

# Fergie taking no chances



AFP, Paris

After unleashing the second string on Sunderland in the Premiership last weekend, Manchester United boss Alex Ferguson will revert to his dream-team against Deportivo La Coruna in a crunch Champions League tie on Wednesday.

Ferguson, who was delighted with the performance of several reserves during the 3-1 victory at the Stadium of Light on Saturday, will look to his star-studded first choice side when the Spaniards visit Old Trafford.

United, top of Group G at the halfway stage of their six-match first-round programme, are set to bring back keeper Fabien Barthez, midfielders David Beckham and Juan Sebastian Veron.

Laurent Blanc picked up an ankle injury during the win at Sunderland but Ferguson remains confident the French central defender will be ready to face the Galicians.

He said: "He felt it just after half time and we took him off towards the end as a precaution, but he should be all right for Wednesday."

Ruud van Nistelrooy is also expected to start after warming the bench against Sunderland and skipper Roy Keane is available once again as United seek to avenge their 2-1 away defeat to Deportivo suffered earlier in the campaign.

In the other group G match between Olympiakos and Lille in Athens, the home side's coach Takis Lemonis has a doubt over the fitness of star midfielder Stylianos Giannakopoulos, who injured his right leg in a 1-1 draw against PAKO Salonika in a Greek league match on Sunday.

Celtic manager Martin O'Neill will have had to decide whether striker Chris Sutton could fly to Portugal with the rest of the first-team squad on Tuesday.

The England man was forced to miss Saturday's 2-1 win at Motherwell after contracting a virus which has also affected his family.

Sutton is anxiously awaiting the results of blood tests which will dictate whether he can travel or not for the vital Champions League Group E clash.

If Sutton fails to recover John Hartson is line to make his Champions League debut against Porto.

O'Neill is expected to recall

season, is available for the first time after missing the club's first three Champions League matches because of a mixture of suspension and injury.

That means coach Marcello Lippi has a free hand and can pick his strongest line-up.

Nedved could play on the left or behind the likely front two of Alessandro Del Piero and Frenchman David Trezeguet.

Lippi will also be able to count on

Saturday.

Coach Klaus Toppmoller has the good news that injury problems involving Turk Yildirim Bastuerk, Jens Nowotny and Brazilian Ze Roberto are on the mend and all are making the trip to Barcelona's Nou Camp stadium.

Turkish club Fenerbahce, with three defeats to date, travel to French club Lyon to try and remedy that barren statistic in the other Group F game.

Bayern Munich's Brazilian star Giovane Elbe is in fabulous form on the run-up to their Group H match against Spartak Moscow in the Bavarian capital's Olympic stadium.

He's the Champions League top scorer with four goals and twice found the net in their first match against the Russians which they won 3-1. Elbe also hit home his seventh Bundesliga goal of the season in Bayern's 5-1 victory over 1860 Munich on Saturday.

Munich coach Ottmar Hitzfeld still has to do without his injured stars Mehmet Scholl, Jens Jeremies and Stefan Effenberg however.

Spartak won 2-1 at Samara on Saturday to take the lead in the Russian league table again to prove their winning form. Skipper Yegor Titov and Belarus international halfback Vasily Baranov found the net in that match.

Group H leaders Sparta Prague, who base their game around a solid defence in front of keeper Petr Cech, travel to Rotterdam club Feyenoord.

Sparta are yet to concede a goal in the competition and 19-year-old Cech has gone 1,035 minutes without letting one in in all competitions, dating back to August 20 when they beat Slezsky FC Opava 2-1 in the Czech league.

"We aren't counting the minutes," said Cech. "We simply begin each match with the determination not to concede a goal."



Sir Alex Ferguson

the presence of Dutch midfielder Edgar Davids and Uruguayan defender Paolo Montero who both missed the weekend 3-3 Turin derby draw with Torino because of suspension.

Last week's 0-0 draw in Porto saw Scotland's Celtic, 1-0 victors over Trondheim-based Rosenborg, take top spot and relegate Juve to second. Anything less than a win on Wednesday at the Stadio Delle Alpi would set alarm bells ringing in Turin.

Bayer Leverkusen are the form team of the competition having won their first three Group F matches and remain unbeaten in all competitions for 15 games.

