



The French League Cup winning Bordeaux players pose with former French prime minister and the city mayor Alain Juppe (C) on Monday. Bordeaux, who beat Lyon 1-0 in League Cup final on Saturday, qualified for next season's UEFA cup.

## Roma ready for United challenge

AS Roma's players are confident they can produce another giant-killing performance and beat Manchester United in the first leg of their Champions League quarterfinal on Wednesday.

After eliminating Olympique Lyon with a 2-0 away win in the last 16, the Serie A side are confident they can upset the odds and beat the Premier League leaders.

United manager Alex Ferguson will be treating Roma with the utmost respect, too, because he rated Lyon as one of the best teams in the competition before their elimination.

Before this season, Roma had not reached the knockout phase of the competition since it was reorganised in the early 1990s.

"United have shown they are in

great form in their league, but we can really push them. Our win over Lyon told us we are capable of beating anyone," said Brazilian winger Mancini, one of several technically-gifted players who could trouble United, especially in the torrid atmosphere of Rome's Olympic Stadium.

Suspended midfielder David Pizarro is the only first-team regular who will be missing. Defender Cristian Chivu is expected to move forward to take his place in front of the back four.

Roma captain Francesco Totti warned United not to underestimate him -- or his side.

"Obviously it's a big satisfaction to be among the top eight teams in Europe, but that doesn't mean we want to stop there. We want to go on," said the 30-year-old striker.

Totti, who is revered by many Italians as the country's best footballer, was stung when Ferguson forgot to name him as one of the players his side would need to watch out for.

"Ferguson, you will learn who Totti is. He will see personally. I hope to make him remember my name," Totti told Italian satellite broadcaster SKY.

United came from behind to crush Blackburn Rovers 4-1 on Saturday for their seventh successive league win and stay six points clear of Chelsea.

Their outstanding second half display was underpinned by an excellent performance from Paul Scholes who scored a fine solo goal to pull United level after 61 minutes.

United's injury-hit 19-man squad travelled to Rome without Nemanja Vidic, who has broken his collarbone and is likely to be sidelined for the rest of the season.

South Korean forward Park Ji-sung was a surprise omission but Louis Saha and midfielder Darren Fletcher were included in the party, although the French striker is unlikely to be risked from the start having just recovered from a hamstring injury.

Both teams have been in good

form in Europe with Roma keeping a clean sheet in their last three Champions League matches and United winning their last three without conceding a goal in the last two.

United and Roma have never met in European competition and the English side will be looking to improve on their poor record in Italy of just two wins in 11 matches.

### PROBABLE TEAMS

**AS Roma:** 32-Doni; 77-Marco Cassetti, 21-Matteo Ferrari, 5-Philippe Mexes, 2-Christian Panucci; 16-Daniele De Rossi, 13-Cristian Chivu; 11-Rodrigo Taddei, 20-Simone Perrotta, 30-Mancini; 10-Francesco Totti

**Manchester United:** 1-Edwin Van der Sar; 6-Wes Brown, 5-Rio Ferdinand, 22-John O'Shea, 4-Gabriel Heinze; 7-Cristiano Ronaldo, 11-Ryan Giggs, 16-Michael Carrick, 18-Paul Scholes; 8-Wayne Rooney, 20-Ole Gunnar Solskjaer

## Marca lash at Mourinho

Valencia's dressing room at Stamford Bridge for Wednesday's Champions League clash with Chelsea has been compared to a 'rat-hole' by Spanish daily Marca.

The paper said on Tuesday the Spanish visitors' had to make do with only three showers "and one mirror for all the players" and suggested the dressing room was not worthy of "a multi-millionaire club".

"It's like a rat-hole" Marca said in its Tuesday edition suggesting that "Chelsea has started the war in the changing rooms".

In contrast it claimed the Chelsea players enjoyed a "luxurious", modern and spacious changing room "three times bigger" than the visitors reequipped with a bar and "stratospheric showers".

