



Controversial Wolfsburg striker Ashkan Dejagah points towards the travelling contingent after scoring a goal in their Bundesliga match against Hanover 96 at the AWD Arena in Hanover on Sunday.

Jol berates Magpies

INTERNET, undated

Martin Jol believes Tottenham's success over the last two seasons means it is impossible to compare them to Newcastle, their opponents on Monday evening.

Pundits have grouped the two clubs together in the clutch of teams looking to qualify for Europe and eventually break into the top four of the Barclays Premier League.

Jol feels that consecutive top-five finishes mean Spurs have already reached the heights that teams such as Newcastle aspire to.

"We had European football for the last two years and they didn't," Jol said. "Why would they be in the same boat?"

"It would be fantastic for them if they were in the first six or seven - playing European football next season would be a good achievement for them."

"We already had that twice so it's different. We are in the group stages of the UEFA Cup and they would love to do that as well."

Jol added: "It's always about the end of the season. We finished above all the other teams including Bolton."

"The only conclusion you can make over the last couple of years is that teams like Aston Villa, Manchester City - they would be delighted to be in the top six."

Dutchman Jol has defied the odds to keep his job at White Hart Lane, although they will stay in the bottom three if they do not pick up a point or more at St James' Park tonight.

Spurs appeared set to change their manager after their infamous meeting with Juanma Ramos, then after defeat to Arsenal a month ago it was widely reported Jol's position would be reviewed during the international break.

They have not been defeated since their rivals beat them, and it is Jose Mourinho and Sami Lee who have been the managerial casualties in the top flight so far. The international break last week passed with Jol doing his usual work at Spurs Lodge.

Karlsruhe spurn big chance

AFP, Berlin



Karlsruhe missed a golden chance to go second in the Bundesliga behind runaway leaders Bayern Munich as they were held to a 0-0 draw at home to Arminia Bielefeld on Sunday.

Both sides missed chances to snatch three points and a win would have put last season's second division champions Karlsruhe second, but the draw keeps them fourth behind Werder Bremen and Hamburg.

There was some crazy football at Hanover as local rivals VfL Wolfsburg held them to a 2-2 draw on Sunday.

Brazilian midfielder Marcelinho opened the scoring on 21 minutes for Wolfsburg before Sergio Pinto put Hanover level eight minutes later.

1 to go third.

This was the champions' eighth defeat in 11 games to leave them 13th in the league, while Hamburg are now up to third.

Werder Bremen claimed second place with a header on 34 minutes as the sides ground out a second-half draw.

On Saturday, Bayern Munich extended their lead at the top of the Bundesliga to six points as they came from behind to beat VfL Bochum 2-1.

Germany Under-21 striker Dennis Grote had given the home side an early lead on 11 minutes but French star Franck Ribery equalised after 35 minutes with a deft touch as he flicked Miroslav Klose's pass past the diving Bochum keeper.

And mid-fielder Bastian Schweinsteiger came off the bench to hit the winner on 78 minutes.

Bayern and Red Star also have English Premier League side Bolton in their qualifying group. The top three sides in each group go into a 32-team knock-out phase.

Germany Cup holders Nuremberg lifted out of the bottom three after picking up their first win in 10 games when they hammered Eintracht Frankfurt 5-1 while Bayer Leverkusen drew 2-2 with Borussia Mönchengladbach.

Duisburg enjoyed a 2-1 win at bottom side Energie Cottbus on Friday night as Bosnian midfielder Ilyas Grcic smashed home his free-kick late in the second-half as the visitors picked up only their third win of the season.

David Beckham and the Los Angeles Galaxy were knocked out of playoff contention Sunday when the Galaxy fell 1-0 to the Chicago Fire on the final day of Major League Soccer's regular season.

The Galaxy, who had mounted a late-season surge to keep their playoff hopes alive, needed a victory in order to advance to the eight-team championship playoffs of the 13-team league.

The Fire only needed a draw but managed to go one better with a 90th-minute goal to claim the last playoff spot.

A sellout crowd of 21,374 at the Fire's home stadium included standing room temporary seating added during the week in anticipation of seeing Beckham.

The English superstar had toggled 25 minutes in a Thursday game against New York in his first appearance since a knee injury on August 29.

Chicago, who boast their own superstar in Mexican international Cuauhtemoc Blanco, completely dominated the Galaxy for the first 45 minutes of the game, out-shooting them 10-1, but Los Angeles goalkeeper Joe Cannon was in superb form, coming up with big saves time and time again and the first half ended scoreless.

After the Galaxy weathered more prolonged battering from the Fire, Beckham entered the game in the 58th minute, but could not add any spark to his team.

