



AC Milan's veteran defender Paolo Maldini (R) and coach Carlo Ancelotti answers questions during a press conference in Munich on Tuesday. Milan will take

## Milan banking on Inzaghi

AFP, Munich



champions.

But Inzaghi, suffering from a thigh problem, is far from fully fit and certainly not assured to take to the field on Wednesday.

"He is available and everything possible to play. His qualities and experience could prove decisive in Munich," said Ancelotti of the 33-year-old.

Whether or not Inzaghi is fit to play, a lot of responsibility will rest on the shoulders of 24-year-old Brazilian playmaker Kaka.

The attacking midfielder is having his best season yet and is the club's top goalscorer.

It was his goal early in extra-time that saw Milan past Celtic in the previous round and Kaka also notched a penalty at the San Siro in the first leg against Bayern.

"He is irreplaceable and as long as he doesn't show signs of tiredness, he will play all the time," said Ancelotti.

Kaka is confident his teammates will do enough to win in Munich, despite twice losing leads in the first

leg as Bayern hit back with two goals from an unlikely source, Belgian centre-back Daniel Van Buyten.

"I believe we can win in Munich. I feel that this could become a historic night for us," said the Brazilian.

He has good reason to feel confident, despite his side conceding home field advantage and knowing a draw -- unless it is 2-2 or higher -- will not be enough to prolong their European adventure this season.

Millan may be languishing in fifth in their domestic league but they were docked eight points before the season began and would otherwise be only goal difference off third place.

As for Munich, their league form has been patchy all season and they sit fourth in the German table with a battle on their hands to make the top three and qualify for next season's Champions League.

They also laboured to a 2-1 win at lowly Hanover on Saturday. "We'll have to play 50 percent

better than that against Milan," coach Ottmar Hitzfeld reflected afterwards.

Hitzfeld has great experience in this competition, guiding Borussia Dortmund to the title in 1997 and then leading Bayern -- in his first stint at the helm -- to the crown in 2001.

Bayern have not even reached the semi-finals since then and confidence is in short supply throughout the club.

Even general manager Uli Hoeneß is not willing to look too far ahead of Wednesday's game.

"We can approach Milan in confident mood. We have a 50:50 chance. That's a realistic estimate," he said in somewhat contradictory fashion.

For the home side to say it is feeling "confident" but rating its chances as only 50:50 of earning the draw that will probably suffice to take them into the last four is not what would be expected of one of European football's giants.

## Vigo fire Vazquez

AFP, Madrid

Fernando Vazquez was on Monday fired by Celta Vigo, the Spanish first division club said.

Vazquez was in his third season at the club having earned them promotion from the second division in his first year in charge before guiding the club to a sixth place finish last year.

But they have struggled this season and currently sit in the relegation zone.

## Vaughan leaves hospital

AFP, Bolton

Everton striker James Vaughan, who severed an artery in his left leg during his side's 1-1 draw at Bolton, was released from hospital on Tuesday.

Vaughan, 18, was rushed to hospital after suffering the injury in a challenge with Abdoulaye Meite midway through the second half at the Reebok Stadium clash on Monday.

The teenager had scored Everton's equaliser in the 33rd minute after Kevin Davies had put Bolton in front. Doctors decided to release Vaughan from hospital after X-rays showed no bone or ligament damage.

## Guidolin keeps Palermo job

INTERNET, undated

Francesco Guidolin will remain at the helm of Palermo after chief Maurizio Zamparini made a surprising U-turn on Monday.

The fiery President was furious after Saturday's 3-1 home defeat to Cagliari and stated that it was Guidolin's last day on the bench.

Zamparini, however, spoke with sporting director Rino Foschi on Monday and declared that the Coach will end the season with the Sicilian club -- no matter what happens.

"The previous statements were due to the fact that I was mad, but Guidolin will stay," confirmed the outspoken patron.

"He will end the season with us. I think this is the right thing to do, no matter what the results are like. The technical staff will not change and we will try to understand what the problem is."

"On Wednesday Palermo will go on 'ritiro' to the Garda Lake. I will join the team and discuss the next moves with the Coach."

Foschi also confirmed the club's renewed trust in the former Udinese boss and believes the team can do well before the end of the campaign.

"There are no problems at all. I spoke to Guidolin at lunchtime after discussions with Zamparini, who is on vacation. This isn't an easy moment, but there will be no changes," said the official.

"The next seven matches before the end of the season will be very difficult, starting with the game against Inter on Sunday."

"Our championship is not over, we must try to reach our objectives. At the end, as at every club, there will be time to evaluate the situation and assess the season's results," concluded Foschi.

Palermo have earned just 10 points from the last 12 rounds and their fourth place in the table is under threat from Milan, Empoli and Fiorentina.

And the experienced South American added: "We believe in ourselves again and we have gained a little bit of confidence over the Easter period."

"Now we're only looking forward to the Intertoto Cup. That's our target."

