



THERE GOES THE BAYERN CLASH: Real Madrid's Brazilian superstar Ronaldo lies on the ground after straining his right thigh against Racing de Santander at the Sardinero stadium, in Santander on March 6.

Primera Liga

Ronaldo blow for Real

Football

APP, Madrid

Real Madrid made do with a point on Saturday in a 1-1 draw at Racing Santander to cement their title credentials but could be without Ronaldo for next week's Champions League tie with Bayern Munich as the Brazilian star limped off with a thigh injury.

"I won't play on Wednesday. I've got a problem behind the leg," Ronaldo said after going off in the 71st minute.

Real, who rested Spain international Raul on Saturday as he is getting over an ankle knock, will now look to rush him back to ensure they do not face German giants Bayern with a blunted attack having drawn the first leg 1-1 in Munich.

"We can only say it's a muscular problem," Real doctor Alfonso Del Corral told Cadena Ser radio, revealing the player, who went into Saturday's encounter with 11 goals in his last 12 starts, would have a test on the injury Sunday.

"He will miss the match against Bayern, the one against Zaragoza in the league next weekend and maybe the final of the Spanish Cup against Zaragoza on March 18," Del Corral said.

Going into the match with an eight-point lead over nearest rivals Valencia, Carlos Queiroz's galacticos could afford to sit back and soak up some early pressure and could even have snatched all three points had Yossi Benayoun not slid in to level smartly just after Santiago Solari's 28th-minute opener.

The point leaves Real on 60 points from 27 games but Valencia closed the gap to six points as they hurtled onto 54 after squashing third-placed Deportivo La Coruna 3-0 at the Mestalla.

Deportivo collapsed after Mauro Silva was sent off for a foul on Pablo Aimar to gift the 2002 champions the lead.

Ruben Baraja had already missed a second-minute penalty before Vicente Rodriguez smacked home another spotkick following Silva's misdeemeanour.

Aimar then went off injured and could miss his side's upcoming UEFA Cup tie with Genclerbiligi of Turkey.

But despite his absence a Juan Sanchez header and a clincher by Vicente wrapped things up in the dying moments.

Midtable Santander put Real under early pressure but it was Real who had the ball in the next on six minutes, although Ronaldo was clearly offside.

The visitors and title favourites

Phenomenon could be back in two weeks

REUTERS, Madrid

Superstar Ronaldo will be out for around two weeks with a thigh muscle tear he suffered on Saturday but the injury is not as serious as the player first feared.

Real Madrid doctor Alfonso del Corral officially ruled the Brazilian out of Wednesday's Champions League game against Bayern Munich after seeing the results of a scan performed on Sunday morning.

After limping out of Saturday's

1-1 draw against Racing Santander in apparent agony, the player dubbed the 'phenomenon' had said he was worried he might be facing a long spell on the sidelines but Del Corral said he was confident the recovery would be relatively quick.

"It could have been a lot worse," Del Corral said on Real Madrid's website. "If the muscle damage had been bigger we'd be looking at four to six weeks out."

"As it is we believe the problem can be cured in two weeks. That recovery time could be shorter but it will be very difficult.

"He'll definitely miss the games against Bayern Munich in the Champions League and Real Zaragoza in the league next weekend and his presence in the King's Cup final (on March 17) is extremely doubtful."

"Our aim is to get him back fit for the game against Athletic Bilbao (on the weekend of March 20-21). We're not going to rush him into a return."

finally stepped up a gear and took the lead in the 28th minute.

Portuguese international Luis Figo motored down the right and found Ronaldo, who played the ball back to mercurial Frenchman Zinedine Zidane, who appeared to be standing offside as Figo made the initial pass.

Zidane quickly played the ball square to Solari, who fired unerringly past former Manchester United keeper Ricardo.

But within four minutes Racing were level, a Fernando Moran high freekick from the left eluding every one until Benayoun slid in to score from close range in the confusion.

The second half was a largely low-key affair enlivened briefly when Santander had a penalty turned down after Uruguayan Mario Riquigre appeared to dive in the area.

Real had Meja dismissed in injury time for a second bookable offence.

Elsewhere, Osasuna missed a chance to move into the top six after a 1-1 home stalemate against Real Sociedad, for whom former Juventus and Sheffield Wednesday man Darko Kovacevic scored a late leveler.

Celta Vigo, having just lost by the odd goal in five to Arsenal in the Champions League ten days earlier, were steamrollered 5-1 at home by Espanyol for whom Raul Tamudo was twice on target.

Sunday's main highlight will see Barcelona go in search of a seventh straight victory at home to Real Mallorca.

Both sides will soon be pitting their wits against British opposition in the UEFA Cup with Barca having been drawn in midweek against Celtic and Mallorca to take on English Premiership outfit Newcastle.

That of Queen Elizabeth II, a report by a British weekly newspaper said Saturday.

Abramovich's 7.2 billion pound (10.6 billion euro, 13.1 billion dollar) wealth puts him top of the Mail on Sunday Rich Report 2004, ahead of food packaging tycoon Hans Rausing and the Duke of Westminster who owns a swathe of properties in central London.

The report includes the 300 richest British-based men and women whose combined wealth comes to 147.3 billion pounds -- up 28 percent only a year ago.

The top ten listed were:

1. Roman Abramovich 7.2 billion
2. Hans Tetrapak 6.6 billion
3. Duke of Westminster, land-owner: 4.63 billion
4. Lakshmi Mittal, steel dealmaker: 3.1 billion
5. Philip Green, retailer: 2.87 billion
6. David Khalili, art collector: 2.7 billion
7. Bernie Ecclestone, Formula One: 2.3 billion
8. Charles de Carvalho, Heineken heiress: 2.1 billion
9. Richard Branson, Virgin boss: 2.07 billion
10. Sainsbury family, supermarket: 2.05 billion

TOP SIX

Spanish league standings after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Real 27 18 6 3 55 30 60

Valencia 27 16 6 5 50 20 54

Deportivo 27 15 5 7 43 23 50

Barcelona 26 13 7 6 42 30 46

Bilbao 26 11 8 7 33 29 41

Atletico 26 11 7 8 32 31 40

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On HBO at 9:30 pm

Genre: Drama / Sci-Fi / Thriller

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