

Liverpool footballers Pepe Reina (L) and Fernando Torres take part in a training session at their Melwood training ground on Tuesday.

## Gerrard in road accident

THE GUARDIAN

Steven Gerrard was involved in a traffic collision yesterday which left a 10-year-old boy with a suspected broken leg, his spokesman said.

The car was travelling along Grantham Road in Birkdale, Merseyside, when the incident happened at 3.15pm and the Liverpool captain's spokesman said: "Steven was driving very slowly through an area of Birkdale when a young boy ran out and hit the side of his car. Steven comfirmed the boy until the paramedics arrived.

Steven later attended a police station where he produced his driving documents as a matter of routine and made a statement about the accident. He was distressed over the accident and has been in contact with the boy's family to check his progress and plans to visit him in the next couple of days.

## Five weeks out for Kahn

AFP, Munich

Bayern Munich captain and goalkeeper Oliver Kahn will be out for the next five weeks after having an operation on Tuesday to repair an elbow injury.

The 38-year-old former German captain missed last Saturday's 1-0 Bundesliga win over Bayer Leverkusen and former Germany under-21 keeper Michael Rensing, 23, will continue to deputise in his absence for the league leaders.

Kahn, who is set to retire from the Bundesliga at the end of the month, will miss all of Bayern's October fixtures including Thursday's UEFA Cup first-round, second-leg trip to Belenenses in Lisbon.

"We will be without Oliver for the next five weeks," Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld told German tabloid Bild with his side four points clear at the top of the table.

"It's not so bad," said Kahn himself, "because of the international break coming up, I won't miss too many games."

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## L'pool lacking firepower

### Football

AFP, Liverpool

keeper insists it is the way Liverpool defend through the team that means their former striker Djibril Cisse is likely to find life difficult when he returns to Anfield with his new teammates.

"We're proud of the record but we all defend together so it's everyone's record," Reina said.

"We have only conceded from penalties so far, which is important. It is something we can be proud of but we must keep working in that way."

Rafael Benitez's squad will however go into Wednesday's Champions League clash with crisis-hit Marseille bolstered by the knowledge that their defensive form is currently as good as at any time in the club's illustrious history.

Jose Reina has yet to concede a goal in open play this season and a first Premier League clean sheet at Wigan on Saturday ensured the class of 2007 have equalled a 30-year-old club record for the best defensive start to the season.

Reina's form has been key to

that run but the Spanish goal-

Liverpool's cause has probably been helped by the turmoil at Marseille, who last week sacked Albert Emon and installed former Belgium defender Eric Gerets as their new coach.

Emon paid the price for the club's disastrous domestic form.

Marseille have won just once in

nine league matches this season and are currently hovering just above the relegation zone in France's top division.

Among those hoping to exploit the disarray in the French side's ranks will be Yossi Benayoun, who has demonstrated why Benitez snapped him up from West Ham in the summer with two goals in his last two appearances, including the winner at Wigan this weekend.

The Israeli playmaker appears to have been ear-marked by Benitez as the kind of player who can provide the extra guile required unlocking defences in cagey European clashes, but he will not be banging on Benitez's door demanding a starting place against Marseille.

"I can't say I deserve to play in this game or this game, because we have a lot of great players," Benayoun said. "For me the most important thing when I'm on the pitch, whether it's for 10 minutes or

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## FOUR-ALL AT WHITE HART LANE

## Spurs save Jol's neck

AFP, London

White Hart Lane on the club's 125th birthday.

