

Serie A

Parma dent Inter hopes

Football

AFP, Rome

Parma took a giant stride towards a place in next season's Champions League Thursday, beating ailing Inter Milan 3-1 in the Italian First Division.

Two goals from Brazilian Junior and one from striker Marco Di Vaio saw Parma prevail despite Christian Vieri's injury-time consolation for Inter.

And Parma's hold on the fourth spot that would ensure they qualified for Europe's top competition was strengthened further by a 2-1 defeat for AC Milan at the San Siro at the hands of Fiorentina.

Enrico Chiesa's early double for Fiorentina proved decisive although Ukrainian striker Andriy Shevchenko scored a consolation for the hosts.

With only three matches left Parma now lead AC Milan by six points and Inter by nine and it would take an unlikely sequence of results to deny them their place in the Champions League alongside AS Roma, Lazio and Juventus.

At the San Siro, Milan dominated the early stages but then Fiorentina went ahead with their first attack of the match.

Enrico Chiesa was the scorer from a free kick, his 21st of the season for the Florence club.

Seven minutes later Chiesa struck again for the visitors, snapping up a chance after intercepting a misplaced backpass by Milan's Federico Giunti.

That put Chiesa on 22 goals for the season, one behind the season's top scorer, Shevchenko.

But 10 minutes later Shevchenko pulled clear of Chiesa by finishing off the move that saw Milan pull the score back to 2-1.

At Parma's Ennio Tardini Stadium the home side took full advantage of Milan's slip-up by taking the points against the other San Siro side, Inter.

Inter's hopes of atoning for their



PHOTO: AFP

Jenilson Junior (R), Parma's Brazilian playmaker, scoring against Inter Milan while teammate Savo Milosevic (L) and Inter defender Matteo Ferrai look on at Parma on May 17.

6-0 thrashing by AC Milan in the derby last week took an early blow when Parma took the lead in the 14th minute after Junior linked up well with Yugoslav forward Savo Milosevic.

In the second period Parma killed the game with a second goal. Marco Di Vaio was the scorer, doing well to control the ball after an Antonio Benarrivo pass before beating Inter's French goalkeeper

Sebastien Frey. Junior, set up by Di Vaio, added another two minutes from time before Vieri notched for Inter in stoppage time.

It has been a miserable week for Inter - thrashed 6-0 by their arch-enemies - a result for which the entire team was forced to apologise to club president Massimo Moratti.

And earlier Thursday the club

Serie A's top six

After Thursday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):

AS Roma	30	20	7	3	58	28	67
Lazio	30	19	5	6	57	32	62
Juventus	30	17	10	3	51	25	61
Parma	31	15	8	8	47	25	53
AC Milan	31	12	11	8	53	42	47
Inter Milan	31	12	8	11	42	44	44

learned their ground would be closed for two matches because of the incident in which their fans vandalised a scooter and hurled it down the stands during a recent match with Atlanta.

These two games were brought forward because next week Fiorentina and Parma contest the first leg of the Italian Cup Final.

The rest of the fixtures take place Sunday. Leaders Roma visit bottom club Bari while second-placed Lazio play a home match with Udinese on neutral territory at Florence because their ground is closed because of crowd misbehaviour.

Third-placed Juventus - one point behind Lazio and six behind Roma - play Bologna.

FIFA cancelling World Club Championship?

AFP, LAUSANNE, Switzerland

FIFA's World Club Championship due to be held in Spain is likely to be cancelled later Friday, a source close to AFP told AFP here.

The tournament, which features the club champions from each continent, was due to be held in Spain in August.

But a source close to FIFA, in Lausanne for the International Olympic Committee meeting, said the 2001 tournament was now expected to be scrapped with FIFA to make an announcement in the next few hours.

The expected cancellation follows the collapse of a rescue plan on Thursday aimed at bailing out FIFA's cash-strapped marketing partners ISL.

