

## 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



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)

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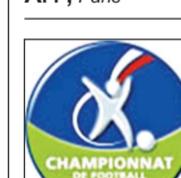
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## Lyon's chance to wrap it up

AFP, Paris



Lyon were set to clinch their sixth straight French league title on Wednesday when a win at home over Rennes would see them past the post.

Gerard Houllier's men already stand 17 points clear of second-placed Toulouse, but were again against mid-table Rennes in hand.

A win in that would leave them a massive 20 points clear with six games to go. Even a draw would virtually clinch it as Toulouse would have to win six in a row by big margins and would need Lyon to lose six in a row.

"It's my first season with Lyon and my first league title," he told the Lyon website.

The champions-in-waiting may have to do without their French international defender Sébastien Squillaci who missed Monday's training with stomach flu, but striker Fred was back in action after being left out of Sunday's 1-0 win against Sudan for being late for training.

The Brazilian, however, was not expected to play against Rennes, with Czech striker Milan Baros available again after suspension.

He would join forces with Swedish midfielder Kim Källstrom, a former Rennes star, who said the Lyon players had no problem with wrapping up the league title in such a matter-of-fact manner.

"It's my first season with Lyon and my first league title," he told the Lyon website.

"The fact that we have all these points in hand and that there is not much in the way of suspense, takes nothing away from the enjoyment of it. The sixth in a row for Lyon.

"We have worked hard for this all season and there were key moments for us like the games against Lens and especially Marseille."

Rennes still have the incentive of finishing the season well and grabbing a qualifying spot for one of the European club competitions.

The day's other game sees slumping Bordeaux host relegation strugglers Nancy.

## FIXTURES

Wednesday

Bordeaux v AS Nancy,

Lyon v Rennes

## Italy bid for Euro 2012

### Football

AFP, Paris

Hooliganism seems set to play a role in the decision of who will host the 2012 European Championships, ahead of the vote in Cardiff on Wednesday.

Italy are bidding for the right against two joint bids -- from Hungary-Croatia and Poland-Ukraine.

Italy are the favourites to win the vote but it is their record on hooligan violence that may well come back to haunt them, a factor that has not been lost on Luca Pancalli, the extraordinary commissioner for the Italian Football Federation (FIGC).

"I'm optimistic," he insisted. "Paradoxically, I would have had many more doubts if there had not been what has happened."

Football-related violence has been a hot topic around Europe this season, ever since a policeman was killed after clashes broke out during the Sicilian derby between Catania and Palermo in February.

More recently, several Manchester United fans were stabbed while attending a

campaign can only work in our favour."

And having defended his own bid he attacked those of their rivals.

"You can also talk about unstable governments in Italy, as well as corruption in football. Plus there has been a hooligan problem."

"Hungary also has political stability issues, while there's a problem with stadium security in Croatia."

Hungary and Croatia, meanwhile, have been concentrating more on their own bid rather than the issues facing their rivals.

"I am certain we will win the right to host," said Vlatko Markovic, president of the Croatian Football Association.

"I was there at the previous presentations (of bids) and we fared the best. While we arrived with one thousand pages of material, others only had a thin booklet to show."

Hungary's Euro 2012 project manager Tamas Gyurfas is also convinced the Hungarian-Croatian bid is the best.

"Italy is a football powerhouse, they are world champions. But I hope this race will be won by the candidate with the best bid," he said.

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

## 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 fought 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 Tinieblas 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 me," 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 Rafael 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