

The Daily Star

# Guus looking ahead



AFP, London

Guus Hiddink admits Chelsea cannot afford a repeat of their epic Champions League quarterfinal second leg against Liverpool when they face Barcelona in the semifinals.

Hiddink's side reached the last four after surviving one of the most dramatic matches in the history of Europe's elite club competition at Stamford Bridge on Tuesday.

After winning 3-1 at Anfield in the first leg, Chelsea were expected to cruise through but twice they were within one goal of surrendering that lead as Liverpool made a heroic bid for victory. It wasn't until Frank Lampard scored his second goal in the last minute that the Blues could finally relax.

The amazing 4-4 draw sealed a 7-5 aggregate success

for Chelsea, but Hiddink knows Barcelona are capable of making Chelsea pay a heavier price if they produce another performance laced with so many errors.

"Barcelona have skilful players and they know how to handle the pace of the game. They always like to play an advanced, attacking game," Hiddink said.

"If you give teams who are very skilful too much space, they know how to handle it and go into that space. Then you are in for a very difficult match."

"It is difficult to play them because they are a top team, but it is one of those beautiful games at the end of the season."

Chelsea's cause won't be helped by the absence of Ashley Cole after he picked up a booking that triggers a one-match ban. With Paulo Ferreira injured, Hiddink has no experienced cover for the England left-back.

Hiddink will also have to

spend time working out a way to restore Czech goalkeeper Petr Cech's shattered confidence.

After conceding three goals against Bolton on Saturday, Cech looked a nervous wreck and was caught completely out of position by Fabio Aurelio's clever first-half freekick.

Hiddink admitted Cech's morale is low but refused to consider dropping him for Saturday's FA Cup semifinal against Arsenal.

"Petr is very intelligent and self-critical. He wasn't happy with his performance against Bolton. He knows he had a difficult time and also against Liverpool you could see there were times when he didn't have full confidence," Hiddink said.

"But I think a goalie once in a while has a right not to have a big performance. We will think about the situation but if a player is playing badly it is not always the reason to make a change."

## Diego faces fitness race

AFP, Bremen

Bremen playmaker Diego faces a race against time to shake off a thigh injury before Thursday's UEFA Cup quarterfinal second-leg tie against Udinese, it was revealed Wednesday.

Diego scored twice in Bremen's 3-1 win over Udinese at the Weserstadion last week and coach Thomas Schaaf is hoping the 24-year-old will be fit in time for the second-leg.

"His leg is better, but it is not perfect yet," said Bremen's Schaaf.

"We are simply hoping he can play, but it will be close."

Diego is a proven goalscorer and decision maker."

The Brazilian, who has scored three goals in five UEFA Cup games this season, says he will do all he can to be fit.

## 'Adriano's career not over'

AFP, Rome

Troubled Brazil forward Adriano's agent insisted on Tuesday that his client's career is not over.

The 27-year-old went to Brazil for international duty last month and has not returned to his club Inter Milan, claiming he would be unhappy if he came back to Italy.

His agent Gilmar Rinaldi is rumoured to be negotiating a termination to his club contract with Inter but he says that Adriano will be back.

"I think he will return to playing, he needs time to reflect and to make a decision," said Rinaldi upon his arrival at Milan's Malpensa airport.

"He's calm in Rio (de Janeiro) with his family and now we're waiting to talk with Inter."

"We have to do these things slowly, without haste, evaluating everything a little and then with Inter we'll make a decision."

"But now we have to be cool, in Brazil and in Italy many things have been said, even that Adriano was dead."

Rinaldi added that he had received no contact from other clubs regarding Adriano's availability.

"Even if I do get an offer we wouldn't reply. Right now there's other things to sort out," he said.

"There is a team, Inter, that has a contract and brought Adriano to Italy six years ago, we have to respect that."

"First we have to talk to them, explain everything and then we'll see."

## Gerrard against MU quintet

AFP, London

Premier League champions Manchester United provided five of the six nominees for the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) player of the season award when they were announced on Tuesday.

The only non United player to be nominated is Liverpool's inspirational captain Steven Gerrard.

The United quintet are headed by favourite for the award Serbian central defender Nemanja Vidic, veteran Welsh star Ryan Giggs who has never won it - Vidic's centreback partner Rio Ferdinand, Portuguese winger Cristiano Ronaldo and veteran Dutch goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar.

For Giggs it probably represents his last crack at getting the ultimate nod from his peers while Gerrard can hope that he benefits as David Ginola did in 1999 by winning because the vote for the United players is split - something that infuriated Sir Alex Ferguson.

Ronaldo is bidding to become the first player to win it on three successive occasions.

United's recent slump in form didn't matter as the voting for the nominations took place prior to it.

The decision will be announced in London on April 26.

## NOMINEES

PFA player of the year award:  
Rio Ferdinand (Man Utd),  
Steven Gerrard (Liverpool),  
Ryan Giggs (Man Utd),  
Cristiano Ronaldo (Man Utd),  
Edwin van der Sar (Man Utd),  
Nemanja Vidic (Man Utd)  
PFA young player of the year award:  
Gabriel Agbonlahor (Aston Villa),  
Rafael Da Silva (Man Utd),  
Jonny Evans (Man Utd),  
Stephen Ireland (Man City),  
Aaron Lennon (Tottenham),  
Ashley Young (Aston Villa)

# Jol dismisses City switch

AFP, Paris

Martin Jol insists he is concentrating on turning Hamburg into a top side despite growing talk of a switch to a

Manchester City, the Germans' opponents in Thursday's UEFA Cup quarterfinals return.

With a 3-1 lead from the first encounter Bundesliga title contenders Hamburg look favourites to reach the last four and former Spurs boss Jol is keen to extend his adventure in the stylish northern German city, even if media reports say he could replace Mark Hughes should the Welshman leave City in the summer.

Jol has a contract until the end of next season and while he has not yet talked about an extension he admits that "I can imagine working here for a long time yet."

The board are hoping to take Kevin Keegan's former club - they won the Bundesliga with Keegan on board, then lifted the European Cup in 1983 after he had left - to the next level.

"They want to take the next step, so I've read - and I'm curious to see what that entails," said Jol.

While Hamburg seek to re-establish themselves as a major force in a European

## FIXTURES

Marseille (FRA) v Shakhtar Donetsk (UKR)  
(Donetsk lead 2-0)  
Manchester City (ENG) v Hamburg (GER)  
(Hamburg lead 3-1)  
Dynamo Kiev (UKR) v Paris St Germain (FRA)  
(Paris lead 0-0)  
Udinese (ITA) v Werder Bremen (GER)  
(Werder lead 3-1)

# Carlo eyes 2nd place

AFP, Milan

AC Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti has set his team a new target: second place in Serie A.

A couple of weeks ago the 49-year-old said the nerazzurri had had to reassess their goals for the season and would be aiming for third place and a direct spot in the Champions League group stages in the next campaign.

Back then they sat 14 points behind leaders Inter Milan and seven away from second-placed Juventus with fourth-placed Genoa breathing down their necks.

However, Juve have picked up only one point from their last two games and now Milan sit only two points behind their old rivals.

"We can believe in it because right now Juventus are back in our sights," Ancelotti told Milan's official TV channel.

"The bianconeri will have to be careful, just as we will. They have to play against Inter on Saturday and that for us is an extra stimulus to catch them."

Ancelotti has not forgotten about Genoa, though, who trail the seven-times European champions by just four points.

And Milan maintained that



CARLO ANCELOTTI

gap with a fortunate and hard-fought 1-0 victory at Chievo on Saturday.

"That was important for the standings. Even if we didn't dazzle it was important to win to keep our advantage over Genoa and Fiorentina," added the coach.

"He was out for a long time and needs to find his top form again because Ricky (Kaka) is a player who exploits the speed in his play a lot and if he's not in good condition he's hampered."

"We have to be careful because one slip could compromise the advantage we have."

Ancelotti also defended

playmaker Kaka, who has not shone since returning recently from injury.

"His performance in Verona (at Chievo) was in line with his period of inactivity," added the coach.

"He was out for a long time and needs to find his top form again because Ricky (Kaka) is a player who exploits the speed in his play a lot and if he's not in good condition he's hampered."

"We have to be careful because one slip could compromise the advantage we have."

Ancelotti also defended



## Laursen out for season

AFP, Birmingham

Aston Villa will have to do without injured captain Martin Laursen for the rest of the season, manager Martin O'Neill predicted on Wednesday.

Laursen has not played since injuring his knee in January and hopes of a return were dashed when he suffered a setback at the club's training break in Dubai last month.

O'Neill said: "Martin is struggling. There's not much more to say. He'll be struggling to play again before the end of the season."

Villa have sorely missed the presence of Laursen at the back, conceding 24 goals in their last 10 matches.

Striker Gabriel Agbonlahor is improving after suffering a hamstring injury against Everton last weekend although he remains doubtful for Saturday's home meeting with West Ham.

Villa are still awaiting the results of a scan on the England player.

O'Neill said: "Gabby came off the pitch on Sunday with a hamstring niggle. It seems to be getting better. But we are awaiting the results of a scan.

"At the back of the doctor's mind is a concern that he may have strained it. That would make him doubtful for this weekend's game."

"He certainly seems to be responding - no doubt about that - but he still remains a doubt for the West Ham match."

Agbonlahor's absence could be offset by the return of Emile Heskey who suffered a hamstring injury during England's recent friendly international with Slovakia at Wembley.

O'Neill said: "Emile has trained for the last couple of days and that is encouraging for us. It would be good if he could make it for the weekend."

"We will see how he is later in the week because we have a few days yet. But at least he has been out training and he is certainly making progress."

## Serie A fighters banned

AFP, Rome

Four Serie A players were on Tuesday hit with lengthy bans after being involved in fights at the weekend.

Florentina's Felipe Melo and Diego Lopez of Cagliari were each handed a five-match suspension for their part in a brawl in the tunnel following the match between the two teams in Florence on Saturday, won 2-1 by the home side.

France defender Philippe Mexes and Lazio's Brazilian midfielder Francesco Matuzalem were each banned for three matches following a scrap they had during Lazio's 4-2 win in the Rome derby.

**Anfield recalls Hillsborough**

AFP, Liverpool

Liverpool's Anfield football ground stood in silence on Wednesday to mark the 20th anniversary of the Hillsborough stadium disaster, in which 96 people were crushed to death.

A bell tolled as the names of the victims were read out, ahead of a minute's silence at 3:06pm - the time when the FA Cup semifinal between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest was abandoned, as the full scale of the tragedy became clear.

The bells of Liverpool's two cathedrals also rang out to honour the victims of the disaster, caused by massive over-crowding in the Leppings Lane end of the Hillsborough ground in the northern city of Sheffield.

After the silence - which was also observed outside Hillsborough and in Nottingham, where people bowed their heads in a mark of respect to those who died -- the crowd spontaneously broke out into dignified applause.

## Real announce election date

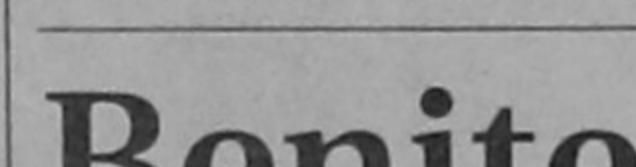
AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid announced Wednesday it will hold elections for a new club president on June 14.

Current president Vicente Boluda, who replaced the embattled Ramon Calderon in January, has announced he will not stand.

The favourite to take over is Florentino Perez, who led Real in its 'Galactico' years, from 2000 to 2006, during which time it won the Primera Liga twice and European Champions League with such stars as Zinedine Zidane, Ronaldo, and Luis Figo.

# Benitez shifts focus



AFP, London

Rafa Benitez believes Liverpool's heroic but unsuccessful attempt to claim a crucial match at home to Arsenal next Tuesday.

"We are not happy with the result. When you lose you are disappointed but to lose in this way, the players have to be really proud and hold their heads up high," Benitez said.

"We showed character, quality and we have to be really proud. The players have done a fantastic job and the fans will be very pleased with the result."

Twice during the amazing 4-4 draw, Liverpool were within one goal of going through, only to finally miss out when Frank Lampard's last minute strike gave Guus Hiddink's men enough breathing space to go through 7-5 on aggregate.

Despite the heartache of losing to Chelsea in the Champions League for the second successive season, Benitez sees no reason to be downcast.

The Liverpool manager is convinced his team's gutsy display proves they have the character to overhaul Premier League leaders Manchester

United.

The Reds are one point behind United and face a crucial match at home to Arsenal next Tuesday.

"We are not happy with the result. When you lose you are disappointed but to lose in this way, the players have to be really proud and hold their heads up high," Benitez said.

"We showed character, quality and we have to be really proud. The players have done a fantastic job and the fans will be very pleased with the result."

"You are always disappointed to lose but thinking about the Premier League maybe it is positive because we showed we can score four goals at Stamford Bridge, so we can do the same at any stadium."

"We can win a lot of games with this mentality."

Liverpool can take extra pride in pushing Chelsea so close despite being without captain Steven Gerrard. The England midfielder didn't even make the bench after tweaking a groin injury 24 hours before the match, but Benitez expects him to be fit for the Arsenal clash.

"He had a problem on