He looked rusty on the several corner and free kicks he took in his time on the pitch, sometimes not even getting the ball over the first defender. He was very obviously not match fit, and was continually gasping for air as the game wound down.

With Los Angeles pushed up looking for a goal, the game-winner came three minutes into injury time, when Caleb Carr lifted a ball from the right wing to substitute John Thorrington, who was unmarked in the middle of the field.

Thorrington - the first American player signed to the same Manchester United youth academy that produced Beckham - slipped the ball under Cannon and gave Chicago fourth place in the Eastern Conference.

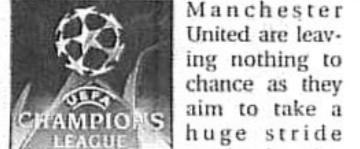
The Galaxy will return to Los Angeles and begin the process of retooling for the 2008 MLS season, including an off-season trip to Australia and New Zealand.

Beckham, whose playing time was severely limited in his first half-season with the Galaxy due to injury, may also take part in another kind of tour.

With Victoria will be part of a two-month, 11-date Spice Girls reunion tour that kicks off in Los Angeles on December 7 and will include dates in New York City, London, Cologne, Madrid, Beijing, Hong Kong, Sydney, Cape Town and Buenos Aires.

MU leave nothing to chance

AFP, Kiev



Manchester United are leaving nothing to chance as they aim to take a huge stride towards the Champions League's first knock-out round with a win at Dynamo Kiev on Tuesday.

Unbeaten Group F leaders Manchester United flew to the Ukraine at the weekend to give their side maximum rest after Saturday's 4-1 Premier League win over Aston Villa.

A third consecutive win would virtually guarantee Sir Alex Ferguson's side a place in the knockout stages.

French striker Louis Saha will be missing for Tuesday's game in Kiev along with long-term knee problem while centre back Nemanja Vidic remains doubtful.

But United have England striker Wayne Rooney in fine form after he

scored twice against Villa as well as producing a top-class strike in last week's Euro 2008 qualifier defeat against Russia in Moscow.

United will assess Vidic's condition on Monday before deciding whether he joins up with the rest of the squad in the Ukraine.

The centre-back missed

Saturday's clash with Villa because he was still suffering from a blow to the head he received against Wigan two weeks ago.

Ferguson admitted: "Vidic is a doubt for Tuesday. He is still feeling some reaction to the knock he got against Wigan and in that situation you can't take a chance."

"He will be close but I'm not so sure he will be ready to play in Kiev."

The United manager is taking nothing for granted ahead of the trip to Kiev and the team flew to the Ukraine a day earlier than normal, taking their own chefs and dieticians with them.

"The travel is always the biggest worry in these situations," said Ferguson.

'Kaka deserves Ballon d'Or'

Football

AGENCIES, Rome

AC Milan chief Adriano Galliani claimed Sunday that the club's Brazilian playmaker Kaka deserves to be named world player of the year.

Kaka has already received one award this season for being the best player during last season's Champions League, where AC Milan emerged victorious.

And now he is the big favourite to be awarded the Ballon d'Or (now known as the World Player of the Year) in Paris on December 2.

"I don't think there's any doubt given what he's done and what he's doing. I can't see anyone else beating him to the trophy," Galliani told Sky Sport just before Sunday's match against Empoli.

Kaka was not among Carlo Ancelotti's squad for the game as he is being rested for the mid-week Champions League clash with Shakhtar Donetsk.

"He's won the Champions League, (he was) the top scorer in the competition. Overall, he's the best player. If he doesn't win it's the end of the world, footballistically speaking," added Galliani.

Kaka is one of 50 players nominated for the award that is voted

THE NOMINEES

The 50 shortlisted candidates are:

Eric Abidal (Barcelona), France. Daniel Alves (Sevilla), Brazil. David Beckham (LA Galaxy), England. Dimitar Berbatov (Tottenham), Bulgaria. Gianluigi Buffon (Juventus), Italy. Fabio Cannavaro (Real Madrid), Italy. Iker Casillas (Real Madrid), Spain. Petr Cech (Chelsea), Czech Republic. Rogerio Ceni (San Paolo), Brasil. Cristiano Ronaldo (Manchester United), Portugal. Deco (Barcelona), Portugal. Mahamadou Diarra (Real Madrid), Mali. Diego (Werder Bremen), Brasil. Didier Drogba (Chelsea), Ivory Coast. Michael Essien (Chelsea), Ghana. Samuel Eto'o (Barcelona), Cameroun. Francesc Fabregas (Arsenal), Spain. Gennaro Gattuso (Milan), Italy. Steven Gerrard (Liverpool), England. Ryan Giggs (Manchester United), Wales. Thierry Henry (Barcelona), France. Zlatan Ibrahimovic (Inter), Sweden. Filippo Inzaghi (Milan), Italy. Kaka (Milan), Brasil. Frederic Kanoute (Sevilla), Mali. David Villa (Valencia), Spain.

