

# Marseille clinch title

AFP, Paris  
Marseille clinched their first French league title in 18 years on Wednesday after beating Rennes 3-1.

The 1993 European Cup winners - who were stripped of their French title in 1993 because of a match fixing scandal - hold an eight-point lead over both Lille and Auxerre with just two matches remaining.

Goals by Argentinian defender Gabriel Heinze - who becomes one a rare breed to win league titles in three different countries - leading scorer and captain Mamadou Niang and record signing Lucho Gonzalez saw Marseille to the crown under the gaze of coach Didier Deschamps a member of the last Marseille side to lift the trophy back in 1992.

Auxerre's hopes of keeping their slim hopes alive had dimmed earlier when they lost 2-1 at Lyon.

A brilliant curling freekick by 32-year-old Heinze in the opening minutes got Marseille off to an ideal start.

However, Rennes had not come along simply to be kingmakers and they deservedly levelled in the 37th minute as Heinze was beaten by Jerome Leroy's cross and Jimmy Briand was on hand to head past Steve Mandanda.

Marseille, though, should have secured the title in the 68th minute when Cameroon international Stephane Mbia had a free header from a corner but instead tamedly headed it well wide.

But his miss didn't matter a jot as two goals inside three minutes from Niang, with a simple tap-in for his 16th of the season making him the league's leading scorer, and a cracking effort from outside the area by Lucho earned them the title.

The relegation places were confirmed as Boulogne lost 1-0 at home to St Etienne, which saw the latter side retain their elite status and condemn the hosts to a quick return to the Second Division while Le Mans joined them as they slipped to a 3-2 defeat at Nancy.

Grenoble had already been relegated. Le Mans' fate was out of their hands as St Etienne needed just a point away at Boulogne to retain their elite status but they still gave it all they had got to keep the pressure on the former French giants.

They even took a 2-1 lead in the first-half having gone behind to a goal by Julian Ferret, as Modibo Maiga and Mathieu Dossevi struck in the 23rd and 25th minutes respectively.

However, Ferret levelled for the hosts with a stunning volley in the 31st minute to douse the strugglers fire and their stay in the First Division ended just after the hour mark as Chris Malonga netted.

Bordeaux's woeful end of season continued as their desperate search for at least a Champions League place looks to be slipping from their grasp as they were held 1-1 away at Nice.

The hosts took the lead through Emersen Fae in the 26th minute but Bordeaux's Brazilian star Wendel levelled for the 2009 champions seven minutes later with a typically brilliant freekick from fully 30 metres out.

However, the point sees them trailing second-placed Lille and third-placed Auxerre by six points.

Lyon are fourth on 65 points, two adrift of Lille and Auxerre, but with a game in hand.

Lille did their chances of a Champions League spot a power of good with a 2-0 away win at Toulouse and Bordeaux even slipped out of the Europa League places as Montpellier beat Sochaux 1-0 away to move into fifth place two points clear of Bordeaux.



Real Madrid winger Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates one of his three goals against Mallorca during their Primera Liga encounter at the Ono Stadium on Wednesday.

## Crouch seals UCL spot

AFP, London  
Tottenham booked a lucrative place in the Champions League in dramatic fashion as Peter Crouch's late header clinched a 1-0 win against Manchester City on Wednesday.

Harry Redknapp's team will finish at least fourth in the Premier League, guaranteeing a place in the Champions League qualifying rounds, after Crouch's 82nd minute winner at Eastlands opened up a four-point advantage over fifth-placed City with just one match to play.

A fixture dubbed a 50 million pounds play-off for a place in Europe's elite club competition lived up to its billing as both sides went for broke, but it was Spurs who were deserved winners.

The presence of Ledley King, who struggles with a persistent knee injury, in Tottenham's team for a rare second appearance in quick succession showed just how important the match was.

Spurs last played in the European Cup in the 1961-61 season and they earned the right to play against the continent's best again with a dominant display.

