LIVERPOOL V BAYER LEVERKUSEN

Germans a real threat



Liverpool will not be underestimating the challenge of Bundesliga leaders Bayer Leverkusen when the teams meet in the first leg of the Champions League quarter-finals at Anfield on Wednesday.

The Merseysiders, who have won the European Cup four times and are currently second in the English Premiership, were handed the seemingly less stern challenge posed by the Germans when the draw was made last month.

But Liverpool's assistant coach Phil Thompson refused to accept his side had been landed with the easy option as they attempt to prolong what has so far been a thrilling ride through Europe's premier club competition.

"We've got a great respect for Leverkusen," he said. "They've got a lot of players in the German national team - obviously we've spoken to (Liverpool midfielder) Didi Hamann since about it - and we'll be looking forward to it.

"It's as tough as any - they've done very well to top their (second phase) group.

"We know of them, we've played against them, in our very first game of the season, a pre-season game We know their strengths, we know their weaknesses. It's an interesting

But Thompson admitted his players were confident of making the semi-finals and setting up a possible mouth-watering clash with Premiership rivals Manchester

"The way we're playing, the confidence is oozing through the players and the club and on our day we can beat anybody," he added.

Thompson did not want to be drawn on the prospect of a last-four match against Sir Alex Ferguson's

"You can't look any further than that (the quarter-finals)," he said. "The main thing is that Bayer Leverkusen need to be beaten and it's going to take us games like we played against Roma (in the last second phase game) to get through this next stage."

Bayern Munich's England international Owen Hargreaves echoed Thompson's sentiments by warning Liverpool not to take Leverkusen

Hargreaves, who was in the Munich team that lost 3-2 to Liverpool in the Super Cup Final in Monaco last season, believes the Germans are more than capable of causing an upset.

"Bayer Leverkusen are top of the Bundesliga for a very good reason. They are having a great season and are easily capable of beating Liverpool over two legs," he said.

'Some people seem surprised Leverkusen have come this far in the Champions League but I'm not. They have an extremely strong

Liverpool because offensively Leverkusen have so many great

"Michael Ballack will be a real threat from midfield and up front Oliver Neuville and the Bulgarian Dimitar Berbatov are proven

"They have a solid pattern of olay, good defenders and are hard to break down but I reckon the key to their success is through their attacking play.'

Stephane Henchoz agreed with Hargreaves but stressed his side have plenty of faith in their own

whole is full of top-class teams, but at this stage it is the cream of the crop which emerges," he said.

lightly. They are top of the Bundesliga, ahead of Borussia Dormund and Bayern Munich and they have scored over 60 league goals this season.



score his first goal for the club four

Everton nerves when he made it 2-0

when his shot took a deflection off

back in the 75th minute for Bolton

when he headed home but any

chances of a revival were shattered

when substitute Nick Chadwick

made it 3-1 for Everton who now

ened when they fell behind to a

Freddy Kanoute strike right on the

half-time whistle at Craven Cottage

as the Frenchman scored his 10th

At White Hart Lane, Tottenham

Norwegian international Steffan

Iversen gave Tottenham the lead

before Teddy Sheringham put away

the second after 29 minutes to add

to Leeds' hangover they had been

suffering after their 4-3 defeat to

Mark Viduka after 52 minutes but

the Yorkshiremen's season contin-

Leeds pulled one back through

In the late game, Blackburn

eased their relegation fears with a 2-

0 home victory over Southampton

with first half goals from Damien

Champions League place next

season, meet Aston Villa on

82

60

60 48

67

44

42 32 36

Newcastle, chasing a

Manchester United on Saturday.

Fulham's relegation fears deep-

Tomasz Radzinski settled

Bruno N'Gotty then pulled one

minutes from the interval.

Paul Warhurst.

have 39 points.

goal of the season

ues to disintegrate.

Duff and Yordi.

Premiership's top six

English Premiership table after Monday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost,

5 12 12

20

21

18

15

33

33

beat Leeds 2-1.

