



Olympique Marseille's Camel Meriem (C) watches his shot going into the net past a despairing Inter Milan goalkeeper Francesco Toldo (ground) at the San Siro stadium in Milan on April 14.

# Inter, Celtic gone

## UEFA CUP

AFP, Paris

Hopes of a UEFA Cup Battle of Britain showdown crumbled on Wednesday when Newcastle clinched a place in the semi-finals but Celtic failed to keep their side of the bargain by crashing out to Spanish side Villarreal.

Bobby Robson's Newcastle moved into a semi-final clash with French side Marseille after a 2-1 win, and 3-2 aggregate score, against his old club PSV Eindhoven at St James' Park.

However, Celtic's dream of a reaching a second successive UEFA Cup final were shattered by Villarreal who added a 2-0 win to the 1-1 draw they clinched in Glasgow last week.

Villarreal's reward is an all-Spanish last four clash against Valencia who knocked out Bordeaux.

Both Newcastle goals came from headers from former England skipper Alan Shearer, in the ninth minute, and Welsh international Gary Speed, after 66 minutes, with PSV pulling one back from a Mateja Kezman penalty.

"It was a classic Shearer goal and Gary, brave as a lion, has been leaping like that at both ends, full of courage, all his career. It was a goal worthy of winning any match," said Robson.

Goals from Brazilian striker Sonny Anderson and Roger Garcia helped Villarreal progress 3-1 on

aggregate at the expense of Celtic.

"It is a big loss. We thought we could have got through but it was not to be. They played well at Celtic Park but we lost some bad goals," said Celtic captain Jackie McNamara.

Anderson headed the opening goal after just six minutes when he outpaced his marker Bobo Balde and connected with a long cross from out by the right touch line from his Brazilian compatriot Belletti for his sixth goal in this season's competition. Villarreal, the Intertoto Cup winners, made sure of their place in the last four when Roger Garcia hit a superb volley from just inside the box after 68 minutes.

French first division side Marseille defeated Inter Milan 1-0 in the second leg of their quarter-final at the San Siro to seal a 2-0 aggregate win.

Leading 1-0 from the first leg, Marseille were second best to Inter in a passionate tie before Camel Meriem's angled shot 16 minutes from time rolled in off the post to oust the Italians from the competition they won three times in the 1990s.

Defeat for Inter left Italy without a representative in European competition following the exit of neighbours AC Milan from the Champions League last week.

Inter coach Alberto Zaccheroni criticised his players for giving away possession to Marseilles in the build up to the match-winning goal when second-half substitute Alvaro Recoba woefully wasted a free-kick.

"Marseille rarely threatened us

and their goal came from the only clear-cut opportunity they had," he said.

"We left ourselves open to the counter-attack and should have been in control as we had more players in that area of the pitch than they did.

"We made a mistake from our own set-piece at the other end of the field and that cost us dearly."

Valencia beat Bordeaux 2-1 to clinch a 4-2 aggregate win and guarantee Spanish representation in the final in Gothenburg on May 19.

Second-half goals from Francisco Rufete, who also scored in the first leg, and Argentinian defender Mauricio Pellegrino gave Valencia, the Spanish league leaders, the edge before Paulo Costa pulled one back late in the game for the French side.

## FIXTURES

UEFA Cup semi-final dates:

**1st leg**  
**Thursday, April 22**  
Villarreal (SPA) v Valencia (SPA)  
Newcastle (ENG) v Marseille (FRA)  
**2nd leg**  
**Thursday, May 6**

**Final**  
Gothenburg  
**May 19**

## Keane is available for Ireland

AFP, London

Former Republic of Ireland captain Roy Keane has made himself available to play international football again, the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) said in a statement.

The inspirational 32-year-old Manchester United midfielder turned his back on his country following a row with then manager Mick McCarthy which saw him sent home from a training camp shortly before the 2002 World Cup Finals in Japan and South Korea.

But the United skipper met with current Republic manager Brian Kerr last week where it is understood he made clear he wanted to play international football again.

In February Keane hinted he was contemplating a comeback to the Republic's colours.

"I have always said I have missed international football - but then felt it was important to move on," Keane explained.

"But part of me has always said that I had unfinished business and it will always be that way."

Ireland are due to begin their qualifying campaign for the 2006 World Cup Finals in September against Cyprus.

# Samba stars not into 'Blues'

## Football

SKY SPORTS

Ronaldinho insists he would not leave Barcelona 'for all the money in the world' after speculation suggesting Chelsea were plotting a summer move for him.

The Brazilian is enjoying a memorable first season with the Catalan giants and has been the driving force behind their renaissance in the second half of the campaign.

The former Paris Saint Germain star has, so far, notched 17 goals and has quickly developed into an idol for the Barca fans.