A game of few chances at a sunbaked St James' Park was notable for the first half withdrawal of Newcastle goalkeeper Shay Given and a contentious United penalty claim in the closing stages.

## Inter to keep Crespo

INTERNET, undated

Hernan Crespo is set to remain at Inter as Chelsea are reportedly ready to free him from his Stamford Bridge contract.

The Argentine is owned by Chelsea, whom he is contracted to until 2008, but has made no secret of his desire to remain in Serie A after loan spells with firstly Milan and now the Nerazzurri.

La Gazzetta dello Sport claims that Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich is ready to release the striker who recently insisted that he

wanted to end his career with his present Italian club.

"If I receive an offer to stay at Inter and end my career here, then I will put pen to paper tomorrow," the South American said recently.

As a result, it is understood that Crespo will be offered a two-year deal with Nerazzurri at the end of the present campaign.

The much-travelled attacker joined Inter last summer in an agreement which did give the London club an option to recall him at the end of the 2006-07 season.

Meanwhile, Inter are also preparing to lure Deco from Barcelona as they search for a replacement for the departing Luis Figo.

The Portuguese star has con-

firmed that he will leave Italy in July to join Arabian club Al-Ittihad and the Via Durini outfit are looking at possible alternatives.

Lionel Messi of Barcelona and Ricardo Quaresma of Porto are the first names on the club's wish list, but Deco is also a target because of his midfield versatility.

The Brazilian is contracted until 2010 and has a massive £53m rescission clause, but reports suggest the Blaugrana might be willing to sell at a much lower price given that he is approaching his 30th birthday.

## Magpies hold Gunners

AFP, London



Arsenal's Champions League hopes are still in the balance after they were forced to settle for a 0-0 draw at Newcastle on Monday.

Arsene Wenger's side remain in fourth place but they are just two points ahead of Bolton, who visit the Emirates Stadium in a crunch clash on Saturday.

Arsenal have gone four matches without a win and, although they ended a run of three successive defeats, they are stumbling at the wrong time.

Failure to qualify for Europe's elite club competition would be a financial and footballing calamity for the London club, but they must improve quickly to avoid that scenario becoming a reality.

There was little to cheer Wenger at St James' Park as his team struggled to overcome resolute Newcastle in a scrappy encounter.

Newcastle went closest when James Milner hit the bar, although Arsenal could have won it late on when Nolberto Solano made a double goal-line clearance to deny Gilberto Silva and then substitute Jeremie Aliadiere.

Bolton missed a chance to increase the pressure on Arsenal as Everton fought back to draw 1-1 at the Reebok Stadium.

Sam Allardyce's side could have moved level on points with the Gunners with a win and they were on course after 18 minutes.

Joleon Lescott played Kevin Davies onside from Ivan Campo's free-kick and the striker controlled on his chest before firing home from close range.

But Arsenal hit back and equalised in the 33rd minute through James Vaughan. His initial shot was blocked but the rebound fell kindly for the young striker and he drove past Jussi Jaaskelainen.

That was as good as it got for Vaughan though as he later needed hospital treatment after severing an artery.

Struggling Wigan held on for a vital 1-1 draw at Aston Villa despite Antonio Valencia's first half red card.

The hard-earned point allowed Paul Jewell's 10 men to move three points clear of third bottom Sheffield United as they scrap to stay up.

Emile Heskey had put Wigan ahead against the run of play in the 21st minute. Denny Landzaat curled in a corner and Lee McCulloch headed on to Heskey, who finished from close range.

Valencia was sent off late in the first half for a two-footed lunge on Wilfred Bouma. Villa piled on the pressure and Gabriel Agbonlahor levelled five minutes into the second half.

Manchester City eased their relegation fears with a 3-1 win at Fulham that left the hosts deep in

trouble themselves.

Chris Coleman's side are without a victory in eight matches and remain just four points from the drop zone, while City are now edging towards mid-table safety.

Joey Barton drilled City into the lead with a fine strike from the edge of the area in the 21st minute. Barton turned provider after 36 minutes when he slipped a pass to DaMarcus Beasley and the American finished well.

City striker Darius Vassell added to Fulham's misery with a third goal in the 59th minute and Carlos Bocanegra's 76th minute header was no consolation for the hosts.

Watford boosted their slender chances of avoiding relegation with a 4-2 win over Portsmouth.

Adrian Boothroyd's side won for just the fourth time in the Premiership this season thanks to a double strike from Hameur Bouazza and goals from Gavin Mahon and Tamas Priskin.

Matt Taylor had given Portsmouth a 16th minute lead but Harry Redknapp's team showed no stomach for a fight and Arnold Mvuemba's late goal was no consolation for the visitors.

Watford are still likely to suffer a quick return to the Championship and they need fellow strugglers Charlton to slip up against Reading in Monday's late match.



Bolton's inspirational striker Nicolas Anelka fends off a challenge from Everton's James Vaughan (R) during Premiership tie at the Reebok Stadium in Bolton on Monday.

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### CRYPTOQUIP