

# Lyon make history

AFP, Bordeaux



Lyon reached the Champions League semifinals for the first time in their history despite losing 1-0 to Bordeaux in a tense quarterfinal second leg here on Wednesday.

Trailing 3-1 from the first leg, Bordeaux needed to win by two goals to turn the tie around and Moroccan striker Marouane Chamakh sent the Stade Chaban-Delmas into raptures by putting his side ahead shortly before half-time.

Laurent Blanc's reigning French champions raided forward throughout the second half, with Ludovic Sane heading wide from a Yoann Gourcuff corner and Hugo Lloris producing a brilliant save to deny Wendel late on.

The game's closing stages unfolded amid intense urgency but Lyon held strong to book their place in the semifinals after quarterfinal exits in 2004, 2005 and 2006 and consign Bordeaux to an agonising defeat.

"We were under a fair bit of pressure in the first half but in the second half Bordeaux's rhythm dipped slightly," said Lyon coach Claude Puel, whose side will play Bayern Munich for a place in the final.

"Our keeper kept us in it on a few occasions." Blanc said his side's defeat owed to the inexperience shown in the first leg.

"We weren't quite up to it in the end and we came up against a great team in Lyon," he said.

"Rather than having regrets, I would say we lacked a bit of experience, which cost us at least two goals in the first leg."

Bordeaux right-back Mathieu Chalme, whose handball provoked the penalty that gave Lyon their third goal in last week's first leg, lost his place in the starting XI to Sane, who moved across from centre-back to accommodate fit-

again Marc Planus.

Lyon started with Bafetimbi Gomis up front after two-goal first-leg hero Lisandro Lopez was ruled out by suspension and it was the away side who threatened first when Michel Bastos cracked a 35-yard free-kick narrowly wide.

Blanc had called on Bordeaux to enjoy the occasion and with skipper Alou Diarra back in central midfield there were fewer signs of the defensive brittleness that was their undoing in the first leg.

Gomis headed over from Cesar Delgado's left-wing corner but the first half was largely a story of the hosts growing into the game.

Wendel's set-piece deliveries were a constant source of irritation, with Gourcuff beating Lloris to one in-swinging free-kick but heading just over in the 18th minute.

Lyon were gradually forced to retreat and after Jaroslav Plasil fired over from long-range, Diarra drove a rising half-volley against Lloris's crossbar from 30 yards.

The away side were eager for half-time to come but their defence was breached a minute before the break when Chamakh touched the ball home after Benoit Tremoulinas's low cross had been flicked on at the near post by Jussie.

Gomis almost caught Bordeaux cold as the second half got under way, but having rounded Cedric Carrasso his tame attempt was cut out by Planus.

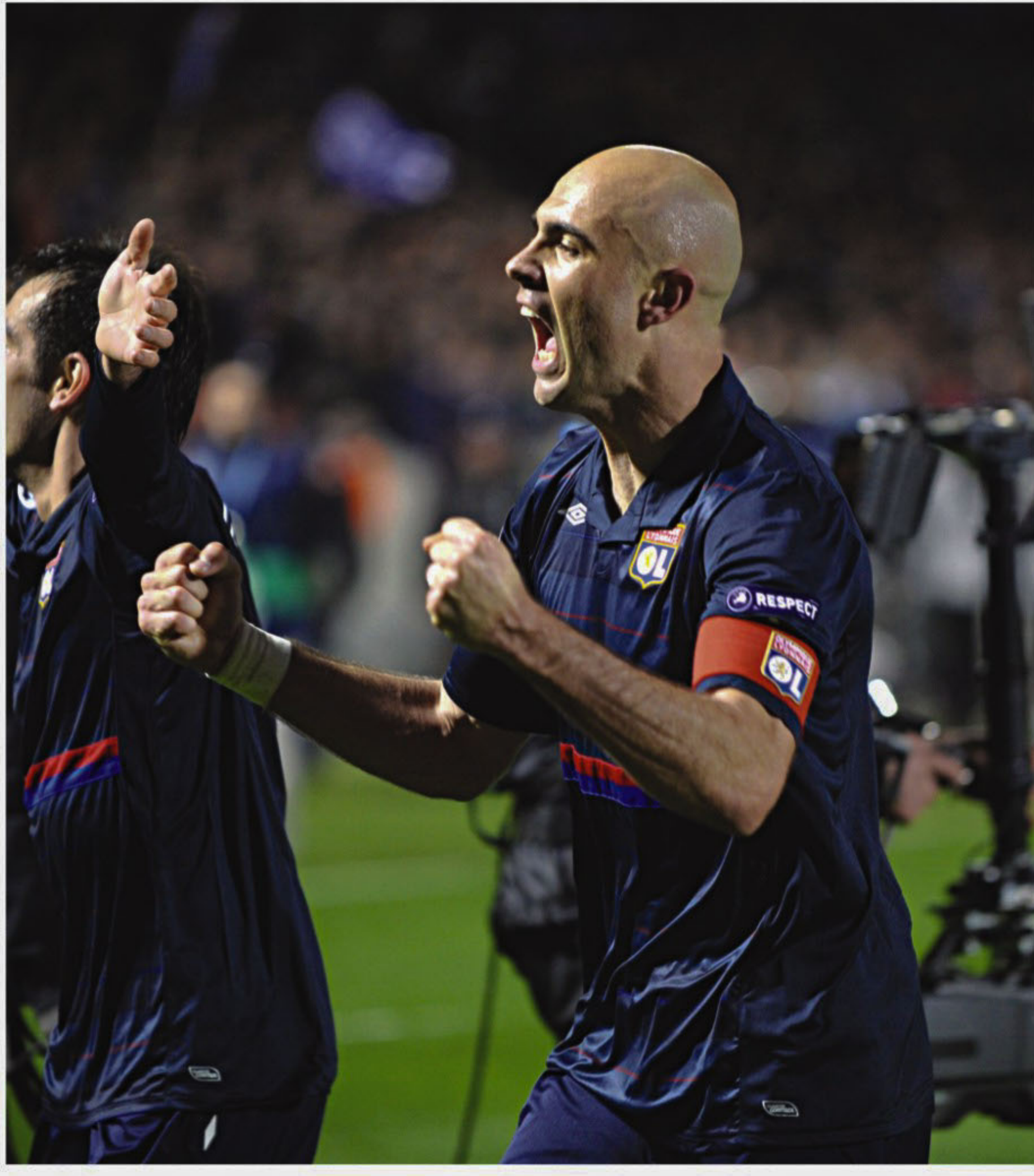
Bordeaux's final ball suffered from their desperation and Puel sought to compound their frustration by sending on Miralem Pjanic in place of Gomis to clog the midfield.

