

## Van Bommel out of Milan clash

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich's hardman Dutch midfielder Mark van Bommel was handed a two-match ban on Tuesday by UEFA which will keep him out of both of his club's Champions League quarter-final games against AC Milan.

Having been sent-off for a second yellow card in Bayern's 2-1 last 16 win over Real Madrid last week, the Dutch midfielder misses his side's trip to Milan's San Siro stadium on April 3 and the return leg in Munich on April 11.

The 29-year-old former Barcelona player has already been fined 6,200 euros by UEFA this year for making an obscene gesture to Real Madrid fans after scoring a late goal in Bayern's 3-2 defeat at the Bernabeu last month.

## Leipzig stadium vandalised

Reuters, London

Hooligans have spray-painted a swastika and right-wing slogans at the stadium of lower division Lokomotive Leipzig, calling the club president a "traitor pig" and demanding his resignation.

A police spokesman said they were investigating whether club president Steffen Kubald was the target for turning over the names of several Lok Leipzig supporters the club suspects of participating in post-match riots on Feb. 10.

"I'm not going to throw in the towel just because a couple of Nazis want me to," Kubald said in a story on the Lok Leipzig Web site.

Last month's violence erupted when around 800 soccer supporters armed with cobblestones and concrete blocks attacked a police force of 300, leaving 39 police injured.

## Chelsea-Spurs fans clash

AFP, London

British police arrested 34 people when rival football gangs clashed in one of the most affluent parts of London after Chelsea's FA Cup clash with Tottenham, officers said Monday.

Fans of the two teams armed with knives, hockey sticks and wooden clubs fought outside a pub in Parsons Green, west London, in what police said was a pre-arranged confrontation.

It came after the 3-3 quarterfinal draw at nearby Stamford Bridge, Chelsea's home ground.

Police restored order after about an hour of unrest Sunday, and arrested 34 men, who were later bailed to various dates in May. Seven of them received hospital treatment for stab wounds or head or chest injuries.

The disturbance is thought to be among the worst in recent years in London, where football hooliganism has been largely wiped out.

"Incidents of this nature following a football match are rare, but it would appear that a very small number of supporters were intent on meeting after the match for a confrontation," Superintendent Dave Page, of London's Metropolitan Police, said.

## Essien extends Chelsea contract

AFP, London

Chelsea's Ghana international midfielder Michael Essien didn't suffer for scoring an own goal in the epic 3-3 FA Cup quarterfinal draw with Spurs as on Monday he was rewarded with a new five-year contract by the Premiership champions.

The 24-year-old has been a huge success since his then record 24million pound move from French giants Lyon in August 2005 when he also signed a five-year deal.

Essien is highly rated by Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho and has been an ever-present for Chelsea this season, making 46 appearances in all competitions and scoring four times.

## Messina 'keeper tests positive

AFP, Rome

Serie A side Messina's goalkeeper Nicholas Cagliari became the second player to test positive for cocaine, the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI) said Monday.

The 24-year-old failed the test after the 1-1 draw with fellow Sicilian side Catania on February 11.

Cagliari follows Sampdoria captain Francesco Flachi in testing positive for cocaine this term.



PHOTO: AFP

Benfica's Simao Sabrosa (L) celebrates his strike against Leiria with teammate Miccoli during their Portuguese Liga match at the Luz stadium in Lisbon on Monday.

## Zizou rejects Matrix link-up

### Football

AFP, Brussels

A star-studded European XI including Ronaldo, Marco Materazzi and Steven Gerrard will join forces to face Manchester United on Tuesday to celebrate 50 years since the EU's founding Treaty of Rome.

The match, to be held at Old Trafford stadium, is a sell-out, ensuring a 72,000-strong crowd with all proceeds going to charity.

World Cup winner Ronaldo, along with fellow Brazilian star Ronaldinho of Barcelona, will also be joined by the likes of German goalkeeping great Oliver Kahn and French world cup winner Lilian Thuram.

However there will be no cosy coming-together for Materazzi and Zinedine Zidane, who famously head-butted the Inter Milan defender in last year's World Cup final in what was the French great's swansong.

The Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) invited Zidane for the special match but "the answer arrived late and it was negative" former Italian coach Marcello Lippi announced Monday.

Rummenigge told German paper Bild.

"But I think it's a decision Oliver will have to make for himself, perhaps he will come and see us to discuss the matter next December when we look at contracts, but we are ready to talk any time he wants to."

Kahn lost his international place for the 2006 World Cup to Jens Lehmann of Arsenal and spent most of the tournament on the bench.

After Bayern knocked Spanish giants Real Madrid out of the Champions League last week, club president Franz Beckenbauer says his side have a better chance of

winning the European Cup than the German title.

Bayern are six points adrift of Bundesliga leaders Schalke 04 and will face AC Milan in the Champions League quarterfinal in April.

"For me, winning the Champions League is a more realistic goal than the Bundesliga title," the German football legend told Bild on Tuesday.

"Although we respect AC Milan, there is no need to fear them. We have wasted too many chances in the Bundesliga and left too many gaps in the defence, which we can't allow ourselves to do against Milan."

Mancini's individual praise also extended to captain Javier Zanetti who has been successfully transformed into a midfielder from his usual right-back role this term.

