



PHOTO: AFP
Tottenham forward Dimitar Berbatov (L) celebrates his first half strike with teammate Steed Malbranque during the UEFA Cup match against SC Braga at White Hart Lane on Wednesday.

GERMANS MARCH ON Spurs ride on Berbatov

REUTERS, London



Two clinical finishes from Bulgaria striker Dimitar Berbatov took twice winners Tottenham Hotspur through to the UEFA Cup quarterfinals on Wednesday. Berbatov's double took his UEFA Cup tally to seven for the season as Spurs overcame a spirited Braga side 3-2 at White Hart Lane for an 6-4 aggregate second knockout round success.

There was double celebration for Germany with Werder Bremen and Bayer Leverkusen reaching the last eight along with Spain's Osasuna, who put out Rangers.

Tottenham can look forward to their first European quarterfinal since 1992 when they bowed out in the last eight to Feyenoord in the Cup Winners' Cup.

The Premier League side, who

enjoyed a bye through to the last 16 after Feyenoord were kicked out of the competition, have won all eight UEFA Cup matches this season.

"We started with 160-170 teams, it's pleasing to be in the last eight," said Spurs manager Martin Jol.

Braga coach Jorge Costa hailed Berbatov as "one of the best strikers in Europe" after he proved too hot to handle for the Portuguese side.

Berbatov quickly cancelled out Tom Huddlestone's own goal with a fine finish from Robbie Keane's pass and volleyed in a superb second just before halftime.

A scorching free-kick from Brazilian Andrade gave Braga a glimmer of hope but Steed Malbranque, from a Berbatov flick, sealed the tie.

Leverkusen invoked memories of their run to the 2001-02 Champions League final with a clinical 3-0 win over Racing Lens at the BayArena, easily overturning a 2-1 first-leg reverse.

The German side produced their most impressive performance of this season's competition to keep on course for a May 16 final at Hampden

Park in Glasgow, the venue for their defeat by Real Madrid five years ago.

"Compliments to my team," said Leverkusen coach Michael Skibbe. "That's football as it should be played. It was a perfect evening for us."

Ukraine striker Andriy Voronin set Leverkusen on their way when he controlled the ball on his chest and swatted a shot just inside the post from the edge of the area in the 36th minute.

Voronin, set for a move to Liverpool at the end of the season, also had a hand in his side's two other goals.

Sergej Barbarez tapped in 11 minutes into the second half to make it 2-0 after Voronin's header had struck a post and Brazilian defender Juan headed home from Voronin's corner with 20 minutes to go.

Werder Bremen, who failed to advance in the Champions League, defeated Spain's Celta Vigo 2-0 at the Weserstadion to complete a 3-0 aggregate victory.

Holders Sevilla take on Ukraine's Shakhtar Donetsk in the four remaining last 16 ties on Thursday. The Spanish side face a tough challenge having been held to a 2-2 draw at home in the first leg.

in the 61st.

"We had to be patient," said Werder coach Thomas Schaaf. "We stayed calm in the first half and that was important. In the second half we had more space and that made things a lot easier for us."

Bremen's only notable European success came when they defeated Monaco to win the 1991-92 Cup Winners' Cup.

Osasuna moved into uncharted territory, reaching the last eight of a European competition for the first time with a 1-0 win at home to Rangers to take the tie 2-1.

Cameroon striker Pierre Webo made sure of victory by firing home 19 minutes from time.

It is the second time the team from Navarra have got the better of Rangers in the competition. They also beat the Scots 2-1 in the first round of the UEFA Cup in 1985.

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Hitzfeld to stay at Bayern

REUTERS, Berlin

Ottmar Hitzfeld will stay on as coach of Bayern Munich for at least another season, the Bundesliga club announced on Thursday.

Bayern said in a statement that Hitzfeld had reached agreement with the club on a new one-year deal at a meeting on Wednesday.

