

# Crisis giants clash

AFP, Paris



Seven previous winners kick off the first Champions League action in 2007 on Tuesday where off-pitch hassle, goal droughts, stadium problems and injury crises have given spice to the build-up.

David Beckham is back in favour at Real Madrid, Manchester United boss Alex Ferguson is up-in-arms over TV schedules, neither Bayern Munich nor Real Madrid have been scoring much but AC Milan at least know the San Siro stadium has passed security regulations.

Lille, who host Manchester United in Lens, are the only non-former European champions in action on Tuesday.

Ferguson has voiced his displeasure that television companies are making it difficult for him against Lille who had an extra day's rest to prepare for this last 16, first round leg.

United's 1-1 FA Cup fifth-round draw against Reading at Old Trafford was the Saturday late match because of the TV schedules though Lille's match against French leaders Lyon was brought forward to Friday night.

Ferguson believed that extra 24 hours or so of rest could play a crucial role in the performance of

both teams at Lens's Felix Bollaert stadium where Lille have moved to for their European games.

"People want us to do well in Europe, but we are not given a proper chance. If you look at Lille, they played Lyon on Friday night, but we have to play on a Saturday night," said the Scot.

However, it could not be a better time to face Lille who are in the midst of an alarming slump in their domestic league.

The French side have won only once in their last nine league games and have been knocked back by late goals in several recent games.

Their set-piece defending has also been poor with three of their last four goals conceded coming from set-plays.

United will welcome back English forward Wayne Rooney, who was suspended against Reading, and will almost certainly recall Gary Neville, Ryan Giggs and Rio Ferdinand - who all sat out the Reading match - and restore Paul Scholes, Patrice Evra and maybe Henrik Larsson to the

## FIXTURES

Tuesday  
Celtic (SCO) v AC Milan (ITA)  
PSV Eindhoven (NED) v Arsenal (ENG)  
Lille (FRA) v Manchester United (ENG)  
Real Madrid (ESP) v Bayern Munich (GER)

## Drunken row shames L'pool

INTERNET, undated

Craig Bellamy will cop an 80,000 pound fine for the drunken row which has shamed Liverpool.

Furious boss Rafa Benitez is going to war after Bellamy lashed out at teammate John Arne Riise with a golf club.

Benitez read the riot act to his players yesterday as a storm raged over Friday's boozy night out in Portugal.

Riise and keeper Jerzy Dudek are set to be disciplined along with Bellamy.

Striker Bellamy and Riise first clashed as the Kop stars let their hair down at Monty's karaoke bar in Vale Do Lobo. Norwegian defender Riise then returned to his hotel room, where it is alleged Bellamy burst in on him while he was in bed.

The Wales striker's Anfield future is now in the melting pot, though both men put on a show of affection at Liverpool's Melwood training ground yesterday as they prepared for Wednesday's Champions League clash in Barcelona.

Disgraced Bellamy will travel to Spain with the squad and is still likely to feature in the Nou Camp show-down.

His behaviour will earn him a fine of two weeks' wages.

Riise will be fined as well, while Dudek is also in the dock having clashed with a Portuguese policeman on the night from hell.

Benitez said last night: "I met with the entire first-team squad this morning.

"I made it clear to all of them the responsibilities that come with

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## Valencia snare Barca scalp

AFP, Madrid

**LFP**  
Spanish internationals Miguel Angel Angulo and David Silva scored twice in three minutes to give Valencia a 2-1 win over Spanish league leaders and

reigning European champions Barcelona on Sunday.

Sevilla then beat Atletico Madrid 3-1 to draw level on points with Barca at the top of La Liga, with both sides having 46 points from 23 games, although the Andalucian side remain second on goal difference.

Angulo was left unmarked to sidefoot the ball into the net after 52 minutes following a bewitching run down the left wing by David Villa.

Silva then hammered a loose ball home from 10 metres out.

Ronaldinho got Barcelona's consolation goal two minutes into injury time, the two-time World Player of the Year getting his 16th goal of the season from a free kick just outside the box.

"In the first half we could have scored but we were playing a game against a team that gave you little space and were operating at a higher level," said Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard.

"A lot of possession doesn't always lead to scoring goals but our problem wasn't one of failing to react (to the goals)."

The win was Valencia's eighth in 10 games and took the 2002 and 2004 champions up to third, four points behind the leading pair.

Barcelona again badly missed the pinpoint accuracy of Samuel Eto'o, who asked not to be included in the Catalan club's squad on Saturday.

Both sides were reduced to 10 men just after the hour when Barcelona's Deco and Valencia captain David Alba were both sent off for dangerous play.

Fredi Kanoute opened the scoring for Sevilla after just 14 minutes when he ran onto a long cross from Daniel Alves before half-volleying it home from the edge of the box.

Alves then got on the scoresheet himself seven minutes later with a sweetly struck right foot shot from 20 metres.

However, Sevilla though had to adjust their tactics after 36 minutes when Jose Luis Marti was sent off for a foul on Kun Aguero.

Atletico got back into the game in the second half before Kanoute, the Spanish first division's leading scorer, headed home his 18th goal of the season after 73 minutes against the run of play.

The two clubs below them both lost and look doomed.

Real Sociedad, who last experienced the Spanish second division 40 years ago, went down 1-0 at Recreativo Huelva.

Recreativo's Beta headed the only goal of the game after 50 minutes, the Portuguese international defender connecting with a corner from Emilio Viqueira.

Bottom club Gimnastic Tarragona took the lead at Racing Santander thanks to a strike from Tobias Grahn after 58 minutes but eventually crashed to a 4-1 defeat.