The paper reckoned that the dressing room was "one of the weapons used" by Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho) against his rivals.

Valencia are in London to take on the English Premiership champions in the Champions League quarterfinal first leg.

## Everton held by Villa

Aston Villa grabbed a vital point in their bid to avoid relegation here on Monday as Gabriel Agbonlahor scored a late equaliser to draw 1-1 with Everton.

Agbonlahor's strike enabled Villa to move five points clear of third from bottom Charlton Athletic -- though their winless streak in the Premiership stretched to five -- while Everton's hopes of putting more pressure on Arsenal for the fourth and final Champions League spot were dealt a blow with the two dropped points.

They remain in seventh, eight points off the Gunners.

Everton's Joleon Lescott scored in the 15th minute -- his first for the club -- heading home a Mikal Arteta freekick after the wily Spaniard had been fouled by Gavin McCann, who was later to be booked for another

foul on Arteta and earning himself a two match suspension.

Both sides traded shots with Howard saving from John Carew, Gareth Barry and Siliyan Petrov while Thomas Sorensen had to be at his best to save from Leon Osman.

However thankfully for the 36,000 fans the second-half was a far more entertaining with Villa having come out in lively manner.

Howard had to pull off an outstanding save from Norwegian international Carew in the 49th minute as the lanky former Lyon striker turned agnd shot five metres out but the American international got his right hand to the ball to push it out.

Even then Carew had the chance to score from the rebound but Alan Stubbs courageously flung himself in front of the shot and the ball was cleared.

Villa, who appeared to be energised after the half-time introduction of Czech midfielder Patrik Berger for the ineffective McCann,

breached the Everton defence again in the 50th minute as Berger floated over a delightful chip which Carew seized on only for Howard to somehow block it.

Berger was causing constant problems down the left and the outstanding Stubbs saved Everton when in the 70th minute the Czech found Carew, but the goalbound shot was somehow blocked by Stubbs.

Stubbs was at it again a minute later as again Berger's teasing cross looked certain to cause havoc but the former Bolton and Celtic centreback chested it into Howard's grateful hands.

However Villa's second-half resurgence was eventually rewarded in the 83rd minute as Agbonlahor slid the ball into the box, Howard once again bravely blocked Carew's effort but the youngster was on hand to slot home the rebound for his seventh of the season.

## Juninho set for spell out

Lyon captain Juninho could be out for up to two weeks with a pulled left buttock muscle, the French champions announced on Monday.

The 32-year-old former Brazilian international suffered the injury during the first-half of the 1-0 League Cup final defeat to Bordeaux on Saturday.

Juninho -- who played on but eventually had to go off in the 68th minute -- underwent a scan on Monday which revealed the extent of the problem.

Juninho -- who is in talks about extending his present contract by two years to 2010 -- will miss Saturday's league match with Valenciennes and is doubtful for the following one against strugglers Sedan on April 14.

Despite the disappointment of the League Cup loss and exiting the Champions League Lyon look certain to secure their sixth successive title as they lead Lens by 16 points and have a game in hand.

## Lenton smashes sprint record

Australia's Libby Lenton became the first woman in history to break 53 seconds for the 100m freestyle when she swam 52.99 during the first leg of the mixed relay at the Duel in the Pool swim meet against the USA here Tuesday.

Lenton's time was 0.31 faster than the 53.30 recorded by Germany's Britta Steffen when she won the European Championships in August 2006.

But because of the unusual nature of the race, the Australian will have an anxious wait to see whether her world record is ratified by the sport's governing body FINA.

The result was not enough to clinch the match for Australia, as the USA won the meet for the third time in

succession, scoring 181.5 points to Australia 129.5.

Lenton swam the first leg of the relay against multiple world champion Michael Phelps and there was initially some concern from swimming officials that FINA may decide that Phelps was pacing the Australian.

