



Werder Bremen striker Claudio Pizarro (L) scores from a flick against Udinese during their UEFA Cup quarterfinal in Udine on Thursday. The match ended in a 3-3 draw with Werder Bremen qualifying for the semifinals.



Man City bow out

AFP, Paris



Ten-man English Premiership side Manchester City bowed out of the UEFA Cup on Thursday, falling short against Hamburg, who advanced to an all-German semifinal against Werder Bremen.

City came from behind to win 2-1 on the night, and Elano twice hit the wood-work, but Paolo Guerrero's opener gave the hosts too much to do after the 3-1 loss in Germany as Hamburg advanced 4-3 on aggregate to delight coach Martin Jol.

"It's a good experience for our team. To get to the semifinals of the UEFA cup is fantastic," he told ITV.

The historical omens had appeared to favour Jol, who while in charge of Spurs won six times in as many attempts facing City and was also unbeaten in four clashes against City's former Blackburn boss Mark Hughes.

Hughes was sanguine in elimination.

"We produced a performance of real desire and commitment," he said. "We got our noses in front after a poor start (but) it wasn't quite enough."

City ended the match down to ten men after skipper Richard Dunne was dismissed ten minutes from time for a second booking.

"We're very disappointed. Now we've got to concentrate on finishing as high in the league as we can," said City midfielder Stephen Ireland, as the club make a last-ditch bid to make next season's revamped Europa League tournament.

Shorn of Craig Bellamy's attacking guile and the width of Shaun Wright-Phillips, City rallied manfully and claimed the equaliser five minutes after Guerrero had shocked them with Hamburg's goal on 12 minutes.

Elano netted from the spot after his snap-shot struck Piotr Trochowski on the arm.

City came out full of fire after the interval and went in front five minutes after the restart with a neat Felipe Caicedo finish from Ireland's pass.

Caicedo then ballooned over from point blank range before having an effort chalked off for offside.

But a third goal would not come in a frantic finale as City bowed out.

Aided by a brace from Diego, Bremen drew 3-3 away to Italy's Udinese, to wrap up a 6-4 win overall while the other semifinal will be an all-Ukrainian affair after Dynamo Kiev swamping a poor Paris Saint Germain 3-0 after a goalless draw in France.

PSG goalkeeper Mickael Landreau handed the Ukrainians victory with two glaring errors which led to two of the goals.

Shakhtar Donetsk inflicted more Ukrainian punishment on French opposition as they won 2-1 at Marseille with Brazilian pair Fernandinho Luiz Rosa and Adriano on target for a 4-1 aggregate win.

Jol rated Werder Bremen as favourites to reach the final after the latter saw off Udinese.

With Udinese trailing 3-1 from the first leg they were forced to attack and Swiss star Gokhan Inler put them ahead on 15 minutes.

But Brazil playmaker Diego, a reported target for Juventus, responded with a sublime equaliser on 28 minutes, turning on the ball before firing into the top corner.

Fabio Quagliarella struck twice within eight minutes to level the tie but Diego then headed home just before the hour mark.

Although Diego then missed out on a hat-trick when Samir Handanovic saved his penalty on 72 minutes Claudio Pizarro poked home from close range to put the result beyond doubt.

Real hope for a favour

AFP, Madrid



After reaching the Champions League semifinals for the second successive season Barcelona are back in league action on Saturday when they travel to Getafe, who have proved a difficult customer for the Catalans in recent seasons.

Barca have a six-point lead over Real Madrid at the top of the table but have failed to beat Getafe in their last three league meetings, while Getafe famously thrashed Barca 4-0 to reach the 2007 King's Cup final.

Real will hope their city neighbours, just four points above the drop zone, can do them a favour in the title race, while Real can fulfil their end of the bargain by beating third-bottom Recreativo Huelva.

On Wednesday Barcelona overcame Bayern Munich to reach the last four of the Champions League - where they will face Chelsea - and midfielder Xavi admits they have a tough six weeks in store as they go in search of an historic treble.

The team is in spectacular form both physically and mentally and is ready to face a really tough month and a half," said the Spaniard.

When Valencia host Sevilla at the Mestalla Stadium on Sunday.

Third-placed Sevilla are eight points ahead of Valencia, who will be keen to avenge this season's King's Cup quarterfinal defeat to the Andalucian side.

