

## UEFA Cup last 16 line-up

AFP, Paris

UEFA Cup last 16 line-up after the completion of the round of 32 on Thursday.

Anderlecht (BEL) v Bayern Munich (GER)

Bolton (ENG) v Sporting Lisbon (POR)

Bayer Leverkusen (GER) v Hamburg (GER)

Getafe (ESP) v Benfica (POR)

Fiorentina (ITA) v Everton (ENG)

Tottenham (ENG) v PSV Eindhoven (NED)

Marseille (FRA) v St Petersburg (RUS)

Rangers (SCO) v Werder Bremen (GER) or Sporting Braga (POR)

— First legs to be played on March 6; return legs on March 12/13

## Hitzfeld happy at win

AFP, Munich

Bayern Munich coach Ottmar Hitzfeld admitted he was happy to make full use of his squad as his side eased their way into the UEFA Cup's last 16 with a 5-1 win over Aberdeen here Thursday.

Bayern will now face Belgium's Anderlecht or French side Bordeaux for a place in the UEFA Cup's quarterfinals as Germany striker Lukas Podolski announced his return from injury with two second-half goals.

Podolski - voted the best young player at the 2006 World Cup - is back to his best and proved the slipped disc he suffered in training last month is behind him as he struck twice to help see off the Scottish challenge in Munich.

The German giants were rarely troubled at the Allianz Arena, fielding nine internationals in the starting line-up, and go through by virtue of their 7-3 win on aggregate.

"I am content with the win and, of course, there are things we can improve on," said Hitzfeld, who made three second-half changes.

"With so many games in the next few weeks, it was good to be able to use the bench and not worry about taking a risk."

"The whole squad did well." Hitzfeld gave a start to 18-year-old midfielder Tony Kroos to make his 10th appearance of the season and the teenager impressed with another composed performance ahead of Sunday's Bundesliga clash with Hamburg.

## Raul, Aragones bury hatchet

REUTERS, Madrid

Spain coach Luis Aragones and Raul joined forces on Thursday to call for an end to the debate over whether the Real Madrid striker should be included in the national squad ahead of Euro 2008.

Raul is the country's leading all-time scorer with 44 goals, and with 102 caps has made more appearances than any other outfield player since debuting as a 19-year-old in October 1996.

He has not featured for Spain in a year and a half since being dropped by Aragones at the beginning of the Euro 2008 qualification campaign, prompting a steady clamour of protest from the Madrid-based sports media in particular.

"We want to end the speculation for the good of Spain, for the Federation, for the player and for me," Aragones told a news conference.

"His behaviour with me has always been exemplary and I hope mine has been with him."

Raul, 30, last played for Spain on Sept. 6 2006 in the 3-2 defeat to Northern Ireland at Windsor Park in a Euro 2008 qualifier.

He was left out of squad for the following game in Sweden the first time he had been dropped for reasons other than injury in 10 years.

Raul has not been included since, while the side went on to finish top of their group. Local media have blamed a reported dispute between the two at the World Cup in Germany in 2006 for his continued exclusion.

"It hurts me every time the debate blows up before a Spain game with a lot of things said that aren't true," said Raul.

"The Spain team should be above all this. The coach should be supported in his job. I want the best for Spain. We spoke about it and decided this was the best way to move forward."

"Nothing has happened of a serious nature between us. Aragones has my utmost respect."

Raul, who has scored 11 league goals for Real this season, said he thought it would be difficult for him to make the side for Euro 2008 but had not given up hope.

Aragones has always maintained the door was open for Raul's return but has favoured Valencia's David Villa and Liverpool's Fernando Torres as his first choices up front.

Raul Tamudo and Luis Garcia of Espanyol, and Real Mallorca's Daniel Guiza have been fighting it out for the supporting roles recently.



Bayern Munich defender Lucio (L) points to the heavens as he celebrates with teammate Hamit Altintop after scoring the opening goal against Aberdeen during their UEFA Cup match in Munich on Thursday.

