



Arsenal goalkeeper Lukasz Fabianski (R) dives to make a save during their FA Cup quarterfinal against Hull City at the Emirates Stadium on Tuesday.

## Van der Sar turns down Marwijk

SOCCERNET

Holland boss Bert van Marwijk has revealed he tried to lure Edwin van der Sar out of international retirement for a second time.

Van Marwijk is facing a goalkeeping dilemma ahead of his side's World Cup qualifier with Scotland on Saturday week.

Maarten Stekelenburg has been dropped by Ajax, while understudy Henk Timmer has been told he can leave Feyenoord after a dismal season.

Van der Sar, who has been one of the stars of Manchester United's season, retired from international football after Euro 2008.

The 38-year-old accepted an emergency call-up for last year's World Cup qualifiers against Iceland and Norway but turned down this latest offer.

"Against my better judgment I called Edwin because of our present difficulties," Van Marwijk told The Herald.

"We had agreed the book was closed before we had these injuries and while I knew what the answer would be, I still called him.

"All our other keepers have a story to tell, sickness, injury or poor form but I will stick by Stekelenburg.

"He has the most potential of all of them and is the best available.

"He is not playing for Ajax, and that is a disadvantage, but this gives him a chance to prove that he can come back stronger."

## Zenit face elimination

AFP, Paris



After solid opening-leg showings, Manchester City and Hamburg are set to reach the UEFA Cup quarterfinals on Thursday while holders Zenit St Petersburg have work to do if they are to survive.

With the likes of Andrey Arshavin in the side, Zenit romped to the title last season but a 2-0 loss to Italy's Udinese has the Russians on the verge of elimination.

A year ago Dick Advocaat's side did pull matters out of the fire when they lost 3-1 in Marseille but turned things around in the return to win on away goals. This time they are without that away strike.

With English sides having buried Italy's Champions League hopes to leave Serie A unrepresented in that competition in the quarters for the first time in seven years Udinese are Italy's last survivors in Europe - and scalping the holders would at least somewhat compensate for their compatriots' shortcomings.

Hamburg, under former Spurs boss Martin Jol, have spent all season firmly involved in the Bundesliga tiderace.

But further advancement in Europe this season depends on pilfering a win in Galatasaray's Ali Sami Yen Stadium after the match in Germany ended 1-1.

Hamburg will likely be

Like Udinese, Manchester City have a 2-0 advantage from the first leg achieved against Danish side Aalborg and midfielder Stephen Ireland says City will be expecting to advance.

"We've done well away from home in the UEFA Cup so I think we're strong and peaking at the right time of the season," Ireland told ITV. "We're feeling confident going there."

City have made little impression in Europe aside from a Cup Winners Cup success in 1970 but with Arab megabucks behind them these days expectations have risen accordingly among fans who have little with which to be satisfied with in the league, where the club sit in midtable.

Aalborg's Thomas Enevoldsen will miss the second leg after his booking for a heavy tackle on Shaun Wright-Phillips.

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Hamburg will likely be

without German international midfielder Piotr Trochowski, who injured knee ligaments in a weekend win over Energie Cottbus.

"His participation in Istanbul is touch and go," said Hamburg doctor Oliver Dierk. But Trochowski has made the trip, as has Michael Gravgard, who has a sore groin. "It will be a tough match out there - but it is within our power to go through," Jol told the club website.

Galatasaray, who won the tournament in 2000 for Turkey's first European trophy, will be missing midfielder Arda Turan, who has a knee injury.

He joins Emre Gungor, Servet Cetin, Mehmet Topal and Tobias Linderoth on the sidelines.

In other action, Ukrainian pride is at stake as Dynamo Kiev seek to hang on to their 1-0 lead over Metalist Kharkiv while compatriots Shakhtar Donetsk need to get back on terms after losing by the same margin at Russian outfit CSKA Moscow, who lead thanks to Brazilian Wagner Love's penalty.

Paris St Germain FC are fighting to stay alive and are away to Portugal's Sporting Braga following their goalless draw in Paris.

## Cesc accused of spitting

AFP, London

Hull manager Phil Brown, still fuming over his side's FA Cup defeat by Arsenal, said Wednesday that the club would support his assistant, Brian Horton, if he decided to make an official complaint after allegedly being spat at by Cesc Fabregas.

Arsenal captain Fabregas has denied spitting at Horton in the tunnel in the aftermath of the Gunners' ill-tempered 2-1 quarterfinal win at the Emirates on Tuesday evening.

But Brown was adamant that the incident took place. "Brian will receive the full support of the people of Hull, that includes my chairman, who we had a long conversation with this morning," he said. "We'll go down the right channels and support Brian Horton."