Crouch's header hit the woodwork early on before King had a headed goal ruled out for a foul on Gareth Barry.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

# Real take it to the death

AFP, Madrid  
Cristiano Ronaldo netted his first ever hat-trick for Real Madrid to move onto 25 goals of the season as Real came from behind to win 4-1 at Real Mallorca on Wednesday to move a point behind Barcelona and ensure the title race goes down to the wire.

Ronaldo, the world's most expensive player, seems to be on a personal mission to win the title for his side in his debut season and followed up his decisive late winner against Osasuna on Sunday with a timely treble to keep his side firmly in the title race with two games to go.

"I have to thank my team-mates for helping me to settle and score so many goals," said Ronaldo. "There was a bit of pressure with Barcelona winning but we scored three in the second half to win the match."

"We hope Barcelona drop points at Sevilla and all we can do is beat (Athletic) Bilbao at home. We hope and really want to be champions."

Aritz Aduriz had put Champions League hopefuls Mallorca into a 16th-minute lead but Ronaldo took advantage of a defensive mix-up to equalise ten minutes later and struck again on 57 minutes.

A fine mazy run and finish on 72 minutes capped his first Real hat-trick and his haul of 25 goals is all the more impressive when one considers he was out injured for two months.

A Gonzalo Higuain chip completed the scoring on 81 minutes and the Argentine has 26 goals for the season, five behind Barcelona's Lionel Messi on 31.

With two games left, champions Barca, 4-1 winners over Tenerife at Camp Nou on Tuesday, hold a slender one-point lead over Real and have a tough trip to Sevilla on Saturday while Madrid are at home to Athletic Bilbao.

This was a ninth away win for Real as they became only the third team to win at Mallorca's fortress Ono stadium and dent their Champions League hopes.

RESULTS	
Real Zaragoza 1 (Colunga 78-pen)	Espanyol 0
Athletic Madrid 3 (Juanito 43, Jurado 66, Forlan 73)	Valladolid 1 (Sesma 77)
Racing Santander 1 (Tchite 60)	Sevilla 5 (Negredo 2, 88, Kanoute 21-pen, Navas 46, Capel 48)
Osasuna 3 (Camunas 11, Pandiani 24, Juanfran 32)	Deportivo La Coruna 1 (Riki 16)
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Toquero 4)	Malaga 1 (Duda 19)
Real Mallorca 1 (Aduriz 16)	Real Madrid 4 (Ronaldo 26, 57, 72, Higuain 81)

Mallorca surrender fourth place to Sevilla who are a point ahead after thrashing Racing Santander 5-1 on Wednesday and take on Barcelona at home on Saturday.

Barcelona's tally of 93 points is the most any team has chalked up in a league of 20 or 22 teams and there are still two games to

play although it may not be enough with Real breathing down their necks.

With five minutes gone Mallorca had the ball in the net but Uruguayan winger Gonzalo Castro looked up in dismay to see his effort had been ruled out for a marginal offside.

Real looked shaky and they conceded from a corner on 16 minutes with Victor arriving at the back post to volley into the danger area and Aduriz was on hand to convert his 12th goal of the campaign.

However, the lead was short-lived and predictably it was Ronaldo who provided the equaliser.

The former Manchester United man used his pace to race onto a long diagonal ball over the top and arrived just before the advancing goalkeeper Dudu Aouate and managed to lob the ball high into the net before colliding with the Israeli custodian.

Real goalkeeper Iker Casillas had to make two saves to deny Aduriz and Castro inside two minutes and the visitors were fortunate to go in 1-1 at the break.

Madrid stepped up their game after the interval and Ronaldo created a great chance for strike partner Higuain who fluffed his lines by shooting wide.

The Portuguese star showed the Argentine how to do it on 57 minutes controlling Sergio Ramos's cross-field pass on his chest before poking the ball home for his second goal of the game.

Ronaldo then collected the ball and left two defenders in his wake before drilling in a low shot to cap a fantastic hat-trick.

It had been one-way traffic in the second half and Higuain produced a fine lob nine minutes from time for a fourth goal to rub salt in Mallorca's wounds and put the pressure back on Barcelona.



Marseille midfielders Lucho Gonzalez (C) and Hatem Ben Arfa (R) celebrate at the end of their League One tie against Rennes at the Velodrome Stadium on Wednesday. Marseille won the match 3-1 to secure their first league title in 18 years.

