

Last bite at semis

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, Paris

The Spain versus English domination of the European Champions League quarter-finals is set to reach a climax this week with second leg matches on Tuesday and Wednesday.

English and Spanish teams, head-to-head on two occasions, are clashing for the right to be named the best in Europe.

On Tuesday, Leeds should win at Deportivo La Coruna following a 3-0 victory in England, though Arsenal's match in Valencia - the Londoners fought back to win 2-1 at home - is more finely balanced.

Manchester United have it all to play for at Bayern Munich after their 1-0 loss at Old Trafford and, in the other Wednesday game, Real Madrid should make the last four although they lost 3-2 at Turkish side Galatasaray.

Valencia v Arsenal (Arsenal won the first leg 2-1)

Valencia and Arsenal will be doubly motivated to progress after both their challenges for domestic titles fell by the wayside at the weekend.

The outcome at Valencia's Mestalla stadium is finely poised but the pair suffered morale-draining home defeats on Saturday.

Arsenal crashed 3-0 to Middlesbrough, which handed the Premiership to Manchester United, and Valencia as good as waved goodbye to any hopes of lifting their first Spanish title in 30 years when they lost 2-1 to Alaves.

Valencia still mathematically can take the Spanish championship, and they lie third in the Spanish First Division, but are now 13 points behind runaway leaders Real Madrid, with eight games to play.

"We are going to have to play much better against Arsenal or else our luck is not going to change," Valencia's giant Norwegian striker John Carew admitted.

Valencia coach Hector Cuper tried to raise the spirits of his dejected players and decided to encourage, rather than verbally tear apart, his squad in the wake of their loss.

"This game isn't going to prejudice the way I'm thinking about the Champions League. Yes, it was a pretty disastrous result but I'm still more than happy with the work that my players put in," Cuper told Spanish reporters on Sunday.

Valencia will start the match as slight favourites to claw back the one goal deficit in front of their home fans but have a growing list of injury problems which could force Cuper to reshuffle his side.

Key players Adrian Ilie, David Albelda and Kily Gonzalez have all recently sustained injuries which will keep them out until around the end of the season.

KEY PLAYERS

Thierry Henry (Arsenal): The France international has scored goals for fun this season with 22 goals in all competitions.

His pace can trouble the Valencia defence and if there is one man you would put your money on to snatch



avital away goal, it would be Henry. Very direct and strong with both feet, Henry can unlock any defence providing he receives the right service. His dribbling skills are a joy to watch and don't be surprised if he picks up the Premiership's player of the year award.

Gaizka Mendietia (Valencia): The Basque playmaker is rated by many as the best Spanish player of the season so far.



An inspirational captain with pinpoint passing ability, and also a deadly finisher when he moves forward. On his day Mendietia is capable of winning games almost on his own.

Leeds v Deportivo (Leeds won the first leg 3-0)

Leeds United will have the bookmakers on their side when they bid to defend their first-leg lead.

After being underdogs all season, the Yorkshire side were installed as one of the favourites to lift this season's Champions League after their impressive victory at Elland Road two weeks ago.

However, Deportivo coach Javier Irureta has promised Leeds an uncomfortable time, whether they ultimately make it into the semi-finals or not, in the second-leg at their Riazor stadium, where they have been undefeated in the Spanish league for more than 15 months.

"Since it's Easter, I suppose it's appropriate to say I expect my team to come back from the dead. A resurrection is certainly possible," Irureta joked to Spanish reporters last week.

"In front of our home fans we can impose our authority on Leeds. Coming back from three down is going to be difficult but it's not impossible," he added.

KEY PLAYERS

Mark Viduka (Leeds United): Although Viduka may not be the most prolific striker around, his all-round game makes him one of the most coveted forwards in Europe.

Comfortable with either foot and



strong in the air, the Australian international has had a big impact at Elland Road since arriving last summer.

An intelligent player who is always looking to bring others into the game, Viduka is willing to sacrifice personal glory for the team, making him invaluable to Leeds' European hopes.

