

Henderson leads Liverpool

AFP, Paris

Jordan Henderson fired Liverpool into the Europa League knockout stages, scoring the decisive goal in the five-time European champions' 1-0 win at Udinese on Thursday. Brendan Rodgers' side ended up topping Group A, ahead of already qualified Anzhi Makhachkala.

Two of the other five last 32 round tickets on offer in Thursday's closing group stage action were claimed by Steaua Bucharest and VfB Stuttgart from Group E. Liverpool turned up in Italy with their Europa League destiny in their own hands - knowing a win

RESULTS	
Udinese (ITA) 0	Liverpool (ENG) 1 (Henderson 23)
Young Boys (SUI) 3	(Eulogio 38, M. Costanzo 52, A. Gonzalez 90)
Anzhi Makhachkala (RUS) 1	(Akhmedov 45+2)
Hapoel Tel-Aviv (ISR) 2	(Mari 56, Maman 80)
Academica Coimbra (POR) 0	
Viktoria Plzen (CZE) 1	(Prochazka 26)
Atletico Madrid (ESP) 0	
AEL Limassol (CYP) 3	(Orlando 41, Edmar 79, Junior 82)
Marseille (FRA) 0	Fenerbahce (TUR) 0
Moenchengladbach (GER) 3	(Cigeri 23, Hanke 28-pen, L. de Jong 79)
Bordeaux (FRA) 2	(Diabate 29, 73)
Newcastle (ENG) 0	
Maritimo Funchal (POR) 2	(Goncalo 18, Nhucco 86)
Club Brugge (BEL) 1	(Rafaelov 85-pen)
FC Copenhagen (DEN) 1	(Vetokele 87)
Steaua Bucharest (ROM) 1	(Rusescu 73)
VfB Stuttgart (GER) 0	Molde (NOR) 1 (Angan 45+1)
Dnipropetrovsk (UKR) 4	(Kalinic 20-pen, Zozulya 39, 52, Kravchenko 86)
AIK Solna (SWE) 0	

would assure them of passage to the knockout stages, irrespective of the outcome of the other Group A tie between Anzhi and Young Boys.

They began boldly yet it was the already knocked-out Udinese who went close to taking the lead when Roberto Pereyra curled in an angled shot on 21 minutes.

Two minutes later Liverpool took control from an unexpected source.

Stewart Downing's corner from the left was headed on by Luis Suarez to Suso who in turn laid it back to Henderson who drilled a low ball through the Udinese defence and the legs of their keeper Daniele Padelli.



Liverpool midfielder Jordan Henderson (C) exults after scoring the all-important goal against Udinese during their Europa League encounter at the Friuli Stadium on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

Terry ruled out of Club World Cup

AFP, London

Chelsea captain John Terry will be unable to compete in the Club World Cup later this month because of a knee injury, interim manager Rafael Benitez revealed on Friday.

The former England centre-back has been told not to travel to Japan for the tournament so as not to jeopardise his recovery from the ligament injury he picked up in the 1-1 draw at home to Liverpool in November.

"We've been talking with the doctor. The inflammation during the flight will not be the best thing for him so he will not travel," Benitez said. "He wanted to go and to help, but it's better that he stays here. We don't know when he will play. We have to wait and see how he reacts."

Chelsea qualified for the Club World Cup by winning last season's Champions League but they were knocked out of this season's tournament.

Fergie lights the fuse

AFP, London



Alex Ferguson lit the fuse on a potentially explosive showdown with Manchester City as the Manchester

United manager claimed a victory at Eastlands would be one of his club's greatest ever results.

For the first time in 44 years, City will go into the Manchester derby as reigning English champions, but the bragging rights from pipping United to the title on the final day of last season will count for nothing if Ferguson's side inflict a first league defeat of the season on Roberto Mancini's men at Eastlands on Sunday.

United are three points clear of second placed City at the top of the Premier League and the prospect of allowing their bitter rivals to extend that lead is certain to provoke a ferocious response from the hosts after their exit from the Champions League in midweek.

