

Kaiser moots January World Cup

German football legend Franz Beckenbauer has suggested that the 2022 World Cup in Qatar be held in January to avoid the searing summer heat in the Gulf country.

A member of the FIFA executive committee that stunned the world on Thursday by acceding to the 2022 tournament to the tiny emirate, Beckenbauer said that it would be wrong to stage the event in the traditional close-season period of June/July.

"We need to consider this solution of January and February when in Qatar the temperatures are around a pleasant 25 degrees," he told Bild newspaper.

"Why would that not be acceptable? The schedules for the big European leagues are due to be changed in 2012 and that would mean the impact would be less."

"Also it would be a viable alternative to the huge expenses involved in setting up air-conditioning for the stadiums and the fan zones."

Beckenbauer, a World Cup winner both as a player and a manager, refused to say who he had voted for in Zurich when the World Cup hosts for 2018 and 2022 were designated.

But he did admit to being left lost for words by Qatar getting the nod for 2022 ahead of the United States, Australia, Japan and South Korea.

"What astonishes me is that Australia was eliminated in the first round of voting, just like England (for 2018), but I am sure Russia will be an excellent host in 2018."

Beckenbauer has already said that he will stand down from the 22-strong FIFA executive next year.

Van Gaal gives up on title

Bayern Munich coach Louis van Gaal has admitted that with his team 14 points behind Bundesliga leaders Dortmund, winning the title again this season is probably now out of the question.

"Lots might still happen but I think (Dortmund) is too far ahead," van Gaal said on German television late Saturday after his Bavarian giants went down 2-0 at Schalke 04.

"We had to win this match to put the pressure on Dortmund. But with us and (second-placed) Mainz losing, Dortmund aren't feeling any pressure at all," the Dutchman added.



Arsenal midfielder Samir Nasri (L) celebrates after scoring a fantastic opening goal during their Premier League clash against Fulham at the Emirates Stadium in London on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

Nasri guns Arsenal top

AFP, London



Arsenal went top of the Premier League by a point after Samir Nasri scored twice in a 2-1 victory over London rivals Fulham on Saturday.

English champions Chelsea, who would also have gone above Manchester United had they won, drew 1-1 at home to Everton after Jermaine Beekford, who began his career at Stamford Bridge, equalised four minutes from time to cancel out Didier Drogba's first-half penalty.

United had to endure a frustrating afternoon after their match away to Blackpool was postponed because of a frozen pitch.

At the other end of the table, Wolves dropped to the bottom on goal difference following a 3-0 loss away to Blackburn Rovers, who bounced back in style after a 7-1 loss to United.

Saturday's other top-flight matches saw 10-man Manchester City see off Bolton 1-0 while Birmingham drew 1-1 with Tottenham and Wigan shared the points with Stoke in a 2-2 draw.

"We once again have shown fantastic quality and spirit," Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger told Sky Sports.

"Credit to Nasri as well, he got two outstanding goals. He's just been voted French player of the year and that gives you more confidence."

"Apart from that, it's a combination of skill, intelligence and calm - that's what you need to score in the box."

But disappointed Chelsea manager Carlo Ancelotti said: "Our performance was not good, the second half was poor."

"We didn't play our football, just long ball. It was difficult to understand why this happened. My team has to play better."

However, it was a different story for Ancelotti's fellow Italian Roberto Mancini after a victory for his Manchester City side left them just three points behind Arsenal.

"We deserved this, we had a lot of chances. At this moment Bolton is one of the best teams in England and to win against them is very important."

Drogba gave Chelsea the lead three minutes before half-time from the penalty spot after Everton goalkeeper Tim Howard was yellow-carded for bringing down Nicolas Anelka.

But they were made to pay for not scoring again when substitute Beekford nodded in from close range after Australia international Tim Cahill had headed on Leighton Baines's cross.

Arsenal took a 14th-minute lead when midfielder Nasri, played in by Russia's Andrey Arshavin, sold two dummies before shooting high into the net.

However, Fulham were level on the half-hour mark.

Laurent Koscielny and Sebastian Squillaci collided, allowing United States international Clint Dempsey to play in Diomansy Kamara, who curled in from 12 yards out.

But Nasri restored Arsenal's lead 15 minutes from time with a superb second goal, beating a defender and Australia goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer, once a Gunners target, before shooting home following a layoff from Robin van Persie.

Carlos Tevez gave City a fourth-minute lead against Bolton in the fourth minute after latching on to Yaya Toure's through ball.

But the hosts had to play the last 11 minutes at Eastlands with 10 men after Aleksandar Kolarov was sent-off for a second yellow card.