# Few surprises from Loew

AFP, Berlin  
Coach Joachim Loew on Thursday selected seven members of Champions League-finalists Bayern Munich for Germany's World Cup squad including recalling veteran goalkeeper Hans-Joerg Butt.

Loew has opted to take Bayern's rising stars, forward Thomas Mueller and uncapped 21-year-old defender Holger Badstuber, along with Butt, who turns 36 at the end of the month, from Munich.

Butt won the last of his three caps in 2003, but has been in stellar form for Bayern who are set to win the Bundesliga title on Saturday and are in the Champions League final at the end of the month.

Chelsea midfielder Michael Ballack will captain the side in South Africa and is just two caps from making his 100th appearance for Germany.

There is no place in the squad for Lazio midfielder Thomas Hitzlsperger, while Bayer Leverkusen pair goalkeeper Rene Adler and midfielder Simon Rolfes are missing with injury.

Loew's first-choice goalkeeper Adler is out with a rib injury which needs an operation and Loew has opted to replace him with Butt to contest the Number One shirt alongside Schalke's Manuel Neuer and Bremen's Time Wiese.

But there has been no decision on who will be in goal for the World Cup.

"We will talk about it and decide probably at the end of next week," said Loew.

But the Germany boss said there was no chance of ex-Arsenal goalkeeper Jens Lehmann being called up.

"That discussion was not an issue for us," said Loew.

Loew revealed he had found it hard to leave out experienced midfielder Hitzlsperger with promising Bremen youngsters Marko Marin and Mesut Ozil being chosen.

"This was a very difficult decision for me," said Loew at the Stuttgart press conference. "Thomas has never disappointed us and made a key contribution in helping us qualify."

Both Cologne's Lukas Podolski, voted the best young player at the last World Cup, and Bayern Munich's Miroslav Klose, the top-scorer at Germany 2006, have been named amongst the forwards along with 20-year-old Mueller.

Germany face warm-up games against Malta in Aachen on May 13, Hungary in Budapest on May 29 and Bosnia-Herzegovina in Frankfurt on June 3.

With Werder Bremen facing Bayern Munich in the German Cup final on May 15, Ballack, whose Chelsea team faces Portsmouth in the FA Cup final the same day, and the Bremen players will join the Germany squad in Sicily after May 15.

The seven from Bayern will join the national squad in their second training camp in the southern Tyrol Alps after the Champions League final on May 22 against Inter Milan in Madrid.

Germany have drawn Australia, Ghana and Serbia in Group D for the World Cup which starts on June 11 and they open their campaign against the Australians on June 13 in Durban.

Loew has also named a separate group of five fringe players who will be brought into the Germany squad only for next Thursday's warm-up game with Malta.

They include goalkeeper Tobias Sippel (Kaiserslautern), Mats Hummel, Kevin Grosskreutz (Borussia Dortmund), Stefan Reinartz (Bayer Leverkusen), Marco Reus (Borussia Moenchengladbach) for the game in Aachen.

### SQUAD

**GOALKEEPER:** Manuel Neuer (Schalke 04), Tim Wiese (Werder Bremen), Hans-Joerg Butt (Bayern Munich)

**DEFENDER:** Dennis Aogo (Hamburg) Jerome Boateng (Hamburg), Arne Friedrich (Hertha Berlin), Philipp Lahm (Bayern Munich), Per Mertesacker (Werder Bremen), Marcell Jansen (Hamburg), Serdar Tasci (VfB Stuttgart), Holger Badstuber (Bayern Munich), Heiko Westermann (Schalke 04), Andreas Beck (Hoffenheim)

**MIDFIELDER:** Michael Ballack (Chelsea/ENG), Marko Marin, Mesut Ozil (both Werder Bremen), Piotr Trochowski (Hamburg), Sami Khedira, Christian Traesch (both VfB Stuttgart), Toni Kroos (Bayer Leverkusen), Bastian Schweinsteiger (Bayern Munich)

**FORWARD:** Cacau (VfB Stuttgart), Mario Gomez, Miroslav Klose, Thomas Mueller (all Bayern Munich), Stefan Kiessling (Bayer Leverkusen), Lukas Podolski (Cologne)

## IN BRIEF

### Ribery loses appeal

AFP, Nyon  
Bayern Munich's French international playmaker Franck Ribery lost his appeal to UEFA against a three match European ban, club chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge said after Wednesday's hearing at European football's governing body.

