



AC Milan's Champions League winners Alberto Gilardino (L), Christian Brocchi and Filippo Inzaghi (R) celebrate with the trophy on top of a bus that toured through Milan on Thursday night. Thousands of fans lined the streets to welcome home AC Milan a day after they clinched their seventh European Cup with a 2-1 win over Liverpool.

Toulouse dream of Europe

AFP, Paris

Controversy has shot up into view for the final round of French league fixtures on Saturday after Toulouse's hopes of European football improved after earning more points following Nantes's punishment.

Champions Lyon and second-placed Marseille are already assured of Champions League football next season but the third Champions League spot and a UEFA Cup spot are still up for grabs.

Yet Thursday's decision by the French football league to award Toulouse a victory after their week-end 0-0 draw was abandoned late on because of trouble by Nantes' fans, has meant the south-western club have an advantage.

Lens, Bordeaux, Rennes and Toulouse, who are second to sixth, all have a mathematical chance of claiming spots but Toulouse are now in a much better position and both Rennes and Bordeaux have not ruled out legal action against the league for their decision.

The French league disciplinary commission president Jacques Riolacci said on Thursday they had followed rules to the letter in awarding Toulouse victory and giving Nantes a one-match, suspended stadium ban.

More intriguingly Toulouse, more known for rugby than football, host Bordeaux this weekend.

Bordeaux president Jean-Louis Triaud said they had not ruled out civil legal proceedings against the league if his club loses revenue because of points awarded to Toulouse.

"All this is laughable," Triaud said. "The decision had been decided in advance. I hope for the league's sake we beat Toulouse because that will avoid certain problems."

FIXTURES

**Saturday**  
Lille v Rennes, Lorient v Paris SG, Lyon v Nantes, Marseille v Sedan, Monaco v Nancy, Nice v Le Mans, Sochaux v St Etienne, Toulouse v Bordeaux, Troyes v Lens, Valenciennes v Auxerre

Zambrotta snubs Milan option

INTERNET, undated

Barcelona's Gianluca Zambrotta has rubbished reports that he is on the verge of joining European champions Milan.

The Italian international has been heavily associated with the Rossoneri who have cash to spend on the market thanks to their Champions League success.

However, the man who left Juventus for the Nou Camp last summer following Calciopoli insists he is going nowhere.

"I'm staying at Barcelona and I'm 100 per cent sure of that fact," said the Italian international full-back.

The former Bari ace has had a difficult first season in La Liga even if he insists returning to the peninsula has never entered his mind.

"I have never thought about moving back to Italy or playing for a different club," added the former winger.

"I am very happy to be a part of Barcelona and I'm settled here.

"Milan? All I will say is that I have many friends there who I'd like to congratulate for their Champions League success."

GERMAN CUP

Stuttgart to unleash Gomez

Football

AFP, Berlin

New Bundesliga champions VfB Stuttgart will unleash their fit again top goal-scorer Mario Gomez on Nuremberg in this Saturday's German Cup final as they bid to land their first domestic double.

Gomez, 21, has bagged 14 goals this season, despite missing eight weeks with a knee injury, and only made his return in dramatic fashion a fortnight ago to score the late goal which put Stuttgart top of the Bundesliga.

Having used him as an impact player from the bench, Stuttgart coach Armin Veh revealed his plans to hit the Nuremberg defence with Gomez, who has been included in the squad for Germany's Euro 2008 qualifiers, from the start.

"There is a strong chance he will play from the outset," said Veh, who

will tempt fate by not be wearing his trade-mark lucky grey suit, the one he wore when his side captured their first Bundesliga title for 15 years last weekend.

Having been hammered 3-0 and 4-1 by Nuremberg home and away this season, Stuttgart are in the hunt for some sweet revenge in Saturday's DFB Cup final at Berlin's Olympic Stadium.

Stuttgart opened the season with a 3-0 defeat at their Gottlieb-Daimler-Stadium and after the winter break went down 4-1 away at their deadly rivals Nuremberg, so are looking to lay a few ghosts on Saturday.

This is the first cup final clash between these two particular sides and both clubs have won the cup three times apiece, so it promises to be an emotional afternoon for both teams – especially their goalkeepers.

Stuttgart's shot-stopper Timo Hildebrand is set to join Spanish giants Valencia, while Nuremberg's Raphael Schaefer, in an ironic twist which could

add to the drama, is leaving this summer to join... Stuttgart.

Schaefer will no doubt be hoping the game will not be decided on penalties and that his likely back four of Dominik Reinhardt, Andreas Wolf, the Brazilian Glauber and Javier Horacio Pinola give him little to do.