ISL were left facing bankruptcy after French utilities group Vivendi pulled out of a deal to save the Swiss-based marketing company.

ISL's collapse left the World Club Championships in doubt because the competition has no sponsors in place.

The World Club Championships has been a favourite project of FIFA president Sepp Blatter. The first edition of the tournament was held in Brazil last year, with Corinthians defeating Vasco da Gama on penalties 4-3.



PHOTO: AFP

Juventus' Dutch superstar Edgar Davids (R) talking to the press while club president Vittorio Chiusano listens at Turin on May 17.

Davids gives his argument

Football

AFP, Turin

Juventus midfielder Edgar Davids called on the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI) on Thursday to relax the limit at which it considers an athlete to have failed a test for the banned anabolic steroid nandrolone.

CONI, which oversees Italian sport, uses International Olympic Committee (IOC) guidelines to judge if footballers have taken banned substances or not.

"I am therefore of the opinion that CONI should raise the level for its tolerance of nandrolone until there is scientific confirmation (that the level is reliable)," he said.

Davids was earlier suspended for failing a test after a match against Udinese on March 4.

The player insists he has never used an illegal substance.

"I am still perplexed by the fact that traces of nandrolone have been found in my urine," he said on Thursday.

Davids' suspension is indefinite and will run until a decision is made on a definitive ban, which is likely to be for around 16 months.

Juventus, third in the table, have four matches left in the Serie A season and are six points behind leaders AS Roma.

Eight players from Serie A and B have tested positive for banned substances this season, including Lazio's Portuguese defender Fernando Couto who has also been suspended indefinitely.

Confusion also stems from the fact that if an athlete loses a lot of body fluid through exertion his urine sample will be more concentrated and so will any trace of a banned substance.

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Elber may quit

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich's Brazilian striker Giovane Elber has hinted that he may leave the club before his contract runs out in three years time.

Elber, whose goals have helped the Bundesliga giants into the final of the European Champions League this season, said he could be ready to leave Germany soon.

"I don't know if I will see out my contract," the attacker told Kicker magazine.

"In July I'm going to be 29. If I wait till the end of my contract I'll be 32. That would leave me with just two more years playing in Brazil," said Elber, who said his wife would have the last word on a move.

"It's up to Cynthia. If she tells me she wants to leave then I won't stay here another day longer," Elber said.

Primera Liga preview

Real could be crowned this week

Football

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid look to grab their first Primera Liga title since 1997 with a win over lowly city rivals Rayo Vallecano on Saturday.

However, the European champions will be counting on favourable results elsewhere in the Liga in the shape of a defeat for second-placed Deportivo La Coruna who are six points adrift and kick off against Oviedo one hour before the Madrid derby.

Going on recent domestic form Real have an uphill climb, and with four games to go there is still room for an upset or two.

Vincent Del Bosque's side lost to Bayern Munich in this season's Champions League semi-finals earlier this month and their domestic performances have begun to falter - their last victory dates back to April 22 when they won 3-2 at Real Zaragoza.

Reigning champions Deportivo could still realistically hold on to the title they won for the first time last year, and with Real on Sunday missing the services of suspended pair, defender Fernando Hierro and midfielder Ivan Helguera, and

injured forward Fernando Morientes, Del Bosque's claim to the Liga throne could prove premature.

However as the stony-faced moustachioed coach mulls over his team's loss of appetite for league wins, his players are at least showing some determination to turn the tables.

"We can't lose any more matches," said Real forward Savio Bortolini. "We need these three points and we're going to Vallecano to take them."

Bortolini added: "The sooner we become champions the better, and we're hoping that will happen on Sunday."

As Deportivo prepare to collect full points at Oviedo to prevent Real from realising their domestic bliss, Valencia in third place on 59 points, 11 adrift of Real - host 11th placed Athletic Bilbao in their bid to keep in touch with the Champions League places.

