



Werder Bremen star Diego celebrates after scoring one of his two goals against Udinese during their UEFA Cup quarterfinal at the Weser Stadium in Bremen on Thursday. PHOTO: AFP

## Good hunting for Germans

AFP, Paris



Germany celebrated a winning double in the UEFA Cup quarterfinals on Thursday as English Premier League moneybags Manchester City were left clinging onto European survival.

City slumped to a 3-1 first leg defeat against high-flying Hamburg despite having taken a 35-second

lead.

Hamburg's Bundesliga rivals Werder Bremen were also casting an eye on the semifinals after seeing off Udinese of Italy 3-1 at home.

Ukraine came out on top in their double-edged duel with France as Shakhtar Donetsk beat former European champions Marseille 2-0 at home while Dynamo Kiev grabbed a precious 0-0 away draw against Paris Saint Germain.

In front of 57,000 fans at the HSH Nordbank Arena, Stephen Ireland put Manchester City in front after just 35 seconds, only for defender Joris Mathijsen to equalise shortly afterwards.

City goalkeeper Shay Given kept his side in the game with some magnificent saves, but a handball by Micah Richards allowed Piotr Trochowski to stroke his side in front from the penalty spot.

Jose Paolo Guerrero struck late on to put his side firmly in the driving seat prior to the return leg on April 16.

"Losing 3-1 has made things difficult, but we are not out of it," said City boss Mark Hughes. "We had a lot of injuries before the match,

but we showed we can cause them problems in their defence. This is far from finished."

Hamburg coach Martin Jol, who knows all about English football after his time at the Spurs' helm, warned against complacency in the second leg.

"We have three goals, we could have had four so we cannot take the return leg lightly," he said. "I know from experience that things can change very quickly in England."

Werder Bremen were indebted to two of their foreign imports for their 3-1 victory over Udinese.

Brazilian playmaker Diego made the breakthrough in the 34th minute before he added a second in the 67th.

Portuguese striker Hugo Almeida made it 3-0 two minutes later before Fabio Quagliarella pulled one back in the dying moments to give Italy's only remaining side in European competition this season an outside hope in the return leg.

Goals from Tomas Hubschman and Brazilian Jadsjon put Shakhtar in control of their tie with Marseille and within touching distance of a first ever European semifinal.

The damage could have been more serious for Marseille had goalkeeper Steve Mandanda not pulled off some fine saves while Shakhtar's joy was tempered late on when defender Mykola Ischenko was yellow-carded and ruled out of the second leg.

"This was a very important victory," said Shakhtar coach Mircea Lucescu. "We showed maturity but we know it will still be difficult in the return because Marseille are a formidable team who play big matches every weekend."

In the French capital, PSG dominated but were unable to break down a well-organised Kiev defence.

## Diarra slates Wenger

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid's French midfielder Lassana Diarra has claimed to have learnt "nothing" from Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger during his short-lived time at Arsenal.

In an interview with El Pais newspaper, Diarra said: "I have the impression that I never played at Arsenal. If you hadn't reminded me of it, I would have forgotten about it. It is something erased from my head."

Asked about any influence Wenger had on him, Diarra said: "Me? Nothing. With Wenger I learnt nothing. Well, he only taught me how to doubt everything."

"I played 15 matches. The relationship I had with him was not good."

"Wenger never spoke to me until I told him I was leaving. He spoke with the others but not me."

Diarra signed for Arsenal from Chelsea in September 2007 but transferred to Portsmouth in January 2008 before joining Real Madrid a year later.

## MU need to tighten up

AFP, London



Edwin van der Sar admits Manchester United risk losing their Premier League title race if the leaders don't sort out their defensive frailties quickly.

Sir Alex Ferguson's side return to domestic action at Sunderland on Saturday after another error-strewn display from the back-four in Tuesday's 2-2 Champions League draw against Porto.

After setting a British record for minutes without conceding a goal earlier this season, van der Sar has had to pick the ball out of his net 10 times in the last four matches.

With Liverpool only one point behind United, van der Sar knows the champions, who will be without injured centre-backs Rio Ferdinand and Jonny Evans at the Stadium of Light, have to find a way to plug their leaky defence.

United aren't the only title challengers suddenly on the ropes.

