

# Rangers hold Brit flag

AFP, Paris



Rangers marched into the UEFA Cup quarterfinals on Thursday to save Britain's blushes after English clubs crashed out.

Rangers lost 1-0 at Werder Bremen of Germany but their 2-0 first leg victory at Ibrox was enough to see the Scots through.

In Thursday's late match, Sporting Lisbon beat Bolton 1-0 to go through 2-1 on aggregate for a further English victim after Tottenham and Everton were both eliminated after penalty shootouts on Wednesday.

Rangers goalkeeper Allan McGregor refused to talk up his side's chances of winning the competition.

Diego scored the only goal of the game after 58 minutes but McGregor was forced to stand firm under a barrage of late pressure, making several impressive saves.

On their chances of going all the

way in the competition, he told BBC Scotland: "I don't know about that but Werder Bremen must have been one of the favourites and you can only take it one game at a time."

"But it's an unbelievable spirit here and all the boys get on well. It's a great mix of Scottish lads and foreigners and the banter is good."

"This is massive for the club. Even at the start of the Champions League draw nobody expected us to get here. We've dug deep tonight and that's what was needed."

Portuguese outfit Sporting were an unremarkable team, and it will be a major surprise if they go on to win the competition in May.

But against a Bolton side shorn of several stars as Premier League survival is paramount, Sporting clinched their quarterfinal place via Bruno Pereira's 85th-minute strike.

Bolton's Gary Cahill, a winter transfer window signing from Aston Villa, told BBC television after the match: "We knew it would be difficult. I thought we frustrated them and they did not hit us that much in the first half."

"I don't know what was lacking today. It was one of those games."



Werder Bremen star Diego celebrates after scoring the opening goal against Rangers during their UEFA Cup match at the Weser Stadium on Thursday.

## Lampard will agree new deal

AFP, London

Frank Lampard will sign a new Chelsea contract, the club's chief executive Peter Kenyon said Friday.

Kenyon also played down reports manager Avram Grant would be sacked at the end of the season if the London club failed to win either the Premier League or Champions League titles.

England midfielder Lampard has criticized what he said was Chelsea's delay in handing him a new deal but Kenyon, speaking at the Champions League quarterfinal and semifinal draw at UEFA headquarters in Nyon, Switzerland, told Sky Sports: "The discussions that we'll have with Frank will be kept private and that's important."

"Both parties have made it absolutely clear we want to find a resolution."

"Hopefully we'll do that sooner rather than later."

Asked if the club and Lampard could agree a deal before the end of the season, Kenyon added: "Anything's realistic. I just don't want to add more speculation counting down each day to the summer."

"We're committed - as is Frank - to finding the right solution to keep him at Stamford Bridge."

Lampard, whose current deal expires at the end of next season, had been widely expected to agree a new contract that - given that he turns 30 in June - would effectively mean he finishes his career in west London.

But after his four-goal display in Chelsea's 6-1 demolition of Derby on Wednesday, the England midfielder criticized what he sees as foot-dragging by the club's hierarchy.

"I've been approached a few times by the club saying they are going to come to me with something and they haven't," Lampard said.

"That means they're saying they will have to wait until the summer and I don't really know what that means."

Meanwhile Grant, who replaced the charismatic and successful Jose Mourinho in September, has had his position called into question following Chelsea's recent League Cup final defeat against Tottenham Hotspur and last weekend's stunning FA Cup exit at the hands of second-tier Barnsley.

But they are still in the hunt for the Premier League title, with Chelsea five points behind leaders Arsenal and the Blues, one of four English teams in the last eight of the Champions League, will now face Turkey's Fenerbahce in the quarterfinals of European club football's leading competition.

Grant will be expected to bring at least one trophy back to west London before the end of the season but Kenyon said reports that failure to secure silverware this term would lead to the Israeli's exit from Stamford Bridge were wide of the mark.

## Andrade to miss Euro

AFP, Lisbon

Juventus's Portugal international defender Jorge Andrade is almost certain to miss Euro 2008 after undergoing surgery for a recurring left knee injury on Thursday, the Portuguese media reported.

The 29-year-old has not fully recovered despite already undergoing surgery in France after suffering seriously torn ligaments in his left knee last September.

