

## DC United hold Real

AFP, Seattle

European power Real Madrid and United States league-leading D.C. United played to a 1-1 draw in an international football friendly here Wednesday.

Antonio Cassano scored in the 22nd minute to give Real Madrid a 1-0 lead but Alecko Eskandarian equalized for D.C. United in the 25th minute.

The teams battled goal-less from there, although two United defenders made saves from near the goal-line to deny the European side in the second half and Emerson put a shot off the post in the final seconds for Real Madrid.

D.C. United, with the best record in Major League Soccer, returns to league play next week.

Real Madrid will continue its pre-season US tour on Saturday against Major League Soccer's Real Salt Lake, named in homage to the Spanish side, before returning to the start of league competition.

## Record ticket sales for United

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United have recorded massive season-ticket sales for the coming campaign, a club spokesman confirmed Thursday.

The Red Devils claim the existing number of tickets sold, including those in executive areas at Old Trafford, has now reached 64,000, ahead of the Sunday evening deadline for sales.

When the normal allocation reserved for away supporters is included, it would take the club to within touching distance of the 67,500 capacity of previous campaigns.

Capacity now stands at 76,000 with the opening of new quadrants.

The sales figure, way in excess of any other Premiership club's ground capacity, has come in the face of continued opposition among more militant groups of United fans to the ownership of Malcolm Glazer.

"This is fantastic news," said a club spokesman.

"We have almost sold as many tickets for every game before the start of the season than we had as an entire capacity last year.

"It is a record figure, not just for us but for English football as a whole and something we are very proud of.

"It shows that United fans are continuing to support the team at Old Trafford in huge numbers."

Supporters who want season tickets but fail to meet Sunday's deadline will be placed on the waiting list created by the club when they confirmed they were launching a special one-year season ticket earlier in the summer.

## U-21 callup for Walcott

AFP, London

Arsenal's untried 17-year-old striker Theo Walcott received his first England Under 21 call-up on Wednesday ahead of next week's opening European Championship qualifier against Moldova at Portman Road.

Walcott, despite never having figured for his club in the Premiership, was the surprise package in Sven-Goran Eriksson's World Cup squad, but returned from Germany without kicking a ball.

He was joined in Peter Taylor's 23-man squad by Scott Carson, the Liverpool keeper who was summoned by Eriksson to stand in for Robert Green after the Norwich player was ruled out of the finals with injury.

Charlton striker Darren Bent, who was on standby for the World Cup, also figures in Taylor's list.

England head coach Steve McClaren said: "I wanted Darren, Scott and Theo to have the chance to play some competitive under-21s football.

"Darren has just come back from injury, Theo has not yet played a Premiership game and Scott faces stiff competition for games at Liverpool. The Moldova match will be very positive for all three of them.

"They are all still very much in my plans. I see the under-21s as a very important stepping stone to the senior team and I will keep a close eye on them this season."

Taylor's team face Moldova on Tuesday.

## Karimi blow for Iran

REUTERS, Tokyo

Iran will be without injured playmaker Ali Karimi for next week's Asian Cup qualifier against Syria, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) said on Thursday.

The Bayern Munich midfielder picked up a thigh strain while training with the German club last week, ruling him out of Iran's Group B clash in Tehran on Aug. 16.

Iran's coach Amir Ghalenoei is also sweating over the fitness of striker Vahid Hashemian, who has yet to fully recover from a back injury suffered during the World Cup.

Iran are drawn with South Korea, Syria and Taiwan in a tricky qualifying group for the 2007 Asian Cup.



Ajax forward Klaas Jan Huntelaar (R) jubilates after scoring the opening goal in their match against FC Copenhagen in Copenhagen on Wednesday.

## Huntelaar fires Ajax

REUTERS, Copenhagen



Striker Klaas-Jan Huntelaar scored both goals as Ajax Amsterdam beat Danish champions FC Copenhagen 2-1 away on Wednesday to

edge towards the lucrative Champions League group stage.

