

Semifinal 2nd leg

BARCELONA v REAL MADRID

Visitors need a mini miracle



AFP, Madrid

Barcelona are boasting optimistically that they can still make this year's European Champions League final, despite their emphatic 2-0 defeat by their bitter rivals Real Madrid in last Tuesday's semi-final first leg in the Nou Camp stadium.

The Catalans have not won by two goals or more in Real's Santiago Bernabeu stadium for nearly 18 years but they believe that they can turn back the clock in the second leg on Wednesday.

"We can still knock out Madrid if we can get a quick goal," commented Barcelona's Javier Saviola on Sunday.

Saviola was in outstanding form, and was one of the goalscorers, in Barcelona's morale-boosting 4-1 league win over Villarreal on Saturday.

"We have all the equipment we need to beat Madrid and we'll be going there determined to win," added the diminutive Argentine striker, on whose shoulders rest some of the responsibility of finding the net.

Similarly optimistic sentiments were uttered by Barcelona's under-pressure coach Carles Rexach.

"We are going there looking to win 3-1 and I can also easily envisage a situation where we are 1-0 ahead at the break, 2-0 in front at full-time and win in extra-time," said Rexach on Sunday.

However, Real Madrid remain the clear favourites to progress to the final in Glasgow on May 15.

They will be willed onto their 12th final, having previously been crowned the kings of Europe on eight occasions, by more than 70,000 fervent fans - Barcelona have only been allocated 2,500 tickets - who are expecting Real to lift at least one trophy in their centenary year.

The Champions League now looks like their best bet after they lost 3-0 at Real Sociedad on Saturday and, although they are still second in the Spanish First Division, they are now four points adrift of league leaders Valencia with just two games to play.

Victory in the match, to be refereed by Italy's Pierluigi Collina, will



PHOTO: AFP

CRUCIAL ABSENTEE: Injured Barcelona superstar Rivaldo (R) during a training session accompanied by the club's masseur Angel Mur on April 29. Rivaldo failed to get fit in time for the semifinal second leg against Real Madrid.

also help quieten Barcelona's controversial president Joan Gaspart, who likes nothing better than berating Real.

The hotel magnate went back to an old theme in the wake of last week's defeat.

"The first five European Cups (Real won) in the 1950s were not legitimate for me. I don't set much store by those victories. There were only the same few clubs that entered, and they were not even the best clubs. For me, the real

European Cup started in 1960-61, the year that Barcelona eliminated Real Madrid in the quarter-finals, then it became an authentic Cup, with more teams and more difficult to win, like it is today," said Gaspart sourly.

Real Madrid legend and honorary president Alfredo Di Stefano, who was part of all five Real teams that lifted 'illegitimate' Cups, rose to the bait.

"I think Gaspart must be suffering from Alzheimer's disease,"

crudely retorted Di Stefano.

Barcelona will go into action on Wednesday without their Brazilian striker Rivaldo, which will be the 20th club game that the former World Player of the Year has lost this season through injury.

Rivaldo damaged a ligament in his right knee on April 20 in the 2-1 loss at Celta Vigo and, despite six hours of physiotherapy a day, he lost his race against time to be fit for Wednesday.

However, there was better news concerning Barcelona's Spanish international midfielder Luis Enrique Martinez, who injured his right hamstring on Saturday but was included in the 19-man squad named by Rexach on Monday, a squad that also saw the return of long-term absentees Sergi Barjuan and Dani Garcia.

"There isn't anything seriously wrong (with Luis Enrique) although we are taking great care over the state of the muscle. We'll see how we go day-by-day," commented the Barcelona doctor Ricard Pruna on Monday, although he admitted that he was still uncertain whether finally Luis Enrique would be able to play.

Madrid coach Vicente Del Bosque was confident enough on Monday to name his starting line up, with only one change to the side that won in Barcelona.

World Player of the Year Luis Figo will come back after suspension to face his old club, from whom he moved two summers ago for what was then a world record fee.

Figo's return led to Del Bosque preferring to keep Ivan Helguera in the middle of the defence, rather than Francisco Pavon, who will be on the bench.

With Helguera moving back, Argentine winger Santiago Solari will partner French international Claude Makelele in the midfield.

Spanish international striker Fernando Morientes continues to struggle with his own right hamstring problems and has been omitted so Jose Maria Gutierrez, who will be well rested after being suspended for Saturday's 3-0 loss at San Sebastian, will accompany Raul Gonzalez in the Real attack.

Amoroso prefers Italy or Spain

INTERNET, Dortmund

Borussia Dortmund forward Marcio Amoroso thinks he can quit the club ahead of his contract expiry.

