

UEFA fine
Lille, MU

AFP, Paris

European football's governing body (UEFA) have fined French side Lille and English club Manchester United following the incidents that marred their Champions League last 16 encounter in February.

Lille were fined 61,734 euros for security violations and incorrect behaviour by the Lille players, who left the pitch after Ryan Giggs's quickly-taken free kick took everyone by surprise and consequently won the game.

United were meanwhile fined 9,256 euros for incorrect behaviour by the travelling fans including disturbances at the turnstiles.

Tear gas was used by police during the match at Len's Stade Felix-Bollaert after ticketing problems led to 5,000 supporters cramming into a stand built for 3,500.

Supporters appeared to be in danger of being crushed against a 10-foot high safety barrier and two fans were lifted over the barrier while security officials slammed shut a gate which had been pushed open by United supporters trying to relieve the pressure.

Television images of the game were used by UEFA during the investigation along with reports from both clubs and UEFA's disciplinary committee.

The two clubs have three days to lodge an appeal against the decision.

Klasnic's op
successful

AFP, Zagreb

Croatia's international striker Ivan Klasnic has undergone a successful kidney transplant after the first attempt failed in January and his doctors said he could start training in a couple of months.

The Jutarnji List daily said the surgery was performed on March 16 at a Hanover clinic, with the donor being Klasnic's father. The first transplant was carried out in January but Klasnic's body rejected his mother's kidney.

"This time I didn't want to go public with the news of the surgery until the doctors were sure that my body had accepted a new organ," Klasnic told the daily.

Croatia coach Slaven Bilic, whose side top Euro 2008 qualifying Group E, congratulated him on behalf of the national team.

"We have heard of the great news and we all wish him a speedy recovery and return to the pitch, as he really deserves it," Bilic said.

Klasnic, 27, has played for Werder Bremen since 2001 and scored 42 goals. He has been on target eight times in his 26 caps for Croatia.

Spurs leading
Nani race

INTERNET, undated

Tottenham are reportedly leading the race to sign Sporting Lisbon's Nani despite competition from Manchester United.

Both clubs have been tracking the 10 million pound-rated 20-year-old attacking midfielder for more than a season but now Spurs are ready to stump up the cash after director of football Damien Comolli watched him play against Porto at the weekend.

However the Portuguese club are reluctant to sell the hot prospect, known as the next Cristiano Ronaldo, and are trying to renegotiate his contract which ends in 2008.

It is believed Nani is seeking a move abroad and it was thought he would follow Ronaldo's footsteps to Old Trafford.

A Spurs source revealed to The Sun: "He's one we've been watching for a long time."

"If a reasonable deal could be done, we'd take him for next season."

Eng-Germany
in Wembley
opener

AFP, Berlin

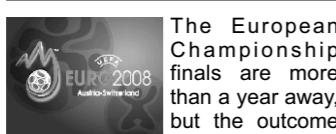
German team manager Oliver Bierhoff confirmed on Thursday that Germany will play England in the first full international at the new Wembley Stadium on August 22.

The meeting between the two classic international rivals mirrors the last international played at Wembley when Germany beat England 1-0 on October 7 2000 and 90,000 fans are expected for the final unveiling in August.

"We are glad to be involved in the first international at the new Wembley," said Bierhoff, with England set to play their first Under-21 international at the new stadium against Italy this weekend.

No room for errors

REUTERS, London



next week.

Whoever wins on Saturday will boost their chances considerably and Greek defender Yourkas Seitairidis says a victory would essentially mean qualification.

"If we win this match then we can say with almost certainty that we are through," he claimed while his team mate Takis Fyssas added: "This is a crucial game and we are aware that if we beat Turkey then we have taken a major step towards qualification."

With the top two in each of the seven qualifying groups advancing and no play-off deciders to come, a consistently strong campaign is essential.

No team has started better than Sweden in Group F where the Scandinavians have opened with four straight wins. A fifth successive victory over Northern Ireland next week will put them in a commanding and probably unassailable position in their group, leaving Spain, among others trailing in their wake.

Spain have won one and lost two of their opening three matches in Group F – and if they were to lose again to unbeaten Denmark in Madrid on Saturday – or even Iceland in Mallorca next week – their campaign would effectively be over.

The Netherlands are another side who have started well with three wins and a draw and victories over Romania at home and Slovenia away next week will put them even closer to qualifying from Group G.

Scotland have made almost as good a start in Group B with three wins – including a 1-0 victory over France – and just one defeat from their first four games.