Veteran striker Ulf Kirsten yet again proved his mettle in scoring twice in their 3-2 German league victory over Energie Cottbus on

## WEDNESDAY'S FIXTURES

European Champions League first phase fixtures on Wednesday:

**Group E**  
Juventus (Ita) v Rosenborg (Nor)

Porto (Por) v Celtic (Sco)

**Group F**  
Lyon (Fra) v Fenerbahce (Tur)  
Barcelona (Spa) v Bayer Leverkusen (Ger)

**Group G**  
Manchester United (Eng) v Deportivo La Coruna (Spa)  
Olympiakos (Gre) v Lille (Fra)

**Group H**  
Bayern Munich (Ger) v Spartak Moscow (Rus)  
Feyenoord (Ned) v Sparta Prague (Cze)

skipper Paul Lambert, flying winger Didier Agathe and in-form midfielder Alan Thompson after resting them on Saturday. But Dutch winger Bobby Petta looks certain to miss out after recently suffering a recurrence of his hamstring injury.

Juventus go into the other Group E match with Rosenborg of Norway in the knowledge that they have everything going for them in terms of personnel but that they are in a rut as far as form is concerned.

Czech midfielder Pavel Nedved, signed from Lazio in the close

## Eriksson cheers up Houiller

AFP, London

England manager Sven-Goran Eriksson has sent his best wishes to Liverpool boss Gerard Houiller saying he understood the pressures he was under.

The Swede told the Football Association's official website www.the-fa.org: "I wish him all the best for a speedy recovery."

"My thoughts are with Gerard's family and close friends. Of course it is at times like this that football does not seem so important."

"Everybody is aware of how stressful the job of manager is and at club level the scrutiny reaches high levels on an almost daily basis."

"This is something we must accept - whether we like it or not."

Eriksson was in the crowd at Anfield watching Liverpool's match against Leeds when Houiller was rushed to hospital during the half-time interval with chest pains.

The Frenchman regained consciousness yesterday following an 11-hour operation and faces further tests before he can be discharged from hospital.

Eriksson is a regular spectator at Liverpool with Houiller's side providing some of the key elements in the national team such as striker Michael Owen and midfielder Steven Gerrard.

## Relief for Bowyer, Woodgate

AFP, Hull

The alleged attack on an Asian student by two Leeds United footballers was not racially motivated, the jury at the retrial of Lee Bowyer and Jonathan Woodgate was told here on Monday.

England under-21 midfielder Bowyer and England international Woodgate are charged with causing grievous bodily harm with intent to Sarfraz Najeib.

Bowyer, 24, of Leeds, and Woodgate, 21, of Middlesbrough, are also accused of affray. The pair deny the charges as do their co-accused Paul Clifford and Neale Caveney, both 22 year-olds from Middlesbrough.

Najeib, 21, of Rotherham, South Yorkshire, suffered serious injuries in an alleged attack in Leeds city centre in January last year.

Trial judge Mr Justice Henriques told the jury at Hull Crown Court on Monday that there was no evidence of a racial motive for the assault on Najeib.

Henriques told the jury: "There is simply no evidence that the attack was racially motivated. The simple issue for your determination is: who did it?"

The jury was told by prosecutor Nicholas Campbell that the attack on Najeib was fuelled by "a heavy mix of alcohol, adrenaline and camaraderie".

The original case against the players was halted back in April following publication of an article in the Sunday Mirror.

# Bahrain deny Thailand



AFP, Bangkok

Bahrain snatched a late goal to draw 1-1 with Thailand in a passionate Asian World Cup qualifier here Tuesday in which Malaysian referee Karim Abdul Hamid was pelted with



PHOTO: AFP

Mohamed Hussein Mohamed (R) of Bahrain, trying to intercept Thailand's Thersdak Chaiman at Bangkok on October 16.

missiles after the equaliser came late in injury time.

With nothing at stake but honour in the rescheduled bottom-of-the-

Piturat had fouled Bahrain's goalkeeper Rahman Karim.

Hamid further angered the crowd in the 74th minute

Choketawee Promrat was booked for a second time. Choketawee was soundly applauded as he left the field.

Down to 10 men, Thailand still looked set to register their first win in the qualifiers until four minutes into injury time, and with seconds on the clock, Hussain Ali Ahmed found the net for Bahrain to level the score.

