



Arsenal strikers Robin Van Persie (L) and Marouane Chamakh attend a training session at London Colney on Tuesday ahead of their tonight's Champions League match against Olympiakos.

PHOTO: AFP

# Trio bids to ignite flame

AFP, Paris



Champions Barcelona will be bidding to get their Champions League title defence back on track Wednesday as Arsenal and AC Milan also look to keep the dream alive in the second round of elite European matches.

But English giants Chelsea, who have already got their campaign off to a winning start, are set for possibly their toughest group assignment when they meet Spanish side Valencia at the Mestalla.

Barcelona were held 2-2 by 2010 champions AC Milan at the Nou Camp in their Group H opener, but despite riding high after a 5-0 hammering of Atletico Madrid in La Liga in which Lionel Messi scored a hattrick, coach Pep Guardiola warned against complacency as the Catalans travel to Minsk to take on Belarus champions FC Bate Borisov.

Both sides are level in Group H on one point after Bate drew 1-1 at Czech champions FC Viktoria Plzen.

"We are not unbeatable - any team can beat us. But if we do things right, the fans who come to watch us will have a good time, which is the most important thing," insisted Guardiola.

"We played very well (against Atletico), it was a lesson in concentration, but ... we have to do it again. Let's see if we're able to maintain this level. It's this year's challenge."

Bate have lost their previous two ties against visiting Spanish sides Villarreal and Real Madrid, but Barcelona's David Villa, who has found the net five times this season, echoed his coach: "Barca play a very high level of football, but each day is different and no team is unbeatable."

"But we sense that the fans are excited. They know how much poten-

tial we've got and what we can do, but we are aware that is only just starting."

Chelsea boss Andre Villas-Boas' side will be looking to take a big step towards the last-16 when they travel to Spain with striker Juan Mata just one month after he left Valencia for Stamford Bridge.

Chelsea sit top of Group E after a 2-0 home win against Bayer Leverkusen with Valencia drawing at Belgium side Genk, who travel to the German club.

Chelsea, who defeated Swansea 4-1 at the weekend, are unbeaten in their last six visits to Spain going back to 2005 and have won both previous trips to Valencia 2-1.

But Villas-Boas knows they face a tough task at Valencia despite the Spaniards' goalless draw at Genk and a La

Dortmund and Marseille to help them reach the 11-point target he has set to ensure qualification to the knock-out stages.

Marseille host Borussia Dortmund in the second Group F tie.

In Group G, UEFA champions FC Porto travel to Zenit St Petersburg.

FC Porto have won all four of their previous visits to Russia but Zenit were unbeaten at home in Europe last season. Porto won their opener against Shakhtar Donetsk 2-1 as Zenit fell to Apoel Nicosia in Cyprus by the same scoreline.

Apoel travel to FC Shakhtar Donetsk in the Ukraine.

AC Milan host FC Viktoria Plzen in the second Group H tie.

## FIXTURES

### Wednesday

(all 1845GMT unless otherwise stated):  
Bayer Leverkusen v Genk, Valencia v Chelsea, Arsenal v Olympiacos, Marseille v Borussia Dortmund, Shakhtar Donetsk v APOEL, Zenit St Petersburg v Porto (1600GMT), BATE Borisov v Barcelona, AC Milan v Viktoria Plzen

Liga loss at the weekend to Sevilla.

"The result at Genk was unexpected," said Villas-Boas.

"Genk is a difficult place to go and it's a very tight stadium with a good environment. But I was expecting Valencia to take the win."

"So I would say that this is a game where Valencia will try to get three points."

"A win at Valencia would put us in a very, very good position."

Fellow Londoners Arsenal are second behind French club Marseille in Group F after a late goal gave German champions Borussia Dortmund a share of the points.

Arsene Wenger is keen his side claim maximum points from the three home fixtures against Olympiakos,

## Injuries hit Arsenal

AFP, London

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger has been hit by a triple injury blow ahead of Wednesday's clash against Olympiakos after Theo Walcott, Gervinho and Laurent Koscielny were all ruled out of the Champions League tie.

England winger Walcott is sidelined after suffering a knee injury in Saturday's 3-0 win over Bolton, while French defender Koscielny has an ankle problem sustained in a challenge with Bolton's Nigel Reo-Coker.

