



Napoli striker Edinson Cavani is ecstatic after scoring to make it 3-3 against Steaua Bucharest during their Europa League encounter in Bucharest on Thursday. PHOTO: AFP

## MU aim to draw level

AFP, London

Manchester United can draw level with champions Chelsea before the Premier League leaders even kick-off if they win away to Sunderland on Saturday.

Victory for Sir Alex Ferguson's side against a team managed by United old boy Steve Bruce would see the Red Devils join Chelsea on 15 points.

And that would give the Blues something else to think about before their London derby against Arsenal at Stamford Bridge on Sunday, even though they would likely still be on top, such is their vastly superior goal difference.

But a United win at the Stadium of Light is anything but assured.

So far this season, Ferguson's men have drawn each of their three away games in the Premier League, losing leads at Fulham and Everton and having to fight back to earn a point at Bolton.

"A lot has been made about us not keeping clean sheets but I

haven't seen us get opened up to make it a real crisis," said United centre-half Rio Ferdinand, fit following a knee injury.

"We have been a little unfortunate and unlucky in certain circumstances, maybe even naive at points, but we haven't been opened up in a manner that would make it a massive problem."

United go into this match on the back of a 1-0 Champions League win away to Valencia, which suggests they are getting over their travel sickness.

But Bruce reckons Sunderland's supporters can put a side of even United's class and experience off their game.

"With the crowd behind us, it can be like an extra man," Bruce said.

Chelsea and Arsenal both head into their eagerly awaited clash following Champions League wins over Marseille and Partizan Belgrade respectively.

Those successes came after both clubs suffered domestic reverses, Chelsea losing to Manchester City and Arsenal, more surprisingly, to West Brom.

Arsenal manager Arsene

Wenger was confident his side could carry their European form into the Premier League.

"For us it was important to win straight away after a big disappointment against West Brom.

"It puts us in a good position confidence-wise, Sunday is a big, big game for us."

Chelsea manager Carlo Ancelotti is expected to be in the Blues dug-out despite having to attend his father's funeral in Italy on Saturday.

Tottenham, also enjoying life in the Champions League after a midweek 4-1 win at home to Dutch club FC Twente, welcome an Aston Villa side rejuvenated by the arrival of French

manager Gerard Houllier at White Hart Lane on Saturday.

Everton may be in a "false position" according to their Spanish midfielder Mikel Arteta but the fact remains they are bottom of the table and are the only team in the Premier League without a win so far this season.

The Merseysiders face a tricky trip to Birmingham as they look to rid themselves of that unwanted record while Stoke face Blackburn, West Brom play Bolton and Wigan take on Wolves.

Blackpool, the surprise package of this season's Premier League, will fancy their chances of causing fresh embarrassment to a Liverpool side that has won just once in the league so far this season when they make the short journey to Anfield on Sunday.

Liverpool's goalless draw away to Utrecht in the Europa League on Thursday did not exactly suggest better days were around the corner.

Manchester City, who battled back to draw 1-1 against Juventus in European football's second tier competition, are at home to Newcastle.

### FIXTURES

(1400GMT unless stated)

#### Saturday

Birmingham v Everton, Stoke v Blackburn, Sunderland v Manchester United, Tottenham v Aston Villa, West Brom v Bolton, West Ham v Fulham, Wigan v Wolves (1145GMT)

#### Sunday

Chelsea v Arsenal (1400GMT), Liverpool v Blackpool (1400GMT), Manchester

## Former stars face old rivals

AFP, Berlin

West Germany's 1990 World Cup-winning side will take on their former East German rivals in a special match to celebrate the 20th anniversary of reunification, it was announced on Thursday.

The German Football Federation (DFB) said it will host a match in Leipzig on Sunday, November 21 between members of the squad that won Italia 1990 and their East German counterparts from that era.

The West German side will be coached by the legendary Franz Beckenbauer, who captained West Germany to the World Cup title in 1974 and then went on to coach the side to success in Italy 16 years later.

