

# Seventh Wanderley!

Football

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid coach Wanderley Luxemburgo booked himself a place in the annals of the club's history after their 2-1 victory at Osasuna on Sunday.

No coach before Luxemburgo had won his first seven league games in charge of the Spanish giants in the 73 editions of the domestic first division.

Nevertheless, Luxemburgo remained downbeat on Sunday despite his astonishing achievement.

"Everybody is happy for the moment but we are not going to win every game. One day we are going to lose. Football is about being prepared for what you do after a defeat or a draw," said Luxemburgo.

Before the former Brazil national team coach arrived in the Spanish capital on December 30, the record had stood for more than 46 years to the Argentine coach Luis Carniglia.

Carniglia rattled off six wins at the start of the 1958-59 season, the start of a campaign that lead to Real's fourth European Cup.

However, Carniglia was dispensed with at the end of that season after he failed to lift the Spanish title and Luxemburgo showed himself to be an astute student of history on Sunday.

"In some respects, this record is actually unimportant," said Luxemburgo.

"The important thing is that we are in second place and keeping close to league leaders Barcelona. But if we don't win the league then this record will not mean a thing."

Luxemburgo knows that he has to win a title this year - and Real are also still in the Champions League - or else Real president Florentino Perez is likely to go shopping for another man to guide the Spanish giants.

"It's a big club with a lot of pressure. But if you start worrying about the pressure, then you will not stop," said Luxemburgo.

Luxemburgo relaxes by shopping for suits and ties and admits to having at least 100 of the former and around 500 of the latter.

"It's not a vanity thing, it just something I like. A public person should look good, give off a good image," he said.

Luxemburgo's public persona is widely thought to be one of the reasons Perez enlisted him during the winter transfer window, and sacked Mariano Garcia Remon.

Another of his predecessors, Vicente Del Bosque, was also infamously jettisoned at the end of his contract in the summer 2003 because Perez was looking for, "a more modern image."

Del Bosque was shown the door of the Santiago Bernabeu despite lifting a trophy in each of his four seasons in charge, including two Champions League titles and two Spanish league titles.

# Paris of love

Football

AP, Paris

Paris hasn't always been a happy place for Brazilian soccer star Ronaldo. But that could change today (Monday) when he hosts a Valentine's Day party for model Daniella Ciccarelli in a castle just outside the city.

Ronaldo has invited Real Madrid teammates Zinedine Zidane, Raul, David Beckham and up to 250 visitors to the bash at Chantilly castle.

A fleet of cars will transport the guests, where they will be given Cuban cigars sporting an extra band with a red heart and the letters "R" and "D" embossed.

A complete guest list was not immediately known -- although Formula One champion Michael Schumacher is expected to attend.

Ronaldo is expected to marry Ciccarelli later this year. Under Spanish law, the 28-year-old Ronaldo cannot remarry for at least one year after a divorce. Ronaldo has split with his first wife, Milene Domingues.

France's horse racing capital, Chantilly features a track and stables of expensive steeds, including those owned by Agha Khan, head of the world's Ismaeli Muslims.

The fairytale-like chateau is surrounded by water and magnificent 17th-century gardens designed by Andre Le Notre, who laid out Versailles.

The original chateau was razed in the French Revolution and rebuilt in the 18th century by the Prince of Conde.

"Ronaldo and Daniella wanted to do something special on Valentine's Day," Ronaldo's press attache



PHOTO: AFP



PHOTO: AFP

Real Madrid striker Michael Owen (R) is over the moon after scoring while a dejected Osasuna's goalkeeper Ricardo Sanz rests on the ground at the Sadar stadium in Pamplona on February 13.

## PRIMERA LIGA

# Squeaky Real win

Football

AFP, Madrid

Michael Owen came off the bench to inspire Real Madrid to a 2-1 win at Osasuna on Sunday, the Spanish giants' seventh successive win.

The England striker had only been on the pitch barely three minutes before he bagged his eighth goal of the season on 76 minutes, to level the scores after Osasuna's Pierre Webbo had scored for the hosts late in the first half.

Ivan Helguera pounced on a loose ball three minutes later for the Real winner, after Osasuna goalkeeper Ricardo Sanzol had failed to hang onto one of David Beckham's trademark thunderbolt free kicks.

"Playing at Osasuna is always difficult. They had their chances but I think the difference between the two sides came down to the goalkeepers. Our Iker Casillas is world class," said Real Madrid coach Wanderley Luxemburgo.

The win means that Luxemburgo goes into the record books as the first Real coach to get seven victories in his first seven games at

Madrid.

Real have 50 points from their 23 games, but are still four points behind Spanish league leaders and arch rivals Barcelona, who thrashed Real Zaragoza 4-1 on Saturday.

"But if we are eventually going to be champions then these are the sort of games we have to win. Here, we showed we've at least got the spirit of champions," added Luxemburgo.

Sevilla moved up to third after beating Villarreal 2-1, the visitors' first defeat in nine games, but are a long way adrift of the leading pair, nine points behind Real Madrid.

