

Bayern Munich midfielder Hamit Altintop (L) runs off to celebrate scoring a rebounded penalty during their UEFA Cup match against Aberdeen at the Pittodrie Stadium on Thursday.

Aberdeen hold giants

AFP, Paris



League sides Tottenham and Bolton took forhismistake. tentative steps closer to the UEFA Cup last 16 on Thursday while Aberdeen maintained Scottish pride

against Bayern Munich. Tottenham overcame an awful howler by goalkeeper Radek Cerny to beat Slavia Prague 2-1 while El Hadji Diouf gave Bolton a 1-0 first

leg win over Atletico Madrid. Dimitar Berbatov and Robbie Keane had given Spurs a 2-0 cushion at half-time in Prague to keep alive coach Juande Ramos's dreams of winning a third successive UEFA Cup to add to his two

with Sevilla in 2006 and 2007. But Cerny, a former Slavia player, gifted the Czechs a goal in the 69th minute when he dropped a cross.

There promises

Stadium on

Saturday with Hertha threatening

legal action against Bielefeld's

Wichniarek, 30, quit Hertha in

December 2005 after two more

than two years at the club, but in an

interview this week he launched a

scathing attack on Hertha manager

career. The manager is the main

problem with Hertha Berlin," the

striker, who has netted eight league

goals so far this season, but had a

difficult time in Berlin, told Sport

Hertha are seeking compensa-

Blatter also warned that the

last week it was considering plans to

extend the season to 39 games with

the extra matches taking place in

five cities overseas, starting in 2011.

British media and football federa-

"This will never happen,"

tions in Asia and Australia.

tion and considering legal action

"Dieter Hoeness cost me my

ArturWichniarek.

Dieter Hoeness.

Bild magazine.

AFP, London

2018.

overthe comments.

AFP, Berlin

"I think we controlled the match in the first hour but then we English Premier became quite nervous. We should have achieved a better result," said Ramos who refused to blame Cerny

> "Mistakes are made on the field. Today it was the turn of Cerny, but we should not dwell on it."

The English side, winners of the competition in 1972 and 1984, were in front after just four minutes when Berbatov scored with a smart with a 2-2 draw half-volley from the edge of the penalty area which beat Martin Vaniak in the Slavia goal.

> Spurs were deservedly two goals ahead on the half-hour mark when Keane latched on to a fine Jermaine Jenas pass before slotting the ball

Slavia pulled a goal back when David Hubacek's hopeful left wing Aberdeen. cross was dropped by Cerny on his goal line in the 69th minute and David Strihavka stabbed the ball home over the line from underneath the crossbar.

At the Reebok Stadium, El Hadji Diouf's goal 16 minutes from time

tion clause in his contract which

means he has to pay 50,000 euros

(73,000 US Dollars) for making

damaging allegations against his

Bundesliga, Hanover are the next

team to try to topple the German

The alarm bells are starting to

After Thursday night's UEFA

Cup clash at Aberdeen, which

ended 2-2, coach Ottmar Hitzfeld's

side have had just two full days to

recover before Sunday's clash in

third in the league, Schalke 04 will

be looking to secure their position

with three points at home to

Wolfsburg before next Tuesday

night's Champions League first-

champions VfB Stuttgart are look-

long as I am the president of FIFA," he

added of the organisation's execu-

And defending Bundesliga

knock out round clash with Porto.

Having raised themselves up to

giants from their perch on Sunday.

ring at Bayern with their star-

studded team struggling to impose

With Bayern Munich three

former club or their managers.

Bad blood in Berlin

Bielefeld at points clear at the top of the

with Werder Bremen.

Poland international itself in last weekend's 1-1 draw

Hanover.

gave Bolton a 1-0 lead to take to Spain next week as they beat 10man Atletico Madrid.

minute when Atletico substitute Sergio Aguero was sent-off for spitting on Matt Taylor. Diouf scored from six yards follow-

The game turned in the 74th

ing good build-up play by Stelios Giannakopoulos and Taylor. "We stressed the importance of keeping a clean sheet," said Bolton

boss Gary Megson. "We've kept four clean sheets out of our last five games. We're doing OK, not just as a back four but as a team. We would have liked to have scored more goals, but we

couldn't have tried harder." Bayern Munich twice came from behind to secure a 2-2 draw at

In front of a lively crowd of 20,047, the Dons had been hoping to emulate their 1983 predecessors, who defeated Bayern 3-2 on their way to winning the Cup Winners

But Wichniarek signed a discre- ing to halt their freefall in the

At half time, a home victory

league after a disastrous run of

three defeats with coach Armin Veh

under pressure after last weekend's

3-1 defeat at home to Hertha

Duisburg are rooted to the bottom

of the table with just one win in the

Cup draw with Turkish side

Galatasary in midweek, Bayer

Leverkusen are hitting form with

one defeat in their last ten games

with Germany international Bernd

FIXTURES

Duisburg v VfB Stuttgart, Karlsruhe v

Bayer Leverkusen, Werder Bremen v

Nuremberg, Energie Cottbus v

Borussia Dortmund, Hertha Berlin v

Arminia Bielefeld, Hansa Rostock v

Hanover 96 v Bayern Munich, Hamburg

Schneider back from injury.

last ten games.

