



Manchester United striker Wayne Rooney (L) shares a light moment with Portsmouth goalkeeper David James after their FA Cup fourth round tie at Old Trafford in Manchester on Sunday.

Mancini wants 'mean' Inter

INTERNET, undated

Roberto Mancini visits Sampdoria for the second time in four days, but warns it'll be a different game to their Coppa Italia tie.

"In order to win, we must be harder and more vicious than Samp," said the Inter Coach ahead of tonight's Marassi match.

The two teams already met on Wednesday when the Nerazzurri ran out with a comfortable 3-0 victory in the Coppa Italia semifinal.

"We mustn't make the mistake of going to Genoa believing it'll be the same kind of performance from both sides. It will be different and we need to be more clinical than we were midweek. The fact we won then means absolutely nothing."

The astonishing form his side is in at the moment makes it difficult for Mancini to pick a first choice XI.

"There is an abundance of choices and I certainly feel a little embarrassed picking one over another, seeing as the lads did so well in the Coppa, especially with some on a tactical level causing Samp real problems."

The most complicated decision is upfront, where Adriano, Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Hernan Crespo are all pushing for places.

"Hernan is in good shape and, the goal he scored in the Coppa aside, he has been working well this week. However, his legs still can't sustain three matches in a week. Zlatan will definitely play."

Wednesday's encounter may have ended with a crushing 3-0 scoreline, but Fabio Quagliarella caused a lot of problems for the Inter defence and could do again.

"Quagliarella is certainly a dangerous player and his effectiveness intensifies the closer he gets to the goal," said former Sampdoria legend Mancini.

"He played the first half in a wide position due to injuries, but this time there will be players coming back and so he'll have a different tactical approach."

Much has been said of Mancini's interview with 'The Sun' newspaper in which he was quoted as being eager to join Chelsea next season.

"I never said those words, nor did I speak to anyone from that newspaper. Still, it's obviously pleasing to hear my name linked to a prestigious club, as it means I'm doing my job well."

Marseille out to get Onyewu

AFP, Paris

French side Marseille admitted on Saturday that they could battle English champions Chelsea for the signature of highly-rated American defender Oguchi Onyewu.

Marseille president Pape Diouf said that the 24-year-old Standard Liege player has been watched.

"Oguchi Onyewu is one of the players on whom we have kept an eye," said Diouf.

"He is a boy who is capable of playing in all defensive positions. He would be a reinforcement, but he's not the only one."

Onyewu has been linked this week with a move to Chelsea while fellow London side Fulham are also understood to be monitoring his progress.

Rooney spells old magic

REUTERS, London



Wayne Rooney came off the bench to give Manchester United a 2-1 win over Portsmouth while third division Bristol City stormed back to draw 2-2 with Premier League outfit Middlesbrough in the FA Cup fourth round on Saturday.

Rooney, who replaced Ole Gunnar Solskjaer on the hour mark, finished off a neat Ryan Giggs pass in the 77th minute and then chipped a spectacular second in the 83rd.

Portsmouth got an 87th minute consolation goal when a shot by Portuguese midfielder Pedro Mendes, who had earlier sparked controversy with a goalmouth clearance, took a deflection off substitute striker Nwankwo Kanu and hit the net.

Boro's draw, after leading 2-0 at halftime, was a rare surprise in Saturday's action.

Tottenham Hotspur, Blackburn Rovers, Fulham and Reading eased through after top-flight class proved too much for second division opponents, while Watford beat West Ham United 1-0 in the all-Premier League clash at Upton Park.

Spurs beat Southend 3-1, Matt Derbyshire scored two and made

another as Blackburn Rovers trounced Luton Town 4-0, on-loan striker Vincenzo Montella engineered Fulham's 3-0 win over Stoke City and Reading were 3-2 winners at Birmingham City.

The controversy was sparked at Old Trafford in the 12th minute when a header by United's Serbian defender Nemanja Vidic seemed to cross the line before being hooked back out by Mendes.

The irony of the clearance will not have been lost on United fans.

In January 2005, Mendes, then at Spurs, hit a stunning shot from around the halfway line, the ball was spilled by Roy Carroll and crossed a metre over the line -- before being scooped back by the then United keeper.

That league game at Old Trafford finished 0-0, triggering one of the biggest talking points of the season.

This time, United were out of luck and their fortune did not improve when a superb volley by on-loan Swedish striker Henrik Larsson was narrowly ruled out for offside.

United's domination was finally rewarded with Rooney's double, the second strike a fantastic chip by the England striker from outside the area that left keeper David James stranded.

United manager Alex Ferguson told Sky Sports: "I'm just glad to win the game because it would have been a real kick in the teeth if we had lost that -- given the fact that

we had two goals disallowed."

It was a very different affair at Ashton Gate, where Middlesbrough could easily have made a shock exit.