Ivory Coast forward Gervinho is struggling with a muscle strain and won't recover in time to face the Greeks at the Emirates Stadium.

The good news for Wenger is the trio's recovery time is expected to be quick.

He rates Walcott's chances of returning for this weekend's north London derby against Tottenham as better than 50-50 and retains hope that Koscielny and Gervinho could also be fit for the trip to White Hart Lane.

"Koscielny, Gervinho and Walcott are not fit," Wenger said on Tuesday.

# Breno unlikely to flee



AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich's Brazilian defender Breno, arrested and taken into custody Saturday on suspicion of causing a fire that destroyed his house, is unlikely to flee the country, his psychiatrist insisted Monday.

Prosecutors arrested Breno and judged him a risk of flight or obstruction of justice, district attorney Thomas Steinkraus-Koch told SID sports news agency at the weekend but Professor Florian Holsbauer said he believed Breno did not need to be kept under lock and key.

"I do not want to say that the prosecutor has got it wrong - but I do not believe the fear (there is a risk) of aggravating the facts or of flight," said Profes-

sor Holsbauer.

The professor, head of the renowned Max-Planck Psychiatry Institute and an expert on depression, added he had found Breno to be "a kindly person, open to others" and he could "not imagine he set fire to his own house or is capable of aggravating the act." The professor added that he had the impression Breno was, however, somewhat detached from his immediate environment and was "isolated."

"And now he is sat in prison," he noted.

Steinkraus-Koch maintains there is "a precise suspicion" of attempted arson against the 21-year-old player, whose luxury villa in the Munich suburbs went up in flames on Monday evening.

Breno, who joined Bayern from Sao Paulo in 2008, had been briefly hospitalised for smoke inhalation after the blaze

at his house, which is reported to have started in a guest room in the basement.

The property in the suburb of Gruenwald was completely gutted, but Breno's wife Renata, their son and two children from Renata's previous relationship were not at home at the time.

The cost of the damage ran to millions of euros.

Professor Holsbauer said that psychological issues had to be addressed with sportsmen as with anyone else.

"Professional football is not just a question of injured muscles or knees but one also has to deal with the psyche, the injuries in the brain," he opined.

German media had revealed Friday that Breno -- full name Vinicius Rodrigues Borges -- had consulted a doctor at the Institute at his employers' behest and Bayern confirmed as much.

# 'TV controls EPL'

AFP, Manchester



Television, and not the clubs, controls English football, Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson told the BBC on Monday.

The 69-year-old said that United and their rivals were paying the price for the big money that television was paying for having the rights to show English Premier League matches live.

The present deal struck for the period of 2010-2013 allows BSkyB and ESPN (who took over Setanta's part of the deal when they ran out of funds) to show 138 games a season at a combined cost of £1.782 billion.

Under the deal, United earned more than £60 million from television last season - a combination of fees for having their matches shown live, and prize money based upon league position.

Ferguson said he found the schedule very

demanding especially on weeks when they were involved in European action.

"When you shake hands with the devil you have to pay the price," said Ferguson.

"Television is God at the moment."

"It shows itself quite clearly because when you see the fixture lists come out now, they can pick and choose whenever they want the top teams on television."

"You get some ridiculous situations when you're playing on Wednesday night in Europe and then at lunchtime the following Saturday. You ask any manager if they would pick that themselves and there'd be no chance."

Ferguson believes also that the clubs are not reaping the financial benefits they deserve given the global reach of the sport.

"When you think of that (the Premier League selling their product to 200 countries) I don't think we get enough money," he said.

# Milan get Ibra boost

AFP, Milan



AC Milan have received a boost ahead of their Champions League clash against Czechs Viktoria Plzen as star forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic returned to full training on Monday.

The big Swede had spent two weeks on the sidelines with a groin problem since being ruled out of their opening European encounter against Barcelona, which ended in a 2-2 draw.

Without Ibrahimovic's return, Milan would be in a state of crisis.

Brazilian forwards Alexandre Pato and Robinho are both injured while attacking midfielder Kevin-Prince Boateng, whom coach Massimiliano Allegri favours in a role behind the front two, is also unavailable.

