

Real Madrid captain Raul (C) takes the ball past Mallorca defender Ivan Ramis during their Copa del Rey match at the Ono Stadium in Mallorca on Thursday.

### Becks keen on bid role

AFP, London

David Beckham made it clear Thursday he would like to play a a part in England's bid to host the 2018World Cup.

The Football Association have yet to say what, if any, role the England midfielder would play in their campaign but Beckham, who had a high-profile position during London's successful bid for the 2012 Olympics, made it clear he would be happy to help try to bring another major sports event to his country.

Speaking after showing British Prime Minister Gordon Brown around his football academy in Greenwich, London, the 32-year-old former Manchester United and Real Madrid star said Wednesday: "I was proud to be involved in 2012 and being involved in 2018 is something I would be very interested in too.

"Being English, to bring the World Cup back to England would be something really special and I would be honoured to be involved in that," added Beckham, who now plays his club football for US side LA Galaxy.

Brown, although a Scot, has repeatedly made clear his support for England's 2018 bid. He said: "David Beckham is known in every

part of the world. "It's a matter for the FA but I'm sure David Beckham will be associated with every big sports campaign that happens in this country because of his reputation, and because of the fame and the respect he has worldwide."

Beckham hopes to win his 100th England cap in next month's friendly international against Switzerland at Wembley - Italian Fabio Capello's first match as England manager.

England previously staged the World Cup in 1966 when they won the tournament for the only time in their history.

### Ranieri cool on Van der Vaart

AFP, Rome

Juventus coach Claudio Ranieri on Friday poured cold water on transfer rumours linking his club with a move for highly-rated Hamburg midfielder Rafael van der Vaart.

The Netherlands international almost moved to Valencia in the close season before his club blocked the move and he has been touting himself around Europe's top clubs all season.

Following recent speculation linking him to Juve, van der Vaart made it clear he wants away from Hamburg, but Ranieri seems less than keen on a move for the player.

Van der Vaart is not a central midfielder in the sense that we understand here in Italy," he told

the Gazzetta dello Sport. Juve are also believed to be

tracking Italian under-21 playmaker Sebastian Giovinco, who plays for Empoli, and the talk in Turin has been about whether or not Ranieri could accommodate both players in his team.

"I don't think van der Vaart will come but nonetheless there would be no problem playing him and Giovinco together," he added.

That news will be a blow to van der Vaart who seemed to be lining himself up for a move to Turin last week when he revealed he had rejected a new contract offer at Hamburg.

"My dream of playing in a very big club is great. And if I tie myself to Hamburg until 2012 it would be

too long for me," he said. "There isn't an official offer. I've heard that Juve are interested and I can imagine myself playing there."

## Mallorca punish Real

Football

INTERNET, Madrid

Juan Fernando Arango's 50thminute goal Thursday gave Mallorca a 2-1 win over Real Madrid in the first leg of their fifthround Copa del Rey match.

Arango used centre back Pepe as a screen after cutting across from the right, swerving a leftfooted shot past Jerzy Dudek inside the near post.

Mallorca goalkeeper Miguel Angel Moya provided several critical saves to preserve the win.

The reserve keeper stopped substitute Javier Saviola's pointblank, half-volley from the edge of the penalty box in the 67th minute before tipping Jose Maria

Gutierrez's curling free kick over the bar in the 72nd minute.

Gonzalo Higuain scored for the Spanish champion in the 25th minute, volleying a deflected ball over Miguel Angel Moya from the right side.

Mallorca's initial pressure paid off two minutes earlier when an unmarked Oscar Trejo trapped a corner kick with his chest inside the goal box before turning and hitting a left-footed shot into the right side of the net. Mallorca had two potential penalties waved aside before

minute. The Uruguayan forward also was tackled by Michel Salgado along the goal-line before the first half closed.

halftime. Dudek slid to bring down

Trejo just inside the area in the 28th

straight cup win over Madrid, who were eliminated by Real Betis at the same stage last season - at the Ono Earlier, Valladolid held Atletico

Madrid scoreless at home for the first time this season with a 0-0 draw. Atletico's Diego Forlan nearly

broke the deadlock twice after breaking in alone on goal, but the Uruguay striker sent one shot well over the bar in the second minute and hit the post in the 27th minute. Atletico goalkeeper Ismael

Gomez Falcon stretched to swipe Sisinio Gonzalez's shot over the crossbar in the 90th minute.

The teams will meet again next Wednesday, the winner moving on to a possible matchup with last year's finalist Getafe, which routed Levante 3-0 in its first-leg matchup It was the 2003 champion's third onWednesday.

### Ware Milan's 'Kaparo'

AFP, Rome



AC Milan will have a new threepronged Brazilian attack when the second half of the Italian season

kicks-off this weekend following a three-week winter break.