WTA & ATP rankings

AFP, Paris

The WTA tennis rankings released on Monday:

1. Justine Henin (BEL)	5930 pts
2. Svetlana Kuznetsova (RUS)	3750
3. Jelena Jankovic (SRB)	3475
4. Ana Ivanovic (SRB)	3175
5. Maria Sharapova (RUS)	2861
6. Serena Williams (USA)	2767
7. Anna Chakvetadze (RUS)	2625
8. Venus Williams (USA)	2470
9. Marion Bartoli (FRA)	2096 (+2)
10. Daniela Hantuchova (SVK)	2027 (-1)

The ATP tennis rankings issued on Monday:

1. Roger Federer (SUI)	7205 pts
2. Rafael Nadal (ESP)	5385
3. Novak Djokovic (SRB)	4470
4. Nikolay Davydenko (RUS)	3250
5. Andy Roddick (USA)	2430
6. David Ferrer (ESP)	2130 (+1)
7. James Blake (USA)	2110 (+1)
8. Fernando Gonzalez (CHL)	2020 (-2)
9. Tommy Robredo (ESP)	1965
10. Tommy Haas (GER)	1870

Lyon pull clear at top

AFP, Paris

Nancy missed the chance to pull level with champions Lyon on Sunday as the high-flying French side

were held 1-1 by struggling Sochaux.

It ended Nancy's nine-match winning streak at home and leaves them two points behind Lyon who have started to create some breathing space between themselves and the pack after a 3-1 victory over Monaco on Saturday.

Nancy have a game in hand over the six-time champions, and looked as if they were heading for another home win when Brazilian striker Kim put them ahead after 26 minutes.

But second-from-bottom Sochaux piled on the pressure and their efforts paid off when Mervut Erding grabbed the equaliser after 56 minutes.

Nancy coach Pablo Correa admitted they had been sorely missing defender Sébastien Puygrenier.

"We were lucky to come away with a draw because if they had taken the lead we wouldn't have

come back," he said.

In Sunday's late match, Marseille's new coach Eric Gerets achieved his first win at the Velodrome to give his side a boost ahead of their Champions League tie at FC Porto midweek.

A goal from Dutch midfielder Bouwezen Zenden after 74 minutes handed Marseille just their second win of the season against Lens which sees the southerners move out of the drop zone.

On Saturday, Bordeaux, once thought to pose the sternest challenge to Lyon's supremacy, were held to a 1-1 draw at Strasbourg and now trail the table-toppers by six points, having played one more.

Traditional giants Paris St Germain suffered more misery as they were held to a 0-0 draw at Valenciennes while Rennes moved into third with a 3-0 win over little Le Mans.

After a difficult opening to the season, where they lost two of their first three games, Lyon have been masterful ever since, despite displaying dire form in the Champions League, where they have suffered 3-0 defeats to both Barcelona and Rangers.

Lyon opened the scoring against Rennes through a generously-awarded Juninho penalty on 12

minutes, after Sidney Govou was fouled by former Lyon player Jeremy Bérthod, and just six minutes later they had already doubled that advantage.

Anthony Reveillère scored the second with a powerful strike after being set up by the impressive Juninho.

Lyon were in complete command despite Sylvain Monrozeau pulling a goal back on 42 minutes, heading home Juninho's free-kick.

And on 51 minutes, France's new star Karim Benzema scored his 11th goal of the season to make the points safe before departing four minutes later to allow Brazilian striker Fred to make his first appearance of the season - a worry for the rest of the league.

Rennes are now just four points off top after a comfortable victory over high-flying Le Mans.

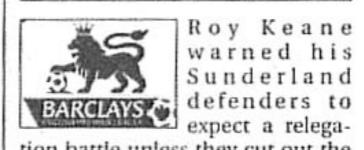
PSG's dismal season continued with a result that leaves them down in 14th place.

St Etienne won 2-0 at Toulouse courtesy of a Bafetimbi Gomis brace but the match of the day was at Auxerre where the hosts scored four times in the final 17 minutes to win 5-3 against Lorient.

Elsewhere Nice beat rock-bottom Metz 3-1 while Caen triumphed 1-0 at home to Lille.

Mistakes rule Keane

AFP, London



West Ham to score three times.