## Germans, English sail Atletico dumped

REUTERS, London



Anderlecht, went through 7-3 on aggregate after a one-sided contest at the Allianz Arena.

They were joined in the second knockout round by Bayer Leverkusen, who enjoyed a 5-1 demolition of Galatasaray, and now meet league rivals Hamburg SV, who dispensed with FC Zurich.

Werder Bremen cruised through 4-0 on aggregate against Braga. The four German sides to progress occupy the top four positions in the Bundesliga.

It was a perfect night for British sides with Rangers, Tottenham Hotspur, Everton and Bolton Wanderers all progressing. Zenit St Petersburg, Getafe, Olympique Marseille, PSV Eindhoven, Benfica, Fiorentina and Sporting also booked their places.

Bayern made the breakthrough against Aberdeen after 12 minutes when Lucio thumped home a vicious free kick and they doubled their advantage nine minutes before

half-time with defender Daniel van Buyten's powerful header.

Podolski added two more with a close-range finish on 71 minutes and a header six minutes later. Steve Lovell pulled one back for the Scottish side before Mark van Bommel's strike took Bayern's tally in the competition to 22 so far this season.

Leverkusen, one place and two points behind third-placed Hamburg in the Bundesliga, tore Galatasaray apart at the BayArena after a goalless first leg in Istanbul.

Two goals from Bosnian forward Sergej Barbarez and another from Stefan Kießling had the 1988 winners 3-0 up by half-time. Leverkusen threatened to run riot with Karim Haggui and Bernd Schneider making it 5-0 after 61 minutes before the Turkish side stopped the rot with Ahmed Barusso's late penalty.

Hamburg eased through with a goalless draw at home to FC Zurich after winning the first leg 3-1.

Spanish striker Nacho Novo's goal nine minutes from time sent Rangers through on away goals after a 1-1 draw in Athens against Panathinaikos.

The Greek side failed to clear a driven cross from Chris Burke and Novo pounced to drill home from eight metres. A superb strike on the half-volley from Yiannis Goumas after 12 minutes had put Panathinaikos ahead. Rangers now play Werder Bremen.

Olympique Marseille went through to a meeting with Zenit St

Petersburg, despite losing 2-0 to Spartak Moscow in the Russian capital.

Spartak, 3-0 down from the first leg, set up a tense finale when Roman Pavlyuchenko added to Aleksandr Pavlenko's first-half goal but it proved in vain.

Zenit clung on in Spain against Villarreal after having two players sent off and went through on away goals despite a 2-1 defeat.

The Russian champions, 1-0 up from the opening leg, had midfielder Roman Shirokov sent off two minutes after half-time and Czech midfielder Radek Sirl became Zenit's second player to be sent off on 82 minutes.

Tottenham Hotspur survived a stern examination from Slavia Prague to keep coach Juande Ramos' hopes of lifting a third successive trophy after back-to-back wins with Sevilla.

Spurs went through 3-2 on aggregate after a 1-1 draw at White Hart Lane and next face PSV Eindhoven.

Nigeria striker Yakubu Aiyegbeni hit a hat-trick for Everton in a 6-1 demolition of Norwegian champions Brann Bergen. The Goodison Park side now take on Fiorentina, who eliminated Rosenborg.

Bolton enjoyed their finest night in Europe as they protected their 1-0 lead from the first leg to hold Atletico Madrid to a goalless draw in the Spanish capital.

the league, has coached his team to a win over Hitzfeld's teams on four occasions, with eight losses and three draws.

The last came in September when the two sides drew 1-1 at the HSH Nordbank Arena and Kahn wants another win.

"We've sent out a very strong signal," said Kahn in the wake of last Sunday's victory over Hanover when Luca Toni struck a hat-trick.

"I think that was tactically one of our best matches of the season, a team performance par excellence."

On Saturday, second-placed Werder Bremen are away to Eintracht Frankfurt, who were humbled 1-0 by strugglers Hansa Rostock last weekend with key midfielder Diego out with a knee injury.