Reports that Chelsea supremo Roman Abramovich was ready to bankroll a €70 million (£50 million) swoop for the Samba schemer will have been of major concern to the Camp Nou faithful, but Ronaldinho has moved to set their minds at rest by claiming that there is no chance he will leave.

"Things are going very well and I am not thinking of leaving Barcelona,"

stated the 24-year-old.

"My head is here and everything is perfect. My family are happy, I am fully fit and nothing is missing."

Speaking of Chelsea's reported interest, he continued: "It is always good to know that my work is pleasing to people and there is interest in what I do.

"However, I would not go for all the

money in the world, my happiness is more important than many things.

"Firstly I always think about being happy and doing what makes me content."

Meanwhile, compatriot superstar Roberto Carlos has also moved to deny rumours that he is ready to quit Real Madrid for Chelsea, insisting he wants to sign a new contract at El

Santiago Bernabeu.

Reports in Spain on Wednesday claimed the Brazilian full back had negotiated a pre-contract with The Blues that would have seen him move to Stamford Bridge when his current Real deal expires in June 2005.

The move would have forced Madrid to cash in on the dynamic defender this summer or face losing him for nothing at the end of next season.

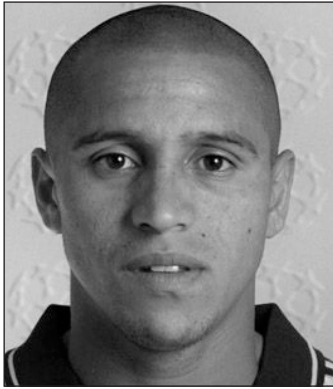
However, Carlos has laughed off the suggestions insisting he remains fully committed to Los Merengues and dismissed the stories as media invention.

Asked about the Chelsea link, the 31-year-old stated: "I don't know, there is nothing to it. Neither with Chelsea or any other team."

"Whoever says there is needs to prove it. I want to renew (my contract) with Real Madrid."

"I don't know what I have to say. My priority is Real Madrid because I am happy here and identify with the club."

"I have won the best titles here and we can keep on doing so."



ROBERTO CARLOS



RONALDINHO

Hungary friendly

# Parreira rests Ronaldo

## Football

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Arsenal midfielder Edu was one of four uncapped players named in the Brazil squad on Tuesday for this month's friendly in Hungary while Real Madrid striker Ronaldo was rested.

Edu, who has recently been quoted as saying he would consider playing for England if Brazil continued to overlook him, is in line for his first cap along with AS Roma full-back Mancini and German-based defenders Bordon and Dede.

Ronaldo, who is expected to be out of action for two weeks with a hamstring injury, was excluded from the match in Budapest on doctor's orders, coach Carlos Alberto Parreira said.

"This is his second injury in around one month, he has played 70 games already this season and we don't want to take any risks," said Parreira.

"We want to preserve his health. He's not being dropped," added Parreira, who said he wanted Ronaldo fully fit for June, when Brazil face World Cup qualifiers against Argentina and Chile.

The world champions will be attempting to end a run of four successive draws -- the last two of them goalless -- and beat Hungary for the first time in the April 28 match.

The two sides have met

four times with three draws and a win for Hungary at the infamous 1954 World Cup match dubbed "The Battle of Berne."

Parreira has been under increasing pressure to include Edu and Mancini and he said the Hungary match was the perfect chance to experiment.

"This will give us the chance to bring in some players who we've been observing for a while and who have been waiting for a chance," he said.

Parreira denied he had been swung by reports that Edu would consider playing for England. "That never came into it," he said.

Volatile Sao Paulo striker Luis Fabiano, one of the top Brazilians still in his homeland, was also included along with Cruzeiro playmaker Alex.

## SQUAD

**Goalkeepers** - Marcos (Palmeiras), Dida (AC Milan, Italy)

**Defenders** - Cafu (AC Milan), Mancini (AS Roma, Italy), Dede (Borussia Dortmund, Germany), Roberto Carlos (Real Madrid, Spain), Bordon (VfB Stuttgart, Germany), Juan (Bayer Leverkusen, Germany), Lucio (Bayer Leverkusen, Germany), Roque Junior (Siena, Italy)

**Midfielders** - Edmilson (Olympique Lyon, France), Edu (Arsenal, England), Julio Baptista (Sevilla, Spain), Alex (Cruzeiro), Renato (Santos), Felipe (Flamengo), Juninho Permanbucano (Olympique Lyon, France), Ze Roberto (Bayern Munich, Germany), Kaka (AC Milan)

**Forwards** - Ronaldinho Gaucha (Barcelona, Spain), Luis Fabiano (Sao Paulo), Adriano (Inter Milan, Italy)

Premiership preview

# Gunners' luxury

## Football

AFP, London

Arsenal can open up a ten point gap at the top of the English Premiership on Friday with a victory over relegation-haunted Leeds with skipper Patrick Vieira insisting the Gunners' team spirit will carry them through to the title.

