



Aston Villa midfielder James Milner's (L) free-kick is defended by Hull City players during their Premiership encounter at Villa Park on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

## CHELSEA (0) V BARCELONA (0) Old scores to settle

AFP, London



As if a place in the Champions League final isn't motivation enough for Chelsea and Barcelona to win their semifinal second leg at Stamford Bridge on Wednesday, both sides will also be fuelled by the chance to settle a few old scores.

For Barcelona, the frustration of being stopped from scoring at the Nou Camp for the first time this season in last week's first leg was exacerbated by the feeling that Chelsea had emerged unscathed from the Catalan cauldron by resorting to the game's dark arts.

It is a source of pride to Barca's fans that their team has always remained true to their purist principles. So to see Chelsea play in such a negative, niggly manner and still avoid defeat drew a furious response from Pep Guardiola's players.

Xavi led the protests against Chelsea's "anti-football" but, inevitably the Blues were unrepentant and Barca would relish the chance to reach the final by eliminating a club who present such an affront to their beliefs.

Losing in the semifinals to Manchester United last season was painful enough but the prospect of bowing out at the same stage to Chelsea is too awful to contemplate.

But that desire won't guarantee Barca get their wish as Chelsea have plenty of additional incentive to complete the road

to Rome themselves.

The Blues were one kick away from winning Europe's elite club competition last May when John Terry ran up to take a penalty in the teeming Moscow rain.

If Terry had converted that spot-kick, Chelsea would have won the shoot-out against Manchester United, but the England captain slipped up as he struck the ball, saw his effort clip the post and it was United who took the trophy.

Chelsea winger Florent Malouda admits the squad are still haunted by that agonising near-miss and he knows only a victory over United or Arsenal in this year's final can erase those bitter memories.

"Last year, to be in the final, was a very good experience but also bad," Malouda said. "It was a shame to lose. We are all determined now to get to Rome and win the trophy because we have come close before."

"This now means that our desire is even stronger than it has ever been. The Champions League is a very important competition for any player."

"We all know going to Rome is going to be difficult but we have ambition and the ability to win the competition. We know we can do it. We need to stay focused on our target and achieve our goal."

Barca will go through with a score-draw however and the Spanish league leaders arrive in west London in great spirits after thrashing Real Madrid 6-2 in the Bernabeu on Saturday.

That win all but sealed the title for Barca and Argentina forward Lionel Messi, who scored twice, is convinced

they are capable of putting Chelsea to the sword in similar fashion.

"We will play in the same way against Chelsea as we did against Real and, playing like that, we will have many chances," Messi said.

"If we do things as we did on Saturday then we will score and go through."

"This was a massive boost. We're going to London with great spirit and desire to fight and with a lot of belief that we'll go through. We've come out of this with a renewed confidence and strength."

Barca's hopes of claiming the away goal that could prove so crucial would be dented if France striker Thierry Henry is unable to recover from a knee injury suffered against Real.

Reports suggesting Henry would be out for two weeks have been denied by Barca, but the Catalans are definitely without suspended centre-back Carlos Puyol and injured fellow defender Rafael Marquez.

Those absences leave Barcelona dangerously short of defensive options but, lest his players start to feel over-confident, Chelsea boss Guus Hiddink was quick to emphasise their opponents' strength in depth.

"They can replace the two players rather easily," Hiddink said. "They are well equipped to bring a team which is able to play well. It won't make a huge difference."

Hiddink has his own injuries problems with Portugal internationals Ricardo Carvalho and Deco sidelined, but England left-back Ashley Cole is available after missing the first leg through suspension.

## Henry misses training

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona striker Thierry Henry was forced to skip a Monday training session due to a knee injury but will face Chelsea in the second leg of their Champions League semifinal, the club admitted on Monday.

Henry picked up the knock on Saturday in the first half of Barca's 6-2 romp over arch-rivals Real Madrid, in which the influential Frenchman scored a brace of goals before being replaced half an hour from the end by Seydou Keita.

According to the club the French international underwent unspecified treatment on Monday.

The first leg in Barcelona finished scoreless.

## Deschamps to take over at Marseille

AFP, Marseille

France World Cup hero Didier Deschamps is to take over from Eric Gerets as manager of Marseille next season, the club announced on its website on Tuesday.

The Belgian has guided the southern giants this season to within striking distance of their first league title since 1992, but he made it clear to his players last week that he would leave no matter what.

Deschamps, who skippered France to the World Cup title in 1998, has previously been coach at Monaco and Juventus. He will take over from Gerets in June.