Arsenal's Swedish international playmaker Freddy Ljungberg (C), trying to make his way through two Charlton defenders at the Valley in Charlton on April 1.

Premiership

Gunners too hot



AFP, London

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger lavished praise on his players for ending Charlton's 12-match unbeaten run against London sides this season with a comprehensive 3-0 victory at the Valley on Monday.

The win in south London took Arsenal top of the English Premiership with 69 points from 32 games, one more than secondplaced Liverpool and two more than Manchester United in third.

However, the Gunners remain hot favourites to land the championship as they crucially have a game in hand on both their title rivals.

Liverpool and Manchester United are involved in the quarterfinals of the Champions League this week and therefore were excused league duties.

All Arsenal's goals at the Valley were scored in the first-half. French international striker Thierry Henry netted twice before Swedish midfielder Freddy Ljungberg

wrapped up the points. Wenger saluted his team for a thoroughly professional performance against a normally stubborn

Charlton side "I think an average Arsenal team would have had problems, but we were really focussed and looked dangerous going forward," Wenger

"We had pace and power and the players were on the same wavelength whenever we had the ball and the movement for the goals was

"Then in the second-half we did a professional job when Charlton pushed more forward to make sure

we kept a clean sheet.' The injury to defender Ashley Cole, who damaged the same medial ligaments in his left knee from which he has only recently recovered, however left Wenger fearing another major blow with Robert Pires and Giovanni van Bronckhorst already ruled out for

At Pride Park, John Gregory's hopes of saving Derby from the drop suffered a major setback when Robbie Mustoe's 12th minute goal gave Middlesbrough a 1-0 win.

of the table with 22 points after going down 2-1 at Sunderland. Sunderland had a dream start

Leicester stay rooted to the foot

when American international Claudio Reyna fired in a superb leftfoot volley aftre just three minutes, but the lead didn't last long as Paul Dickov headed in an equaliser six minutes later.

However, Reyna added his second after 18 minutes to ease the pressure on manager Peter Reid and add to the gloom for Leicester.

Ipswich, third from bottom at the start of play, drew 0-0 with Chelsea but will regret missing a golden opportunity to grab the three points when Marcus Bent missed a firsthalf penalty.

Alun Armstrong had been brought down by John Terry but Chelsea keeper Carlo Cudicini pushed Bent's spot-kick over the

Everton, thrashed 6-2 at Newcastle on Friday, look to have guaranteed their safety with a 3-1 win over fellow-relegation candidates Bolton at Goodison Park.

Both teams had a player sent-off the first-half. Everton striker Duncan Ferguson was dimissed for violent conduct in the 20th minute while Bolton's Kostas Konstantinidis followed him 11 minutes later for a second bookable offence.

The home side then nosed in front when Alessandro Pistone hit a screaming shot from long range to

goals for, goals against, points):

Arsenal

Man Utd

Chelsea

Newcastle

they carry on like this, they'll probably win the Bundesliga. "It's going to be very tough for

weapons in their side.

Liverpool's Swiss defender

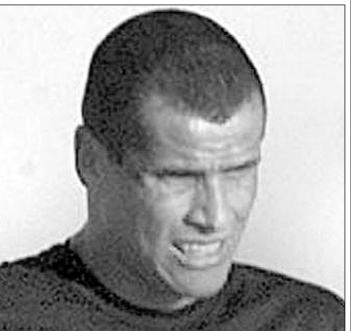
"The Champions League as a

"Leverkusen must not be taken

"But we have a lot of self-belief in our own quality. We will have the highest respect for Leverkusen, as we would for anybody, but we won't be frightened of them. We are not frightended of anybody."



Rivaldo back for **Spaniards**





AFP, Athens

quarter-final The 1999 FIFA World Player of the Year hurt himself in mid-March against arch rivals Real Madrid and has been out of action since but

The gifted striker, whose lastgasp goal for a 3-2 victory over Valencia to complete his hat-trick and snatch fourth spot in Spain for a Champions League place last June, is expected to continue his major contribution in the event.

