

# Beckhams in trouble?

## Football

AFP, Madrid

England football captain David Beckham joined his wife Victoria in Switzerland for a skiing holiday after denying newspaper reports he had had an affair with his Spanish interpreter in Madrid.

Beckham has joined his former Spice Girl wife Victoria Adams and family on holiday after labelling newspaper claims about his private life as "ridiculous".

The player, who moved from Manchester United to Real Madrid last July in a 25 million pound (45 million dollar) deal, insisted Monday that he was happily married after the News of the World story published claims he had a fling with former personal assistant Rebecca Loos.

The 25-year-old Loos is the daughter of a Dutch diplomat employed by Beckham's former agents. She had been chaperoning Beckham because his wife had refused to move permanently to the Spanish capital.

Newspapers carried claims by the woman's brother and Beckham's former chauffeur in Madrid backing up the claims on Monday.

The 29-year-old singer and her parents, brother and two sons Brooklyn and Romeo flew out from

Heathrow airport for an Easter break on Sunday.

Beckham, 28, was able to take time off from Real Madrid as he is suspended for their Champions League quarter-final with Monaco on Sunday.

In a statement, released through his agent, Beckham said on Sunday: "During the past few



DAVID BECKHAM

"There is nothing that any third party can do to change these facts."

Spokeswoman for the News of the World insisted the paper's story was true.

Beckham, made an OBE by Queen Elizabeth last November, could yet take legal action against the News of the World.

The Beckhams released statements in September and November denying claims their marriage was in trouble.

The former Manchester United midfielder married Adams when she was a member of the pop group the Spice Girls.

Last month Beckham, the world's best-paid footballer, opted for Queen Elizabeth's stockbroker to manage the fortune he has built up with his wife.

Beckham signed a deal for Cazenove to manage around 40 million pounds (73 million dollars) of the couple's wealth.

He earns more than 5 million pounds (9 million dollars) a year with the Spanish champions.

But he is reported to earn another 10 million dollars a year from off-pitch sponsorship deals.

His earnings currently dwarf those of his wife who is trying to revive her pop career.

months I have become accustomed to reading more and more ludicrous stories about my private life.

"What appeared this morning is just one further example.

"The simple truth is that I am very happily married, have a wonderful wife and two very special kids.

## Premiership

# Owen delight for Liverpool

## Football

AFP, London

Michael Owen's brace of goals kept Liverpool firmly in the hunt for a Champions League place as Gerard Houllier's men beat Blackburn 4-0 at Anfield.

Victory saw Liverpool go fourth - the last spot available to English clubs for next season's premier European club competition, a point clear of Newcastle and two ahead of Birmingham.

As well as Owen's double, Liverpool also netted late on through his fellow England striker Emile Heskey and an Andy Todd own-goal.

"It was a strong, powerful, determined performance. We have performed very well at times and not got the result but today we have got both the performance and the result," said Liverpool's French manager Gerard Houllier.

Defeat took Blackburn to the edge of the relegation zone and their manager Graeme Souness, the former Liverpool captain, said: "Long before today we realised how dangerous our position is."

"We have seven games to go and we need to win three of them and there is no hiding from that fact."

Also on Sunday, Aston Villa were left two points behind city rivals Birmingham following a 1-1 draw at home to struggling Manchester City.

On Saturday, high-flyers Chelsea assured themselves of a place in next season's Champions League with a 1-0 win over London rivals Tottenham thanks to Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink's first-half goal.

The result saw Chelsea close to within four points of leaders Arsenal. The two London clubs meet again on Tuesday at Arsenal's Highbury ground

for the second leg of their Champions League quarter-final which currently stands at 1-1.

Newcastle ensured they stayed in touch with a 4-2 win over Everton that left them breathing down Liverpool's neck after two goals from Alan Shearer and one each from Craig Bellamy and Kieron Dyer put paid to Everton.

Elsewhere, Southampton's 4-1 win at Molineux kept Wolves in last place, Birmingham's goalless draw away to Fulham kept them in the Champions League hunt while Middlesbrough beat Bolton 2-0.

"We no longer have a world where security and safety can be taken for granted," Velappan said.

"Football is the most attractive event to really disrupt, since you can destabilize the entire football world. No other sport brings together so many people in one venue. If someone chooses to go and plant some bombs in different parts of a stadium, you lose everything."

Walter Gagg, FIFA's director of stadiums and security, said soccer's world governing body was optimistic the sport would not be targeted by terrorists, but that officials should remain "very, very careful."

