

## CHELSEA (3) V LIVERPOOL (1) Hiddink confident

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, London

Guus Hiddink believes Chelsea's unbreakable team spirit will stop Liverpool staging a famous revival in Tuesday's Champions League quarterfinal second leg.

Although Hiddink's side have one foot in the semifinals after last week's stunning 3-1 victory at Anfield, Liverpool have developed a habit of upsetting the form book in Europe under Rafael Benitez.

Liverpool's fightback from 3-0 down to win the 2005 Champions League final against AC Milan proved how dangerous they can be, but it would take a spectacular meltdown to deny Chelsea a probable last four showdown against Barcelona, 4-0 winners over Bayern Munich in their first leg.

While a less resolute team could crack under the pres-

sure of an early Liverpool goal on Tuesday, Blues boss Hiddink is convinced the squad's togetherness will play a key role in finishing the job at Stamford Bridge.

"There is a fantastic spirit around this club, everyone believes in what we can achieve this season and it is exciting to be a part of that," he said.

"But we must not lose our focus for one game or one minute and that means each game is as important as the next one. We have the same aim, which is to try and win all of them."

"It is important that we take the momentum gained from winning at Anfield into this game and keep our level of performance up."

Ashley Cole, Chelsea's England left-back, admits the rejuvenating effect provided by Hiddink's no-nonsense style has come at the perfect time.

"It is always nice to go to Anfield and get a good result

and it is going to be tough for them to come to the Bridge and score three goals," Cole said.

"Of course it could happen but we have got the players in our team to score goals. We have scored in every game apart from one since the new manager came in so we are very confident we can push on now and go through."

Hiddink's only concern going into Tuesday's tie is the careless way his side allowed Bolton to come back from 4-0 down to set up a tense finale, with Czech goalkeeper Petr Cech looking especially vulnerable.

After the ruthless way Hiddink targeted and exploited Liverpool's zonal marking system in the first leg, Benitez will be desperate to find a tactical retort. He could do worse than tell his players to test Cech early on.

If Liverpool do claim a famous victory, it is safe to say Fernando Torres will have

played a key role.

Torres scored a stunning half-volley as he took his tally for the season to 14 with two goals in Saturday's 4-0 rout of Blackburn and the Spain striker believes the result proved Liverpool have the goal-power to mount a remarkable fightback.

"The way we played is good for our build-up and preparation for Tuesday," Torres said.

"This win gives us confidence after the 3-1 defeat. But I believe the team can score three goals at Stamford Bridge. We won away to Manchester United, they scored but we still won 4-1."

"Chelsea could just defend, but I doubt that. They will want to score themselves and that will give us a chance ourselves."

Chelsea will have to do without their skipper as John Terry serves a one-match ban after his booking for a foul on Liverpool keeper Jose Reina in the first leg.

## Martins won't be fined

AFP, Newcastle

Newcastle manager Alan Shearer will not take disciplinary action against Obafemi Martins, despite the Nigeria striker's late withdrawal from Saturday's 1-1 draw against Stoke.

Martins was a surprise omission from the Newcastle squad at the Britannia Stadium and Shearer revealed after the match that the former Inter Milan star had only informed him six hours before kick-off that he was pulling out with a groin injury.

Shearer admitted Martins had shown no sign of the injury during the week, but he won't fine the forward.

"He rang up and said he had a sore groin and unable to play. We got the doctors and physios to go and have a look at him, and he couldn't play. But there was no evidence earlier in the week he had the injury," Shearer said.

"After working on a particular system over the previous few days, then it was obviously disappointing to find out so late in the day he couldn't make it, so we had to reshuffle the pack a little."

The suggestion after the game was Martins had overslept, breaking a regimented routine implemented by Shearer, so fabricating the groin injury as a cover-up.

But Shearer added: "No, he didn't sleep in at all. That's not true. We met just after 11 o'clock, so he never broke any curfews or anything like that."

"I personally spoke to him and I'll speak to him again on Monday and we'll have another look at him."

"I wasn't happy I got the call at 11 o'clock, particularly after we had trained all Thursday and Friday, had massages Friday, and there was no sign of it."