"I am content with Dortmund," said the Brazilian player to Stern weekly, "Supporters and players respect me, but if I'll have an opportunity of returning to Italy or playing in Spain or England, I'll have to think over what will be the right decision for my family and me."

Bundesliga best scorer in the current season (18 goals) doesn't feel responsible to play for the club till the end of 2005 as is expected by his contract.

"It is common nowadays to sigh long-term contracts but they are rarely adhered to. Every Brazilian player dreams to play in Italy or Spain. The championships of these countries are more prestigious and the character of Italians and Spaniards is similar to that of ours," says Amoroso.



MARCIO AMOROSO

going to his third World Cup when the squad is named on May 13.

Luis Enrique scored at both USA 94 - where he also had his nose broken by Italian defender Mauro Tassotti in an off the ball incident in their quarter-finals clash - and France 98 as well as picking up a 1992 Olympic gold medal.

The tally of club matches includes 213 in the famous all-white strip of Real Madrid during a five season stint in the Spanish capital between 1991 and

His move to Barca in the summer of 1996 turned him into a hate figure for many of Madrid fans but Luis Enrique is an expert at turning the odium to his advantage.

"I prefer it if they hate me in the Bernabeu, and they are whistling me, because that's when I know things are going well," he joked.

Luis Enrique still believes Barcelona can progress to the Champions League final in Glasgow on May 15, despite the odds being against them.

"Deportivo beat Madrid 2-1 in the Spanish Cup final, which was held in the Bernabeu.

"Why can't we win 3-1? We are going to fight until the referee blows the final whistle. And if we are going to lose, then we are going to do it with our head held high," he commented.



RONALDO

news for the superstar. On Monday, accompanied by Alexandre Martins, Ronaldo left for Paris. As planned, the Brazilian underwent some routine check-up examinations at professor Gerard Saillant's clinic. According to the French doctor,

Controversial Collina!

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona criticised UEFA's decision to have Italian Pierluigi Collina referee their European Champions League second leg against bitter rivals Real Madrid on Wednesday.

The Catalans, who are 2-0 down after the first leg in their own Nou Camp stadium last week, have accused Collina of being biased towards the eight-times kings of European club football.

The reason for Barcelona's wrath is that Collina, who is widely regarded as one of the world's best referees, has a contract with the same sportswear company as Real stars Raul and Zinedine Zidane.

Earlier this month pictures were published in the Spanish media of the three of them laughing and joking together off-camera while they were shooting a promotional video.

"There are loads of people who could have refereed this game and so I think it is foolish to have chosen him," commented Barcelona club captain Sergi in the Spanish sports daily Marca on Tuesday.

"I think it is unwise for him to be on the same field as Zidane and Raul. I'm sure Real will gain confidence from this," added Sergi.

Barcelona have won two and lost two of their Champions League games that Collina has officiated in, while Madrid have won four of their five Champions League games in which Collina has been the referee.

Enrique light for Barca

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona's Spanish international midfielder Luis Enrique is expected to be ready to play against his old club Real Madrid in their European Champions League semi-final second leg on Wednesday.

Luis Enrique, who celebrates his 32nd birthday next week, is a vital component of Barca's bid to overturn a 2-0 first leg deficit but suffered a slight right hamstring strain in Barcelona's 4-1 win over Villarreal on Saturday, a game in which he also scored.

"After Saturday's game I was pessimistic about the prospects of playing, but things have gone better than I expected," he said.

"I'll decide finally tomorrow (Wednesday) but at the moment I think I'll be able to play," he added.

Playing in the match has added significance for Luis Enrique because it will be his 500th first class club match.

"Against Real Madrid there is no problem with motivation but, I have to admit, occasionally you have to look inside yourself for reasons to be ready to play at your best," added Luis Enrique, who is expected to be

Ronaldo dreams Roman conquest



REUTERS, Milan

Twice World Player of the Year Ronaldo returns to the scene of his career-threatening knee injury keen to transform his memories of the Olympic Stadium with an Italian title-clinching win for Inter Milan.

Ronaldo ruptured his knee ligaments against Lazio in the Italian Cup final on April 12, 2000 just six minutes after making a comeback appearance as a substitute.

Now a win against Lazio at that same stadium will give Inter their first Italian title since 1989.

The Brazilian has made a phased comeback this season, which has been plagued by further fitness problems.

But he appears to have refound his strength at just the right moment with four goals in the last four games as Inter defend their lead at the top of *Serie A*.

The image of Ronaldo's knee giving way as he ran goalwards remains etched in the collective

memory of Italian football and the Brazilian admits that, like many of those watching, he thought his career might have been over.