Andrade missed the final phase of the 2006 World Cup because of another operation on his knee.

He is expected to leave hospital this weekend and will recuperate in Portugal, the Lusa news agency reported. No date has been given for his return to competition.

# MU seek Derby tonic

AFP, London



Carlos Queiroz has challenged a Manchester United squad still smarting from their premature FA Cup exit to take their frustration out on the Premier League's whipping boys Derby on Saturday.

United's hopes of repeating their 1999 treble were shattered by an unexpected home defeat by Portsmouth last weekend and Sir Alex Ferguson's assistant has warned Derby, who were thrashed 6-1 by Chelsea in midweek, that they could be in for another torrid time.

"We were very down after the Portsmouth game," Queiroz admitted. "There was a lot of frustration and sadness amongst the team and the staff, but the most important thing now is to show the right attitude, the Manchester United attitude and bounce back from what happened. We need to keep moving forward."

Queiroz went on to state that United could not afford to rely on other teams slipping up, although that is exactly what Arsenal did when they were held to a goalless draw at Wigan on Sunday.

That has tilted the see-saw title race back in United's favour with the champions now just two points adrift of the leaders with a game in hand.

Arsenal will seek to get their show back on the road at home to Middlesbrough and manager Arsene Wenger's preparations for their visit have been helped by the return to fitness of both Robin van Persie and Theo Walcott.

"We have gone through a difficult patch but we have to keep our

calm and focus and belief," the Frenchman said. "Four points have been dropped in the past three league games but you go through a patch like that and the negative is a deficit in points."

"The positive is we didn't lose a game. I am still very confident we still have good chances to win the title. We want now to come back to winning habits straight away against Middlesbrough on Saturday."

Chelsea, who travel to Sunderland, bounced back from their humiliating FA Cup exit to Barnsley by hitting Derby for six, which moved them to within five points of Arsenal with a game in hand over the leaders.

Frank Lampard's four goals helped ease some of the pressure on manager Avram Grant but the England midfielder's subsequent criticism of the club's failure to table an offer of a new contract suggests all is far from well behind the scenes at Stamford Bridge.

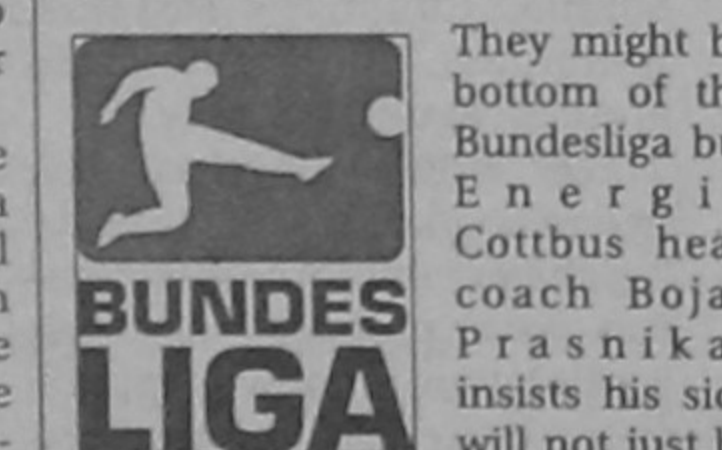
Grant insists Chelsea can still muscle their way back into the title race with Arsenal and Manchester United still to visit West London.

"We have won more than 80 per

FIXTURES	
(1500 GMT kick-off unless stated)	
Saturday	Arsenal v Middlesbrough (1715 GMT), Derby v Manchester Utd, Liverpool v Reading, Portsmouth v Aston Villa, Sunderland v Chelsea, West Ham v Blackburn
Sunday	Fulham v Everton (1330 GMT), Manchester City v Tottenham (1600 GMT), Wigan Athletic v Bolton
Monday	Birmingham v Newcastle (2000 GMT)

# Cottbus vow to attack

AFP, Berlin



They might be bottom of the Bundesliga but Energie Cottbus head coach Bojan Prasnikaar insists his side will not just be making up the numbers at home to league leaders Bayern Munich on Saturday.