A club statement said that Deschamps had agreed to a two-year deal after chairman Pape Diouf and majority shareholder Robert Louis-Dreyfus had decided he was the man they wanted to replace the popular Gerets.

"The choice of Didier Deschamps, whose career both as a player and a coach prove his merits, was a natural one to make," the statement said.

## Le Guen will stand down

AFP, Paris

Paul Le Guen will stand down as coach of Paris St Germain when his contract expires at the end of this season, club sources told AFP on Tuesday.

A former France international defender who made 343 appearances for PSG, Le Guen began his coaching career at Rennes but made his name in a three-year stint at Lyon during which he led the side to three league titles.

After a disastrous eighth-month spell in charge of Scottish giants Rangers, Le Guen returned to PSG in January 2007, narrowly sparing the team from relegation in his first two seasons and securing the League Cup in 2008.

## Villa secures Europe

AFP, Birmingham



John Carew's first-half goal gave Aston Villa a 1-0 win over relegation candidates Hull City here on Monday as the Midlands side assured themselves of European football next season.

Victory, Villa's first in 13 matches, saw them regain fifth place in the English Premier League from Everton and secured their spot in the Europa League, which will replace the UEFA Cup.

By contrast defeat left Hull just three points above the relegation zone with three games left at the end of a round of matches where all the teams in the bottom eight lost.

"It was relief at the end that we have won a game," Villa manager Martin O'Neill told Sky Sports. "We've thrown away leads against Stoke and West Ham, and tonight it was nice to keep a clean sheet."

Norway striker Carew grabbed the only goal of the game in the 34th minute when he turned in an Ashley Young cross from close range.

There was a suspicion of offside regarding Carew's 14th goal of the season but the forward said: "It was very good, the referee made the right decision."

"I wasn't sure but it was good to see it wasn't offside."

Hull manager Phil Brown refused to be downcast and believes his team - who have been in freefall for several

months now - can avoid relegation.

"We deserved something from the game, no doubt about it and if we get the same effort on Saturday, Stoke have got a game on their hands," said Brown.

"I can't fault the players' commitment in the second-half."

Hull goalkeeper Boaz Myhill made several fine saves to deny Villa, who fielded eight England players as England boss Fabio Capello looked on, a more emphatic victory, including a fine point-blank stop from Gabriel Agbonlahor.

The Tigers rarely threatened as the hosts won at Villa Park for the first time in the Premier League since mid-January, a run which helped cost them a top four finish and a Champions League spot.

## Stars buying vineyards

Football

AFP, Paris

The late, great George Best was renowned for his love of fine wine and champagne, and footballers past and present have followed his lead by investing in their very own vineyards.

Whilst some British heroes of yesteryear lost all their money by drinking away their profits, their modern contemporaries have proved to be keener on cultivating than imbibing.

Not surprisingly, the most well-known British star to have had a go at running a vineyard is England icon David Beckham, who bought one in the Bordeaux region as a present for his wife and one-time pop star Victoria.

Victoria's tastes have evidently matured since the days when she said her favourite wine was the cheap German 'Blue Nun'.

Predictably, though, it is the French who have taken to vineyard-ownership most eagerly.

Former France glamour boy David Ginola has not gone in solo, but, as he revealed to the Daily Telegraph, it hasn't stopped him from tasting some success.

Given that wine is France's favourite tipple, it has perhaps restored some of his popularity with the French public, many of whom blamed him for his role in a defeat to Bulgaria that prevented France from reaching the 1994 World Cup.

"I have always been interested in buying a vineyard but they were too expensive when I was looking a few years ago," said the former Paris St-Germain, Newcastle and Tottenham star.

"So I have invested in a co-operative of small vineyards instead and that means I can blend my own wine."

"We've received a silver medal for my Costa Brulade and I am very proud of that," added the 41-year-old.

Jean Tigana - another former French star, who was part of the famed midfield quartet that inspired France to the 1984 European Championship - was one of the first high-profile players to see the attraction of making his own wine.

Indeed, he has enjoyed more success in the wine business than he did during an unhappy spell as coach of English side Fulham, where his biggest victory was the three million pounds in damages he won from club owner Mohammed Al-Fayed.

Tigana, who sold a vineyard in Bordeaux before snapping one up near Marseille, rarely speaks in public, but back in 2000 he laid out how he was approaching the ultimately unsuccessful task of rebuilding the Fulham side.

"It's like wine. In Bordeaux I rebuilt an abandoned property. I improved it bit by bit and now I have eight hectares."