Saturday

Sunday

v VfL Bochum

Eintracht Frankfurt

Stuttgart are tenth, while

After their impressive 0-0 UEFA

looked a possibility with Aberdeen leading 2-1 thanks to goals from on-loan teenagers Josh Walker and Sone Aluko with German World Cup striker Miroslav Klose scoring in between for Munich.

However, Bayern were awarded Moments later Senegal striker a soft second half penalty, and although Hamit Altintop's effort was blocked by goalkeeper Jamie Langfield, the Turkish international smashed the rebound home.

Aberdeen manager Jimmy Calderwood believed a draw was a fair result.

"It was a wonderful first half performance and it says a lot that we're disappointed we've not beaten one of the richest clubs in the world," said Calderwood.

SV Hamburg had better luck than their Bundesliga rivals Bayern when they cruised to a 3-1 victory at FC Zurich while former Chelsea striker Adrian Mutu scored after 16 minutes to give Fiorentina a 1-0 win at Rosenborg in Norway.

In the night's other tie, Portugal's Benfica edged Nuremberg 1-0.

They are at Karlsruhe, last sea-

After sacking their coach Hans

son's second division champions.

Meyer following last weekend's 1-1

draw with Hansa Rostock, his

replacement Thomas von Heesen

has a tough assignment as his side

travel to Werder Bremen, fresh

from their 3-0 UEFA Cup win over

chance to stop their slide towards

the relegation zone at second from

bottom Energie Cottbus, who will

have honoury fan and German

chancellor Angela Merkel in the

spirit of late with a 5-1 demolition

of Hanover two weeks ago as well as

a 3-3 draw at Bochum last weekend

and are working hard under coach

Having dropped out of the top

four, Hamburg will be looking to

build on their UEFA Cup 3-1 win at

Zurich when they face VfL Bochum

at home on Sunday, while Hansa

Rostock are at home to Eintracht

Frankfurt on Saturday.

Cottbus has shown a fighting

Borussia Dortmund have the

Sporting Braga.

Bojan Prasnikar.

crowd.

Benzema sorry | MUCH AT STAKE for Ronaldo

INTERNET, undated

Olympique Lyon striker Karim Benzema, who grew up admiring Ronaldo, said he felt sorry for the Brazil and AC Milan striker over his serious knee injury.

AFP, London

TheFA

Arsenal's suc-

cess in opening

up a five-point

Premier League

Saturday's FA Cup fifth-round

key players ahead of next week's

Champions League appointments

has been removed by the addi-

tional psychological importance

now attached to the outstanding tie

of the last 16 -- a stage of the com-

petition that only six top flight

Still smarting from Sunday's Old

Trafford derby defeat at the hands

of Manchester City, which allowed

Arsenal to pull away from them in

"It was a very bad weekend,"

acknowledged Rio Ferdinand. "We

have all been thinking about the

reasons why it happened and how

we want to pull ourselves together

and get the result out of our

Victory at Old Trafford on

Saturday would put Arsene

Wenger's young squad on track to

complete the third domestic dou-

ble of the Frenchman's reign in

"This Saturday is very important

the league, United badly need to

clubs have managed to reach.

make immediate amends.

Any chance of either side resting

showdown between the clubs.

"He would have deserved another end to his career," said the 20-year-old France striker, who has a collection of Ronaldo matches on DVD and studies his every move.

"To me he is the best player ever," Benzema told his club's Web site (www.olweb.fr). "Even if he stops playing football I'll keep watching the DVDs. Having a career like his is my dream."

Meanwhile, Lyon coach Alain Perrin may rest a few valued players, among them Benzema, for Saturday's match at Le Mans, the last outing before the Ligue 1 leaders welcome Manchester United in the first leg of their Champions League first knockout round tie next week.

Romario cleared of doping

AFP, Rio De Janeiro

Brazilian World Cup winner Romario was on Thursday cleared of a doping offence and had a three-month suspension quashed.

