

Borowski out indefinitely

AFP, Bremen

German and UEFA Cup title challengers Werder Bremen could be without influential midfielder Tim Borowski for the rest of the season, the player said Monday.

The German international suffered a knee injury during Sunday's crucial 2-0 victory at Borussia Dortmund and will be out for an indefinite period of time.

With just a month remaining this season, Borowski could miss the title run-in and Bremen's UEFA Cup quest.

Macala to coach Bahrain

AFP, Prague

Czech coach Milan Macala has been named to take over at the helm of the Bahrain national side, the Dnes daily newspaper reported on Tuesday.

The 63-year-old former manager of the Czechoslovakia team before the country split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia at the start of 1993, has signed a contract taking him through until 2009.

Macala has years of experience in the Gulf having previously been in charge of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Oman. He was sacked from the Oman job in February.

"This will be a great challenge for me," he said. "I intend to do all I can to bring success to Bahrain."

Wenger expects Lehmann to stay

AFP, London

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger said on Tuesday he expects German goalkeeper Jens Lehmann to sign an extension to his contract to keep him at the English giants.

With the 37-year-old's contract up at the end of the season, the German international had been linked to a move back to the Bundesliga to join Hertha Berlin, but Wenger expects to keep him in North London.

"I expect he will stay," the Arsenal manager told Arsenal TV.

The 13-times English champions have already offered Lehmann an extension, having joined them from Borussia Dortmund in 2003, and the German has already said he is happy to stay.

"I have always said that I enjoy playing here, but no decision has yet been taken," said Lehmann.

"I expect to be able to make an announcement in the next few days or next week," he said.

Villa grant Angel wings

AFP, Birmingham

Juan Pablo Angel was handed a footballing green card for the United States on Tuesday when Aston Villa boss Martin O'Neill confirmed that he would let the Colombian striker leave for Major League Soccer (MLS).

Angel is reportedly on the verge of agreeing a two-year contract with MLS outfit New York Red Bulls which would end a six-year stay at Villa.

The 31-year-old striker was the club's record signing when he joined for 9.5 million pounds from Argentina's River Plate in 2001.

But he has not been a first-team regular since O'Neill took over as manager last summer and Villa have since invested heavily in Norwegian striker John Carew and former Watford forward Ashley Young.

"Juan has a year left on his contract here and obviously we're trying to re-structure," O'Neill admitted.

"There are two transfer windows over in America and I wouldn't stand in his way if he has the chance to extend his career.

"A few weeks ago I wouldn't have considered it. We still needed points and John Carew was out injured. But John is on his way back and Luke Moore is also back.

"Juan has been really excellent since I came here to the football club in terms of being a real professional and I genuinely have nothing but praise for him.

"In the latter stages, perhaps he hasn't played the number of games he would hope to but I thought earlier in the season he was excellent for us, led the line and did great.

"He lost his place in the side just after Christmas, but ever since then, his attitude has been great.

"Maybe now he feels the upper echelons of the Premiership might be eluding him, but there could be a great chance to start a new life in America."

Angel has had an up and down career at Villa with his best season in 2003-2004 when he notched 23 goals.

He has netted seven times this season but has gradually slipped down the pecking order after a bright start to the current campaign as the sole striker in a 4-5-1 formation.



PHOTO: AFP

Benfica's veteran midfielder Rui Costa (R) vies with Braga's Pedro Costa during their Portuguese Super Liga match at Luz Stadium in Lisbon on Monday. The match ended 0-0.

Inter a step away

AFP, Rome



Inter Milan, who have dominated the Serie A this season, are one step away from being crowned champions for the second straight year against AS Roma on Wednesday.

Victory would give Inter an unbeatable 19-point advantage on Roma, assuring the champions their 14th Serie A crown with six games left this season.

The tie between the top two sides was first scheduled back in February, but was postponed following the riots in Sicily.

Inter, who finished third last season but were awarded the title after Juventus and AC Milan were found guilty of match-fixing, will be looking to make the most of their home advantage for the celebrations as well as maintaining their unbeaten run this season.

A victory would also allow Inter to focus on their bid to break the 100-point barrier. To do so they need 19

points from the remaining 21 on offer.

Inter have currently 81 points from 31 games, with AS Roma on 65.

But Roma will be gunning to cause some upsets in Milan, a week after being humiliated 7-1 by Manchester United in the Champions League.

"We're not going to the San Siro to join in their party," warned captain Francesco Totti.

"It's an important match for them, but for us as well -- we don't want to let our grip on second place slip away."

After a comfortable 4-0 win at Sampdoria on Sunday, Roma demonstrated that they had recovered from their Old Trafford mauling.

By contrast Inter were almost unrecognisable as they were held to a 2-2 draw at home to Palermo, a week after a goalless draw against relegation-threatened Reggina.

It was the first time this season that the leaders have had to settle for two consecutive draws.