As angry fans threw plastic cups and bottles at Hamid when he left the pitch, Thailand manager Virach Charpanich said he was disappointed in the refereeing.

"I am very disappointed. I have never blamed it on the referee before, but this time I can't help it. Kiatisak's attempt should have been our second goal," he told reporters.

"We have done our best. I have to apologise to the fans for not giving them the much-needed victory," he said.

Thailand's English coach Peter Withe said his side failed to retain control of the ball and conceded the final goal too easily "but we should have got a penalty and scored more goals in the first half."

Bahrain's German coach Wolfgang Sidka conceded that luck was on his side.

"It was an exciting game although neither of us have a chance to qualify. Both teams played very well, and we were lucky to score in the last minute," he said.

The match was originally to have been played last Saturday but was called off after 25 minutes, with Bahrain leading 1-0, when fire broke out at Thailand's Rajamangala National Stadium.

## Iran thugs on trial

AFP, Tehran

Thirty young Iranians went before Tehran's headline revolutionary court Tuesday for allegedly disturbing public order after last week's Iran's 2-1 victory over Iraq in a World Cup football qualifier, state radio said.

They were among more than 400 people arrested during celebrations which took place after the match in Tehran last Friday.

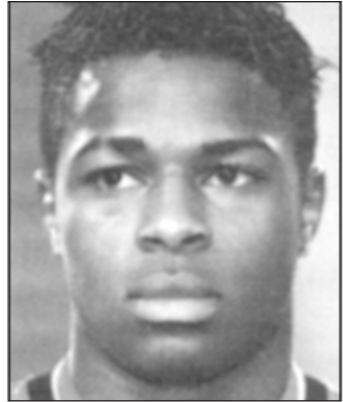
The radio said they were sent for trial following "preliminary questioning" but gave no further details.

A court official contacted by AFP said the trial was being held behind closed doors.

It is thought to be the first time that an Iranian revolutionary tribunal, normally charged with handling cases related to offences against religion and the state, has dealt with such a case.

Police fired tear-gas to break up a crowd of around 20,000 people celebrating in the capital's western Nur square Friday, while anti-riot forces clubbed dozens of supporters of all ages.

They had warned in newspapers that they would "seriously confront" any "hooliganism" after the match. "These people have been accused of disturbing public order," Ibrahim Rezaei-Babadi, a Tehran security official said, quoted by the student news agency ISNA.



EMILE MPENZA

Kaiserslautern following a 3-0 loss to VfB Stuttgart on Saturday.

Mpenza joined Schalke at the beginning of 2000 for a club record of 8.7 million euros (7.9 million dollars).

Addressing the team on Monday, Aussenauer gave a general warning: "Whoever does not want to play for Schalke should end their contract and leave the club."

Schalke, UEFA Cup winners in 1997, are last in Champions League Group C with no points from three matches.

## Perez gives a piece of his mind

AFP, Madrid

Spanish champions Real Madrid have paid the price of over confidence with their disastrous start to the season, club president Florentino Perez said Monday.

Real continued their stuttering start to the season at the weekend being held to a goalless draw at last season's UEFA Cup finalists Alaves putting them in the unaccustomed spot of 16th position in table.

"We're not moving well in the championship. We haven't had luck with injuries and international call-ups, and why not admit it - an excess of confidence," said Perez.

"To win the Liga you have to work every Sunday and we've started too relaxed and with too much confidence which is bad," said Perez.

Perez however defended world-record signing Zinedine Zidane's slow start blaming the French World and European Cup winner's problems on excessive media pressure.

"Zidane has had two bad months because of media pressure and he needs another two months to find his feet."

"We're convinced that Zidane will be profitable on both a sporting and economic level," added Perez.

Perez, a 54-year-old construction tycoon, also revealed that the club have a major sports marketing venture in the pipeline between now and the end of the year.

"There are more than 100 million Real Madrid supporters worldwide, but the club has never been able to transform into money the passion of its supporters," lamented Perez.

"Our model has been Manchester United and between now and the end of the year we will work with our supplier Adidas to launch our own Real Madrid label globally."

"We have more than 200 individual projects and are going to launch a network of franchise distribution throughout the world."

## Boban calls it a day

AFP, Vigo

Unhappy Croatian international midfielder Zvonimir Boban announced his retirement from football here Monday after failing to relaunch his career with Celta Vigo.

