

### Bruce wants Zaki to stay

Wigan manager Steve Bruce has admitted that he may have made a major blunder by failing to sign Egyptian striker Amr Zaki on a permanent basis when he was available for a bargain 7.25 million pounds.

Zaki, 25, has taken the Premier League by storm by banging in seven goals since his loan move from Zamalek and his success has fuelled speculation that a club of Wigan's size will be unable to hang on to him.

Although Zamalek had quoted a relatively low price for Zaki, Bruce admitted he had felt that a permanent deal would be risky.

But he insists Wigan will be ready to meet what will inevitably be an inflated transfer fee now that they have seen how good the player is.

"He's on loan with us until June and over the next few weeks, or however long it takes, we will try and open negotiations with Zamalek and do everything in our power to try and make sure he stays here."

"Zamalek were hoping, and that's why they took the deal, that he would do well. Obviously, the better he does, the bigger the fee. He's our player, so we're in the driving seat."

"We haven't got first refusal on anything. But we have got to see if we can agree a transfer fee with Zamalek."

"Of course, with hindsight, it would have been nice for him to have been ours. But we have still got a chance - that is the most important thing - and we will do our utmost."

### \$90m deal for Brazil

The Brazilian football confederation (CBF) on Wednesday announced a six-year, 90 million-dollar sponsorship contract for the national football team by one of the country's major banks.

The CBF said the sponsorship of the "Selecao" would run till the end of the World Cup finals in Brazil in 2014.

The size of the contract was not officially announced, but according to local media reports, the Itaú bank will pay 90 million dollars (70 millions euros) over the six-year duration.

### Frankfurt get into groove

Greece striker Ioannis Amanatidis scored in injury time to seal Eintracht Frankfurt's 2-1 victory over Karlsruhe to lift his side out of the bottom three and claim their first league win of the season.

A Madonna concert in mid-September damaged the Frankfurt pitch enough to cause the Bundesliga game to be postponed until Wednesday and both sides worked to put on a show in the dramatic last ten minutes.

Karlsruhe defender Maik Franz scored with a header in the 82nd minute, but Frankfurt equalised when Miller Liberopoulos floated a free-kick into the penalty area and midfielder Benjamin Koehler scored on 84 minutes.

Amanatidis slotted home off his right foot in injury time to lift Frankfurt up to 15th in the table and help coach Friedhelm Funkel keep his keep his job.

### Simao pegs back L'pool

A late slip cost Liverpool dear in Wednesday's Champions League group match at Atletico Madrid as Portuguese winger Simao struck an 83rd minute equaliser in a 1-1 draw.

Irish international Robbie Keane, yet to score in the Premiership, had put the visitors ahead in the 14th minute for his second Champions League goal at the Vicente Calderon stadium.

The 83rd minute goal of Simao, whom the Merseysiders tried to sign two years ago, was a blow for Liverpool although both they and Atletico have seven points from nine in Group D.

Atletico and Liverpool, who both lost their 100 per cent European records, face off again in the next group match at Anfield on November 4.

It is a big week for Liverpool who have a title tussle with co-leaders Chelsea on Sunday.

This was Atletico's biggest European night since March 19 1997 - when they were ousted by Ajax in the Champions League quarterfinal - and there was a red-hot atmosphere at the Calderon.

UEFA had threatened to switch the match to a different venue after the trouble in Marseille but fortunately there was no repeat.

After conceding early goals in their previous two matches Atletico were probably relieved to be 0-0 after 10 minutes but then Keane struck after a slick pass from Steven Gerrard.



Inter Milan striker Adriano (2nd from L) scores the all-important goal against Anorthosis Famagusta during their Champions League encounter at San Siro on Wednesday.

## Ballack criticizes Loew

Football  
AFP, Berlin

Michael Ballack's place in the German team was under threat on Wednesday after furious coach Joachim Loew summoned the Chelsea star to explain his public criticisms of the way the squad is being handled.

Loew is angry after Ballack criticised him in newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) in which he said the coach should show his senior players more respect and loyalty.

"I will call Michael Ballack and insist on a meeting in Germany," Loew told the German Football Federation (DFB) website on Wednesday.

"I am extremely disappointed by the manner and content of what he has said - I cannot accept this. What happens after that, and the decision I make, will depend on this conversation."

"Quite often in the past, we have asked Michael Ballack as captain to address things which he sees critically or differently."