Walter Pandiani (Deportivo): The revelation of the second group phase was the scoring of Uruguayan forward Walter Pandiani, who is often used as a super sub to unravel a flagging opposition late in the game.



Nowhere was his impact more evident than against Paris St Germain, when he scored a second half hat-trick after coming on after the break, and was instrumental in a stunning comeback by Deportivo in which they turned a 0-3 deficit into a 4-3 victory.

Man United v Bayern (Bayern won the first leg 1-0)

Manchester United will be hoping history repeats itself when they come face to face with Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich.

The English Premiership champions face an uphill task at the Olympic Stadium with the reigning German champions holding a precious 1-0 lead.

But few would write off United, who thrive on adversity. They were in a similar position in the epic 1999 final against Bayern at the Nou Camp Stadium only to defy the odds and snatch a memorable victory.

The Germans led the epic 1999 final 1-0 deep into injury time at the Barcelona ground through a Mario Basler goal before United subs Teddy Sheringham and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer scored twice to clinch a dramatic win.

KEY PLAYERS

Stefan Effenberg (Bayern Munich): Simply the engine room, playmaker and leader of the team who also allows other players to flourish. Combines good passing ability, ball-winning skills and vision with a



tough mental approach. A straight-talking, no nonsense guy who has had his share of controversy, he is nevertheless as important to Bayern as Roy Keane is to United.

Roy Keane (Man United): When the chips are down a team needs players who lead from the front and Keane certainly fits the bill.



An integral part of United's success, Keane can inspire his team to glory just as he did in the Champions League semi-final two years ago.

When United were trailing Juventus 2-0 in Turin after drawing 1-1 at Old Trafford, Keane dug his heels in and scored with a flying header to revive his side's hopes.

United came away with a 3-2 win and qualified for the final, a match which Keane failed to take part in because he was suspended.

By Keane's own high standards the Republic of Ireland midfielder has not had a great season, but on the big occasion the United skipper rarely fails to deliver.

Real Madrid v Galatasaray (Galatasaray won the 1st leg 3-2)

Real Madrid may have lost the first leg against Galatasaray, but the away goals scored in Turkey will give them a superb chance of making the last four after Wednesday's Santiago Bernabeu clash.

Madrid's two first half goals from Ivan Huelguera and Claude Makelele were cancelled out by a virtuoso second half display by the Turkish side.

A converted penalty from Davala Umit spurred them on before second half substitute Fatih Akcel unlocked the Madrid defence twice to provide goals for Hasan Sas and Mario Jardel which sealed Galatasaray's victory.

The Turkish team had also defeated the Spaniards 2-1 in the European Super Cup last August and, despite protestations to the contrary, Real are keen to erase one of the few stains on their season so far.

They are romping away at the

head of the Spanish league, looking set for their first domestic title since 1997, though they have won the Champions League twice in the last three years.

Much of their success has been down to the goal scoring touch of their Spanish international striker Raul. However, Real are far from a one-man team as anyone who has faced them this year could testify.

Portuguese striker Luis Figo has justified his world record transfer fee last summer with a series of scintillating displays down the right wing while England's Steve McManaman has adjusted with ease to life on the left side of the field, after starting the season out-of-favour.

Del Bosque has settled on a 4-2-3-1 formation in recent matches, both at home and abroad, with a fit-again Fernando Morientes acting as the target man up front after a series of injuries ensured his absence for the first half of the season.

International midfielder Ivan Huelguera, who was impressive in a Spanish jersey in recent matches against Liechtenstein and France, is usually accompanied by his French counterpart Claude Makelele in a double-pivot in front of the back four.

KEY PLAYERS

Gheorghe Hagi (Galatasaray): Hagi's talismanic influence and legendary status at the club lifts the side just by his presence.



At 36, he is not as impressive as at his peak at the 1994 World Cup, but his notable midfield performances for Romania at Euro 2000 and this season for Galatasaray in Europe have confirmed his evergreen status.