"We are not going to just react and wait for something to happen against Bayern," said Slovenian Prasnikaar with his side at the foot of the table.

The contrast between Cottbus' league record and that of Bayern is vast.

While Cottbus have won just three games this season, Bayern have lost only once and have scored 41 times to go seven points clear at the top of the table - at the bottom Cottbus have already conceded 40 goals this season.

Bayern, who suffered a surprise 2-1 UEFA Cup defeat at home to Anderlecht last Wednesday but made the quarterfinals on goal difference, will be without Brazilian defender Lucio and striker Miroslav Klose at Cottbus.

Third-placed Hamburg - knocked out of the UEFA Cup by Bundesliga rivals Bayer Leverkusen in midweek - have the chance to move up to second when they face Borussia Dortmund at home on Saturday.

Both captain Rafael van der Vaart and striker Ivica Olic have bagged ten league goals this sea-

son and Hamburg have not lost in eight league games since Werder Bremen beat them in December.

In the chase to catch Bayern Munich, both rivals Werder Bremen and Bayer Leverkusen are in action on Sunday when Bremen host mid-table VfL Wolfsburg while Bayer are home to relegation-candidates Nuremberg.

On Friday, Champions League quarterfinalists Schalke 04, fifth in the league, are home to Duisburg having broken their disastrous run of three league defeats at Bielefeld last weekend and are eager for three more points.

Having halted their slide down the table in dramatic fashion, defending champions VfB Stuttgart have lifted themselves into sixth place - just one off a place in Europe next season.

After taking Bremen's scalp with a 6-3 win at the Gottlieb-Daimler Stadion last week, Stuttgart picked up another three points with a 2-0 win over Cottbus on Tuesday.

With striker Mario Gomez claiming a hat-trick against Bremen to become joint top-scorer with Luca Toni, Stuttgart

FIXTURES	
Saturday	VfL Bochum v VfB Stuttgart, Energie Cottbus v Bayern Munchen, Hamburg v Borussia Dortmund, Hansa Rostock v Hertha Berlin, Hannover 96 v Arminia Bielefeld, Karlsruhe v Eintracht Frankfurt
Sunday	Bayer Leverkusen v Nuremberg, Werder Bremen v VfL Wolfsburg

cent of the games in the league since I came," said the man who succeeded Jose Mourinho in September. "It's enough to be close to the top two and maybe the right time to be there. We need to continue to play like we have played most of the league games and then who knows? Anything can happen."

"I can tell you that we will fight until the end. I never give in and I will not start now."

Liverpool go into their Anfield clash with relegation-threatened Reading buoyed by reaching the last eight of the Champions League and the form of Fernando Torres, whose winner against Inter Milan in midweek took his tally to 26 from 35 games since his 21-million-pound move from Atletico Madrid.

Torres's exploits have put his strike partner Dirk Kuyt in the shade but the Dutchman is not complaining.

"Fernando will only get better and better," Kuyt predicted. "Other teams now are very worried by him, but you could see with the way he put away his one chance of the night against Inter just how dangerous he is."

With Aston Villa, Portsmouth, Blackburn and Manchester City all having faded away over the last few weeks, the battle for fourth place and the final qualifying place for next season's Champions League now appears to have come down to a straight fight between Liverpool and Everton, who travel to struggling Fulham on Sunday.

At the bottom, the biggest match of the weekend sees Wigan entertain Bolton on Sunday while Birmingham can drag Newcastle into deep trouble if they can produce a win over Kevin Keegan's side on Monday evening.

Lyon's young French international striker Karim Benzema on Thursday committed his future to the club by extending his contract with the six-time French champions by a further year at least.

The 20-year-old agreed a deal which makes him one of the club's highest-paid players, keeping him in south eastern France until June 30, 2013 with an optional year until 2014. His current deal ran until 2012.

Benzema, who has nine caps for France and has helped Lyon to three of their titles, had already extended his contract by two years last August.

"It's a good contract," said Benzema, without revealing the financial details, adding that he "did not think too much about the money which comes when you give good performances."

He added: "I can't say how many years I'm going to stay - maybe two or three. In my head I want to continue learning at Lyon where everyone has confidence in me, continue to progress and not to exile myself abroad."

