



PROVING A POINT: Monaco's Spanish international Fernando Morientes, who is on loan from Real Madrid, pulls his tongue out while celebrating his strike against Chelsea at the Louis II stadium in Monaco on April 20.

Target Old Trafford?

Football

AFP, London

Police continued to grill 10 terrorism suspects, a day after a Manchester United football match -- a feared target of attack -- passed without incident.

Greater Manchester Police said the nine men and one woman, of North African and Iraqi Kurdish origin, arrested under the Terrorism Act 2000 in raids Monday in central and northern England, remained in custody.

"We've got extensions on the detention of the 10 suspects," a police spokesman told AFP, adding that under British law, they could -- with a judge's consent -- be held longer without charge.

"You can go up to 14 days before time runs out," he said. "It's an ongoing investigation, so it takes some time to complete."



YOU ARE NOT SAFE ANYMORE: Policemen search spectators entering the Old Trafford Stadium in Manchester prior to April 20's Premiership match between Manchester United and Charlton. Extra security measures are in place at the venue after Monday's anti terrorism arrests in Manchester. British police have foiled a plot to bomb a football stadium, possibly that of Manchester United, following the arrest of 10 terror suspects in central and northern England.

Ronaldo to cost £120 million

INTERNET, Source

Real Madrid have told Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich that he may attempt to purchase the Spanish club's Galacticos, but at a massive price.

But the Blues have been told that the Real Madrid players have minimum fee release clauses which make them extraordinarily expensive, even to Britain's richest man.

To buy either Ronaldo, Raul, Zinedine Zidane and Luis Figo out of their existing contracts would allegedly cost the London side in excess of £120 million.

"If they want to sign Ronaldo or any other Real Madrid player, they will have to buy out their contract. In Ronaldo's case that would be £120 million," a Real Madrid spokesman told Spanish newspaper Marca.

"Our players are worth what it says in their contracts."

Roberto Carlos has a relatively lower price of £60 million but is out of contract next year.

Abramovich is rumoured to be looking to bolster his squad again before next season. Ronaldo is thought to be a target for the Russian, while David Beckham's recent problems in his private life have led to reports of the England captain moving to Chelsea.

Nevertheless, it appears that Real are going to put up a big fight to keep their star names.

Premiership

United blank Charlton

Football

AFP, Manchester

Goal-shy Gary Neville scored his second goal in three games as Manchester United took another step towards securing the runners-up berth in the Premiership on Tuesday with an emphatic 2-0 victory over Charlton Athletic here at Old Trafford.

If they beat Liverpool at home on Saturday, they will move above Chelsea into second place, which would ultimately ensure automatic qualification for the Champions' League.

Victory left Alex Ferguson's side just a point behind Chelsea who on Tuesday suffered a 3-1 Champions' League semi-final first leg defeat away to French side Monaco.

Meanwhile Charlton's own European hopes were dealt a blow since victory here would have allowed them to climb into fourth place, which provides the final Champions' League place.

Ferguson had to do without Paul Scholes, who was starting a three-match ban for violent conduct.

But United welcomed back Ruud van Nistelrooy up front after a knee injury, and Tim Howard returned in goal in place of Roy Carroll.

United dominated the early stages. After a quarter of an hour they earned a free-kick 25 yards out and Louis Saha rolled the ball to an unmarked Phil Neville who forced an excellent save from Dean Kiely. United broke the deadlock on 28

"We are confident that the steps that we have taken to date have significantly reduced any potential threat in the Greater Manchester area," Dave Whetton, assistant chief constable of Greater Manchester Police, said.

Manchester United said in a statement Tuesday that it encouraged "all supporters to be particularly vigilant at this time and report anything regarded as suspicious to ground officials".

The 10 suspects picked up in Monday's raids in central and northern England, which involved 400 officers, were described by police as being North African and Iraqi Kurdish in origin.

The Times newspaper reported Tuesday that other possible targets for an attack might have been the ground of United's local rivals, Manchester City, or else a shopping centre in the Manchester area.

