

Hulk's sister kidnapped

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Brazilian police were on Tuesday investigating whether the younger sister of Brazil footballer Hulk had been kidnapped, amid press reports that she had been seized by armed gunmen.

One police officer was quoted as saying by the daily *Correio* that Angelica Aparecida Vieira, 22, had been alone in a car outside a restaurant in Campina Grande, in northeast Brazil, on Monday when she was taken.

No contact has been made with the woman's family, who have reportedly asked the police not to intervene due to fears for her life.

"We are waiting for a contact but they seem to prefer silence for now," Vieira's mother, Maria do Socorro, was quoted as saying.

Media reports said that Hulk, who signed in September for Russian champions Zenit Saint Petersburg, had been sidelined with a calf injury.

Man arrested over racist gesture

AFP, London

British police investigating an alleged racist gesture by a Chelsea supporter towards a black Manchester United player arrested a 28-year-old man on Monday, Scotland Yard said.

Several British newspapers last week printed a picture taken during Chelsea's dramatic 5-4 League Cup win over Manchester United at Stamford Bridge on Wednesday which appeared to show a fan making a monkey gesture at striker Danny Welbeck.

"Officers investigating a complaint regarding alleged racist behaviour at Stamford Bridge on Wednesday, 31 October have arrested a man," London's Metropolitan Police said in a statement.

"The 28-year-old man was arrested... after attending a west London police station by appointment.

"He was arrested on suspicion of a racially aggravated Section 4A Public Order Act offence and has been bailed to a west London police station in late November.

"Enquiries continue."

Chelsea said last Thursday that they were holding their own separate investigation into the incident and appealed for anyone who could identify the fan to contact the club.

The incident comes after Chelsea confirmed they had complained to the Football Association about "inappropriate language" used by referee Mark Clattenburg towards midfielder Jon Obi Mikel during an English Premier League defeat by Manchester United on October 28.



What to WATCH

ESPN
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Live at 8:30pm
TEN Sports
UEFA Champions League
Braga v Man United
Live from 1:45am (Thursday)
TEN Action
UEFA Champions League
Chelsea v Shakhtar Donetsk



Manchester United star Robin van Persie (C) attends a training session in Manchester yesterday ahead of their Champions League match against Braga.

PHOTO: AFP

MU, Barca eye knockout

AFP, Paris



Manchester United can avenge the embarrassment of last year's Champions League group stage exit with a victory in Braga on Wednesday, while Barcelona can also secure their passage to the knockout stage by beating Celtic.

The fourth round of matches holds great significance for several teams in this year's competition as defending champions Chelsea face a crunch encounter against runaway Ukrainian league leaders Shakhtar Donetsk, with beaten finalists Bayern Munich vying to keep pace in Group F when they host Lille.

United recovered from an early two-goal deficit to beat Braga 3-2 at Old Trafford a fortnight ago to record their third win in as many matches in Europe's top club competition, having yet to reach top gear.

Successive league wins over Chelsea and Arsenal has seen United climb to the top of the Premier League table and defensive stalwart Rio Ferdinand believes there is more to come from the Group H leaders.

"I don't think we have hit a real purple patch yet, which we are really searching for," he was quoted as saying on the club's website.

Despite a solid defensive display in Saturday's 2-1 triumph over the Gunners, United's

profligacy in front of goal prevented a more convincing scoreline and Ferdinand stressed the importance of "getting it all in one package and doing it all in ninety minutes at the right times".

"We're still aiming for that and it will come soon, don't worry," added the 33-year-old in an ominous warning to upcoming opponents.

Spanish giants Barcelona also have maximum points after three rounds and may welcome back long-term absentee Gerard Pique after the defender was included in the squad for Wednesday's tie in Glasgow.

A 3-1 win over Celta Vigo at the weekend propelled Barca to their best start to a league season and the Catalans own the distinction of being the only side to have defeated Celtic at Parkhead in the tournament's modern era.

Jordi Alba's stoppage-time winner broke Celtic hearts at the Nou Camp two weeks ago and another triumph for Tito Vilanova's side would secure their progression to the last 16, leaving Celtic with plenty of work to do after a promising start to Group G.

Chelsea will be out for revenge at Stamford Bridge against Shakhtar after their first taste of Ukrainian opposition ended in a 2-0 defeat on matchday three.

Group E leaders Shakhtar are searching for a

first victory on English soil, while second-place Chelsea know they cannot afford to cede any more ground if they are to repeat last year's improbable success.

The Blues are just a point ahead of Juventus, who are in action against Danish minnows Nordsjaelland, and must still travel to Turin later in the month.