English football's governing body will be obliged to investigate the incident if Hull make a formal complaint or if the incident is mentioned by the referee in his match report.

Hull's failure to immediately register their grievance however pointed to the issue not going any further than the verbal recriminations.

The feud between Brown and Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger looks certain to simmer away for the foreseeable future however, with the Hull boss accusing the Frenchman of behaving ungraciously in the wake of Tuesday's match.

"It just shows how we've got up the noses of the Arsenal hierarchy," Brown claimed. "He wouldn't shake my hand when we beat them fairly 2-1 at the Emirates (in the Premier League), he wouldn't shake my hand when they beat us, fairly, 3-1 at the KC Stadium."

Wenger has denied consciously snubbing Brown at the end of the match.

Bruckner calls it quits

AFP, Prague

Karel Bruckner, former coach of the Czech and Austrian national teams, said Wednesday he is retiring from the game.

"My career as head coach is ending," the 69-year-old Bruckner told Sport daily.

"This week I'll officially join the ranks of the retired. I will benefit from reductions on the railways and the tramways," joked Bruckner, who coached the Czechs from 2001-2008 and then the Austrians until the beginning of this month.

"After 37 years work my brain is completely impregnated with football," said Bruckner, who had intended to quit after Euro 2008 but changed his mind after the Czechs lost to Turkey in a thrilling encounter which left him wanting more.

"The end of that match was quite brutal - I wanted to chase off that memory so it would no longer haunt me," Bruckner told reporters.

## Gunners' late revival

AFP, London



Arsenal's new-found resilience was underlined on Tuesday as Arsenal Wenger's side staged a late rally to win an ill-tempered clash with Hull and book a Wembley FA Cup semifinal date with Chelsea.

Nick Barmby's 13th-minute strike had given Hull hope of performing an encore to their September victory at the Emirates in the Premier League.

But Robin van Persie and William Gallas both found the net in the final quarter of an hour to send the Gunners through to the last four of the world's oldest knockout competition, as well as ensuring the club's first appearance at the new Wembley.

Gallas will not have the chance to lead Arsenal out at

the national stadium, having been stripped of the captaincy earlier this season, but the France defender underlined his value to the club with his headed winner, six minutes from time, albeit one that was overshadowed by a strong suspicion of offside.

Arsenal had received a pre-match boost with Andrey Arshavin being passed fit to start.

The Russian playmaker had been unplayable against Blackburn on Saturday, but neither he nor Arsenal were to perform with the same fluency as in that 4-0 romp and it was little surprise that Hull took the lead through Barmby, an erstwhile star for their north London rivals Tottenham.

Arsenal's defence hesitated when confronted with a long ball from Andy Dawson, allowing Barmby to find the net with a volley and the help of a deflection off Johan Djourou.

Gunners goalkeeper Lukasz Fabianski, offered a chance to impress in place of the rested Manuel Almunia,

then produced a fingertips save to prevent Hull's Brazilian playmaker, Geovanni, from doubling the lead from a freekick.

Gradually however the Gunners began to assert themselves and efforts from Arshavin and Abou Diaby went close before van Persie forced Hull keeper Boaz Myhill into a fine save with a perfectly-executed freekick from 25 yards.

The Dutch striker was not to be denied however, finally finding the net with 16 minutes left thanks to the persistence of substitute Nicklas Bendtner.

The big Dane's dogged determination enabled him to work the ball to Arshavin who provided the cutback from which van Persie fired Arsenal level.

Bendtner then had a close-range shot blocked behind by Michael Ricketts but Arsenal avoided a replay with six minutes left, with Gallas heading home from what replays showed was a blatantly offside position.

## Diego aiming high

Football

SOCCERNET

Werder Bremen midfielder Diego is unlikely to stay at the club if they fail to qualify for Europe next season.

Missing out on a Europa League place is a real possibility, given Bremen are 11 points adrift of fifth spot with 10 games of the Bundesliga campaign remaining.

Diego said: "It would be very bad for me (if Bremen did not qualify). It means you lose worth as a player. For each one of us, European competition is like a shop window where each can present himself."

The Brazil international has been heavily linked with a move away from the Weserstadion, with the likes of

Chelsea, Juventus and Real Madrid reportedly interested.

The 24-year-old admitted he would gladly play for any of the trio, saying: "These are clubs from the best three leagues in the world. I admire them a lot. I believe every player in the world would gladly play there. That also applies to me."

"These clubs always play at the highest level and every year they are always there or thereabouts on the international stage."

He admits offers have come in for him but insists he will not make a definite decision on his future until the end of the season.

"The only concrete thing at the moment is that the possibility exists to move," he told WeltOnline.

"I have been here for three

years and still have two years left on my contract.