Liverpool's run of four

successive wins had catapulted them back in the race but a 3-1 home defeat to Chelsea in Wednesday's Champions League quarterfinal exposed flaws in their gameplan that could prove costly.

Although Rafa Benitez's side have little time to regroup as they face Blackburn at Anfield in Saturday's sear game.

While Liverpool try to come to terms with Wednesday's shocking loss, Chelsea midfielder Frank Lampard believes the Blues can use their Anfield triumph as a springboard to put pressure on United.

Gus Hiddink's side, who

host Bolton this weekend, are four points behind United and have played a game more, but confidence is sky-high at Stamford Bridge.

Arsene Wenger believes Arsenal's attempt to cement their position in the top four at Wigan can survive the loss of William Gallas, Manuel Almunia and Gael Clichy.

France defender Gallas is out for the season after suffering a knee injury in the mid-week draw at Villarreal, while goalkeeper Almunia and left-back Clichy will be sidelined for at least two weeks with injuries also suffered in Spain.

At the bottom of the table, Newcastle manager Alan Shearer admits his team have to go for a win at fellow strugglers Stoke.

Newcastle are three points adrift of safety, but with fourth bottom Sunderland hosting United, there is a good chance of closing that gap with victory at the Britannia Stadium.

Middlesbrough, five points from safety, are in even worse trouble after one win in 19 matches and boss Gareth Southgate knows defeat at home to Hull would be a hammer blow.

FIXTURES	
(1500GMT unless stated)	
<b>Saturday</b>	Chelsea v Bolton, Liverpool v Blackburn (1245 GMT), Middlesbrough v Hull, Portsmouth v West Brom, Stoke v Newcastle (1730 GMT), Sunderland v Man Utd, Tottenham v West Ham, Wigan v Arsenal
<b>Sunday</b>	Aston Villa v Everton (1400 GMT), Man City v Fulham (1610 GMT)

## Barca to appeal yellows

AFP, Paris

Barcelona will appeal the yellow cards handed out to star striker Lionel Messi and coach Josep Guardiola during Wednesday's 4-0 Champions League quarterfinal first leg win over Bayern Munich.

The appeals will be heard by UEFA on Saturday, the Spanish club said.

Messi, who scored twice, was booked for diving in the 17th minute after a clash with Bayern defender Christian Lell while Guardiola was sent to the stands by English referee Howard Webb for debating a decision.

"I can't control myself. I am like that," said Guardiola after the game.

## Babel can continue as coach

AFP, Frankfurt

Former Germany international Markus Babel has received the green light to continue as coach of Bundesliga club Stuttgart despite not having the necessary badges.

The German football federation (DFB) said the 36-year-old Babel will take part in a coaching course in Cologne at the start of July, which will run three days a week for 10 months.

Stuttgart's training sessions in Babel's absence will be held by other staff on the club's coaching staff.

Babel's case has been a sticking point between Stuttgart and the federation, who announced in January that the former Bayern Munich and Liverpool defender could not continue in his post from season's end.

With 51 caps to his name, Babel took over from Armin Veh at the end of November and has led Stuttgart from 11th up to fifth in the Bundesliga table, six points off leaders Wolfsburg.

## Top clubs thriving: Forbes

AFP, Los Angeles

The world's top football clubs are thriving, despite tough economic times, according to a report on Forbes.com.

Forbes calculated that the 25 most valuable clubs are currently worth 597 million dollars, eight per cent more than the previous year despite the global economic downturn.

English Premiership giant Manchester United tops the list, worth 1.87 billion dollars. That makes European champion United not only the world's most valuable football club but the world's most valuable sports franchise.

With 160 million dollars in operating income, it was also the most profitable team.

## Juve not giving up yet

AFP, Rome



Juventus travel to Italy's oldest club on Saturday hoping to resurrect their failing Serie A title chances.

The record scudetto champions have a nine-point deficit to leaders Inter Milan following last weekend's disappointing 3-3 home draw against lowly Chievo and if they are to have any chance of being in the title race when they host Inter next week, a win is a must.

However, that won't be easy away to Genoa who themselves are fighting for fourth place and a spot in next season's Champions League.

They have only lost once at home this season and that against Inter so the task facing Juve is a daunting one.

However, young star Sebastian Giovinco says his team are not giving up on the scudetto just yet.