Boro, 2-0 up at the break through Nigerian Yakubu Aiyegbeni and Malcolm Christie, looked to be cruising until Richard Keogh pulled one back in the 53rd minute and midfielder Scott Murray levelled six minutes later.

City manager Gary Johnson told Sky Sports: "We came back from the dead...(but) the boys are a bit disappointed that we haven't nicked it in the end."

"We played okay in the first half without creating winning football, as we say, but we played that winning football in the second half and caused a real problem."

Boro manager Gareth Southgate said: "The players are very disappointed. Bristol punished us, they deserved a draw -- it's their day today. But we live to fight another day...it's a good lesson for us."

Four second division clubs reached Monday's fifth-round draw after wins for Plymouth Argyle, Preston North End, Ipswich Town and Derby County. Norwich City were held 1-1 by third division Blackpool.

Fourth round action continues on Sunday with four ties, including Chelsea against Nottingham Forest and Arsenal at home to Bolton Wanderers.

German league president dies

AFP, Berlin

Werner Hackmann, president of the German football league (DFL), died on Saturday from cancer, DFL spokesman Harald Stenger announced on Sunday. He was 59.

Hackmann took up his post at the DFL in 2000 after a spell on the management board at Bundesliga club Hamburg.

Capello not giving in yet

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid coach Fabio Capello insisted his team adopt a positive outlook after Villarreal derailed the Spanish giants' revival with a 1-0 reverse.

"We are close to the very top of the league table, therefore we must be doing something right," said the Italian coach.

"I've told my players that we must be strong psychologically in order to recover."

Capello, in remarks on the official realmadrid.com website, said the key to the game late Saturday had been Villarreal's "physical superiority."

"We suffered considerably during the second half. They were physically superior. They found it easier to recover the ball."

"I have to cheer my players up in order for them to move on. I think Villarreal proved to be a tough rival that have recovered from drawing against Sevilla last week. They are a very difficult team to defeat at home."

Villarreal, last year's Champions League semi-finalists, had teenage striker Marcos Garcia to thank for a 67th minute goal that sealed Real's fate.

The hosts showed displayed a water-tight defence and always threatened to score on the break.

Real couldn't break down Villarreal and stayed in third place in the Spanish first division although they will slip back a place if Valencia win at Real Betis on Sunday.

Capello said Real needed to adopt a positive outlook to move on.

"We will recover Raul and Guti next week, and we will have to see how Emerson evolves," he said. "Roberto Carlos' injury will take longer to heal. We must look ahead positively."

"We did some good things, although we suffered physically at times."

"We had three excellent chances on goal in the first half, while they only had one. But Villarreal gave us few options of getting through. We tried, but they stopped us many times."

"It's hard to play here. I am rather surprised that they haven't done better this season, although, come to think of it, they have sustained several injuries."

Galliani hails 'historic' Milan

INTERNET, undated

Adriano Galliani believes that with Ronaldo and Massimo Oddo, they can rival the 'Grande Milan' of the 1980s and 90s.

"We have brought back the stellar Milan of years past. Finally we have been able to replace Andriy Shevchenko with Ronaldo and Jaap Stam with Oddo," said the Vice-President.

Oddo is set to make his debut against Parma, but although Ronaldo has not yet penned his contract, he is already treated as a Rossoneri figure.

"He is so charged up, happy, determined and behaving very well," continued Galliani on 'Milan Channel'.

The switch for the former Inter man has caused controversy, but there are details about the deal that will surprise many.

"Ronaldo will earn a little less than he did at Real Madrid and infinitely less than he would had he accepted the offers from Saudi Arabia. That means he is making this move because he wants to work hard and prove himself all over again."

It has been reported that Il Fenomeno will receive 'just' 4 million pounds for the next 18 months compared to the £5m he would've taken in Madrid.

On Monday Galliani will fly out to Spain to complete the negotiations for the 4-million-pound transfer.

"Ronaldo has further cut his wages to ease the talks, so now we are waiting for him on the field. We have made an offer and received a counter-proposal from Real. There is still a difference, but we hope to shave it down."

The Vice-President also denied that the Brazilian is in bad shape or still suffering from the injuries that have blighted his career.

"He was found to be in good physical condition, better than the medical staff were expecting. The tendon has completely healed and he'll need one or two weeks of training to be ready."

Baros off the mark

AFP, Paris



Milan Baros celebrated his recent move to French champions Lyon by scoring a face-saving goal in a 1-1 home draw with Nice on Saturday.

Lyon coach Gerard Houllier brought the Czech striker from Aston Villa, with striker John Carew going in the opposite direction in midweek, in the hope of revitalising the team's stuttering attack.

The five-time French champions, and runaway league leaders, had slipped up badly in their past three league games, slumping to two defeats and a draw to give their league rivals a brief glimpse of a late-season upset.

Nice had Houllier's men worried for a brief moment on Saturday when Bakay Kone opened the scoring in the 34th minute.