Valencia, of course, could solve that problem by beating Bayern Munich in the Champions League final in Milan on Wednesday.

Real Mallorca, who sit fourth, equal on points with Valencia, visit Espanyol, while Espanyol's city rivals Barcelona, who sit fifth on 56 travel to Alaves, beaten 5-4 in extra time by Liverpool in an astonishing GKT.

Weah going to Monaco

Football

AFP, Monaco

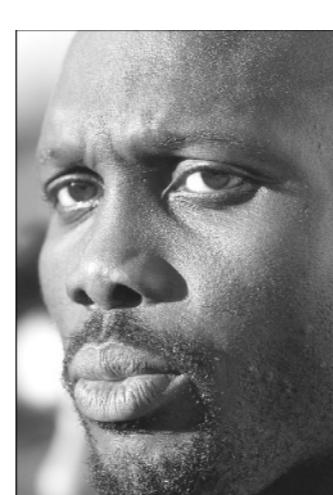
Marseille's Liberian international forward George Weah is set to sign a one-year contract at former club Monaco on Friday, according to Monaco officials Thursday.

The 34-year-old Weah, the 1995 World Footballer of the Year, was at the Principality club on Thursday to discuss terms and put the finishing touches to the deal.

Weah signed a one-year deal with Marseille in October after a short spell with Manchester City in the English Premiership.

He announced in March that he would leave the perennially crisis-stricken Marseille club at the end of the season.

Weah last played for Monaco between 1988 and 1992.



GEORGE WEAH

Lifeline for St Etienne

Football

AFP, Lyon

Relegated French First Division club St Etienne were thrown a potential lifeline on Thursday when French justice officials ruled that the club be given back seven points that had been docked for fielding players with false EU passports.

However, Marseille, who consequently fall into the relegation firing line, said it was "entirely unconcerned" by the news.

It was the latest twist in a long-running saga sparked when St Etienne had seven points deducted after they were found to be fielding Brazilian striker Alex and Ukrainian Maxim Levitsky, who were found to be using false Portuguese and Greek passports respectively.

A court in Lyon agreed to St Etienne's request for a suspension of the seven-point deduction until a final decision is made at a later date.

The decision throws the relegation situation in the French league into disarray, because St Etienne now have 36 points, just three fewer than the closest club in the table, former European champions Marseille.

As regards goal difference, Marseille (-9) have a four-goal advantage over St Etienne (-13) so the final day of the season could potentially lead to the clubs switching relegation places.

In the case of equal points, goal difference is decisive. If that is also equal, then the highest-scoring team is given precedence.

Marseille, recently boosted by the return of influential management figure Bernard Tapie, reacted coolly to the court decision, saying that it was "entirely unconcerned" by the news.

Koller moving to Fulham

Football

AFP, Brussels

Giant Czech star Jan Koller's current club Anderlecht insisted on Thursday that they had agreed terms for his transfer to English First Division champions Fulham despite reports that a deal had been struck with German side Borussia Dortmund.

Koller was reported to have agreed terms with Bundesliga side Dortmund - who will play in next year's Champions League - on Thursday, but Anderlecht general manager Michel Verschueren told Belgian press agency Belga the same day that terms had been agreed with Fulham.

"We all feel we are going places and I want to be part of it," he said.

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Hamburg have nothing to play for but pride.

Bayern's midfield general Jens Jeremies is injured and Bosnian mid-fielder Hasan Salihamidzic is suspended, but Hitzfeld's men looked to have raised their game to a late-season peak after beating holders Real Madrid twice in the Champions League semi-finals.

Schalke 04 are just three points behind Bayern but their chances of capturing their first title for 43 years look slim.

But if Bayern do lose, Huub Stevens' team must beat relegation-threatened Unterhaching and hope their slightly superior goal difference wins the title.

The team from the Ruhr industrial heartland have had their chances this season to pull ahead, but Bayern have kept reeling them in.

Their consolation would be an automatic