Pinola said after training on Thursday that he feels a Nuremberg win is in the air and Wolf was just as optimistic, saying: "We are very confident of our chances."

But for Nuremberg striker, Markus Schroth, who wants to give Hildebrand the worst possible send off in his last game having spent the last 12 years at Stuttgart, the Bundesliga is now history.

"The league is over," he said, "now we are onto something quite special, we play as a tight unit and we'll know exactly what to do on Saturday."

McClaren mum on Becks

Football

AFP, Manchester

Steve McClaren will decide in the next 24 hours whether to recall David Beckham to the England squad.

Speculation is growing that the Real Madrid star could be named for next month's must-win Euro 2004 qualifier with Estonia after almost a year in the international wilderness.

But McClaren, who axed Beckham after taking over from Sven Goran Eriksson following England's World Cup failure last summer, gave little away when probed on the subject ahead of Friday's B international friendly with Albania.

"There has been a lot of speculation about David and quite a few other people," said the England coach.

"I'm naming the squad on Saturday morning and everybody will find out then. Before then I've got a game to get through.

"I've got to check on the Liverpool players after the Champions League final and make sure the Manchester United and Chelsea players are available.

"I've got to put everything together and then name a squad on Saturday."

Newcastle striker Michael Owen will make his first appearance for his country on Friday since limping out of last summer's World Cup with cruciate

knee ligament damage.

Owen, who scored in England's last game against Albania six years ago, has managed just four hours and seven minutes of Premiership action this season.

But the 27-year-old veteran of 80 caps insists he is fitter than ever – and McClaren cannot wait to see him back in action.

Providing he comes through Friday's game at Burnley unscathed then Owen is likely to figure in England's first full international at the new Wembley against Brazil on June 1 followed by the Estonia qualifier on June 6.

McClaren, who will be without suspended striker Wayne Rooney for Estonia, said: "We have missed Michael.

"One of our problems over the last year is that we haven't scored enough goals. Michael is a player who sticks the ball in the back of the net and who wins you matches."

Owen, scorer of 36 England goals, admitted he had endured a frustrating 12 months, but is relishing the opportunity of representing his country once again.

"You never want to get injured and I don't know any players who are good patients," said Owen, who will partner Manchester United's Alan Smith in attack against Otto Baric's Albania.

"But I've coped fine with it. I've tried to turn it into a positive experience

McClaren endured a barrage of

abuse from fans and the media following England's last outing, an unimpressive 3-0 victory over Euro minnows Andorra in Barcelona in March.

But the coach, speaking for the first time since that game, insists the thought of quitting never once entered his head.

"Sometimes you have to go through the bad times to appreciate the good times," added McClaren.

"What impressed me was the second half performance of the players. After the game there was a great feeling among the players and the staff that we had come through.

"It was a hostile atmosphere and it was a difficult game. That was a test and the players came through it.

"We had a good feeling after the game that we were going to prove people wrong and turn things around.

"I still believe that. "Nobody likes what we had to endure during that 90 minutes.

"But that's football and everybody has their opinion. Everyone has the right to voice that.

"All we can do is perform and do our best and try and win matches."

Quintet in battle for survival

AFP, Rome

Five Serie A teams are involved in a fierce scrap to avoid the final relegation place on Sunday, the final day of the season.

Siena, Reggina, Catania, Parma and Chievo are all involved in the dogfight, with just two points separating the nervous quintet.

Two of those five face each other with Catania taking on Chievo, while Reggina will be hoping AC Milan still have sore heads when they host the newly-crowned European champions.

Milan won the European Cup for the seventh time on Wednesday after they defeated Liverpool 2-1 in Athens. Filippo Inzaghi scored twice for Milan as they took revenge for their defeat to Liverpool in the 2005 Champions League final in Istanbul.

Siena entertain third-placed Lazio, while Parma play at home to seventh-placed Empoli.

Should Reggina survive it will be a remarkable feat for the Calabrian club given their 15-point deduction for match-fixing.

Champions Inter Milan, who host Torino this weekend, will go directly into the Champions League group stages together with second-placed Roma, while AC Lazio must overcome a two-legged qualifier to join their compatriots in the competition proper.

AC Milan failed to finish in the top two, but they will go directly into the group stages as holders of the trophy.

The three UEFA Cup places have been claimed by Fiorentina, Palermo and Empoli.

FIXTURES

(all 1300GMT kick-off)  
Ascoli v Cagliari, Catania v Chievo (being played on neutral ground at Bologna), Fiorentina v Sampdoria, Inter Milan v Torino, Livorno v Atalanta, Parma v Empoli, Reggina v AC Milan, Roma v Messina, Siena v Lazio, Udinese v Palermo

A dream come true: Inzaghi

INTERNET, undated

Milan hero Filippo Inzaghi insists he fulfilled a childhood dream by scoring a brace in the Champions League final.