Monaco's 10-man masterclass

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, Monaco

Fernando Morientes and Shabani Nonda hit two spectacular late goals to give ten-man Monaco a 3-1 victory over Chelsea in the first leg of their Champions League semi-final here on Tuesday.

Croatian striker Dado Prso had given Monaco, playing in their third Champions League semi-final in ten years, the lead in the 17th minute before Argentinian international Hernan Crespo levelled with a crucial away goal five minutes later.

The match seemed to be meandering towards a draw before Morientes struck his 25th career goal in the tournament 13 minutes from time and Nonda slotted in a third in the 83rd minute just seconds after coming on as a substitute for skipper Ludovic Giuly.

It was a spectacular response from the French side who had been reduced to ten men earlier in the second half when Andreas Zikos

was sent-off after Claude Makelele collapsed theatrically to the ground having been gently tapped on the head by the Greek international.

Monaco coach Didier Deschamps was ecstatic at the extraordinary outcome, coming two weeks after his side put out Real Madrid on away goals after winning by the same score at home.

"It's a super result - we go to Stamford Bridge with lots of hope," said France's 1998 World Cup and Euro 2000 winning captain.

"To be even one goal in front after the first leg is good, we've got two.

"Luckily Zikos' sending off didn't cost us dear. My team responded exceptionally well."

His Chelsea counterpart Claudio Ranieri gracefully admitted he was at fault for the crushing defeat.

"It's my fault," said Ranieri after his side's first away defeat in the tournament this season.

"I put on Hasselbaink because I wanted to win the game. In the last fifteen minutes, everybody wanted to do something but in the wrong

way. They didn't pass the ball to the three strikers.

"We completely lost the plot but I was sure it was the best thing for the team."

The outstanding Giuly said the team had more than stepped up to the plate when they went down to 10 men.

"We played with hunger and with guts," he said.

"One doesn't always get the chance to play in a Champions League semi-final and we gave it our all."

Veteran Chelsea centreback Marcel Desailly warned of a backlash for the French side when they come to London in a fortnight.

"It will be fiery," declared Desailly, who might not be able to play as Monaco contest that he elbowed Morientes in the second-half.

The Monaco breakthrough arrived in the 17th minute when Mario Melchiot chopped down Jerome Rothen on the left touch-line.

Melchiot was booked by referee Urs Meier leaving Rothen to hit a free-kick which wasn't

cleared and it found its way to Prso who headed into the top corner past the despairing dive of Marco Ambrosio in the Chelsea goal.

It was the Croatian's seventh goal of the Champions League campaign as he joined Morientes as joint top-scorer.

But Chelsea were level just five minutes later when a cross from the left fell for Eidur Gudjohnsen whose shot was only half-cleared and the rebound fell into the path of Crespo who scored from six yards.

He could have had another moments later when he poked a cross from Frank Lampard over Flavio Roma's crossbar.

At the other end, Giuly, so influential in his side's stunning quarter-final win over Real Madrid, broke through two defenders but Ambrosio saved at his feet.

Juan Sebastian Veron replaced Jesper Gronkjaer at the start of the second half but was to prove a largely uninfluential figure.

Four minutes after the interval,

Ambrosio pulled off a point-blank save to deny Morientes who seconds earlier had been writhing on the floor after the Desailly incident.

Desailly then cleared off the line from Zikos before the game exploded when the Greek was red-carded in the 52nd minute.

Makelele was booked for his part in the exchange and will miss the second leg.

To shore up the midfield, Prso was withdrawn in favour of former West Ham player Edouard Cisse.

Chelsea sensed an opportunity and the tireless Gudjohnsen headed over a Veron corner in the 57th minute while Ranieri threw on Hasselbaink.

Thirteen minutes from time, Monaco's persistence paid off when Giuly's sweet flick was latched onto by Morientes whose running, right foot volley shot past Ambrosio.