In-form Tottenham went ahead against Birmingham in the 19th minute when Cameroon defender Sebastian Bassong got on the end of Gareth Bale's free-kick.

But the Blues were level nine minutes from time when Craig Gardner headed in from close range.

Stoke went ahead at the Britannia Stadium when Robert Huth's 22-yard free-kick was deflected past Wigan keeper Ali Al Habsi in the 18th minute.

Wigan equalised on the half hour through a Danny Collins own-goal but a minute later Stoke's Matthew Etherington shot home from Ricardo Fuller's pass.

But Wigan though were back level five minutes before the break thanks to Tom Cleverly's deflected shot.

RESULTS

- Arsenal 2** (Nasri 14, 75)
- Fulham 1 (Kamara 30)
- Birmingham 1 (Gardner 81)
- Tottenham 1 (Bassong 19)
- Blackburn 3** (Dunn 29, Emerson 43, Nelsen 55)
- Wolves 0
- Chelsea 1 (Drogba 42-pen)
- Everton 1 (Beckford 86)
- Man City 1** (Tevez 4)
- Bolton 0
- Wigan 2 (Collins 30-og, Cleverley 40)

SPORTS POLL

Do you think the selectors were too harsh on Shahriar Nafees?

Yes 79.1%

No 20.9%

TOTAL VOTES: 249

WEEKLY QUESTION

Do you think Bangladesh will win the ongoing series against Zimbabwe?

Visit the sports page of www.thedailystar.net to cast vote

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www.twitter.com/dspsport

What to WATCH

BTV

Bangladesh v Zimbabwe Third ODI
Live from 9:00am

STAR Cricket

Australia v England Second Test, Day 4
Live from 6:00am

ESPN

Sportscentre India Sports News
Live at 8:30pm

English Premiership Liverpool v Aston Villa
Live from 1:45am (Tuesday)

TEN Sports

Serie A Fiorentina v Cagliari
Live from 2:30am (Tuesday)

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh v Zimbabwe Third ODI
Time: 9:00am
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur

Bayern slump at Schalke

AFP, Berlin



Bayern Munich's hopes of retaining their Bundesliga title suffered a major setback on Saturday when a 2-0 defeat at rivals Schalke 04 left them 14 points behind leaders Dortmund.

Second-half goals by Spanish midfielder Jose Manuel Jurado and defender Benedikt Hoewedes gave Schalke only their fourth win of the season, but left Bayern lagging in seventh place.

Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge has set coach Louis van Gaal the task of taking 10 points from their last four league games before Christmas and Bayern must now beat St Pauli and Stuttgart over the next two weekends to meet that target.

Schalke's Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer kept his side in the game with some outstanding first-half saves as Munich went close through Mario Gomez and Franck Ribery.

But the opening goal came after 57 minutes when a long ball from Neuer was picked up by Spain veteran Raul who had his shot saved only for compatriot Jurado to fire the hosts into the lead.

Raul turned Bayern centre-back Breno for the first goal and Bayern's Brazilian defender was at fault for the second goal when Hoewedes was left unmarked in the middle of area.

minute header home fans zero tempera- Gelsenkirchen. leaves Schalke Bayern sev- Dortmund chance to open at the top when Nuremberg on

RESULTS

- Borussia Muenchengladbach 1** (Bradley 19)
- Hanover 2 (Hanke 73, Ya Konan 75)
- VfL Wolfsburg 0
- Werder Bremen 0
- Eintracht Frankfurt 2** (Russ 35, Gekas 84)
- Mainz 05 1 (Schuerle 42-pen)
- Freiburg 1** (Cisse 3)
- Hamburg 0
- VfB Stuttgart 1 (Harnik 34)
- Hoffenheim 1 (Salihovic 11)
- Schalke 04 2** (Jurado 58, Hoewedes)

Madrid target fired a second-over the bar as McClaren's Wolfsburg were held to a goalless draw at home by Werder Bremen.

The 24-year-old, who has scored nine league goals this season, fired his penalty over the bar on 77 minutes just minutes after Bremen captain Torsten Frings had also missed a spot-kick with Wolfsburg goalkeeper Diego Benaglio making the save.

The result leaves Bremen 10th and Wolfsburg 13th after they suffered their fourth-straight league draw.