The striker netted a decisive double in the 2-1 win over Liverpool this week and he admits his Athens memories will last forever.

"You dream about scoring two goals in a Final when you're a kid," said the 2006 World Cup winner.

"The goals I scored on Wednesday were the most important of my whole career," continued Super Pippo.

"It was an unforgettable match. Nights like these remain with you for your entire life and it is clear that two goals in the Final leave you with few words to say."

Inzaghi is also delighted that this week's victory has helped to erase the ghosts of Istanbul in 2005, a game he missed.

"That was terrible for me," he added. "I was in the stands and I hoped I would one day face Liverpool again in order to help my team take revenge.

"These are the stories that make football a great sport."

Inzaghi, who will turn 34 in August, is aware that playing time might be restricted in the future at the San Siro, but he still wants to contribute when asked.

"I will have to play less and that is only right," he added. "I will try to do my best when I am fielded and will play only when I am fit to do so.

"I would like to reach the landmark of 100 goals for Milan," explained the striker, who has scored 82 times so far. "Nevertheless, I plan on ending my career here if the club agrees."

UEFA blame L'pool fans

AFP, Paris

William Gaillard, advisor to UEFA president Michel Platini, clearly laid the fault of incidents before the European Champions League final on to the Liverpool fans, describing the Milan spectators as "exemplary."

Many Liverpool fans arrived in Athens for Wednesday night's match, won 2-1 by the Italians, with forged tickets or without any tickets at all.

"Before the match certain Liverpool fans did not have tickets, or false tickets, and tried to get past the barriers and into the stadium," Gaillard told AFP.

"To avoid more serious incidents, Greek police decided, correctly, to let some of them in.

"But others, who got into the section of the crowd for Liverpool fans prevented fans with proper tickets watching the match properly which shows no solidarity and is regrettable.

"Now is a good time for Liverpool supporters to use some self-criticism. They must understand that seats are not unlimited. You have to compare the behaviour of the two sets of supporters. Milan fans were exemplary, disciplined, behaved correctly and must be praised for that."

BARCA SEEK REDEMPTION

Real eye stretching lead

AFP, Madrid



Real Madrid and Barcelona continue their close tussle for the Spanish league title this weekend with just three games to go and both clubs leading the table on the same number of points.

Real Madrid host Deportivo La Coruna and Barcelona entertain Getafe in Saturday fixtures as they attempt to forge out an advantage.

Fourth-placed Valencia, four points behind the leading two, also have a Saturday home match against Villarreal.

Valencia are finishing the season on a high and are on a run of five consecutive victories with 33-year-old Frenchman Robert Pires in fine form.

Sevilla, in third spot two points behind the leaders, play on Sunday against Real Zaragoza.

Real Madrid, who are like Valencia on a run of five victories, are in confident mood on the run-up to the Deportivo fixture. "We know we have a formidable team," said Real keeper Iker Casillas during the week.

It will also in theory be the penul-

FIXTURES

**Saturday**  
Valencia v Villarreal, Real Madrid v Deportivo La Coruna, Barcelona v Getafe  
**Sunday**  
Celta Vigo v Real Betis, Osasuna v Real Sociedad, Racing Santander v Levante, Athletic Bilbao v Real Mallorca, Recreativo Huelva v Espanyol, Gimnastic Tarragona v Atletico Madrid, Sevilla v Real Zaragoza

time Santiago-Bernebeu stadium appearance for two of the big names at the club – David Beckham who joins Los Angeles Galaxy next season, and Robert Carlos who said in March he would leave after this season following 11 years at the club.

Barcelona, who beat Atletico Madrid 6-0 last weekend, play Getafe who shocked them in the Spanish Cup semifinals, putting an end to Barca's league and cup double dreams, by winning 4-0 at home following a 5-2 loss at the Nou Camp.

At the other end of the table, this 36th round of matches could see the relegation of both Gimnastic Tarragona and Celta Vigo. The two Basque clubs Real Sociedad and Athletic Bilbao continue their fight against relegation against Osasuna and Real Mallorca respectively.

France call up new faces

Football

AFP, Paris

France coach Raymond Domenech has named two uncapped players, Rennes striker Jimmy Briand and Auxerre defender Bakary Sagna, in his squad for next week's Euro 2008 qualifiers.

But left out of Thursday's 23-man list for the qualifiers against Ukraine and Georgia were Juventus attacker David Trezeguet, while also missing were the injured trio Thierry Henry, Willy Sagnol and Patrick Vieira.