### FIXTURES

**Saturday**  
Bayer Leverkusen v Schalke 04, Eintracht Frankfurt v Werder Bremen, VfL Wolfsburg v Hertha Berlin, VfB Stuttgart v Karlsruhe, Borussia Dortmund v Hansa Rostock, Arminia Bielefeld v Duisburg

**Sunday**  
Bayern Munich v Hamburg, Nuremberg v Energie Cottbus

# Depth to determine title

AFP, London



Nemanja Vidic believes Manchester United's superior strength in depth will help his side overhaul Arsenal in the race for the Premier League title.

United trail leaders Arsenal by five points but Serbia defender Vidic is convinced the extra quality of Sir Alex Ferguson's squad will prove the decisive factor at the business end of the season.

The reigning English champions were able to snatch a Champions League draw at Lyon in midweek after Ferguson sent on Nani and Carlos Tevez, who scored the late equaliser.

It is that kind of impact from the bench which has Vidic in positive mood ahead of Saturday's trip to Newcastle.

"We are capable of finishing games strongly because we have so much strength on the bench. Nani and Tevez made a big difference when they

came on in Lyon," Vidic said.

Ferguson's side should have little to fear from a Newcastle team still searching for their first win since Kevin Keegan took charge, although the bitter memory of a 6-0 defeat at Old Trafford last month may drag a defiant display from the hosts.

By the time United kick-off at St James' Park in Saturday's late game, Arsenal could be eight points clear.

Arsene Wenger's team play Birmingham in the weekend's first Premier League match, with Togo striker Emmanuel Adebayor confident they will end a two-game goal drought at St Andrews.

"It is slightly worrying and for Arsenal not to score in two games in a row will lead to some frustration," he said. "But we know that we can score at any time - our belief is still high and we want to show that in Birmingham, by playing our football and getting back to scoring."

"It's a big difference going to a team like Birmingham after play-

ing against Manchester United and Milan, but as footballers we have to keep our focus very high."

"We know that if we play the same against Birmingham as we did against Milan, we will win."

Jamie Carragher is determined to make sure Liverpool forget about their European heroics and concentrate on getting back into the Champions League through their domestic form.

Rafa Benitez's side are on a high

### FIXTURES

(1500 GMT unless stated)

**Saturday**  
Birmingham v Arsenal (1245 GMT), Fulham v West Ham, Liverpool v Middlesbrough

**Sunday**  
Newcastle v Manchester Utd (1715 GMT), Portsmouth v Sunderland, Wigan v Derby

**Sunday**  
Blackburn v Bolton, Reading v Aston Villa (1230 GMT)

**Monday**  
Manchester City v Everton (2000 GMT)

after their 2-0 win over Inter Milan on Wednesday, but Carragher is realistic enough to admit they are far from certain to clinch a top-four finish in the Premier League.

The defender knows a win against Middlesbrough at Anfield on Saturday would keep the pressure on fourth-placed Everton.

"We realise that we've now got three or four league games before the second leg in Milan and we're going to have to make sure that we are in this competition next season," Carragher said.

At the other end of the table, Derby manager Paul Jewell insists he can't afford to let sentiment get in the way as he returns to Wigan for the first time.

Jewell resigned after six years at Wigan when they avoided relegation on the final day of last season, but now he could put a dent his former club's survival hopes.

The rock-bottom Rams are destined for relegation already but Wigan could still beat the drop. Not that Jewell is too concerned.

## Inter fret on defence

AFP, Rome



If anything can halt Inter Milan's seemingly insatiable title charge this season it seems that injuries might be their trickiest stumbling block.

Already shorn of the likes of Walter Samuel and Olivier Dacourt, and with Patrick Vieira and Luis Figo only just starting to play matches again, Inter suffered a new injury blow on Tuesday when Ivan Cordoba damaged his knee against Liverpool in the Champions League defeat.