Sane headed wide from a Gourcuff corner with 10 minutes to play and Lloris, a thorn in Bordeaux's side throughout the first leg, then displayed tremendous reactions to palm away Wendel's firm header in the 87th minute.

**Bordeaux 1 0 Lyon**  
**Chamakh 45**  
**Lyon win 3-2 on aggregate**

**BORDEAUX:** Cedric Carrasso, Michael Ciani, Ludovic Sane, Marc Planus (Fernando Cavenaghi, 85), Benoit Tremoulinas, Alou Diarra (Mathieu Chalme, 70), Yoann Gourcuff, Jussie (Yoan Gouffran, 77), Geraldo Mauricio Wendel, Jaroslav Plasil, Marouane Chamakh

**LYON:** Hugo Lloris, Cris, Jean-Alain Boumsong (Mathieu Bodmer, 77), Anthony Reveillere, Aly Cissokho, Kim Kallstrom, Michel Bastos (Honorato Campos Ederson, 88), Cesar Fabian Delgado, Jeremy Toulalan, Maxime Gonalons, Bafetimbi Gomis (Miralem Pjanic, 66)



Lyon captain Cris celebrates his team's passage into the Champions League semifinals at the end of their quarterfinal against Bordeaux at the Chaban Delmas Stadium on Wednesday.

Photo: AFP

# Germans hail Robben

AFP, Berlin

The German press on Thursday hailed Bayern Munich and their Dutch star Arjen Robben the morning after the Bundesliga giants reached the Champions League semifinals.

Bayern lost the second leg 3-2 in Old Trafford but won the tie on away goals after a 4-4 aggregate draw, to give them their first semifinal spot in Europe's top competition since 2001.

And the sports pages of the national press were already looking forward to the team holding aloft the trophy for the fifth time.

"And now give us the trophy," headlined daily Bild on their sports page, who estimated that "beating Lyon in the semifinal is an achievable mission."

Bild continued: "What a fantastic evening in Manchester! Nevertheless after 41 minutes of play Germany's most titled club were trailing 3-0 and risked humiliation. But Bayern came back with a desire to win which gives hope of a final victory."

Die Welt evoked "Bayern Munich's most beautiful defeat."

The daily highlighted "Sir Alex's (Ferguson) grandiose bluff" when he included Wayne Rooney who had suffered a leg injury in the first leg in Germany and "Arjen Robben's incredible volley" which put Bayern through.

Bi-weekly Kicker hailed the Dutch winger, who also made his return from injury, under the headline: "Incredible Robben."

"It's been the slogan of Bayern's 2009-10 European campaign: there is never anything normal... Is that going to continue? Against Lyon, Inter or Barca?" asked Kicker.

