

# Real trump city rivals

Football

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid fought back from a goal down to defeat city rivals Atletico 3-1 in the first leg of the Spanish Cup quarterfinals on Thursday.

Atletico were ahead after just seven minutes at the Santiago Bernabeu when Uruguayan striker Diego Forlan was on target following a bright burst from Sergio Agüero which was ended by goalkeeper Iker Casillas's clumsy challenge.

But Sergio Ramos powered in a header from an Angel Di Maria corner in the 14th minute to bring the home side level before Cristiano Ronaldo and Mesut Ozil added second half strikes to give Real breathing space ahead of the second leg next week.

Atletico's young goalkeeper David De Gea pulled off a string of fine first-half saves to keep his side in the contest, particularly alert to a header from Portuguese international centre-half Ricardo Carvalho.

But he was powerless to keep out Real after the break.

Ronaldo gave his side the lead in the 61st minute when he stretched to steer in a cross from German star Ozil past De Gea.

Ozil then grabbed the third in stoppage time after a defensive error allowed him to chip the ball home from close range.

There was a bad-tempered end to the match, however, when Agüero and Ramos clashed and as their row continued, missiles were thrown onto the pitch.

In the night's other game, Almeria edged Deportivo La Coruna 1-0 thanks to a first-half own goal from on-loan Norwegian defender Knut Olav Rindaroy.



Real Madrid midfielder Mesut Ozil (L) scores the third goal against Atletico Madrid during their Copa del Rey clash at Bernabeu on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Saudis crash

Football

AFP, Doha

There was high drama at the Asian Cup on Thursday with Saudi Arabia knocked out and Japan recovering to beat Syria after having their goalkeeper controversially sent off.

Jordan dumped three-time champions Saudi Arabia out of the tournament with a 1-0 victory courtesy of a goalkeeping howler by Waleed Abdullah.

It has been a traumatic few days for Saudi Arabia, whose quest for a first Asian Cup since 1996 got off to a disastrous start when they were beaten 2-1 by Syria in their opening game.

It cost Portuguese coach Jose Peseiro his job, with Nasser Al Johar taking over.

But the change failed to pay off as the regional giants became the first team to be eliminated, while surprise package Jordan now have four points in Group B along with Japan. Syria have three points with one more game to play.

Jordan got the shock winner three minutes before half-time and against the run of play when Baha Abdelrahman was left unchallenged at the Al-Rayyan Stadium, and lofted over a cross that inadvertently curled into the net.

It was a moment of horror for keeper Waleed, who totally misjudged the flight of the ball.

They play their final crucial game against Syria on Monday after the Syrians crashed 2-1 to Japan in a high-octane clash at the Qatar Sports Club featuring two penalties and the dismissal of Japan goalkeeper Eiji Kawashima.

Captain Makoto Hasebe opened the scoring for the three-time champions in the 35th minute but Syria pulled one back after chaotic scenes that saw Kawashima dismissed. He was accused of bringing down Sanharib Malki even though the player had been flagged offside.

Despite loud protests from Japanese players and team officials, Iranian referee Torky Mohsen awarded the spot-kick and red-carded Kawashima, who initially refused to leave the field.



**TEN Cricket**  
South Africa v India  
Second ODI  
Live from 6:30pm  
**NEO Cricket**  
New Zealand v Pakistan  
Second Test, Day 1  
Live from 4:00am  
**ESPN**  
English Premiership  
Chelsea v Blackburn  
Live from 9:00pm  
West Ham v Arsenal  
Live from 11:30pm  
**STAR Sports**  
English Premiership  
Man City v Wolves  
Live from 9:00pm  
**TEN Sports**  
Serie A



**Bangladesh League**  
Brothers Union v Sheikh Russel  
Time: 4:00pm  
Venue: Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal

# MU face Spurs test

AFP, London



Sir Alex Ferguson is ready to unleash Wayne Rooney on Tottenham here Sunday as Manchester United aim to extend their phenomenal 23-match unbeaten streak against the Londoners.

Rooney missed last Sunday's FA Cup win over Liverpool at Old Trafford with an ankle knock but is expected to be fit as United travel to White Hart Lane looking to cement their place at the top of the table.

United last lost to Spurs in May 2001 and since then have held a hex over Harry Redknapp's side, who currently stand fourth in the table, eight points behind the unbeaten league leaders.

Ferguson is expected to welcome both Rooney and Nemanja Vidic back to United's starting line-up as Spurs try to avenge their 2-0 defeat at Old Trafford in October, when Nani's controversial strike stole the headlines.

Tottenham and Manchester United's top four clash is the most eye-catching fixture of

a Premier League schedule notable for a slew of derby matches.

The pick is at Anfield on Sunday, where Kenny Dalglish can expect a rapturous reception as he returns for the Merseyside derby against Everton in his first home match since taking over at Liverpool from Roy Hodgson.

While Liverpool entertain Everton, Sunderland will have the chance to avenge their humiliating 5-1 defeat to Newcastle in the Tyne and Wear derby last October at the Stadium of Light.

In Sunday's other derby tussle, Birmingham face bitter rivals Aston Villa at St Andrews.

Second-placed Manchester City meanwhile can claim top spot ahead of United's clash with Spurs if they defeat

Wolves at Eastlands.

Chelsea meanwhile will aim to build on their 7-0 demolition of Ipswich in the FA Cup when they face Blackburn at Stamford Bridge.