It means Inter will be without key defensive players for their difficult trip to Sampdoria on Sunday, something that has club president Massimo Moratti concerned.

"We're counting the cost of the serious injury Cordoba suffered,

he's out for at least six months," said Moratti.

"And with Samuel that's our first choice centre-back pairing out. But the players replacing them are just as good."

Inter do at least have a seemingly decisive 11-point lead over second-placed AS Roma who face a tough match at home to fourth-placed Fiorentina on Sunday.

The Viola are trying to hold off AC Milan for fourth spot and the final Champions League qualification place while Roma sit just one point ahead of third-placed Juventus.

Still, they will have been buoyed by their 2-1 Champions League victory over Real Madrid on Tuesday, although Chile midfielder David Pizarro believes the capital-based club must quickly refocus.

"The important thing for us is to concentrate back on the league," he said. "Against Real we achieved something important in coming back from

a goal down early on against a Real team on top form to win."

"I'm happy because we showed that we can play at that level in that situation."

"We showed that in the next match we have an equal chance of progressing."

However, Roma could find themselves dropping down a place in they fail to beat an in-form Fiorentina, who have won five and drawn one of their last seven league matches.

Juventus meanwhile travel to lowly Reggina on Saturday and

### FIXTURES

**Saturday**  
Reggina v Juventus, Torino v Parma

**Sunday**  
AC Milan v Palermo, Atalanta v Siena, Cagliari v Lazio, Empoli v Catania, Livorno v Napoli, AS Roma v Fiorentina, Sampdoria v Inter Milan, Udinese v Genoa

could overhaul Roma with a victory, but winger Mauro Camoranesi is taking nothing for granted.

"Reggina are a tough team. As we approach the end of the season matches against teams threatened by relegation become more and more difficult," he said.

"This is a vital stage in the season. We want to qualify directly for the Champions League group stages."

"If we have the possibility, next year we'll try to win it (the league), that's clear. Two months ago we were talking about the title, now we're much calmer."

"Now our main aim is to finish second, which would put us directly into the Champions League group stages."

Milan meanwhile host Sicilians Palermo at the San Siro with their visitors' star Brazilian striker Amauri lamenting the fact he will not play against injured countryman Ronaldo.

## Fergie fuming at agents

AFP, Manchester

Sir Alex Ferguson believes Wes Brown's decision to reject Manchester United's new contract offer is typical of the way top players let agents run their lives.

Brown has reportedly been offered wages of 55,000 pounds a week to extend his stay at Old Trafford. But the England defender, who is out of contract at the end of the season, wants another 10,000 pounds a week and could leave for free in July.

Ferguson is convinced it is the influence of agents that persuades Brown and his contemporaries to drive a hard bargain, even though it could damage their career.

"We wouldn't have made the offer if we didn't have faith in him. But the players of today live in the pockets of their agents," Ferguson said. "It's a situation which depresses me at times, it really depresses me."

"Wes has been with us since he was 12 years old, but I don't think that matters these days."

"Agents live their players' lives and if you're happy to go along with that then you get the situation we've got just now. But Wes knows this. And the other players have told him."

## Capello warns Liverpool

REUTERS, Rome

England manager Fabio Capello has warned Liverpool not to think they have sewn up qualification for the Champions League quarterfinals after beating Inter Milan 2-0 at home on Tuesday.

"Liverpool must be very careful at the San Siro," he said in an interview in Friday's edition of La Gazzetta dello Sport. The English Premier League side face the Italians in the return leg on March 11.

"Inter are really strong at home. Even at Anfield they defended with order after (defender Marco) Materazzi's sending off, conceding only a couple of chances."

"They can reverse the result, although it shouldn't be forgotten that Liverpool haven't reached two finals in three years by chance."

Capello also said his former club AC Milan still had a lot of work to do to ensure qualification on March 4 after Wednesday's goalless draw with Arsenal in London.

"Milan must be just as careful as Liverpool," he said. "Arsenal are capable of important feats, they find spaces and they strike at speed."

