

Lyon going public

AFP, Paris

Lyon on Friday made a bid to boost its financial future -- and secure the cost of a new stadium -- when it unveiled details of its plans to become the first French football club to float on the stock market.

The operation will value the club, which has won five consecutive national titles, at 305 million euros (394 million dollars).

Club president Jean-Michel Aulas said 30 percent of the club's shares would be up for sale at a price of between 21 and 24.40 euros each when they hit the stock market on February 9.

He hoped the shares sale would bring the club "between 85 to 100 million euros in revenue."

"This will help to give the group fresh, disposable resources and thus prompt new growth," said Aulas.

Lyon is able to float its shares after the French government earlier this year changed a law preventing professional sports clubs from listing on the stock market.

Bolton sign Slovakian pair

AFP, London

Bolton manager Sam Allardyce has confirmed the signing of Slovakia defender Lubomir Michalik on a three-and-half-year contract.

The 23-year-old Michalik's FC Senec team-mate, 19-year-old striker Zoltan Harsanyi, is also moving to the Reebok Stadium on loan until the end of the season with a view to a permanent deal.

The two players are Allardyce's first signings in the January transfer window, which only has five days to run.

Bolton currently sit fifth in the English Premiership table 17 points adrift of Manchester United and five points adrift of fourth placed Arsenal.

UEFA studying Scots, Irish proposal

AFP, Dusseldorf

European football's ruling body has agreed to launch a feasibility study on a proposal to increase the number of teams in the European Championship finals from 16 to 24.

The proposal was made by the football federations of Scotland and Ireland, who argue that having 24 nations in the four-yearly finals will boost the smaller federations in terms of image and revenues.

The proposals to launch a study was agreed unanimously after 44 of the 52 member nations voted in favour.

UEFA's executive committee would pore over the results of the study before then making any decision.

Bremen sign Rosenberg

AFP, Amsterdam

Ajax Amsterdam and Werder Bremen have reached an agreement for the immediate transfer of Swedish striker Markus Rosenberg to the German league leaders, Ajax announced Friday.

Rosenberg, 24, was under contract at Ajax until July 2009. The Swede made his debut for the Amsterdam side in August 2005 and played 63 official games, scoring 20 goals.

As Rosenberg already played for Ajax in the ongoing UEFA Cup tournament he will not be eligible to play for Werder Bremen in the UEFA Cup, Ajax said on its website.

Coppa Italia Roma hit back

AFP, Rome

Roma staged a thrilling comeback from two goals down to draw 2-2 at AC Milan in the Italian Cup semi-final first leg clash.

Watched by Ronaldo, who is expected to move from Real Madrid to Milan on Monday, the home side took the lead after just four minutes at a sparsely-attended San Siro tie.

Ricardo Oliveira was the man on target converting a pass from Massimo Ambrosini.

Kaka set up the second goal when he released Marek Jankulovski whose cross was tapped home in typical fashion by 'Pippo' Inzaghi to make it 2-0.

Roma pulled one back in the 29th minute when Simone Perrotta scored from close range before David Pizarro made it 2-2 six minutes before halftime when his long range shot evaded Dida in the Milan goal.

The second leg takes place next Wednesday in Rome with the winner facing either Inter or Sampdoria in the final.

Holders Inter took a 3-0 lead after their first leg clash on Wednesday.

Rijkaard circumspect

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard refuses to see his team as the title favourites despite history showing that the leaders at the halfway point

have gone on to win the Spanish championship in 10 of the last 12 seasons.

"It's too soon to talk about that. There are four or five other teams who are candidates," said the Dutchman, mindful of the fact that a one point advantage at the top of the table doesn't guarantee success.

Barcelona are the only one of the top four teams playing at home this weekend and could make significant progress towards winning La Liga for the third consecutive year by beating struggling Celta Vigo on Sunday.

Celta have not won in their last eight league games and slipped down the table.

"The team is frustrated. We didn't think we were going to be in this position at the start of the season," admitted Celta defender Borja Oubina.

To add to Celta's difficulties, the Galicians will be without the suspended Pablo Contreras and Iriney while Pablo Garcia, on loan from Real Madrid, is doubtful for a left thigh strain.

Second-placed Sevilla have 38 points and are just ahead of Real

Madrid on goal difference but have yet to win in 2007.

However, last season's UEFA Cup winners will be hoping to end that dismal run at Levante on Sunday.