## IN BRIEF

### A gift for purpose

AFP, Munich

Bayern Munich bosses have given their French international Franck Ribery a pen for his 27th birthday which they hope he will use to sign a new contract.

After Bayern reached the Champions League semifinals at the expense of Manchester United on Wednesday night club bosses used the traditional after match banquet to celebrate Ribery's birthday.

"It's a pen," chief executive Karl-Heinz Rummenigge told the player before he could even open his present.

Rummenigge added: "We hope he's going to use it to sign his new contract."

The midfielder's contract runs until June 2011 and Bayern are keen to extend this season or risk losing him on a free transfer in 18 months.

### Guerrero gets 5-match ban

AFP, Frankfurt

Hamburg striker Paolo Guerrero has been banned for five matches for throwing a bottle at a fan after his side's goalless draw with Hanover last weekend, the German football federation (DFB) said on Thursday.

The sanction means that the season is over for Guerrero, who had just returned from a serious knee injury, and he may not play in the Bundesliga again with his contract set to expire at the end of May.

### Barca book China date

AFP, Beijing

European champions Barcelona and their superstar forward Lionel Messi will play China's Super League winners Beijing Guoan at the Bird's Nest Olympic Stadium in August, state press said Thursday.

"Barcelona's Beijing match is basically set for August 8 in the Bird's Nest," the Beijing Youth Daily quoted promoter Xia Haifeng as saying.

"They will be bringing their top line-up. This is stipulated (in the contract)."

Xia said that 30 per cent of Barcelona's appearance fee had already been paid, although he did not specify the amount involved.

# 'Lionel kicking about with Jesus'

Football

THE GUARDIAN

Lionel Messi is "playing a kick-about with Jesus" but must not make the wrong choices, Diego Maradona said today.

Maradona, the Argentina coach, said that when the 22-year-old was on the right path to be the greatest footballer ever.

"He's at a select level, being the best in the world and a star at Barcelona. Lio is playing kick-about with Jesus," Maradona said the day after his compatriot Messi's brilliant four-goal performance in Barca's 4-1 win over Arsenal in the Champions League.

"There are moments when you are invaded by loneliness, but you have to be strong so you don't end up doing things one did," he said, apparently referring to his drug addiction during his playing days. "I spoke to him a lot about this," he told Radio Metro in Buenos Aires.

Maradona said that after Argentina's World Cup warm-up against Germany in Munich on 3 March, a 1-0 win, he spent two hours with Messi talking about many issues.

"I told him I'd done my thing, now he has to make his career and at the end we'll see who was the greatest of all time. But he's on the right path. I saw that he's mature and full of will," Maradona said.

"How could I not be happy for Messi to win the World Cup? The Maradona and Pele polemics will end and the best thing is that Messi is Argentinian."

Maradona was speaking publicly for the first time since he was bitten on the upper lip by his pet dog. He said the dog, which was under medication, was not to blame. He had picked her up while asleep and she had woken suddenly and lashed out.

# Marseille go top

AFP, Paris

French League Cup winners Marseille were the latest team to go top of the French league in what is turning into a thrilling title race, with a 3-0 victory over Sochaux on Wednesday.

The eight-time champions, whose last title in 1992 was under the present coach Didier Deschamps' captaincy, hold a two-point lead over seven-time champions Lyon, Montpellier and Auxerre, but Marseille have a game in hand on them.

Defending champions Bordeaux - who were beaten by Deschamps' side in the League Cup final to land their first silverware since 1993 - are three points adrift of Marseille with a game in hand.

Marseille had the three points wrapped up by half-time as Argentinian defender Gabriel Heinze and French international midfielder Hatem Ben-Arfa struck, the latter with a penalty.

International Ivory Coast striker Bakari Kone grabbed the third in time added-on in the second-half with a delightful lob to send Marseille top of the league for the first time this campaign.

# 'C'Ron as good as Messi'

AFP, Madrid



Real Madrid's Portuguese winger Cristiano Ronaldo is just as good as Barcelona's Lionel Messi and his teammates insisted Thursday.

"These are the two best players in the world and it's going to be a good match. Messi is a really good player, he destabilizes, but we have Ronaldo who is just as good," Real's Brazilian defender Marcelo told sports daily Marca.

The confrontation between the two players is highly anticipated after Messi scored all four goals during Barcelona's 4-1 win over Arsenal on Tuesday which took the Catalan side into the

Champions League semifinals.

The 22-year-old's first ever four goal haul won him superlatives from all sides, with Arsenal coach Arsene Wenger

Gonzalo Higuain, the club's top scorer this season in La Liga with 24 goals, told sports daily AS.

The two previous winners of the prestigious Ballon D'Or

again this year.

"The two can win matches in just one phase of the game. Ronaldo is at the same level, if not better, than Messi," Real Madrid midfielder Jose Maria Gutierrez 'Guti' said at a post-training press conference on Wednesday.

