

Red alert for PSG game

AFP, Paris

Paris Saint Germain's high risk UEFA Cup tie against Panathinaikos at the Parc des Princes on Wednesday will be policed by 2,000 officers and part of the stadium will be shut to fans.

Wednesday's fixture is the first to be held at the Parc des Princes since November 23 when racist violence after PSG's defeat to Israeli side Hapoel Tel Aviv left one fan dead.

"The closure (of part of the Boulogne stand) has been confirmed for tomorrow and for Sunday (when PSG play Nice in the French league)," Christophe Caresche, security officer at Paris Town Hall, announced on Tuesday.

"There will be 2,000 security officers," he added.

"It's a big number, but we've already had that amount working at matches like PSG v Marseille for example. The police reckon this will be enough to deal with any eventual problems."

The Boulogne stand is home to PSG's notorious far-right supporters' group, the Boulogne Boys.

Wednesday's fixture has been categorised as high risk by UEFA, European football's governing body, following the tragic events that marred PSG's last home game against Hapoel when a black off-duty police officer shot dead a PSG supporter and seriously injured another as he tried to shield a Hapoel Tel Aviv fan from a mob of around 150 PSG supporters.

UEFA spokesman William Gaillard welcomed the beefing up of security. "Everyone will understand these measures, they're understandable," he told AFP.

McClaren asks for time

AFP, London

England manager Steve McClaren has pleaded for time to mould his squad into a team of world-beaters after a dismal qualifying campaign for the Euro 2008 so far.

In recent qualifiers England were held to a 1-1 draw in Macedonia and beaten by Croatia, meaning their next match in group E - against Israel in March - could be crucial.

Another England setback would place McClaren under further pressure. However the former Middlesbrough manager, who replaced Sven-Goran Eriksson following the World Cup finals, does not believe his suitability for the job should be assessed over a matter of months.

"Rome was not built in a day," he said. "It is where you end up, not where you are after the initial period."

"We are talking about qualifying for the Euros and we are talking about the World Cup, so are you going to start judging after four or five months?"

"It's got to be a long term. You have to develop things and that is what we are going to do."

England currently have seven points after four matches in Euro 2008 group E qualifying. Croatia are top on 10 points with Russia second on eight points.

Real to take legal action

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid have joined Barcelona in taking out legal action against French daily newspaper Le Monde for alleging the clubs had links to the doctor at the centre of a Spanish doping investigation.

In a statement on Tuesday, Real said they had never been linked with Doctor Eufemiano Fuentes nor used his services and any documents the newspaper had of supposed physical preparation plans for the players were false.

Real also said Fuentes had no relationship with the club's medical team, that none of their players had visited him, and no unauthorised substances had been used at the club.

"Taking into account the falsities printed in the newspaper we require them to publish a retraction as soon as possible, putting right these points in the same form as the original article," Real said on their Web site.

"Either way, Real Madrid will put forward the appropriate legal action against the newspaper and the people directly or indirectly responsible for these incorrect facts."

Fuentes, who has collaborated with a number of cycling teams, has been accused of offences against public health in Spain following raids on a number of addresses in Madrid and Zaragoza in May this year.

Heads roll at FIFA

Football

REUTERS, Berne

FIFA has dismissed marketing director Jerome Valcke and three other employees following last week's New York court ruling against world soccer's governing body in a sponsorship case.

In a statement on Tuesday, FIFA acknowledged its World Cup sponsorship negotiations with rival credit card firms Visa and MasterCard had "breached" (FIFA's) business principles", adding that "FIFA cannot possibly accept such conduct among its

own employees".

FIFA said in the context of the contract talks, the four had been accused of "repeated dishonesty during negotiations and of giving false information to the FIFA deciding bodies in question."

The statement added FIFA were "considering lodging an appeal against the court's judgment, while taking account of the interests of every party involved and seeking suitable solutions."

A.U.S. District Judge overturned FIFA's planned eight-year sponsorship deal with Visa last week following a federal lawsuit brought by MasterCard.

As previous sponsors of the

World Cup finals, MasterCard successfully demonstrated they had a right of first refusal on any future arrangements.

In her ruling, judge Loretta Preska said the FIFA negotiators had "lied repeatedly to MasterCard", including when they assured the company that FIFA "would not sign a deal for the post-2006 sponsorship rights with anyone else unless it could not reach agreement with MasterCard."

Visa announced in April it had signed an eight-year deal with FIFA, which sources said was worth up to 200 million pounds (\$392.3 million).

Scudetto in Roma's mind

INTERNET, undated



Roma coach Luciano Spalletti is convinced his team have every reason to remain positive despite Sunday's bitter derby defeat.