Third-placed Arsenal will seek to shake off their 1-0 League Cup semifinal first leg defeat to Ipswich on Wednesday against bottom club West Ham.

| FIXTURES                 |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| (1500 GMT unless stated) |  |
| <b>Saturday</b>          | Chelsea v Blackburn, Man City v Wolves, Stoke v Bolton, West Brom v Blackpool, West Ham v Arsenal (1730), Wigan v Fulham |
| <b>Sunday</b>            | Birmingham v Aston Villa (1200), Liverpool v Everton (1405), Sunderland v Newcastle (1200),                              |

# Messi targets Malaga

AFP, Barcelona



Barcelona star Lionel Messi vindicated his selection as the World Player of the Year by netting a hat-trick in the 5-0 Spanish Cup destruction of Real Betis and now he has his sights set firmly on struggling Malaga.

The Catalan club dominated the Ballon d'Or short-list but while Andres Iniesta and Xavi Hernandez were favourites to win, with Spain having clinched the World Cup, it was the gifted Argentine who picked up the award for a second successive year.

Relegation-threatened Malaga now face the ominous task of pitting themselves against Barca who will be seeking a record 28th straight game without defeat - they equalled their previous record tally set in the 1974-75 season with the win over Real Betis.

Real Madrid remain on the shoulders of Barcelona but lack the fluidity and fire power of their rivals.

Cristiano Ronaldo came to the rescue with a hat-trick in the 4-2 win over Villarreal last weekend and they are scouring the market for a goal scorer with Gonzalo Higuain a long term injury absentee.

On Thursday, they had to come from behind to beat city neighbours Atletico in the Spanish Cup. This weekend they meet

second-from-bottom Almeria.

Once again a considerable gap has emerged between the top two sides and the rest with Villarreal eleven points behind in third.

Villarreal take on Osasuna while fourth-placed Valencia face Deportivo La Coruna.

Espanyol's impressive run this season continues but they now have a complicated away game against Sevilla.

The Andalusian club are surprisingly down in mid-table but their confidence will have been boosted with a 3-2 win away to Real Sociedad and now they are battling to get key striker Luis Fabiano fit.

Atletico Madrid are still in the Europa League places despite their inconsistent form and now have a crucial encounter with Mallorca, who along with Getafe are below them on goal difference.

Athletic Bilbao are also in the hunt for a place in Europe and are preparing to play Racing Santander with Spain international Fernando Llorente a fitness doubt.

The position at the foot of the table remains tight with the bottom three all on 13 points.

Zaragoza are bottom but they know a victory over Levante and other results going their way would take them out of the relegation zone, while Sporting Gijon, who haven't won since mid-October face Hercules, fresh from a 4-1 win over Atletico Madrid.

| FIXTURES        |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>Saturday</b> | Villarreal v Osasuna, Getafe v Real Sociedad, Zaragoza v Levante, Sporting Gijon v Hercules, Athletic Bilbao v Racing Santander, Sevilla v Espanyol |
| <b>Sunday</b>   | Valencia v Deportivo La Coruna, Almeria v Real Madrid, Barcelona v Malaga   |
| <b>Monday</b>   |   |



Japan midfielder Keisuke Honda is ecstatic after scoring the second goal against Syria during their Asian Cup encounter at Qatar Sports Club Stadium on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

# IN brief

## Villarreal sign Cicinho

AFP, Madrid

AS Roma's Brazilian defender Cicinho has joined Villarreal on loan until the end of the season, the Spanish side said Thursday.

Under the deal, Villarreal said it has the option to buy the Brazil international.

The 30-year-old, whose full name is Cicero Joao de Cezare, formerly played in Spain for Real Madrid from 2005 to 2007, before joining Roma.

Villarreal are currently third in Spain's top division, 11 points behind second-placed Real and 13 off the pace set by leaders Barcelona.

## Stoke agree Ba fee

AFP, Berlin

Stoke City have agreed to pay seven million euros (5.9 million pounds, 9.4 million dollars) for Hoffenheim's Senegalese striker Demba Ba, German magazine Kicker reported Friday.

Ba, 25, who had refused to join the Bundesliga side's winter training camp, was due to undergo a medical at the English Premier League club on Friday, Kicker reported on its website.

For Hoffenheim it is the second departure of a player in recent weeks, following the 17-million-euro sale of Brazilian midfielder Luiz Gustavo to Bundesliga giants Bayern Munich.

## 'Kraft move risky'

AFP, Berlin

Former Bayern Munich goalkeeper Oliver Kahn said the decision to hand Thomas Kraft a Bundesliga debut against Wolfsburg on Saturday could be a risky move by coach Louis van Gaal.

The 22-year-old, who takes over goalkeeping duties from his 14-year senior Jorg Butt, had impressed van Gaal in the Champions League, proving himself a safe pair of hands in group encounters against AS Roma and FC Basel.

But Kahn, who played for Bayern between 1994 and 2008, warned that the pressure could be too much.

"It's a risk," he said. "No one knows how he'll react."

## Ibricic joins Lokomotiv

AFP, Zagreb

Bosnian international midfielder Senijad Ibricic has joined Lokomotiv Moscow from Croatia's first division side Hajduk Split, a local daily reported here on Friday.

"We are satisfied with the deal on which we have agreed," Hajduk Split head coach Josip Grbic was quoted as saying by Sportske Novosti.

He spoke after talks about the 25-year-old's transfer held in Moscow on Thursday.

Ibricic signed a three-and-a-half year deal worth 3.1 million euros (4.1 million dollars), the daily reported.

Lokomotiv Moscow is to pay Hajduk Split five million euros in damages as well as 20 per cent of the value from Ibricic's next transfer, it said.