"Valencia are behind us and playing well so it is going to be a difficult game which is crucial for both sides," said Sevilla's Aldo Duscher.

"We will still have an advantage whatever the result but we have tough games coming up against Barcelona, Real and Villarreal."

Valencia have taken advantage of Villarreal's poor form to climb to fourth but face a fight to stay there with Villarreal, Atletico Madrid and Malaga all

still in the hunt.

"Our fans know it is a big game to help ensure we are in the Champions League next season," explained Valencia defender Carlos Marchena.

Villarreal, runners-up last season, have lost three out of their last four league matches to surrender fourth and are now one point behind Valencia going into Sunday's trip to Valladolid.

Villarreal limped out of the Champions League to Arsenal on Wednesday - losing 4-1 on aggregate - and to restore confidence quickly, although injuries to Spanish internationals Marcos Senna and Santi Cazorla have not helped.

Captain Senna is absent for three weeks with a leg injury while Cazorla is out for the season with a broken leg.

"We were beaten by a better side," Villarreal coach Manuel Pellegrini said after the Arsenal defeat. "Now we have to concentrate fully on the league to make sure we are in the competition next season."

Atletico Madrid, three points behind Valencia, host troubled Numancia, hoping to snatch a top-four spot and a much-needed Champions League financial windfall that would help them hold onto stars such as Sergio Aguero and Diego Forlan.

Cazorla has played a more attacking role in recent games which have seen him become Everton's leading scorer with nine goals while his change of role has coincided with a hot streak of form which has seen Moyes' men lose just one of their last 11 matches.

Defender Joseph Yobo and striker James Vaughan are both back from injury.

UEFA Cup semis line-up

AFP, Paris

UEFA Cup semifinals line-up: Werder Bremen (GER) v SV Hamburg (GER)

Dynamo Kiev (UKR) v Shakhtar Donetsk (UKR)

1st legs April 30

2nd legs May 7

Final

May 20

Istanbul

Juve take on Inter

AFP, Rome

Serie A's top two come face to face in an epic battle at Turin's Stadio Olimpico on Saturday with only seven matches left until the end of the season.

The title may not be at stake but this match is still called the 'derby of Italy' and like clashes between Real Madrid and Barcelona or between Manchester United and Liverpool, there is always much to play for.

"There is a rivalry between us and Milan," said Marco Tronchetti, president of Inter's shirt sponsors Pirelli.

"But with Juventus, for the success they have had, for the history between the two teams and for the dramas, they have always been a plus for play-off."

It's not just the historic rivalry that will fire up the visitors, though. Coach Jose Mourinho is a proud man and won't want to concede anything in his quest to demonstrate how superior Inter are to the rest of Serie A.

He may have claimed a week ago that a draw would suffice to ensure the title stays with Inter for the fourth year in a row, but his president Massimo Moratti insists the team will still go out with the intention of winning.

"On Saturday we have to go to Turin to win because it's the right thing to do in such a prestigious match and because when you play for a draw things don't go well," said Moratti.

"Of course we can't be hypocrites, right now we can feel the possibility of winning the scudetto."

"We need to be fired up otherwise we won't have the right attitude for the game."

The clash between the top two may be dominating the build up to the weekend but there is more than just that to play for.

Milan can go second if they win and Juve lose while Genoa, who host Lazio on Saturday, could close right in on both Milan and Juve.

Genoa are in a fight with Fiorentina for fourth place and the final Champions League qualifying place but they are only four points behind Milan and six off Juve.

A strong finish to their campaign could even see them sneak into the top three and gain automatic entry into the group stages of Europe's premier club competition.

Meanwhile, the bottom five all play away this weekend so any points gained could boost their survival hopes.

Cahill warns United

AFP, London



Australia midfielder Tim Cahill has warned Manchester United that the team have hit peak form just in time for their FA Cup semifinal at Wembley this weekend.

David Moyes' side have lost just one of their last 11 matches and Cahill is confident they can extend that impressive run at United's expense on Sunday.

"Hopefully there will be a few more chances to come and I will stick them in the back of the net."

"If I end up getting opportunities, I will get my goals and they are a bonus which I really enjoy."

"We are playing with a purpose and the character of the lads is really starting to show."

"It is just so good to be a part of it. We are growing week-in, week-out and getting stronger on and off the pitch."