Then Nonda, battling back from a career threatening knee injury, slotted in the third at the foot of the post seven minutes from time to set up an explosive return match.

Time to walk on moon again

UEFA CUP

AFP, Newcastle

Neil Armstrong was two months away from becoming the first man to walk on the moon when Newcastle last entered a European club semi-final and the present team will be hoping they go on and emulate their forebears by winning the competition.

The 1969 Fairs Cup - the predecessor of the UEFA Cup - was also the Magpies' last success in a major trophy which not one of the present squad save their venerable manager Bobby Robson would have been alive to see.

They enter Thursday's home clash against surprise French outfit Marseille on the back of nine wins and one draw in their last 10 home matches but will see it come under some threat as Marseille have proved to be no mugs on the road having drawn away at crisis club Liverpool and then beaten Italian giants Inter Milan 1-0 last week.

"Marseille beat Inter Milan and Liverpool and they are very useful," said Robson.

"However they will have a difficult match with us at our place."

His talismanic skipper Alan Shearer believed that the Magpies can reward their long suffering Toon Army fans by delivering the UEFA Cup even with both Welsh strike partner Craig Bellamy and promising young attacking midfielder Jermaine Jenas out injured.

"There is belief we can finish fourth (in the Premiership) and win the UEFA Cup," said Shearer.

"If we don't believe it we might as well pack in now and go on our summer holidays.

"We are doing well. We are not conceding goals, our defence is playing very well at the moment and we are always going to score goals and that is a good mixture.

"If that continues we have a very good chance."

Marseille have their own injury

problems with Egyptian international striker Mido definitely missing with a leg injury while the French outfit are also waiting nervously on a scan on French international Steve Marlet, who has looked a different player to the moody one that was playing for Premiership side Fulham.

However with the creative talent of playmaker Camel Meriem, the striking power of Didier Drogba and talismanic French international goalkeeper Fabien Barthez - who was in goal when Marseille beat AC Milan to take the 1993 European Cup - they have a formidable spine.

Marseille coach Jose Anigo has been justifiably fulsome in his praise for Barthez, who has been in sparkling form since he came on loan from Manchester United and the shavenheaded guardian could be forgiven for gloating a little as his replacement at United Tim Howard has been shunted to the replacements bench after a dramatic loss of form.

"In the big matches, Fabien always steps up to the plate and that is the sign of a great player," purred Anigo.

Anigo can have reason for personal satisfaction as well as he has revived the club's fortunes since he took over from Alain Perrin earlier in the season and he is looking for a conservative performance from his side on Thursday.

"It would be great if we grabbed a goal but even better if we don't concede one," he said.

Shearer will have other ideas about that as Newcastle seek to banish the ghostly black and white images of Armstrong from their minds for ever.

The quickest goal ever?

AFP, London

An amateur English footballer has claimed the fastest goal ever scored after shooting home from the half-way-line immediately after the kick-off in 2.5 seconds.

Marc Burrows, 25, scored the goal for Cowes Sports reserves against Eastleigh reserves on the Isle of Wight on April 3.

The English Football Association has recognised his achievement after receiving a match report from the referee John Sorrell.

"We can now say that Marc's goal is the fastest we are aware of," the FA said in a statement. "Two-and-a-half seconds may not seem long enough to complete the manoeuvre described by the referee but we appreciate there was an exceptionally strong (following) wind."

Burrows, who went on to score a hat-trick in a 5-3 win, said: "My fellow striker Michael Ponter rolled the ball forward a couple of inches and I took a mighty swing at it. The wind was so strong I thought it was worth a go.

"The ball just sailed over their poor keeper. I was so stunned I didn't really celebrate. I just put my hands in the air and burst out laughing."

Burrows hopes the Guinness Book of Records includes his achievement in the next edition.

Currently the world's fastest goal listed in the Guinness book is one of 2.8sec which was scored by the Argentinian Ricardo Olivera for Rio Negro against Soriano on December 26 1998.