The Giallorosso boss watched his side go down 3-0 at the hands of arch rivals Lazio, a result that shattered Roma's six-game winning run.

The defeat leaves Roma seven points adrift of Serie A leaders Internazionale 15 games into the

season.

However, Spalletti is adamant his team will not give up their fight for the Scudetto.

"We made no mistakes against Lazio," said Spalletti. "We controlled the opening half and we were surprised by their first goal."

"Now we must believe in ourselves considering we can still have a say in Serie A this season. It's always in difficult times when a team must show their worth."

"I have more conviction than ever, we must believe in ourselves."

Inter coach Roberto Mancini will be grateful to his former club

Lazio for the favour, as his side have now extended their lead at the top of the standings.

A 3-0 triumph at Empoli marked Inter's eighth successive league victory and meant Mancini has now equalled the club records set by former Nerazzurri tacticians Heleno Herrera and Giovanni Trapattoni.

"Of course we are proud to have reached this achievement," said Mancini. "But in the end it means little if we don't win the Scudetto at the end of the season."

"We are dominating the campaign but we must continue to work hard."

The story of a Cannibal

Football

REUTERS, London

As a small boy Chelsea defender Khalid Boulahrouz had to sneak out of the house to play football because, with nine children to look after, his mother was fed up having to wash his mud-spattered clothes.

"She wanted me to stay at home because we had a big family. She said: 'Don't go! Your clothes will get dirty. You're not the only one!'," the softly spoken Dutchman recounted in an interview with Reuters.

"So sometimes I had to go out without her knowing. I was very, very sneaky."

At five, Boulahrouz was small for his age and playing street soccer against boys twice his size. He was a striker. "I just loved to dribble, dribble and score."

By 13 Ajax Amsterdam had turned him into a defender and at 22 the son of Moroccan immigrants was playing in the orange of the Netherlands.

Last August, he signed for one of the wealthiest and most high-profile clubs, aiming to help Chelsea secure a third Premier League title in a row and a coveted Champions League trophy. Newspapers put his fee from German side Hamburg at 12 million euros.

"Khalid is the kind of person I admire," manager Jose Mourinho said after his transfer. "Life was not easy for him...Now he is at one of the best clubs in the world at the moment. He did that because of hard work, ambition, confidence and quality."

The glamour of Mourinho's London side is a world away from the street soccer of Maassluis near Rotterdam and it has not all been plain sailing for the defender.

He rebelled against the strict training methods employed at the youth teams at Ajax which cramped his style.

"They wanted to take your dribble away, they wanted to take your skills away. You are 13 years old," he said. "Okay teach them but don't take away their enjoyment."

He played for a string of clubs as a boy then at 16, while at AZ Alkmaar, his father died. "I suffered emotional problems," he said, adding that he earned an unjustified reputation for being awkward and belligerent.

"I was protecting myself by

words not by fighting. They (newspapers) want to make me out as an 'enfant terrible' but I'm not like that. I was emotional," he said.

After knuckling down and making his name for the right reasons under Martin Jol, who now manages Tottenham Hotspur, at RKC Waalwijk, Boula transferred to Hamburg.

There, the day he signed in 2004, he earned the nickname Khalid the Cannibal and it has stuck.

"I went to talk with the press and they asked how I played and my German was not good...I wanted to say something like 'I like to control my striker the whole game'. Then there was a little bit of chat and then someone says you want to eat your striker up and I said yes, okay."

The next day the newspapers were full of Khalid der Kannibale.

He lived up to his reputation as a fearsome tackler in Germany and was one of four players sent off during the Netherlands' defeat by Portugal at the World Cup last June, after he floored first Cristiano Ronaldo then Figo.

Boula, whose meticulous manners -- he shakes hands with everyone when he enters the room, even the taxi driver -- suggest a far more temperate character, is worried about the effect his reputation might have on English referees.

"I've not been that bad in England, have I?" he asks.

In fact Boula has been booked three times in 14 appearances for his new club.

He would like to play every game but with captain John Terry and



KHALID BOULAHROUZ

Wenger paints bleak future

REUTERS, London



Arsene Wenger said on Tuesday he feared for the future of English soccer if Premier League clubs continued to sell up to foreign owners.

"At the moment the point is the love of the game," Arsenal's manager told a news conference at the club's training ground.

"Once it becomes investment only, then you have some different ingredients that are not necessarily for the love of the game, or the good of the game."

"It looks as if we have gone from one period to a new one with more people who look at it as an investment -- where they want to be paid back quickly."

Wenger said the days of Englishmen buying clubs for the

love of the game is gone and he is worried about the future.