The 42-year-old, who quit as player-coach of Vasco da Gama last week, had been banned for 120 days but a five-man tribunal cleared the former striker who had tested positive for finasteride, a substance used to treat hair loss.

Romario, who won the World Cup with Brazil in 1994, had failed the dope test on October 28 after playing for Vasco against Palmeiras and was suspended on December 18.

Romario had said that if his suspension was not reduced, then he would call an end to his playing career on March 30, the date on which his contract ends.

Ronaldinho no 'super hero'

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona's Brazilian forward Ronaldinho, whose form has dipped this season, has stressed that he is not a "super hero." "Even if lots of people thought

that I could be (a super hero), I'm human and it's clear to me that I've never been a super hero,' Ronaldinho told Marca newspaper. The Brazilian said that it was

"normal" that he had been relegated to the replacements' bench since his return from injury. "I've had a month without

playing and I have to refind my fitness. At first I played a few minutes, the other day I played half an hour and now I'm looking to refind my starting spot," he said. Ronaldinho, 27, has only started

10 matches in La Liga this season because of a series of injuries and also a dip in form.

Tardelli named Irish assistant

REUTERS, Dublin

Ireland named former Inter Milan coach Marco Tardelli as assistant manager on Thursday, a day after announcing the appointment of fellow Italian Giovanni Trapattoni as national coach.

"We are delighted that such an experienced coach as Marco Tardelli has agreed to join Giovanni Trapattoni's backroom team,' Football Association of Ireland (FAI) president David Blood said in a statement.

Tardelli had met with FAI representatives, including chief executive John Delaney, in Milan on Tuesday to agree a two-year contract, a spokesman for the association said.

Having played under Trapattoni at Juventus in the 1970s and 80s, Tardelli said earlier he was looking forward to being reunited with one of Europe's most successful coaches.

"I'm stimulated by the idea of having to face Italy (in the 2010 World Cup qualifiers)," he told Italy's Radio Kiss Kiss. "I like the idea of being for Trapattoni what (Carlos) Queiroz is for Alex Ferguson at Manchester United."

Ireland have been drawn with world champions Italy, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Georgia and Montenegro in qualifying Group Eight for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. Their last manager, Steve

Staunton, was sacked last year after Ireland failed to qualify for the finals of Euro 2008. Tardelli was a member of Italy's

1982 World Cup-winning team and as a coach led the Italian Under-21 side to victory at the 2000 European championships.

He subsequently had unsuccessful stints with Inter, Bari and Arezzo in the Italian second division and Egypt's national team.

Former Ireland midfielder Liam Brady, who played with Tardelli at Juventus, said earlier he was also interested in a possible role within the national team but not at the Ronaldo's injury. expense of his job as head of youth

Gunners take on MU to us," said Abou Diaby, the

> Holders Chelsea have been lead over favoured by a draw which has Manchester pitted them against the lowest-United at the ranked side left in the competition, top of the HuddersfieldTown.

Gunners' midfielder. "Maybe a win

But Avram Grant and his men has upped the will be wary of opponents from the middle of League One who have already dumped Premier League side Birmingham out of this year's competition.

The Stamford Bridge clash is a repeat of a 2006 third round tie which Chelsea only just edged 2-1 thanks to a late goal from Eidur Gudjohnsen.

Bristol Rovers, who are two places above Huddersfield in the third tier of English football, look to have a better chance of extending their Cup run, which has including the elimination of Fulham, thanks to a home tie against managerless Southampton, who are still looking for a successor to new Scotland

FIXTURES

(1500 GMT kick-off unless stated) Saturday

Bristol Rovers v Southampton (1230 GMT), Cardiff City v Wolves, Chelsea Huddersfield, Coventry v West Brom, Liverpool v Barnsley, Manchester Utd v Arsenal (1715GMT) Sunday

Preston North End v Portsmouth (1600 GMT), Sheffield Utd v Middlesbrough (1400 GMT)

boss George Burley.

Liverpool begin a make-orwill give us a psychological advanbreak week for their season with a home clash with Championship side Barnley, who will feature Brazilian midfielder Anderson de Silva, a former Everton player, in

their ranks. Manager Rafael Benitez will welcome back Fernando Torres, Fabio Aurelio, Sami Hyypia and Alvaro Arbeloa from injury for a clash that takes place just three days before the Champions League second

round first leg against Inter Milan. "I need to consider both games but I know it's important to progress in the FA Cup, so I will try to use a strong team," Benitez said, while implying that star striker Torres's

involvement may be limited. "For Inter, he will be okay -- we will have to check before Barnsley."