However, Swimming Australia spokesman David Lyall said later there was no reason to believe the record would not stand.

"We've spoken to FINA and they said they expected the record to be ratified," Lyall said.

"We won't know for certain tonight but we are confident it will stand as a record," he said.

It will be a double celebration for Lenton if she is awarded the world record as she is due to marry fellow swimmer Luke Trickett on Saturday.

"I think the wedding is going to top everything," she said.

"I don't think you can really compare the two, it is a very special personal moment for me."

Phelps, who won a record seven gold medals at the World Championships, swam only two individual events at the Duel in the Pool but he won them both comfortably.

He clocked 48.79 to win the 100m freestyle ahead of Australia's Eamon Sullivan (49.37) and fellow American Cullen Jones (49.76), then beat compatriot Aaron Peirsol and Australia's Ephraim Hannant to win the 200m backstroke in a time of 1:56.29.

In the major upset of the meet, Tara Kirk of the US beat Australia's world record holder Leisel Jones in the 100m breaststroke.

Kirk went out fast early on and Jones just failed to reel her in, the American touching in 1:06.72 ahead of Jones in 1:06.80.

## Federer wins Laureus

Roger Federer was named sportsman of the year at the Laureus World Sports awards for the third successive time here on Monday.

The Swiss tennis star was preferred in the vote by journalists to retired Formula One ace Michael Schumacher and golf icon Tiger Woods.

The sportswoman of the year title went to Russia's world record pole vaulter Yelena Isinbayeva.

France's Wimbledon champion Amelie Mauresmo picked up the breakthrough of the year honour ahead of Briton's F1 rookie Lewis Hamilton.

Serena Williams' exploit in returning from injury to capture the Australian women's Open title earned her the comeback of the Year trophy.

There was no surprise at the destination of the team of the year prize which went to Italy's World Cup winning footballers.

## Sharapova to miss Fed Cup

Russian world number two Maria Sharapova has pulled out of next week's WTA event the Family Circle Cup and the forthcoming Fed Cup clash in Moscow with Spain, it was announced on Monday.

Sharapova is slated to miss between five to six weeks of action because of a repeat of a right shoulder injury and a left hamstring injury.

"I am very disappointed to have to withdraw from the Family Circle Cup because of my injuries that will keep me out for five to six weeks," said Sharapova, who was recently ousted as world number one by Justine Henin.

"I'm looking forward to getting back on the court as soon as possible," added Sharapova.

Sharapova was clearly not at her best last week when she was demolished 6-1, 6-1 by Serena Williams - who had also beaten her in the Australian Open final - in the last 16 of the Miami ATP and WTA Masters Series event.

## Couto receives suspended prison

Veteran former Portuguese international defender Fernando Couto received a four month suspended prison sentence here on Monday for failing a drugs test back in 2001.

The 37-year-old -- who was also fined 4000 euros -- tested positive for nandrolone following a Serie A match between Fiorentina and his then club Lazio in January 2001.

Couto, who is still playing in Serie A with strugglers Parma, fell foul of the Italian anti-doping law which was implemented in 2000 and is one of the strictest in the world, with prison sentences ranging from three months to three years.

The 110-times capped Couto, who has always protested his innocence, was suspended by the sports authorities for 10 months, though that was reduced to four months on appeal.

Couto, who has won the now defunct Cup Winners Cup with Barcelona and Lazio and the UEFA Cup with Parma in 1995, is not the first athlete to be prosecuted for such offences but none have gone to jail.

## Charlton cautions Barca, Real

Manchester United director and former playing legend Bobby Charlton has denounced speculation over Cristiano Ronaldo's future as incorrect and destabilising for the star winger.

Both Barcelona and Real Madrid have been linked to the 22-year-old Portugal international whose dazzling form has helped United's push towards prising the Premiership title away from Chelsea.

Charlton told BBC Radio on Monday: "They link themselves to whoever they feel fit and it's not right."