"We gave them too much space and didn't start the match with enough aggression and focus. I

hope that that won't happen against Roma," said coach Roberto Mancini.

Mancini has however several players sidelined with injuries including defender Maxwell and midfielder Patrick Vieira, with striker Hernan Crespo uncertain after picking up a thigh injury against Palermo.

On Roma's side Brazilian midfielder Rodrigo Taddei is uncertain.

Elsewhere Wednesday, third-placed Lazio, nine points behind Roma, host Chievo, while AC Milan will be looking to secure the fourth qualifying spot for Champions League next season when they visit tailenders Ascoli.

FIXTURES

(1530GMT kick-off unless stated)  
**Wednesday**  
Ascoli v AC Milan, Empoli v Atalanta, Inter Milan v AS Roma, Lazio v Chievo, Livorno v Cagliari, Reggina v Messina, Udinese v Sampdoria, Parma v Fiorentina (1830), Siena v Torino (1830)

Shevchenko eyes Milan final

INTERNET, undated

Chelsea's Andriy Shevchenko hopes to meet former club Milan in next month's Champions League final.

"As I have already said, in Athens I would like to face Milan," said Sheva. "However, I don't like talking about a game that is not yet even in the fixture list."

While the Italian giants have been drawn against Manchester United, the London club will take on Liverpool in the semi-finals.

The latter is set to be a keenly felt tie for the Ukrainian after the events of the 2005 Final between Liverpool and Milan.

The Reds came back from 3-0 down to win the game on penalties, with the striker missing the decisive effort in the shoot-out.

"There will not be any sporting revenge for me though," insisted the former Dynamo Kiev star. "Why does everyone speak about the past?"

"For me the word is future. I will play against Liverpool without thinking about what happened in that cursed Champions League Final," said the 30m-pound summer signing.

"It's going to be difficult as Liverpool are very strong, especially in the Champions League," he maintained.

Shevchenko also commented on the possibility that Chelsea may meet Manchester United three times in 14 days if both clubs reach the May 23 Final in Greece.

"This season we are fighting against Manchester United on every front," he continued.

"Apart from the domestic League and the Champions League, we will have to play against them in the FA Cup which is also very important."

Vieri set for comeback

AFP, Rome

Veteran Italian striker Christian Vieri is set to end a year on the sidelines by playing for Atalanta against Empoli in a league match on Wednesday, the Gazzetta dello Sport reported on Tuesday.

The 33-year-old goalscorer last played on March 26 of last year when he injured his left knee when turning out for Monaco against Paris St Germain in the French first division.

He underwent two operations since then to repair the damage and eventually signed on August 30 for Atalanta for the minimum salary allowed under Italian labour laws.

Vieri played 49 times for the Italian national side, scoring 23 goals, but was overlooked for the squad that eventually won the World Cup in Germany last year.

He moved to Monaco in January of 2006, but played only seven games for them before injuring his knee.

Real ref received death threats

AFP, Madrid

The referee in charge of Real Madrid's 2-1 weekend defeat by Racing Santander said Tuesday that he fears for his family's safety after receiving telephone death threats following the game.

"I have received more than 50 phone calls at my home threatening me and my family with death. I like being a referee and I do it with honour and dignity but I have a family and it's hard," Javier Turienzo Alvarez told Punto Radio.

"I have a six-year-old daughter who returned from the park yesterday crying. My daughter said: 'the children tell me you ruined things for Real...' and it hurts me to the core," he added.

Alvarez enraged Real fans when he awarded Santander two penalties in the last 20 minutes of Saturday's match and sent off two Real Madrid players, Ivan Helguera and Alvaro Mejia, in the 87th and 90th minutes respectively.

Real's defeat, coupled with Barcelona's 1-0 home win over Mallorca on Sunday, left the nine-times European champions five points adrift of their bitter rivals in the title race.

Real sports director Predrag Mijatovic criticized the refereeing after the match, saying, "some very strange things have happened".

"It isn't normal what they have done to us," he added.

Alvarez rejected Mijatovic's comments and lodged a complaint over the treats with a court in the northwestern city of Leon where he lives.

"There is nothing strange going on. Everyone makes mistakes -- players, directors, referees," he said.

Alvarez told the radio station he recorded several telephone numbers from which the threatening calls originated.

Crouch wants to stay a Red

AFP, Liverpool



Peter Crouch has responded to speculation surrounding his Liverpool future by insisting he

has no intention of quitting the Champions League semifinalists.

England striker Crouch, set to face Middlesbrough in a Premiership clash at Anfield on Wednesday, has been continually linked with a summer move to Newcastle after failing to secure a regular starting spot in Rafa Benitez's team since his seven-million-pound switch from Southampton two years ago.

The 6ft 7ins forward is the club's leading scorer with 18 goals this season, but Liverpool are understood to be monitoring Spanish duo David Villa and Fernando Torres ahead of possible summer swoops bankrolled by their new American owners.