The previous fastest goal in Britain was scored by Colin Cowperthwaite in 3sec for non-league Barrow against Kettering in 1979.

Football

AFP, Madrid

Tendinitis in his left knee forced freshly-cropped England skipper David Beckham to curtain a Real Madrid training session Tuesday, although he is set to be fit for Sunday's showdown with Barcelona at the Bernabeu.

Beckham, his new hairstyle hidden under a cap, pulled out of the session after a quarter of an hour's jog as a precaution.

The Barca match is make or break for Real's title aspirations with the club out of the Champions League and having lost the Spanish Cup final.

Saturday's derby win at Atletico Madrid saw them draw level on points with Valencia at the top of the Spanish league but the latter led the table on goal difference with only five games remaining.

Barca have hauled themselves into third spot following a purple patch and a win in Madrid to avenge a loss to their hated rivals at the Nou Camp last autumn would close the gap to four points.

Brazil striker Ronaldo is set to return from a left thigh injury suffered two weekends ago in the shock home reverse to Osasuna which followed on from the Champions League exit to Monaco.

UEFA CUP

AFP, Madrid

Villarreal have not conceded a goal at home in this season's UEFA Cup but it is a streak that Spanish league leaders Valencia are out to end when the local rivals meet in Thursday's semi-final first leg.

The game brings together two Spanish teams at this stage of the competition for the first time in 40 years.

With Villarreal just 60 kilometres down the coast from Valencia, not since Barcelona met Espanyol in the quarter-finals of the 1966 Fairs Cup has there been a Spanish derby involving teams of such close proximity in a European competition.

"We won there 2-0 in the league last season and drew 1-1 the previous two years so we know how to score in the El Madrigal," said Valencia captain

David Albelda.

However, Villarreal's man between the posts is Jose Manuel Reina and the 21 year-old has been having an outstanding season, especially in recent months.

He is many people's tip to go to Euro 2004 as Spain's third goalkeeper after being a key component in Villarreal's first European campaign, which has seen them knock out the likes of Galatasaray, Roma and Celtic.

"I always have nerves before a game but I am getting better at handling them," said Reina recently, a point proven by his performances against top class opposition.

His latest feat included saving a last minute penalty in Villarreal's 2-1 win at Real Mallorca on Sunday.

Albelda suggested on Tuesday that the Villarreal players should be paid their UEFA Cup victory bonuses regardless of whether they win or lose the semi-final, subtly hinting that their run was about to come to an end.

"(Villarreal president) Fernando

Roig should give the players their bonuses right now. They have made history," said the Spanish international midfielder.

"It's just a pity that we are not on the same deal but we know that this club doesn't make as much money in the UEFA Cup as it does in the Champions League.

"Although now we will be talking to the club to see what they can come up with," added Albelda, suggesting that their had been dressing room mutterings about playing for more than pride as Valencia strive to pick up their first European trophy since the 1980 Cup Winners' Cup.

Nevertheless, meetings between Villarreal and Valencia are rarely timid affairs and Thursday's hosts can be sure to meet their more illustrious visitors punch-for-punch.



THAT LOOKS BAD: Real Madrid's David Beckham in obvious pain as a physiotherapist checks his left knee during a training session at Sport city in Las Rozas near Madrid on April 20.

Former Barcelona favourite Ronaldo indulged in some light training but fellow Brazilian Roberto Carlos, suffering from a bruised toe, missed out Tuesday as did club captain Raul, also carrying a knock.

Real's Valencia-born defender Raul Bravo told reporters he was convinced Real would settle down to win the title and rescue their season.

"There are five games left, we are level on points and it's up to us. If

we win all five we won't have to look at the rest of our rivals," he explained, confidently predicting Valencia would slip up before the finish line.

Valencia, who won their first league title in 30 years two seasons ago, have a tough trip to fifth-placed Athletic Bilbao on Sunday to negotiate.

Only one Spanish to live

UEFA CUP

AFP, Madrid

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