Racing struck back quickly and were back on level terms within two minutes when a 20-metre effort by

Madrid's Santiago Bernabeu stadium turned sour on Saturday when the former England captain was sent off in the dying seconds of the 0-0 draw with Real Betis after hacking at the legs of Betis' Jose Isidro.

The draw means that Madrid slip a place to fourth on goal difference.

At the other end of the table, Celta Vigo notched up their first league win in 12 games with a 1-0 victory at Osasuna on Sunday.

Fernando Baiano headed the only goal of the game came after just two minutes.

However, Celta spent the majority of the game with just 10 men after Uruguayan midfielder Nestor Canobbio got his second yellow card four minutes before half-time.

Despite the long-awaited win, it was not enough to help Celta out of the relegation zone and they remain third from bottom.

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## TOP SIX

Team	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Barcelona	23	13	7	3	46	20	46
Sevilla	23	14	4	5	44	22	46
Valencia	23	13	3	7	34	22	42
Real	23	13	3	7	30	19	42
Atletico	23	11	6	6	29	20	39
Zaragoza	23	11	5	7	35	24	38

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Valencia winger Miguel Angel Angulo (R) puts the ball beyond the despairing reach of Barcelona goalkeeper Victor Valdes to put his side ahead during their Primera Liga clash at the Mestalla on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

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Real Madrid midfielder David Beckham (R) juggles the ball as left-back Roberto Carlos stretches during a training session on Monday on the eve of their Champions League clash against old rivals Bayern Munich in Madrid on Tuesday.

## Zidane in charity appearance

AFP, Bangkok

## Ruud laments goal drought

AFP, Madrid

**LFP**  
French football legend Zinedine Zidane, whose career ended with an infamous head-butt in last year's World Cup final, will play a charity match this weekend in Thailand, organisers said Monday.

Zidane will play alongside south-east Asian stars in the northern Thai city of Chiang Mai on Saturday, corporate sponsor Adidas Thailand said.

They have only scored 30 goals so far this season, one of their worst records in recent history, and the problems continued with a 0-0 draw against Real Betis on Saturday.

Other statistics are equally damning.

Real have only scored one goal in front of their own fans in their last four games.

The goals have dried up for a club that can look back and count free-scoring forward legends like Alfredo Di Stefano, Ferenc Puskas and Hugo Sanchez among their past players.

"It's one of our problems. We lack goals," conceded the Dutch striker who has scored 11 times this season.

"We want to create chances through wingers and forwards, but we lack a bit of confidence in the attacking front. We have players on the team capable of scoring goals. It's only a matter of time until they do."

Despite the optimism that he and his Real teammates would soon be scoring regularly again, Van Nistelrooy confessed that he was actually stumped about how to resolve the situation.

"If I knew the answer to that question I would have the solution to the problem, but we are still standing strong and I ask people to give us more time, although that is a very difficult thing to ask at Real Madrid," added the striker.

"Football sees teams going through bad stages but they always eventually pull through. Barcelona and Milan went through similar situations (in recent years) and eventually won the Champions League."

He admitted that the dull draw against Betis had been a blow to their morale ahead of their crucial Champions League last 16 match against Bayern Munich on Tuesday.

"The game against Bayern Munich is the most important one so far this season and we must win it in order to recover our confidence," added van Nistelrooy.

"Tuesday will see two good teams playing against each other. Bayern Munich will be looking to forget about their situation in the League and so will we."

"It will be a good chance for both teams to win back their confidence. I watched their game and saw they have several problems but they will be a different team on Tuesday."

## Milan Italy's flag-bearers

REUTERS, Rome

AC Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti believes his side's Champions League first knockout round match against Celtic in Glasgow on Tuesday could be a chance to restore the tarnished image of Italian football.

The Italian game, still smarting from last year's Serie A match-fixing scandal, suffered another massive blow to its public image earlier this month when a policeman was killed in rioting at a match between Catania and Palermo.

Merchandising increased by 44 percent to 11.1million pounds (16.4million euros), and football activities increased by 6.3 percent to 130.4million pounds (193.5million euros).

"I believe that the Champions

League can be the trampoline to relaunch the image of Italian football abroad by showing the strength of our teams," Ancelotti was quoted as saying on La Gazzetta dello Sport's Web site on Monday.

"From the World Cup onwards the image of Italian football abroad has continued to decline. We touched a new low point with what happened in Catania."

"Today, we play in stadiums that are empty or half-empty and when we turn on our televisions to watch matches in foreign leagues we see full stadiums, enthusiasm, and a different kind of sporting culture," he said.

Milan's Serie A rivals Inter Milan and AS Roma are also involved in Champions League last 16 first-leg fixtures this week.

On Wednesday, Inter host Valencia at the San Siro, while Roma take on Olympique Lyon at Rome's Olympic Stadium (kickoff 1945 GMT).

"I'll be supporting Inter and Roma as well because at the moment Italian football needs good results," Ancelotti said.

Milan travel to Celtic Park having won five of their last six Serie A games despite a series of injuries to key players.

Striker Filippo Inzaghi was left out of the squad after failing to recover from a muscle strain, while the team's leading scorer this season, Alberto Gilardino, and midfielder Clarence Seedorf are struggling to shake off minor injuries.

"Their presence is important to us. We have a day and a half to know whether we can recover them," said Ancelotti, who anticipated a tough game in Scotland.

"On paper, Celtic look an easier opponent than some of the others, but they remain a dangerous team, especially at home, where they try to impose their rhythm on the match. We will have to pay a lot of attention to defence".