"He's Barca's most important player but if you ask (Barcelona coach Pep) Guardiola about Cristiano Ronaldo, I am sure he will tell you the same. We need to have a strategy that is anti-Barca not only anti-Messi," he added.

Messi is the top scorer in the Spanish league with 26 goals while 25-year-old Ronaldo is La Liga's fourth most prolific scorer with 18 goals.

Real are on top of the standings on goal difference from European and Spanish champions Barcelona with eight games remaining after beating Racing Santander 2-0 on Sunday, their 12th successive La Liga win.

# Fergie fumes at Bayern

AFP, Manchester



Sir Alex Ferguson launched a scathing attack on Bayern Munich's cynical stars after Rafael da Silva was sent-off as Manchester United crashed out of the Champions League on

Wednesday. Ferguson felt Bayern's players contributed to Rafael's dismissal for two yellow cards, which proved the decisive moment in a dramatic quarterfinal second leg at Old Trafford.

He also claimed Louis van Gaal's men targeted Wayne Rooney, who returned ahead of schedule from an ankle injury before coming off in the second half.

Brazilian right-back Rafael was booked in the first half for kicking out at Mark van Bommel after being fouled by the Bayern midfielder and then saw red for a foolish tug on Franck Ribery five minutes after the break.

Ferguson, whose side won the second leg 3-2 but lost the tie on away goals after a 4-4 aggregate draw, felt 38-year-old Italian referee Nicola Rizzoli had been influenced by Bayern.

"He's (Rafael) a young boy and showed inexperience, but they got him sent off. They all rushed towards the referee. Typical Germans. You can't dispute that," said Ferguson.

"There is no doubt about it. They were never getting through that tie, with 11 men we had no problem.

"The key issues were the goal before half-time and then the boy getting sent off, but it's still taken an exceptional goal to win the tie." Ferguson's side had raced into a three-goal lead thanks to Darron Gibson's strike and two fine finishes from Nani. But Ivica Olic reduced the deficit and,

after Rafael was sent off, Arjen Robben got the crucial goal in the 74th minute.

Ferguson insisted he had no complaints about his side's performance.

"I think we've done well, performed well. It was a great performance. We were very unlucky," he said.

"We played better than they did in their own ground. Without the extra man they made the ball work and I thought we defended very well."

Ferguson also insisted United striker Wayne Rooney would be fit for the rest of the season. Rooney started brightly but struggled to have an influence after being caught on the ankle by Bayern defender Daniel van Buyten.

"We will have a look at it," Ferguson said. "I don't think it is serious. It's just that tissue and the blood vessel has just burst. I am sure he'll be fine for the following week."

Bayern boss Louis van Gaal disputed Ferguson's version of Rafael's dismissal and said: "I thought England was a country of fair play and I don't think that is fair. I don't share Sir Alex's opinion."

"Part of being a player is control. Every player must know if you pick up one yellow card, a second one means a sending off."

"I certainly believe it was a yellow card offence and that is down to the player."

"We shall never know (if the red card changed the game). It is easy to say that after a loss. This game shall not be played again. I think he (Ferguson) is just disappointed."

Van Gaal insisted he always felt Bayern could go through after Olic got one back before the break.

He said: "In the first 20 minutes United were on top but after being 3-0 down we got a great goal from Ivica Olic and at half-time I was confident we could get back in the game and get a result. It is still incredible to come back from three goals down."

# Rooney return wasn't rushed

AFP, Manchester

Sir Alex Ferguson insisted Thursday he did not put any pressure on Manchester United doctors to declare Wayne Rooney fit for their Champions League loss to Bayern Munich.

Ferguson had claimed Tuesday that Rooney had no chance of playing after suffering ankle ligament damage in the first leg last week, but less than 24 hours later had named the England star in the second leg tie in Old Trafford.

Ferguson said the decision had only been taken following consultation with his medical team and Rooney, who all agreed the risk to the ankle he damaged in Munich a week previously was minimal.

As it turned out, Rooney went over on the same ankle in the first half and was clearly struggling before Ferguson substituted him with over half an hour remaining following the dismissal of Rafael.

"I never force the medical staff into anything," said Ferguson.

"Their job is difficult. It is important they make the right decisions about players' fitness. They made the right decision. The medical staff did not see any problem."

That assessment should at least ease the concerns of England manager Fabio Capello, who was at Old Trafford, with Ferguson adamant the correct procedures had been followed.



Former England cricket captain Michael Vaughan (R) has assumed a new role, caddie for England golfer Lee Westwood (L) at the Augusta Masters. The two have a light chat during Par 3 prior to the 2010 Masters at Augusta National Golf Club in Georgia on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP