

Nightmare for Milan giants



AFP/INTERNET, Paris

Marcio Amoroso's first half hat-trick all but thrust Borussia Dortmund into the UEFA Cup final as they beat AC Milan 4-0 here on Thursday night to virtually destroy any hopes the Italian city had of a final between AC and Inter. To rub salt into the wounds, Inter then slipped up 1-0 at home to Dutch side Feyenoord, who secured the win with an own goal courtesy of Colombian defender Ivan Cordoba, and leaving Italy facing yet another bare year in European club competitions, which they dominated from the mid 80's to the mid 90's.

DORTMUND 4; AC MILAN 0

However it was Amoroso who deservedly took the night's plaudits. The 27-year-old Brazilian forward showed a full repertoire of scoring skills - first a penalty, then a superb individual goal, and lastly a far post header, for a great forward display at Dortmund's Westfalenstadion. Jorg Heinrich finished off the scoring for Dortmund midway through the second half and all but booked their place in the final in Rotterdam on May 8 "It was certainly a great result," Dortmund coach Matthias Sammer said. "The team proved they could play well in these pressure situations." Dortmund were on the attack from the off and Amoroso's strike partner Ewerthon managed to put the ball in the net though it was disallowed for offside. In the eighth minute, Dortmund went ahead when Romanian Cosmin Contra fouled Amoroso in the box and he scored from the spot, firing into the top left hand corner. Czech Republic midfielder Tomas Rosicky, who had a great game throughout, nearly doubled Dortmund's tally on the half hour



PHOTO: INTERNET

Marcio Amoroso (L), Dortmund's Brazilian striker, volleys past AC Milan custodian Massimo Ambrosini (R) to score one of his three goals after evading a desperate tackle from AC Milan's Martin Laursen at Dortmund on April 4.

but, in his exchange with Ewerthon, he could just not get the ball into the net.

Then, in the 34th minute, came the best piece of skill from the game from Amoroso, Dortmund's 6.6-million-dollar summer signing from Parma.

After good work from Rosicky and compatriot Jan Koller, Amoroso lobbed the ball over Milan's Danish defender Martin Laursen to tee himself up to shoot past keeper Christian Abbiati.

A far post header in the 39th minute from Amoroso for his third virtually finished off the tie with AC Milan powerless before the break before such an attacking onslaught.

Milan were a little better after the break, but it was still Matthias Sammer's team in control of the game.

In the 62nd minute, Jorg Heinrich, thanks to Ewerthon putting the ball through keeper Abbiati's legs in a cross from the left, easily knocked the ball home from close in to get further cheers from the home crowd.

Amoroso went off in the 77nd minute to cheers from the crowd having done his work for the night to be replaced by 36-year-old central

defender Jorgen Kohler, a veteran from their 1997 European Champions League victory.

Heinrich could barely believe the result at the end.

"We certainly did not think we would win 4-0 at the start of the match. It goes without saying we played a really good game. We were aggressive and confident and we could not have had a better result," he said.

Feyenoord scored another historic FEYENOORD 1; INTER MILAN

one foot in the De Kuip based UEFA Cup final.

32-years after Feyenoord lifted the Champions Cup trophy, the Rotterdam club returned to Milan to square off with the Italian league leaders

A spirited performance by Bert van Marwijk's side was capped in the 50th minute when Pierre van Hooijdonk's cross was knocked into Cordoba's own net, to give Feyenoord that priceless away goal. Feyenoord goalkeeper, Edwin Zoetbier was born one day after his

club's Champion's Cup triumph over Glasgow Celtic in 1970 and was one of the star performers last night together with Bonaventure Kalou.

The sole consolation for Inter was the return of Ronaldo, who came on for Kallon in the 70th minute to enormous adoration from the crowd. But even the former double world player of the year could not find a way through the well-organised Feyenoord back-line.

The buoyant atmosphere created by the 8,000 supporters who had made their way to Italy from Rotterdam gave Feyenoord the sense that they were playing at home. Feyenoord were given that extra lift that was especially needed in the closing stages as Hector Cuper was forced into bringing on some of the biggest Inter stars, who proceeded to lay siege to the Feyenoord penalty area.

Cuper had elected to begin the match without the services of Vieri, Recoba, Seedorf or Zanetti, with an eye on Inter's upcoming league clash with Atalanta in mind.

Inter regard winning their fourth UEFA Cup in ten years as little consolation if they fail to claim their first Scudetto since 1989. But Inter's strength in-depth was illustrated by the fine performances by their replacements last night in Kallon, Ventola, Guglielminpietro and Emre.

Van Marwijk had taken the risk of fielding inspirational centre-back, Patrick Paauwe and the still slightly injured player and Paauwe immediately illustrated his worth. A Van Persie free-kick was crossed into danger by the defender and Van Hooijdonk should have put Feyenoord in front straight away. However, the tall striker somehow managed to shoot over Fontana's cross-bar from point-blank range, when it looked easier to score.

Paauwe was on-hand at the other end a couple of minutes later, in stopping a threatening Kallon run. Ventola and Guglielminpietro had further Inter chances as the home-side forced Zoetebier into producing some fine saves.

Riquelme's brother freed

AFP, Buenos Aires

Cristian Riquelme, the brother of Argentina's most popular footballer Juan Roman Riquelme, was freed on Thursday the day after being kidnapped by an unknown group and held for ransom, police said.

The 16-year-old Riquelme was found "safe and sound" early in the morning, said police spokesman Anibal De Gastaldi.

Press reports said that his family had paid a ransom to secure his release, but only between 130,000 and 160,000 dollars - less than half of what had been demanded by the kidnappers.

Juan Roman Riquelme, 23 and an Argentine international, arrived at Boca in 1996, scoring 37 goals in 146 matches on his way to helping Boca twice win the Libertadores Cup and the Intercontinental Cup (2000).

Younger brother Cristian turns out for Argentine Second Division side Platense.

Capello extends Roma stay

AFP, Rome

Coach Fabio Capello has extended his contract with Italian champions AS Roma by two years till 2005, the club said on Thursday.

The 55-year-old, who has guided the club to within sight of a second successive championship crown, finally signed the deal after several weeks of negotiations with club president Franco Sensi.

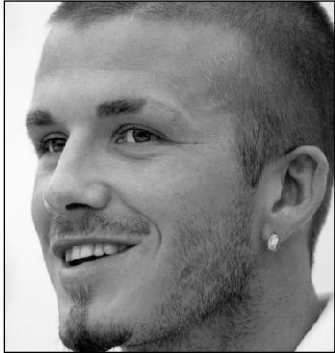
Capello, who made his name at AC Milan in the early 1990's which included the 1994 European Cup final when they thrashed Barcelona 4-0, had received many offers from abroad, including Barcelona, but finally plumped to stay at Roma.

Beckham badly brusied

AFP, London

Manchester United confirmed Thursday that a scan on David Beckham's injured ankle has discovered nothing worse than bad bruising.

Beckham was stretchered off in stoppage time during United's 2-0 Champions League win against



Deportivo La Coruna on Tuesday following a late tackle by Diego Tristan and there were fears his ankle could be broken.

But a preliminary examination eased those fears on Wednesday and that has been confirmed by a more detailed scan today.

United manager Alex Ferguson will announce Friday how many matches Beckham is expected to miss, although he is definitely out of Saturday's Premiership trip to Leicester.

A United spokesman told the Press Association: "The ankle is badly bruised and the manager will provide a further update tomorrow."

Premiership preview

More than a derby for Gunners

Football

AFP, London

It's not just local pride at stake as Premiership leaders Arsenal welcome under-achieving neighbours Tottenham for Saturday's north London derby.

Arsenal can move a step closer to their first league title in four years with victory at Highbury.

The Gunners have 69 points from 32 games, one more than second-placed Liverpool and two more than Manchester United in third.

Liverpool, who beat Bayer Leverkusen in the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final on Wednesday, do not play this weekend while Manchester United travel to Leicester for a midday kick-off on Saturday.

Although their lead is a slender one, Arsene Wenger's men have a game in hand on both their title rivals.

Passions normally run high when these two teams meet as Arsenal defender Sol Campbell can testify.

The England defender left Tottenham on a free transfer last season and with plenty of offers on the table, decided to opt for fierce local rivals Arsenal rather than move elsewhere.

The move angered many Tottenham fans who felt Campbell had committed the ultimate act of betrayal.

But Arsenal can ill afford to be distracted by past events as they go in search for three more valuable points in their bid to become champions.

"It's a very big game but it's important for us to just try to see it as a normal game and just try to get a

good result," Arsenal's Swedish midfielder Fredrik Ljungberg said.

"We are taking each game, concentrating on each game at a time and try to our best in each game and then at the end see where we are."

Wenger is expecting Spurs to provide stiff opposition but is confident Arsenal will prove too strong for the visitors.