Berlusconi has been talking about lower. this partnership for months and has likened it to the great Swedish 'Grenoli' partnership of the 1950s.

Gre-No-Li was of course the Gunnar Gren, Gunnar Nordahl and Nils Liedholm triumvirate and 50 years later its Brazilian equivalent consists of Kaka, Pato and Ronaldo (Ka-Pa-Ro).

of the year, while the word from inside the San Siro is that Ronaldo has started to get back in shape and should be flying soon, but the most excitement is reserved for the quality to bounce back.

teenager Pato. barely half a season of experience in senior football and that for

Internacional in Brazil. But the whole of Italy is awaiting his introduction to Serie A and Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti has already said that could happen as

early as this weekend, against Milan have been in desperate need of a boost at home in the league having gone their first seven games at the San Siro without

winning, losing twice and scoring a

French striker Nicolas Anelka has

joined Chelsea from English

Premier League rivals Bolton, the

France international Anelka

joined the London club on a four-

and-a-half year deal worth almost 15

million pounds, Sky Sports reported.

after Chelsea's League Cup semifi-

nal first leg win over Everton on

Tuesday that he hoped to clinch a

deal in time for Saturday's Premier

Drogba and Salomon Kalou, who

are away at the African Cup of

Chelsea are without Didier

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League clash with Tottenham.

Blues boss Avram Grant said

paltry three goals in the process.

Football

clubs announced Friday.

AFP, London

That has been the main cause of with Milan's focus shifting from their poor league position and simply winning the game. lacklustre start to the season.

They sit 12th, a massive 25 points off leaders Inter Milan and notwithstanding their three games in hand, their title hopes are certainly dead.

Even the players admit it with Gennaro Gattuso and Alessandro Nesta both claiming that Milan's Milan president Silvio sights have been set somewhat

> "The goal in the championship is fourth place because it's unthinkable that Milan will not qualify for the Champions Legaue," said Gattuso.

"Our aim is to win as many matches in a row as possible and go on a positive run. In the fight for fourth place I think we have a really Kaka is already the world player dangerous challenger to look out for: Fiorentina," added Nesta.

> But with a rejuvenated Ronaldo and with Pato's arrival, Milan certainly have the squad and the

Despite Milan not yet winning At just 18 years of age he has had at home, Napoli will certainly not arrive at the San Siro on Sunday

believing they're the favourites. But if Pato does feature at all, that could work in Napoli's favour

#### **FIXTURES**

Catania v Juventus, Empoli v Reggina

AC Milan v Napoli, Atalanta v Roma, Cagliari v Udinese, Lazio v Genoa, Parma

v Fiorentina, Sampdoria v Palermo, Siena

v Inter Milan, Torino v Livorno

Chelsea rope in Anelka

Plus the expectation on Pato's shoulders is immense.

"In terms of quality he will certainly give us something extra and we have no fears about heaping too much responsibility on his

shoulders," said Ancelotti. However, others are more guarded.

"Is he the new Ronaldo, I think so. But there is a risk that the expectation will put too much pressure on him," added Kaka.

But Milan little need any such distractions and simply must win to start clawing back some of the ground they have lost on rivals.

With Inter 25 points clear and Roma and Juventus 18 and 17 points ahead respectively, Milan must look to try to close the 11point gap to fourth-placed Udinese and the 10-point one to fifth placed

Fiorentina. Udinese have a trip to rockbottom Cagliari while Fiorentina bounced back to form just in time for the winter break, thumping Cagliari 5-1 having previously picked up just two points in five games.

Their trip to struggling Parma is

distinctly winnable. Meanwhile Inter will be expected to prove too strong for lowly Siena while Juventus and Roma will have their work cut out trying to stop the gaps between them and the leaders from growing.

Juve have a tricky trip to Sicily and Catania to negotiate while Roma travel to Atalanta, who are enjoying a good season in the top half of the table.

**NICOLAS ANELKA** 

### League minus Africans

AFP, London

SPORT



will see the squad strength of sev-BARCLAYS eral Premier League clubs put to the test as they face up to life without players now required by their respective countries for the

This weekend

African Nations Cup. Table-toppers Arsenal, two points clear of champions Manchester United, go into their home game against Birmingham City without Kolo Toure, Emmanuel Eboue and Alexander Song, all on their way to the 2008 Nations Cup in Ghana.

As if that were not bad enough for the Gunners, defenders Philippe Senderos and Johan Djorou are both injured.

Gilberto Silva is likely to line-up alongside William Gallas at the

But unlike several managers in English football's top-flight who can be heard complaining about the timing of the three week Nations Cup, Arsenal's French boss Arsene Wenger is willing to accept the consequences of signing those players who are eligible for the tournament.

"I won't use (the African absentees) as an excuse if we don't win the title because I've known who we will lose since the start of the away for the biennial competition.

season. The build-up to Manchester United's meeting with Newcastle has been overshadowed by the departure from St James' Park of manager Sam Allardyce.