"But Milan did not slip up at the Emirates Stadium even under maximum pressure. It is the Milan team of the Champions League."

## Real face bogey side

REUTERS, Madrid



Modest Getafe have been a thorn in the side of Real Madrid in recent meetings and they have the chance to be a nuisance again when they visit the leaders in the Primera Liga on Sunday.

Real coach Bernd Schuster's former club were the last team to take a point at the Bernabeu, when they drew 1-1 there last March, and were unlucky to lose by a solitary goal after having dominated in the Coliseum earlier this season.

However, they are in unfamiliar territory at present as one of only two Spanish clubs still alive in three competitions, the other being Barcelona.

"I don't know which game is more important," Getafe coach Michael Laudrup said.

Getafe are fortunate to be catching the champions at a time when

one or two doubts are creeping into their minds following a run of three defeats from their last four games in all competitions.

The reverses have all been on their travels, the last a 2-1 loss to AS Roma in the Champions League on Tuesday, but at home they maintain a 100 per cent league record.

Schuster's squad is likely to be boosted by the return from injury of Brazilian forward Robinho, while Dutch winger Arjen Robben is finally starting to make his mark in the side.

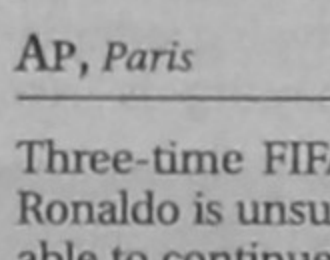
### FIXTURES

**Saturday**  
(1600 GMT unless stated)  
Valencia v Recreativo Huelva (1900), Sevilla v Real Zaragoza (2100)

**Sunday**  
Athletic Bilbao v Villarreal, Deportivo La Coruna v Espanyol, Real Mallorca v Real Betis, Murcia v Valladolid, Osasuna v Atletico Madrid, Racing Santander v Almeria, Barcelona v Levante (1800), Real Madrid v Getafe (2000)

## Ronaldo ponders retirement

AP, Paris



Three-time FIFA player of the year Ronaldo is unsure whether he will be able to continue playing after rupturing his left knee.

ing at tendon in his left knee.

"Physically it will be difficult and mentally it will be very difficult," Ronaldo said Friday, as he left the Pitie-Salpetriere hospital in Paris after surgery a week ago.

The hospital has said the operation went well but that it was too early

to say whether the 31-year-old Brazilian striker would return to the field.

"I have not decided what should be done," Ronaldo said. "My will is to keep on playing. My heart tells me this, but my body is showing me signs that it's tired, that it is asking for rest."

Ronaldo was injured in AC Milan's 1-1 draw with Livorno in the Serie A last week.

The top-scorer in World Cup history with 15 goals for Brazil, Ronaldo had a successful two-hour operation at the end of last week and followed that with eight days of physical therapy.

More treatment will follow in a specialized centre, but Ronaldo will not be able to play again for at least eight or nine months.