"The fact that he chose to air these criticisms in the media is utterly wrong and incomprehensible."

"No player - and the captain isn't an exception - has the right to criticise the selection policy or decisions of the coach, or to level public criticism against the team."

Earlier in the day, Loew and team manager Oliver Bierhoff held an emergency phone conference call

with DFB president Theo Zwanziger, who is in Zurich for a FIFA conference, to discuss the matter.

"I am disappointed with Michael Ballack over his style," said Zwanziger.

"His comments have led to a complicated and difficult situation developing."

"The team has developed in a very positive way in the last few years and therefore I don't understand the fact there has been criticism from the team aimed at Joachim Loew in the media."

"Such comments are absolutely inappropriate. In the interest of the success of the team, the authority of the national team coach must have the highest priority."

In Tuesday's FAZ interview, Ballack criticised Loew for dropping veteran midfielder Torsten Frings for this month's World Cup qualifiers against Wales and Russia.

"Maybe he is not in top form right now, but he is still playing at very high level," Ballack said of Frings.

"If he is no longer wanted, he should be told so honestly."

"Respect and loyalty is the least you can expect as a deserving national team player."

But Ballack received support for his comments by Frings.

"It wasn't right that I didn't play and Michael recognised that too," Frings told German television channel Sat1.

"If anyone is going to say something, then it has to be the captain."

Also in the FAZ interview, Chelsea star Ballack also said he had sympathy for Kevin Kuranyi who walked out on the team during their 2-1 win over Russia on October 11, after not being selected for the game.

Loew has since said he will never select Kuranyi again.

Having captained Germany to World Cup qualifiers over Russia and Wales earlier this month, Ballack had an operation to remove thickened nerves from both feet.

Loew never called him after the operation, Ballack said.

"I am surprised, because in the past it was always different," Ballack said.

But former Germany captain and coach Franz Beckenbauer said he is troubled by the noises coming from the Mannschaft and players' egos are getting the better of them.

"For me there is too much talk coming from the national team," said Beckenbauer.

"Everyone is announcing themselves whether it is Kuranyi, who suddenly disappears, or Frings, who talks about retiring."

"And now we have Ballack, the captain, coming out and saying this."

"These sort of things should be dealt with internally."

"Some people should hold their tongue and play football, or at least have the conversation with the coach, not with a journalist."

Ballack has already tested Loew's patience this year when he had an on-field row with Bierhoff after the Euro 2008 final last June in Vienna which erupted again in September with a war of words between the manager and captain in the media here.

to the Italian game.

"His quality with the ball is the best I have ever witnessed. He is an inspirational player, he has been great for English football, he's an ambassador and a really good friend."

"It will be interesting to see how he gets on with the language but he can call me for a few tips."

"Mind you I would rather he signed for Inter than AC! I wish him all the best though."

Ince said bringing Beckham to Blackburn was beyond the confines of his budget: "I would love to sign him but I just can't."

Beckham needs to continue playing first-team football if he is to continue to get picked by England manager Fabio Capello and break 1966 World Cup-winning captain Bobby Moore's record of 108 caps for an outfield player.

Reports in England claim Capello, a former Milan manager, helped smooth the way for Beckham's surprise move by calling Adriano Galliani, the Milan managing director, to vouch for the former Manchester United star.

England goalkeeper David James said: "I haven't spoken to David about it and don't know whether he's going to Milan but as a player I know he's still hungry and wants to play."

"Any player with international aspirations knows he has to be playing regularly and I'm sure that's the case with David."

Harry Redknapp, James's manager at Portsmouth, added he hadn't given up hope of bringing Beckham to Fratton Park: "If he doesn't go to Milan maybe I'll try to sign him myself. He would be a great loan for anybody."