Euro 2008 Qualifiers



GROUP C		
	P / F / A	Points
1. Turkey	3 8 0	9
2. Greece	3 6 0	9
3. Norway	3 6 2	6
4. Bosnia-Herzegovina	4 8 11	4
5. Hungary	4 5 8	3
6. Malta	3 4 8	3
7. Moldova	4 2 10	1
Moldova - Malta	1800	
Norway - Bosnia-Herzegovina	2000	
Greece - Turkey	2030	

GROUP F		
	P / F / A	Points
1. Sweden	4 8 2	12
2. Denmark	3 6 0	7
3. Northern Ireland	4 4 5	7
4. Latvia	3 4 2	3
5. Spain	3 6 5	3
6. Iceland	4 4 8	3
7. Liechtenstein	3 1 11	0
Liechtenstein - Northern Ireland	2015	
Spain - Denmark	2200	

CONTINENTAL TIME (GMT +1)		
GROUP B		
	P / F / A	Points
1. France	4 11 2	9
2. Scotland	4 9 3	9
3. Italy	4 7 5	7
4. Portugal	3 8 3	7
5. Belgium	5 4 2	7
6. Kazakhstan	5 1 7	2
7. Armenia	4 0 5	1
8. Azerbaijan	4 1 8	0
Poland - Azerbaijan	1800	
Portugal - Belgium	2200	
Kazakhstan - Serbia	1400	

GROUP D		
	P / F / A	Points
1. Germany	4 19 2	10
2. Czech Republic	4 13 2	10
3. Ireland	5 10 8	7
4. Slovakia	4 12 9	6
5. Cyprus	4 8 12	4
6. Wales	3 5 8	3
7. San Marino	4 1 27	0
Ireland - Wales	1600	
Cyprus - Slovakia	1900	
Czech Republic - Germany	2045	

GROUP E		
	P / F / A	Points
1. Croatia	4 13 3	10
2. Russia	4 5 1	8
3. England	4 6 2	7
4. Israel	4 9 6	7
5. Macedonia	5 4 3	7
6. Estonia	3 0 4	0
7. Andorra	4 1 19	0
Croatia - Macedonia	2015	
Estonia - Russia	1930	
Israel - England	1930	

Prev qualifiers
September 2, 2006
November 21, 2007

The top two teams in each group qualify for the final phase

220307 AFP

Gerrard backing Rooney

AFP, Tel Aviv



England may be woefully short of strikers at the moment, but Steven Gerrard believes supporters have nothing to worry about – as long as Wayne Rooney stays fit.

The Manchester United forward goes into England's Euro 2008 crunch with Israel here on Saturday on the back of a strong run of form for his club.

But Rooney will also be aware that it is some time since he produced his best in an England shirt and he will be keen to put that right when he partners Andrew Johnson in attack against Israel and, if all goes to plan on Saturday night, against Andorra in Barcelona next Wednesday.

Gerrard, for one, is confident that Rooney will deliver, and he was particularly encouraged by the sight of the United forward terrorising Israeli centreback Tal Ben Haim in United's 4-1 win over Bolton on the weekend.

The Liverpool midfielder revealed: "I was watching the Bolton game, watching Wayne up against Tal Ben Haim thinking 'you should save that for England'."

While Rooney's imaginative qualities are undisputed, it remains to be seen if he can forge an effective partnership with Johnson, who

owes his place in the starting line-up to the injuries which have deprived manager Steve McClaren of Michael Owen, Dean Ashton, Peter Crouch and Darren Bent.

Johnson's supporters insist he deserves his chance in the central role he prefers and argue that his pace, mobility and finishing will provide the perfect counterfoil to Rooney's ability to drop slightly.

"Wayne has come into a bit of form of late, which is great news for me playing alongside him," he said. "When I watch Manchester United, I do tend to concentrate on Wayne's runs for when I am playing with him."

"It is great to have him back fit. He has played really well for England. He was fantastic at the last European Championships but it was difficult for him at the World Cup because he was injured and there was a lot of pressure on him because people expected him to win the World Cup on his own."

"I don't need to tell anyone how good Wayne Rooney is. He is one of the best in the world. He has a great future."

"It is just great to have him here 100 percent fit because he could win us these two games on his own."

Yet doubts linger over whether Johnson's sometimes suspect first

touch and the nerves he has displayed on previous England outings mean he will never really live up to that kind of billing on the international stage.

That debate will be closer to being resolved by the end of Saturday night's match, but Gerrard stresses that it is not only fellow forwards who have to work at building an understanding with England's most valuable asset.

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