Monarchs begin quest for 'Euro Grail'

¥VEF∢ ★CHAMPS LEAGUE

The Champions League is the place to be in European football and the competition starts rolling again Tuesday with the whole continent taking aim at moneybag holders

Real ended up as top dogs for the ninth time last season by seeing off German upstarts Bayer Leverkusen in the final.

But although the Spaniards have ploughed the profits from their exploits into the capture of World Cup winner Ronaldo they could hardly have asked for a tougher start than AS Roma away in Group

Fabio Capello, coach of AS Roma who lost 2-1 at Bologna on focuses on Premiership champions Arsenal's intriguing tussle with their German counterparts Borussia Dortmund, European champions back in 1997.

Whereas Arsenal have made a blistering start to the new domestic season Dortmund have been throwing away silly points and Saturday's home draw with Schalke 04 was their fourth draw in five league outings, leaving the club six points behind rivals Bayern Munich.

Gunners' coach Arsene Wenger says he believes his side, who have proved poor European travellers in the recent past, are now ready to win the tournament for the first time.

With the Premiership title under their belts the Champions League is the pot of gold Arsenal have their sights on - they have a costly new stadium in the offing - and Wenger insists his current squad can crack the winning code even if the last eight is the best his sides has man-



THIERRY HENRY ... loaded weapon Italian league match, has selection

problems as he has three players suspended - Italy international playmaker Francesco Totti, Argentine Gabriel Batistuta and Brazilian Lima.

With Genk of Belgium and AEK Athens of Greece making up the numbers in the group the fact that Ronaldo is not yet ready for action should not cause the 'meringues' to melt in action just yet as they bid for the top prize in the European game. English opening-day action

Bundesliga

Football

Bayern Munich claimed their famil-

iar outright lead in the German

league following VFL Bochum's 1-0

loss at home to Hansa Rostock on

consecutive titles till Borussia

Dortmund triumphed last season,

beat Nuremberg 2-1 on Saturday

thanks to a Michael Ballack double

strike to give them a chance of pole

against Hansa Rostock and Bayern

claimed their accostomed top spot

to warn their rivals with just five

matches gone in the Bundesliga

Bochum suffered their first

defeat of the season and fell to third

spot three points behind Bayern,

after a poor match which they domi-

Bochum duly obliged by losing

position on their own.

Bayern Munich, who won three

Expectedly Bayern

behind the leaders.

"There is a very big desire in this team to do well in Europe. That is in me as well. We will give everything to win it, but it's the best teams in Europe," he maintained.

Neither Arsenal nor Dortmund can afford to be complacent as Group A also contains tough opposition in the shape of French side Auxerre - quarterfinalists six vears ago - and Holland's PSV Eindhoven, the 1988 European champions.

Auxerre are joint top of the

The Fast German side Rostock

snatched victory through Togo's

Bachirou Salou in the 32nd minute

meaning they have now won all

three of their away matches so far

and are in second spot, a point

ern port side SV Hamburg beat

big-time loser last season as he

picked up runner-up mementoes in

the Bundesliga, the German Cup

and the Champions League for

Bayer Leverkusen, plus in the World

goals for, goals against, points):

Bayern Munich

Hansa Rostock

Werder Bremen

Borussia M'gladbach 5

VfL Bochum

In Sunday's other game, north-

Midfield dynamo Ballack was a



TEAM INVINCIBLE: A file image of Real Madrid players celebrating in last season's Champions League final against Bayer Leverkusen at Hampden Park in Glasgow

French league after seven games and Arsenal fans will well remember that five seasons ago their side just made it to phase two after a home defeat to another French side in Lens, whom they also were unable

Liverpool have conquered Europe four times - but not since 1984 - and they have a tricky start away to Spanish champions Valencia in Group B.

That fixture should produce the two sides who will advance at the expense of the less-experienced Basel of Switzerland and Russia's perennial participants Spartak

However while Swiss football does not represent the cutting edge of the continental game, Basel did knock out Scottish champions Celtic in the preliminaries and neither Liverpool nor Valencia will underes-

Tuesday's other matches come with Group D encounters between experienced Norwegian campaigners Rosenborg and a now Ronaldoless Inter Milan, twice champions but lifting the trophy back in the mid-1960s on both occasions.

But his two goals, one in either

half for Bayern in the success at

Nuremburg has given an early-

season boost to the Bavarian

12th-minute header from a cross by

former Bayer Leverkusen team-

neat one-two with Giovane Elber

seven minutes after the restart to

under orders to deliver the title - and

the Champions League - after a

Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld is

Ballack netted the first with a

Inter won their opening Italian

Cup for Germany.

net the decider.