"There are still a lot of things to do here, titles to win, notably the French Cup and league double this season," he said, adding that he would eventually like to win the Champions League with Lyon.

Club president Jean-Michel Aulas added: "We did what we thought we should do that Karim need not be embarrassed by comparisons with what happens abroad."

"We did the best we could, he fully deserves it. It's necessary that he not only feels good at Lyon but that he can find the financial framework to fit his immense talent."

He has scored 17 goals in 28 league games and is currently the top scorer in the French top flight. His performance on the pitch has captured the attention of UEFA president Michel Platini.

## Getafe in Bayern's way

REUTERS, London

Favourites Bayern Munich will face Spanish club Getafe in the quarterfinals of the UEFA Cup.

Friday's draw pitched the German heavyweights, four-times European champions, against a club enjoying its first taste of European competition.

The outstanding tie of the round features PSV Eindhoven against Italian club Fiorentina. Both won penalty shoot-outs on Wednesday to reach the last eight.

Germany's other representative Bayer Leverkusen face Zenit St Petersburg while Rangers, the sole British club to survive, are up against Sporting Lisbon.

Should both German clubs win they will meet in the semifinal. The first legs will be played on April 3 with the second legs a week later.

Quarterfinals	Bayer Leverkusen (GER) v Zenit Saint-Petersburg (RUS)
Rangers (SCO) v Sporting Lisbon (POR)	Bayern Munich (GER) v Getafe (ESP)
Fiorentina (ITA) v PSV Eindhoven (NED)	1st leg - April 3
2nd leg - April 10	Semifinals
Bayern Munich (GER) or Getafe (ESP) v Bayer Leverkusen (GER) or Zenit Saint-Petersburg (RUS)	Rangers (SCO) or Sporting Lisbon (POR) v Fiorentina (ITA) or PSV Eindhoven (NED)
1st leg - April 24	Final
2nd leg - May 1	May 14 - City of Manchester Stadium, England

which has seen them winless in the Principality for seven years.

Lyon have not won at the Stade Louis II since 2001 but coach Alain Perrin is convinced that a victory this weekend can put them firmly on the road to a seventh successive title.

Knocked out of the Champions League by Manchester United at Old Trafford a week ago, Lyon are on course for another domestic crown after their 4-2 win over main challengers Bordeaux last week.

And a win on Saturday could see them extend their lead to nine points over Bordeaux who host Strasbourg.

"We're at a turning point. Let's show our qualities away," said Perrin. "We had to win at home against Bordeaux. We did that. Now the title will be decided away," said Perrin.

"Of the four upcoming games we're going to play three away not forgetting hosting PSG. We know what's expected of us... We have to do better away otherwise Bordeaux will come back."

"The challenge will be to win in

to win. It has been 17 years since Real Madrid won here and it will soon be 18," said Depor striker Xisco.

Although they are comfortable league leaders with 11 games left, Real have not been impressive of late and are likely to be without striker Ruud van Nistelrooy once again as he struggles to overcome an ankle injury.

Defender Sergio Ramos serves the second game of his two-match suspension.

Barcelona could find themselves 11 points adrift of their arch-rivals before they take to the pitch in Almeria on Sunday.

Having cut a nine-point deficit

Real Madrid have not won a league game at Deportivo La Coruna's stadium in their last 15 attempts and will be out to break that jinx when they travel north in the Spanish Primera Liga on Saturday.

The leaders have had a thin time of it at the Riazor since winning 3-0 there in November 1991, and have lost on their last four visits.

Bernd Schuster's side enter the game with a handy eight-point cushion over their closest challengers Barcelona, but have struggled away from the Bernabeu in recent weeks with three defeats from their last four in all competitions.

Depor are two points above the relegation places but have shown signs of a recovery with only one defeat in their last seven league outings.