Cardiff will be looking to reach the quarterfinals for the first time since they won the trophy in 1927 by overcoming fellow Championship outfit Wolves, previously managed by Cardiff boss Dave Jones.

"It's a good opportunity to get to the quarter finals as Wolves are in the same division as us," said Jones.

"They will be thinking the same." Another all-Championship clash on Saturday sees Coventry entertain West Brom, while Preston and Sheffield United, who got rid of manager Bryan Robson on Thursday, will be seeking upset wins over Portsmouth and Middlesbrough, respectively, on

Sunday.

Spain looking to Betis

north London.

minds.



All eyes in Spain will be on Real the southern club can defy their status as relegation candidates and stop Real Madrid all

but wrapping up the title by Easter. Real smashed seven goals past Valladolid last weekend to march eight points clear of a jadedlooking Barcelona who must wait a few more days before they can welcome back talismanic striker Samuel Eto'o from injury.

A week ago, questions were briefly being asked of Real after their limp showing at Almeria culminated in a third league defeat of the campaign, but the Valladolid canter proved an emphatic response by Bernd Schuster's men.

Barca's draw with Sevilla, Betis' city neighbours, was the Catalan club's sixth of the season and without African Nations Cup star Eto'o during the past month they have lacked a killer touch.

The club said Thursday the Cameroon hotshot may be fit for next week's Champions League match at Celtic despite suffering a thigh twinge in Sunday's Nations Cup final defeat to Egypt.

Club doctors swiftly ruled him out of Saturday's league encounter away to Zaragoza. Barcelona also have problems

gled for form while French striker Thierry Henry has likewise been out of sorts. Henry insisted Thursday he was

with Ronaldinho who has strug-

only following the orders of coach Frank Rijkaard in playing wide much of the time. "The coach tells me to play on the flank and I do," said the former

glimpses of his English Premiership form since decamping to Barca last summer. Weekend rivals Zaragoza, tenth in the table, have every incentive to

Arsenal star, who has only shown

land the three points as a win would take them to the fringes of the European places.

Saturday Real Betis v Real Madrid (1900 GMT)

Espanyol v Sevilla (1900), Real Zaragoza v Barcelona (2100) Sunday Real Valladolid v Real Mallorca (1600)

Almeria v Murcia (1600), Levante v Osasuna (1600), Villarreal v Racing Santander (1600), Recreativo v Deportivo La Coruna (1600), Getafe v Valencia (1800), Atletico Madrid Athletic Bilbao (2000)

Notwithstanding their ability to find the net without him, Real may start with Dutch forward Ruud van Nistelrooy, who returned to training midweek after an ankle knock suffered in the loss to Almeria.

Van Nistelrooy, top scorer for the Liga leaders with 12 this season. Argentine defender Gabriel Heinze will also be fit but fellow stopper Sergio Ramos could miss out with a groin strain and German defender Christoph Metzelder has just had foot surgery.

If Real and Barca are already out on their own in the title race, Villarreal and Atletico Madrid will be out to pull up the trapdoor beneath them to hold onto the other two Champions League berths.

Villarreal, currently six points behind Barca but one ahead of Atletico, must get past sixth-placed Racing Santander on Saturday while Atletico's task appears the easier one as they host struggling Athletic Bilbao.

Elsewhere, Espanyol could break into the top four if they beat seventh-placed Sevilla at home on Saturday, while, in other games, Valencia will bid to build on a win at Valladolid which ended a miserable league run of nine games without victory.

That success was welcome relief for Dutch coach Ronald Koeman, who has only been in the job three months.

Second spot up for grabs

AFP, Rome



Second place is the prize on offer in the big match of the weekend as Roma travel to Turin to face Juventus while AC Milan try to overcome the loss of

Ronaldo in their trip to Parma. Ronaldo's possibly careerthreatening knee injury has been the talk of Italian football this week as Serie A wakes up to the possibility that the Brazilian may have played his last match.

His ruptured knee tendon, an injury he sustained on his other leg back in 1999 that kept him out of football for the best part of 20 months, could put an end to one of something that will distract Roma the most illustrious careers in modern football.

Milan vice-president Adriano Galliani is trying to remain positive but the signs are not good.

After a two-hour operation in Paris on Thursday, Ronaldo will be sidelined for at least nine months. "We don't want to think about

something as sad as the possibility that this is Ronaldo's last appearance," said Galliani, "We hope that he comes back and wears this (AC Milan's) jersey

again because it fits him well. After Pele he is probably the best player to have come out of Brazil." More importantly for Milan it deprives them of an integral part of their attacking threat and with Pato and Kaka also sidelined, their

Champions League qualification charge has taken a knock. Not least because in Wednesday's timid 1-1 home draw with Livorno they looked largely toothless in attack, before and after

Filippo Inzaghi, while a preda-

tor in the box, is ageing, Alberto Gilardino has failed to convince and new 18-year-old star Alberto Paloschi looked lost in his first start

Milan travel to Parma on Saturday needing to win to try to take over fourth place - the final Champions League qualification berth - from Fiorentina, who entertain Catania on Sunday.

for the European champions.