Bundesliga's top six

German league table after weekend matches (played, won, drawn, lost,

league match against Torino 1-0 on Saturday thanks to a Christian Vieri goal and coach Hector Cuper has the good news that he has a full squad to choose from.

Group rivals Ajax won the last of their four crowns in 1995 and kick off their campaign against French champions Lyon, the most fluid outfit currently gracing a domestic game which is struggling to attract

If they do not possess the depth of talent of a Real Madrid, Lyon do nonetheless have a potent strikeforce, however, of Brazilian Sonny Anderson and new France international Sidney Goyou.

Coach Paul Le Guen rested both in Saturday's league defeat at Nantes and both will be raring to go come Tuesday, as will the whole squad according to France international keeper Gregory Coupet.

"We have great spirit at this club We will take that to Amsterdam."

However, Brazilian midfielder Juninho admitted: "We can expect a tougher challenge there than

trophy-less campaign last season.

But he said he was enjoying the

challenge of proving who is really

top dog even if Dortmund have

"borrowed" the championship for

can't always expect to win by two or

three goals and it's hard to come up

three draws in four games to date as

they were unable to break down

Schalke 04, who now place fourth

following a 1-1 draw, leaving

Dortmund six points adrift of Bayern

Bayer Leverkusen, who were

unable to resist Bayern's overtures

to Ballack in the summer, thought

their early woes were over with a

But they followed up with a home

flop, losing 3-1 to promoted

Hanover, for whom veteran forward

Fredi Bobic, who spent last season

on loan at Bolton Wanderers,

midweek success at Rostock.

scored twice.

with the season only a month old.

Borussia Dortmund made it

"Nuremburg played well. You

FIXTURES AT A GLANCE

European Champions League opening fixtures for the 2002/03 season this week: **TUESDAY**

Group A: Auxerre (Fra) v PSV Eindhoven (Ned)

Arsenal (Eng) v Borussia Dortmund (Ger)

Group B: Valencia (Spa) v

Liverpool (Eng) Basel (Swi) v Spartak Moscow

Group C: Genk (Bel) v AEK Athens (Gre) AS Roma (Ita) v Real Madrid

(Rus)

Group D: Rosenborg (Nor) v

nter Milan (Ita) Ajax (Ned) v Lyon (Fra) WEDNESDAY

Group E: Feyenoord (Ned) v Juventus (Ita)

Dynamo Kiev (Ukr) v Newcastle (Eng) Group F: Manchester United

(Eng) v Maccabi Haifa (Isr) Olympiakos (Gre) v Bayer everkusen (Ger) Group G: Bayern Munich

(Ger) v Deportivo La Coruna AC Milan (Ita) v Lens (Fra)

Group H: Lokomotiv Moscow Rus) v Ġalatasaray (Tur) Barcelona (Spa) v Bruges (Bel)

Real honour Pope John

AFP, Castelgandolfo (Italy)

Spanish giants Real Madrid had an unusual build-up to their Tuesday Champions League clash with AS Roma - an audience with Pope John Paul II at his summer residence here on Monday.

The Pope, who kept goal for a local side as a young man in his native Poland, urged Figo, Zinedine Zidane and the other Real stars to use their positions as worldrenowned footballers to promote Christian values.

"The Church." he said. "regards sport as an instrument of education promoting human and spiritual ideals and helping young people to follow values such as loyalty, perseverance, friendship, solidarity and

He added: "Sport, in rising above cultural differences and ideologies. is a privileged opportunity for dialoque and understanding between people for the development of a society based on love."

Real Madrid in turn presented the Pope with honorary club mem-

Ronaldo's request

Ronaldo has called for the aparazzi to back off hounding his family's every move.

The Brazilian World Cup star made the request on his website on Monday just weeks after signing for European champions' Real Madrid from Inter Milan.

"I'm a footballer and I want to be treated like one," pleaded Ronaldo. "I'm saying this because over the last few days my family and myself have been followed everywhere by reporters and photographers, many

of them not involved in the world of On Saturday the top scorer at this summer's World Cup appeared visibly upset when he and his wife Milene and two-year-old son Ronald tried to give the waiting press pack the slip by leaving a restaurant from

The new Real recruit said: "I'm sure that people appreciate my situation - the most important thing for me is the privacy of my family."

Ronaldo is due to make his anxiously-awaited debut for Real in the European Champions League tie against Genk of Belgium in the Spanish capital on September 25.