The DFB said several stars had already said they will play, without giving names.

"We are delighted that so many former players want to play in this match and give the game a worthy setting," said DFB general secretary Wolfgang Niersbach.

The match is to be played at Leipzig's impressive Central Stadium.

The date is significant as November 21 will be the 20th anniversary of the day West Germany and East Germany's football federations combined, 49 days after the country's reunification on October 3, 1990.

## Albania coach hospitalised

AFP, Tirana

Albanian national football coach Josif Kuze has been hospitalised here after suffering a stroke, local media reported Thursday.

"As soon as he is stable, Kuze, currently in a US hospital in Tirana after a cerebral attack, will be transferred by plane to (Croatian capital) Zagreb," said Alisa Demollari, spokeswoman of Albania's Health Ministry.

Croat Kuze has been at the helm of Albania's squad since May 2009.

The 58-year-old replaced Dutchman Arie Haan who quit after Albania's poor performance during qualifying matches for the 2010 World Cup.

## Sochaux coach punished

AFP, Paris

Sochaux coach Francis Gillot was on Thursday banned for four matches by the disciplinary panel of the French Professional Football League (LFP).

Gillot received the punishment for "abusive and threatening behaviour towards the referee" during his side's Ligue 1 match at home to Paris Saint-Germain on the fourth weekend of the season.

The 50-year-old was sent to the stands by referee Ruddy Buquet in the sixth minute of the game, which Sochaux went on to win 3-1.

He was also handed a suspended ban for a further two games.

# City, L'pool held

AFP, Paris



Manchester City kept Juventus at arm's length in Europa League Group A after a 1-1 draw between the sides on Thursday, while Liverpool and holders Atletico Madrid also recorded draws.

City fell behind in the 11th minute when a long-range effort from Vincenzo Iaquinta took a deflection off Kolo Toure and fizzed past Joe Hart, but the hosts drew level eight minutes before the interval with a goal of real quality.

Yaya Toure picked up possession in the centre of the pitch and slid a beautifully weighted pass through to Adam Johnson, whose first touch caught Alex Manninger flat-footed and allowed him to toe the ball into an unguarded goal.

Alessandro Del Piero almost snatched victory for the Italians in the 85th minute but his dipping free-kick hit the crossbar and bounced on the goal-line before rebounding to safety.

"It was hard. They're an Italian side, so we knew they'd come here and defend well," said Johnson.

"I think we were the better team, especially in the second half."

The English side top the group on four points alongside Polish outfit Lech Poznan, who beat Red Bull Salzburg 2-0. Juve are two points back in third.

A second-half penalty from Simao allowed Atletico to come from a goal down and claim a 1-1 draw at home to Bayer Leverkusen.

Leverkusen lead Group B by a point from Atletico's matchday one conquerors Aris Thessaloniki and Rosenberg, who beat the Greeks 2-1 in Norway.

Earlier, Liverpool's stuttering season yielded another forgettable performance when the English giants were held to a 0-0 draw at Dutch side FC Utrecht.

Roy Hodgson's side came close to conced-

ing on numerous occasions, with Jan Wuytens seeing a first-half effort chalked off for a foul and Dries Mertens drawing a sharp save from Reds goalkeeper Pepe Reina in the 39th minute.

Liverpool were lucky to escape early in the second period when Raul Meireles had to head off the line from skipper Michael Silberbauer, while Jacob Mulenga poked the ball across goal and wide for the hosts late on.

"I thought it was a good point," said Hodgson, who guided Fulham to a surprise runners-up finish in last season's competition.

"We knew it was going to be a tough game. It wasn't a dull 0-0. Utrecht did well. Utrecht were very committed. We saw a good team."

In the group's other game, Napoli hit back from conceding three goals in the first 16 minutes at Steaua Bucharest to snatch a 3-3 draw, with Uruguayan Edinson Cavani notching the equaliser in the eighth minute of added time.

The results mean Liverpool top Group K and have a two-point lead over Napoli and Utrecht.

Napoli's fellow Serie A representatives Sampdoria won 1-0 at home to Hungarian side Debrecen in Group I, thanks to an 18th-minute penalty by Giampaolo Pazzini.

Sampdoria share the lead in the group with PSV Eindhoven, who won 2-0 at Ukraine's Metalist Kharkiv.

Gregorio Manzano's first game in charge of Sevilla saw his new charges win 1-0 at in-form Borussia Dortmund in Group J.

A goal in first-half injury-time from on-loan Napoli midfielder Luca Cigarini was the difference between the teams, while Marcel Schmelzer was dismissed for the German side after being shown a second yellow card for diving.

Paris Saint-Germain top the group after a 2-0 win at home to Karpaty Lviv gave them six points from a possible six prior to their trip to Dortmund next month.

"It's a dream start but nothing's decided yet," said PSG coach Antoine Kombouare. "We expect to have a difficult time at Dortmund."

# Golden Boot Messi's

Football

AP, Barcelona

Lionel Messi has been presented with the Golden Boot award for being the top scorer in European domestic leagues last season.

The Argentine forward received the prize Thursday after scoring 34 league goals to help Barcelona retain its Spanish La Liga title.

Messi joined Marco van Basten, Ronaldo and Cristiano Ronaldo as the only players to win the three major individual awards: the Golden Boot, FIFA Player of the Year and the Golden Ball, given to Europe's top player.

Chelsea's Didier Drogba and Udinese's Antonio Di Natale were tied for second place with 29 goals apiece.

Luis Suarez scored 35 goals last season for Ajax in the Netherlands but failed to win due to the

points system that compensates for the degree of difficulty posed by the major European leagues: England, Spain, Italy, Germany and France.

Messi had failed to score a single goal at the World Cup in South Africa. Even so, former Argentina coach Diego Maradona said Wednesday that Messi deserved the award and hoped he would "win many more."

Messi is the second Barcelona player to be honoured by European Sports Magazine. Ronaldo earned the club's first Golden Boot by scoring 34 goals, in the 1996-97 season.

Barcelona captain Carles Puyol applauded Messi's ability and character.

"He is the best in the world, but he is humble. He improves everyday," Puyol said before the awards ceremony. "He is the best player in the world and he demonstrated that he deserves this award."

Messi has scored two goals in three games in the Spanish league this season.



Argentina and Barcelona star Lionel Messi (C) poses with the Golden Shoe award for being the top scorer in European domestic leagues last season in Barcelona on Thursday. PHOTO: AFP

# Barca missing key men

REUTERS, Madrid



Champions Barcelona will be without suspended Spain striker David Villa at home to Real Mallorca on Sunday (1700), while midfielder Xavi is a

doubt. Spain coach Vicente del Bosque left playmaker Xavi out of his squad for the Euro 2012 qualifiers against Lithuania and Scotland to give him time to recover properly from sore tendons which have been bothering him since the start of the season.

Jose Mourinho's response to a run in with the Spanish media on Monday has been to hold Real Madrid training behind closed doors without the daily news conference for players, in the build up to Deportivo Coruna's visit on Sunday (1900). The match, which will be played on a re-laid pitch at the

Bernabeu, pits La Liga's worst attack against the strongest defence. Depor have only scored twice this season, both from the penalty spot, and Real have conceded just one in five.

After their midweek Champions League defeat at home to Manchester United, leaders Valencia return to the Mestalla to host Athletic Bilbao on Saturday (2000) boosted by good news off the pitch.

The club posted a pre-tax profit of 18 million euros for last season (they lost 70 million in 2008-9) helped by the sales of Spain duo David Villa and David Silva. Their debt burden reduced from 550 million to 430 million euros.

They will be without injured winger Joaquin and have a doubt over Dutch midfielder Hedwiger Maduro. Argentine playmaker Ever Banega has returned to training after a month out with an ankle injury.

New Sevilla coach Gregorio Manzano enjoyed a winning debut with a 1-0 victory away to Borussia Dortmund in the Europa League on Thursday,

and in his first league game at the helm hosts former club Atletico Madrid on Sunday (1500). "The team have suffered a difficult few games recently. We have picked up an empty bottle and little by little we'll be filling it with self-esteem and confidence," he told reporters after the Dortmund win.

Atletico are struggling to get Argentina striker Sergio Aguero back to full fitness from a knee injury suffered three weeks ago and he was a late withdrawal from their 1-1 Europa League

draw at home to Bayer Leverkusen.

"He's a very important player. He started the season brilliantly but if there is the slightest risk he isn't going to play," coach Quique Sanchez Flores told reporters.

Real Sociedad striker Raul Tamudo, 32, will face former club Espanyol for the first time when they visit Anoeta on Saturday (1800).

Tamudo started his career with the Barcelona-based side, debuting with them in La Liga in 1997, and went on to become captain and all-time top scorer with 129 goals before leaving in the closed season.

Malaga will have Portuguese striker Eliseu back for the Sunday's trip to Almeria (1500) after his red card from Monday's defeat against Villarreal was reduced to a yellow.

Getafe are at home to promoted Hercules on Sunday (1500) but will be without defender Mario who snapped an Achilles tendon in their 2-0 Europa League defeat away to Young Boys.

### FIXTURES

(times GMT)

#### Saturday

Real Zaragoza v Sporting Gijon (1600), Real Sociedad v Espanyol (1800), Valencia v Athletic Bilbao (2000)

#### Sunday

Getafe v Hercules CF (1500), Osasuna v Levante (1500), Sevilla v Atletico Madrid (1500), Almeria v Malaga (1500), Villarreal v Racing Santander (1500), Barcelona v Real Mallorca (1700), Real Madrid v Deportivo

# Eto'o focuses on Juve

REUTERS, Milan



A photograph of Wesley Sneijder taken by Inter Milan team mate Samuel Eto'o after the Cameroon striker bagged a hat-trick in Europe on Wednesday made its way into the press as the hype increases before Sunday's game with Juventus.

Eto'o grabbed a photographer's camera and snapped a quick picture during the 4-0 Champions League win at home to Werder Bremen and the very respectable shot was printed by Friday's Gazzetta dello Sport.

The Cameroonian will be looking for his 12th goal in 10

games in all competitions this term in the "Derby of Italy" at the San Siro on Sunday (1845 GMT).

Champions and leaders Inter have injury worries for the visit of their fierce rivals but said in a statement that the conditions of goalkeeper Julio Cesar and centre back Lucio were improving after they were injured against Werder.

Walter Samuel, Marco Materazzi, Javier Zanetti, Goran Pandev and Diego Milito are all doubtful too as Rafael Benitez's squad is stretched to the limit.

Ninth-placed Juventus, buoyed by a decent showing in the 1-1 Europa League draw at Manchester City, have long been involved in a war of words with Inter over the 2006 match-fixing scandal and have moved to calm their fans ahead of the match.

Juve want the 2006 scudetto which they won on the pitch but was awarded to Inter to be taken away from their rivals after saying new evidence shows the European champions were involved in the match-fixing affair too.

Inter deny any involvement and say if anything, Juve should have more titles stripped from them given the depth of the scandal.

Ronaldinho is set to return at Parma having been rested in Amsterdam.

Lazio striker Mauro Zarate, whose side are level on points at the top with Inter, is available for Sunday's home game against Brescia after being fined 10,000 euros (\$13,660) but not banned for a fascist salute to fans.

### FIXTURES

Saturday

Udinese v Cesena, Parma v AC Milan

#### Sunday

Lecce v Catania, Bologna v Sampdoria, Chievo v Cagliari, Fiorentina v Palermo, Genoa v Bari, Lazio v Brescia, Napoli v