AFP, Paris



marched into the UEFA Cup quarterfinalson 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

competition. game after 58 minutes but McGregor was forced to stand firm under a barrage of late pressure,

making several impressive saves.

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

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,

to get here. We've dug deep tonight

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

Bolton's Gary Cahill, a winter side's chances of winning the transfer window signing from Aston Villa, told BBC television Diego scored the only goal of the 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.

cent of the games in the league

since I came," said the man who

succeeded Jose Mourinho in

September. "It is enough to be close

to the top two and maybe the right

"The positive is we didn't lose a tinue to play like we have played

time to be there. We need to con-

most of the league games and then

who knows? Anything can happen.

"I can tell you that we will fight

Liverpool go into their Anfield

until the end. I never give in and I

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.

strike partner Dirk Kuyt in the

shade but the Dutchman is not

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 dan-

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 strug-

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 pro-

duce a win over Kevin Keegan's

have the chance to break into the

title race for the first time this

season with a win at Bochum on

be hoping for three more league

points to keep them away from the

danger zone when they take on

results have seen them drop out

of the title race, take on fellow

mid-table side Eintracht

Agger out for

Liverpool defender Daniel Agger is

likely to be sidelined for the

remainder of the season with a foot

injury, Reds manager Rafael

action since September with a

metatarsal injury and is due to have

want to get his problem sorted,'

Benitez told the club's official

Martin Skrtel is playing very well.

Daniel will be back for next sea-

website, www.liverpoolfc.tv.

"It's a blow for Daniel but we

"We have defensive cover and

Slovakian Skrtel replaced Agger

as the most expensive defender in

Liverpool's history following his six

million pounds transfer from Zenit

St Petersburg in January.

The 23-year-old Denmark

the season

Benitez said Friday.

an operation next week.

With striker Mario Gomez international has been out of

son."

And Karlsruhe, whose recent

Hertha Berlin on Saturday.

Strugglers Hansa Rostock will

gling Fulham on Sunday.

side on Monday evening.

Saturday.

Frankfurt.

With Aston Villa, Portsmouth,

gerous he is."

Torres's exploits have put his

"Fernando will only get better

will not start now."

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

Both parties have made it absolutely clear we want to find a resolu-

"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 footdragging 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

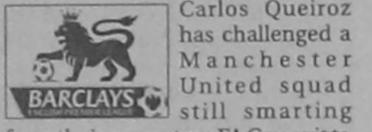
Portuguese media reported. The 29-year-old has not fully recovered despite already undergoing surgery in France after suffering seriously torn ligaments in

his left knee last September. Andrade missed the final phase of the 2006 World Cup because of

another operation on his kneecap. 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.

Lampard will agree new deal MU seek Derby tonic

AFP, London



has challenged a Manchester United squad BARCLAYS Still smarting from their premature FA Cup exit to take their frustration out on the

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.

Premier League's whipping boys

"We were very down after the hand over the leaders. Portsmouth game," Queiroz admitted. "There was a lot of frustration and sadness amongst the team and the staff, but the most England midfielder's subsequent important thing now is to show the criticism of the club's failure to complaining. right attitude, the Manchester United attitude and bounce back from what happened. We need to the scenes at Stamford Bridge. keep moving forward."

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

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

They might be

bottom of the

Bundesliga but

Cottbus head

coach Bojan

insists his side

will not just be

making up the

numbers at home to league leaders

and wait for something to happen

against Bayern," said Slovenian

Prasnikar with his side at the foot

The contrast between Cottbus'

While Cottbus have won just

league record and that of Bayern is

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

Bayern, who suffered a surprise

2-1 UEFA Cup defeat at home to

Anderlecht last Wednesday but

make the quarterfinals on goal

difference, will be without

Brazilian defender Lucio and

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

Vaart and striker Ivica Olic have

bagged ten league goals this sea-

Both captain Rafael van der

home on Saturday.

striker Miroslav Klose at Cottbus.

conceded 40 goals this season.

"We are not going to just react

Bayern Munich on Saturday.

AFP, Berlin

BUNDES

of the table.

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.

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 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 Frank Lampard's four goals helped ease some of the pressure on manager Avram Grant but the

table an offer of a new contract suggests all is far from well behind Grant insists Chelsea can still Queiroz went on to state that 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

son and Hamburg have not lost in

eight league games since Werder

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 relega-

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

the table in dramatic fashion,

defending champions VfB

Stuttgart have lifted themselves

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

claiming a hat-trick against

Bremen to become joint top-

scorer with Luca Toni, Stuttgart

FIXTURES

VfL Bochum v VfB Stuttgart, Energie

Cottbus v Bayern Munchen, Hamburg v

Borussia Dortmund, Hansa Rostock v

Hertha Berlin, Hanover 96 v Arminia

Bielefeld, Karlsruhe v Eintracht Frankfurt

Bayer Leverkusen v Nuremberg, Werder

Bremen v VfL Wolfsburg

place in Europe next season.

Having halted their slide down

After taking Bremen's scalp

into sixth place - just one off a AFP, Liverpool

On Friday, Champions League

tion-candidates Nuremberg.

more points.

on Tuesday.

Saturday

Sunday

In the chase to catch Bayern

Bremen beat them in December.

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

Bayern Munich (GER) v Getafe (ESP) Fiorentina (ITA) v PSV Eindhoven (NED)

1stleg-April3 2ndleg-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) 1stleg-April 24 2ndleg-May1

Final May 14 - City of Manchester Stadium, England

Benzema staying put

AFP, Lyon

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 myselfabroad. "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

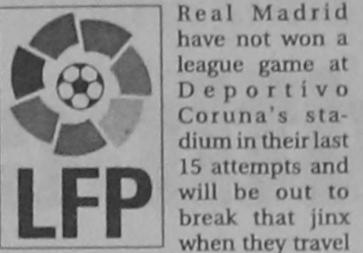
should so that Karim need not be embarrassed by comparisons with whathappens abroad. "We did the best we could, he

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.