"I have thought back to that injury loads of times, that's for sure...about the moments when I thought about everything -- even that it might all be over," Ronaldo told Italian media.

"They were only moments however because I have never lost the will or the faith. But it is nice to think that on Sunday, the place that I saw as hell could become a kind of heaven," added the Brazilian.

Throughout a testing return this season Ronaldo has shown glimpses of his old self but it is only in recent weeks that he has once again been considered a real asset for Hector Cuper's side.

After grabbing both goals in the 2-1 comeback win over Brescia, he scored in the 2-2 draw at Chievo and then sealed Sunday's crucial 3-1 victory over Piacenza with a thundering free-kick.

"Things are going more naturally for me now. There is no anguish and I am not dealing with the past because my legs are fine now. I

have the strength inside me and I have a real desire to make up for all that lost time," said the former Barcelona striker.

And everyday is bringing better

Ronaldo conditions at the moment are excellent. Ronaldo also went to do some therapy with Philippe Boixel, followed by professor Frano Combi (head of Inter's medical staff) and by Inter's therapist Nilton Petrone.

But while the media are focusing heavily on the return of the 'Phenomenon', Ronaldo was quick to point out that Inter find themselves on the brink of their first title in 13 years thanks to the results gained while he was still sidelined.

"I want to make an important contribution to a team that had already done so much this season before I could come back and give a hand. Inter want and deserve this title," he said.

Sunday's opponents Lazio are still fighting for European qualification and have insisted that they will give their all against Inter even if a win would risk handing the title to their bitter rivals Roma or Juventus.

Ronaldo says he and his team mates are well aware a tough game awaits him at the Olympic stadium.

"We know very well that Lazio will not gift us anything, but we also that this club has waited a long time for a day like this Sunday."



PHOTO: INTERNET

Freddie Ljunberg is over the moon after scoring against Bolton on April 29.

Premiership

Gunners a point away



REUTERS, London

Arsenal took a giant stride towards the English Premier League title with a 2-0 victory away to Bolton Wanderers, their 11th straight victory, on Monday.

Goals by Fredrik Ljungberg and Sylvain Wiltord, both superbly laid out by Dennis Bergkamp, put the London club five points clear of defending champions Manchester United with two games each left to play.

Arsenal, who have also won a Premier League record eight away games in a row, are seven points clear of third-placed Liverpool, who also have two games left.

The Highbury club need only draw their match against United at Old Trafford in nine days' time to secure their first championship since 1998.

By then they might be on the point of securing their second league and cup double since the same glorious first season under manager Arsene Wenger if they beat Chelsea in the FA Cup final at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff on Saturday.

Arsenal had been caught offside by Bolton's defence five times in the first half-hour but Bergkamp found the key in the 36th minute, stroking the ball into Ljungberg's path down the middle with the outside of his right foot.

Ljungberg darted through a gap in the defence to steer the ball wide of goalkeeper Jussi Jaaskelainen and inside his right-hand post for his sixth goal in five games.

Premiership's top six									
After Monday's match(Played, Won, Draw, Lost, Goals for, Goals against, Points)									
1 Arsenal	36	24	9	3	74	33	81		
2 Manchester Utd	36	24	4	8	87	44	76		
3 Liverpool	36	22	8	6	58	27	74		
4 Newcastle United	37	21	8	8	73	49	71		
5 Chelsea	37	17	13	7	65	35	64		
6 Leeds United	37	17	12	8	52	37	63		

Japan to fight fire with fire

AFP, Yokohama

Policemen with machine guns burst from an armed van and shot at fake terrorists in a drill Tuesday, as Japan demonstrated it would use fire power to fight extreme violence during the World Cup finals.

Terrorism and hooligan attacks were the key targets for police at the International Stadium Yokohama, the nation's biggest football venue, as they held a final large-scale display of measures to tackle trouble at the tournament which starts in a month.

"Regarding machine guns, we just hope not to have to use them but if we need to then we hope to do so without injuring third parties," said Ritsuo Umekita, head of security for Kanagawa prefectural police, the force charged with guarding Yokohama city, southwest of Tokyo, and the stadium.

"Today's drill was the worst case scenario, and our basic principle is to allow people to enjoy the soccer matches," he told a news conference.

In the practice, a coach carrying a football team was ambushed by two masked gunmen in a racing minibus.

As the terrorists threatened to spray the coach with bullets, five armed police sprang from a vehicle and opened fire before surrounding the pair, throwing them to the ground, disarming them, and dragging them off.

"Security measures are not meant to be drastic unless we are pressed to take them," said Umekita.