Remaining 47 mins in Nov!

a side exit

Real Betis and Real Madrid will play the remaining 47 minutes of their abandoned match on November 6, according to Spanish Professional Football League (LFP) officials on Sunday.

unconfirmed, LFP officials told Spanish reporters that their regulations demand that the match has to be played before the second half of the season and will be started from the point at which the referee abandoned Saturday's Primera Liga fixture.

The date in November is the only feasible gap in both team's congested calendars.

Saturday's match was abandoned after floodlight failure at Betis'

even a ball had been kicked with the start delayed for 16 minutes after the floodlights were flickering on and off.



Juventus star Alessandro Del Piero (R) scores a penalty against Atalanta during their *Serie A* match in Turin's Delle Alpi Stadium on September 15.

Serie A

Del Piero drives Juve

Football

REUTERS, Milan

Alessandro Del Piero scored twice as Italian champions Juventus made a winning start to their title defence with a 3-0 victory over Atalanta in Serie A.

Last season's surprise package Chievo showed they plan to continue their giant-killing feats with a superb 3-2 win at Lazio while Udinese and Parma drew 1-1. On Saturday, Roma suffered a

shock 2-1 defeat to Bologna while Inter Milan beat Torino 1-0 and AC Milan enjoyed an impressive 3-0 win at promoted Modena. Those first-day results supported

many pre-season predictions that the two Milan sides will be the main challengers to Juve this term but the champions showed they remain the team to beat. With last season's joint-top

scorer in Serie A, French striker David Trezeguet, ruled out with injury, Juventus coach Marcello Lippi gave a debut start to Marco Di Vaio in attack. But it was his more established

strike partner Del Piero who made the difference, putting Juventus ahead with a 27th-minute penalty

after Luciano Zauri had brought him Del Piero added the second seven minutes later with fine control

and finish after good work from Pavel Nedved. Substitute Salvatore Fresi, making his Serie A debut for Juventus, completed the win with a powerful long-range effort in the

final minute. Chievo exceeded all expectations last season with a fifth-place finish in their first ever top-flight campaign and quickly showed they have no intention of fading out of the

Lazio, with new coach Roberto Mancini in charge for the first time, got off to the perfect start with Argentine Diego Simeone putting them ahead in the fifth minute. hooking in a Claudio Lopez cross at

the near post. But within nine minutes Chievo had drawn level with defender Lorenzo D'Anna thundering in a header from a corner.

The team from a tiny suburb of Verona then went ahead five minutes after the restart with German international striker Oliver Bierhoff producing a neat finish to score on his Chievo debut.

With the game flowing from end to end Lazio striker Bernardo Corradi, making his first appearfrom Chievo, scored against his old club with a back-post header to make it 2-2.

As Lazio pushed forward in search of a winner Chievo caught them out with a pacey counterattack in the 70th minute, Ivano Della Morte racing past Fernando Couto before chipping advancing Lazio 'keeper Angelo Peruzzi to grab the win.

Piacenza's veteran striker Dario Hubner, joint-top scorer in Serie A last season, was on target right away with the decisive goal in his side's impressive 2-1 win at Brescia.

After a dull first half. Jonathan Bachini fired Brescia ahead in the 69th minute but after an equaliser from Colombian Johnnier Montano Hubner struck 11 minutes from the end with a superb shot on the turn.

Udinese came back for a 1-1 draw at home to Parma with Brazilian Alberto cancelling out an early opener from compatriot Adriano.

Reggina, Serie A's only southern team, fell to a 2-0 defeat at Perugia on their return to the top division --Fabrizio Miccoli and Giovanni Tedesco on target with second-half goals for Perugia.

Primera Liga

Sociedad stroll

Football

Real Sociedad spent most of last season mired in relegation trouble but this season their fortunes look to have changed, emphasised by their 3-1 victory at Espanyol on Sunday.

together two consecutive victories, a rare feat in recent seasons, and scored seven goals. Into the bargain Espanyol's

The Basques have now put

Montjuic Olympic stadium continues to be a lucky venue for Real.

The Barcelona-based club were forced to sell their old Sarria Stadium in 1997 and move into the Montiuic as tenants but they have not beaten the Basques since the move and Real Sociedad have now won on their last three visits.