Iker Casillas (Real Madrid): Real Madrid's defence is its weakest link and keeper Casillas has usually been around to tidy up its mistakes.



Still a teenager, Casillas has graduated over the last year to being Spain's number one between the posts but inexperience means that he is still prone to the occasional error mixed in with all his spectacular saves and assured handling.

WC 2002 qualifiers Socceros finish 66-0

AFP, Coffs Harbour

Australia completed the first stage of their campaign for next year's World Cup finals in South Korea and Japan with a 11-0 romp over Samoa in another top-sided Oceania qualifier here Monday.

The Socceros took their tally in the four-game series to 66-0 at an average of 16.5 goals a game.

Australia are now likely to meet New Zealand in the next round of its 2002 World Cup qualifying campaign. New Zealand are hot favourites to win the other Oceania group in June.

The overall Oceania winner will progress to play the fifth-placed South American nation on a home and away basis in November for a place in the World Cup finals.

The Australians, reinforced by eight of their large overseas contingent, set two world record scores in thrashing Tonga 22-0 and American Samoa 31-0 before meeting tougher resistance in a 2-0 win over Fiji on Saturday.

As a result of the lopsided nature of the scores world governing body FIFA said they will consider a playoff series among the smaller Oceania nations in future World Cup qualifying before they are pitted against the regional powerhouses, Australia and New Zealand.

Fiji wrapped up second spot in group one with an 8-1 win over Tonga in Monday's late match. Australian-based striker Esala Masi scored five times. Tonga finished third ahead of Samoa and American Samoa.

Scottish Cup

Super-striker Larsson takes Celtic to final

AFP, Glasgow

Swedish hot-shot Henrik Larsson broke Celtic's goal-scoring record with a two-goal salvo to fire the Glasgow giants into the Scottish Cup final Sunday.

Larsson bagged his 48th and 49th goals of an amazing season to break Charlie Nicholas' old mark of 48 as Martin O'Neill's men romped to an easy 3-1 win over Dundee United.

The victory keeps Celtic on course for a domestic treble. They are two-thirds of the way there already after winning the Scottish championship and League Cup.

"I feel tremendous. It was great to get the goals today, and we won and that's what we came to do today," Larsson beamed after the win.

Larsson, who returned to full action this season after coming back from a horrific double leg fracture sustained in 1999, said he had not been thinking about Nicholas' record this season.

"I didn't think about a figure (before the season). I just wanted to come out and do my best every game," he told Sky Sports television.

Larsson's brace effectively killed off rejuvenated Dundee United before substitute Jackie McNamara applied the finishing touch.

The scoreline flattered Celtic, but Derek Lilley gave manager Alex Smith some consolation as he watched his dream to become the first manager to win the trophy with three different teams disappear.

Celtic now face Hibernian in the

Rivaldo linked with MU move

Football

REUTERS, Barcelona

Barcelona are set to negotiate the transfer of Brazilian forward Rivaldo to an "important" English club, according to the agent of his team mate Pep Guardiola.

"Next Thursday there will be a meeting between an important English club and representatives of Barcelona to negotiate the transfer of Rivaldo," Jose Maria Orobitg said on Catalan television station Canal 33 on Sunday.

Guardiola shocked Spanish football last week by announcing that he would be leaving Barcelona to play abroad, possibly for a club in England.

Rivaldo has hinted that he would understand if the Catalan club decided to sell him before his contract expires in June 2003, but club president Joan Gaspart has insisted

that the former World Player of the Year will stay at the Camp Nou.

The Spanish media speculated on Monday that the English club could be Manchester United, who reportedly expressed an interest in signing the Brazilian last season.

When rumours of a possible move surfaced last month Rivaldo said he was flattered by the interest of other clubs, but that any transfer was in the hands of Barcelona.

"All I can say is that it gives me great pleasure to see my name linked with important clubs like Manchester United and Milan," Rivaldo said on his web site www.Rivaldo.com.