### C LEAGUE RESULTS

AFP, Paris

European Champions League results on Wednesday:

**Group A**  
At Bordeaux  
Bordeaux (FRA) 1 (Cadu 54-og) CFR Cluj (ROM) 0  
At London  
Chelsea (ENG) 1 (Terry 77) AS Roma (ITA) 0  
**Group B**  
At Milan  
Inter Milan (ITA) 1 (Adriano 44) Anorthosis (CYP) 0  
At Athens  
Panathinaikos (GRE) 2 (Mantzios 36, 68) Werder Bremen (GER) 2 (Mertesacker 29, Hugo Almeida 83)  
**Group C**  
At Donetsk  
Shakhtar Donetsk (UKR) 0 Sporting Lisbon (POR) 1 (Liedson 76)  
At Basel  
FC Basel (SUI) 0 Barcelona (ESP) 5 (Messi 4, Busquets 15, Krkic 22, 46, Xavi Hernandez 47)  
**Group D**  
At Madrid  
Atletico Madrid (ESP) 1 (Simao 83) Liverpool (ENG) 1 (Keane 14)  
At Eindhoven  
PSV Eindhoven (NED) 2 (Koevermanns 71, 85) Marseille (FRA) 0

### Malaysia to discuss over AFC HQ

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia said on Thursday it was willing to negotiate with the Asian football's governing body to stop it moving to another country.

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) proposed earlier this month moving its headquarters from the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur and invited applications from the its 46 member nations to provide a new home.

"They can discuss it with me and can ask for several privileges. We can consider it but don't coerce with excessive demands," Malaysian sports minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob was quoted as saying by state news agency Bernama.

He told Bernama he was leaving it to AFC president Mohamed Bin Hammam to arrange a meeting but added that Malaysia had its dignity and would not be cowed by a "give or we'll leave" ultimatum.

The Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) has said it will not try to convince the AFC to stay.

Relations between the two bodies took a turn for the worse last year when Malaysia decided to invite the glamour English Premier League side Manchester United for a friendly during the Asian Cup tournament, which it was joint-hosting.

The AFC criticised Malaysia's plan which it saw as drawing attention away from its premier event, and United subsequently dropped their tour plans.

The AFC will discuss its plan to leave AFC House during its annual meeting in Shanghai next month.

Malaysia has hosted the AFC since 1965 and its first prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman served as its president for 24 years.

## Inter in control

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE  
AFP, Milan

Italian champions Inter Milan were made to battle all the way by a spirited Anorthosis Famagusta at the San Siro on Wednesday night before securing a 1-0 Champions League Group B victory.

Brazilian striker Adriano scored the winner late on in the first half to put Inter in control of the group with seven points from three games.

The Cypriots did themselves justice, though, by hanging in to the end and they are still in a position to qualify for the knock-out stages after Panathinaikos and Werder Bremen drew 2-2 in Greece.

Inter coach Jose Mourinho said the three points was more important than the performance against a team that played with damage limitation in mind.

"Ours is a strong group made up of good players. Tonight some people weren't happy with the way the team played and I agree with them, but the important thing was the three points," he told Sky cameras.

"Tonight we played against a team which I must compliment because they played well and waited 80 minutes to try to do

something. That's not a criticism, that's the reality."

Anorthosis's Georgian coach Temuri Ketsbaia, a former player with Newcastle United, congratulated his players.

"It's always difficult to congratulate after a defeat but my players deserve it tonight," he said.

"We're not happy we lost, Inter deserved to win but we can look our opponents in the eye."

"We have four points but we must win more, especially in our last two home games because even finishing third won't be enough."

It was minnows Anorthosis who fashioned the first notable chance from a free-kick but Inter's stand-in goalkeeper Francesco Toldo parried Traianos Dellas's fierce strike.

Inter were next to create an opening as Adriano played a brilliant ball over the top of a static defence for compatriot Mancini but the Brazilian failed to bring the ball under control.

Had it been Zlatan Ibrahimovic on the end of the pass, the outcome might have been a bulging net.

On 10 minutes Anorthosis's Albanian goalkeeper Arian Beqaj had to be alert to keep out a precise shot from Ghana midfielder Sulley Muntari with his legs after good Inter build-up play.

Five minutes later and Inter

played some great one-touch football between Esteban Cambiasso and Dejan Stankovic before Adriano blazed his shot wide.

But a minute from the break the Brazilian got the goal Inter deserved. Ibrahimovic's crossfield ball was expertly taken down by full-back Maicon who turned inside and lifted a cross onto his compatriot's head for a simple goal from six yards.

However, the visitors almost levelled straight after the break. Nicos Katsavakis reached a deep free-kick from Dellas but couldn't keep his close range header down.

The action was soon taking place back down the other end and Beqaj saved the Cypriots by diving out to pick Ibrahimovic's cross off Adriano's boot.