"I'm proud that there is recognition of what I have done," said Tigana, who was reportedly in talks with Manchester United manager and wine connoisseur Sir Alex Ferguson over buying another vineyard together.

Such appears to be the trend these days of footballers tending the vines that it can have beneficial ramifications for other winemakers in the most unlikely circumstances.

Liverpool fans returning from their Champions League last-16 first-leg victory over Real Madrid in February were quaffing beer on the plane when one of their number noticed a wine bearing the label 'Fernando Torres'.

Thinking that it was the produce of their Spanish striker, they loyally - if ill-advisedly - switched beverages, only to find out later that the Fernando Torres who made the wine was their hero's namesake and not the real deal.

## MU in £62m Ribery bid

Football

THE GUARDIAN

Manchester United have made an offer of about 70 million Euros (£62.5m) for the Bayern Munich midfielder Franck Ribery as they close in on a deal that would shatter the world transfer record.

Sources in Munich confirmed the bid has been received for the France international, who has made his desire to leave Germany known in the past few weeks. United scouts have repeatedly watched the 26-year-old in recent Bundesliga matches and sounded out his friends and entourage in Munich.

United's remarkable offer, which comfortably eclipses the record 44 million pounds paid by Real Madrid for Zinedine Zidane in 2001, is contingent on the sale of Cristiano Ronaldo to Madrid this summer but the approach to Bayern has been firm enough to suggest that the Portuguese's departure is a near certainty. Although Bayern are understood to have turned down United's offer, it is considered the first serious move in a negotiation that will eventually bring the winger to Old Trafford.

Ribery, who earns 8 million Euros a year at the Allianz Arena, the equivalent of 134,000 pounds a week, is set to replace Ronaldo as United's highest-paid player. Due to the unfavourable exchange rate and taxation levels in Britain, the Champions League holders will have to spend closer to 145,000 pounds a week to match his net wages at Bayern. Money, however, is not the determining factor for Ribery. The former Marseille player, who moved to Munich in 2007 for 25 million Euros plus add-ons and is contracted to Bayern until 2011, has repeatedly turned down offers to renegotiate a contract extension on improved terms.

Bayern's general manager, Uli Hoeness, who has ruled out a sale of Ribery throughout the season, softened his stance over the weekend. He confirmed Bayern were already eyeing up Werder Bremen's Brazilian midfielder Diego, 24, as a possible replacement "in case Ribery were to go".

Barcelona recently came close to an agreement with Ribery but negotiations halted when news of their interest was leaked to the French press by sources close to the player last week. Although Barcelona have not officially pulled out, United are now best placed to entice Ribery abroad. Relations between Bayern and United are cordial despite displeasure at Sir Alex Ferguson's aggressive pursuit of Owen Hargreaves in the summer of 2006. The English international moved to Old Trafford for 17 million pounds in July 2007.

In an interview with the French sports paper L'Equipe last week Ribery indicated that he would leave Bayern if his team did

not qualify for next season's Champions League: "In those circumstances it would indeed be very difficult to stay, that's obvious... That's why the club has to finish at least second." Bayern are currently second in the league, three points off the leaders VfL Wolfsburg. Only Germany's top two teams are guaranteed places in the Champions League.



FRANCK RIBERY

## Juve to fire Ranieri

Football

AFP, Rome

Reports in Tuesday's Gazzetta dello Sport claim that Claudio Ranieri's tenure at Juventus is close to an end.

Juve have not won in five matches and look set to miss out on second place in Serie A having fallen four points behind AC Milan in the quest for that position.

Ranieri's job has long come under speculation but Gazzetta now claim that he will definitely be fired at the end of the season and maybe even sooner if Juve lose to Milan at

the weekend.

Juve themselves have constantly repeated that Ranieri's job is safe, while the former Chelsea and Valencia boss is contracted until the end of next season.

But Italian football presidents are notoriously fickle and with a run such as Juve's, and with a tough trip to Milan up next, a defeat would probably suffice to see a changing of the guard.

Gazzetta speculated on a number of possible replacements with AS Roma's Luciano Spalletti and Gianpiero Gasperini of Genoa the favourites for the job.

## FA to examine crowd trouble

AFP, London

The Football Association (FA) are to examine incidents of crowd trouble during and after Saturday's Premier League match between Stoke City and West Ham at the Britannia Stadium on Saturday.

Police officers had to break-up clashes between rival fans and there were some scuffles inside the stadium. There were also incidents outside the ground after a match visitors West Ham won 1-0.

An FA spokesman said: "We will investigate the incidents."