"However, when I signed my improved contract I gave Barcelona all the say in any transfer. At the moment it is up to Barcelona to decide."

Rivaldo, who will be 29 on Thursday, is the leading scorer in the Spanish Primera Liga this season with 19 goals.

Spain friendly

Defence first for Japan

Football

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's head coach Philippe Troussier formed a defensive line up Monday for a match against Spain on April 25, following a humiliating 5-0 defeat to World Cup holders France three weeks ago.

"I hope we can show what we learned from the defeat to France. I must solve the problems in our defence and form a team capable of fighting evenly against top teams in the world," Troussier said.

"Our main goal is to learn from Spain their physical, technical and tactical differences," added the Frenchman, who guided Japan to the Asian Cup victory in October last year.

Troussier recalled experienced forward Masashi Nakayama, Japan's only goal-scorer in the World Cup finals, for the first time since December, alongside his Jubilo Iwata teammate Toshiya Fujita.

AS Roma midfielder Hidetoshi Nakata will be the key player of the Japanese team in their second international match of the season at Cordoba, Spain.

Also lined up was RCD Espanyol forward Akinori Nishizawa, who fired an amazing get-ahead goal against France in a 2-2 draw in the

King Hassan II tournament in Morocco in June last year.

Newcomers to the team were defender Kenichi Uemura and Yasuhiro Hato, midfielder Kazuyuki Toda and forward Takayuki Suzuki, while struggling Shunsuke Nakamura was sidelined.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Yoshikatsu Kawaguchi (Yokohama Marinos), Seigo Narazaki (Nagoya Grampus Eight)

Defence: Toshihiro Hattori (Jubilo Iwata), Kenichi Uemura (Sanfrece Hiroshima), Ryuzo Morioka (Shimizu S-Pulse), Yasuhiro Hato (Yokohama Marinos), Naoki Matsuda (Yokohama Marinos), Yuji Nakazawa (Tokyo Verdy), Koji Nakata (Kashima Antlers)

Midfielders: Toshiya Fujita (Jubilo Iwata), Hiroshi Nanami (Jubilo Iwata), Hidetoshi Nakata (AS Roma/Ita), Daisuke Oku (Jubilo Iwata), Teruyoshi Ito (Shimizu S-Pulse), Kasuyuki Toda (Shimizu S-Pulse), Tomokazu Myojin (Kashiwa Reysol), Junichi Inamoto (Gamba Osaka)

Strikers: Masashi Nakayama (Jubilo Iwata), Naohiro Takahara (Jubilo Iwata), Takayuki Suzuki (Kashima Antlers), Akinori Nishizawa (RCD Espanyol/Spa), Tetsuhiko Kubo (Sanfrece Hiroshima).

Primera Liga

Mallorca move into fourth

Football

AFP, Madrid

Real Mallorca jumped to fourth in the Spanish First Division, pushing Barcelona out of the Champions League qualification places, as they grabbed a 2-1 win at home to Las Palmas on Sunday.

Mallorca took the lead through Gustavo Siviero on 36 minutes, the Argentine defender sliding in at the far post to bundle in from a corner.

Las Palmas grabbed the equaliser in first-half injury-time, as young striker Guayre, who appeared to be in an offside position, received the ball from a header in behind the defence and slotted past Nacho Gonzalez.

Mallorca dominated possession in the second half but had to wait until the last minute for the winner from Carlos Dominguez, who finished off a swift counter-attacking move.

With eight games left to play in Spain, Real Madrid continue to lead the standings with 65 points following their 4-0 win over Villarreal on Saturday.

Deportivo are eight points back after a 2-1 victory over Osasuna, with Valencia, beaten 2-1 at home to Alaves, third on 52.

Mallorca, also with 52 points, take over fourth spot from Barcelona, who are fifth on 51 after their 4-4 draw at home to Real Zaragoza.



Lyon's Brazilian ace Sonny Anderson (R) fighting off Paris Saint Germain defender Mauricio Pochettino.

French First Div Lyon stay in the hunt

Football

AFP, Paris

Nantes struggled to beat Bastia 1-0 at their De La Beaujoire stadium but it was enough to increase their lead at the top of the French championship, ahead of Lyon who moved second Sunday after a 2-0 home win over Paris Saint Germain.

Lyon leap-frogged both

Bordeaux and Lille and are now the closest rivals to the high-flying Canaries with a four point gap and just three matches to go.

Lille dropped to third position but equal on points with Lyon after they could only draw 1-1 at Burgundy club Auxerre, with Bordeaux in fourth two points adrift following their 2-1 home win over bottom-table Strasbourg.

It was a valuable three points for Lyon at their Gerland stadium

against the Parisians and one which they were determined not to lose with attacking football which paid off with goals in either half from Sonny Anderson and Steve Marlet.

Skipper Anderson opened the scoring just before the half-time whistle, but although PSG remained threatening their best efforts were thwarted by the well-organised Lyon defense with Anderson setting up Marlet for the second on 81.

**Quarter-final
2nd leg fixtures**

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE
European Champions League quarter-final, second leg fixtures this week:

Tuesday
Deportivo La Coruna (Spa) v Leeds United (Eng)
Valencia (Spa) v Arsenal (Eng)

Wednesday
Bayern Munich (Ger) v Manchester United (Eng)
Real Madrid (Spa) v Galatasaray (Tur)

1st leg results
Leeds (Eng) 3 (Harte 26, Smith 51, Ferdinand 66) Deportivo La Coruna (Spa) 0
Arsenal (Eng) 2 (Henry 58, Parlour 60) Valencia (Spa) 1 (Roberto Ayala 41)
Manchester United (Eng) 0 Bayern Munich (Ger) 1 (Sergio 88)
Galatasaray (Tur) 3 (Umit 47-pen, Hasan 66, Jardel 75) Real Madrid (Spa) 2 (Huelguera 33, Makelele 43)

Vieira pledges future to Arsenal

Football

AFP, London

Arsenal midfielder Patrick Vieira once again pledged his future to the Gunners on Saturday - this time adding that he would still stay at Highbury even if coach Arsene Wenger moved on.

Vieira has been linked with a move to Italy in recent weeks while Wenger, whose contract ends in 2002, has been tipped for a return to Japanese national coach.

But Vieira insists that his only wish is to help Arsenal topple

Manchester United at the head of the Premiership, and he believes continuity could be the key to achieving that task.

The 24-year-old French international told the Daily Star: "I have a coach who is teaching me a lot, but I want it to be known that my Arsenal future is not linked to that of Arsene Wenger's."

"But I do not believe Wenger was ever going to leave for Barcelona anyway and I would be very surprised if he left at the end of the season."

"All I am concerned about is that there is still a difference between us and Manchester United."

A real witch!

AFP, Lagos

The corpse of former Nigerian skipper Sam "Zagallo" Opono who died last November is being held by a witch doctor until he has recovered money owed him for the player's treatment, a newspaper reported Monday.

According to the newspaper, Opono was before his death being treated by the witch doctor. Blacky Awommi, in Aladja southern Nigeria after he suffered a stroke in November 1999 which left him paralysed.

The paper reported that at a time the witch doctor discontinued treatment claiming unpaid bills and when the former defender passed on he refused to give up the corpse to the family until he has been paid about 1,200 dollars.

"I'm yet to see my father's corpse. I only read about his death in the newspapers," said Opono's son, Lucky.

The herbalist is so desperate for his money that he has threatened the son of the deceased player he will use magic to kill him if he did not come up with the money," said Austin Akosa, a former board member of the Nigeria Football Association (NFA) who has worked to recover Opono's corpse.

Opono led Nigeria to the 1968 Olympics in Mexico. He starred for the famous Lagos club Stationery Stores. Until his death he was coach of Nigerian First Division club Gabros International of Nnewi.



Gustavo Siviero (L) of Mallorca and Las Palmas' Mario Turdo locked in an aerial tussle.