But given a run that has seen Newcastle take just nine points from 12 games and last weekend's uninspired goalless draw against Championship side Stoke, Allardyce was always likely to be on thin ice particularly as the team were not playing the flowing football beloved of so many Newcastle

Allardyce's tenure with the Tyneside club lasted a matter of months but by contrast, Sir Alex Ferguson is now entering his 22nd year in charge of Manchester United.

Saturday's match at Old Trafford could see Ferguson able to field his first-choice forward pairing of Wayne Rooney and Carlos Tevez after injuries to the duo.

"We have a strong season ahead of us, so it is important Wayne is ready along with all the other players as well," said United's Cristiano Ronaldo.

Chelsea too have been depleted

by the call of Africa. Ivory Coast internationals Didier Drogba and Salomon Kalou,

Sunday Nigeria star John Obi Mikel and Ghana's Michael Essien are all

Meanwhile injuries to goalkeeper Petr Cech, defender and captain John Terry, midfielder Frank Lampard and striker Andriy Shevchenko have created problems even for a club of Chelsea's

resources. One consolation for Blues manager Avram Grant ahead of Saturday's home match against Tottenham is that Chelsea's London rivals have not won in the league at Stamford Bridge for close on 18 years.

Everton and Manchester City, two teams on the verge of breaking into England's elite, go head-tohead at Goodison Park, basement club Derby are at home to fellow drop candidates Wigan in what could be Robbie Savage's first match for the Rams since he joined earlier this week.

Liverpool, currently outside

(1500GMT unless stated) Saturday

Arsenal v Birmingham, Aston Villa v Reading, Chelsea v Tottenham, Derby v Wigan, Everton v Manchester City, Manchester United v Newcastle (1715GMT), Middlesbrough v Liverpool, West Ham v Fulham

Bolton v Blackburn (1600GMT) Sunderland v Portsmouth (1330GMT)

their customary place in the leading quartet, travel to Middlesbrough while secondbottom Fulham will look to kickstart their push for Premier League survival in a London derby with

West Ham. On Sunday, Sunderland - also relegation candidates - are at Fratton Park where hosts Portsmouth haven't scored in the league since September.

Sunderland manager Roy Keane said that if his side were to improve on a run of just two wins in 16 matches in all competitions it was vital his players improved their discipline.

"Some of our yellow cards and our sendings-off, I really think we have no-one to blame but ourselves," said Keane, himself not always on the right side of referees during his time as a Manchester United midfielder.

Pompey are currently eighth in the table but have four players strikers John Utaka and Kanu and midfielders Sulley Muntari and Papa Bouba Diop - at the African Nations.

But that does give a chance to striker David Nugent, who scored the south coast side's winner against Ipswich in the FA Cup last weekend, to make Keane regret not signing him when he had the chance during the pre-season.

Blackburn will have South

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### bigger Euro

AFP, Paris

UEFA are to consider expanding the European championships from 16 to 24 teams at their congress in Zagreb at the end of this month.

In a statement on Thursday European football's governing body explained: "At UEFA's Congress in Dusseldorf last year member associations voted on the proposal of a feasibility study into the expansion of the competition.

"Since the 1996 edition in England the final phase of the Euro has comprised 16 teams."

In Dusseldorf Michel Platini, in his first press conference since taking over as UEFA president, said: "My answer is clear.

"We cannot consider making it 24 without taking account of the qualification system. The qualification system is a great deal more important than the wishes of this or that association.

"But for now, nothing's decided. A study is in progress."

### MU holding onto C'Ron

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United have insisted that in-form Portuguese winger Cristiano Ronaldo is not for sale at any price.

Ronaldo has already netted an impressive 19 goals this season, carrying on his outstanding form from United's title-winning campaign in 2006-2007. The Portugal international is

widely considered to be one of the best players in the world at present and Spanish giants Real Madrid and Barcelona would undoubtedly jump at any opportunity to purchase the 22-year-old. However Manchester United

chief executive David Gill has warned off any interested parties, insisting that no matter how much is offered, The Red Devils would never partways with their prize asset.

"There's no chance of us selling him. Absolutely no way, whatever the money," he said in The Sun.

"He signed a new contract last season to 2012 and we are not a selling club. Alex Ferguson has never let a player go when he was not happy to do so.

"Cristiano is happy here. Alex (Ferguson) and Carlos Queiroz know his mind and what he's about. "Everything about him is Manchester United. He's like

George Best, Eric Cantona. "You can't sell players like that and we are not going to sell players like that."

### Pato warned by predecessor

AFP, Rome

the new star.

AC Milan's new Brazilian teenage sensation Pato has been warned about the perils awaiting him by a player who trod the same path 50 years before.