However, Crouch has vowed to prove his commitment to Liverpool as they close in on third spot in the Premiership and the Champions League semi-final double-header against Chelsea.

He said: "People are saying I am going to move on but I'm determined to prove I'm happy at the

club. I want to stay and, until I'm told otherwise, I will carry on doing the same things and working hard.

"It has never entered my head to leave. I'm happy here. There are more things to come, we will win more things and I certainly don't want to leave.

"But I've got to work hard and make sure I'm invaluable to the set up otherwise you will find yourself out of it.

"I think the future is bright. We have got the right man in charge, we have got a new stadium to look forward to and I don't want to go anywhere else."

With a top four spot and Champions League qualification for next season virtually secured, Liverpool boss Benitez admits that next Wednesday's Champions League first leg against Chelsea is looming large in his players' minds.

But the former Valencia coach insists that the Middlesbrough and Saturday's Anfield encounter with Wigan will be crucial pointers as to his team selection against Jose Mourinho's men.

Benitez said: "We have two home games now and we know if we play well and with confidence we could win those games. We have to try to be positive.

"The players know every game is important for them. If they want to

play in the semi-final they need the confidence of the manager and the people.

"We know what they players are capable of but they should show they're in a good situation to play at their best. We have a few games to play before the semi-final and we expect 100 per cent."

Middlesbrough travel to Anfield seven points clear of the relegation zone, but with a daunting trip to Manchester United following their clash with Liverpool. Relegation is a distant possibility, but Boro and England winger Stewart Downing insists the Teessiders can wipe out those fears against the big two.

He said: "From the outside looking in, it probably looks as if we want the season to end, but certainly in the dressing room we don't feel that way because we haven't got 40 points yet. There's no chance of us just letting things drift.

"There are two big games coming up at Liverpool and Manchester United. They're not easy games, but we have to go there and put up a fight.

"Everyone fears that we'll go to Anfield and Old Trafford and get beat, but we have good records there and we'll go with confidence and give them a hard game."



PHOTO: AFP

A fan adjusts an altar in tribute to Diego Maradona in a street of Naples on Monday. The football idol was rushed to emergency on Friday, just two days after being discharged from a different facility after 13 days of treatment for excessive drinking which sparked a return of the chronic hepatitis he has suffered for years.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

<b>ACROSS</b>	<b>43</b> Tide type	<b>3</b> Big name	<b>23</b> Whopper topper
<b>1</b> After-hrs. bank	<b>44</b> Satchel		
<b>4</b> Dalai —	<b>46</b> Hallow- een	<b>4</b> Portable PCs	<b>25</b> Dog bane
<b>8</b> Some- where out there	<b>50</b> Immedi- ately	<b>5</b> Past	<b>26</b> Despot
<b>12</b> "Annabel Lee" writer	<b>55</b> Moo — gai pan	<b>6</b> More, to	<b>27</b> Lancaster adversary
<b>13</b> Culture medium	<b>56</b> Roundish	<b>7</b> Crafts' mates	<b>28</b> Cougar
<b>14</b> Scoop holder	<b>57</b> Boot attach- ment	<b>8</b> Gum arabic	<b>29</b> October stone
<b>15</b> Blunder	<b>58</b> Aries	<b>9</b> Support- ing	<b>30</b> Emulate Columbus
<b>16</b> Vacation- ers'	<b>59</b> Luminary	<b>10</b> "Not only that, but ..."	<b>31</b> Otherwise
<b>18</b> Duffer's digging	<b>60</b> Sheet of glass	<b>11</b> Dos' neighbors	<b>35</b> Open shelving
<b>20</b> Pouch	<b>61</b> — out a living		<b>38</b> IOU
<b>21</b> Matador's foe			<b>40</b> Speed- ometer abbr.
<b>24</b> "Swell!"	<b>1</b> Wasn't original		<b>42</b> "Unh-unh"
<b>28</b> Put off	<b>2</b> Actress		<b>45</b> React in horror
<b>32</b> Moreover	<b>Spelling</b>		<b>47</b> Shrek, for one
<b>33</b> — tree (caught)			<b>48</b> Drench
<b>34</b> Fun't directive			<b>49</b> Heavy reading
<b>36</b> Corn spike			<b>50</b> Faux —
<b>37</b> One of the help			<b>51</b> Fre- quently
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<b>41</b> "Manhat- tan" director			<b>Pyrenees</b>

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SWEET	USED	
PALE	INCENSE	
ALL	ARIA	ARCH
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CRYPTOQUIP

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I J F U Q T N Z Z N J, F H E R Q Q

M Z E W F H J N Q T M F N

J T U R S R C T I I F - C R S N T K K M.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN TWO PEOPLE ARE PARTICIPATING IN AN ONLINE SPEED CONTEST, I'D SAY THEY'RE E-RACING.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: M equals Y