# Gunners go for broke

AFP, London



against Liverpool on Sunday as unpredictable nature of this the Gunners try to get back in year's race. the Premier League title race.

match at the Emirates Stadium away from Old Trafford. and a defeat would leave their title challenge in tatters.

against their main rivals, with Chelsea have already disseason.

Wenger knows another win essential if Arsenal are to back into the race, the importhe English crown from United Liverpool. in the second half of the cam-

top four and I am convinced we Rafa Benitez. have the quality to do it," Wenger said. "It is an opportuwe want to take.

sory for us to beat the three weekat Anfield. other teams - Manchester United, Chelsea, Liverpool and

we want to do that on Sunday." While Arsenal will still be Arsenal face some way adrift of first place a make or even with a win over Liverpool, break clash Wenger takes heart from the

Wenger's side trail leaders already dropped several points Liverpool by eight points at home, while United have ahead of this weekend's crucial struggled to win the big games

"At the moment the race is still very tight because it looks But Arsenal have proved for me for the first time in six or adept at raising their game seven years that the number of points for the winner of this Manchester United and league will be much lower than usual because everybody patched by the Gunners this drops points against everybody," Wenger said.

"For us, the first step is to get against one of the big four is back into the race and to get mount a concerted bid to take tant thing is for us to beat

While Wenger plots a way to improve Arsenal's title pros-"We are highly-motivated to pects, Liverpool have been on beat another of the so-called auto-pilot in the absence of

The Liverpool manager has been recuperating at home nity for us to catch them, which after a minor operation on a kidney stones problem last injury but Kolo Toure and "With our position in the weekend, but Benitez's attenleague, we know it is compul- tion to detail ensured a smooth fitness doubts.

Benitez has been in regular contact with Lee from his sick bed and the assistant manager fully expects his boss to make it to the Emirates on Sunday.

"He has had an eventful few days, it hasn't been the best for him," Lee said. "He was in a lot of pain earlier in the week but Liverpool and Chelsea have he has got better and he will be there on Sunday.

> "Obviously when you take a presence like Rafa away from the place it is not going to be easy. But I have phoned him every day to keep in touch and let him know what has been going on.

The players have done really well, they have focused and concentrated with all the stuff which has been going on in the background."

Benitez's input will be crucial if Liverpool are to halt a poor run of results at Arsenal, with their last win coming in 2000 when the Gunners were still playing at Highbury.

Liverpool's hopes of ending that run won't be helped by the likely absence of Fernando Torres with a hamstring strain.

Arsenal winger Samir Nasri could return from an ankle | Canada". Nicklas Bendtner are both

## C'Ron going nowhere

Kalle warns Bayern

Friday's draw for the last 16 Rummenigge acknowledged.

"I'd like us to lay the groundwork for success with a goalless draw at the Allianz Arena.

Although the Portuguese runners-up and league while Munich are second in the German

Bayern Munich avoided a

European heavyweight in

of the Champions League,

but chairman Karl-Heinz

Rummenigge warned

against taking Sporting

Lisbon lightly.

While the Bundesliga champions avoided the

likes of current Champions League holders

Manchester United, English giants Chelsea or

Spain's Real Madrid, Rummenigge says they

Stadium in Lisbon on 25 February next year with

the return at Munich's Allianz Arena on 10

caution against underestimating this team,"

The first leg will be played at the Jose Alvalade

"I think it's a good draw for us, but I want to

domestic Cup winners represent a significant table.

must make a good start in Portugal.

Football

AFP, Yokohama

AFP, Munich

CHAMPIONS

March 2009.

in Lisbon.'

Rummenigge warned.

Captain Gary Neville has joined boss Sir Alex Ferguson in insisting Cristiano Ronaldo is going nowhere, as Real Madrid hit back at world," Calderon said in a statement. Manchester United's "sad" comments.

between the clubs, but we can't do anything about the speculation. All we can do is look after our own situation," said Neville.

"Cristiano is our player and he will continue to be our player as long as we want to keep him. The manager has already said that.

"Manchester United don't let players go that they don't want to sell, it's as simple as that. And they want to keep Ronaldo," he added on Ronaldo transfer, as alleged by Spanish media. the club website.

Ronaldo move to the Bernabeu at the end of the season, saying he would not "sell them a virus."

Real Madrid president Ramon Calderon, who like Ferguson is in Japan, termed the comments "sad."

"In the code of conduct of our club, there is no room for insults, for scorn nor for a lack of respect for our rivals. Perhaps for this reason, Real Madrid is respected in all corners of the

"It is sad that a professional with the career There should be a level of respect shown of Mr. Ferguson can make a statement like that, which is in addition to other unfortunate statements made in recent months.

> "Despite these, Real Madrid will never respond without respect to Manchester United, to any of its officials, nor of course to its sup-

Calderon also confirmed that there was "no agreement" between the two clubs on a

Ronaldo was touted all summer as an 80 Ferguson lashed out at Real Madrid on million euro (115 million dollars, 74 million Thursday as new rumours swirled about a pounds) Real target, with United furious at the Spaniards' constant efforts to prise him away. from Manchester.

hurdle for Bayern, the men from Munich were

spared a daunting tie against the likes of Inter

"It could have been a lot harder for us,"

The last sixteen draw has thrown up no fewer

"We'll take each round as it comes, but we're

But Rummenigge is refusing to dream about

"It would be fantastic if we could make it to

The last team Bayern and Lisbon met in

Bayern won 1-0 in the Portuguese capital,

Sporting currently lie fourth in their domestic

than three England v Italy clashes, including the

meeting between holders United and ex-

aiming to make the quarterfinals at the very

the German giants reaching the final at Rome's

the semifinals again, but I'm not even dreaming

Europe's elite club competition was in the group

of the final just yet," added Rummenigge.

Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho's Inter.

Milan, Chelsea or Real.

least," Rummenigge said.

Olympic Stadium on May 27.

phase two years ago.

# candidate.

for 2018,

2022 WCs

AFP, Tokyo

should a bidder for 2018 be unsuccessful then they would be able to enter the vote for 2022 to be held immediately afterwards, so long as the 2018 hosts are not from the same

everyone, although African and South American countries are not allowed to enter in 2018 as those continents will have held the World Cup in 2010 (South Africa) and 2014

China, Qatar, Mexico, the

joining forces.

But he highlighted England.

"We have a bunch of possible, even I would say very strong candidates," he said "And everybody knows England will be a candidate, a strong candidate."

Australia too are considered a good bet, with the government in Canberra this month agreeing to spend 30 million US dollars to back

Bidding opens in January next year.

the Club World Cup.

### 'Chelsea don't need Owen'

SOCCERNET

Chelsea midfielder Frank Lampard believes Michael Owen would be a sound investment in next month's transfer window - but insists he is not required at Stamford Bridge.

mulling over a contract offer from Newcastle, amid rumours he could leave St James' Park in January rather than see out the remainder of his current deal, which expires in the summer.

Tottenham and Wigan have all been linked with the injury-

And Lampard told The Sun: 'Obviously it's the manager's decision. Michael's a top player - he showed that with the goal he scored against Portsmouth last week, it was an unbelievable finish, top

"If he is fit, which he's struggled with a bit, he's a top,

it's for us or not, he's going to be a good buy for someone for sure.

and Didier Drogba fit, I'd look at us and say we've got enough."

### Puel unfazed by Barca clash

SOCCERNET

concerned about the prospect of facing Barcelona in the last 16 of the Champions League. Prior to the draw in Nyon,

Puel insisted Primera Liga leaders Barca would be the worst possible opponents in the first round of the knockout stages.

But after being paired with the Spanish giants, Puel reckteam will be outsiders.

big tie - Barcelona are the form team of these last six months. At least there will be no problems with motivating our players.

even if it is Barca who have the

to play Barca.

will have to see where the two | challenge to his players that are evenly balanced with teams are when it comes to February and March. Even in adversity, we are still there."



it will hold a simultaneous bidding process for the 2018 and 2022 World Cups, with England considered a "strong" The decision means that

continent. The bidding is open to

The hosts for the two events will decided at the same time, in December 2010.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter said countries to express an interest included Japan, United States, Russia, and Australia, "even perhaps

Spain could lodge a bid in conjunction with Portugal, he added, while Belgium and Holland are considering

their campaign.