"It will be like a cup game, but we

FIXTURES (1400 GMT unless stated)
Saturday: Arsenal v Tottenham, Bolton v Ipswich, Chelsea v Everton, Leicester v Manchester United
(1100 GMT), Middlesbrough v Aston Villa, Southampton v Derby, West Ham v Charlton
Sunday: Leeds v Sunderland
(1500 GMT)
Monday: Newcastle v Fulham
(1900 GMT)

are playing at Highbury, we feel strong here, and we also have the fans behind us," he said. "We are very confident we will do it, but we know it will be tough."

Tottenham have been going through the motions in recent weeks with no chance of European football next season and the club still coming to terms with their 2-1 League Cup final defeat to Blackburn Rovers.

Manchester United will be without England captain David Beckham for their trip to Filbert Street.

Beckham was stretched off in Tuesday's 2-0 Champions League quarter-final, first-leg win over Deportivo La Coruna after a late challenge by Diego Tristan.

But a scan revealed that there is no serious damage done to his ankle which was left badly bruised.

Ryan Giggs takes the captain's

Serie A preview

Leaders expect no slip

Football

AFP, Milan

Italian clubs may be out of the Champions League race but the title countdown is keeping domestic tensions high as Inter Milan bid to unhinge AS Roma's grip on their Serie A title.

Inter, whose last domestic title goes back to 1989, took control of the Italian First Division a fortnight ago after an emphatic 3-1 victory over Roma that had the press positively gleaming.

With a home match against mid-table Atalanta this weekend, while Roma play away to Venezia, Inter coach Hector Cuper will be looking for free-scoring forwards Christian Vieri and Alvaro Recoba to move the San Siro outfit a step closer to ending their 12-year title drought.

Vieri, who has scored 20 goals in a remarkable season, was rested for Thursday's UEFA Cup tie against Feyenoord in Milan - underscoring exactly where Inter's priorities lie as the league race heats up.

It showed as well as Inter went down 1-0 to their supposedly poorer opponents, though ever the perfectionist Cuper will be looking for his expensively assembled squad to pull their socks up both against

Atalanta and in next week's second leg.

Roma meanwhile were handed a setback with captain and playmaker Francesco Totti out for Sunday's match with Venezia.

Undoubtedly, the Italian international's pulled hamstring injury has provided music to the ears of the San Siro faithful.

Totti is expected to be replaced by

FIXTURES
Saturday: Torino v Bologna
Sunday: Chievo v Milan, Brescia v Verona, Perugia v Juventus, Piacenza v Fiorentina, Venezia v Roma, Inter v Atalanta, Parma v Udinese, Lazio v Lecce

Brazilian Emerson.

In any case, Inter are still taking the Roma challenge seriously despite somewhat premature press reports, following their 3-1 win over Roma, of an imminent league title triumph.

"They (Roma) have a good squad and have already demonstrated their value," Inter's French midfielder Stephane Dalmat told the club's website midweek.

"They are going to win all matches from now till the end and we are going to do the same as well. We have three matches at home and two away, and we are very concen-

armband for the foreseeable future in the absence of hamstring injury victim Roy Keane who is expected to be out of action for three weeks.

"Keaney is such a key player and when we are without him we definitely lose something so his injury is a big disappointment," Giggs said.

Keane's injury could not have come at a worse time -- as well as their European adventure United are also fighting to win a fourth successive league title.

The Irishman has been plagued by injuries throughout his career at Old Trafford with the most serious coming at Leeds in September 1997 when he ruptured cruciate knee ligaments and missed the remainder of that fruitless campaign as a result.

Newcastle boss Bobby Robson could have speedily forward Craig Bellamy available for Monday's home match against Fulham.

The Wales international has not played since the 1-0 victory at Sunderland on February 24 when he tore a knee tendon.

The faltering in Newcastle's championship hopes coincided with the loss of Bellamy whose lightning pace gave the Magpies' attack an extra dimension.

Cameron striker Patrick Mboma has handed Sunderland boss Peter Reid a huge boost by declaring himself fit for Sunday's trip to Leeds.

The on-loan Parma player missed Monday's 2-1 victory over Leicester with an ankle injury sustained in the 3-0 defeat at Arsenal 48 hours earlier.

"I am totally recovered and it's now just a question of taking care of my ankle," Mboma said.

"I trained this week and it was okay, so I don't think it will keep me out."

trated."

Dalmat's striker could not have been more precise.

Roma sit only three points behind Inter, with Juventus three points further back and waiting for either to slip up.

Roma, who will look for Totti to get back on track as soon as possible, also have the advantage of being free of the shackles of European competition after they were eliminated by Liverpool in the Champions League last month.

Coach Fabio Capello is hoping Totti will be back for next week's home match against strugglers Parma, however the talented 25-year-old is likely not to be rushed into an early return.