"But it's happened and we're hopeful it's not going to be too serious because he has a big part to play."

## Scotland set Japan date

AFP, Glasgow

Scotland will take on Japan in a friendly international on October 10, the Scottish Football Association revealed on Sunday.

Both sides will hope the fixture in Japan, at a venue yet to be confirmed, will form part of their preparations for the 2010 World Cup.

Scotland are currently second in their European qualifying group, eight points behind Holland, and have a chance of securing a play-off place, while Japan are two points behind leaders Australia in their Asian qualifying section.

The visit to Japan will mark a return to the scene of Scotland's successful 2006 Kirin Cup campaign, when the Scots won a three-team tournament also involving Japan and Bulgaria.

"The Scottish FA are delighted to confirm that Scotland will travel to the Far East to play an International Challenge match against Japan in October this year," a statement on the SFA website announced.

## BAYERN MUNICH (0) V BARCELONA (4) Bastian promises fight

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger has promised his side will go down fighting in Tuesday's Champions League quarterfinal with the German giants effectively out of the competition.

The debacle of Bayern's 4-0 first-leg thrashing at the hands of Barcelona in Spain last Wednesday means only a minor miracle at Munich's Allianz Arena will now keep the Germans in the competition.

Argentina star Lionel Messi, Samuel Eto'o and Thierry Henry all scored in the mauling of Bayern in Spain last week as Barcelona played some breath-taking football.

The defending Bundesliga champions responded by hammering Eintracht Frankfurt 4-0 on Saturday to exorcise the ghosts of last week's Barcelona nightmare and Schweinsteiger says his side will not roll over on Tuesday.

"The defeat (in Barcelona) was painful for us and our supporters, but we've taken a first step in the right direction, and we hope we can take the steps we need beyond that," said Schweinsteiger.

"Our job as a team is to represent the club to the best of our abilities, but we didn't do that in Barcelona."

"We need to take another step forward in the German League table and catch up with Wolfsburg. That would be sensational."

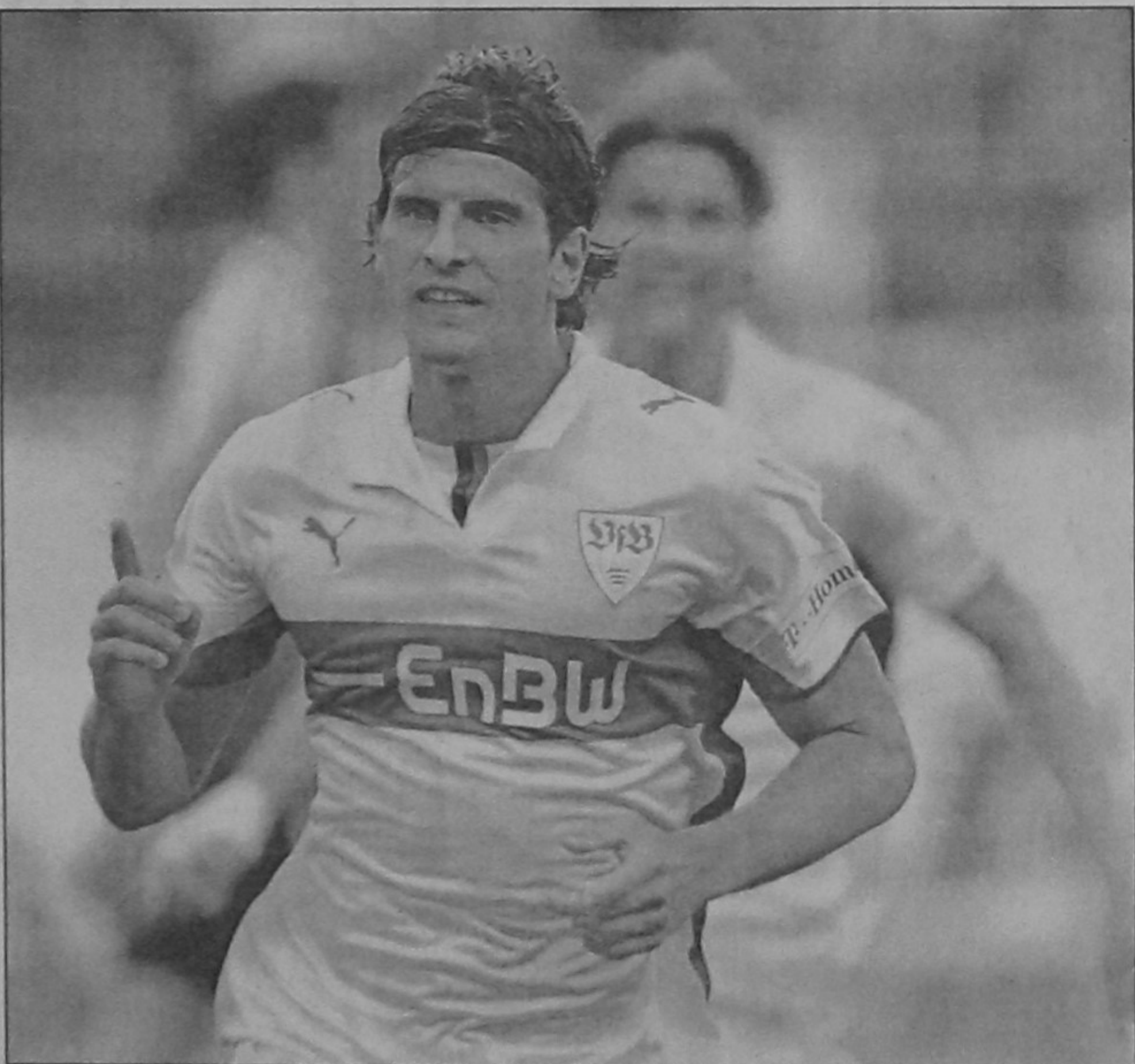
And Bayern coach Jurgen Klinsmann - whose job is on

