



BACK WHERE HE BELONGS: A combo of photos showing (L) Inter Milan Superstar Ronaldo replacing compatriot Adriano and (R), unleashing a shot on the Brasov goal during their UEFA Cup match at Trieste on September 20.



PHOTO: AP/INTERNET

# UEFA Cup first-round first-leg Ronaldo steals the show

## Football

AP, London

The appearance of Ronaldo in a competitive soccer game for the first time in 22 months put extra gloss on Inter Milan's 3-0 victory against Brasov in the first-round, first-leg of the UEFA Cup on Thursday.

The Brazilian superstar returned to competitive soccer Thursday after recovering from a double knee injury. He came on as a substitute in the last 28 minutes against the Romanian team and nearly scored twice.

Instead, Inter's goals came from French midfielder Stephane Dalmat (24th minute), Sierra Leone striker Mohammed Kallon (31st minute) and Italian international Luigi Di Biagio (42nd).

Inter's fellow Serie A clubs also had a successful night when 39 first-round, first-leg matches of the UEFA Cup were played Thursday. The games were postponed one week because of the terrorist attacks in the United States on Sept. 11. Clubs held a minute's silence before each match.

AC Milan scored a 2-0 victory against BATE Borisov in the Belarus capital Minsk, while Parma was less impressive in beating Finnish minnow HJK Helsinki 1-0 at Tardini Stadium. But troubled Florence team Fiorentina could only manage a scoreless draw against Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk in the Ukraine.

The surprise loss Thursday came from English Premier League leader Leeds, which lost 1-0 at Portuguese underdog Maritimo. Dutch club Ajax, a four-time Champions Cup winner beat Apollon Limassol of Cyprus 2-0 in Amsterdam. In England, Ipswich Town drew 1-1 with Torpedo Moscow, Chelsea beat

Levski Sofia of Bulgaria 3-0 and Aston Villa lost 3-2 to Varteks of Croatia.

In Trieste, Ronaldo was greeted by wild cheering from nearly 7,000 fans at the Nereo Rocco stadium as he replaced Adriano for a long-awaited comeback.

The Brazilian striker and two-time FIFA player of the year, moved cautiously at the beginning. Then he took momentum, led some fast actions and went close to scoring twice, showing samples of his past splendors.

He narrowly missed a golden chance to score after his close-range shot was deflected by an outstretched leg.

Now Ronaldo - after passing the acid test - will be looking to a return to the international fray and a place in next year's World Cup in Japan and South Korea, if troubled Brazil manage to qualify.

"I'm very tired because it was a competitive match and it's totally different from a friendly context. But I'm happy and satisfied, success will come sooner or later," Ronaldo told Italian television after the match.

The Phenomenon explained how he has lived his return to the field: "I'm so excited" - says Ronie - "because I was looking forward to start playing again an official match and finally I've been able to do it. I liked above all to be able to play 30 minutes and in a high intensity."

"I will never forget tonight. My colleagues and supporters have pushed me forward over all difficult moments. Now that I'm back, I hope to be able to pay back this support, but taking my time. I still need more matches to be back in shape."

Ronaldo had last played a full official match in November 1999. A torn right knee tendon and surgery sidelined him for five months until April 2000. He hurt the same knee

seven minutes into his first game back to action, requiring a second operation and a long rehabilitation.

In Funchal on the Madeira Islands, Bruno Pereira's goal in the 34th minute gave Maritimo the win. Pereira netted a 35-yard free kick against Leeds, a semifinalist in last season's Champions League.

England head coach Sven-Goran Eriksson kept careful watch over Leeds international players Danny Mills, Nigel Martyn and Rio Ferdinand, and must have been disappointed.

After the game's dull start, Leeds goalie Martyn made a superb save in the 19th minute from Brazilian midfielder Dinda's free kick from outside the penalty area.

The second half burst into life early with Gary Kelly's 20-yard drive going wide as he tried for an equalizer. Leeds attacked relentlessly, but Maritimo's defense held firm.

In Amsterdam, Ajax won with a goal apiece from Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Nikos Machlas.

Greek Machlas provided the cross for Ibrahimovic's fourth-minute opener and the Swede's finish was made easier when his marker fell over.

A monster score looked likely for Ajax against the Cypriot minnow, but Ajax's 4-4-2 formation didn't achieve the rapid ball circulation required to break down a stubborn defense and chances were rare.

In Minsk, Belarus, only 15,000 spectators watched Andriy Shevchenko and Javi Moreno score to lead AC Milan to a 2-0 victory against BATE Borisov.

After a scoreless first half in which both teams failed to produce real scoring opportunities, AC Milan, third in the Serie A standings, launched an onslaught from the very first minute of the second half.