"I don't think it's a correct way to go about their business."

Charlton is confident Ronaldo will reject the overtures from Spain and sign an extension to his existing contract which would keep him at Old Trafford until 2012.

"I can see no reason at all why he should want to play for another club."

"It's really destabilising for both the club and the player to have all this speculation about his future. All of it is coming from abroad and none from our club."

Ronaldo -- who had seemed to be on his way out of the club following adverse headlines after teammate Wayne Rooney's sending-off in the World Cup quarterfinal between Portugal and England -- confirmed last month that he was ready to thrash out a new deal with United.

## Chelsea up the tempo

Jose Mourinho has warned Valencia that Chelsea are ready to raise their game to a higher level when they clash in the Champions League quarterfinals.

Mourinho's side are unbeaten in their last 15 matches and have won seven successive games in the Premiership. But the Blues manager believes his players can hit even greater heights now they are free to concentrate solely on club football.

Chelsea were unusually subdued for long periods in Saturday's last gasp 1-0 win at Watford and Mourinho puts that down to his squad being drained by two weeks away on international duty.

Mourinho is relieved he can now focus his players on their bid to win the quadruple and he expects a much higher tempo and intensity to Chelsea's performance when Valencia visit Stamford Bridge on Wednesday for the first leg of their last eight tie. "I do not want to excuse it because I always feel we have something inside of us, something hidden, that we can give, that extra bit," Mourinho told Chelsea TV.

"At the training ground in Cobham, you saw I was there doing nothing (during the international break). I was there playing five against five, with the medical department and my people and that is not good."

"You cannot prepare your team when the players come and are

tired, with no focus and no concentration."

Mourinho's future remains a source of conjecture after owner Roman Abramovich once again opted not to join the manager and his players in the changing rooms after the win at Watford.

If Mourinho is to repair his fractured relationship with Abramovich, then the Champions League trophy would be an ideal peace offering.

Mourinho's belief that his team can do just that will have been boosted by Joe Cole's earlier than expected declaration that he is ready to return to action.

The England winger has been sidelined for four months with a foot injury, but he insists he is ready to play some part on Wednesday.

"Some said I wouldn't play this season but I want to come back and make an impact, and hopefully that'll be on Wednesday night," Cole said. "I've been out a long time but hopefully I can hit the ground running."

"I'll do what I can, even if it's only for 10 or 15 minutes."

If Valencia end Chelsea's Champions League challenge, it is a safe bet that much of the damage will have been inflicted by David Villa.

Spain striker Villa has scored 37 goals in 64 games for Los Che and he was instrumental in their 3-2 win over Espanyol on Saturday.

Villa, valued at 70 million pounds, is one of Europe's most coveted forwards and he knows Valencia's hopes rest on his shoulders.

"If a chance falls to me, I have to be fully focused to make sure I put it away. That is what is expected of

me," Villa said.

"We know it won't be easy and one of the strongest teams in the competition stands in our way. But we believe we can triumph and make it to the semi-finals."

"Chelsea are solid in defence but I will do my best to lead the attack so that they don't have a moment's rest. It just makes me more determined."

"The last few days have gone really well and I'm full of confidence now I'm back scoring goals. We've got a bit of time to rest and prepare for Chelsea to make sure we go out there at full strength."

Quique Sanchez Flores's side need Villa to be on form because they will be without several key players in London.

Carlos Marchena and David Navarro are suspended following the brawl that marred their last 16 win over Inter Milan, Fernando Morientes is out with a dislocated shoulder, while Roberto Ayala suffered a concussion against Espanyol that makes him a doubt.