Huntelaar opened the scoring in the third qualifying round first leg match after 38 minutes by diverting Thomas Vermaelen's header past Copenhagen's goalkeeper Jesper Christiansen.

The home side put up a tough fight well into the second half but failed to convert several chances

early in the match and tired as the game wore on.

FC Copenhagen's Norwegian defender Brede Hangeland equalised in the second minute of added time at the end of the first half when he headed home a free kick from Tobias Linderoth.

The goal raised Danish hopes of having a manageable task in the return match in the Netherlands in two weeks' time, but Huntelaar struck again six minutes from the end by driving the ball past Christiansen from close range.

That goal all but dashed FC Copenhagen's chances of becoming the third Danish team ever to qualify for the group stage of the Champions League since the Danes will have to score at least twice in Amsterdam on Aug. 23 to go

through.

"It's going to be difficult but I believe we can do it in Amsterdam in 14-days' time," FC Copenhagen's Norwegian coach Stale Solbakken told a news conference.

Ajax coach Henk ten Cate was confident his club, which won the 1995 Champions League, would qualify for the next stage.

"They (Copenhagen) made a great effort today, but in the end we beat them 2-1 and that's what counts," he said.

Last season Ajax finished fourth, a massive 24 points behind champions PSV Eindhoven, but reached the Champions League third qualifying round after winning a domestic playoff competition.

## Lyon launch Ribery bid



Football

AFP, Lyon

French giants Lyon have made a 22 million euro bid for Marseille's unsettled international midfielder Frank Ribery, the five-time champions disclosed Wednesday.

Ribery has repeatedly expressed his desire to quit Marseille, with Lyon heading the list of clubs interested in acquiring the 23-year-old World Cup star's talents.

And a source at Lyon confirmed to AFP: "We have indeed made Marseille an offer of 22 million euros for the transfer of Ribery."

Marseille, desperate to keep hold of the player touted as the next Zinedine Zidane, denied having received Lyon's offer and reacted angrily to the news.

Club president Pape Diouf, speaking in Switzerland on the eve of his side's UEFA Cup preliminary round tie against Young Boys Berne,

said: "This comes the day before an important game for us, and is part of what we consider a concerted destabilising manoeuvre by Lyon and their president.

"They can go about this as they want but for us it doesn't change our position nor our determination one bit.

"This simply shows that they've got their backs to the wall."

Lyon president Jean-Michel Aulas has been a long time admirer of Ribery and earlier this year welcomed reports that the impish winger nicknamed 'Scarface' was agitating for a move to the Stade Gerland.

"We're always on the lookout for good players," Aulas said. "Ribery and his agent want to leave Marseille and come to Lyon. We should confirm it soon."

He reiterated that Ribery was their number one target as recently as ten days ago after Lyon's win over Paris Saint Germain in the Champions Trophy.

A stumbling block to any move involving Ribery has been the new

contract that he signed in March that was meant to keep him at Marseille until 2010.

Marseille boss Diouf has insisted that the club intends to hold on to Ribery for at least one more season.

Meanwhile, reports from Rome suggest Juventus' Mauro Camoranesi could also be moving to the Stade Gerland.

Sergio Fortunato, the Italy international's agent, says his client is keen to quit Juventus, relegated to the second division for their part in the Serie A match-fixing scandal.

"Mauro is almost 30, he's always fought throughout his life and it's not right that he should have to pay for the sins that he didn't commit by playing in the second division," Fortunato told the ANSA news agency.