Espanyol did not help themselves to break the hoodoo by having to play the majority of Sunday's match with just 10 men. Toni Soldevilla was given his

marching orders after just 34 minutes, before either side had scored. after his second bookable offence on 11 minutes. "The sending off was the key moment of the macth," said Real

Sociedad coach Raynald Denoueix. "Until that point the match was even, but afterwards we could play the game at our pace and control what was happening. However, I did think that Soldevilla's second yellow card was rather harsh" added Real's French boss.

Six minutes after Soldevilla's departure, Real Sociedad made their advantage tell with Darko Kovacevic heading them into the lead from an Igor Gabilondo corner. Gabilondo was again the service

provider as Miguel Aranburu found the net from close range after 55 minutes to put Real Sociedad further

lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Valencia

Celta Vigo

Barcelona

Malaga

Real Sociedad

Real Valladolid



Real Sociedad's Yugoslav Darko Kovacevic (L) contests an aerial tussle with an Espanyol player in their Primera Liga match in Barcelona on September

Primera Liga's top six table

Spanish football league table after Sunday's matches (played, won, drawn,

0

Espanyol's Spanish international striker Raul Tamudo reduced the deficit with 11 minutes to go before Kovacevic made certain that three points went back to San Sebastian, slotting home a Nihat Kahveci cross

back on Sunday's 3-1 win over Real He scored two of the Galicians' goals to maintain their perfect record but was then sent off eight minutes

with his right foot two minutes from

have mixed feelings when he looks

Celta Vigo striker Jesuli Mora will

from time for celebrating his second effort with the fans. He will miss next week's match at

Recreativo Huelva. Catanha headed the opening

goal for Celta after 27 minutes when he connected with an Alexander Mostovoi freekick, and Jesuli got Celta's second strike five minutes

Premiership Spurs owe Gardner

Football

AFP, London

Young defender Anthony Gardner piled on the misery for West Ham with a late goal to give Tottenham a 3-2 win that returned them to second place in the Premiership on Sunday. The Hammers had twice come

back from a goal down but they paid the price for failing to close down the advancing Gardner when his longrange shot took a cruel deflection past David James in the 89th min-The home side had always

looked favourites to win after the Hammers had Ian Pearce sent off in the 71st minute after a brilliant piece of skill by Robbie Keane on his Tottenham debut. The seven-million-pound (10.9million-dollar) striker brought the

ball down, chipped it over Pearce's

head and looked like scoring when

he was fouled. Teddy Sheringham duly converted the spot-kick to put Tottenham 2-1 ahead. But six minutes later West Ham were back in it, England midfielder Trevor Sinclair running on to Paulo

Di Canio's chipped free-kick to volley an equaliser. Welsh international Simon Davies had put Tottenham ahead just after the hour mark with a neat finish from a low Matt Etherington

cross from the left. West Ham were level within four



12 6 10

Tottenham Hotspurs' Robbie Keane (L) and West Ham United's Tomas Repka fight for the ball during a Premiership game at White Hart Lane

Premiership's top six

English Premiership table after Sunday's matches (played, won, draw lost, goals for, goals against, points):									١٧
	Arsenal	6	4	2	0	15	6	14	
	Tottenham	6	4	1	1	11	8	13	
	Leeds	6	4	0	2	10	4	12	
	Chelsea	6	3	3	0	13	8	12	
	Liverpool	6	3	3	0	13	8	12	

minutes, Frederic Kanoute getting on the end of Christian Dailly's knockdown from a Di Canio cross. Glenn Roeder, the West Ham

manager who has seen his side

claim just one point from five

matches in their worst league start in 40 years, bemoaned the defensive errors that cost his side a point. "I'm very disappointed with the goals we have conceded," he said. "We have contributed to all three goals with poor defending and until

we clear that up its going to be

Spurs boss Glenn Hoddle said: "I'm delighted with the three points but we made hard work of it.

difficult for us."

"It was one of those days when we had to churn out a victory.' Ten-man Manchester City stunned Blackburn by coming back from 2-0 down to earn a share of the

Shaun Goater scored in the second minute of injury time to snatch an unlikely point for Kevin Keegan's men in one of the most open matches of the season.

by the sending off of Danny Tiatto. The Australian was ordered off 25 minutes from the end after a nasty two-footed tackle on David Thompson, Blackburn's two-millionpound summer signing from

Thompson had paid some of the

transfer fee back when he put

Blackburn ahead after 26 minutes

with a blistering low shot from 20

Both of City's goals came after

they had been reduced to ten men

Although the date is as yet

Estadio Manuel Ruiz de Lopera. There were problems before

The same malfunction caused the referee Juan Antonio Fernandez Marin to briefly halt the game just 10 minutes into the first half