Despite morale-crushing exits in the FA Cup and in the Champions League, Arsene Wenger's men have recovered well with a win against Liverpool and a draw at Newcastle to put their season back on course.

"It was a lot of pressure on our shoulders but we love it because it means we are doing well," said Vieira.

"We gave ourselves more pressure after losing those first two games against Manchester United and Chelsea. But we managed it well."

"I am proud to be the captain of the team," added the French international.

"Everybody gives their best and, when we are on the pitch, nobody tries to cheat. They just do the best for each other. In the dressing room the atmosphere is fantastic."

Victory at Highbury on Friday will virtually guarantee the Premiership title for Arsenal who would then have 10-point lead over Chelsea with just five matches left.

In the 1970s, matches between Arsenal and Leeds were fiercely-contested affairs with both teams regularly in the chase for honours, but Leeds are third from bottom this season and desperately need a win to move out of the relegation placings.

Their hopes, however, have not

been helped by season-ending injuries to Seth Johnson and Erik Bakke.

Manchester United beat Leicester 1-0 on Tuesday on Gary Neville's first goal of the season to close in on second-place Chelsea.

Manchester United are on for 68 points, three fewer than Chelsea, but the Reds have a game in hand.

Leicester, meanwhile are 19th in the 20-team Premier League and in danger of being relegated to the first division.

## Henry top pick for PFA award

AFP, London

French star Thierry Henry tops the list of nominees for the English Players' Player of the Year title at the PFA's annual awards dinner on April 25.

But last year's winner faces competition from Liverpool's Steven Gerrard, Newcastle's Alan Shearer, Chelsea's Frank Lampard, Bolton's Nigeria captain Jay-Jay Okocha and Henry's Arsenal and France teammate Patrick Vieira.

The Young Player of the Year nominees are Chelsea trio John Terry, Glen Johnson and Scott Parker, Arsenal's Ivory Coast international Kolo Tourre, Everton's Wayne Rooney and Manchester City's Shaun Wright-Phillips.

Primera Liga

# Barca miss out

## Football

AFP, Seville

Barcelona, who have now 14 games unbeaten, blew their big chance to move up to third in the Spanish first division when they could only draw 1-1 at Real Betis on Wednesday.

The game had been postponed from last month after torrential rain left the pitch at the Manuel Ruiz de Lopera stadium waterlogged and unplayable.

The Catalan club have 60 points from 32 games, nine adrift of league leaders Valencia, but they remain in fourth after their draw in Seville, behind Champions League semi-finalists Deportivo on goal difference.

Javier Saviola opened the scoring for Barca after just five minutes, the Argentine interna-

tional striker having been brought down in the box by Betis defender Daniel Lembo.

Saviola's initial penalty was parried by Betis keeper Toni Prats but he was alert enough to find the net with a second effort after the ball ran loose.

Barca almost doubled the score just after the midway point of the first half when Andres Iniesta, standing in for the suspended Ronaldinho, hit the post. But shortly afterwards the visitors paid the price for some slack defending.

However, the equaliser came in bizarre circumstances.

Barca goalkeeper Victor Valdes was penalised for a foul on Dani Martin in the box and was red-carded.

Betis' former Spanish international striker Alfonso Perez scored from the spot, chipping the ball past substitute goalkeeper Recber Rustu.

Betis's advantage however

failed to tell, even though Barca were reduced to nine men in injury time when Gerard Lopez received his second yellow card and the home side left the field to shrill whistles from their own fans for the second time in four days.

One consolation for Betis was that they broke their three-game losing streak, although they have not now won in their last eight outings.

## TOP SIX

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

Valencia	32	21	6	5	63	21	69
Real	32	20	7	5	65	40	67
Deportivo	32	18	6	8	52	30	60
Barcelona	32	17	9	6	52	34	60
Osasuna	32	11	15	6	35	27	48
Bilbao	32	13	9	10	42	40	48

# Deco interests Bayern

## Football

AFP, Berlin

German champions Bayern Munich want to sign FC Porto's mercurial midfielder Deco their manager Ottmar Hitzfeld confirmed on Thursday.

Bayern scouts have watched

pint-sized Deco, 26, inspire Porto to the Champions League semi-finals, where they will face Deportivo La Coruna, and Hitzfeld is now preparing to test the club's resolve to hang onto their playmaker.

"Deco is a player on our wish list," Hitzfeld told Kicker magazine. "We are watching him but have not made a concrete move yet."

Recruiting Deco will not be cheap with his stock raised after a

sterling performance in Porto's UEFA Cup win over Celtic last season and some stellar displays in the Champions League this term.

Deco, real name Anderson Luis de Souza, was born in Brazil but will play for hosts Portugal in the 2004 European championships.