"A nine-point gap to Inter does not mean that the scudetto is over," he said.

"It's our duty to continue to dream because you never know what might happen in life."

"Until it becomes mathematically impossible we'll be snapping away at Inter's heels."

However, Genoa's Champions League qualifying position is under threat from both Fiorentina, who host Cagliari, and AS Roma, who take on Lazio in the Rome derby.

Fiorentina sit just two points back with Roma a further three behind.

With eight games left, that and the battle to avoid relegation are the only matters that seem undecided in Serie A.

FIXTURES	
<b>Saturday</b>	Bologna v Siena, Chievo v AC Milan, Fiorentina v Cagliari, Genoa v Juventus, Inter Milan v Palermo, Lazio v AS Roma, Lecce v Sampdoria, Napoli v Atalanta, Torino v Catania
<b>Sunday</b>	Reggina v Udinese

Leaders and champions Inter host Palermo who are still in contention for a UEFA Cup finish and will be hoping to take something home from the San Siro.

Inter have several players missing in defensive positions but they have had throughout much of the season without it affecting them adversely.

Meanwhile AC Milan travel to Chievo under a cloud of incessant transfer rumours linking star playmaker Kaka with a move to Real Madrid and coach Carlo Ancelotti with a switch to Chelsea in the summer.

That won't help Milan's preparations for a tricky tie against a team that have lost only once in 13 matches.

This weekend's matches will be the first in Serie A since the Abruzzo earthquake tragedy that claimed almost 300 lives.

A minute's silence will be observed before all matches and players will wear black armbands while several teams have pledged their gate receipts to the victims of the disaster.

## Barcelona shift focus

AFP, Madrid



After humiliating Bayern Munich 4-0 in the Champions League on Wednesday

Barcelona switch their attention back to the league on Saturday when they host Recreativo Huelva at Camp Nou.

Barcelona, who have crushed Malaga 6-0 and Bayern 4-0 in their last two home matches, go into the weekend with a six-point lead over Real Madrid.

"We have to keep our feet on the ground after the Bayern game," said Barcelona coach Pep Guardiola. "The way to do that is to focus on the next three points in the league and maintaining our six-point cushion at the top."

Barcelona are still on course for a historic treble with one foot in the

Champions League semifinal, a place in the Kings Cup final and top spot in the domestic championship.

Real have only dropped two points from the past 14 league matches and need to maintain that consistency if they are to topple Barcelona.

After enviously watching Barcelona in European action this week Real entertain Valladolid on Sunday.

Valladolid, more famous for wine-making than its football, beat Real 1-0 in mid-November and are looking for a memorable double over the champions.

Sevilla host Getafe on Sunday looking to keep up the momentum and seal their place sooner rather than later.

Freddy Kanoute has been a major factor with his 16 goals and last weekend the Mali striker equalled the record for Sevilla goals from a foreign player matching Croat Davor Suker's haul of 90.

Rather than chasing Sevilla,

Villarreal, who drew 1-1 with Arsenal in their Champions League quarterfinal match on Tuesday, are clinging to fourth and need to get back to winning ways against Malaga on Saturday.

Valencia are now just two points adrift of Villarreal and hope to improve their awful away form at Sporting Gijon on Sunday.

Aleico travel to Deportivo La Coruna, who are level on points, knowing games are running out of games to break

FIXTURES	
<b>Saturday</b>	Barcelona v Recreativo Huelva, Villarreal v Malaga
<b>Sunday</b>	Real Madrid v Valladolid, Real Mallorca v Almeria, Osasuna v Athletic Bilbao, Numancia v Espanyol, Racing Santander v Real Betis, Sporting Gijon v Valencia, Sevilla v Getafe, Deportivo La Coruna v Atletico Madrid

into the top four.

Down at the bottom things are incredibly tight with ten teams involved in the relegation dogfight.

Almeria are in 11th but only lie four points above the drop zone and all the teams below them are scrambling for survival.

Espanyol prop up the table despite winning against Deportivo La Coruna last time out and are six points adrift of safety.

Second from bottom Numancia are just two points better off and the bottom two meet in Soria in Sunday for a crucial six-pointer.

Real Betis, a point above the drop zone, sacked coach Paco Chaparro on Tuesday after just one win from the last 10 league matches and stop-gap coach Maria Nogueiras has the task of keeping the Seville club in the top-flight.