However, Baros replied five minutes later, latching on to a well-timed cross from Sidney Govou to beat Hugo Lloris from close range in the Nice goal.

Paris St Germain meanwhile gave their suffering fans a little relief after taking a welcome point

from a scoreless draw at home to Sochaux.

A defeat could have put PSG into the drop zone, but they managed to avoid such ignominy and moved to relative safety -- although that was mainly because fallen former French champions Nantes went down 2-0 at home to Lorient.

Former Rangers manager Paul Le Guen was called in to save PSG from the drop, however the tactician is still looking for the win that could kickstart a late season revival.

Portuguese international Paulta -- who hails from the Azores islands -- spurned several chances to give PSG the lead, and later apologised to his team.

"We all played really well and we should have won, but I just wasn't up to scratch," said the PSG skipper.

"I'm really disappointed. So much so that I'd love to just get on a plane and go home to the Azores."

Marseille, PSG's bitter rivals, are in a much healthier position although Canadian businessman Jack Kachkar's dream of buying the French giants was tempered by a 2-0 away defeat to Le Mans.

Kachkar, who is hoping to buy the southern giants from Robert Louis Dreyfus in a few weeks,

walked on to the park at Le Mans prior to the game in the hope it would be followed by a victory for the southern giants.

However, he watched a league setback which opens up the way for both Lens and Lille to move closer to runaway leaders Lyon.

After Mamadou Niang had hit the post for Marseille in the 22nd minute, the visitors were stunned when James Fanchone pounced on a rebound to open the scoring for the hosts in the 36th minute.

The referee awarded a penalty for Le Mans late in the second half, and Graffite beat Marseille keeper Cedric Carrasco from the spot to seal the points -- and avenge their recent exit from the French Cup at the hands of Marseille.

Marseille coach Albert Emon was so incensed with the penalty decision that he was sent to the stands for remonstrating with the fourth official on the touchline.

The defeat ended Marseille's string of five victories in all competitions and meant they lost second place to Lille, who had a Marouane Chamakh own goal to thank for their 1-0 away defeat of Bordeaux.

Lens, now in fourth, can move up to second place if they beat Saint Etienne at home on Sunday.

'Leave Ronaldinho alone'



AFP, Madrid

Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard leapt to the defence of his under-fire superstar Ronaldinho at a press conference on Saturday.

The 2004 and 2005 World Player of the Year has this season rarely displayed the form that won him the top accolade.

"Ronaldinho is a key player. Ronaldinho is also part of the team and we have to look at that (issue) together," said Rijkaard.

"If the team isn't good, it's not just because of one player. I don't understand what all the noise is about. How many goals has he set up? How many goals has he got? How many games has he decided?"

"Leave us in peace to carry on working. I have confidence in everything he's done and I'm sure he will return to what he was," said the Dutch coach angrily, giving a rare display of emotion.

The Spanish sports daily As suggested on Saturday that the

Catalan club were thinking of selling the Brazilian striker and, although it didn't name its source, repeated the long-standing rumours that Chelsea and AC Milan were interested in him.

Concern and controversy over Ronaldinho's mediocre form has been raging all season and the fire was fuelled by comments by his brother Roberto Assis, who also acts as his agent.

"There are no problems between Ronaldinho and Barcelona and everything is going well, but that doesn't mean that we will not take in consideration other offers. For example, we know there is interest from a team in the United States," Robert Assis told a Brazilian newspaper on Tuesday.

Barcelona moved quickly to try to staunch the talk of his immediate departure escalating.

"Ronaldinho has a contract here until 2010. We are happy with this and he is happy with this. We are not talking about any extension yet and we will not be for several seasons," said Barcelona vice-president Ferran Soriano on

Thursday.

Rijkaard conceded on Saturday that it was not just Ronaldinho who needs to rediscover the form that made Barca the Spanish champions for the last two years and the reigning kings of Europe.

"We have to show that we deserve the applause of the public," added Rijkaard, reflecting on the fact that they were whistled off the pitch despite beating bottom club Gimnastic Tarragona 3-0 last week.

"We have to leave a good image (of ourselves) so that the fans can have pride in us," added Rijkaard, despite the fact that Barcelona started the weekend leading La Liga and have qualified for the last 16 of the Champions League.

Despite the erratic displays, Barcelona have a good chance of maintaining, or even extending, their one point lead at the top of the Spanish first division this weekend.

They are the only one of the top four teams at home and play host to struggling Celta Vigo, who have not won in their last eight league games.



Argentine legend Diego Maradona (L) and Mauricio 'Chicho' Serna of Colombia wave to fans during a game to mark Serna's farewell in Medellin, Colombia on Saturday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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" H G W X H S W V Q J G S A G H . "
Yesterday's Cryptquip: IF A FORMER BEATLE CONTACTS PEOPLE ON THE PHONE, I BELIEVE HE'S GIVING THEM A RINGO.
Today's Cryptquip Clue: Q equals S