According to Fortunato talks have already taken place with Lyon prepared to bid five million euros for the midfielder.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

## Qualifying Results

AFP, Paris

Collated results from UEFA Champions League final qualifying round first leg fixtures played Wednesday:

**At Moscow**

CSKA Moscow (RUS) 3 (Olic 58, 65, Vagner Love 83) Ruzomberok (SVK) 0

**At Lille, France**

Lille (FRA) 3 (Stepanovski 60og, Bastos 70-pen, Fauvergue 72) Rabotnicki (MKD) 0

**At Kiev**

Dynamo Kiev (UKR) 3 (Rincon 1, 67, Yussuf 83) Fenerbahce (TUR) 1 (Marco Aurelio 48)

**At Donetsk, Ukraine**

Shakhtar Donetsk (UKR) 1 (Elano 39-pen) Legia Warsaw (POL) 0

**At Sofia**

Levski Sofia (BUL) 2 (Domovchyski 8, Bardon 85-pen) Chievo (ITA) 0

**At Istanbul**

Galatasaray (TUR) 5 (Ilic 7, Arda 43, 60, Hakan 49, Sabri 90) Mlada Boleslav (CZE) 2 (Brezinsky 82, Kulic 83)

**At Liberec, Czech Republic**

Slovan Liberec (CZE) 0 Spartak Moscow (RUS) 0

**At Hamburg, Germany**

SV Hamburg (GER) 0 Osasuna (ESP) 0

**At Copenhagen**

Copenhagen (DEN) 1 (Hangeland 45) Ajax (NED) 2 (Huntelaar 37, 83)

**At Liege, Belgium**

Standard Liege (BEL) 2 (Rapaic 17, 51) Steaua Bucharest (ROM) 2 (Paraschiv 8, Marin 78)

**At Milan**

AC Milan (ITA) 1 (Inzaghi 22) Red Star Belgrade (SCG) 0

**At Salzburg, Austria**

Salzburg (AUT) 1 (Pitak 73) Valencia (ESP) 0

**At Liverpool, England**

Liverpool (ENG) 2 (Bellamy 33, Gonzalez 88) Maccabi Haifa (ISR) 1 (Boccoli 29)

**At Edinburgh**

Hearts (SCO) 1 (Mikolunas 62) AEK Athens (GRE) 2 (Kapetanios 89, Berra 90+3-og)

**Played Tuesday**

**At Vienna**

Austria Vienna (AUT) 1 (Blanchard 36) Benfica (POR) 1 (Nuno Gomez 16)

**At Zagreb**

Dinamo Zagreb (CRO) 0 Arsenal (ENG) 3 (Fabregas 63, 79, van Persie 65)

## Barca claim pulsating draw

AP, Houston

Forward Samuel Eto'o scored in the 90th minute as FC Barcelona came from three goals down in the final five minutes to tie Club America of Mexico City 4-4.

The international friendly at Reliant Stadium drew a sold-out crowd of 70,550, a record for a soccer match in Texas.

Forward Nelson Cuevas scored three first-half goals to help lead Club America to a 4-1 lead early in the second half.

Ronaldinho, FIFA's World Player of the Year for the second straight season, sat out the first half as team officials rested him for the second straight match.

But he played the entire second half and pulled Barcelona to within 4-3 on a penalty kick in the 89th minute after being knocked down by Club America's Jose Antonio Castro.

Forward Javier Saviola started the comeback when he took a pass from Eto'o in the 85th minute to score from 15 yards out to make it 4-2.

Club America grabbed a quick lead when Cuevas took an assist from Claudio Lopez and scored from 12 yards out in the third minute of the game.

Barcelona answered almost immediately as defender Rafa Marquez scored on a rebound in the fifth minute to tie it at one.

Cuevas scored his second goal in the 30th minute and got his third in the 44th minute for a 3-1 lead just before halftime.

Barcelona's Oleguer scored an own goal in the 65th minute to give Club America its 4-1 lead.

It was the second of a three-match tour of the United States by Barcelona, winner of the Spanish League and European Champions League titles. The Catalan club tied Chivas 1-1 in the first match in Los Angeles on Sunday.

The match was part of doubleheader at Reliant. The Los Angeles Galaxy beat the Houston Dynamo 1-0 in an MLS match earlier.

The former Texas attendance record was 69,582 for the United States-Mexico friendly at Reliant May 3, 2003.

## Profligacy costs Hamburg

AFP, Hamburg



It is advantage Osasuna after the Spanish side secured a 0-0 draw with German outfit SV Hamburg in the first leg of the

Champions League qualifier here on Wednesday.