Cahill has played a key role in Everton's winning streak after adapting superbly to a more advanced attacking role.

Injuries to Ayegbeni Yakubu, James Vaughan, Victor Anichebe and Louis Saha have often forced Moyes to use Cahill as a striker, but the Soccerstar hasn't been fazed and is Everton's leading scorer with nine goals.

"It is a great stadium from what I heard, there will be 80,000 fans there," he said. "It is a dream for me to captain Arsenal to a trophy but we still need to work really hard for that to happen."

"We are in a very good position that three months ago we would be praying to be."

"We have to enjoy it but for

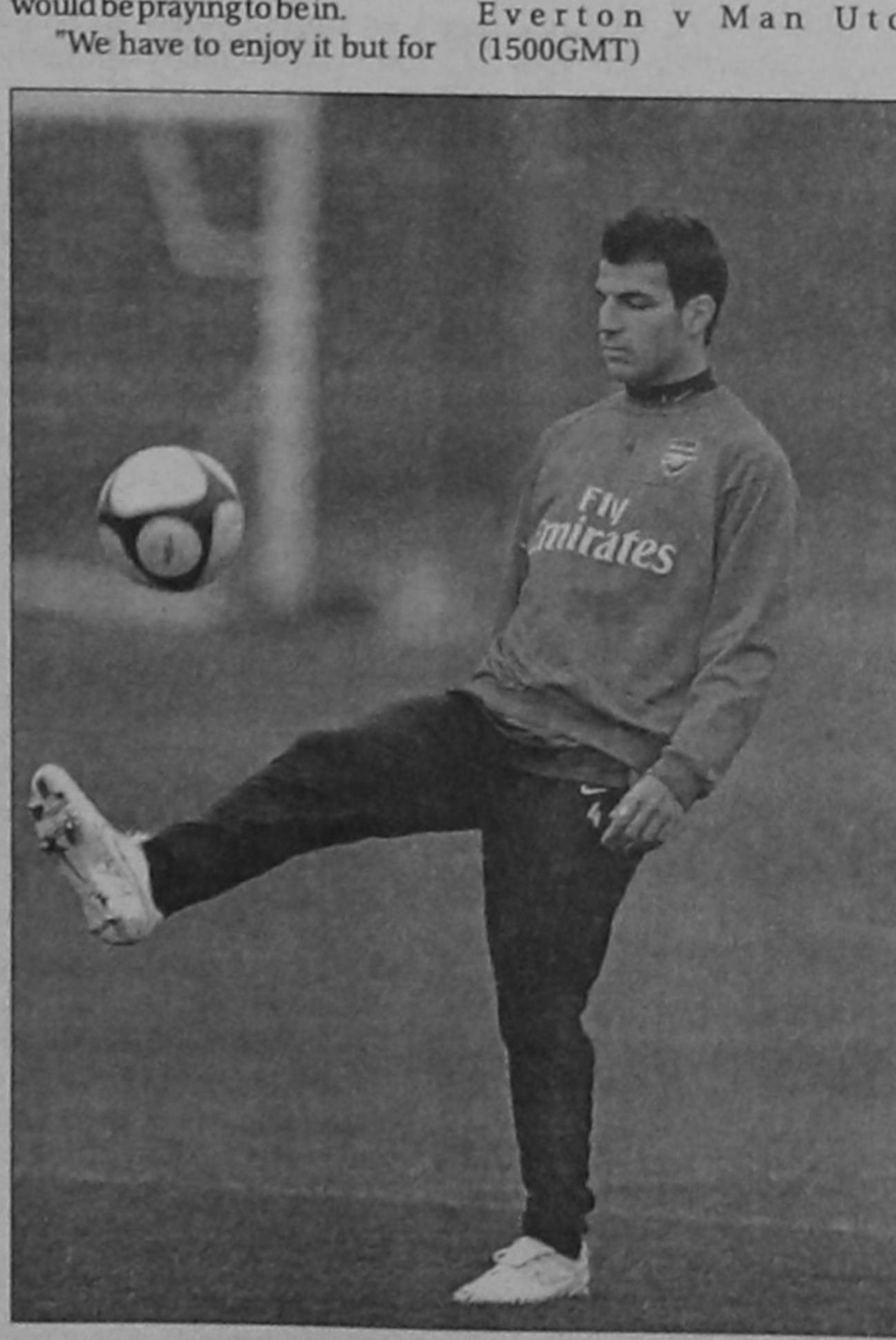


PHOTO: AFP

sure it would be a disappointment if we do not get to a final or win. What we have achieved is good but a semifinal is not good enough."