Boban, 33, was loaned to Spanish side Celta from Italian Serie A giants AC Milan in the summer after becoming surplus to requirements at the San Siro.



ZVONIMIR BOBAN

But he has struggled to make his mark in Spain and has now decided to call time on a career which peaked when he was a key part of Milan's wonderful sides of the early 1990s.

"I've given a lot to the sport, and I'm leaving for good," Boban said. "After several years abroad I want to return to my country, study history and be with my family," he said. "I'll always be connected to football because it is a drug," he added.

Boban admitted he felt down at bowing out. "I'm sad because I've hardly played. I thought long and hard before taking this decision," he added.

He said he had joined Celta in the summer keen to take part in a 'sporting project', but said: "Today I don't feel the same way."

Boban joined Milan from Dynamo Zagreb in 1991.

## English Premiership

# Spurs down Derby



AFP, London

Glenn Hoddle's Tottenham handed Colin Todd a losing start to his reign as Derby manager here Monday with a deserved 3-1 victory at White Hart Lane.

Spurs were set on the way after scoring first half goals from striker Les Ferdinand and German international wingback Christian Ziege.

Ferdinand opened the scoring on 10 minutes when he prodded home a sharp low cross from the veteran Ziege.

Former Italy international Fabrizio Ravanelli levelled the scores for Derby on 15 minutes as the midlanders broke out of defence.

But Derby joy was shortlived and Ziege had increased the lead by halftime, sent clear with an incisive pass from the evergreen England international Teddy Sheringham.

Derby boss Todd, who replaced sacked 'bald eagle' Jim Smith as manager last week, could only watch as his new team were outplayed by Spurs throughout the second half.

Spurs sealed the win with an exquisite lob from Uruguayan midfielder Gustavo Poyet to make it 3-1 on the stroke of fulltime.

The victory saw Spurs move one place up the table to 12th spot with 11 points. Derby remain in the relegation zone following the defeat.



PHOTO: INTERNET

Tottenham Hotspur's German international Christian Ziege celebrates his goal by blowing a kiss to the fans against Derby County at White Hart Lane on October 15.

# Dundee rope in Chinese Fan



AFP, Beijing

Scottish Premier League side Dundee have signed veteran Chinese international defender Fan Zhuyi from England's Crystal Palace for a fee of one million pounds, reports in China said Tuesday.

Dundee official Dario Magri spent the past week in China thrashing out the deal, said the official Xinhua news agency.

The negotiations with Fan, 31, took place in the northeastern Chinese city of Shenyang, where the Chinese national side are preparing for their final World Cup qualification game in Uzbekistan on Saturday.

Fan has been an integral member of the team which secured China's first-ever place in the World Cup Finals earlier this month.

Although he has been a great success in his three seasons at Crystal Palace, Fan has faced increasing pressure from the First Division club to stand down from the heavy commitment of international duty.

He has been away from England a great deal for China's qualification campaign, which saw 14 games in around five months.

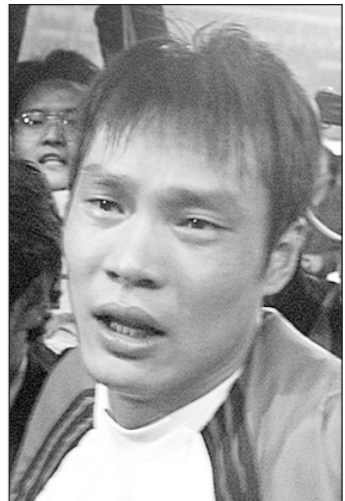
"The reason I have left Crystal Palace is because they tried to place

limitations on me playing international games," Fan told the Beijing New Daily newspaper.

"Dundee have said they will be much better for this."

Fan would be paid around 12,000 pounds (17,300 dollars) a week at Dundee, the newspaper added.

Dundee currently lurk near the lower reaches of the Scottish Premier League and would welcome some steel in their defence after a 4-0 home pummeling by top-of-the-table Celtic on Saturday.



FAN ZHIYI

# Terror tops WC medical manual



AFP, Tokyo

A group of medical experts preparing a manual for treating large numbers of injured at the 2002 World Cup in Japan and Korea has shifted its focus to terrorism since the attacks in the United States last month, a team member said Tuesday.

"We considered terrorist attacks before, but now we will give that section much more importance," said Dr. Yuichi Koide, one of the 15 team members from Nippon Medical School.