Riazor jinx worries Real

REUTERS, Madrid



Real Madrid have not won a Xisco. league game at dium in their last

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 They beat Sevilla 2-1 at home two weeks ago and came from two

the Mestalla last time out. "We are confident we are going

down to draw 2-2 with Valencia at

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

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 archrivals before they take to the pitch

in Almeria on Sunday.

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)

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)

on Real to just two three weeks ago, Frank Rijkaard's men have to do it

to Atletico Madrid and Villarreal. They will be without the injured Lionel Messi and have doubts over

midfielders Deco and Yaya Toure. Promoted Almeria are riding high in eighth place and claimed Real's scalp with a 2-0 win at the Mediterranean Games stadium last month. They have only conceded once in their last five home games.

An intriguing match-up takes place when King's Cup semifinalists Getafe and Racing Santander meet at the Coliseum on Sunday, for the first of two clashes between Having cut a nine-point deficit the sides in the space of four days.

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.

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.

Roma look to up pressure

REUTERS, Rome



Roma are seeking a home win over AC Milan on Saturday to put pressure on an Înter 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

cropping 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

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

six in recent weeks and knocked

Champions League and gain points for the Serie A title," Roma captain Francesco Totti told Sky are is battling to regain their fitness. television.

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 fourthplaced Fiorentina and into the qualification zone for the

Saturday Roma v AC Milan, Udinese v Lazio

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

Champions League, after bring knocked out by Arsenal last week. Striker Filippo Inzaghi is in

doubt for the trip to the capital because of a groin strain, while Clarence Seedorf, Marek Jankulovski and Alessandro Nesta

Roma full back Marco Cassetti is "I was surprised by Mancini's also on the mend from a shoulder problem.

Third-placed Juventus, who are seven points behind Roma with 51 points from 27 games, will be short-handed for Sunday's home game against Napoli.

Nicola Legrottaglie, Jonathan Zebina and Mauro Camoranesi are suspended, Cristiano Zanetti is out for a month with a thigh injury and Portuguese midfielder Tiago is a doubt because of an ankle prob-

Fiorentina, who reached the UEFA Cup quarterfinals on Wednesday after winning a penalty shootout with Everton, are a point above Milan and entertain Genoa

on Saturday.

Tricky tie for Lyon

left ankle.

AFP, Paris



Champions Lyon face a potentially tricky task on Saturday as they travel to ing to over-

come a jinx 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 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

the Stade Louis II."

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

Perrin has however some injury

news that Lyon's young French international striker Karim Benzema had put pen to paper with a new deal until 2013.

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

(all times 1900 GMT unless stated) Saturday

Monaco v Lyon (15:00); Le Mans v Rennes: Lille v Caen; Lorient v Auxerre Metz v Nice: PSG v Valenciennes; Sochaux v AS Nancy; St Etienne Toulouse Sunday

Bordeaux v Strasbourg (17:00); Lens v Marseille (19:50)

Monaco bearing in mind that Lyon look to close the gap with the leadhave not won in a very long time at ers 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

But Perrin was boosted by the home just twice this season, are equal on 31 points with Sochaux in the first relegation spot. "It's a key match for our sur-

vival," said PSG's David Ngog. "We Monaco meanwhile will once 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.

> It's back to the drawing board for Eric Gerets' side who once again have their eyes fixed on Europe when they travel to struggling Lens on Sunday. Marseille are currently fourth with 45

> points from 28 games. Elsewhere, Le Mans, in fifth, will be hoping to get back to winning ways against visiting Rennes as will Nice who travel to tailenders Metz. Caen visit midtable Lille and St Etienne host second-from-bottom Toulouse.

can't go and work with another

no problems following his world

champions from an armchair

television for two years now and I'll

keep on doing it," he said. "And I

beat at the tournament in

Switzerland and Austria in June,

but they will also have to cope with

certainly hope they (win it)."

The Tuscan said he would have

"I've been watching Italy on

Italy will clearly be the team to

country's team," he said.

during Euro 2008.

Lippi waiting on right offer

Football

REUTERS, London

Marcello Lippi, who coached Italy to their 2006 World Cup triumph, said on Thursday he was waiting for a chance to get back into club management.

Lippi, who won five Serie A titles and the 1996 Champions League during two spells with Juventus, stepped down from the national job after their victory in Germany. Linked since with several European clubs, Lippi said he missed being in the dugout, telling Reuters: "I still see my future on a football pitch for a few years yet - as soon as there's a solution which I like, one that

interests me." Asked whether he was tempted by a move into English football, an option he discussed in a 1997

be an interesting experience; but I can't very well go knocking on the doors of the clubs. "If a club were to come to me, we

autobiography, Lippi said: "It could

could talk." The 59-year-old, who also had a

spell at Inter Milan, had no doubts about the extent of domestic Premier League talent. "There are a lot of very good

English players, people like (Frank) Lampard, (Steven) Gerrard and (Wayne) Rooney," he said. The trio are part of an England the weight of expectation from

squad coached by Lippi's compatriot and former Serie A rival Fabio Capello, who was appointed after England's failure to qualify for Euro 2008 under Steve McClaren. Capello's job, as a national handicapped by the mantle of

coach, is not one that would have world champions. appealed to Lippi.

"A coach who has just won the

backhome. Lippi, who was in London to receive an award from the Dolce Vita Italian cultural fair, shrugged off any notion that Italy would be

"Do you think it would have been better not to have won the

World Cup with his national side World Cup?" he grinned.

On their chances of going all the AFP, London