"I think that Zanetti, who started off as a midfielder, has been exceptional in the middle of the pitch this season," noted the tactician.

"And with his ability and versatility, he can play in any role."

"For 30-35 matches everyone thought Zanetti was extraordinary in midfield. After the 0-0 draw at Valencia I read that someone said we couldn't play with defenders in midfield."

"The fact remains that the midfield is playing very well."

"There are 50 million coaches in Italy and those who pass judgement the day after can say all sorts of things, but this always happens and always has happened."

The former Ajax man also highlighted his growing maturity off the pitch recently, by admitting he didn't perform in the 0-0 draw at Valencia which cost Inter a place in the Champions League last eight.

The giant Swede has been a revelation since his 17-million-pound summer switch from Juventus and again underlined his ability by grabbing the derby winner in the 2-1 victory over Milan yesterday.

"Ibra is a phenomenon and, like I have always said, he can improve tremendously," Mancini told Inter Channel on Monday evening.

"I think he can get to the point where he decides when and how to score. Which is what he did in the second half yesterday, but he can do it all the time because he has the ability."

"He can still improve a lot, but he is extraordinary in everything he does."

The former Ajax man also highlighted his growing maturity off the pitch recently, by admitting he didn't perform in the 0-0 draw at Valencia which cost Inter a place in the Champions League last eight.

The 24-year-old failed the test after the 1-1 draw with fellow Sicilian side Catania on February 11.

Cagliari follows Sampdoria captain Francesco Flachi in testing positive for cocaine this term.

ZLATAN IBRAHIMOVIC

## Kahn urged to keep on playing

### Football

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge on Tuesday urged captain and goalkeeper Oliver Kahn to cancel plans to retire after Euro 2008.

Having won 86 caps for Germany, Kahn, 37, announced at the start of January that he will finish his career after Euro 2008 next June, but Bayern are keen to extend the career of one of their stalwarts.

"He is contracted until 2008, but I think he has a lot more left in him,"

Rummenigge told German paper Bild.

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ZLATAN IBRAHIMOVIC

## Manchi hails magical Ibra

INTERNET, undated



Inter boss Roberto Mancini has described Zlatan Ibrahimovic as a phenomenon who can only get even better.

The giant Swede has been a revelation since his 17-million-pound summer switch from Juventus and again underlined his ability by grabbing the derby winner in the 2-1 victory over Milan yesterday.

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ZLATAN IBRAHIMOVIC

## Philosophical Henry

REUTERS, Paris

Arsenal captain Thierry Henry, out for the season, said his injuries were an inevitable result of last season's punishing schedule.

The France striker damaged stomach and groin muscles in his team's Champions League exit to PSV Eindhoven last week.

Henry has been dogged by a lack of fitness since returning from the World Cup in Germany, notably with a long-standing sciatic nerve problem, along with hamstring and foot injuries.

"I saw it coming and, in a way, I was ready for it. My body was in a permanent state of alert," Henry told France Football magazine on Tuesday.

"It's even comforting: we know we are not robots and these injuries remind us of that."

"I will now heal and get ready for next season. I have not had a proper break in the past seasons."

Henry, expected to resume training in July, will miss France's next three Euro 2008 qualifiers, as well as Arsenal's Premier League run-in as they chase a Champions League place.

"I'm not saying France will not have any problems because I respect our opponents but I am not worried," he added.

"As for the Gunners, they are among the best three teams of the league if you look at the last eight matches. We are on a nice streak, without me playing."

**Goalkeepers:** Oliver Kahn (Bayern Munich/GER), Gregory Coupet (Lyon/FRA), Iker Casillas (Real Madrid/ESP)

**Defenders:** Paolo Maldini (AC Milan/ITA), Jamie Carragher (Liverpool/ENG), Eric Abidal (Lyon/FRA), Lilian Thuram (Barcelona/ESP), Carles Puyol (Barcelona/ESP), Marco Materazzi (Inter Milan/ITA), Fabio Grosso (Inter Milan/ITA), Gianluca Zambrotta (Barcelona/ESP)

**Midfielders:** Steven Gerrard (Liverpool/ENG), Juninho (Lyon/FRA), Florent Malouda (Lyon/FRA), Luis Miguel (Valencia/ESP), Gennaro Gattuso (AC Milan/ITA), Andrea Pirlo (AC Milan/ITA)

**Strikers:** Ronaldinho (Barcelona/ESP), Ronald (AC Milan/ITA), Alessandro Mancini (AS Roma/ITA), Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Inter Milan/ITA), Henrik Larsson (Helsingborg/SWE)

**Real Madrid captain Raul is aiming to fight his way back into the Spain squad for their next Euro 2008 qualifier against Denmark on March 24.**

Spanish football icon Raul has recently been out of favour with national team coach Luis Aragonés, who did not include him in his squad for their last qualifier in October, a 2-0 defeat to Sweden.

Raul was also left out for the 1-0 friendly win against England last February in Manchester.

However Spain's next match is in Real's Santiago Bernabeu stadium, and Raul is reported as saying: "I think I've got a chance (of playing). That's my opinion."

Spain, who exited last year's World Cup finals before the quarterfinals stage, are currently struggling in group F of the Euro 2008 qualifiers.

Aragonés' side sit in fifth place on only three points after three games.

## Raul confident of Spain call-up

AFP, Madrid

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