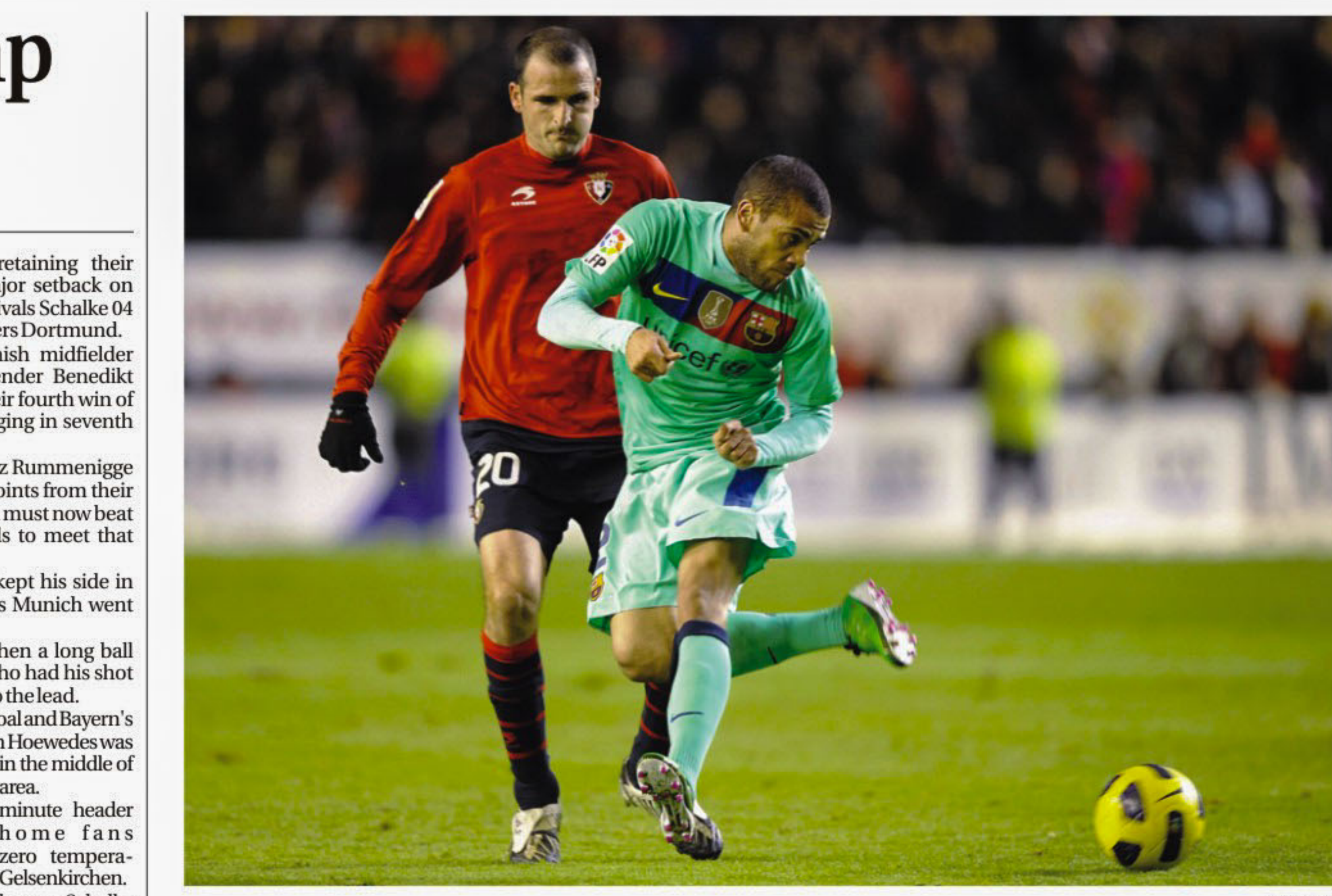
Second-placed Mainz blew their chance to close the gap at the top.

They suffered their fourth defeat in their last six games when they were beaten 2-1 by Eintracht Frankfurt.

The league's top scorer Theofanis Gekas netted a penalty in the 84th minute, his 13th of the season.

Hanover are third after they won 2-1 at bottom side Borussia Muenchengladbach, who were reduced to 10 men after Argentina's Raul Bobadilla was sent off at the end of the first-half for kicking an opponent.

A bizarre goal by Freiburg's Pappis Cisse after just three minutes sealed his side's 1-0 win over Hamburg as the Senegal striker scored his 11th goal of the season when he hit both posts before finally stabbing the ball home.



Barcelona defender Dani Alves (R) brings out the party tricks in their comprehensive win over Primera Liga rivals Osasuna at the Reyno de Navarra Stadium in Pamplona on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

Barca, Real dominant

AFP, Madrid



Saturday to stay top of the Spanish first division, two points clear of Real Madrid who beat 10-man Valencia 2-0.

Lionel Messi scored a second-half brace with his 14th and 15th league goals of the season after creating the

25th minute opener for Pedro Rodriguez as Barcelona built on Monday's 5-0 ClasicO drubbing of Real by notching their eighth consecutive league win.

Real bounced back from that mauling, their first defeat under Jose Mourinho, with Cristiano Ronaldo scoring his 15th and 16th goals of the season on 72 and 86 minutes as Madrid made it a perfect seven home wins in the league.

Valencia had their moments but midfielder David Albelda was sent off after 64 minutes for a second booking and Ronaldo made them pay.

Barcelona were buoyant after their Real rout five days ago but saw their Osasuna preparations turn into a nightmare when the Spanish Football Federation reversed from flying.

That forced the Catalan giants to undertake a five-hour overland journey that saw kick-off delayed by 50 minutes.

"We don't mind travelling. Last season we did 14 hours on a coach to play a Champions League match because UEFA said they wouldn't postpone the match. However, the Spanish federation told us that if our flight didn't go they would postpone the (Osasuna) match," said Barcelona coach Pep Guardiola.

"To play against Osasuna, a team that were unbeaten in 12

RESULTS

- Levante 2** (Nano 2, Caicedo 58)
- Atletico Madrid 0
- Real Madrid 2** (Ronaldo 73, 86)
- Valencia 0
- Osasuna 0
- Barcelona 3** (Pedro 26,

Serie A A Milan masterclass

AGENCIES, Milan

Zlatan Ibrahimovic scored another special goal as AC Milan underlined their position as Serie A title favourites with a 3-0 home win over Brescia on Saturday.

The Rossoneri, chasing a first scudetto since 2004, moved three points clear at the top having been briefly caught on Friday by Lazio who beat troubled champions Inter Milan 3-1.

Sixth-placed Inter are now 10 points behind city rivals Milan and their chances of a sixth straight title look remote after 15 games of the season.

Milan, who drew 1-1 with Sampdoria last weekend in a rare blip, took no time at all in dismantling promoted Brescia.

Midfielder Kevin Prince Boateng netted his first league goal for the club in the fourth minute after Ibrahimovic's assist.

Forward Robinho, preferred to fellow Brazilian Ronaldinho for a seventh straight game, extended the lead after 28 minutes when he intercepted a backpass before Ibrahimovic produced great individual skill to make it three on the half-hour.

The giant Sweden striker, who failed to net against Samp, scored his eighth of the league campaign and no Milan fan would doubt that the addition of the ex-Inter and Barcelona man is the key reason why they are top of the table.

The shrewd coaching of new boss Massimiliano Allegri, whose only previous Serie A experience was with perennial mid-table team Cagliari, has also made a difference.

The softly-spoken manager has shown his tougher side by daring to leave the underperforming Ronaldinho out despite the playmaker being club owner Silvio Berlusconi's favourite.

The result, along with limiting Andrea Pirlo's slowing influence on the side, has been a quicker and more incisive Milan than the versions seen in the last five years.

"It's important to carry on like this, often it's happened and it will happen that someone is left out. The key thing is those who play give their all," Allegri told Sky.

"Tonight we can be happy but the championship is still long. Last season (runners-up) Roma made up 14 points on Inter."

Ronaldinho came on in the second half but, despite long-term injuries to Alexandre Pato and Filippo Inzaghi, the former world player of the year is just a spare part these days and local media say he may leave in January as Milan seek another striker.

In the early game, seventh-placed AS Roma threw away a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 at Chievo and could easily have lost.

Schweinsteiger set to stay on

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich star Bastian Schweinsteiger is expected to sign a four-year contract extension that would keep him at the German champions until 2016.

Schweinsteiger, 26, has a contract with Bayern until June 2012, but German daily Bild said the Germany star is now ready to commit a further four years with the Bavarian giants.

Sources close to Schweinsteiger said he could sign the contract before Christmas.

Both Real Madrid and Manchester United are reported to be interested in luring Schweinsteiger away from Munich and Bayern have said they will do everything they can to keep their star.

In the wake of Bayern's 2-0 defeat at Schalke on Saturday night, sporting director Christian Nerlinger refused to confirm Bild's report, but said he is optimistic.

"It doesn't matter when he signs, just as long as he does and I am confident we can convince him," Nerlinger said on German television.

At Bayern's annual general meeting last week, president Uli Hoenes told Munich's members it is "incredibly important" that Schweinsteiger stays.