Both sides spurned good chances to win the match but erratic finishing and some last-ditch defending ensured a stalemate at the AOL-Arena.

Hamburg, third in the German top-flight last season, must now score in the return leg in Spain on August 22 to progress leaving Osasuna with a slight advantage.

"We were the better team for most of the match but just needed the goal," lamented Hamburg coach Thomas Doll.

"However we are good away from home too so all is not lost and we have to go there believing we can win the match and qualify."

Belgian international defender Vincent Kompany, an eight million euro summer signing from Anderlecht, hit the crossbar in the third minute after the ball came off his shoulder.

Peruvian international striker Paolo Guerrero then went close again for Hamburg in an encouraging opening quarter hour.

"We had so many chances it was incredible we did not score," said Kompany.

"We had no luck tonight but hopefully we will do in Spain and if we can keep it tight at the back again we can go through."

Osasuna, fourth in the Spanish top-flight last season, had their first opening in the 23rd minute when Roberto Soldado blasted a shot at Sascha Kirschstein's legs.

The Spanish visitors then had the ball in the net through veteran striker Savo Milosevic four minutes from the interval but the effort was ruled out for offside.

Two minutes into the second half Ivory Coast attacker Boubacar Sanogo missed a glorious chance to put Hamburg ahead from just five yards.

Serbia international Milosevic, who has over 100 caps for his country, then missed a sitter for Osasuna on the hour fluffing his left-footed shot metres from the goal line.

The misses contributed to a scoreless draw which Osasuna will certainly be happier with.

The Spaniards are bidding to qualify for the Champions League for the first time in their history while Hamburg aim to reach Europe's flagship competition for the first team since 2001.

## Mourinho calls off Cole deal

AFP, London



Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho has told Premiership rivals Arsenal that he is not

willing to break the bank to sign England full-back Ashley Cole.

Chelsea are understood to have offered 16 million pounds (30m dollars) for the player but Arsenal are holding out for 25 million pounds (47.5m dollars).

The Blues may be bankrolled by billionaire owner Roman Abramovich but they will not increase their offer, warned Mourinho.

"I'm not the financial man. That's in the hands of Peter Kenyon and Roman and the board but they told me 100 percent no chance," said Mourinho.

"Ashley Cole is Arsenal's player and they have the power in their hands to say yes or no.

"We have the power in our hands to say how far our offer

goes. The offer went to the limit.

"The club does not move one single pound more and I completely agree with that.

"Our offer is an excellent offer for an excellent player. It's in their hands. They say no and no is no."

Mourinho claims he will now turn his attention to possible alternatives but Arsenal know there is a shortage of left-backs in Cole's class.

The Chelsea boss said: "We have been looking all the time at other players.

"When you try to sign a player, you can't think this is the only player in the world you can get.

"You have to look at some alternatives. Of course he was an important choice for us but I believe he was also an important choice for them and they probably want to keep him."

Arsenal would like to sign Chelsea's William Gallas but Mourinho revealed the unsettled France defender was not part of the Chelsea offer.

Mourinho said: "It's a pure-

and-simple financial offer. It's a figure Chelsea have offered and Arsenal have said no."

Gallas angered Mourinho by failing to report for pre-season training on time after the World Cup, instead preferring to extend his holiday in Guadeloupe.

He did not start training until Monday and has not played in any of the club's pre-season games.

The France international has less than a year remaining on his contract and has said in the past he wants to leave Stamford Bridge for a new challenge.

Mourinho does not want to lose him but admits he will not play any part in the FA Community Shield against Liverpool on Sunday.

Asked if Gallas will feature in Cardiff, Mourinho said: "No, he won't be involved. I make the decisions and it is a decision based on everything. He still has heavy legs from the beach in Guadeloupe."



PHOTO: AFP

Barcelona's Samuel Eto'o (R) is hugged by teammate Deco after scoring a goal during the second half of their friendly against Club America in Houston, Texas on Wednesday.

### CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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