A little further up the table, Roma defend second place in their trip to Juventus.

Juve cannot take second spot away from the capital based club if they win as they are four points down in third, but a victory would give them a psychological boost ahead of the resumption of the Champions League next week, and not Juve.

Roma have one eye on keeping Juve behind them and the other on trying to haul back the eight-point gap to leaders Inter Milan, who host Livorno on Saturday.

"Eight points is a lot but we're just concentrating on ourselves, said Roma's Brazilian winger Alessandro Mancini.

"We know it's difficult, they're a great team. We're trying to win as many matches as possible."

As for Juventus, Mancini knows the importance of winning to fend off the challenge from below.

"It's a straight fight for second place, it'll be a tough match," he

FIXTURES

Inter Milan v Livomo, Juventus v Roma, Parma vAC Milan

Fiorentina v Catania, Genoa v Sampdoria, Lazio v Atalanta, Napoli V Empoli, Palermo v Cagliari, Reggina v Udinese, Siena v Torino

"They are growing, they're a great team. The important thing is that the team who wins will take home the three points.

"It's an exciting match; we want to show our quality."

Real reward their sons

INTERNET, Madrid

Real Madrid president Ramon Calderon announced on Thursday contract extensions for striker Raul Gonzalez and goalkeeper Iker Casillas, at a ceremony which demonstrated how well the Spanish giants take care of their idols. Raul, 30, has extended his playing contract for one more season, until June 2011.

In addition, he has been guaranteed a post - to be decided later - at the club after he hangs up his

The contract of Casillas, 26, which was to finish in 2011, has been extended until 2017. The same as Raul, Casillas has been guaranteed a job at the club when his playing days finish.

Calderon - flanked by sporting director Pedja Mijatovic and honorary president Alfredo Di Stefano did not reveal the economic details of the contracts.

Di Stefano, 81, one of the predecessors to Raul and Casillas as white idols, is due to receive his own special homage from the club on Sunday, in a ceremony which will be attended by FIFA and UEFA presidents Joseph Blatter and Michel Platini.

The latest homage to Di Stefano is yet another example of how Real like to take care of their stars, both during and after their playing days.

Blatter's vehement no Blatter told the BBC. "The FIFA executive committee Football

tive committee meeting next month. "Those that are richer than the Sepp Blatter, the president of footothers, they have more responsibilball's world governing body FIFA, ity and what the Premier League is said on Thursday that plans to trying to do is contrary to this stage English Premier League (EPL) responsibility. games overseas will never happen.

"This does not take into consideration the fans of the clubs and it gives proposals could harm England's the impression that they just want to attempt to host the World Cup in go on tour to make some money. The Premier League announced

"This is something I cannot understand and definitely the FIFA executive committee will not sanction such an initiative. At the weekend EPL chief execu-

tive Richard Scudamore said there But the idea has met with resiswas nothing much FIFA could do if tance from fans in England, the the Premier League gave the allclear to the expansion plans. But Blatter countered: "It is not true.

"At least this will not happen as will apply article two of the FIFA statutes, 'to prevent all methods or practices which might jeopardise

> ciation football'. "This is abuse. The rich Premier League is trying to get richer and wants to expand the importance of that league.

the integrity of matches or compe-

titions or give rise to abuse of asso-

And Blatter warned that if the Premier League continued with its plans overseas expansion, it could harm England's bid to stage the 2018 World Cup. When it comes to a decision of

the executive committee concerning this matter of the 39th round, and I am sure they will be against it, then it will not have a positive impact on the bid from England for the World Cup in 2018," he added. "I support the fans 100 per

cent," he said. "If I was a fan in England I would say: 'No, please play at home and don't go and exercise your talents abroad'. If the plan includes official league matches then, as a fan, I would protest against this." Earlier, Scudamore dismissed

reports that some of the 20 EPL clubs were faltering in their support of the plan. But Scudamore insisted: "We're confident that we had the support of the 20 clubs and we still have the

support of the 20 clubs."

The most controversial aspect of Scudamore's proposal is that the games played overseas will be an additional 39th match for each club, meaning some sides will play each other three times a season with some sort of draw possibly involving seedings deciding the development at Arsenal. additional fixtures.