When Pato was injured a week ago against Udinese he was replaced by teenage forward Stefan El Shaarawy, an Italian youth international who has an Egyptian father.

The 18-year-old scored Milan's equaliser in the 1-1 draw against Udinese and then started in the 1-0 victory over Cesena on Saturday.

Veteran forward Filippo Inzaghi is also working his way back from a cruciate knee ligament injury and has made two brief substitute appearances in the last two games.

However, neither of those two were included in Milan's 25-man Champions League squad.

It meant that without Ibrahimovic, the club would only be able to call on Antonio Cassano and 18-year-old Simone Andrea Ganz, who has yet to play for the first team and having come through the club's youth system was only on the Champions League B-list anyway.

Cassano at least has had a run of five games as a starter since the beginning of the season and has played twice for Italy as well, meaning the oft maligned forward has gradually recovered his best form and indeed physical shape.

At the beginning of the season there was a lot of speculation linking the then overweight Cassano with a move away from Milan, but Allegri insisted the club always intended keeping him.

"Cassano is doing very well. People spoke a lot about him in the summer because it seemed as if he would be leaving," said Allegri.

"However, we're very happy that he stayed because it was never our intention to sell him."

"We're taking care of him and he's repaying us."

However, with a dearth of attacking options, it will be a relief to Allegri to at least have Ibrahimovic available as a luxury substitute should the need arise.

Although with mid-table Milan travelling to league leaders Juventus at the weekend, Allegri may prefer ideally to hold the Swede back for that crunch clash.

There is not such good news for club captain Massimo Ambrosini, though, who is still suffering pain in the shoulder he dislocated against Barcelona two weeks ago.

However, Allegri believes he may have both players available.

"We're assessing them, they're both getting better. We have (some time left) and we hope they'll be ready," he said.

Milan will be expecting to take three points from this game against the group stage debutants, who began their campaign two weeks ago with a 1-1 draw at home to BATE Borisov, leaving all four teams level on one point.



PHOTO: AFP

Brazil starlet Neymar gestures during a training session at the Mangueirão Stadium on Monday. Brazil take on arch-rivals Argentina in an international friendly today.

# Wilshere out for 5 months

AFP, London

England and Arsenal midfielder Jack Wilshere has undergone a successful operation on his right ankle but could be out for up to five months, the Premier League giants announced on Monday.

The 19-year-old suffered a stress fracture to his right ankle in a pre-season friendly against the New York Red Bulls.

"The initial indications are that the surgery has been successful and Jack will now undergo a prolonged period of rehabilitation. It is envisaged that Jack's rehabilitation will take a period of four to five months," the team said in a statement.

Wilshere added: "I've had my operation this morning and all went well. My ankle is little bit sore, but I'm already looking forward to working hard to get fit and playing again."

"I would also just like to say thanks for the many messages of support I have received from you - the fantastic Arsenal supporters. See you all soon at the Emirates."

The news will add further pressure on Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger as his side have made a dreadful start to the Premier League campaign after struggling to overcome the departures of Samir Nasri and captain Cesc Fabregas.

## Juve-Milan sold out

AFP, Rome

This weekend's super-clash between Juventus and Milan in Turin has been declared a sell-out at the 41,000 Juventus Stadium.

Juve are top of the Serie A pile while champions Milan are in mid-table having won only one of their first four games.

Juve only moved to their new self-owned stadium this season following several years playing at the city's Olympic Stadium and before that at the highly unpopular Stadio Delle Alpi.

**SPORTS POLL**  
**WEEKLY QUESTION**  
Do you think Mushfiqur Rahim is a good choice as skipper?

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**What to WATCH**

**ESPN & STAR Cricket**  
Champions League T20  
New South Wales v Trinidad & Tobago  
Live from 5:00pm  
Chennai v Cobras  
Live from 8:30pm

**TEN Sports**  
UEFA Champions League  
Arsenal v Olympiakos  
Live from 12:00am (Thursday)

**TEN Action+**  
UEFA Champions League  
Valencia v Chelsea  
Live from 12:00am (Thursday)

**DAY'S EVENT**

BCB Red v BCB Green  
Four-Day Practice Match, Day 3  
Time: 9:30am  
Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur