

Rooney out for four weeks

THE GUARDIAN

Wayne Rooney will be out for two to four weeks after the sprained ankle he sustained during Manchester United's 2-1 defeat to Bayern Munich in their Champions League quarterfinal tie yesterday, Sky Sports News have reported.

The striker had to be carried off the pitch moments before full-time after an accidental collision with the Bayern striker Mario Gomez. He left the Allianz Arena on crutches with his injured right foot in a protective boot prior to having a hospital scan back in Manchester.

There were fears that Rooney may have suffered a fracture of his ligaments, an injury that could have sidelined him for months and possibly put his participation in this summer's World Cup in jeopardy.

However, it appears that the injury may not be too serious, although he will almost certainly miss United's crucial match with Chelsea at Old Trafford on Saturday and the return with Bayern, at the same ground, next Wednesday.

Edwin van der Sar, whose man-of-the-match display ensured United do still have hope of reaching the semifinals after a poor performance, insists they can cope without Rooney. "Against Bolton we also played with some other players," he said. "It can happen in the season. You always want your best players available but we know the players coming in can also do a good job."



Manchester United star Wayne Rooney (C) is helped off the pitch after being injured during their Champions League quarterfinal against Bayern Munich at the Allianz Arena on Tuesday.

Jose unhappy with Italian football

AFP, London

Jose Mourinho sparked speculation about his future on Tuesday on the eve of his side Inter Milan's Champions League quarterfinal clash with CSKA Moscow by declaring he was unhappy with Italian football.

The charismatic but unpredictable Portuguese coach, who previously managed English Premier League giants Chelsea and guided Porto to the 2004 Champions League trophy, told Sky Sports that he did not like Italian football.

"It is a simple situation, I am very happy" said the 47-year-old, who is in his second season with Inter.

"I am happy at Inter, but unhappy with Italian football. I always speak with my heart but if I spoke with my heart now about Serie A I would be suspended."

Mourinho, who has not enamoured himself with the Italian football authorities earning himself four touchline bans, made it clear why he was unhappy.

"Because I do not like it (Italian football) and because they don't like me."

Mourinho - who earlier on Tuesday had held his first press conference with the Italian media for six weeks - has made it no secret he would love a return to English football which he left when sacked by Chelsea in 2007 after a successful three year spell there.

Jens confirms retirement

AFP, Berlin

Stuttgart goalkeeper Jens Lehmann confirmed on Tuesday that he will retire at the end of the season.

The ex-Arsenal and Germany shot-stopper said his final game would be against Hoffenheim on May 8, adding that he was retiring for family reasons.

"I'm still fit and I will miss football," said the 40-year-old father-of-three. "The two seasons at Stuttgart have been great and I hope that we'll finish the season with a European qualifying spot."

Lehmann has been with Stuttgart since 2008 after having played for Schalke 04 (1988-98), AC Milan (1998), Dortmund (1998-2003) and Arsenal (2003-08), playing a total of 388 matches in the Bundesliga and 147 in the Premier League.

He also made 61 international appearances, playing in the 2006 World Cup and Euro 2008, when Germany finished third and runners-up respectively.

Lehmann will be in South Africa for this year's World Cup as a commentator for a pay television channel.

Lyon take control

AFP, Lyon



Lyon took control of their all-French Champion's League quarterfinal

with Bordeaux after securing a 3-1 win in an entertaining first leg here on Tuesday.

The visitors turned in an improved second-half showing after going in 2-1 down at the break but a Lisandro Lopez penalty in the 77th minute gave Claude Puel's side a two-goal cushion ahead of the return leg on April 7.

Lisandro had put Lyon ahead in the 10th minute but Bordeaux, who lost 3-1 to Marseille in the League Cup final on Saturday, levelled shortly afterwards via a trademark header from Marouane Chamakh.

Michel Bastos restored Lyon's lead and Lisandro's spotkick means Laurent Blanc's French champions must win by two clear goals at the Stade Chaban-Delmas next week if they are to turn the tie around.

"It's a good result obviously, but they have an away goal," warned Brazilian international Bastos.

"We have done what we had to do tonight, but we are only halfway there and we have to finish off our task next week."

Chamakh, who is a reported target for English Premier League side Arsenal, was left to reflect on a deeply disappointing four days.

"They were not the best two matches of our season, which has promised so much," he said. "However, unlike the League Cup final, we have another chance to get back at Lyon and we have the away goal. An early goal next week and who knows?"

Lyon took the lead in innocuous circumstances, when a high ball forward was poorly cleared by Bordeaux centre-back Michael Ciani, allowing Mathieu Bodmer to fire across goal for Lisandro to tap home.

Borussia's response was immediate and they drew level barely four minutes later, after Yoann Gourcuff cut inside his man on the right and bent in a fine left-footed cross that Chamakh converted with Cris floundering.

