

PHOTO: AFP

Robben in

Dutch international star Arjen

Robben is in the Bayern

Munich squad for his club's

Champions League

quarterfinal return against

Manchester United, the

behind to record a 2-1 win in

the first leg, had to do without

the Dutchman for Saturday's

success by the same score at

Bundesliga title rivals Schalke

as he races to overcome a calf

on whether he starts at Old

Trafford will be taken on the

Wolfsburg

Euro hopes

German champions Wolfsburg

rekindled their hopes of

European football next season

with a 4-0 home win against

scored a double which put him

joint top of the Bundesliga

scorers list as his team sit ninth

in the table, 16 points behind

leaders Bayern Munich with

minutes, before Italian World

Cup winner Andrea Barzagli

claimed the hosts' second six

minutes into the second half

with Bosnian midfielder

Zvjezdan Misimovic netting

doubt with his second a minute

later as his 18th Bundesliga

goal of the season put him joint

top with Schalke's Kevin

Kuranyi and Bayer

Wolfsburg, who have won

Leverkusen's Stefan Kiessling.

six of their past seven

Bundesliga ties, could still

qualify for the Europa League,

as they trail just five points off

In Sunday's late game,

Hamburg could only muster a

goalless draw at home against

second-from-bottom

Hanover, as they remain sixth

in the table with just 14 points

since the return from the win-

ter break.

the fifth spot in the league.

Dzeko put the game beyond

Dzeko opened after 25

Bosnian striker Edin Dzeko

Hoffenheim on Sunday.

five games remaining.

the third on 74.

rekindle

AFP, Berlin

His club said a final decision

Bayern, who came from

Bavarian giants said Sunday.

Bayern

squad

AFP, Munich

injury.

day of the match.

Birmingham City defender Liam Ridgewell (R) celebrates his equalising goal against Liverpool during their Premier League encounter at St Andrew's on Sunday.

IN BRIEF

Arsenal lose Song

AFP, London

Arsenal suffered another injury blow on the eve of their Champions League quarterfinal second leg match with holders Barcelona on Monday as Cameroon midfielder Alex Song was ruled out, according to the BBC.

The 22-year-old will be unable to take his place in the starting line-up as he has a groin injury, joining captain Cesc Fabregas, Russian playmaker Andrey Arshavin and veteran French defender William Gallas on the injured absentee list.

Guerrero in hot water

AFP, Hamburg

SV Hamburg's Peruvian striker Paolo Guerrero i facing club sanctions after launching a bottle at the head of an angry supporter following a scoreless draw with Hanover on Sunday.

According to television pictures Guerrero -- who recently returned from a seven-month injury absence -- was leaving the pitch when the fan targeted the player with insults, telling him to go back to his country.

Guerrero reacted by throwing a bottle at the supporter, striking him on the head. He was then ushered into the dressing room by one of his teammates.

It was not clear whether the bottle was plastic, or made of glass.

Hamburg president Bernd Hoffmann said

Guerrero was now facing certain sanctions. "No matter what the supporter said, this is some-

thing that simply should not happen. It's unacceptable, and we will make sure his is punished," said Hoffmann. The German league's disciplinary federation could

also become involved in the affair. After a promising start

this season Hamburg are currently sixth in the Bundesliga, 16 points behind leaders Bayern Munich.

AFP, Paris

Real back on top

AFP, Madrid



Real Madrid's deadly strikeforce of Cristiano Ronaldo and Gonzalo

Higuain engineered a 2-0 win at Racing Santander on Sunday to put their side back on top of La Liga and push Barcelona into second place.

Ronaldo won and converted a penalty for his 18th league goal in just 21 games before Argentine Higuain netted for the fifth consecutive game to make it 24 goals for the season.

The duo have scored 42 out of Real's 83 goals this campaign and Madrid have now notched 12 consecutive league wins to move above Barcelona on goal difference. Champions Barcelona also

have 77 points after their 4-1 win over Athletic Bilbao on Saturday to set up the mouthwatering 'El Clasico' clash in Madrid next Saturday between the two great rivals.

"I don't think there is a favourite for the match as both teams are on form and winning a lot of games," said Real coach Manuel Pellegrini.

"In these matches the team that makes the fewest mistakes wins. We need to recover the points we lost at Camp Nou (where they lost 1-0) and I am

German defender Christoph Metzelder made just his second Real appearance of the season with Sergio Ramos suspended and Pepe out for the

sure we can win."

Racing fielded 19-year-old starlet Sergio Canales who has already reached a deal to join Real in the summer for a reported 4.5 million euros.

The first opening fell to Canales on the quarter hour mark. Iker Casillas's clearance went straight to the teenager but with an open goal he lobbed his shot wide.

Real were looking dangerous and Ronaldo won a penalty on 23 minutes with several step-overs confusing defender Jose Moraton who clipped the Portuguese star and the winger went down easily to win the spot-kick.

Ronaldo converted the penalty with a fierce drive to the left for his 18th goal of the season.

Racing had failed to score in their last four outings against Madrid and have the worst

home record in the league so the omens didn't look good for

the hosts. After the break Racing improved but struggled to create clear-cut chances while Real went off the boil and Guti was introduced on the hour mark.

It was a poor second half from Real but Alvaro Arbeloa produced a sublime pass to Higuain on 76 minutes and the

With fifth-placed Real Mallorca falling eight points behind after a 1-1 draw at Almeria, Valencia, in third, now look odds-on to net one of the

four Champions League spots. Atletico beat Deportivo La Coruna 3-0 at home on Sunday to move five points off the top six.

Defender Juanito's first goal of the season put Atletico in front before Diego Forlan

RESULTS

Valladolid 0 Villarreal 2 (Angel 9, Nilmar 59) Sporting Gijon 2 (Rivera 13, de las Cuevas 56) Xerez 2

(Bermejo 52, Alustiza 79)

Getafe 1 (Manu 26) Espanyol 1 (Osvaldo 50) Almeria 1 (Uche 4) Real Mallorca 1 (Webo 87)

Valencia 3 (Joaquin 47, Villa 89, 90-pen) Osasuna 0 Racing Santander 0 Real Madrid 2 (Ronaldo 23-pen, Higuain 76)

Atletico Madrid 3 (Juanito 22, Forlan 56, Tiago 60) Deportivo La Coruna 0



PHOTO: AFP

Real Madrid striker Gonzalo Higuain (R) is ecstatic after scoring the second goal against Racing Santander during their Primera Liga clash at the El Sardinero Stadium on Sunday.

Argentine raced through to scored his 16th of the camcoolly slot home.

Elsewhere, Spanish international striker David Villa took his season's league tally to 20 with a late brace as Valencia defeated Osasuna 3-0 to reinforce their bid for a Champions League place.

Joaquin netted the opener before Villa scored two late goals scoring on 89 minutes and then converted a penalty three minutes into stoppage

paign and Tiago added a third.

Real Mallorca's away form continues to undermine their Champions League hopes as the islanders drew 1-1 at Almeria as they missed the chance to go back above Sevilla into fourth.

In other matches, Villarreal moved two points behind sixth-placed Athletic Bilbao with a 2-0 win at Valladolid.

L'pool lose ground There was more than a hint

AFP, Birmingham



Liverpool's challenge for a Champions League place suffered another

setback as Liam Ridgewell's goal gave Birmingham a 1-1 draw at St Andrews on Sunday.

Rafael Benitez's side took the lead early in the second half through Steven Gerrard's seventh Premier League goal of a worryingly unproductive

But Ridgewell equalised soon after to leave Liverpool without an away win in seven league outings, their worst run away from Anfield in four seasons.

The Reds remain four points adrift of fourth-placed Manchester City, having played a game more than Roberto Mancini's side.

Benitez also opted to substitute Fernando Torres 25 minutes before full-time in an attempt to save the legs of the Spanish international ahead of Thursday's Europa League quarterfinal second leg against Benfica. For all Benitez's promises of

a fourth place finish and Torres's assertion they needed to win their remaining six games, the lack of urgency in Liverpool's first half performance was alarming.

Benitez's decision to play two holding midfielders was far too cautious and they will surely have to be more adven-

turous to achieve the bare minimum of Champions League qualification.