AFP, Paris

French far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen warned France's footballing superstar 5 on Tuesday not to interfere in the presidential election which reaches its climax this Sunday.

The 73-year-old leader of the National Front (FN), who stunned the French political establishment by beating Prime Minister Lionel Jospin in the first round of voting on



JEAN-MARIE LE PEN

April 21 to oust him from the race, was reacting to comments made by Zidane on Monday.

Zidane, whose father is Algerian, claimed that the National Front did not represent the traditional French values.

"If Zidane was opposite me I would say to him 'Zinedine, don't get involved with issues such as that,

you are only being manipulated by people who are taking advantage of you for their own infamous ends," Le Pen told French radio.

Le Pen dismissed the effect of Zidane's comments, just the latest in a long line of France's 1998 World Cup winning team to urge people to vote for his rival and current incumbent Jacques Chirac on Sunday.

"Zidane is nothing special, he is just another citizen.

"His vote is no more important than the last one cast by one of my supporters.

"I would say to him as well 'I will



ZINEDINE ZIDANE

give you part of my votes if you give me a proportion of your wages."

Le Pen has never been a friend of the current French side.

His most infamous attack on them came in 1996 when he said several of them were not even French and some could not or would not sing the national anthem, the Marseillaise.

Bayern plan Effenberg farewell

AFP, Munich

Bayern Munich captain Stefan Effenberg will return for the final league match of the season to bid farewell to the club before he leaves at the end of the campaign, Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld said on Monday.

After meeting with the player, Hitzfeld said that the 33-year-old midfielder would play against Hansa Rostock on Saturday at Munich's Olympic Stadium despite being dropped for the previous two matches after making controversial comments about Germany's unemployment.

"He will therefore be able to make an honourable and deserved farewell as Bayern Munich captain and as a great personality on the field over the last few years," said Hitzfeld.

"I am sure that Stefan Effenberg and our team will defend their title with honour to the last," Hitzfeld added.

In a close finish to the *Bundesliga* title race, reigning champions Bayern are in third place, two points behind leaders Borussia Dortmund and one adrift of second-placed Bayer Leverkusen. If both those teams lose and Bayern beat the strugglers from eastern Germany, they could still retain their title.

Effenberg, 33, was dropped for the victories over VfL Wolfsburg and Hertha Berlin after claiming in an interview with the German edition of Playboy magazine that laziness and over-generous benefits were behind the country's unemployment problem.

Bayern's signing of German international midfielders Michael Ballack and Sebastian Deisler signalled the end of his career at the club he joined in 1998 from Borussia Munchengladbach.

A medal-laden spell with the club was capped by victory over Valencia in the 2001 Champions League final.

Effenberg, who has also played for Italian *Serie A* side Fiorentina, denied reports last week that he had signed for newly promoted English Premiership club Manchester City.

Hayatou vows transparency

AFP, Dubai

The team campaigning for African soccer chief Issa Hayatou's election as FIFA president said Tuesday the Cameroonian would bring much-needed transparency to the most powerful job in world football.

"Hayatou will bring a wind of change in the football family," vowed Mustapha Fahmy, secretary general of the African Football Confederationwhich Hayatou has headed since 1988.

Briton Glen Kirton, former Football Association (FA) spokesman and member of the campaign team, said Hayatou was "not a candidate for Africa but of transparency, openness and a new start for FIFA."

Hayatou himself failed to turn up for the Soccerex 2002 exhibition in the Gulf emirate of Dubai, "due to last-minute obligations in Africa" that included meetings with "very important heads of state," according to Fahmy.

The CAF chief would conduct himself differently from current FIFA president Sepp Blatter if elected on May 29 in Seoul, Kirton said.

"He will work with and through the executive committee, congress, the members of FIFA - the national associations - and the confederations.

"He will not operate in the style of the present incumbent which can only be described as executive president," not in touch with the administration on a day-to-day basis, he added.

Hayatou was urged to run against the beleaguered Blatter following a series of rows over the Swiss official's running of world football's governing body.

Blatter has been accused of covering up the true extent of losses suffered by FIFA following the collapse of the sport's body's marketing partner ISL last year.

He has also been the target of allegations of vote-buying during the last FIFA presidential election which he won four years ago.

On Hayatou's manifesto, Kirton said the African would "take steps immediately on his election to ensure a distribution of places in the World Cup on a fairer basis."

Europe would be left with 13 berths with an additional one to be played off with CONCACAF, which would retain three places. CAF's allocation would stay at five.

The 11-strong federation of Oceania however would receive an automatic berth for the first time, and Asia will be increased to five. But places for South American teams would be cut from four-and-a-half to three.