FIXTURES

Saturday

Arsenal v Chelsea (1615GMT)

Sunday

Everton v Man Utd (1500GMT)

Pizarro's Peru fine cancelled

AFP, Geneva

International sports top court on Friday cancelled a fine the Peruvian football federation imposed on Werder Bremen striker Claudio Pizarro for alleged misbehaviour in a hotel 18 months ago.

Following an appeal Pizarro made last year, the Court of Arbitration of Sport rejected the fine imposed on the player, saying there was no concrete evidence against him.

The Peruvian player was initially fined \$80,000 dollars and suspended for 18 months, after several players were accused of indiscipline on November 2007 following the side's 1-1 draw with Brazil in a World Cup qualifier.

The sanction was later cut to three months and 10,000 dollars after a first appeal by the player, but he later sought redress with the international court.

"The CAS Panel noted that the facts put forward by the PFF in relation to Pizarro were not supported by concrete evidence," CAS said in a statement.

"Furthermore, the Panel also noted that the incidents reported by the PFF were not dealt with either in the PFF regulations, or in the FIFA regulations." Accordingly, the CAS has cancelled the fine of \$10,000.

The former Chelsea forward was left out of Peru's squad for World Cup qualifiers so far this year.

Bastian back for Bayern

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich welcome back Germany star Bastian Schweinsteiger for Saturday's Bundesliga clash at Bielefeld as they look to put their Champions League heartbreak behind them and chase league leaders Wolfsburg.

Schweinsteiger scored in last Saturday's 4-0 league win over Frankfurt, but a knee injury kept him out of Tuesday's 1-1 draw with Barcelona which knocked Bayern out of the Champions League.

"Look at Hertha Berlin: three rounds ago, they were four points ahead of us. Now, they are five points behind. It can happen so fast," said Magath, with Hertha now fourth in the league.

"We hope that the problem will be healed by the weekend," said Bayern boss Jurgen Klinsmann with his side second in the table.

Schweinsteiger's Germany teammate Lukas Podolski is still out with a calf problem and the striker has not trained with the team this week.

As Bayern focus their thoughts on retaining their Bundesliga title, Klinsmann said it is all about points now and the ex-Germany boss was booted by his own fans at the Allianz Arena on Tuesday.

"We have to concentrate purely on the Bundesliga and win points, points, points,"

said Klinsmann, with Italians Carlo Ancelotti and Robert Mancini both being linked to his job by the Italian media.

Bayern are three points behind leaders Wolfsburg, who are at home to Leverkusen.

Wolfsburg have few injury worries as they prepare to host Leverkusen. Strikers Edin Dzeko and Brazilian Grafite have scored 36 league goals between them, but coach Felix Magath is keeping his feet on the ground.

"Look at Hertha Berlin: three rounds ago, they were four points ahead of us. Now, they are five points behind. It can happen so fast," said Magath, with Hertha now fourth in the league.

Hamburg, who qualified for the UEFA Cup semifinals on Thursday, are at home to strugglers Hanover, who shocked Hertha Berlin 2-0 last weekend.

Having climbed up to fifth in the league thanks to Germany striker Mario Gomez scoring an injury-time goal last week, Stuttgart have a good chance to take three more goals at strugglers Cologne.

Gomez has now hit 15 goals in 26 league games this season.

In the weekend's other games, Schalke 04 are at home to strugglers Energie Cottbus on Friday while bottom club Karlsruhe are home to Hoffenheim who are now 10 points off Wolfsburg and effectively out of the title race.

Mid-table sides Bochum and Dortmund will slug it out Saturday and Eintracht Frankfurt, who were humbled 4-0 at Bayern on Saturday, are up against Borussia Moenchengladbach who are third from bottom and in the relegation zone.

Fixtures

Saturday

Arminia Bielefeld v Bayern Munich, Cologne v VfB Stuttgart, VfL Wolfsburg v Bayer Leverkusen, VfL Bochum v Borussia Dortmund, Eintracht Frankfurt v Borussia Mönchengladbach, Karlsruhe v Hoffenheim