Jose Altafini joined Milan as a 20-year-old in 1958 after being part of the Brazil squad that won the World Cup in that summer. He went on to represent Milan for seven years before moving on to

Napoli and Juventus and his 216

Serie A goals rank him third in the overall list of league goalscorers. A lot was expected of him as a sented at a news conference in youngster at Milan and, while he exceeded expectation, he is as well placed as anyone to offer advice to

"I've not yet seen him play live, I've only seen clips of him on television," Altafini admitted in an intersurprise. view with Datasport on Friday.

### Real ready for derby each player 900,000 euros should

AFP, Madrid



The African Nations Cup will deny some teams in the Spanish topflight some of their best players ers Real Madrid

unlikely to feel the pinch with their huge squad.

Real must do without Mali international midfielder Mohamed Diarra but Guti and Fernando Gago are waiting in the wings as Real defend their seven-point lead at the summit. A trip to bottom side Levante on

for the champions and confidence is high in the Madrid camp. "If we continue playing like we have been doing we can win everything," said Brazilian defender Marcelo. "We have a big squad and everyone is more than capable of

Sunday looks a certain three points

playing at this level." Real are reportedly ready to pay

they do the league, Champions League and King's Cup, they fell 2-1 to Real Mallorca in Thursday's last 16 first leg, treble.

Last weekend Real churned out a flattering 2-0 win over Real Zaragoza to keep them seven points clear of Barcelona but they were indebted to goalkeeper Iker Casillas who has been an unsung hero this season.

"It is not my place to say I am the best goalkeeper in the world," said Casillas "I am happy with how I am playing and that I have been at this level for a long time."

#### **FIXTURES**

Saturday Barcelona v Murcia, Athletic v Sevilla (both 1900 GMT)

Sunday Real Betis v Getafe, Valladolid v Recreativo Huelva, Almeria v Espanyol, Villarreal v Deportivo, Real Zaragoza v Mallorca, Osasuna v Racing Santander (all 1600 GMT), Levante v Real Madrid (1800 GMT) Atletico Madrid v Valencia (2000 GMT)

While Casillas is keeping the opposition at bay Real have been plundering the goals with Ruud van Nistelrooy, Raul and Robinho all in double figures for the season.

Barcelona, who drew 1-1 with

Sevilla in their midweek cup tie, are waiting for Real to slip up but must first concentrate on three points at home to Real Murcia on Saturday. Barca have lost Ivory Coast international Yaya Toure for the African Cup of Nations and

Cameroon striker Samuel Eto'o will depart after the Murcia match. Brazilian Ronaldinho and Portuguese playmaker Deco continue to struggle with minor injuries and coach Frank Rijkaard reacted angrily to claims that he is

keeping the duo out of the firing "It is wrong to doubt these injuries," said Rijkaard. "I know journalists have their work to do but these players are suffering with injuries and are working hard to get

back to fitness." Sevilla look like the team that will suffer most from the Jan 20-Feb 10 SEE PAGE 18 COL 1



German legend Juergen Klinsmann arrives in Munich airport on Friday. Klinsmann is scheduled to attend a press

# Bayern appoint Klinsmann

conference where he will be unveiled as the new Bayern manager.

Football

AFP, Munich

Bayern Munich announced on in the Bundesliga. Friday that former Germany boss and World Cup winner Juergen Klinsmann will take the reins at the club next season.

on the club's official website.

Munich at 1500 GMT. 43-year-old Klinsmann came as a current club Los Angeles Galaxy.

The four-time European cham- Beckenbauer welcomed the

to continue the job of reviving their fortunes after they failed to qualify for the Champions League last season when they finished fourth it is an intelligent and thought-out

been mentioned as a contender, with former Chelsea coach Jose Mourinho, former Bayern star success to the national team with "Former Germany coach Lothar Matthaeus and Dutch pair Juergen Klinsmann will take over Marco van Basten and Frank on July 1, 2008," said a statement Rijkaard all named by the German media as possible successors to the Klinsmann was due to be pre- veteran Hitzfeld.

Klinsmann coached Germany to the semifinals of the 2006 World Hitzfeld had already announced he role will be his first coaching job at to eventual winners Italy. will leave the club at the end of the a club although he has worked as current season, the appointment of an advisor to David Beckham's after the tournament, turned down

Bayern president Franz homein California.

pions were looking for a big name appointment and denied the club were taking a risk on an inexperienced coach. "It is not a courageous decision,

decision," Beckenbauer told Bild But Klinsmann's name had not newspaper to be published Saturday. "Juergen Klinsmann brought

his new methods and I am sure he

will also be successful at Bayern." Klinsmann ploughed his own course as Germany coach, drafting in young players and creating a formidable team spirit that carried the host nation to the semifinals of

He left his post immediately a host of offers and retreated to his

the 2006 World Cup where they lost

### SEE PAGE 18 COL 5