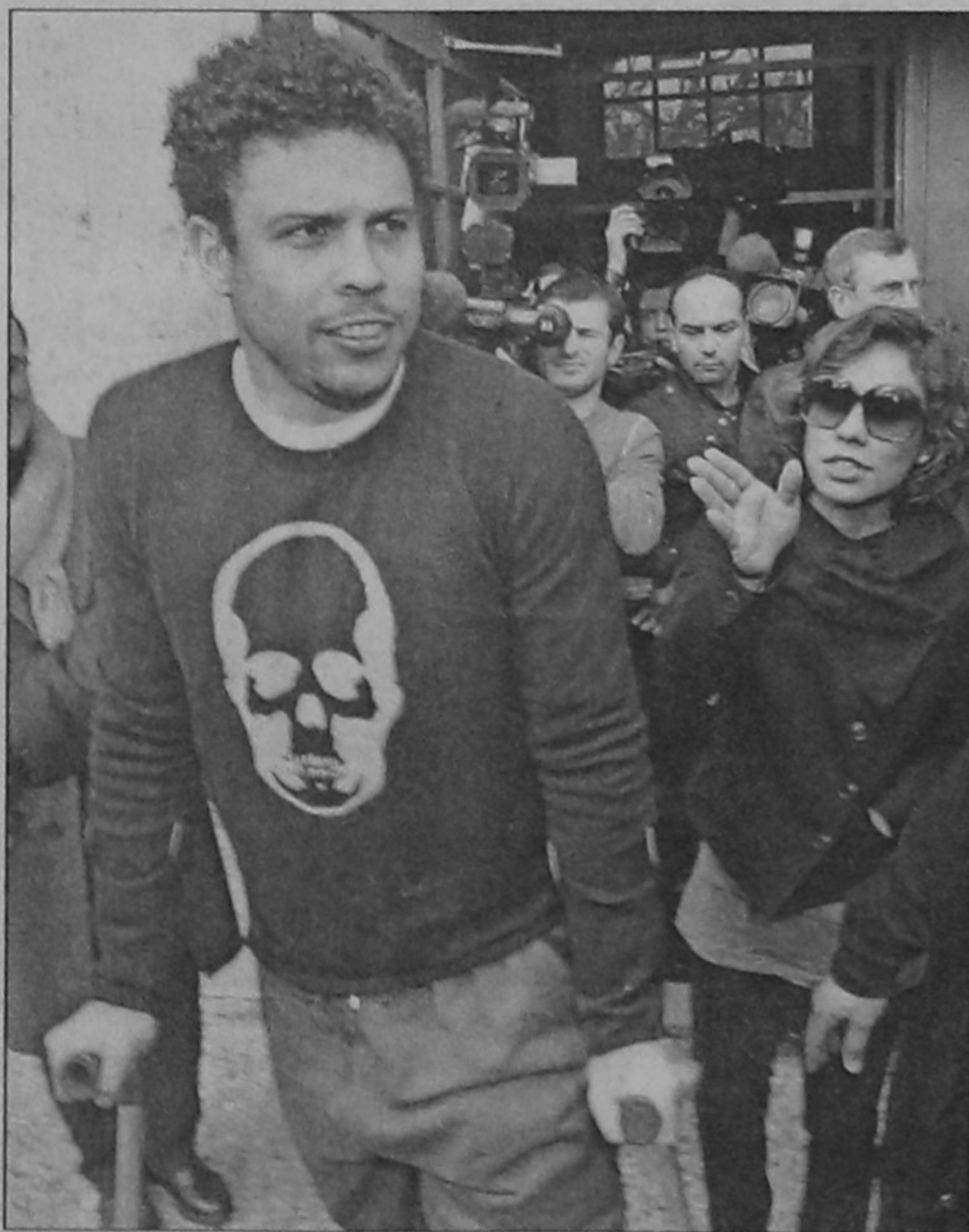
"If, at the end, I am back in shape physically and I can play, so much the better," Ronaldo said. "Otherwise, it will be a difficult decision to take, but that will be the decision."

He has played only sporadically since joining Milan a little more than a year ago, but his scoring rate of nine Serie A goals in 16 starts showed that when fit he had lost none of razor-sharp finishing.

Ronaldo scored twice in a 5-2 win over Naples on Jan. 13, where his instinctive understanding with 18-year-old Brazilian Alexandre Pato had Milan fans dreaming of things to come.

He lost his place in the Brazil team after the 2006 World Cup, but still managed three goals during the competition to increase his international total to 61 in 97 games.

Ronaldo has battled serious injuries throughout his career, and already had a career-threatening right-knee injury when playing for Inter Milan eight years ago. He missed the following season, but came back strongly at the 2002 World Cup, guiding Brazil to its fifth title with eight goals, including two in the final against Germany.



Brazilian star Ronaldo leaves the Pitie-Salpetriere hospital in Paris on crutches on Friday.