"We've slipped in the last few weeks but every competition is still open to us," said striker Adriano.

The often-inspirational Adriano believes he will play at Levante, who are just one place above the relegation zone, despite suffering a dislocated shoulder in last week's 0-0 draw at Villarreal.

"I've still got some inflammation but there are several days to do and I should be fit by Sunday," said the Brazilian.

"However, I think we've got a hard game ahead of us. Teams in their position (Levante) are now going to be fighting to get themselves out of trouble."

Last week, Levante welcomed back Irish international defender Ian Harte for his first game after injury and he should get further match practice thanks to the suspension of Alexis Suarez.

Real Madrid, despite all the off-the-pitch turmoil concerning their departing 'galacticos' David Beckham and Ronaldo, have started to show better form by winning their last two games.

Coach Fabio Capello will be looking to continue that trend at Villarreal on Saturday and received the good news on Thursday that both Sergio Ramos and Gonzalo Higuain should be fit for the trip to

last season's Champions League semi-finalists.

The pair both received heavy knocks in the 1-0 win at Real Mallorca on Sunday but were finally training normally on Thursday.

Valencia are the current team in form and have strung together six consecutive wins to move them back into contention in fourth place.

The 2002 and 2004 champions are now just three points adrift of leaders Barcelona and will see whether seven is their lucky number at relegation-threatened Real Betis on Sunday.

The match will see Valencia's Joaquin Sanchez return for the first time to Betis, where he was an icon after playing more than 200 league matches in six seasons at the club where he started his career, since his move last summer. Valencia (2000)

FIXTURES

Saturday

(Kick off in GMT)
Atletico Madrid v Racing Santander (1900)
Villarreal v Real Madrid (2100)

Sunday

Getafe v Osasuna (1600), Gimnastic Tarragona v Espanyol (1600), Levante v Sevilla (1600), Real Mallorca v Recreativo Huelva (1900), Real Sociedad v Athletic Bilbao (1600), Real Zaragoza v Deportivo La Coruna (1600), Barcelona v Celta Vigo (1800), Real Betis v

Things look up for Sheva

Afp, London

Andriy Shevchenko believes his Chelsea future is looking bright after he ended a ten-game goal drought to help Jose Mourinho's side into the League Cup final at the expense of Wycombe in midweek.

The Ukrainian, branded a 30-million-pound flop and blamed for perceived tensions between Mourinho and the club's owner Roman Abramovich, has had a tough time since arriving in London.

But the 30-year-old has been given a boost by his midweek double and he gets the chance to plunder more goals against lower league opposition when Chelsea entertain League One's Nottingham Forest at Stamford Bridge on Sunday.

"After more than a month, it is very important for a striker to score goals again," he said. "It was also important to play well, and the support from the fans was incredible."

"Now it is all much better and I believe in the future."

Mourinho had publicly snubbed Shevchenko after Chelsea's league defeat at Liverpool last weekend, but he has moved to build bridges by lavishing praise for the striker's display following his return to the starting line-up.

"He needed the performance more than the goals," Mourinho said. "He had the effort, the commitment, the aggressiveness and the desire - all the ingredients that we want in our players, plus the quality for scoring goals he has."

Chelsea captain John Terry, who spent a spell at Forest on loan as a teenager, is still not ready to return following back surgery but Mourinho is hopeful the badly-missed centreback will resume full training next week.

Dutch full-back Khalid Boulahrouz, who is recovering from a knee problem, and his compatriot Arjen Robben will also miss out, although Robben's ankle injury is not as bad as first feared.

Despite their problems, Chelsea are still in the hunt to win every competition they have entered this season and Mourinho warned his players that they would have to keep their concentration to avoid giving Forest the chance of a major upset.

"We still fight battles on four fronts, but we can take nothing as done," Mourinho said. "Now we must focus and keep thinking. We must play with belief in our ability. The prizes are getting closer."

Forest have already claimed one Premiership scalp in the competition this season, Junior Agogo and Grant Holt having fired Colin Calderwood's promotion-chasing outfit to a 2-0 win over Charlton in the third round.

Calderwood acknowledges that Chelsea represent a totally different scale of challenge. But the Scot believes his side can give the Premiership champions problems, particularly if their highly-rated winger, Nathan Tyson, is firing on all cylinders.