Shevchenko headed in a free kick from second-half substitute

Andrea Pirlo from the left in the 64th minute to give the visitors a 1-0 lead.

One minute from regulation time, Serginho Santos made a solo raid down the left flank and made a pass to Moreno who hit the target from eight yards.

In Parma, Italy, Savo Milosevic converted a first-half penalty kick to give unimpressive Parma a 1-0 victory against Finnish underdog HJK Helsinki.

Milosevic forward scored in the 22th minute, following an unneeded foul by the Finnish defense.

Parma, a two-time UEFA Cup champion, confirmed its questionable form at the start of the new season, failing to produce good-quality play and scoring chances. This was despite Parma starting with such international stars as Milosevic, Hidetoshi Nakata, Junior, Alain Boghossian and Jorge Bolano.

## Bundesliga preview

# Euro flops search for form

## Football

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund will try to put their disappointing Champions League form behind them this weekend as they try to close the gap on Bundesliga leaders Kaiserslautern.

European champions Bayern were held to a 0-0 draw by Sparta Prague at the Olympic Stadium in midweek while Dortmund also drew a blank against Liverpool.

However, both teams face tough examinations in the German league this weekend - Munich, in third place, travel to fifth-placed minnows Energie Cottbus while Dortmund, in fourth, entertain second-placed Bayer Leverkusen who salvaged German pride in the Champions League with a 1-0 win against French side Lyon.

Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld was so disenchanted with his team in midweek that he admitted that had the rules allowed he would probably have substituted most of the team at half-time.

"That performance was unworthy of the Champions League title holders," said the coach.

Striker Carsten Jancker was more forthright.

"It doesn't get much worse than that. All that was missing was a goal from Sparta."

Energie Cottbus, who survive on one of the smallest budgets in the Bundesliga, will be hoping to catch Bayern on the hop in much the same fashion as they did last season.

Bayern crashed to a 3-2 defeat in that game and even had goalkeeper Oliver Khan sent-off.

Dortmund, beaten at Schalke last Saturday, face a Leverkusen side boosted by their midweek win in the Champions League.

Veteran striker Ulf Kirsten grabbed the only goal of that game after they had soaked up early pressure in France.

Dortmund have yet to decide whether or not striker Heiko Herrlich will be involved in the game.

The 30-year-old striker, with a record of 75 goals in 253 career Bundesliga matches, was diag-

## The Houllier way is the only way!

AFP, London

Liverpool manager Gerard Houllier has insisted there is no discord in the Anfield dressing room but warned that he would not hesitate to get rid of unhappy players.

A spate of reports in the British press have suggested that star striker Robbie Fowler, Jari Litmanen and Nick Barmby are all fed up at being left on the bench.

But Houllier was quoted widely in newspapers here Friday rejecting accusations of discontent at the Merseyside giants.

"I have heard the stories about Jari apparently being unhappy but they are simply not true," Houllier told the Daily Mail.

"First of all Robbie is supposed to have had a bust-up, then there are questions about Nick Barmby being left out at Everton and there is meant to be a problem with Jari.

"I am getting fed up with having to deal with allegations like these but let me make it clear: I fought hard to bring Jari to the club and he still has a role to play as fourth striker," said Houllier.

Houllier said the foundation of Liverpool's successful cup treble-winning season last year had been having a large squad and being able to rotate players.

Although the French boss appreciated players would prefer to play rather than sit on the bench, he warned dissent would not be tolerated.

"Obviously four or five are not happy at not being involved, but we won't things last season by staying united and by having players who were up for the task when they were called upon.

"That is why, if ever a player does start complaining about being left out, I will not tolerate it. If anyone decides they have had enough and want to leave then I will not stand in their way.

"They will go, and I will bring in someone else," he said as Liverpool prepare to face Tottenham at Anfield on Saturday.

## Serie A preview

# Zacc's nostalgic trip

## Football

AFP, Milan

Newly installed Lazio coach Alberto Zaccheroni takes a trip down memory lane on Sunday when he leads the troubled Rome club to the San Siro to face his former team AC Milan.

Zac is still fondly remembered by 'Milanistas' for a period described by Milan vice-president Adriano Galliani as "three good years and three bad months" that ended last spring when club president Silvio Berlusconi intervened to sack him when Milan failed to qualify for the Champions League quarter-finals.

Many accused Berlusconi of blatant electioneering - the campaign that would end in his election as Italy's prime minister had just begun - and most at the San Siro were sorry to see Zaccheroni go, including Galliani.

Zaccheroni had been given little money to spend by Berlusconi, Italy's richest man, but had still led Milan to a totally unexpected Scudetto in 1998-9, his first season in charge, when Fiorentina and then Lazio collapsed on the run-in and Milan sneaked home after being out of contention nearly all season.

Three days after replacing the sacked Dino Zoff, Zaccheroni will perhaps reflect on the ironic fact that since his departure Berlusconi has given Milan's new Turkish coach Fathi Terim a vast injection of cash that has allowed the purchase of the likes of Portuguese playmaker Manuel Rui Costa and striker Filippo Inzaghi.

But Zaccheroni will be more concerned about the dismal form of

Lazio who have lost both their Champions League matches so far and are yet to win in Serie A.

The midfield axis of Spain's Gaizka Mendietta and Stefano Fiore is yet to gel and the Lazio fans remain to be convinced they can



ALBERTO ZACCHERONI

replace the fondly remembered Argentinian Juan Sebastian Veron and Czech Pavel Nedved, who departed to Manchester United and Juventus respectively in the summer.

Argentinian Hernan Crespo, top scorer in Italy with 26 goals last term, is yet to break his duck this year and most expect 'Zac' to immediately ditch the 3-5-2 system used by Zoff in favour of the 4-4-2 model he preferred at Milan.

The other Roman club - champions AS Roma - are also yet to win in the league and after only three rounds of games are seven points behind leaders Juventus. They host Fiorentina who are set to be declared bankrupt, but with a pro-

viso that would allow them to carry on playing.

Roma coach Fabio Capello is toying with the idea of dropping out-of-touch Argentinian Gabriel Batistuta, denying 'Bati-gol' the chance of facing the club where he was idolised in a nine-year stay that yielded a club record 152 Serie A goals.

Leaders Juventus will be hoping to continue their 100 percent record in all competitions on Saturday when they make the long trip south to Lecce, who have made a fine start to the season and will be no push-overs for Marcello Lippi's side.

Inter Milan are joint second with AC Milan and Hector Cuper's side, buoyed by the return to fitness of Brazilian talisman Ronaldo, travel to the Stadio Delle Alpi where they play Torino.

Chievo will hope to recover from their first defeat of the season at home to fellow promotees Piacenza, who defeated Roma last week while Brescia make the trip to Parma.

Bologna make the trip to Venezia while Udinese visit Perugia in Umbria.

Atalanta, like Venezia yet to record a point, hope to do better when they welcome Verona to their Bergamo home.

FIXTURES (13:00 GMT unless stated) Saturday: Lecce v Juventus (18:30 GMT) Sunday: Atalanta v Verona, Chievo v Piacenza, Parma v Brescia, Perugia v Udinese, AS Roma v Fiorentina, Torino v Inter Milan, Venezia v Bologna, AC Milan v Lazio (18:30 GMT)

## Primera Liga preview

# Real out to prove

## Football

AFP, Madrid

The Spanish league spotlight focuses on Real Madrid on Saturday after their emphatic 4-0 victory over Lokomotiv Moscow in the Champions' League.

After equalling their worst ever start to season by gaining just one point from their first three matches, the Spanish champions are out to prove that they can fire on all cylinders at home too.

Espanyol are their supposed victims, as Real bid to rise up the Primera Liga from unfamiliar territory in the relegation zone - a bid which Brazilian international defender Roberto Carlos fully backs.

"We showed (against Lokomotiv) that we know how to win without any problems," Carlos said on Thursday.

"The match against the Russians was important because we played well and recovered our morale. Now we have to play in the same vein against Espanyol."

Despite the deluge of goals against Lokomotiv, Real coach Vicente Del Bosque will still be worried about the state of his strike force.

Spanish internationals Fernando Morientes and Jose Maria Gutierrez are both injured and Raul Gonzalez is still struggling with a hamstring niggle and faces a late fitness test.

Del Bosque, after the disastrous experiment of making five changes against Real Betis last Saturday which resulted in a 3-1 loss, may be tempted to stay with a winning formula, meaning the unusual pairing of Savio and Pedro Munitis up front with Raul, if fit, playing behind them.

The prospect looms of Del Bosque naming world record transfer signing Zinedine Zidane among the substitutes.

However, if Del Bosque is reluctant to leave 66-million-dollars worth of talent on the bench, the Frenchman could come in for his compatriot Claude Makelele or Brazilian midfielder Flavio Conceicao.

Espanyol, for their part, were showing little fear at the prospect of visiting the Santiago Bernabeu on Saturday and they can look for comfort at last season's 2-2 draw in the corresponding fixture.

"We can beat Real Madrid, whether they have Zidane or not. After all, Betis showed that it could be done," said Espanyol midfielder Enrique De Lucas, the man likely to be handed the task of keeping Zidane in check.

At the top Alaves, in second, welcome fourth-placed Deportivo La Coruna in a match which could decide who will take hold of the Liga's reins.

Alaves went top for the first time in their history last Saturday, albeit only for a day, but it was still a far cry from their fourth division status barely a decade ago.