Birmingham had already deprived Manchester United, Chelsea, Tottenham, Arsenal and Manchester City of points at St Andrews, so it was hardly surprising to see Liverpool struggle to break down the home side's defence.

Yet Maxi Rodriguez will take some time to work out how he did not register his first Liverpool goal at the end of an incisive move begun by Pepe Reina's throw out to Dirk Kuyt.

fortunate about the way Gerrard wrong-footed Lee Bowyer and produced devastating power in his right boot to defeat Hart from an acute

of good fortune in the way Glen Johnson's attempted shot from

the edge of the area found its

way to Gerrard after the

England international's corner

had been headed clear by

There was nothing remotely

Stephen Carr.

angle.

But Gerrard's hard work was undone by dreadful defending

RESULTS

Birmingham 1 (Ridgewell 56) Liverpool 1 (Gerrard

Everton 2 (Bilyaletdinov 24, Yakubu 85) West Ham 2 (Da Costa 60, Ilan 87)

Fulham 2 (Okaka 47, Hangeland 58) Wigan 1 (Scotland 34)

Yossi Benayoun and Torres combined to set up the Ridgewell as he bundled in Argentinian's volley from six James McFadden's cross at the yards, but somehow Joe Hart managed to push the shot up onto the bar and away to safety.

That was as exciting as it got in the first 45 minutes, but the game burst into life with two goals in nine second half min-Gerrard is the first to admit

his form has been far from the high levels he sets himself this season and the fact that his 47th minute intervention was only his second league goal in 2010 underlines his concerns.

with no one within five yards of far post in the 56th minute.

Bowyer could have won it for Birmingham, but contrived to miss from six yards when unmarked at the far post and David Ngog, Torres's replacement, could easily have finished with two goals of his own.

Rodriguez's pass set up Ngog, who shot wide from 15 yards and in stoppage time the Frenchman missed from closer range after Gerrard's long diagonal pass.

Pitch concerns Inter

AFP, Moscow



Jose Mourinho believes that CSKA Moscow's plastic pitch poses as much danger to Inter Milan's Champions League as concerns over the tense security situation in the Moscow capital.

Inter, who last won Europe's most prestigious club prize back in 1965, take a slender 1-0 lead to the Luzhniki Stadium on Tuesday for their quarterfinal second leg clash with the artificial, all-weather surface taxing his planning.

"It will be the first time we have played on a plastic pitch," said Mourinho.

"We don't have any time to train on a synthetic surface. It is a big disadvantage, but when players were kids they played on the street, so why can't they play on a plastic pitch?"

Inter's Argentine midfielder Esteban Cambiasso believes the key will not be distracted by the playing surface.

"We have to consider the pitch as a normal difficulty, as can be both the heat or the cold," he said.

"We will focus on our opponents and on what

we ourselves can do.' Inter warmed up for Tuesday's tie with a 3-0 win over Bologna on Saturday which kept them top of Serie A with Mario Balotelli, back in favour

after a fall-out with Mourinho, on target.

Brazilian midfielder Thiago Motta, who missed the quarterfinal first leg at the San Siro

Motta should return Tuesday as could compatriot Lucio who also sat out the first game. CSKA, bidding to become the first Russian

through suspension, scored the other two.

team to make the Champions League semifinals, didn't play the weekend after their scheduled league match with Zenit St Petersburg was postponed because of the Russian Orthodox Easter celebrations. The interior ministry called the match off

saying there were not enough police officers to provide security at the match, which was scheduled for Luzhniki stadium on Saturday. "Easter is an event which cannot be cancelled

or postponed," interior ministry spokesman Oleg Elnikov said. He added that Moscow's police were on red

alert after suicide bombers carried out attacks in the Moscow metro last week, killing 40. CSKA manager Leonid Slutsky said his side

can still stun Inter and make the last four. "In the match at San Siro we failed to create anything serious in attack," Slutsky said. "We lost

the ball on too many occasions allowing Inter to put extra pressure on our defence. "The score of the first leg leaves us chances for an aggregate win and a place in the semis. I

believe we can play more interesting football in Moscow." However, CSKA will be without two first-

choice midfielders -- Serbian star Milos Krasic and Russian international Yevgeny Aldonin who both received yellow cards in Milan.