Rummenigge claimed the decision was too harsh and said Bayern would lodge another appeal with the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), possibly next week.

Ribery is set to miss the Champions League final against Inter Milan on May 22.

### EPL rejects Fulham plea

AFP, London  
Fulham's request to have their final league game of the season brought forward to aid their preparation for next week's Europa League final has been rejected by the English Premier League.

The decision means Roy Hodgson's squad must face Arsenal at the Emirates on Sunday, three days before meeting Atletico Madrid in the European final in Hamburg.

Fulham had wanted the league match played on Saturday but the EPL has insisted that all fixtures in the season's final round of matches must take place at the same time.

Arsenal need a point from the match to be sure of finishing in third place, which means they will qualify directly for the group stages of next season's Champions League.

# One down for Inter

## Football

AFP, Rome

Inter Milan secured the first trophy in their historic treble quest as they beat AS Roma 1-0 at the Stadio Olimpico here on Wednesday.

Diego Milito scored the only goal of the game while Roma substitute Francesco Totti was dismissed late on in an often bad-tempered and fractious affair.

It was Inter's third cup triumph in the last six seasons -- in the fifth final between the two teams in that same period -- and their sixth in all.

Now Jose Mourinho's men have two more league games to hold onto their Serie A lead - they head Roma by two points -- and a Champions League final against Bayern Munich in Madrid on May 22 as they aim to become the first ever Italian team to win the treble.

The game got off to a dreadful start for the nerazzurri as Wesley Sneijder went down under a heavy challenge by on loan Inter defender Nicolas Burdisso and after hobbling around for a minute he had to be replaced.

Mourinho decided to throw on forward Mario Balotelli, changing his forma-

tion in the process to a 4-3-3 from a 4-3-1-2.

Despite the change Inter were very much in the ascendancy in the first half as Esteban Cambiasso dispossessed Mirko Vucinic in midfield and spread the ball wide to Samuel Eto'o, who slipped it inside for the charging Maicon but Julio Sergio blocked his near post shot.

Moments later Maicon crossed and Thiago Motta rose highest in box but couldn't keep his header down.

On 16 minutes Eto'o played in Milito but his clinical finish was disallowed for a marginal offside.

Eto'o turned provider

again on 21 minutes, clipping the ball over the top for Balotelli whose control was exquisite before Burdisso slid in to block his left foot volley.

Roma finally came to life on 25 minutes with a rapid break as Marco Materazzi got caught out of position but Julio Cesar came out to get a vital touch on Rodrigo Taddei's cross and deny Luca Toni an easy tap-in.

Roma came close again as Simone Perrotta played it wide to Taddei and then met his return cross with a bullet header that flew just off target.

Inter then lost Ivan Cordoba to injury, replaced by Walter Samuel but they took the lead on 39 minutes.

Thiago Motta played Milito in down the inside right channel and despite having three defenders converging on him, the Argentine scampered into the box and buried a shot into the top left corner.

Roma should have drawn level on 53 minutes as Julio Cesar spilled a Totti free-kick from 30 yards but centre-back Juan somehow contrived to head over an open goal from six yards.

Minutes later Balotelli forced Julio Sergio into a sprawling save down to his right.

With a quarter of an hour left Roma had a free-kick from 25 yards but John Arne Riise blazed it high and wide.

Julio Cesar then had to punch away a dipping Riise volley while Vucinic screwed a shot horribly wide after a lucky deflection played him in.

Then three minutes from time Totti lost his head and deliberately hoofed Balotelli, earning a straight red card which he didn't contest.



Inter Milan coach Jose Mourinho (C) kisses the Italian Cup after his team defeated Roma in the final at the Olympic Stadium in Rome on Wednesday.