Nogues' first match in charge is a trip north to Racing Santander on Sunday.

## Bayern try to stop the rot

AFP, Berlin



Jurgen Klinsmann's bruised and battered Bayern Munich face Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday desperate to restore some respect after heavy defeats against Wolfsburg and Borussia Dortmund.

Tuesday's 4-0 rout at the Nou Camp on top of last weekend's 5-1 drubbing by Bundesliga leaders Wolfsburg has left the German giants reeling, and no place to hide.

With club chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge conceding

Bayern's Champions League hopes lay in tatters the aim now he said was to qualify for next season's competition.

"What I want to say is that we must now concentrate on our next match against Frankfurt on Saturday. We have to react after this second heavy defeat in a row."

"We have no more hope in the Champions League, that is obvious," he said.

"Now we have to concentrate on the Bundesliga and at least make sure of our place in this competition (for next season)."

German media are speculating on Klinsmann's future as coach after a rocky first season.

Klinsmann has come out fighting, insisting he still had

control of the locker room and that his job now was to overhaul the three points Bayern trail joint-leaders Wolfsburg and Hamburg.

Victory over mid-table

FIXTURES	
<b>Saturday</b>	Borussia Moenchengladbach v VfL Wolfsburg, Bayern Munich v Eintracht Frankfurt, Hanover 96 v Hertha Berlin, Schalke 04 v Karlsruhe, Hoffenheim v VfL Bochum, Energie Cottbus v Arminia Bielefeld, Borussia Dortmund v FC Cologne
<b>Sunday</b>	Bayer Leverkusen v Werder Bremen, Stuttgart v Hamburg

Frankfurt would go some way to steadying a ship that has leaked nine goals in its past two games.

Klinsmann's fourth-placed side certainly can't afford to slip up with Wolfsburg, winners of their last eight league matches, favourites to take all three points in their away trip against relegation strugglers Borussia Moenchengladbach.

Martin Jol's Hamburg, who lie second on goal difference only, face a tough assignment on Sunday at fifth-placed Stuttgart.

Hertha Berlin, one point clear of Bayern in third, will fancy their prospects of keeping the pressure on the leaders at Hanover 96, who are hovering three points above the drop zone.

## Adriano taking time off

AFP, Milan



Inter Milan coach Jose Mourinho said on Friday that the club had done everything possible to help troubled striker Adriano, who on Thursday announced from Rio de Janeiro that he would be taking a sabbatical.

The 27-year-old former Parma forward has not returned to Italy since heading to Brazil at the end of last

month for international duty and on Thursday he told a news conference in Rio that he needed time off.

"I'm not planning an immediate return to Italy. I'll be unhappy there," he said.

"I need to think about my career. I'm not happy in Italy. I am here in Brazil with my family and friends."

Adriano had taken refuge in the favela where he grew up and his ex-girlfriend Joana Machado said he felt lost and had returned there as it was

the only place that felt like home for him.

Now Mourinho has washed his hands of the Brazilian who appears to have no future at Inter.

"I didn't want to talk about this before and I'm not going to talk about it now either," said the Portuguese boss.

"Inter have done everything possible to help him before I arrived and since I've arrived."

"If he stops playing and becomes a happy man then that's perfect. I've not yet spoken to him but we have to understand the reason for these words. We'll see."

Adriano's agent Gilmar Rinaldi has come to Milan from Brazil, reportedly to arrange a termination of Adriano's contract with Inter, but Mourinho refused to speculate on that.

"He (Adriano) was the first one to speak about that and it's up to him to do what he wants. All I know is what I read in the press," he said.

Ahead of the visit of Palermo on Saturday, Inter have a nine-point advantage over second-placed Juventus, who face a tough away trip to fourth-placed Genoa.

With the crucial Juve-Inter clash just a week away and only eight games left to play, Mourinho said his team is concentrating on what they need to sew up a fourth straight title.

"We can't start thinking that Juve will drop points. We have the opportunity to take 12 points at home and that would practically be enough for us to win the title at the San Siro," he said.

Brazil striker Adriano addresses a press conference in Barra da Tijuca on Thursday. Adriano announced that he will stop his career for a while to think it over. PHOTO: AFP