the line after heavy recent defeats by Bundesliga leaders Wolfsburg and Barcelona - is determined his side will hold their heads high against the Spanish giants.

"We have big plans for Tuesday night, because we want to make a fitting exit from the Champions League," said ex-Germany boss Klinsmann.

No Spanish side has ever won the treble of league, Kings Cup and Champions League, but Barcelona are on course after they opened a nine-point gap at the top of the Spanish League on Saturday with a 2-0 win over Recreativo Huelva.

Barcelona coach Pep Guardiola has warned his side Bayern Munich contain enough talent to hurt them, but the Spaniards would have to suffer a disaster to threaten their place in the last four.



Stuttgart striker Mario Gomez (L) celebrates after scoring the all-important goal against Hamburg during their Bundesliga tie in Stuttgart on Sunday.

## Gomez sinks Hamburg

AFP, Berlin



Hamburg were dealt a blow in their push for the German title on Sunday when an injury time goal from Mario Gomez earned VfB Stuttgart a 1-0 win over Martin Jol's high flyers.

Hamburg had gone into the weekend as Bundesliga co-leaders, second only on goal difference to VfL Wolfsburg.

But this defeat saw them drop back to third, with Wolfsburg now the outright leaders after their ninth successive win 24 hours earlier, their latest victims Borussia Moenchengladbach.

Bayern Munich, who bounced back from their twin disasters against Wolfsburg and Barcelona with a 4-0

drubbing of Eintracht Frankfurt, are second, on 51 points, three off the top.

Hamburg, also with 51 points, are third on goal difference.

Sunday's other game resulted in a 1-1 draw between Bayer Leverkusen and Werder Bremen.

On Saturday Franck Ribery was the main architect of Bayern's much needed pick-me-up.

The France international scored one of the goals and was instrumental in setting up another in a result that gave under-fire coach Jurgen Klinsmann some much needed breathing space from his critics.

Bayern took a third-minute lead when Luca Toni set up Ribery, who scored with an angled shot from the right from 20 metres for his seventh goal of the season.

Barely a quarter of an hour later the former Marseille playmaker conjured up a pinpoint freekick with his left

foot for Toni to volley in.

On 35 minutes Brazilian Lucio headed in from a corner for Bayern's third with Bastian Schweinsteiger completing a satisfactory afternoon's work three minutes after the break.

Wolfsburg largely failed to replicate last weekend's stunning romp over Bayern but still had enough class to see off a Moenchengladbach side that are struggling to avoid the drop 2-1.

Wolfsburg's Edin Dzeko put the Bundesliga leaders in front in the 21st minute only for the home side to level with 11 minutes left on the clock.

But Wolfsburg maintained their impressive run with Sascha Riether's 85th minute match winner.

Elsewhere Hoffenheim pacesetters Surpren early crashed 3-0 at VfL Bochum after having two players sent off while Hertha Berlin were beaten 2-0 at Hannover 96.

## Gerrard on track

AFP, Liverpool

Steven Gerrard is on track to lead Liverpool in Tuesday's Champions League quarterfinal second leg at Chelsea after the England midfielder returned to training on Monday.

Gerrard was rested by boss Rafael Benitez for Saturday's 4-0 win over Blackburn at Anfield following scans that showed a recurrence of the Liverpool skipper's groin injury.

But Benitez confirmed on Monday that Gerrard was responding to treatment and will travel to London as Liverpool try to overturn a 3-1 deficit from the first leg.

"Steven is getting better, he has been working with the physio and will train on Monday," Benitez said.

"We will then discuss the situation with the doctors, but Steven will travel with the party to London and I will make a decision on Tuesday."

Benitez knows Liverpool's hopes of a famous win at Stamford Bridge would be boosted by Gerrard and he is ready to take a calculated risk.

He said: "Obviously we do not want him to break down again, he could then be out for 10 to 16 days. But the injury is not a massive one, it will be a calculated gamble to play him but one that I will consider."

"We are 3-1 down and we know that everything can change if we have Steven in the side and he plays well."

## Villarreal lose Senna

AFP, Madrid

Villarreal captain Marcos Senna has been ruled out of Wednesday's Champions League return leg against Arsenal because of a leg injury.

Senna, who scored in the first leg against the Gunners which ended 1-1, sustained the injury during the La Liga match against Malaga on Saturday.

## Ribery keen on Barca

AFP, Madrid

Bayern Munich's French midfielder Franck Ribery has been told by his own captain that he should join Barcelona next season.

"Franck wants to play for Barcelona," Bayern skipper Mark van Bommel told RAC-1 radio on Monday in comments that will hardly go down well with the Bayern board, who are desperate to hold on to their prize asset.

"More than that, I think it would be a good thing if Barca buys him, he would adapt easily," said the Dutchman, who played for Barcelona in 2005-06.

"He is the best (player) in Germany, he is very powerful and very technical," said van Bommel.

His comments came two days ahead of the return leg of the Champions League quarterfinal between Bayern and Barcelona.

The Catalan club won the first leg 4-0 in Spain last Wednesday and Barcelona president Joan Laporta praised Ribery after the match.

"We saw that he was a very fast player and who causes upsets," he said. "We have spoken (with the managers of Barcelona) about all the good players and Bayern knows that we want as we know what they want."

Bayern has insisted for some months that Ribery is not for sale.