With United showing alarming defensive frailties in recent weeks, encapsulated by a chaotic 4-3 win at Reading last week, Ferguson knows it won't be easy to subdue City, especially as the Blues have a formidable record on their home turf.

City haven't lost a league home game since Everton won at Eastlands in

December 2010 and they can also take confidence from a pair of league victories over their bitter rivals last season.

In the circumstances, Ferguson believes a derby victory would rank as one of the all-time great United triumphs.

"If we win (on Sunday) it will be one of our best ever results. They are a really good, powerful team with massive players," Ferguson said.

"It won't be easy and if we defend

FIXTURES	
(1500GMT unless stated)	
Saturday	
Arsenal v West Brom, Aston Villa v Stoke, Southampton v Reading, Sunderland v Chelsea, Swansea v Norwich, Wigan v QPR	
Sunday	
Everton v Tottenham, Man City v Man Utd (1330GMT), West Ham v Liverpool (1600GMT)	
Monday	

like we did at Reading we'll be in trouble.

"The important thing for us is to take lessons from the mistakes we're making and do something about it. We need to find a solution."

Mancini faced renewed questions about his future after City's latest European flop and a defeat to United would only add to the pressure on the Italian.

Reports of Pep Guardiola or Jose

Mourinho replacing him at the end of the season will make unpleasant reading and, while Mancini is convinced he will be given time to get his spluttering team back on track, even he admits his players need to raise their game.

"It's clear the season isn't finished. We have the Premier League and FA Cup to go for, but we must work more now. What we're doing is not enough," Mancini said.

"I don't feel any pressure. I'm disappointed because we went out of the Champions League and I'm disappointed for the club because they deserve to go through and for our players, who deserve to play on that stage." The theme of managers under pressure runs through the rest of the weekend's programme at both ends of the table.

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger has been under fire of late and another negative result against West Bromwich Albion on Saturday would trigger more bile from the growing number of critics among the club's previously loyal fanbase.

Wenger's team are on a miserable run of two wins from their last nine matches in all competitions and Spanish midfielder Mikel Arteta, is well aware that a victory over West Brom is essential to ease the sense of crisis enveloping the Gunners.

Messi on the mend

AFP, Madrid



Lionel Messi could yet be available for Barcelona at Real Betis on Sunday, despite being stretchered off the field against Benfica in the Champions League.

The league leaders go to Seville looking to defend a six-point advantage over Atletico Madrid and 11 over Real Madrid at the scene of the latter's latest upset a fortnight ago. Betis beat Real Madrid 1-0 on that occasion and will be formidable opposition for Barca but Messi himself believes there is plenty of talent in the squad if he is not available to play with what has been diagnosed as a bruised knee.

"The team will be the same, with or without me, there are more than enough players to do the job. I feel fine, but I don't know yet if I will be available for Sunday," he said.

No decision will be made on Messi's involvement before he trains on Saturday but whether the initial fears that he could be out for some time appear to be unfounded.

Within 12 hours of leaving the pitch he was back in the gym doing a recovery session on Thursday but he explained

how he too was worried.

"On the stretcher I thought the worst, of the pain torturing me, of being out for a long time," he explained.

Cesc Fabregas also spoke of being initially worried for the Argentine, but also believes he could still feature at Betis.

"We were worried about Messi but we're happy he's fine now, knowing him he'll want to play on Sunday," he said.

Messi needs to hit just one more goal to equal Gerd Mueller's record of 85 goals in a calendar year in 1972.

However with two further league games and a cup match to go before the end of the year it would not be a shock to see him rested at Betis as a precaution.

Barca have both Andres Iniesta and Jordi Alba available again and only Alexis Sanchez and Dani Alves are long term casualties.

Betis midfielder Ruben Perez was full of praise for Sunday's opponents.

"They are the best team in the world, they keep the ball all the game and it's difficult but we'll go out looking for points and try to win," he said.

On his own side's start, that sees Betis fourth on 25 points, he continued: "The atmosphere is great and we've got some good points so far, we're up there and we have to keep working hard because in football a bad run can come at any time".