"There are offers for me. Therefore you have to decide in this season how it should go on. There has been a lot written about it in the past weeks, that I have already allegedly spoken to other clubs or even signed a new contract. But none of that is correct."

"I am concentrating at the moment completely on Werder Bremen, because we are in a tough situation. When May arrives we will decide what is good for me and the club."

"(The possibility that I will stay) is there. But I don't know - and I think the club doesn't know either - how the plans for the new season in Bremen are looking in detail."

"It will depend on sporting goals and money."

## Loew praises Podolski

Football

AFP, Berlin

Germany coach Joachim Loew has praised Bayern Munich striker Lukas Podolski for his timely return to form - just as Germany discover veteran hot-shot Miroslav Klose is out for six weeks.

With three goals in his last three games, including two in the 7-1 Champions League win over Sporting Lisbon last week, Podolski - voted the best young player at the 2006 World Cup - is now on form after a barren year on the bench.

"Podi" has failed to break into the Bayern first-team behind striker Luca Toni and Klose over the last two seasons

and will return to Cologne in the summer.

But Toni's achilles tendon injury last month gave him his chance and with Klose injuring an ankle at the weekend, Podolski will now lead Bayern's attack.

"Lukas has clearly taken his chance - not only because of his three goals in his last three games," Loew told website Sport1.de.

"I see many positive things in his game."

Klose is expected to be sidelined for six to eight weeks following an operation on his injured right ankle having limped off the field during Bayern's 3-0 win over Bochum last Saturday.

quarterfinal opponents in Friday's draw in Nyon, Podolski will have extra responsibility for Bayern in the coming weeks as well as in the Bundesliga.

"As a substitute you have to be prepared for moments like these," said Loew.

Germany have World Cup qualifiers in Leipzig on March 28 and Wales in Cardiff on April 1 and Loew says he will look at all his options before selecting his forward pairing.

Both Stuttgart's Mario Gomez and Leverkusen's Patrick Helmes are in good form and Loew still has plenty of options in attack.

He said: "Fortunately, we have other good strikers who want to prove themselves and they will get their chance to replace Miro."

## Real to launch Beckham bid?

SOCCERNET

David Beckham could be subject to a remarkable summer transfer bid from Real Madrid, but only if Florentino Perez becomes the club's next president.

The Sun claim that in order to bring the England international back to the Bernabeu Madrid would offer Los Angeles Galaxy £10m for Beckham, who turns 34 this May.

Perez, who was the man in charge at Real Madrid when Beckham was lured to the club from Manchester United in 2003 in a £24m deal, has emerged as the favourite to win this summer's presidential elections, although has yet to officially declare that he will stand.

The newspaper claim a top Madrid source said: "Florentino will try to bring Becks back if he decides to run for the presidency. It would be silly to deny it."

With Beckham having battled long and hard to remain on loan with AC Milan until the end of the season it is unlikely that he would be tempted by Madrid's possible offer.

Likewise it is doubtful that the LA Galaxy or Major League Soccer would be interested in any approach from the Spanish giants; while they have lost Beckham to Europe in the short-term the player insists his long-term ambitions remain firmly tied to developing the game in the US.

While Real Madrid presidential campaigns are renowned for prominently featuring the names of high profile transfer targets, it is more likely that the man who inherited Beckham's No 7 shirt at Manchester United will be the key pawn in the forthcoming election.

Former Real president Ramon Calderon has already insisted that a deal is already in place for Cristiano Ronaldo to join.

Alves rubbishes Chelsea link

SOCCERNET

Barcelona defender Daniel Alves has denied he has any interest in a move to Chelsea after a British newspaper claimed he was eager to join the club in the summer.

Since moving to the Nou Camp, Alves has carved out a reputation as one of the best attacking right-backs in the world.

But the player, who came close to moving to Stamford Bridge two years ago, has now come out and issued a statement denying any interest in a move to the Premier League club.

Alves has three years left on a contract which includes a release clause of 90 million euros. The Daily Mirror suggested Chelsea may be willing to pay £27m but that seems unlikely to tempt one of their European rivals to part with a crucial player.

The 25-year-old former Sevilla wing-back is also said to be interesting Manchester City, who are linked with just about every player of note in world football.

## Ballack mending image

AFP, Berlin

Germany captain Michael Ballack has been working hard to build bridges with his teammates following last autumn's spat with national coach Joachim Loew, senior players have revealed.

Chelsea midfielder Ballack caused a storm here last autumn when he accused Loew of failing to show senior players enough respect and loyalty after veteran midfielder Torsten Frings was kept on the bench for two World Cup qualifiers.

Ballack was later forced to issue an apology and backed down, but it became clear things were not entirely harmonious in the Germany camp.