"What was traditionally true in England is that the people who were the owners were the supporters. The biggest example was at Blackburn where a guy called Jack Walker, who was a passionate supporter of the club, was in charge."

Walker ploughed the wealth he made from the steel industry into Rovers and they won the Premier League title in 1995. The Blackburn-born steel magnate died aged 71 in August 2000.

"What happened, chronologically, was he was a supporter, he became wealthy and he fulfilled his dream by buying the club of his dreams," said Wenger.

"But that looks to be a period of the past. It was really reassuring for the fans because it looked as if the heart of the owner was like their heart."

"It didn't matter whether it was blue and white, or red and white, or yellow and black, but it was the same colour -- the heart was the same colour."

"It looks like that period has gone because the implication of the financial investment is too high. This tradition has gone."

"We are one of the biggest clubs left with this tradition. Liverpool, until now, were another."

The Merseysiders look set to be the next Premier League club taken over by foreign backers, with Dubai International Capital (DIC) in talks about investing what British newspapers have said could be worth up to 450 million pounds (\$882.7 million).

Wenger fears the Premier League could lose its competitive streak if too many teams take up the lead set by champions Chelsea, owned by Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich.

Player's father kidnapped in Brazil

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

The father of Spanish side Espanyol's Brazilian midfielder Jonatas was kidnapped on Tuesday in the north eastern region of Ceara, Globo agency reported.

Lourenco Domingos was in his car when he was abducted by three men in Fortaleza, the capital of Ceara.

Jonatas, who moved to the Barcelona club from Flamengo this year, has been informed of the incident, his club said.

In a statement Espanyol said: "Jonatas Domingo wants everyone to understand that he's not in a position to make any comment and calls for discretion."

Jonatas was due to play for his side in their UEFA Cup game against Austria Vienna in Barcelona on Wednesday, but instead is expected to return home urgently.

This is the 20th kidnapping this year in Ceara.

Nantes make Barthez offer

AFP, Nantes

Fabien Barthez, last seen on a football pitch keeping goal for France in the World Cup final in Berlin in July, has reportedly been offered a contract with French side Nantes.

Barthez, out of contract with Marseille since the end of last season, is wanted by Nantes to replace Serb keeper Vladimir Stojkovic, who is keen to leave.

According to France Inter radio Barthez' lawyers will study the deal which is for an initial six months with an option of a two year extension, on Wednesday.

Nantes manager Georges Eo revealed at the start of the week that he had been in contact with the 1998 World Cup winner.

Real uncertainty for Woody

REUTERS, Madrid



Middlesbrough defender Jonathan Woodgate is unsure whether Real Madrid will want him back when his one-year loan spell in the Premier League

ends.

The centre back returned to his hometown club in August after being plagued by injuries in his two-year spell with the nine-times European champions.

The English side have an option to turn the loan move into a perma-

nent one.

"Honestly, I don't know what will happen. All I want at the moment is to play lots of games here and help Middlesbrough earn a place in Europe," Woodgate told sports daily AS on Tuesday.

"At the end of the season we'll have to wait and see. I am extremely happy here and I don't know if Real want me to return. My future isn't in my hands."

"I have only spoken with Real's physiotherapists, with their doctor and David Beckham. I suppose it is normal no one else calls me."

The 26-year-old only played 14

competitive games with Real after joining from Newcastle United for \$25 million in August 2004.

But he has avoided serious injury with Middlesbrough and established himself as a first team regular making 13 league appearances so far this season.

"I am still a little way off being in perfect condition. But I feel better day by day," he added.

"I have a personalised training plan and every day arrive an hour before everyone else, and leave two hours after everyone. I am working hard to be in top shape as soon as possible."

Woodgate has a contract with Real until 2008.

Hargreaves pleads for move

AFP, London



Wanted away Bayern Munich midfielder Owen Hargreaves has pleaded again to be allowed to leave the German champions for a club in

England.

Stubborn Bayern bosses have so far rejected pleas by the Canadian-born England midfielder, who had hoped for a move to Manchester United earlier in the season after holding talks with Sir Alex Ferguson.

Hargreaves claims says he is not being disrespectful to his current club but wants to play in the country he calls home.

"It's about the opportunity to possibly play in another league I haven't played in before, which is also the country I represent and where my family lives," Hargreaves, who is back in training after sustaining a broken leg not long after Ferguson expressed an interest in him, told The Times.

"If people don't understand that, I don't expect them to. It's not their life. It's mine. But I don't think anyone in the football world is in the same situation as mine."

Bayern's refusal to allow



OWEN HARGREAVES