"We are delighted we could reach such a quick and easy agreement," Bayern manager Uli Hoeneß said.

"It was a mutual decision to make the new contract just for one year. In due course we'll review the situation and agree on whether to extend it into the middle or long term."

Hitzfeld, who led Bayern to victory in the Champions League in 2001, returned for a second spell in place of Felix Magath at the start of February.

Early results were not good, with Bayern losing their first match 3-0 away to Nuremberg and managing just one win in the first four games.

They have since won two and drawn one of the last three Bundesliga games to revive hopes of a third successive league title, with the gap behind leaders Schalke 04 now down to six points with nine games to play.

The team also made up a 3-2 deficit in the Champions League to beat Real Madrid and clinch a place in the quarterfinals, where they will face AC Milan.

Marca predict C'Ron arrival

AFP, Madrid

Cristiano Ronaldo, who is in talks to extend his contract at Manchester United, will quit Old Trafford for Real Madrid at the end of the season, Spanish sports daily Marca predicted on Thursday.

"Cristiano Ronaldo will sign for Real Madrid once the season is over," the paper claimed on its front page, a report that will hardly be welcomed by Sir Alex Ferguson.

"That's the bombshell that the president (of Real Madrid, Ramon Calderon) is going to announce this summer. A galactic transfer, if he's one," the paper continued.

This latest bout of speculation over the Portuguese international comes on the back of last week's assertion from Ferguson that his prize winger was going nowhere.

"Cristiano is at the right club. He wants to stay. Why would he want to go anywhere else?" the Scot said, adding that negotiations were up and running for Ronaldo to sign an extension to his existing contract which finishes in 2010.

The player himself spoke about his future intentions to Portuguese radio also last week, saying: "Everyone knows I really like Spain, that I would like to play in Spain one day but I am happy here at Manchester.

"If I don't leave now, if I leave in two, three, four, five years, I would be happy, I am at a great club."

He joined Manchester United from Lisbon-based Sporting for 12 million pounds (17.6 million euros or 23.2 million US dollars) in August 2003 on a five-year contract which he extended for another two years in November 2005.

Villa's record against Arsenal is desperately poor and their last victory came back in 1998 when the game was marred by an injury to a parachutist - who had a badly broken leg amputated after crashing into the roof of the Trinity Road Stand before the game.

Their chances of breaking that depressing sequence should have been more remote when Freddie Ljungberg's excellent cross picked out Jeremie Aliadiere - but the French striker squandered the simplest of opportunities, forcing his free header into the ground and over the crossbar from six yards out.

Arsenal's only real moment of discomfort in a first half which they controlled with embarrassing ease,

despite suspensions for Gael Clichy, Kolo Toure, Emmanuel Eboue and Emmanuel Adebayor, was when Justin Hoyte brought down John Carew, when the Norwegian international broke free.

Hoyte's challenge was adjudged to have been just outside the area by referee Martin Atkinson, despite Villa manager Martin O'Neill's demands for a penalty and Carew blasted the resulting free-kick into the wall.

Villa certainly had a more spirited attempt at rescuing matters in the second half and Carew would have equalised when clean through - but his first touch saw him run over the ball with only Jens Lehmann to beat.

Ljungberg had to rescue Diaby with a goal line clearance when the younger accidentally headed Gareth Barry's corner beyond Lehmann.

Villa's poor record of just two wins in their last 17 Premiership games is an ever increasing source of embarrassment to their manager O'Neill, especially given the funding he has been provided with by American owner Randy Lerner.

O'Neill should be grateful that he accumulated enough points in his impressive start at Villa Park to provide him with a comfortable cushion from getting sucked into relegation.

The French tactician risked fielding the 29-year-old striker against the Dutch giants last week and later said: "I don't take responsibility for that (his injury) because I feel Thierry has been badly managed by the French national team."

The London club have had a disappointing season, crashing out of the Champions League last week and losing to Chelsea in the final of the League Cup.

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