FIFA wrapped up their end-of-year executive committee meetings in Tokyo Saturday on the sidelines of

England striker Owen is

The likes of Liverpool, plagued 29-year-old.

quality.

top player.

"At the right price, whether

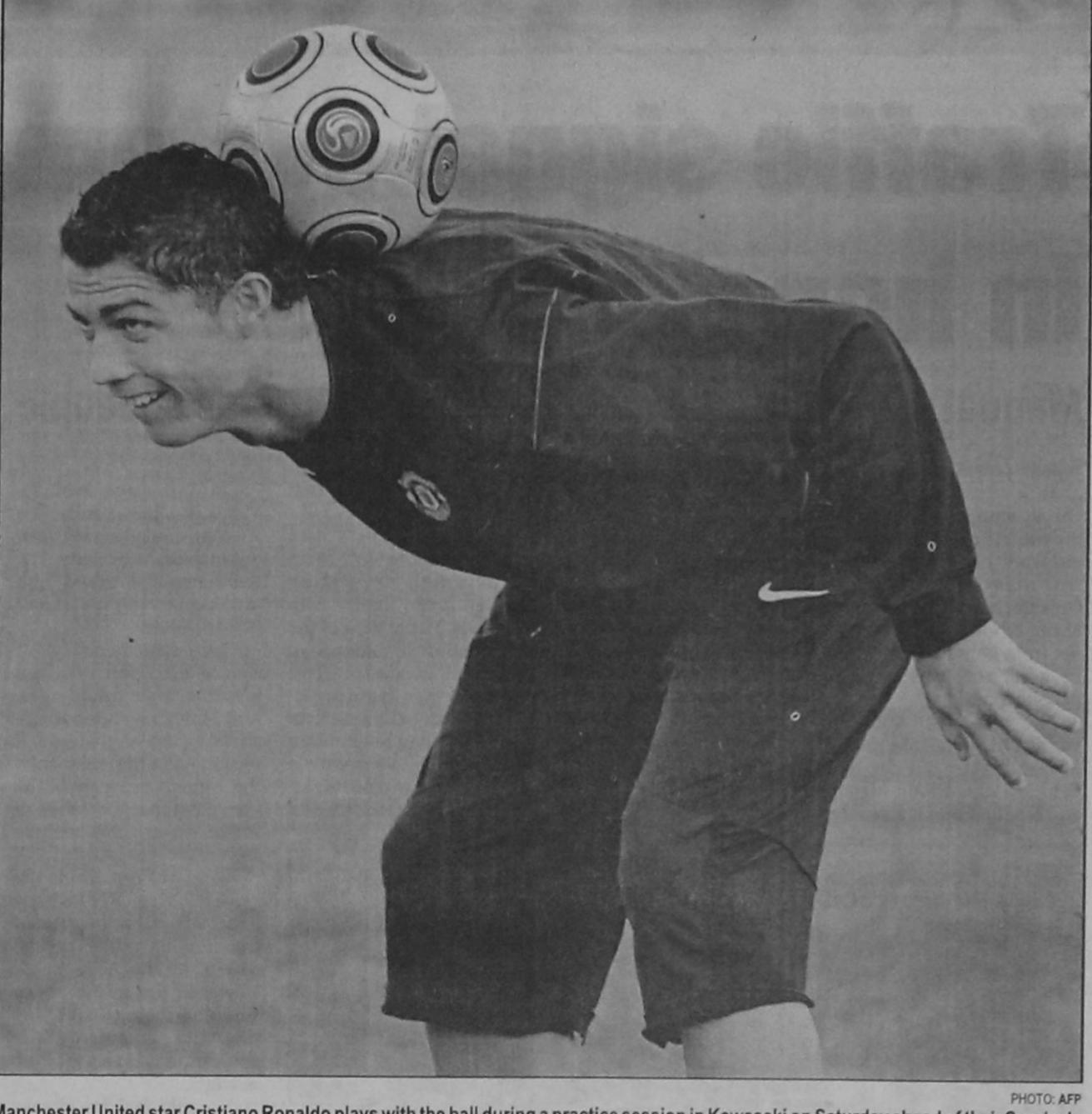
"But with Nicolas Anelka

Lyon coach Claude Puel is not

ons it is all to play for, even though he appreciates his "It doesn't worry me," he told club's website. "It is a very

"We will play to qualify return leg in Spain.