"In a stadium, it's easy to create a disaster, since security officers cannot check every spectator," Gagg said. "Clubs and national associations should refurbish their stadiums with modern security infrastructure, not just spend money on transfers of players and salaries of players and coaches."

Velappan noted that numerous international soccer events were scheduled for Asia this year, including the July-August Asian Cup in China and qualifying matches for the Athens Olympics and the 2006 World Cup.

Although Milan remain firm favourites to land their 17th Scudetto and their first since 1999, Roma do have a game in hand on Carlo Ancelotti's men and have to play the European champions at the San Siro on May 2.

In Sunday's late match, title-holders Juventus missed out on the chance to close the gap on Milan to seven points after losing 3-2 at Inter Milan, still firmly in the hunt for a place in next season's Champions League.

Inter's win, which completed a league double over their fierce rivals, saw them cement sixth place and move to within a point of fourth spot.

Milan have 69 points from 28 matches played, 10 more than third-placed Juventus, who trail Roma by a point.

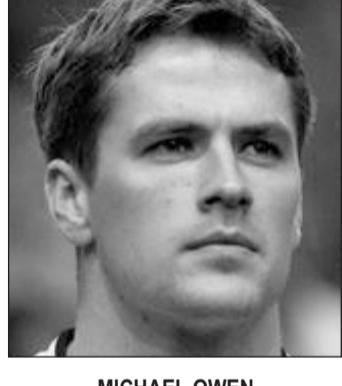
Jon Dahl Tomasson, in for the injured Andrei Shevchenko, gave Milan a first-half lead, snapping up the rebound after goalkeeper Adriano Zanocchi had failed to hold Clarence Seedorf's stinging shot.

But Nicola Amoruso denied the Champions League holders an 11th away victory with a 51st minute equaliser, side-footing home Diomansy Kamara's cross.

Two goals in a four-minute second-half spell helped Roma to a comfortable victory in Puglia.

Brazilian midfielder Emerson headed the visitors into a 51st minute lead before Cesare Bovo deflected Gaetano D'Agostino's free-kick into his own net. Roma captain Francesco Totti completed the scoring with a stoppage-time penalty after Antonio Cassano had been fouled in the box.

In Milan, Inter tore into Juve from the very start and their adventurous



MICHAEL OWEN

## TOP SIX

English Premiership table after Sunday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

	30	22	8	0	58	20	74
Arsenal	31	22	4	5	58	24	70
Chelsea	31	22	4	5	58	24	70
Man Utd	30	19	5	6	56	30	62
Liverpool	31	13	10	8	46	31	49
Newcastle	31	12	12	7	45	33	48
Birmingham	31	12	10	9	37	36	46

## 'You are not safe'

AP, Kuala Lumpur

International soccer games could become targets for terrorists, a top Asian Football Confederation official warned Monday.

Peter Velappan, AFC general secretary, told a security seminar that event organizers in Asia have often presumed venues would be safe from attack because many countries in the region are peaceful.

But terrorist activity and other violence in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq and Uzbekistan - all of which field teams in Asian competitions - show that "there are potential volcanoes, even in Asia," Velappan said.

"We no longer have a world where security and safety can be taken for granted," Velappan said.

"Football is the most attractive event to really disrupt, since you can destabilize the entire football world. No other sport brings together so many people in one venue. If someone chooses to go and plant some bombs in different parts of a stadium, you lose everything."

Walter Gagg, FIFA's director of stadiums and security, said soccer's world governing body was optimistic the sport would not be targeted by terrorists, but that officials should remain "very, very careful."

"In a stadium, it's easy to create a disaster, since security officers cannot check every spectator," Gagg said. "Clubs and national associations should refurbish their stadiums with modern security infrastructure, not just spend money on transfers of players and salaries of players and coaches."

Velappan noted that numerous international soccer events were scheduled for Asia this year, including the July-August Asian Cup in China and qualifying matches for the Athens Olympics and the 2006 World Cup.

Although Milan remain firm favourites to land their 17th Scudetto and their first since 1999, Roma do have a game in hand on Carlo Ancelotti's men and have to play the European champions at the San Siro on May 2.

In Sunday's late match, title-holders Juventus missed out on the chance to close the gap on Milan to seven points after losing 3-2 at Inter Milan, still firmly in the hunt for a place in next season's Champions League.

Inter's win, which completed a league double over their fierce rivals, saw them cement sixth place and move to within a point of fourth spot.