## Agger's future uncertain

AFP, Liverpool

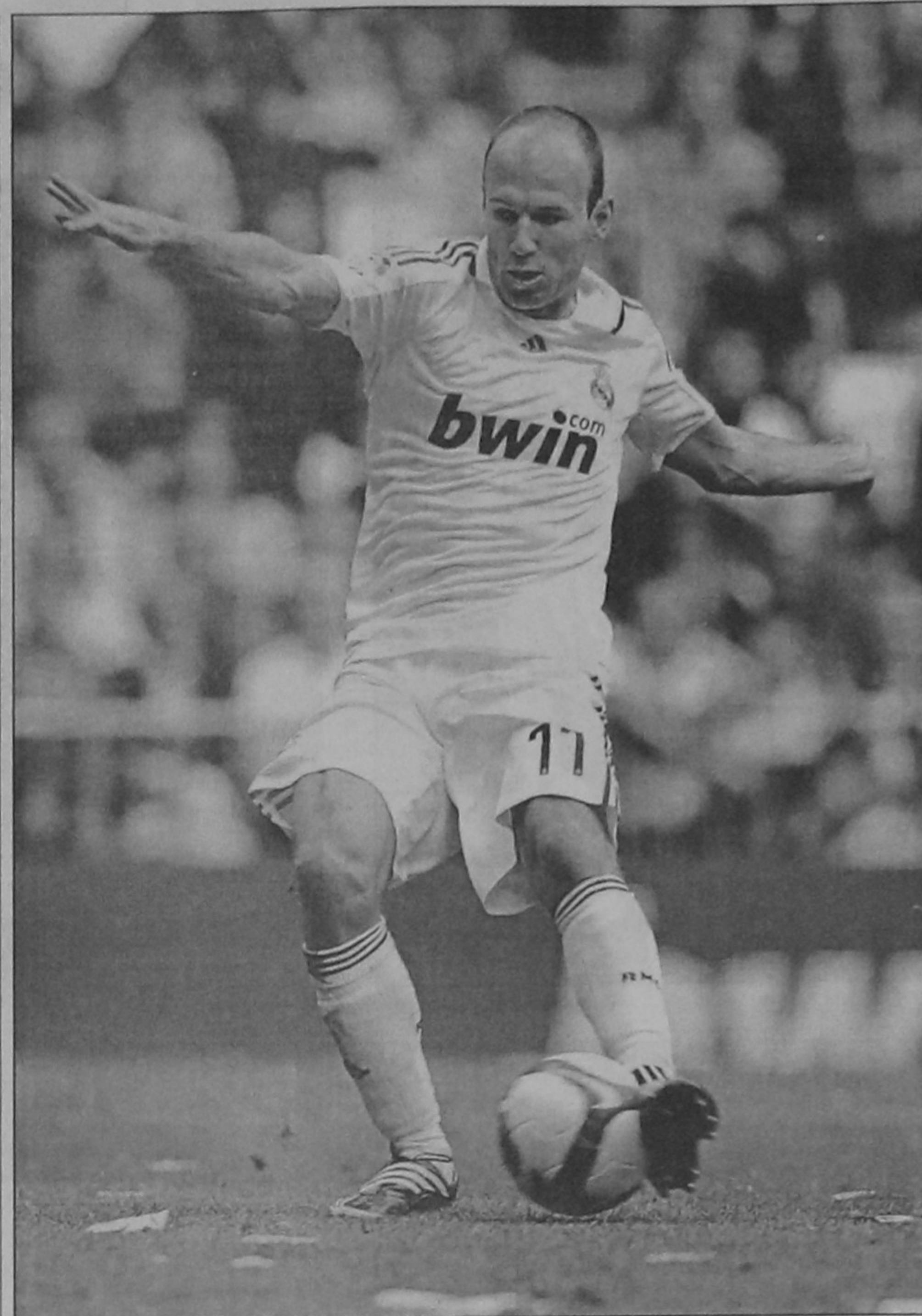
Liverpool defender Daniel Agger admits he may have to quit the Premier League club for the sake of his career.

Danish defender Agger has endured a frustrating season at Anfield as injuries and the impressive form of Martin Skrtel have kept him out of the team for long periods.

The 24-year-old marked his return to the side with a superb long-range goal in Saturday's 4-0 win over Blackburn, but is likely to be back on the bench for Tuesday's Champions League quarterfinal second leg at Chelsea.

Agger is out of contract at the end of next season and, although he is in talks with boss Rafael Benitez over a new deal, he admits the outcome is uncertain due to his lack of playing time.

"I am at the stage of my career where I need to play, and want to play, but that situation has nothing to do with the contract talks," he said.



Real Madrid forward Arjen Robben shoots to score his team's second goal against Valladolid during their Primera Liga encounter at Santiago Bernabeu on Sunday.

## Real see off Valladolid

AFP, Madrid



Real Madrid produced a 2-0 home win over Valladolid on Sunday to move back to within six points of Barcelona at the top of the Spanish championship.