Sven didn't hesitate

AFP, Stockholm



Sven-Goran Eriksson did not hesitate before agreeing to coach Ivory Coast at the World Cup finals, the former England boss said on Sunday.

Eriksson said he was watching one of the team's matches in London when he was first contacted by Ivory Coast football officials.

"The president of the Ivory Coast football federation was there and asked me if I had a job. I said no," Eriksson told Swedish public television SVT.

"Some days later he rang and said: 'Coach us during the World Cup then?' I said yes. I didn't need any time to consider it." Eriksson, 62, guided England to the quarter-

finals of the 2002 and 2006 World Cups.

Coast team's stars in London and would scout the country's domestic players in an April 11 exhibition match.

He told SVT he had met many of the Ivory

Eriksson added he would count on fellow Swedes Tord Grip, a long-time assistant, and Benny Lennartsson as assistant coaches. "Benny will be a coach and translator. He

speaks French, which is really important," he said. Eriksson's last job was as director of football of English League Two side Notts County, but he quit in January when the ownership of the club

Before that he spent a turbulent 10 months in charge of Mexico.

changed hands.

Ivory Coast, who boast Chelsea striker Didier Drogba amongst their stars, are in Group G at the June 11-July 11 World Cup finals in South Africa along with Brazil, Portugal and North Korea.

Marseille move up

Marseille overcame being reduced to 10 men to defeat Lens 1-0 on Sunday to hammer home their French league title credentials,

snapped a 17-year silverware drought. Marseille, who lifted the League Cup points behind. It will be a race right until last weekend, moved into fifth spot, just a point behind leaders Lyon and, like fourth-

just a week after they

having two games in hand. Lyon have 57 points and lead the way on goal difference ahead of Montpellier and Auxerre who both missed opportunities to take pole position after 0-0 and 1-1 draws against Monaco and Paris St Germain

placed Bordeaux, boosted by the luxury of

respectively. Brazilian striker Brandao grabbed the only goal in the 22nd minute for Marseille when he leapt above Lens defender Romain Sartre to head in a perfect cross from Lucho for his eighth league goal of the

campaign.

Marseille coach Didier Deschamps admitted the match had not been pretty as they played the last 15 minutes a man down when Stephane Mbia was redcarded for a push on Issam Jemaa.

"It wasn't our best match, but the job

was done," said the former World Cup winner. "The most important was the result, above all at this point in time. "It wasn't long ago that we were 11

On Saturday, Lyon returned to the top after coming back from a goal down to defeat Rennes 2-1 and depose Champions League quarter-final opponents Bordeaux

who lost 2-1 at home to Nancy. Lyon coach Claude Puel gambled by resting a number of key players ahead of Wednesday's all-French Champions League second leg clash, where they will be defending a 3-1 lead.

With Cris and Jeremy Toulalan on the bench, Lyon slipped a goal down after just 14 minutes when Ghanaian international Asamoah Gyan found the net following Jimmy

Briand's shot coming back off the post. Brazilian midfielder Michel Bastos levelled for Lyon in the 52nd minute before Argentine centre-forward Lisandro headed in a 61st-minute winner from

Ederson's cross. It was Lisandro's 13th league goal of the

not with this schedule. For us, the most

"It's not important to be first in the table,

important thing was to win," said Puel. "It's important to continue to have ambition in this championship. It was a match between two Champions League games, so I say 'bravo' to the players who showed their desire and quality."

Bordeaux coach Laurent Blanc, with one eye on the midweek Champions League clash, started with star striker Maroune Chamakh on the bench and the decision quickly backfired when Youssouf Hadji gave Nancy a 17th-minute lead.

Argentine striker Fernando Cavenaghi levelled 10 minutes later, but Issiar Dia made sure of the three points 20 minutes from time with a fine piece of individual



Arsenal players Niklas Bendtner (L), Mikael Silvestre (C) and Samir Nasri warm up during a training session in London Colney on Monday on the eve of their Champions League quarterfinal second leg against Barcelona.