Milan have 69 points from 28 matches played, 10 more than third-placed Juventus, who trail Roma by a point.

Jon Dahl Tomasson, in for the injured Andrei Shevchenko, gave Milan a first-half lead, snapping up the rebound after goalkeeper Adriano Zanocchi had failed to hold Clarence Seedorf's stinging shot.

But Nicola Amoruso denied the Champions League holders an 11th away victory with a 51st minute equaliser, side-footing home Diomansy Kamara's cross.

Two goals in a four-minute second-half spell helped Roma to a comfortable victory in Puglia.

Brazilian midfielder Emerson headed the visitors into a 51st minute lead before Cesare Bovo deflected Gaetano D'Agostino's free-kick into his own net. Roma captain Francesco Totti completed the scoring with a stoppage-time penalty after Antonio Cassano had been fouled in the box.

In Milan, Inter tore into Juve from the very start and their adventurous



Valencia players converge in celebration of Miguel Angel Mista's (on the ground) goal against Murcia during in on April 4.

## Primera Liga

# Valencia stay close

## Football

REUTERS, Madrid

that leaves them in fifth place three points clear of Osasuna.

Valencia, who went into the game at Mestalla on a four-match winning run, found it hard to open up a crowded Murcia defence.

In-form winger Vicente made room for himself on the left on several occasions, but a forest of Murcia defenders were always on hand to clear the danger when he headed the ball to the area.

Without playmaker Pablo Aimar, who picked up a groin injury while on international duty with Argentina in midweek, Valencia appeared to lack the ideas needed to unpick the defence.

The home side had a strong appeal for a penalty turned down when Mista was bowled over in the area at the end of the first half, but it was not until 28 minutes into the second half that they got the breakthrough.

With his first touch of the ball, substitute Jorge Lopez swept a corner in from the right and Pellegrino burst through the defence to score with a bullet header.

The goal immediately settled a nervy Valencia and Mista grabbed his 18th goal of the season when he volleyed in from eight metres out after Murcia failed to clear a Vicente header.

Atletico Madrid took an important step towards securing a place in next season's UEFA Cup with a 2-1 win at home to Valladolid, a victory

that leaves them in fifth place three points clear of Osasuna.

Valencia, who went into the game at Mestalla on a four-match winning run, found it hard to open up a crowded Murcia defence.

In-form winger Vicente made room for himself on the left on several occasions, but a forest of Murcia defenders were always on hand to clear the danger when he headed the ball to the area.

Without playmaker Pablo Aimar, who picked up a groin injury while on international duty with Argentina in midweek, Valencia appeared to lack the ideas needed to unpick the defence.

The goal immediately settled a nervy Valencia and Mista grabbed his 18th goal of the season when he volleyed in from eight metres out after Murcia failed to clear a Vicente header.

Atletico Madrid took an important step towards securing a place in next season's UEFA Cup with a 2-1 win at home to Valladolid, a victory

that leaves them in fifth place three points clear of Osasuna.

Valencia, who went into the game at Mestalla on a four-match winning run, found it hard to open up a crowded Murcia defence.

In-form winger Vicente made room for himself on the left on several occasions, but a forest of Murcia defenders were always on hand to clear the danger when he headed the ball to the area.

Without playmaker Pablo Aimar, who picked up a groin injury while on international duty with Argentina in midweek, Valencia appeared to lack the ideas needed to unpick the defence.

The goal immediately settled a nervy Valencia and Mista grabbed his 18th goal of the season when he volleyed in from eight metres out after Murcia failed to clear a Vicente header.

Atletico Madrid took an important step towards securing a place in next season's UEFA Cup with a 2-1 win at home to Valladolid, a victory

that leaves them in fifth place three points clear of Osasuna.

Valencia, who went into the game at Mestalla on a four-match winning run, found it hard to open up a crowded Murcia defence.

In-form winger Vicente made room for himself on the left on several occasions, but a forest of Murcia defenders were always on hand to clear the danger when he headed the ball to the area.

Without playmaker Pablo Aimar, who picked up a groin injury while on international duty with Argentina in midweek, Valencia appeared to lack the ideas needed to unpick the defence.

The goal immediately settled a nervy Valencia and Mista grabbed his 18th goal of the season when he volleyed in from eight metres out after Murcia failed to clear a Vicente header.

Atletico Madrid took an important step towards securing a place in next season's UEFA Cup with a 2-1 win at home to Valladolid, a victory

that leaves them in fifth place three points clear of Osasuna.

Valencia, who went into the game at Mestalla on a four-match