Chelsea playmaker Juan Mata billed Wednesday's clash "like a final", underlining the importance of collecting three points "if (Chelsea) want to finish first in (their) group".

Meanwhile last season's runners-up Bayern Munich find themselves level with Valencia and BATE Borisov, who meet at the Mestalla in midweek, on six points in Group F.

The German heavyweights will be aiming to regain control of the group when they host strugglers Lille at the Allianz Arena, while Rudi Garcia's French charges must avoid defeat to prevent an early elimination.

Romanian outfit CFR Cluj can tighten their grip on the second qualification spot alongside United in Group H as they welcome bottom side Galatasaray to Transylvania.

Elsewhere Benfica are out to stop the rot against visiting Group G rivals Spartak Moscow in Portugal.

Spartak's 2-1 win in Moscow earned Unai Emery's side their first points of the campaign, while Benfica -- who have lost two consecutive European home fixtures -- are bottom with just a point to their name.



West Bromwich Albion forward Peter Odemwingie scores the opening goal during their Premier League encounter against Southampton at the Hawthorns on Tuesday.

Dortmund impresses Mourinho

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho thinks German champions Borussia Dortmund are a team capable of winning the Champions League as the two clubs get set to do battle in their Group D tie on Tuesday.

"They are an excellent team and can win the competition if they qualify for the second round," said the 49-year-old Mourinho who lifted Europe's most prestigious tournament in 2004 with Porto and with Inter Milan in 2010.

"Dortmund are an excellent team and it is not by chance that they have twice won the German championship. If they can reach the second round, they are even capable of winning the competition.

"They are very strong on the counter-attack and in transitional play. Their players are creative and quick but at the same time rigorous in defence. It is going to be complicated but I think we can get a good result."

Scotland sack Levein

Football

REUTERS, London

Craig Levein has been sacked as Scotland manager, the Scottish FA said on Monday.

Levein, a former international who became manager in December 2009, has departed with Scotland bottom of their 2014 World Cup qualifying group.

Scotland have collected two points from four matches after opening draws with Serbia and Macedonia before defeats in Wales and Belgium last month.

"The Board of the Scottish FA has taken the decision primarily due to the disappointing results in the FIFA World Cup Brazil 2014 Qualifiers," the Scottish FA said in a statement.

Levein oversaw three wins in 12 competitive fixtures in charge of Scotland who are seeking to qualify for a first major tournament since the 1998 World Cup.

Scottish FA chief executive Stewart Regan said Levein had paid the price for the increasing importance of results in modern-day football and Scotland's drop in the world rankings.

"We are taking this decision with real sadness. Craig has worked hard to bring success, and has been thoroughly professional in his approach to the job," said Regan.

"However, he would be the first to agree that football is a results-driven business. The challenge for the squad now is to improve our position in Group A and, subsequently, improve our position in the FIFA rankings."

Regan said the Scottish FA would honour Levein's contract, due to run until the end of the 2014 World Cup qualifying campaign next October.

Levein, who won 16 caps for Scotland during a playing career spent mostly at Hearts, took charge of the national side when they were 46th in the rankings but they now lie 10 places lower.

Under-21 coach Billy Stark will manage the team for the Nov. 14 friendly in Luxembourg.

Odemwingie sinks Southampton

AFP, West Bromwich



Peter Odemwingie scored twice as surprise package West Bromwich Albion went fifth in the Premier League with a 2-0 win at home to Southampton on Monday.

Albion returned to winning ways in convincing fashion after two straight losses but this result left basement club Southampton rooted to the foot of the table with eight defeats from just their first 10 league games.

"This was a good response from a good team," said Nigeria international Odemwingie. "We needed a bit of luck and it is simple, if you keep shooting you will score, we are happy with the three points."

Southampton's fifth successive away defeat can only increase the pressure on manager Nigel Adkins and the Saints boss had to endure mocking taunts of "you're getting sacked in the morning" from the

home supporters.

Odemwingie had enjoyed several chances opened the scoring in the 36th minute when his left-footed shot deflected off Maya Yoshida and went past Saints keeper Paulo Gazzaniga.

Southampton started the second half well with a shot on the turn from striker Rickie Lambert hitting the crossbar with Albion keeper Ben Foster beaten.

But Odemwingie doubled the Baggies lead after the hour when, having made good ground to outpace his marker, he headed in a superb cross from Shane Long.

"To bounce back from the last two difficult games where we lost like we did was superb and I felt we deserved the win," said Foster.

"We have conceded some unlucky goals recently so it is great to get back to winning ways and also keep a clean sheet. It is a cliché but we are not getting carried away, we will take each game as it comes."



PHOTO: AFP