka looks on at Milan on February 14.

this time Roque Junior pulled him down and Swedish referee

Anders Frisk had no alternative but to show the red card.

Milan coach Alberto Zaccheroni, already missing four first team regulars through injury, was forced to shuffle his pack at the break bringing on French midfielder Ibrahim Ba for striker Oliver Bierlroff and switching Paolo Maldini to the centre of the

defence. PSG had a good chance to go ahead in the 56th minute but wing-back Didier Domi shot over from close range after excellent work from Benarbia.

It was something of a surprise when PSG coach Luis Fernandez replaced the light-footed Benarbia, who had been arguably the best player on the pitch, with striker Laurent Robert. The switch coincided with an intense spell of Milan pressure.

The Italians would have restored their lead five minutes later had Ukrainian striker Andriy Shevchenko not rushed his shot and fired high and wide from a good position.

Milan's third Brazilian, flying winger Serginho, was causing PSG plenty of problems down the left flank but too often his crossing was inaccurate and Milan's forages came to nothing. As Milan appeared to run out

of steam PSG regained their composure and Robert forced a good save out of Abbiati with a powerful shot from a tight angle after he had robbed defender Thomas Helveg on the edge of the area. While Milan missed the biting presence of Gennaro Gattuso and Massimo Ambrosini in midfield,

their last 12 French league matches scoring only seven goals, lacked the confidence to really attack Milan. Milan will be relieved to have at least earned a draw, which

PSG, who have won just three of

leaves them on five points and still in with a chance of qualifying for the quarterfinals.

acter and the desire but not the

missed a good chance to seal vic-

tory in the second period.

did very well."

He refused to blame Ukrainian

"He worked his socks off, he

But if Zaccheroni was disap-

pointed then so was his PSG

counterpart Luis Fernandez, who

said he would rather Roque Junior

had staved on the field than com-

mitted the professional foul on

Nicolas Anelka that in his view

"We felt they were struggling,

Zacc being realistic

Football

AFP, Milan

AC Milan coach Alberto Zaccheroni admitted after Wednesday's 1-1 Champions League The test was taken on January | Group B draw with French outfit Paris St Germain that his future probably hinged on the home match with Spain's Deportivo La Coruna.

Next week Milan face struggling PSG in the return leg in Paris but with Turkey's Galatasaray almost certain to qualify from Group B Zaccheroni knows the second berth from that group will probably be decided by the match with Deportivo. "I think the match with Depor-

tivo at home will determine whether we qualify," said Zaccheroni after the match where his side took the lead through Brazilian Leonardo only for Nicolas Anelka of PSG to equalise minutes And he admitted that his job

was also riding on that result with Milan 15 points behind leaders AS Roma in the Italian First Division and eliminated from the Italian

"As for my immediate future it

is the thing that worries me least," said the former Udinese coach.

Zaccheroni is refusing to sign a contract because of a clause that hitman Andriy Shevchenko who says it would not be binding on the club should Milan fail to qualify for next season's Champions

"But I also know my fate is linked to results and the mood of the (club) directors."

Milan vice-president Adriano Galliani, running the club while president Silvio Berlusconi concentrates on his bid to become Italy's Prime Minister for the second time in forthcoming elections, replied quickly to Zaccheroni on Italia 1 TV channel, quipping: "My mood is good." 'Zac' said he was proud of his

patched-up side - midfielders Fernando Redondo, Massimo Ambrosini, Gennaro Gattuso, defender Alessandro Costacurta and striker Jose Mari were all missing - but still felt he had lost two points even though his Brazilian central defender Roque Junior was sent off before the in-

"This was a game we had to win at all costs," said Zaccheroni. "In the first half we were disturbed but in the second half we did well, especially with 10 men "I was pleased with the char-

under pressure - we had them rattled. If instead of Roque Junior being sent off Anelka had scored we would have gone on and won the match," Fernandez said. "Playing with a numerical ad-

cost the Parisians victory.

vantage is not an advantage as some people think," he added. The Spanish-born former French international midfielder, who played alongside Michel Platini, Alain Giresse and Jean

side's fate could be determined earlier than Milan's. "Now we must win next week's return match with Milan," said

He asked staff to contact the

The court heard that after be-

"I saw a group of men in a

tween 30 seconds and one minute

semi-circle around something at

He told the jury there was be-

Fernandez.

He said he next heard a scream police and while inside the take-

and saw Sarfraz Najeib holding his away he heard more screaming

Tigana in France's legendary Euro

84-winning midfield, admitted his

Witness tells brutal tale

Football

A young Asian student broke down in tears Wednesday as he told a court how he heard his friend being attacked by a group of men alleged to include three Leeds

The student, who cannot be named for legal reasons, told the Jury at Hull Crown Court that he had been on a night out with, Sarfraz Najeib, 20, in January last year when they were involved in a confrontation outside a city centre nightclub.

The witness said that inside the Majestyk club he had noticed a man he recognised as Leeds and England international defender

There were also a group of into a fast food shop in Mill Hill. whom said something to Najeib's brother Shahzad.

attack us. I was really scared. I thought they would come after us and get us." He said as he reached the bot-

tom of Mill Hill where their car was parked he turned into the street.

jury: "As I got to the bottom I could hear screaming...".

tears and the trial judge ordered a short adjournment. Woodgate, 21, Bowyer, 24 He said they had seemed "ex- Hackworth, 20, of Leeds and Neale

Woodgate and fellow players 21, of Middlesbrough, deny caus- Liverpool's German star Markus ing grievous bodily harm with Babbel has ruled out a return to intent to Najeib. They also deny international duty saving he wants ford, with Leeds United player

to concentrate solely on club foot-"My position has not changed.

tions. I don't see any chance of me

year-old student said that as he fled from the chasing group he ran

AFP, Hull

United footballers.

morning," a spokeswoman for Lee Bowyer and Tony Hackworth Belfast City Hospital confirmed are alleged to have been among the group who chased Najeib and Best, 54, has been dogged by his friends before a violent assault in which he was kicked and punched unconscious. Najeib's friend said that as they

left the club he noticed Woodgate leaning against railings outside.

seven or eight men nearby, one of

head, before running up to one of outside, the jury was told. the group and seeming to punch one of them. The witness said: "I panicked and I ran towards where we had parked the car. I feared they would

The student started to tell the

At that point he broke down in

Caveney and Paul Clifford, both Woodgate, Caveney and Clif- ball

the course of justice.

tween five and six white men in the semi-circle. The student also said he had witnessed the attack on Najeib's brother, 21-year-old Shahzad.

the top of Mill Hill," he said.

he left the take-away.

Babbel's no to Germany

AFP, Munich

Michael Duberry, 24, also plead 1 want to concentrate solely on not guilty to conspiring to pervert Liverpool, where I have big ambi-After the adjournment, the 19- playing for Germany," Babbel said.