The big Swede should have settled the match on 68 minutes as he scammed onto a perfectly weighted through ball from his strike partner but he puzzlingly shot from the left with the outside of his right boot and sent his effort well wide.

Anorthosis remained competitive and Toldo came out confidently to punch clear a high ball as substitute striker Hawar Mulla Mohammed of Iraq challenged.

Substitute forward Julio Cruz almost snatched a second for Inter a minute from time but his skimming low shot sailed just past the post.



Barcelona starlet Bojan Krkic takes a shot against Basel during their Champions League match at St. Jakob-Park Stadium in Basel on Wednesday.

## Barca rout Basel

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE  
AFP, Basel

Teen sensation Bojan Krkic scored twice as Barcelona cruised past Basel 5-0 Wednesday to keep their 100 per cent record in the Champions League Group C.

Coach Josep Guardiola left Andres Iniesta, Samuel Eto'o and Thierry Henry out of the starting lineup, but the French striker came on for Xavi Hernandez in the middle of the second half.

That left 18-year-old Krkic to lead the attack.

It was Argentine winger Lionel Messi who opened the scoring in the fourth minute, beating the Basel offside trap and picking up a superb cross from Daniel Alves to knock the ball past his compatriot Franco Costanzo in the Swiss goal.

Barely 10 minutes later, Xavi Hernandez lobbed a ball across the Basel defence to Sergi Busquets at the far post and the Spanish under-21 international slotted it home.

Messi played a ball to the feet of Krkic, who sent it to the corner of the net from the edge of the penalty area in the 22nd minute.

Krkic, whose Serbian father, also named Bojan Krkic, played for Red Star Belgrade, doubled his tally at the start of the second half when Barcelona launch a counter-attack after a rare Basel foray into Spanish territory.

Xavi Hernandez made it five for the Catalan side just two minutes later.

Barcelona now have a perfect nine points from three games in Group C, which also includes Ukraine's Shakhtar Donetsk and Sporting Lisbon.

## Atletico fans jeer UEFA theme

AFP, Madrid

Atletico Madrid fans whistled and jeered the UEFA Champions League theme music when it was played before kick-off in the tie against Liverpool at the Vicente Calderon stadium on Wednesday.

Supporters of the Spanish side also turned their backs on the pitch when the music, Handel's Zadok the Priest, accompanied the teams out for the tie.

Atletico fans were venting their anger at the decision made by the sport's European governing body to hand the club a two-match European stadium ban following racist insults hurled at players from French side Marseille in an earlier game.

The suspension was postponed pending an appeal by the club.

## Barton rues past mess

Football  
AFP, Newcastle

A repentant Joey Barton has pleaded with football fans to accept that he is a reformed character after spending 74 days in prison following assaults on a 16-year-old boy and a former teammate.

Barton, who could be in line for a return to the Newcastle side in Saturday's derby clash with Sunderland, says giving up drink -- he has been sober since last December -- has helped him to realise he must change or lose the career he loves.

"I have messed up on more than one occasion but nothing sobers you up like going to prison," he said.

"It was not a nice experience and I know this is the last-chance

saloon."

Barton is eligible to play again after serving a six-match ban imposed by the Football Association after he received a suspended four-month prison sentence for an unprovoked training ground attack on Ousmane Dabo when the two players were both at Manchester City.

The midfielder would have almost certainly served time in prison for that assault if he had not already been given a six-month custodial sentence over an alcohol-fuelled attack on a teenager during a night out in his native city of Liverpool in December 2007.

Barton served 74 days of his sentence and is now hoping to rebuild his career and act as a positive example for other wayward young men aiming to turn their lives around.

As he articulated that objective, Barton could not however prevent himself courting fresh controversy by suggesting that he could be a more relevant role model than "squeaky clean" players like Michael Owen and David Beckham.

The claim triggered a torrent of outraged reaction on radio phones on Thursday with listeners suggesting Barton should have waited until he has proved he genuinely is capable of acting as a role model, but the player insists his intentions are sincere. "I hope I can be a shining beacon for kids who have been in trouble," he said. "I have probably made a lot more people unhappy than a normal person. Hopefully young kids who look at squeaky clean, unbelievable professionals like David Beckham and Michael Owen but can't relate to them, can relate to me."



Liverpool striker Robbie Keane (L) shoots to score the opening goal against Atletico Madrid during their Champions League tie at the Vicente Calderon Stadium in Madrid on Wednesday.