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# Riazor jinx worries Real

REUTERS, Madrid



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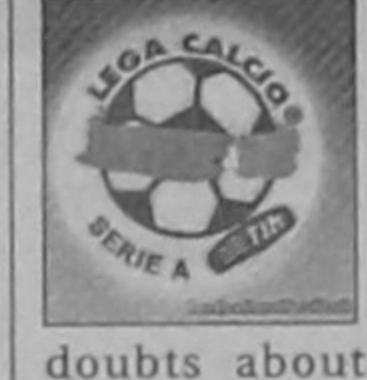
FIXTURES	
Saturday	Recreativo v Real Murcia (1900 GMT), Real Betis v Athletic Bilbao (1900 GMT), Deportivo La Coruna v Real Madrid (1900 GMT), Valencia v Sevilla (2100 GMT)
Sunday	Espanyol v Mallorca, Valladolid v Osasuna, Getafe v Racing, Villarreal v Real Zaragoza (all 1600 GMT), Almeria v Barcelona (1800 GMT), Atletico Madrid v Levante (2000 GMT)

At the foot of the table on Saturday, new Real Murcia coach Javier Clemente, whose side are second bottom and eight points from safety, visit 18th-placed Recreativo Huelva who are six points above them, in a real relegation shootout.

Michael Laudrup's Getafe, who made the UEFA Cup quarterfinals on Wednesday to extend their unbeaten run to 10 in all competitions, hold a 3-1 lead from the home leg of the semifinal. The second leg is in Santander on Wednesday.

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REUTERS, Rome



Roma are seeking a home win over AC Milan on Saturday to put pressure on an Inter Milan side unsettled by

doubts about coach Roberto Mancini's future.

Mancini, whose team lead Serie A, stunned Italian soccer when he announced he intended to leave Inter at the end of the season after Tuesday's Champions League last-16 defeat by Liverpool.

He made a U-turn on Wednesday after talks with club chairman Massimo Moratti, but the affair is likely to have upset the champions ahead of Sunday's home game with Palermo.

Roma can rattle them further by dropping their lead to three points, for a night at least, with a win over the European champions, who are fifth.

The Rome side's tails were already up after they trimmed Inter's advantage from 11 points to

six in recent weeks and knocked Real Madrid out of the Champions League to become Italy's only representative in the competition.

"We want to go all the way in the Champions League and gain points for the Serie A title," Roma captain Francesco Totti told Sky television.

"I was surprised by Mancini's decision. They may have some problems now, we'll have to see how the players react, it could be a good thing or a bad thing."

European champions Milan need a win to move above fourth-placed Fiorentina and into the qualification zone for the

FIXTURES	
Saturday	Roma v AC Milan, Udinese v Lazio
Sunday	Atalanta v Empoli, Cagliari v Torino, Fiorentina v Genoa, Inter Milan v Palermo, Juventus v Napoli, Livorno v Parma, Reggina v Siena, Sampdoria v Catania

# Tricky tie for Lyon

AFP, Paris



Champions Lyon face a potentially tricky task on Saturday as they travel to Monaco looking to overcome a jinx

which has seen them winless in the Principality for seven years.

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Monaco bearing in mind that Lyon have not won in a very long time at the Stade Louis II."

Perrin has however some injury worries in midfield with Juninho and possibly Sidney Govou both out for the tie.

Juninho has a right thigh injury while Govou is uncertain to be fit as he recovers from tendonitis in his left ankle.

But Perrin was boosted by the news that Lyon's young French international striker Karim Benzema had put pen to paper with a new deal until 2013.

Monaco meanwhile will once again be without Italian international goalkeeper Flavio Roma, already missing during their loss at Nancy, with a thigh injury. He will be replaced by youth international Stephane Ruffier.

Bordeaux also have their injury problems as they will be without Brazilian Wendel (ankle) as they

look to close the gap with the leaders against Strasbourg, just four points above the drop zone.

Third-placed Nancy, ten points behind Lyon after their 2-0 win against Monaco last week, travel to third-from-bottom Sochaux on Saturday, while Paris Saint Germain host eighth-placed Valenciennes.

The Parisians, who have won at home just twice this season, are equal on 31 points with Sochaux in the first relegation spot.

"It's a key match for our survival," said PSG's David Ngog. "We need points and we can't allow ourselves to lose on front of our fans. We want to give the best of ourselves for them, despite the fact that they are naturally unhappy with our results. They deserve that we win."

Marseille turn their attentions back to domestic duty after their UEFA Cup elimination ended France's participation in European club action this season.