Cesar Delgado fired straight at Cedric Carrasso in

Lyon	3-1	Bordeaux
Lopez 10		Chamakh 14
Bastos 32		
Lopez (p) 77		

TEAMS

LYON: Hugo Lloris, Cris, Mathieu Bodmer, Anthony Reveillere, Aly Cissokho, Michel Bastos (Sidney Govou, 66), Miralem Pjanic (Kim Kallstrom, 66), Jean Makoum, Cesar Delgado (Gonalons, 86), Jeremy Toulalan, Lisandro Lopez

BORDEAUX: Cedric Carrasso, Michael Ciani, Mathieu Chalme (Henrique, 82), Ludovic Sane, Benoit Tremoulinas, Fernando Menegazzo, Yoan Gouffran (David Bellion, 84), Yoann Gourcuff, Wendel (Jussie, 72), Jaroslav Plasil, Marouane Chamakh

the Bordeaux goal after haring onto a long pass from Bastos, and when the visitors broke, Yoan Gouffran drew a sharp save from Hugo Lloris with a smart backheel flick.

Chamakh then headed narrowly wide after Lloris failed to claim a cross from

the left but Bordeaux's usually rock-solid defence looked atypically nervous in the absence of suspended holding midfielder Alou Diarra and injured centre-back Marc Planus, and Lyon readily looked to exploit their hesitancy.

The home side re-took the lead in the 32nd minute.

An enterprising run from Miralem Pjanic took the Bosnian into space on the left and when his cross was misjudged by Bordeaux left-back Benoit Tremoulinas, Bastos cut inside before drilling the ball across Carrasso and in.

A frenetic first half gave way to a more cautious second period and as Lyon's level dropped, so Bordeaux began to assert themselves.

Lloris reacted magnificently to palm the ball away after Chamakh threw himself at a right-wing cross just beyond the hour-mark.

The visitors came inches away from a tie-turning equaliser with 20 minutes remaining when Wendel cracked a volley against the Lyon crossbar.

There were 76 minutes on the clock when Mathieu Chalme was penalised for blocking Aly Cissokho's shot with a fumbling hand inside the Bordeaux area.

Referee Felix Brych pointed to the spot and Lisandro outwitted Carrasso to take Lyon to within 45 minutes of their first ever Champions League semifinal.

Substitute Yoann Gouffran could have added further gloss to the result, but his volley flashed inches wide of the right-hand upright, while Makoum had a late header cleared off the line by Tremoulinas.

Lyon's joy was tempered by bookings for Lisandro and Govou that rule them out of the second leg.

Benfica test for Liverpool

AFP, Paris



Rafael Benitez's tenure at Liverpool has lost a lot of its sheen in the past couple of seasons but the Spaniard could do his chances of remaining in the post a power of good by landing the Europa League this season.

The three-time winners of the old UEFA Cup - the last time in 2001 - would have preferred to have still been in the Champions League but Benitez will take anything out of another season that promised much but has delivered little.

Benitez takes his side into a challenging quarterfinal as a first leg clash with Portuguese side Benfica this week.

He has four memories of the last time the two sides crossed swords in European competition as Benfica brought a premature end to the defence of their Champions League title in 2006.

However, Benitez, who turns 50 on April 16, comes into the match on the back of a 3-0 victory over Sunderland which keeps them in the hunt

for the coveted fourth spot and a place in the Champions League next term.

The Spaniard, though, is focused on getting a good result from Portugal and finishing off the job in Liverpool with the tantalising possibility he could face former club Valencia in the semifinals should they win the all-Spanish clash with Atletico Madrid, the former club of Liverpool's star striker Fernando Torres.

Benitez, who guided Valencia to the 2004 UEFA Cup trophy, is not taking Benfica for granted.

"We know they are a good team and, of course, we have played them before in the Champions League," he said.

"They are a massive club with a lot of support from their fans and it will be a tough game."

"They are top of the table and playing really well at the moment. I know a number of their players well - Pablo Aimar (who played under him at Valencia), Javier Saviola, Javi Garcia - so we know they have a lot of quality."

Benfica, unlike Liverpool, have had a successful domestic campaign and are six points clear of their championship with just six matches remaining and with

players such as Argentinian duo Aimar and Saviola they possess a team that, if on song, can test the best in Europe.

Rui Costa, Benfica's sporting director and a member of Portugal's golden generation as a player, acknowledged that their league form counts for nothing in such a tie though he has taken heart over their easy victories over Liverpool's city rivals Everton in the group stage.

"We were always going to be drawn against a difficult team," said the 38-year-old Champions League winning midfielder, who won 94 caps alongside such fellow golden era team-mates as Luis Figo and Paulo Sousa.

There are neither easy nor impossible opponents at this stage. We got Liverpool and I hope it will be a great match."

Liverpool's English rivals Fulham pulled off the result of the previous round with

FIXTURES

Thursday	Benfica (POR) v Liverpool (ENG)
	Fulham (ENG) v Wolfsburg (GER)
	Hamburg (GER) v Standard Liege (BEL)
	Valencia (ESP) v Atletico Madrid (ESP)

victory over Juventus and now face German champions VfL Wolfsburg who the 'Cottagers' manager Roy Hodgson respects enormously.

"German champions and Bundesliga sides can prove a handful historically," said the 62-year-old, who took Inter Milan to the 1997 UEFA Cup final.