For their part, Deportivo are

expected to recall Roy Makaay and Lionel Scaloni in place of Spanish internationals Fran Gonzalez and Victor Sanchez, who were both injured in the Galician side's 2-2 draw with Olympiakos in the Champions League on Tuesday.

However, Deportivo's confidence was badly dented by the dour draw with the Greeks, and losing at home last week against Athletic Bilbao after having only lost one home game all last season.

Celta Vigo though could retain pole position with a win against Real Mallorca on Sunday, and history is on their side. They have never lost to Mallorca in 11 league visits from the island club.

Valencia, who lie third, have a tough tie at Athletic Bilbao and will be hoping their players are fully recovered from the gruelling mid-week trip to Russia where they won 1-0 against UEFA Cup opponents Chernomorets.

FIXTURES Saturday (all times GMT): Villarreal v Real Sociedad (1830), Barcelona v Tenerife (1900), Las Palmas v Malaga (1900), Real Madrid v Espanyol (1900) Alaves v Deportivo La Coruna (1900) Sunday: Valladolid v Real Betis (1700), Celta Vigo v Real Mallorca (1700), Sevilla v Rayo Vallecano (1700), Real Zaragoza v Osasuna (1730), Athletic Bilbao v Valencia (1800)

## Premiership preview

# Big ask for leaders

## Football

AFP, London

Premiership table-toppers Bolton Wanderers face their toughest test of the season so far when they tackle third-placed Arsenal at Highbury on Saturday.

Bolton are a point ahead of the Londoners who have a game in hand going into Saturday's match.

Wanderers started their campaign impressively but defeat at home to Southampton last Saturday followed by a draw at Blackburn in midweek has slowed their progress in their first season back in the top flight.

As for the Gunners, their Premiership challenge appears to be back on track after their 2-1 home defeat to title hopefuls Leeds last month.

A win for Arsenal this weekend will see them replace Bolton at the summit although second-placed Leeds, who are level on points with Wanderers, would leapfrog Arsene Wenger's men with victory at home to Derby on Sunday.

Arsenal overcame stubborn German outfit Schalke 04 3-2 on Wednesday for the first win in the Champions League this season. The absence of injury victims Sol Campbell and Tony Adams, together with the suspension of Ashley Cole, forced Wenger to select a makeshift rearguard but despite some sloppy defending their explosive attack was on fire to hide

the cracks. Schalke converted just two of their 16 attempts at goal while France international Thierry Henry, criticised recently for his poor finishing ratio, was on target twice to steer the Gunners to a vital win.

The electric pace of French duo Henry and Sylvain Wiltord is enough to frighten any defence and with compatriot Patrick Vieira pulling the strings in midfield, Bolton could be in for a busy afternoon in north London.

Bolton's attack was strengthened this week by the signing of former Glasgow Rangers and Leeds striker Rod Wallace who gave Wanderers the lead in Wednesday's 1-1 draw at Ewood Park.

The man who scored 56 goals in his time at Ibrox showed he had lost little of his sharpness, opening his account with a powerful debut header.

Liverpool, who held Borussia Dortmund of Germany to a 0-0 draw on Wednesday entertain Glenn Hoddle's Tottenham, 2-1 winners at Sunderland the same night.

Unimpressive in midweek, reigning champions Manchester United host Ipswich at Old Trafford.

Sir Alex Ferguson's men were pushed all the way by Everton side Lille in their Champions League opener this week before David Beckham's decisive last-gasp winner.

United skipper Roy Keane believes the English Premiership giants need to be more boring if they are to realise their Champions League dream.

The outspoken Irish midfielder said Tuesday's dour 1-0 win - United's first clean sheet of the season - was good news for Ferguson's squad.

United's defence, which leaked four goals against Newcastle in the league last Saturday, was in need of tightening Keane said - and the shut-out of Lille was a welcome improvement.

Leicester manager Peter Taylor could once again be in the firing line if his side lose at home to Fulham.

The Foxes took the lead at home to fellow strugglers Middlesbrough on Monday but two goals in the last five minutes handed the visitors their second consecutive win.

But Middlesbrough's improvement faces a thorough examination at unbeaten Chelsea on Sunday while basement club West Ham, with just two points out of 12, welcome Newcastle to Upton Park the same day.

Monday night's match sees Aston Villa travel to Southampton.

FIXTURES Saturday (all 1400GMT unless stated): Arsenal v Bolton, Blackburn v Everton, Leicester v Fulham, Liverpool v Tottenham, Manchester United v Ipswich, Sunderland v Charlton Sunday: Chelsea v Middlesbrough (1300GMT), Leeds v Derby (1300GMT), West Ham v Newcastle (1500GMT) Monday: Southampton v Aston Villa (1900GMT)