"To go to the end, you have to eliminate every opponent. | two and losing their last two We will be outsiders but we have a chance. It is motivating he wanted to draw one of



Manchester United star Cristiano Ronaldo plays with the ball during a practice session in Kawasaki on Saturday ahead of their Sunday's Club World Cup final against Liga de Quito.

### CLUB WORLD CUP

# History bars MU path

Football

AFP, Yokohama

Manchester United go into the Club World Cup final against Liga de Quito on Sunday driven by their desire to claim more silverware, and the odds are heavily stacked in their favour.

No British team has ever won the tournament, with Liverpool coming closest in 2005 when they made the final but were beaten by ment and it seems to be rubbing off, with the Sao Paulo 1-0.

Sir Alex Ferguson had some concerns with team has ever got their hands on before. his side's defensive lapses against Gamba Osaka on Thursday when they conceded three I have had," said Cristiano Ronaldo. late goals, and is aware that Liga used lightning counter-attacks to break down Pachuca in their semifinal.

granted, knowing through experience that Premier League again.' games against South American opponents are never easy.

Ecuadorians. "My assistant Mick Phelan and I saw a video of their semifinal against Pachuca and also had we have a great chance," he said. them watched by a scout. Quito are a typically

South American side -- solid at the back and dangerous in front of goal. "It will certainly be anything but an easy match, but it is the final of the Club World Cup

so you can't expect an easy ride." Ferguson said Saturday that striker Dimitar Berbatov had still not fully shaken off a virus but will be on the bench, adding that he would likely make changes to the team that played

Thursday "I've not decided on my team but I may go for fresh legs this time," he said, confirming only that Park Ji-Sung was a definite starter.

The South American champions know they are clear underdogs against their European counterparts, but vowed to pull out all the stops for the biggest match of their lives

Their Argentine coach Edgardo Bauza, who will be in charge for the last time before quitting the team, remains confident.

"It will be the match of our lives," he said. "Even though we are not favourites we will be at the top of our game and do our best. I don't know how we will handle the best team in

England but I know my players will give every-

thing they've got. Ferguson has repeatedly drummed into his squad the importance of winning this tournaplayers excited about lifting a trophy no British

"I really want to win this trophy after the year

Not just for me, but for United. No other British team has won it and we want to be the first to do that. And I believe it will give us extra With that in mind, he is taking nothing for motivation to win the Champions League and

Patrice Evra, who will be playing his last match before a four-game ban kicks in "I'm very pleased that we're in the final, but for his part in a brawl at Chelsea last seawe will be facing a stern test, as Liga de Quito son, said victory would cap a year to are very strong defensively," he said of the remember with three major trophies in United's possession.

"If we are professional and do our job I think

"To be named world champions after winning the league and the Champions League would make it an amazing year.

Bauza pinpointed Ronaldo as the main threat, but admitted the whole team was world

"You'd need six defenders to keep Ronaldo out so we won't do anything special for him, he said.

"But it's not just Ronaldo. There's Nani on the other wing, and Ryan Giggs and Wayne Rooney in the middle. They also have a very

good defence. "We don't have their attributes but we will attack and hope to win. We have quick and clever players too. The British teams move the ball around a lot so we need to control that and

### try to keep possession." United tie delights Jose

AFP, Rome



Inter Milan the champions of the world," coach Jose Mourinho said he was delighted after his drawn against reigning chamthe Champions League sec-

ond round. Mourinho locked horns with United boss Sir Alex Ferguson during his time at Chelsea but also in the year he guided Porto to the Champions League crown, knocking out