Captain Sergi is also expected to be available, having been out for more than a month, also with a twisted left ankle. Coach Carles Rexach may not risk Sergi however meaning Francesco Coco could get

ing their 1992 triumph, are in sixth

CUP CORNER

SPÖRT



Spectators at football's World Cup finals will not be allowed to bring plastic drink bottles, umbrellas and confetti into stadiums, organisers said

The Japanese and South Korean World Cup organising committes said "stones, bottles, cans, PET bottles with caps attached, sealed paper packets, frozen substances or other objects which may be considered as intended to be thrown" were banned.

The rules for spectators at stadiums and other World Cup facilities also prohibit bringing in umbrellas, "with the exception of folding umbrellas judged harmless by the security personnel".

Not surprisingly firearms and knives were also listed as banned Takahisa Ishida, security director for the Japanese organising commit-

tee JAWOC, told reporters that confetti would be prohibited "because they hamper competition when scattered in enormous volume" It is the first time that the World Cup finals are being held in Asia and in a co-hosting scheme. Both Japan and South Korea are braced for their first

which kick off on May 31. The organisers have banned people from taking alcoholic beverages into the stadiums, but beer will be sold in the venues in limited amounts as a US brewer is one of the worldwide sponsors of the 2002 finals.

encounter with European football hooligans during the month-long finals

WORLD CUP PIRACY!

Following the triumph of China's footballers in qualifying for their first World Cup finals, one of the country's other success stories -- counterfeiters have got in on the act, state media said Tuesday.

In the first documented case of pirated World Cup 2002 products in the country, police in the southern city of Shenzhen seized a series of illicit commemorative copies of the tournament trophy, the Xinhua news agency

A special anti-piracy task force in the bustling commercial centre adjoining Hong Kong found 60 forged Cup trophies, 54 semi-finished ones and six sets of production moulds in a company warehouse. The raid followed a tip off by football's world governing body FIFA about

sham World Cup merchandise being produced. The finished trophies were inscribed with logos such as "FIFA World Cup" and "Everlasting Memory of 2002 World Cup", Xinhua said.

China's qualification for the World Cup finals, to be held jointly by South Korea and Japan, prompted a national outpouring of joy in the soccer-mad

Millions of fans are now hoping the wily leadership of charismatic Yugoslav coach Bora Milutinovic -- himself immortalised on innumerable souvenirs -- can help the inexperienced side avoid humiliation in the first round group stage, where they will face Brazil, Turkey and Costa Rica.

Piracy and counterfeiting, especially of computer software, music and films, is rampant in China despite repeated high-profile crackdowns.

JAPAN EXPECT **GDP BOOST**

Japan's gross domestic product (GDP) would get a 0.3 percentage point boost in the April-June quarter from its co-hosting of the World Cup soccer finals, a research institute said Tuesday.

"The economy will benefit by about 370 billion yen (2.8 billion dollars), boosting GDP by 0.1 percentage points on the year and 0.3 percentage points for the April-June quarter," said a study by the Dai-ichi Life Research Institute Inc.

The study cautioned however that it was not clear whether the effects would be offset by decreased spending in other areas as Japan's economic woes continued.

"With the rise in the unemployment rate, and decrease in salary bonuses, the income situation is getting worse, and it is possible an increase in spending on World Cup spending will result in cutbacks in spending on other items," it said.

Dai-ichi Life Research's forecast was based on the assumption that soccer matches would draw a total of 1.6 million domestic and foreign

It predicted spending directly related to the World Cup in Japan would reach 233 billion yen.

Total economic windfall would be 369 billion yen, the institute said

PANATHINAIKOS V BARCEL



RIVALDO

★CHAMPS LEAGUE

Brazilian Rivaldo, whose heroics last season earned Barcelona a late qualification, is set to return from a twisted left ankle against Greek club Panathinaikos here on Wednesday night in the Champions League

should be fit for the first leg clash.