Brazilian striker Julio Baptista didn't find his midweek trip to Hong Kong on national team duty too tiring as he got both of Sevilla's goals.

"It was a good night's work against a team that had won its last five games," said Sevilla coach Joaquin Caparros.

Baptista put the Andalusian side ahead after 35 minutes, his shot squeezing between the post and Villarreal goalkeeper Jose Manuel Reina.

He got Sevilla's second from the penalty spot 10 minutes from time but the hosts had to survive a nervous final eight minutes after Aitor Ocio was sent off.

Villarreal's Juan Roman Riquelme got one back shortly after Ocio's dismissal but the visitors could not find the net a second time.

Reigning champions Valencia drop to fourth following their 2-1 home loss to Deportivo La Coruna on Saturday, while Real Betis move up a place to fifth after a wild 4-4 draw at Athletic Bilbao late on Sunday.

Betis took a 3-0 lead in 24 minutes at the Basques before Athletic staged a stunning fightback to lead 4-3 with nine minutes to go.

However, Brazilian striker Ricard Oliveira stopped the slide and got his hat-trick on 81 minutes as Betis managed to salvage a late point.

Espanyol bounced back from their 4-0 mauling at Real Madrid last week, with injury time goals from Toni Soldevilla and Raul Tamudo giving them a 2-0 win over Getafe which saw them go sixth.

At the other end of the table, bottom club Numancia have now gone 10 games without a win after they went down 1-0 to fellow strugglers Malaga.

The only goal came on the stroke of half time from Malaga's Juan

Rodriguez.

Numancia were reduced to 10 men, after just 32 minutes when Luis Tavenet was sent off after elbowing Rodriguez in the face.

"This was just ridiculous. There will be wholesale changes for the next match. I might even put out the reserve team instead," fumed Numancia coach Maximo Hernandez, whose team are seven points adrift at the foot of the table.

Racing Santander slipped into the relegation zone after losing 3-1 at home to Real Sociedad, two of the Basque team's goals coming from their prolific Turkish striker Nihat Kahveci.

TOP SIX												
Spanish League standings after Sunday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):												
Barcelona	23	17	3	3	47	17	54					
Real	23	16	2	5	43	17	50					
Sevilla	23	12	5	6	28	24	41					
Valencia	23	10	8	5	36	23	38					
Betis	23	10	8	5	37	28	38					
Espanyol	23	11	5	7	28	24	38					

## Passive offside could go

AFP, Frankfurt

FIFA president Sepp Blatter admits football's governing body will consider abolishing the confusing passive offside rule in a meeting scheduled for February 26 in Cardiff.

For some time referees, fans and management have been perplexed by the 'active' or 'passive' offside law and Blatter revealed plans to simplify the rule were in the pipeline.

"Abolishing the passive offside rule would benefit attacking football," declared Blatter.

"It would simplify matters if the person receiving the pass was the only player who could be flagged offside."

As it stands the referee and his assistant must decide whether a player is actively involved, for example receiving the ball, or passive where a player could be coming back from an offside position.

For officials it is a difficult rule to adhere to as a linesman may keep his flag down for one player who is passive to play, but if the same player suddenly becomes active to score he should be flagged offside.

Blatter revealed he had talked the rule over with Czech international strikers Jan Koller and Milan Baros to get a player's perspective.

"I spoke to Baros and Koller about it and they think it is a good idea," added Blatter.

"It would be useful for referee's assistants and help fans understand the decisions."

TOP SIX												
English Premiership table after Sunday's match (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):												
Chelsea	27	21	5	1	50	8	68					
Man Utd	27	17	8	2	45	1	65					
Arsenal	26	16	6	4	58	3	60					

# All-star tsunami match today

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

World Player of the Year Ronaldinho and European Footballer of the Year Andriy Shevchenko will lead two teams at the Nou Camp on Tuesday in a benefit match to raise funds for victims of the Asian tsunami.

The 'Football for Hope' match will feature more than 50 of the world's best known players including Real Madrid's Zinedine Zidane and David Beckham.

Brazil coach Carlos Alberto Parreira and Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard will manage Brazilian Ronaldinho's 'World' side and Italy coach Marcello Lippi and Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger will manage the 'European' team.

Italian Paolo Maldini, German Michael Ballack and France's Thierry Henry will join Frenchman Zidane, England's Beckham and Ukraine's Shevchenko in the European side.

Ronaldinho's World team will include Didier Drogba of the Ivory Coast, Brazilian Kaka, Argentina's Javier Zanetti and South Korea's Park Ji-sung.

Italian referee Pierluigi Collina will take control of the match and be assisted by Mohamed Saeed from the Maldives and Jason Joseph Damoo from the Seychelles.

Barcelona president Joan Laporta offered the services of the 98,000 seat Nou Camp for free.

"I was horrified when I saw the disaster on the television. Horrified because it was a tragedy that killed innocent human lives,"

Laporta told the official website of world body FIFA.

"The scale of it was so huge, in fact, that it called upon each and every one of us to come together to help in any way we can.

"I think football basically unites people against injustice, unfairness, and racism. Football is a union of players of all colours and creeds and brings people together at the same time, so it is very important to send out a positive message. Football should set an example."