What to WATCH

Channel 9
Bangladesh v West Indies
Fifth ODI
Live from 2:30pm
STAR Cricket
India v England
Third Test, Day 4
Live from 9:30am
ESPN
English Premiership
Sunderland v Chelsea
Live from 9:00pm
STAR Sports
English Premiership
Arsenal v West Bromwich
Live from 9:00pm
Primera Liga
Malaga v Granada
Live from 11:00pm
Real Valladolid v Real Madrid
Live from 1:00am (Sunday)

DAY'S EVENT

National Cricket League
(Four-Day Match; Day 2)
Rajshahi v Khulna
Venue: Shaheed Chandu Stadium, Bogra
Sylhet v Dhaka Metro
Venue: Rangpur Cricket Garden
Chittagong v Rangpur
Venue: Sylhet Divisional Stadium
Barisal v Dhaka
Venue: Shaheed Kamruzzaman

Italian giants after Balotelli

AFP, Milan

Speculation over Mario Balotelli's possible exit from Manchester City intensified Friday a day after the striker's daughter was born in his native Italy.

Italy international Balotelli is enduring a turbulent season at the English Premier League champions.

But despite recent links to AC Milan, a club he has admitted to supporting, the Italian sports media has spiced up the rumour mill by claiming former club Inter Milan and champions Juve are also chasing the player's signature.

The reports come a day after model Raffaella Fico gave birth to the couple's baby girl, who has been named Pia. Balotelli is reported to be planning a trip to Italy to see the child for the first time next week.

Gazzetta dello Sport meanwhile carried a front page picture of Balotelli wearing a jersey with the colours of all three Italian clubs.

The report, which carried no official club sources, claimed "AC Milan was the first (club) to show interest but Inter remembers

having the first right of refusal and Juve..."

While both Milan and Juventus are reportedly looking for an out and out striker in the mould of Balotelli, Inter reportedly have a buy-back option on the man they sold to City for 22 million euros in August 2010, a sale on which the Nerazzurri made a profit of over 21 million.

After their qualification for the last 32 of the Europa League on Thursday, Inter coach Andrea Stramaccioni admitted their first Christmas wish was for a top striker.

"We'd like a central striker, something we all know we've been missing from the start.

"That's the only type of player we're lacking but, as I've said, either someone like this comes in or we'll focus on getting everyone fit."

Balotelli's agent Mino Raiola appeared to up the ante for potential suitors earlier this week when he claimed the unsettled striker is like the Mona Lisa, virtually unaffordable.



Fourth Dutch teen arrested

Football

AFP, The Hague

Dutch police said Friday they had arrested a fourth teenager in connection with the shocking beating to death of a football linesman.

The 16-year-old from Amsterdam was arrested on Thursday evening, police said, meaning two 15-year-olds and two 16-year-olds are now in custody for the fatal beating.

A team of 20 police is investigating Sunday's assault by amateur players from Amsterdam club Nieuw Sloten on Richard Nieuwenhuizen, 41, of the Buitenboys club in neighbouring Almere, police said.

Police said they had interviewed around 10 witnesses and that there may be more arrests. They appealed for anyone who might have filmed or photographed the attack on the assistant referee to come forward.

On Thursday, a Dutch judge remanded in custody the three teens arrested at their Amsterdam homes on Monday for two more weeks.

The three appeared before a judge following the amateur game attack that has shocked football-mad Netherlands, where some 1.2 million people out of a population of 16.5 million are members of national football federation KNVB.

The teens, who are being held at a youth detention centre whose location is being kept secret, face charges of manslaughter, assault and public violence.

If convicted, the two 15 year olds would serve a maximum sentence of one year in a youth prison.

The 16 year olds could be jailed for a maximum two years, unless judges rule that they should be tried as adults and face a stiffer penalty.

The precise charges will be refined based on the results of an investigation by police and prosecutors.

The murder prompted Dutch football federation KNVB to call off all 33,000 of this weekend's amateur matches. Professionals held a minute's silence and players wore black armbands during their matches.