"We must get back to basics - how we defend, passing, set-plays," Calderwood said.

"It's just two teams. The difference is not so vast, but we have to be excellent defensively. We have to believe in ourselves. We have to believe we can score."

Mancini keen on Premiership

AFP, London

Inter Milan coach Roberto Mancini said Friday he would not rule out a move to the English Premiership.

Mancini, who has led the Italian champions to an 11-point lead in Serie A, is reported to be linked to the manager's job at Chelsea and his future at the San Siro is currently uncertain.

Blues manager Jose Mourinho has recently fallen out with Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich, and reports Thursday said that despite peace talks having taken place, Mourinho is secretly planning his exit from Stamford Bridge for the end of the season.

Mancini has yet to sign a new deal with the Italian giants and has been linked with a move to Stamford Bridge should Jose Mourinho leave.

He told The Sun: "I'd really love to manage a Premiership side one day. Chelsea? It would be fantastic."

"Nothing has been decided about the contract but this is not a formality."

On Thursday it was reported that the contracts of all of Mourinho's assistants are being allowed to run down until their expiration in the summer.

The report said Chelsea have made no attempt to discuss new terms with Mourinho's inner circle, which includes assistant managers Steve Clarke and Baltemar Brito, goalkeeping coach Silvino Lauro, fitness coach Rui Faria and head scout Villas Boas.

The latter three followed Mourinho to Chelsea from FC Porto after he led the Portuguese giants to Champions League glory, and Mourinho has stated he would not work at the club without them.

Bremen look to consolidate

AFP, Berlin



German league leaders Werder Bremen host Hannover on Sunday in their first match after the winter break with coach Thomas Schaaf

hopeful German international Miroslav Klose will make the line-up.

Werder Bremen's 4-2 away victory and then 5-0 win at home in their last matches against Hannover augur well for the northern port club.

And Schaaf is hopeful striker Klose will be back to full fitness.

"We will have to see how his body holds up but I'm hoping for something positive," he told the club's official website. "It would be very important to us if he could play and it's looking really good."

The Weser stadium is already sold-out for Sunday's game at 1600GMT.

And Bremen skipper Frank Baumann, who had been out of action for two months through injury, had a successful run out against Mattersburg two weeks ago and has

been in full training since.

"He (Baumann) was out for a long time and will need a certain period to acclimatise to get back to complete fitness, but he is very close to being back," Schaaf said.

Though Werder outclassed Hannover in their previous two games, Schaaf said the results did not do enough justice to Hannover.

"I'm not thinking about the last home game. We have to deal with the present," Schaaf added.

"Perhaps they will play with a lone striker and a deep midfield behind which would not make it easy for us."

Hanover had an up-and-down time in the first half of the season.

In their first three matches, the Reds, led by Peter Neururer, lost 4-2 to Bremen and had two other defeats leaving them at the bottom of the table which resulted in Neururer's departure.

Hanover then took on former player of the club Dieter Hecking who turned around their fortunes.

However they are only five points above third-from-bottom Borussia Monchengladbach in the first relegation spot.

In other matches of the weekend,

second-placed Schalke 04 who are behind Bremen on goal difference, travel to Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday and fourth-placed VfB Stuttgart visit Nuremberg.

In Friday's big match, Borussia Dortmund must do without captain and central defender Christian Woerns at home to Bayern Munich, who are in third place and three points behind leaders Bremen.

Woerns ripped his right calf muscle in training on Wednesday and will be out of action for three weeks. Dortmund's Sebastian Kehl is also out with a knee injury.

Leverkusen, Werder Bremen v Hanover

FIXTURES

Friday

Borussia Dortmund v Bayern Munich

Saturday

Arminia Bielefeld v SV Hamburg, Energie Cottbus v Borussia Monchengladbach, Eintracht Frankfurt v Schalke 04, Hertha Berlin v Wolfsburg, Nuremberg v VfB Stuttgart, VfL Bochum v Mainz 05

Sunday

Alemannia Aachen v Bayer



PHOTO: AFP

Aston Villa manager Martin O' Neill (C) unveils his latest signings John Carew (L) and Ashley Young at Villa Park on Thursday.

10x3



PHOTO: INTERNET

Roma captain Francesco Totti (L) congratulates midfielder David Pizarro on scoring a goal in their enthralling two-all draw in their Italian Cup match against Milan at the San Siro on Thursday.