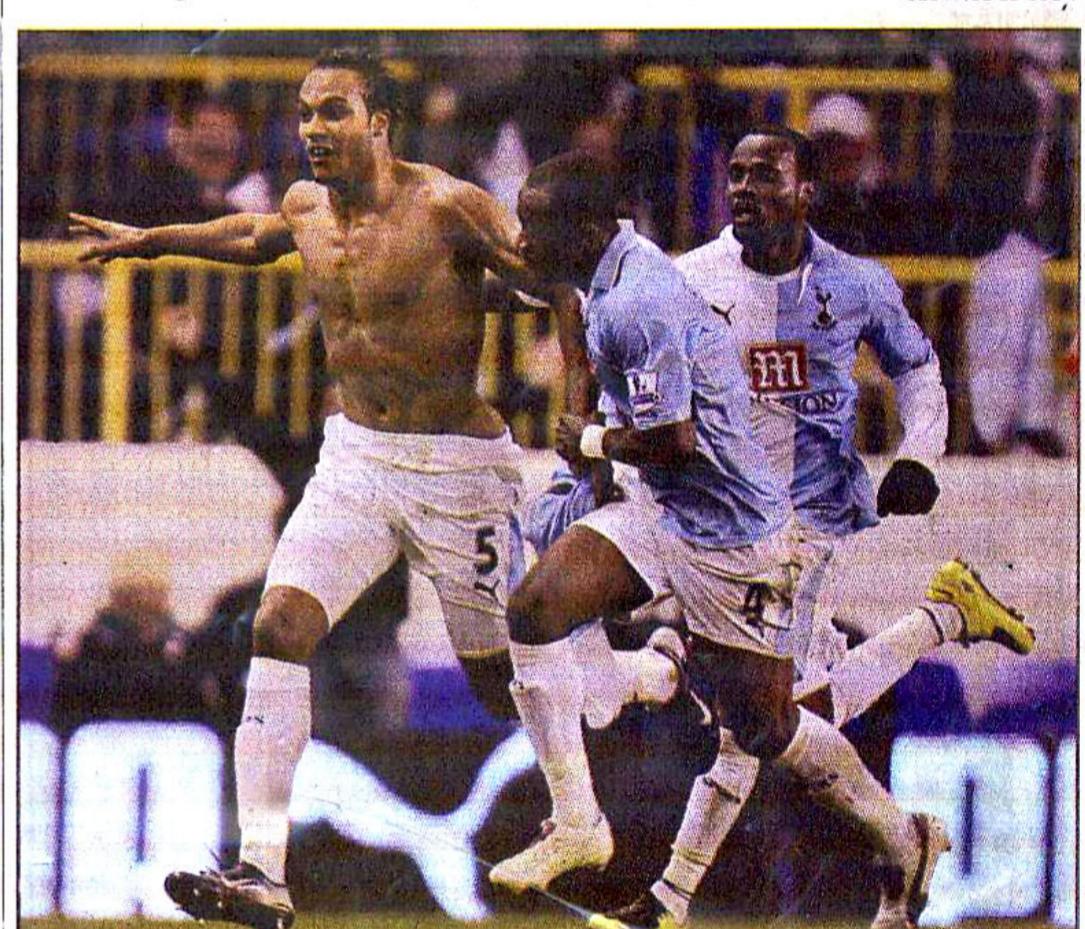
"You talk about dead and buried but we showed lots of character. That's what we have in this team. When you're 4-1 down, you go hell for leather. It does feel like a sort of victory to us in many ways."

The players celebrated Kaboul's equaliser by sprinting to embrace Jol, who had looked distinctly like a condemned man when Villa's fourth goal, a Craig Gardner free-kick, went in the 59th minute.

"You should have seen him (Jol) at the end when we scored the goal," Keane added. "He had the support from everyone. He's shown what a good manager he is over the past couple of years."

Jol showed the strain of the evening when he admitted: "I don't know what to feel."

"It was awful but on the other



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## Crunch time for Chelsea

AFP, Paris

Madrid.

Chelsea's under-fire new manager Avram Grant will face his first European test t

W

ednesday

away to Valencia who are keen to avenge last season's quarter-final loss in the European Champions League.

There has been a chorus of protest since Grant took over from Jose Mourinho who grew louder after his first home match resulted in a 0-0 stalemate against Fulham, and striker Didier Drogba who was sent off the pitch.

Grant will travel to Europe for the first time as Chelsea manager for the Group A match, probably without captain John Terry, who fractured his cheek against Fulham, and striker Didier Drogba who was sent off the pitch.

It will also be the first European match for new Marseille manager, Belgian Eric Gerets, who faces a tough Group A match away to last year's Champion's League finalists Liverpool.

Gerets last week replaced Albert Emon who was sacked after Marseille's disastrous start to the French league season -- they are currently 16th with one win from nine games.

Liverpool, fourth in the English Premier League after a 1-0 win over Wigan, will be looking to notch up their first European win after a 1-1 away draw with FC Porto when they

were reduced to 10 men just eight minutes into the second half.

Marseille started their European campaign with a 2-0 win over Turkish side Besiktas, their first win in any league this season.

But Liverpool's Rafael Benitez will be hoping his team can continue the impressive home form which helped them reach last season's final in Athens where they lost 2-1 to AC Milan.

They lost only one game in front of their own supporters in the first knockout round against Barcelona (1-0) after winning the away leg (2-1).

Celtics' hopes of upsetting last year's Champion's League winners AC Milan at Celtic Park, in a Group D Champion League match, received a blow on Saturday when Dutch international striker Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink suffered a hamstring injury.

However Celtic manager Gordon Strachan is hoping their Japanese star Shunsuke Nakamura, who has missed their last three games with a ligament injury to his left knee, may still make it.

Celtic come into the game after moving to the top of the Scottish Premier League on Saturday with a 3-0 at home win over Dundee United.

## FIXTURES

AFP, Paris

European Champions League fixtures on Wednesday:

- Group A: Liverpool (ENG) v Marseille (FRA)
- Group B: Besiktas (TUR) v FC Porto (POR)
- Group C: Valencia (ESP) v Chelsea (ENG)
- Rosenborg (NOR) v Schalke 04 (GER)
- Group D: Lazio (ITA) v Real Madrid (ESP)
- Werder Bremen (GER) v Olympiakos (GRE)
- Group E: Celtic (SCO) v AC Milan (ITA)
- Benfica (POR) v Shakhtar Donetsk (UKR)

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## FA move to protect Ref

AFP, London

The English Football Association (FA) is to launch a campaign aimed at getting players to be more respectful of referees.