Barcelona, dreaming of repeat-

place in Spain and once more struggling to qualify for next sea-

Panathinaikos defender Sotiris Kyrgiakos is a doubtful starter after a thigh injury in the 2-2 draw at PAOK Salonika at the weekend. The Greeks have an unbeaten nome record in the Champions

League this season - in fact draws against Porto and Real Madrid are the only points they have dropped at their 17,000-seat Apostolos Nikolaidis Stadium so far. Coach Sergio Marcarian praised Barcelona, and added: "Anything can happen from the quarter-finals but I have great faith in my players

reach the final in Glasgow (May Panathinaikos club president Angelos Filippidis said: "It is a major success for us and for Greek soccer to be among the best eight teams in

and I see no reason why we cannot

Europe. We have to give it our all." Veteran Panathinaikos keeper Antonis Nikopolidis hoped they might sneak through into the last four believing Barcelona are not the force they once were.

"Barcelona is not the same team that it was five years ago. Perhaps we can catch them on a bad day," he



Scolari's favourite Ro-Ro

2002 FIFA WORLD CUP KOREA APAN AFP/AP, Rio de Janeiro/Milan

Both Ronaldo and Ronaldinho will figure in the 23-strong Brazilian squad for this summer's World Cup finals, coach Luiz Felipe Scolari has

Monday that he had been impressed with their budding partnership during the 1-0 win over Yugoslavia in a friendly match last Wednesday.

Scolari told Radio Gaucha on

In that match, Ronaldo played his first game for Brazil in over two years, but lasted just the first 45 minutes before being substituted.

as a second striker or as a playmaker," said Scolari.

But the Brazil coach said he had no intention of buckling under pressure from the fans who want to see former star striker Romario being brought back into the squad.

wheeling attitude and poor training habits had not changed and that therefore he would not be considered for a recall. Meanwhile, Ronaldo will likely return to Internazionale's lineup

nals, an Italian newspaper reported. The two-time FIFA player of the year has not played for Inter since

Ronaldo scored four times Monday in a training game with his Inter teammates and coach Hector Cuper now plans to use him in the European competition, Milan sports daily Gazzetta dello Sport reported Tuesday.

Scolari said that Romario's free-Cuper had been hesitant to use the 25-year-old superstar in the Italian league, saying he was not yet Ronaldo returned to action

earlier this season following a twoyear injury absence due to a torn Thursday against Dutch club right knee ligament and then was Feyenoord in the UEFA Cup semifihurt again in December. Nearly 2,000 fans watched

Ronaldo Monday in the practice match at the team's training site,

Lippi's future uncertain?

Football

REUTERS, Milan

ACROSS

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5 Western

8 Urban

12 Gyro

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Juventus general manager Luciano Moggi has insisted that coach Marcello Lippi's future at the club is not under discussion but the Italian media have begun to speculate on the coach's possible replacement.

Juve's title aspirations faded on Saturday when they drew 1-1 at home to Lazio, leaving them six points behind leaders Inter Milan with just five games remaining.

Asked whether Lippi would be staving with Juventus, Moggi told the daily Gazzetta dello Sport on Tuesday: "Certainly, there is no

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Solution time: 24 mins.

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MARCELLO LIPPI

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name

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43 Method

44 Burpee

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2002-2003 season. Should Juve fail to make up the ground on Inter it would be their fourth consecutive season without a major trophy, although the Turin club have reached the final of the low-key Italian Cup. Moggi put the blame for Juve's

Lippi's current contract with

Juventus runs until the end of the

failure to keep the pace in the Champions League and Serie A on the series of injuries throughout the campaign. "When you get tons of injuries, as

has happened to us this season, how can you hit your targets?" said

VAPIGZ P G Z LJI INJZVOVNA. PG'Z RODDNT

"GUN VLDPRN TPZVOGRU."

VANRPIRG

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I IMAGINE A SCRABBLE TOURNAMENT COULD BE THOUGHT OF AS A WAR OF WORDS. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: V equals P

he Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for nother. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the uzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe ive you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.