

## Amauri in ultra support

INTERNET, undated

Palermo striker Amauri showed support for the Sicilian club's hardcore ultra supporters during the weekend match with Internazionale.

The Brazilian wore a t-shirt dedicated to the violent section of fans situated in the Curva Nord stand at the Stadio Renzo Barbera.

"I acknowledged the fans," an unrepentant Amauri said of the incident. "I have asked for their support."

Palermo lost the top of the table showdown 2-1 to drop six points off the pace in Serie A, though they are still sitting pretty in third position.

When questioned, club captain Eugenio Corini denied that he knew of Amauri's actions.

"I did not notice the words written," he insisted. "They have only come to prominence afterward."

"I would like to hear his explanation before giving my own opinion."

## Amelia claims Reds interest

INTERNET, undated

Livorno goalkeeper Marco Amelia has claimed Premiership club Liverpool are interested in securing his signature.

The sought-after shot stopper suggested earlier in the week that an English club -- along with a host of other top European clubs -- was interested in signing him.

Amelia is out of contract at the end of the season and it is thought the 24-year-old wants an exit, with the Premiership, and Liverpool, now seemingly an option.

"There are several English clubs interested in me, especially Liverpool," Amelia said.

"I have agreed with [club owner Aldo] Spinelli to renew my contract but we have postponed the meeting until the new year."

Milan and Chelsea -- who both have their first choice keepers out with long-term injuries -- are also thought to be in the hunt for the highly-rated number one.

## Bayern threaten G-14 quit

REUTERS, Berlin

Bayern Munich are considering pulling out of the G-14, doubting whether the lobbying group of top European clubs is achieving anything for its members or for the game as a whole.

Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, the Bayern chairman, was sharply critical of the Group, saying clubs from Spain, Italy and England were looking out only for themselves in a sport he was ruled by "selfishness".

Speaking in an interview with Kicker published on Monday, he also said the growing disparity in income meant German clubs would soon be unable to compete with clubs in richer leagues.

"We will consider whether it makes any sense to stay on in the G-14," Rummenigge said. "We don't feel like paying an annual subscription for just sitting around and talking about things when nothing comes out of it."

"I doubt whether the G-14 is meaningful any longer. I find that too little is happening. There is no communication with FIFA or UEFA."

Bayern are among the founder members of the G-14, which met for the first time at a Madrid casino in 2000 with a view to promoting the interests of Europe's top clubs, particularly over issues such as TV money from the Champions League and compensation for players injured on international duty.

Other notable members of the original 14 were Real Madrid, Barcelona, AC Milan, Inter Milan, Juventus, Manchester United and Liverpool. Four clubs were added in 2002, taking the membership number to 18.

"The clubs in the G-14 only have themselves in mind," Rummenigge said in response to a question about Real Madrid and their president Ramon Calderon.

"I'll say it in no uncertain terms: Calderon and his colleagues are single combatants, as are the Italians and the English. In football it is pure selfishness that rules. There is little common ground among the clubs."

German teams were successful in Europe in the 1990s and early 2000s but Rummenigge said Bundesliga clubs would no longer be a match for Spanish clubs raking in TV rights money or English clubs with wealthy foreign investors.

"I dare say that in the next 10 years you won't see a German club in the final of a European competition," he said.

"What Werder Bremen have achieved against Barcelona and Chelsea in the Champions League is a miracle. If they make it past Barcelona it will be the eighth wonder of the world."

"Bremen received 23 million euros from TV, while Barcelona got 143 million euros. I hope the European Union puts a stop to these excesses of (Chelsea owner Roman) Abramovich and foreign television."

Rummenigge said he hoped for a salary cap and a central system of marketing to combat the growing financial inequality.



PHOTO: AFP

Lyon midfielder Florent Malouda (L) shields the ball from Auxerre defender Bakari Sagna during their French Ligue 1 clash at the Gerland stadium in Lyon on Sunday.

## Lyon half-time winners

AFP, Lyon



Lyon picked up the largely honorific title of 'winter champions' with a 1-0 win at home against Auxerre on Sunday as under-fire Paris Saint Germain failed to shake off the crisis surrounding the club with a 1-1 draw at Nantes.

A header from midfielder Florent Malouda after 25 minutes gave Lyon their 13th win from 15 games and a 14-point advantage on the chasing pack of Lille, Lens and Sochaux with four games left before the club now in 13th position in the league.

"Is it his fault if we return from Nantes with a draw because of a penalty not being called? The team fought hard and scored a magnificent goal," said Cayzac.

And he paid tribute to the way the team responded to the turmoil.

"When you endure such a drama it's hard to concentrate on football. There is work to be done to ensure that this never happens again," he added.

Midfielder Mathieu Bodmer finally equalised for Lille after 77 minutes following a pass from Nigerian international striker Peter Odemwingie.

Striker Toifilou Maoulida saved

Marseille's blushes with a second half equaliser which gave the southern French outfit a 1-1 draw at struggling Troyes.

Bordeaux followed their midweek

3-1 Champions League win over Galatasaray with a 1-0 win over Saint Etienne following a goal from Alejandro Alonso after 70 minutes.

At the bottom end of the table hosts Nice were held 2-2 by tailenders

Le Tallec after 23 and 26 minutes got the visitors back on track and

team in silence in memory of the dead fan.