### ROBABLE TEAM

Chelsea: 1-Petr Cech; 19-Lassana Diarra, 6-Ricardo Carvalho, 26-John Terry, 3-Ashley Cole; 12-John Obi Mikel, 8-Claude Makelele, 13-Michael Ballack, 8-Frank Lampard; 11-Dieder Drogba, 7-Andriy Shevchenko

Valencia: 1-Santiago Canizares; 2-Miguel, 4-Roberto Ayala, 20-Raul Albiol, 24-Emiliano Moretti; 15-Joaquin, 6-David Albelda, 16-Hugo Viana, 21-David Silva; 10-Miguel Angel Angulo, 7-David Villa

## Rummenigge rues German demise

Bayern Munich chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge on Tuesday rued the demise of the Bundesliga which he believes is no longer capable of challenging their money-spinning counterparts in England and Spain.

"This season has been one of the best in sporting terms for German football but economically we are no

longer capable of fighting," Rummenigge told the business daily Handelsblatt.

Germany finished third at the 2006 World Cup, and Bayern Munich have reached the quarterfinals of the Champions League and Werder Bremen and Bayer Leverkusen the same stage in the UEFA Cup.

"In the past we were the most powerful championship in this domain, but for the past 10 years we've been resting on our laurels, notably in terms of the marketing of

our championship," said Rummenigge.

"When I see that television rights in other countries are negotiated for 20 million euros and that the Premiership got 105 million euros from Hong Kong, we will not catch England."

Club president Franz Beckenbauer added: "Bayern doesn't have the money to win the Champions League, which doesn't stop them from having a chance of making a name for themselves."



Veteran Italy striker Alessandro del Piero poses with the award for the Team of the Year at the Laureus Sports awards in Barcelona on Monday. Tennis star Roger Federer won the Sportsman of the Year award.

### CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

**ACROSS**

1 Antitoxins the  
5 Kittenish flight  
9 Scepter director  
12 Geologic periods  
13 Neighborhood  
14 Playwright  
15 Hush-hush  
17 Hair-styling stuff  
18 Willy  
19 Western U.S.  
21 One of the Kettles  
22 Coffer  
24 Irritate  
27 Luau offering  
28 Child's play  
31 Chart format  
32 Remnant  
33 Keatsian verse  
34 Anger

**DOWN**

1 -- prece- dent  
2 Piccadilly statue  
3 En-grossed  
4 Take for granted  
5 Jousting weapon  
6 Blunder  
7 Itsy-bitsy  
8 Star-bucks order  
9 Promptly  
10 Hydrox competitor  
11 Chip's pal  
16 Greek vowel  
20 Balaam's mount  
22 Rabbit  
23 Conceal  
24 Music edition of "Trivial Pursuit"  
25 Mid-afternoon, on a sundial  
26 Romantic area of Paris  
27 Money  
29 Oklahoma  
30 Energy  
35 Distant  
37 Sailors  
39 Aeolian tale  
40 Judge Lancelotti  
41 Ms. Moore  
42 Maleficence  
43 Bedazzle  
44 Spot in the water  
45 Lumps  
46 Lovers' quarrel  
49 Tin Man's need  
50 Mad Hatter's quaff

**Solution time: 25 mins.**

ANS: BET, ACME, OBOE, AGE, CLAY, CLIFFTOP, BLAKE, RIBBON, LISBONO, AGG, DENT, AUP, EGGS, EYARIE, TISLE, WAP, WARE, RILING, DITE, PIEN, PLED, LEO, PIEN, OFFICE, LESBIEE, POLS, GOMPONO, TROT, ROW, ANOE, SAAPS, YLES, ROISE

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47							48	49	50		
51							52		53		
54							55		56		

**CRYPTOQUIP**

F M Z N G H O D C B V W T Q G  
Z M O Z H B O T O S D B H P C O F  
P Y B N I H B V K T D Y S B C O F  
W M Q T C S H : " T D ' P C  
K M O F H B W N Q Q H C W . "

**Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF YOU WEAR A SMALL FLOWER BOUQUET THAT'S QUITE TYPICAL, IT MIGHT BE PAR FOR THE COURSE.**

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: C equals A