Explaining Trezeguet's absence the France manager said: "His ability isn't in question, he hasn't been picked for the same reasons as before, the difference between Serie B and the international level."

Both Briand, 21, and Sagna, 24, are graduates of France's Under 21 side.

Franck Ribery and Florent Malouda make their return to the national team while among the goal-keepers Domenech has added Fiorentina's Sebastien Frey to regular stoppers Gregory Coupet and Mickael Landreau.

France play Ukraine at the Stade de France on June 2 and Georgia in Auxerre four days later with Domenech calling for fans to recreate the 'Spirit of '98' when France won the World Cup on homesoil.

"I would like to see something extra, like all the supporters decked out in blue – that will give an immediate confidence boost to the players," he explained.

The 2006 World Cup finalists are tied on 12 points with Ukraine and Scotland at the top of Group B, but have a game in hand on the Scots in the race to gain qualification for next year's European Championships in Austria and Switzerland.

World champions Italy are fourth in

the group on 10 points, and like France have played five matches.

SQUAD

**Goalkeepers:** Gregory Coupet (Lyon), Mickael Landreau (PSG), Sebastien Frey (Fiorentina/ITA)

**Defenders:** Eric Abidal (Lyon), Francois Clerc (Lyon), Julien Escude (Sevilla/ESP), William Gallas (Arsenal/ENG), Bakary Sagna (Auxerre), Sebastien Squillaci (Lyon), Lilian Thuram (Barcelona/ESP)

**Midfielders:** Abou Diaby (Arsenal/ENG), Alou Diarra (Lyon), Lassana Diarra (Chelsea/ENG), Claude Makelele (Chelsea/ENG), Florent Malouda (Lyon), Samir Nasri (Marseille), Franck Ribery (Marseille), Jeremy Toulalan (Lyon)

**Forwards:** Nicolas Anelka (Bolton/ENG), Karim Benzema (Lyon), Jimmy Briand (Rennes), Djibril Cisse (Marseille), Sidney Govou (Lyon)

Jansen leads march to Bayern

AFP, Berlin



Germany's international defender Marcell Jansen will join Bundesliga giants Bayern Munich this summer after signing a four-year contract in a deal worth nine million euros (12 million US dollars) it was revealed on Friday -- with more arrivals expected.

Jansen, who has won 14-caps for his country, will leave Borussia Moenchengladbach, who were relegated from the Bundesliga last weekend, and has completed the deal after passing a medical in Munich.

A fringe player in the German squad, 21-year-old Jansen is highly regarded by national coach Joachim Loew, who has included him in his squad for next month's Euro 2008 qualifiers against San Marino and Slovakia.

"This is an important step in my

career and has been very carefully thought out," left-back Jansen told German sports magazine Kicker on Friday.

But Bayern's gain is Moenchengladbach's loss.

"We did not plan to sell Marcell Jansen, he was part of the planning for the coming season. But we can understand his wish to improve himself and further his career," said Borussia president Rolf Koenigs.

Jansen's switch is sure to be the first in a long list of arrivals at Bayern Munich set to be announced in the next few weeks by the German giants who are smarting after their worst season for more than ten years.

Of those confirmed for next season, talented 23-year-old striker Jan Schlaudraff is joining from relegated Alemannia Aachen and Turkish international midfielder Hamit Altintop is coming from Schalke 04.

While Argentinian midfielder Jose Ernesto Sosa is set to join from Argentina's Estudiantes de La Plata, as is Italian World Cup winner

Luca Toni from Fiorentina.

But there is a long list of big names who Bayern are courting as head coach Ottmar Hitzfeld looks to completely rebuild his squad.

English giants Chelsea are negotiating with Dutch winger Arjen Robben, but if the 23-year-old fails to agree terms, Bayern are ready to step in.

Other targets include attacking midfielder Franck Ribery (Marseille) and Portugal's forward Ricardo Quaresma (Porto FC), while former Bayern midfielder Ze Roberto is set to return after a season playing for Santos in his native Brazil.

Bayern have already lost the services of English international midfielder Owen Hargreaves, who is set to join Manchester United, Mehmet Scholl (retired), Juventus-bound midfielder Hasan Salihamidzic.

Peruvian striker Claudio Pizarro and Iranian midfielder Ali Karimi are both leaving Bayern, but there has been no announcement of where they will go.



Boca Juniors' Rodrigo Palacio celebrates with teammate Martin Palermo (R) after scoring against Paraguay's Libertad, during a Libertadores Cup second-leg quarterfinal match in Asuncion on Thursday. Boca won 2-0 on the night to advance to the semis with an aggregate of 3-1 win.