The proceeds from the game, which has been jointly organised by FIFA and European counterpart UEFA, with support from the Spanish FA and Barcelona, will be donated to the FIFA/AFC (Asian Football Confederation) Solidarity Fund, which has been set up in response to the tragedy.

The "Football for Hope" match is just one of a number of major sporting events that have been organised across the world to support victims of the disaster.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) raised more than \$11 million (5.8 million pounds) for the survivors with a charity match in January and have another planned for April.

The International Rugby Board (IRB) have a game arranged for March 5 at Twickenham, while the Asian and European Tours of Golf have donated around \$86,700.

In horse racing the Coolmore stud raised \$3.5 million by auctioning the services of their stallions and in the world of tennis top players have auctioned their rackets, and donated their winnings from the Chennai Open.

## SERIE A

# Milan get lucky

Football

AFP, Milan

Serie A title-holders AC Milan stayed in close pursuit of leaders Juventus with a 1-0 win away to Reggina on Sunday.

The only goal of the game was scored in comical fashion by Reggina's Marco Zamboni, who put through his own net six minutes from half time when trying to make a clearance from his own penalty box.

The 27-year-old defender sliced the ball which spun backwards and looped over the head of Reggina keeper Nicola Pavarini.

The visitors dominated the second half and always looked dangerous on the break, but poor finishing prevented them from killing the game off sooner.

Milan's third consecutive league victory enabled them to cut Juventus' advantage at the top of the table to two points.

Juve threw down the gauntlet to their title rivals earlier in the day with a 2-1 home win over Udinese which, for a few hours at least, extended their lead over the reigning champions to five points.

Milan defender Alessandro Nesta admitted his team were gifted the goal but insisted they fully deserved the three points in Calabria.

"The goal was very fortunate, but after that we created lots of chances on the counter-attack and should have won by more," said the Italy international.

In Turin, Zlatan Ibrahimovic opened the scoring for Juve in the first minute with a cool finish before Mauro Camoranesi found the top corner of the net with a rising drive shortly after half-time. Davide Di Michele scored for Udinese in stoppage time.

Juve's victory provided the perfect tonic after two successive defeats that saw their eight-point lead slashed.

Defeat left Udinese in fourth place, behind Inter Milan who beat Roma on Saturday.

Juve coach Fabio Capello was delighted to see his new attacking formation pay off.

"We did something different with three defenders and three strikers and I don't think Udinese were expecting that-it took them by surprise," he said.

Fiorentina improved their chances of avoiding the drop with a 2-1 home win over fellow strugglers Parma, while Brescia also gave themselves hope of retaining their top flight status by defeating Cagliari 2-0.

Sampdoria remain fifth despite losing 1-0 at Livorno where Cristiano Lucarelli grabbed the winner eight minutes from time.

Palermo are sixth after their 1-1 draw at Bologna, while Lecce thumped Chievo 3-0. Siena remain in danger of relegation after being held to a 2-2 draw at home to Messina.

Inter Milan, whose title challenge has been hampered by 15 draws, maintained their unbeaten record after beating Roma 2-0 at the San Siro.

In Saturday's other match, Lazio eased their relegation fears with a 2-1 home win over bottom club Atalanta.

TOP SIX												
Italian league table after Sunday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):												
Juventus	24	16	5	3	40	15	53					
Milan	24	15	6	3	42	16	51					
Inter	24	9	15	0	46	29	42					
Udinese	24	12	4	8	33	23	40					
Sampdoria	24	11	5	8	26	18	38					
Palermo	24	9	9	6	23	17	36					

## BUNDESLIGA

# Buckley bombs Bayern

Football

AFP, Bielefeld

South Africa striker Delron Buckley continued his fantastic season at Arminia Bielefeld scoring a sensational brace to help down league leaders Bayern Munich 3-1 on Sunday.

Buckley, 27, wreaked havoc in the Munich rearguard with his blistering pace and scored two memorable goals to put a huge dent in Bayern's title bid.

A snow-covered surface in Bielefeld made defending difficult and Buckley took advantage in the 61st minute rampaging down the left wing before crashing a first-time shot past Bayern keeper Oliver Kahn.

Brazilian Lucio pulled a goal back for Bayern in the 80th minute to make it 2-1 but Buckley landed the knockout blow two minutes later.

Using his electric pace the attacker shrugged off two defenders before slotting the ball through the legs of Kahn to clinch the win.

The goals and his overall performance earned him the man of the match award in Kicker magazine and took his season's tally to 13 goals in 21 matches.

Only FC Nuremberg's Marek Mintal, the Bundesliga top-scorer with 15 goals, has netted more than Buckley this season.

Indeed it is a real turnaround in fortunes for the South African international, capped 40 times for his country, who has scored more Bundesliga goals this season than he did in 110 games for former club VfL Bochum.

Buckley is the find of the season for promoted Bielefeld and in all likelihood they would be in the bottom three without his goals.

Buckley has scored 13 out of Bielefeld's 23 goals in the German top-flight.