The move follows growing alarm at the level of abuse that is being directed at officials which in turn results in fewer people being prepared to put up with the behaviour.

The FA chief executive Brian Barwick acknowledges the issue affects the highest levels of the game as much as the lowest and he believes methods introduced at grass-roots can have a huge impact.

The three main components of the pilot scheme to be launched in nine regions from next January are:

- Only the team captain will be allowed to speak with the referee.

- Roped-off areas will be introduced at junior matches so 'over-indulgent or abusive parents cannot direct their bile at the referee.'

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## Real plan for Bali

AFP, Jakarta

Real Madrid plan to open a soccer academy on the Indonesian resort island of Bali, a spokesman for the national sports council said Tuesday.

"Their CEO came to visit yesterday (Monday) and told us about their intention to build their soccer academy in Bali later this year," Atal Depari told AFP.

He was referring to Real Madrid's local venture, Realino Sports Indonesia, whose boss Jose Evaristo Nadal told the council that the academy would be Real Madrid's second overseas development. The first is in Mexico.

"When I asked, 'Why Bali?', he said that Indonesia had a vast population and an equally vast pool of sports talent," Depari said.

The academy will accept about 220 students between nine and 18 years of age, and train them for 10 months, he said, adding that the admissions process would begin in December.

Depari said that recruitments would initially be only from among Indonesians but gradually the school would open its doors to foreigners as well.

The state Antara news agency quoted Nadal as saying that tuition would cost 20,000 dollars per student for the 10 months. Top students would be sent to Spain to train and play with Real Madrid, he said.

## Messi rising unabated

### Football

AFP, Madrid

"He is probably the best player in the world because he is not just happy to destabilize you with his dribbling, he scores as well," said Zaragoza coach Victor Fernandez.

Messi's rise to superstardom has been meteoric. He made his first team league debut for Barcelona in October 2004, when he was the third youngest player ever to appear in the club's famous and claret jersey.

Later that season, while still only 17, he became the youngest player for the Catalan club to score in a league match.

He followed up these prodigious feats with an outstanding display at the under-20 World Cup in the summer of 2005 where he was voted the best player of the tournament.

His success has won him comparisons to former Argentine football legend Diego Maradona and sparked talk that he could be a contender for a place on the podium at the forthcoming FIFA World Player of the Year awards.

Spanish media, sports fans and Messi's teammates and rivals have all heaped praise on the player whose nickname is "the flea" because of his shortness.

"Messi is in a state of grace. There are few other players in Europe with his form," said Sevilla coach Juanma Ramos whose side was defeated 2-1 by Barcelona this season with both goals coming from the Catalan club's star.

Messi scored twice within six minutes during his side's 4-1 thrashing of Real Zaragoza.

One of his goals scored against

Getafe in the Spanish Cup was widely regarded to be amongst the best of last season anywhere in the world.

His effort from the halfway line, going past a myriad of defenders before slotting the ball home, has elicited comparisons to Maradona's famous strike at the 1986 World Cup against England.

In a contemporary test of popularity a video of the goal on the video-sharing Internet site YouTube has been one of the most viewed sporting features in recent months.

"I do not know whether or not I am the best in the world. I am working away as normal and feel good and I am pleased with the way things have been going," said Messi.

The striker has benefited from out-of-sorts Ronaldinho and the injury-induced absence of Cameron Samuel Eto'o and French international Thierry Henry still finding his feet in his new team.

"He is currently playing at a very high level," said Rijkaard not wishing to inflate the player's ego although the player has shown any inclination of getting big-headed about his talent.

## Celtic face Milan test

AFP, Glasgow

Celtic will have to do it the hard way as they try to get their Champions League campaign back on track against AC Milan on Wednesday.

Gordon Strachan's side desperately need a victory over the European champions at Parkhead after losing their opening Group D fixture against Shakhtar Donetsk.

It might be premature to call the second game of the group stage a make or break clash, but the Scottish champions have such a

bad record on their travels in the Champions League that, with visits to Milan and Benfica to come, a defeat on Wednesday would leave them clinging to the slenderest hope of reaching the knockout stages.

With so much at stake, Strachan must be cursing the injuries that threaten to deprive him of two key players.

Japan midfielder Shunsuke Nakamura has missed the last three matches with a knee problem and is doubtful, while Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink limped off with a hamstring injury against Dundee United on Saturday.

If Vennegoor of Hesselink is

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The Australian concedes Celtic's hopes of qualifying will suffer a major blow if they fail to beat Milan.

"It would be hard to come back from not winning, but there would still be four games left and it would depend on what the other results were," he said.

Milan eliminated Celtic en route to winning the tournament for a seventh time last season. That first knockout round triumph was achieved by the narrowest of margins.

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