And senior players defender Philipp Lahm and striker Miroslav Klose have revealed Ballack is now working hard to improve his image within the national team.

"He approaches players far more now than he used to," Bayern Munich's Lahm told Stern magazine.

And Klose, who misses both Germany's qualifiers against Liechtenstein, in Leipzig on March 28, and Wales, on April 1 in Cardiff, with an ankle injury, says Ballack must lead by example on and off the field.

"You notice that Michael tries to integrate himself more," said Klose, who has captained Germany in

Ballack's absence.

"But he must also do that on the field that will not happen today or tomorrow, but is something he must learn and create for himself."

After Germany lost the Euro 2008 final 1-0 to Spain in Vienna last June, several senior players criticised Ballack for using strong language, especially in his on-field row with team manager Oliver Bierhoff.

Ballack later justified his words by saying when he started his career, a football dressing room was the place where problems within the team were thrashed out.

"Things are different to how they were," said Ballack, who made his debut in 1999.

"My challenge is to conduct myself as the captain of the national team and to be approachable for the younger

players."

And Loew himself says he has seen a change in attitude from his captain, who has won 90 caps.

"During the last game, I had the feeling that Michael was communicating more and that is good," said the national coach.

Germany have lost their last two games at home - the first time that has happened since 1956 - when they went down 2-1 to England at Berlin's Olympic Stadium last November and were then humbled 1-0 by Norway in February.

Minnovs Leichtenstein - ranked 151 in the world - take on Germany on March 28 in a World Cup qualifier and Germany need a convincing win to underline their place as group leaders ahead of Russia.



MICHAEL BALLACK

## Cohen admires Capello

Football

AFP, London

George Cohen believes that in Fabio Capello England have a manager with similar qualities to those of 1966 World Cup supreme Sir Alf Ramsey.

Cohen, England's right-back when they beat the then West Germany 4-2 after extra-time in the World Cup final at Wembley nearly 43 years ago, reckons that successive sides have too often been allowed to lose their way.

The 1966 World Cup remains the only major international football trophy that England have won and, for Cohen, the team's failure to reach the Euro 2008 finals in Austria and Switzerland under Steve McClaren, Capello's predecessor, was a particular lowpoint.

"Missing out a place at the qualifying for the European Championships last year was quite frankly a massive disappointment to all of us," Fulham great Cohen said Tuesday.

"It's been a long, long time since we won anything. I think the whole thing was poorly run for a long time - and without getting personal, the side has been badly managed."

However, Cohen is an admirer of Italian former AC Milan and Real Madrid manager Capello, insisting he has the necessary authority to do many recent England bosses have lacked in their dealings with high-profile players.

"I think in Capello we have a real disciplinarian; he has players thinking only about the football, which is how it should be," Cohen said.

"In that sense he is the same as Ramsey. He would always make sure we concentrated on why we were there, with no asides, and he got results. Capello is the same."

"I think Capello is right to impose some discipline on them and to say 'you are expected here at a certain time - we all eat at a certain time.'"

Cohen, whose nephew Ben was a member of the England team that won rugby union's World Cup in 2003, warned that although Capello's men had won all four of their qualifying matches so far for next year's World Cup finals it was still too early to make a judgment about how they might fare in South Africa.

"England have improved under Capello - there's no doubt about that. But it's very difficult to know if we are any closer to a second World Cup, because we haven't yet played the likes of Argentina."

Capello's England contract runs until 2012 but some reports in the British media have suggested that Aston Villa manager Martin O'Neill is already being lined-up by the Football Association as his successor when the time comes to appoint a new boss.

Cohen was one of many who thought the Northern Irishman deserved more consideration for the post than he ultimately received from the FA

following McClaren's dismissal.

"I have a great deal of respect for Martin. I don't know what happened the last time he was interviewed or why they let it happen," said Cohen.

"He is a smart guy, loves football, loves the game. He knows the game and he's been around a bit. He would be a very decent choice."

## FIFA suspends Marquez for 2 matches

AP, Mexico City

FIFA has suspended Mexican national team defender Rafael Marquez for two matches for unsportsmanlike behaviour during the Feb. 11 U.S. - Mexico match.

Marquez, who plays for Barcelona in the Spanish league, will have to sit out Mexico's March 28 World Cup qualifying match against Costa Rica and the April 1 matchup with Honduras.

The sanction was for Marquez's kick to the leg of U.S. goalkeeper Tim Howard. Marquez, the team captain, was sent off and Mexico lost 2-0 in the opening game of the final round of CONCACAF qualifying for next year's World Cup.

FIFA's disciplinary commission also issued the same suspension against assistant manager Francisco Ramirez.