Capello meanwhile has shown he has confidence in the club by signing a two-year extension to his contract, taking the no-nonsense 55-year-old Italian up to a 2005 deadline at the club.

The contract negotiations, amid offers from a host of top European clubs including Barcelona, were said to be difficult but were concluded after several weeks of talks with club president Franco Sensi - he will be hoping his players reward his faith in the club by retaining the trophy.

Primera Liga preview

Real can't afford to stumble

Football

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid will embrace the rigours of the Spanish *Primera Liga*, and a less insulting encounter than the one they had midweek, when they host city rivals Rayo Vallecano on Saturday.

Real went down to two late goals at Munich on Tuesday to give Bayern a healthy 2-1 lead going into next week's Champions League quarter final showdown.

To embitter the taste of defeat, the Spanish champions were subjected to snide comments from some of the European champions' top names, with a front page headline in Wednesday's Marca newspaper emblazoned "Real shit their pants."

Bayern's Bosnian midfielder Hasan Salihamidzic was attributed with that particularly potent comment, but it is an indication of Real's resolve that most of the players have brushed it under the carpet.

"We have to keep our nerve," said Real captain Fernando Hierro

in responding to the Bosnian's well-publicised comments. "In a situation like that it's important to keep calm and just do your job."

With it all to do in a week's time, Real's domestic ambitions are still on track with the capital derby giving the league leaders a chance to forget Tuesday's late show by the Germans.

But Valencia's presence in sec-

FIXTURES
Saturday: Athletic Bilbao v Barcelona, Deportivo La Coruna v Real Mallorca, Las Palmas v Real Zaragoza, Real Madrid v Rayo Vallecano
Sunday: Espanyol v Celta Vigo, Alaves v Villarreal, Valencia v Real Sociedad, Real Betis v Osasuna, Valladolid v Seville, Malaga v Tenerife

ond spot in the Spanish First Division, also on 59 points, will keep Vicente Del Bosque's side on their toes as the league counts down with six games to play.

Valencia, who have won one less game than Real Madrid so far this season, are also at home as lowly

Real Sociedad travel east in a bid to build on last week's impressive 1-1 draw with Deportivo La Coruna.

Deportivo, in third place four points behind the leaders, host Real Mallorca with victory the only option if they are to stay in with a chance of winning the title.

Deportivo won the Spanish title for the first time two seasons ago and this year's Champions League form initially pointed towards the possibility of the double.

That notion came promptly to an end on Tuesday when the Galicians were also handed a harsh lesson by former winners of Europe's biggest prize when Manchester United ran riot at the Riazor stadium to run out 2-0 winners.

Like Real Madrid, Deportivo will be looking for an upturn in form at home - both as a tonic to ease their fans' woes, and as a means of forgetting their own unforgettable mishaps in Europe.

Meanwhile fourth-placed Celta Vigo, only one point of Deportivo, travel to Barcelona on Sunday to play Espanyol.

CUP CORNER

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Brazilian striker Romario of the Vasco da Gama club shed some tears at a press conference over what he described as his big dream to play in this summer's World Cup finals.

The 36-year-old 1994 World Cup star, who has the backing of many fans and the media but is not highly impressing Brazil coach Luiz Felipe Scolari, told the press: "I am going to do everything I can, from the possible to the impossible, to earn the right to play in the finals."

Romario, who needed time to settle after shedding tears, added: "Who knows if my name will be in the squad list on May 6." May 6 is the date that Scolari will announce his final selection for the May 31 to June 30 showcase football event in Korea and Japan.

"My big dream is to play in the World Cup, it's what I would love to do because I just love playing," Romario continued. "The Brazilian public who have gone through so much recently, deserve to have a victory."

"If I'm not picked I will still be Brazil's biggest fans because we must have confidence in the team which is chosen."

On Tuesday, Scolari picks a squad for the friendly match against Portugal in Lisbon on April 17.

Romario added: "I will be continuing to work to be in perfect physical and technical condition."

EAGLES SMELL SOMETHING SINISTER

Lagos

Nigeria alleged Thursday that an unknown group was attempting to force the cancellation of World Cup warm-up matches involving the country.

"This group is out to frustrate our efforts to arrange top friendly matches for the team ahead of the World Cup," the marketing chief of the Nigeria Football Association (NFA) Edozie Enemuo told AFP.

"They have written to those involved in our pre-World Cup matches to inform them we are not interested in the matches. The matches in question are those against Paraguay, Yugoslavia and Scotland."

The top NFA official told AFP that at no time did the association inform any organisation they were not interested in playing those tune-up matches.

"Some people are only out to sabotage Nigeria. It is as simple as that," the official said.