United in the second round. And after Inter's struggles to qualify from a seemingly easy group that included Panathinaikos, Werder sides with Mourinho's former Bremen and Anorthosis employers coming up against Famagusta -- Inter finished Juventus and AS Roma due to second behind the Greeks winning only twice, drawing matches -- Mourinho had said Europe's big guns in the times in England. "Everything is possible. We | knock-out stages to present a

best and we've got the champi-

would motivate them.

ons of Europe who maybe in two days time will also become

said the Portuguese. "It is a team that has the area part of me." Ballon d'Or winner (Cristiano Ronaldo), a great manager in Alex Ferguson and a stadium

pions Manchester United in Manchester (United) against whom I had many important

with a fantastic atmosphere.

Chelsea and with Porto we equaliser and send Porto played two incredible through 3-2 on aggregate. matches against them." Italian teams left in the com-

face Arsenal. resist a dig at former foe and Arsenal coach Arsene Wenger, with whom he clashed several

who are not Manchester or that year.

"I hope the Italians win but I don't feel like supporting anyone against Chelsea, who

In 2004 Mourinho, then a little known coach outside of Portugal, took his Porto team to Old Trafford after a surprise

"I've got great memories of 2-1 win in Portugal. United took the lead through Paul Scholes on 32 minutes but Costinho "I've got a good record pounced on a late fumble by against Alex Ferguson but it's United goalkeeper Tim not my record, it's that of Howard to slot home the

That prompted Mourinho As well as Inter's clash to dance along the Old against United, the two other Trafford touchline and two months later Porto beat petition also drew English Monaco 3-0 in the final, earning Mourinho his move to

Chelsea. At Stamford Bridge he led Chelsea to the league title in his And Mourinho could not first two seasons before his team were beaten to the Premier League crown by Ferguson's United in his third season.

However, a Didier Drogba "They are three clashes that goal in injury time gave Chelsea revenge over United maybe Roma the slight in the FA Cup final, giving "I'm delighted. I wanted the favourites against Arsenal, the Londoners a cup double

### Rovers exit on Cruz's mind

AFP, London

Blackburn striker Roque Santa Cruz has admitted that he would consider leaving the Premier League outfit if "a bigger club came in for me" during the January transfer

window. New Blackburn boss Sam Allardyce has insisted he wants the 27-year-old Paraguay forward to stay at Ewood Park, but speculation is growing linking him with cash-rich Manchester City, the

club of his former boss Mark "Everybody knows my opinion (regarding a possible transfer), I am happy at Blackburn but also I want to keep improving my football

and remain ambitious," Santa Cruz told BBC radio on Friday. My contract with Blackburn is clear and for that I need to continue with the club.

"But I am looking to again play in a big side that is in Europe and trying to win their He added: "I have to say the

fantastic, I am very happy with the fans. "But, I don't want to miss the chance of playing with a big side. If a bigger club came in for me then I would like to

people here at Blackburn are

"I want to watch out for myself but I have to think of Blackburn. It is a very hard decision." Santa Cruz penned a new four-year deal with Rovers

before the season, but the

poor start to the season which

take that opportunity.

cost the job of manager Paul Ince has re-ignited speculation that he could leave. In a sign of the club's woes, Santa Cruz has scored just four

goals this season compared to 23 times in the last campaign. FIFA lifts

suspensions

on trio

AFP, Tokyo World football body FIFA on Saturday announced it had lifted its suspensions on the federations of Kuwait, Samoa

and Peru. Kuwait was suspended in late October for political interference and the lifting of its ban is only provisional to allow them to play in Asian Cup qualifying starting in

January and the Gulf Cup. Whether the ban returns will be reviewed at FIFA's Congress in March.

In the case of the Samoans, they were suspended for "repeated management problems" in October, but this has been resolved following meetings of the FIFA executive committee on the sidelines of the Club World Cup here.

A row with the government over alleged political interference in Peru saw that federation suspended last month, but they too are now in the clear.



Manchester United and Real Madrid midfielder is joining Milan on loan from his current club Los Angeles Galaxy and will stay at San Siro until the end of March.