Captain Raul scored close to half-time, with Gonzalo Higuain setting up his strike partner, while Arjen Robben added a late second as Real made it 14 wins from 16 under Juande Ramos.

Barcelona had defeated Recreativo Huelva 2-0 on Saturday to open up a nine-point gap, but Real continued their dogged pursuit of a third successive league crown.

Valladolid had beaten Real 1-0 earlier in the season, when Bernd Schuster was at the helm, but under Ramos Real have improved and are unbeaten in the league in 2009.

England international David Beckham, now on loan

at AC Milan, was one of the spectators at the Santiago Bernabeu cheering his old club on from the stands.

Beckham, 33, won the 2007 league title with Real before leaving to join Los Angeles Galaxy.

Sergio Ramos was suspended so Miguel Torres deputised at right back but apart from that Real were at full strength and fresh after no midweek Champions League distraction.

However, Real were flat in the opening 25 minutes and only a great piece of skill from Higuain - a drag back and turn - earned applause from the home fans.

Along with French midfielder Lass Diarra, Higuain was Real's standout performer and made the opening goal close to half-time chipping the ball between two defenders and crossing for Raul to tap in.

Robben showed great control to score the second nine minutes from time although Valladolid were furious as they felt they

should have been awarded a penalty seconds before.

Elsewhere, Valencia climbed above Villarreal into fourth with a 3-2 win at Sporting Gijon.

Villarreal lost 2-0 against Malaga on Saturday and now trail Valencia by a point in the Champions League race.

David Villa put Valencia 2-1 up from the penalty spot but didn't celebrate the goal out of respect for former club Gijon where he started his distinguished career back in 2000.

Sporting equalised but Juan Mata, recently capped by Spain, struck the winner three minutes from time.

In other matches, new Betis coach Maria Noguez had an immediate impact with his first match in charge ending in a 3-2 win over 10-man Racing Santander.

Betis moved four points clear of the relegation zone with the victory.

The bottom two sides, Numancia and Espanyol, drew 0-0 in a result that helps neither side.

## Villa salvage a point

AFP, Birmingham



Martin O'Neill admits Aston Villa's hopes of clinching a lucrative place in the Champions

League hang by a thread after his side's 3-3 draw against Everton.

Villa came from 3-1 down to salvage a point at Villa Park on Sunday but they still finished disappointed at a result which leaves them eight points adrift of fourth placed Arsenal with only six games to play.

The Gunners also have a superior goal difference and O'Neill concedes Villa's run of five games without a win has left them with little chance of catching Arsene Wenger's team.

"Are we out of the

Champions League? I would not disagree. I think we had to win to keep in touch. It is a result that suits Arsenal," O'Neill said.

"Arsenal have some very tough games ahead, so have we, so we just have to go and win them and see what happens. I am not giving up but it will be very hard."

Everton would have had a slender chance of catching Arsenal with a win, but their late meltdown at Villa left boss David Moyes admitting they will probably have to settle for the soon to be revamped UEFA Cup.

While O'Neill was frustrated by Villa's failure to keep pace with Arsenal he had no cause to criticise their spirit.

First half goals from Marouane Fellaini and Tim Cahill put Everton 2-0 up before John Carew pulled one back for Villa.

When Steven Pienaar restored Everton's two-goal lead early in the second half it looked all over, but James Milner scored with a superb freekick to give Villa hope.

Gareth Barry equalised from the penalty spot in the 66th minute after Joleon Lescott's high challenge on Stilian Petrov.

O'Neill said: "I thought we were fantastic going forward, although defensively we were not so clever."

"But we showed tremendous character and determination when 2-0 and 3-1 down and the fans were fantastic towards us."

Moyes felt referee Howard Webb's penalty decision was harsh on Lescott.

"I thought it might have been an indirect freekick because all Joleon has done is put his foot up to try and get the ball," Moyes said.



Aston Villa striker John Carew (2nd from L) shoots past Everton defender Phil Jagielka (R) to pull a goal back during their Premiership clash at Villa Park on Sunday.