"They are solid defensively and Wolfsburg are also pretty useful up front. So the Juventus match is for me a great result but it is in the past and we have to deal with a different challenge," he added.

Atletico and Valencia's clash should be a cracker with the latter side desperate to avenge a 4-1 humbling in the league earlier in the season.

Atletico - who have recovered somewhat from a poor start to their league campaign but still trail third-placed Valencia by 16 points - will be without two key players in former Arsenal winger Jose Antonio Reyes and Juan Valera, who both suffered injuries in last Sunday's 3-2 derby defeat by Real Madrid.

The other quarterfinal pitches unfashionable Belgian side Standard Liege against Hamburg.

IN BRIEF

More misery for Pompey

AFP, Portsmouth

Portsmouth's miserable season took another turn for the worse on Tuesday when key players Hermann Hreidarsson and Danny Webber were both ruled out of action for at least six months.

Central defender Hreidarsson has suffered a ruptured Achilles while Webber, a forward, has ruptured one of his anterior cruciate ligaments in his knee.

Both players suffered their injuries in Saturday's 2-0 defeat at Tottenham, the club Pompey will meet again in the FA Cup semifinals at Wembley on April 11.

Prandelli pledges Fiorentina stay

AFP, Rome

Cesare Prandelli has dismissed speculation over a move to Juventus next season by pledging his allegiance to Fiorentina on Tuesday in a statement on the club's website.

Prandelli's announcement followed on from the resignation of honorary club president Diego Della Valle earlier in the day.

The pair had been at odds since last week when Della Valle criticised Prandelli for not openly claiming he would be staying in Florence.

"Cesare Prandelli has indicated his intentions to stay in Florence and respect his contract with the 'Viola'," said the club statement.

Prandelli joined Fiorentina in 2005 and has a contract until the end of next season.

Fergie slams United

AFP, Munich



Sir Alex Ferguson slammed his team on Tuesday after seeing Manchester United lose 2-1 to Bayern Munich in the Champions League quarterfinal first leg and striker Wayne Rooney injured.

"We didn't play well enough, to be honest. We kept giving the ball away," said Ferguson after his side conceded an injury-time Ivica Olic goal that evoked memories of the famous 1999 Champions League final between the two.

However, the Scot remained upbeat for the second leg at home next Wednesday, saying: "Well, Old Trafford will be a different game obviously... we'll play better and we won't be giving the ball away the way we did tonight."

"We've got the away goal and that's an advantage."

To add injury to insult for the three-time European champions, talismanic striker Rooney limped off the field after giving the visitors the advantage with a left-foot volley with only 66 seconds on the clock.

Summing up the game, Ferguson said it was "a disappointing performance possession-

wise" but handed credit to United's German opponents who, he said, were the better side.

Goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar, left stranded by a Franck Ribery free kick mid way through the second half - which took a deflection off Rooney - and beaten from close range by Olic in the second minute of injury time, paid tribute to Bayern's "never-say-die" spirit.

"German teams are never beaten until they are on their way to the airport. It's hard to take," he said.

Bayern will hope to welcome back their own talisman, Dutch winger Arjen Robben, who sat out the clash with United after picking up a calf injury in Saturday's defeat against Stuttgart.

Belgian defender Daniel van Buyten also stressed the Bayern team's will to win after a run of poor results that has seen them slip off the top of the Bundesliga.

"Of course, we started the game very badly, but we never gave up hope. We played a full 90 minutes knowing that we could win."

German international striker Mario Gomez, who came on as a second-half substitute, said the 66,000 fans inside the Allianz Arena had pulled the team through.

"The crowd carried us. I have only very rarely experienced an atmosphere like that in a match," he said.

Trap turned down Juve

Football

SOCCERNET

Republic of Ireland coach Giovanni Trapattoni has revealed that he turned down the Juventus job in favour of the challenge of steering the Irish towards Euro 2012 qualification.

Trapattoni was heavily linked with a move back to Turin in 2008 but was sacked earlier this season, but the post went to Alberto Zaccheroni on a temporary basis.

Veteran Trapattoni would have likely been a popular appointment, having managed Juventus for ten years between 1976 and 1986 - guiding the Bianconeri to six league titles and the 1985 European Cup.

But the 71-year-old chose instead to con-

tinue his excellent work with Ireland, having guided them to the brink of World Cup qualification before painfully losing out to France and Thierry Henry's controversial handball.

"It was impossible to divide my time between Ireland and a club," Trapattoni said.

"With a heavy heart I had to turn it down, as it was impossible to divide my time between Ireland and a club. It would not have been professional of me," he revealed on Italian television show Chiambretti Night.

But Trapattoni was happy to offer advice on how he would have handled the implosion at Juventus this season.

"How would I have approached the current crisis? First of all try not to lose, then the results can come," he said. "If the media creates too much tension during the week, then at the end of it the team feels excessive responsibility to win and it weighs them down."



Liverpool players do warm up exercise during a training session at their Melwood training ground on Wednesday ahead of their Europa League tie against Benfica.