Despite the draw PSG president Alain Cayzac said that coach Guy Lacombe would still be in charge for Thursday's UEFA Cup tie against Czech side Mlada Boleslav despite the club now being in 13th position in the league.

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A double from Anthony Le Tallec put Sochaux in the chase on Saturday with an emphatic 3-1 win at Lorient as Lille, held 1-1 by Monaco, missed the chance to close the gap on Lyon.

Lens are just behind Lille and ahead of Sochaux on goal difference after holding Le Mans 1-1.

Nancy missed the chance to leapfrog the trio into second position after losing 1-0 at Valenciennes after striker Steve Savidan scored in the first minute.

In-form Sochaux are unbeaten in their last seven matches.

But they looked as if their run was about to end as Lorient's Sylvain Marchal opened for the Bretons with a header after just a minute of play.

A quickfire double from Le Tallec after 23 and 26 minutes got the visitors back on track and

a penalty converted by Karim Ziani just before the break ensured they move from seventh position to joint second with Lille.

"We're holding our own at the top of the table and if we can get a UEFA Cup spot it would be magic," said Le Tallec, who is on loan from Liverpool.

"Our success will make us less of the underdog now but we're not going to let the pressure get to us."

Lille, meanwhile, were playing catch-up against Monaco after a brilliant solo effort from Serge Gakpe from 20 metres out after 36 minutes.

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## Buffon puts on brave face

Football

INTERNET, undated

Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon says that winning the World Cup makes up for missing out on the 2006 Golden Ball.

The Bianconero was included in the list of 50 nominees competing for the prestigious award, along with his Azzurri colleagues.

The early reports had suggested he would become the first goalkeeper to be voted as the European Footballer of the Year since Lev Yashin in 1963.

However, he was pipped to the award by Italy teammate Fabio

Cannavaro.

"It's not a big problem," said Buffon to Sky Italia. "If I ever win that trophy it will be because I was supported by my entire team in reaching another great objective."

"I admit I thought I had won, as many newspapers stated that my victory was sure. Then when I heard no more news, I understood that I was not the winner, but my life will not change."

"Having won the World Cup was already a dream come true, now I must leave something to the others as well."

Although he put a brave face on missing out on the Golden Ball, Buffon has refused to reveal whether or not he will remain with Juventus and Milan.

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TOP OF THE WORLD: Sao Paulo forward Leandro stands atop the goalpost with the trophy after winning the Brazilian Football Championship title on Sunday.



## Iran ban lifted

AFP, Dubai

World football's governing body FIFA has temporarily lifted its ban on Iran so it can take part in the Asian Games football competition after frantic behind the scenes manoeuvring.

"The ban has been provisionally lifted. The team can participate in the Asian Games," FIFA president Sepp Blatter said in Dubai.

It followed what Blatter called "alarming phone calls" from Iranian authorities and the country's ambassadors in Europe after Iran, the defending champions, were tossed out of the Asian Games which start this week in Qatar.

"We have agreed with Iran a route that needs to be respected. We have given them until December 5 to do so," he said without going into details.

"In the meantime, together with the Asian Football Confederation, we have agreed to make sure they can participate in the Asian Games."

"If they fully agree to our roadmap to normalisation of the situation, then we will lift the ban altogether."

"If the promises are not applied, then the ban will remain effective and it will affect the Asian Cup draw (on December 19)."

FIFA suspended Iran last week due to government interference in running the game and non-adherence to their statutes.

FIFA's Emergency Committee said Tehran had violated Article 17 of the FIFA Statute, which relates to the independence of national football associations free of any government interference.

In August, following the national team's World Cup failure in Germany, the Iranian football federation's elected president, Mohammed Dadkan, was sacked, following complaints by lawmakers.

Both FIFA and the AFC set a November 15 deadline for Iran to reinstate Dadkan and to comply with the FIFA statutes, but Iran refused to meet the deadline.

Iran football chief Dariush Mostafavi said they would now work to meeting FIFA's demands.

"We have informed FIFA that we will adhere to all of their requests," he was quoted as saying by Iranian national news agency ISNA.

"We plan to announce our commitment to FIFA and finalise the agreement to bring an end to the suspension of the national team."

The heat has also been on for Gladbach to stay fourth from bottom as the pressure increases on new manager Jupp Heynckes.

"He is a good coach but he is just not having much luck," said Gladbach president Rolf Konig.

"He is the right team to form this team."

The heat has also been on for Leverkusen coach Michael Skibbe but he received some welcome relief with a 3-1 win over Energy Cottbus.

Leverkusen crashed out of the UEFA Cup in midweek with a 1-0 home reverse against Tottenham Hotspur but goals from Sergej Barbarez, Simon Rolfes and Andrei

Borodanov.

Bremen could have hit double

figures against Bielefeld but had to settle for a 3-0 victory with German international forward Miroslav Klose scoring twice and setting up the third for Aaron Hunt.

"Klose would be a better name for him after how he played today. Anyone would be glad to have a Miroslav Klose in their ranks," purred television pundit Franz Beckenbauer, a World Cup winner with West Germany in 1974.

Bremen are now two points behind Schalke and have a great chance of reaching the last 16 of the Champions League after defeating Chelsea 1-0 in midweek.

Title-holders Bayern, aiming for their third championship in a row, are three points behind Schalke after a 2-1 comeback win at Hamburg.