The manual will tell doctors, paramedics and other authorities how they need to prepare in case a large number of fans are injured for whatever reason, including attacks

using the deadly anthrax bacteria.

"We had focused on cases caused by violent hooligans, arson, or fans collapsing and we said terrorist acts might also occur. Now I think there will be more focus put on the terrorism pages," Koide said.

The team will refer to strategies developed against bioterrorist attacks for the Group of Seven summit in Okinawa, southwestern Japan, in July last year as well as contingencies made for other major soccer competitions around the world.

The manual of about 50 pages will be completed this year and distributed to the 10 Japanese venues by January or February, when Koide said he hopes training on how to prepare could begin. The World Cup tournament opens in May.

# Platini's no to presidency



AFP, Paris

Michel Platini on Monday ruled himself out of a possible bid for the presidency of European football's governing body, saying he would instead seek election to UEFA's executive.

Platini, vice-president of the French Football Federation, had been tipped as a possible candidate to face reigning UEFA president Lennart Johansson in an election next April.

But Platini, who campaigned

against Johansson for Sepp Blatter during the FIFA presidential election campaign in 1998, put an end to the speculation surrounding his position on Monday.

He said Johansson's decision to stand for the post again after earlier speculation that he may step down had deterred him from running for the job.

"I have been thinking for several months of taking on more responsibility in football's institutions," he said.

"I saw that president Lennart Johansson was thinking of retiring. I have an ambitious vision on the future of football and I began to think what I would do should he do so,"

Platini told AFP.

"At the start, my whole outlook was based on not challenging anybody. However the situation changed after his decision not to retire. It would have been harder to win against Johansson, but victory would still have been possible," he said.

"I consulted quite a few people and then I decided it would be more wise and honest to take a route which could lead to the same thing in time to come," he added.

"It's wiser not to create a feud within UEFA. It's a deal which suits everybody. My bid to be represented on the executive committee is only a stepping stone for other goals."

## Only Thompson for Liverpool

AFP, London

Liverpool chief executive Rick Parry on Tuesday ruled out the possibility of appointing an interim manager in the absence of Gerard Houiller who underwent open heart surgery at the weekend.

Houiller had an 11-hour cardiac operation on Saturday after being rushed to a Liverpool hospital with chest pains during his side's 1-1 Premiership draw at home to Leeds.

Assistant coach Phil Thompson has taken charge for the club's Champions League clash with Dynamo Kiev on Tuesday night.

Rumours have been circulating that the club may decide to bring in a big name on a temporary basis until Houiller has fully recovered.

However, Parry feels the club already have the players and backroom staff in place to cope with the situation.

"There have been all sorts of unhelpful prognostications but our line has always been that it's business as usual," he said.

"We have a very competent team here both in terms of playing staff and coaching staff and we're going to carry on as we are. It's business as usual and there will be no short-term changes or appointments."

Parry was pleased to report that Houiller is recovering well following surgery.

"The very latest is encouraging, he came off the ventilator early yesterday and was conscious. He was chatting to people yesterday and I think generally it was an important day and it went very well," he added.

"We're all absolutely delighted and everybody here was massively relieved. He has got a long way to go before recovering fully but so far so good."

"All we're focusing on at the moment is letting Gerard take it day by day. The thing we care about most about is his health. It's been a big operation but he's come through it well."

## Fresh dates for Asian qualifiers

AFP, Riyadh

FIFA have switched the dates of the closing Asian Zone World Cup Group A qualifiers between Saudi Arabia and Thailand in Riyadh and between Bahrain and Iran in Manama from Friday to Sunday, a Saudi football official said.

The reason was that Saturday's game opposing Thailand and Bahrain had been called off due to a fire in the stadium and was only replayed on Tuesday.

That meant that both teams would be unable to reach the venues before Thursday leaving them insufficient time to prepare for the crucial final games originally scheduled for Friday.

There was no immediate confirmation of the date switch from FIFA headquarters in Zurich.

First place in the group, which ensures qualification for next year's World Cup finals in Japan and South Korea, depends on the results of the last two games.

Iran lead the group with 15 points, while the Saudis are second one point back. The eventual runners-up play off against the runners-up of Asian Zone Group B with the winners of that match taking on Ireland for a place in the finals.