


# Clash of the titans

AFP, Madrid



The world's richest football clubs Real Madrid and Manchester United meet on Wednesday here in a Champions League last 16 first-leg tie described by Jose Mourinho as "the match the world is waiting for".

Alex Ferguson takes his United side to the Spanish capital after extending their lead at the top of the Premier League to 12 points with Sunday's 2-0 win at home to Everton.

The meeting also marks the latest instalment in the Ferguson-Mourinho duel with the Scot emerging triumphant last time the pair locked horns as United dispatched Mourinho's former employers Inter Milan 2-0 on aggregate at the same stage of the 2008-09 competition.

His current Madrid side is sixteen points behind Barcelona in La Liga and only the delivery of a tenth Champions League title to the famous old club would be enough to appease his critics in the Spanish capital.

Mourinho's reign at Madrid has been a tumultuous one this season, with a series of dressing room disputes between the Portuguese coach and his players.

Despite the problems Madrid are enjoying some good form, losing only once in twelve outings in all competitions, and it is two years since they lost a Champions League game at the Santiago Bernabeu when Barcelona were the victors.

Cristiano Ronaldo will face his old club on the back of another hattrick in the 4-1 win over Sevilla on Saturday and his attacking partner Gonzalo Higuain is convinced their side can beat United in the Bernabeu.

Madrid are almost at full strength and the inclusion or not of Portuguese centre-half Pepe is Mourinho's big dilemma.



Manchester United star Wayne Rooney (C) takes part in a training session alongside teammates Michael Carrick (L) and Ryan Giggs at Carrington yesterday on the eve of their Champions League clash against Real Madrid.

PHOTO: AFP

## Santos joins Gremio

AFP, London

Arsenal defender Andre Santos joined Brazilian club Gremio on loan until the end of the season on Monday after a miserable spell with the Premier League club.

Santos signed for Arsenal from Turkey's Fenerbahce in a £6.8 million deal on transfer deadline day in August 2011, but the Brazil left-back was unable to adapt to the demands of the English game and was regularly targeted by opponents looking to exploit his error-prone defending.

He also infuriated Gunners manager Arsene Wenger and Arsenal's supporters when he asked former team-mate Robin van Persie to swap shirts at half-time during the 2-1 defeat at Manchester United last November.

The 29-year-old has made just six starts this season and Wenger appeared to admit the transfer had been a mistake.



What to WATCH

Channel 9

BPL

Chittagong Kings v Duronto Rajshahi

Live from 3:30pm

Barisal Burners v Sylhet Royals

Live from 7:30pm

STAR Sports

Australia v West Indies

Only T20I

Live from 2:35pm

TEN Sports

UEFA Champions League

Donetsk v Dortmund

Live from 1:45am (Thursday)

TEN Action

UEFA Champions League

Real Madrid v Man United



DAY'S EVENT

BPL

Chittagong Kings v Duronto Rajshahi

Time: 3:30pm

Barisal Burners v Sylhet Royals

Time: 7:30pm

Venue: Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium, Mirpur

Bangladesh Premier League

Muktijoddha v Sk Russel

Time: 3:00pm

Venue: Gopalganj Stadium

Sk Jamal v Abahani

Time: 4:30pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National

## Dismal Liverpool

AFP, Liverpool



Liverpool crashed to a dismal 2-0 defeat against West Bromwich Albion on Monday as Steven Gerrard's penalty miss triggered an Anfield meltdown.

Brendan Rodgers' side looked set to secure their first win in four Premier League matches when Gerrard stepped up to take a late penalty, but the Liverpool captain's effort was saved by Ben Foster and Albion went on to take full advantage of that escape.

Gareth McAuley headed the opener with nine minutes remaining and Romelu Lukaku's stoppage-time strike secured Albion's first league victory in seven attempts and lifted them above Liverpool into eighth in the table.

Albion's third successive win against Liverpool was also sweet revenge for manager Steve Clarke, who was the Reds' assistant manager under Kenny Dalglish last season before being sacked at the end of the campaign.

Liverpool made the running for most of the match without ever hitting peak form.

They had the ball in the net early on when Foster failed to deal with a long-range dipping Glen Johnson effort and Jonjo Shelvey pounced to tap in the rebound, only for the linesman to correctly rule the midfielder offside.

Liverpool tried to up the tempo in the second half and Jordan Henderson almost rounded off a flowing move with a clever backheel that Foster blocked with his legs.

The Reds kept pressing and Downing laid the ball off

to Fabio Borini, who tested Foster with a curling low shot that the former Manchester United keeper did well to keep out.

Gerrard also forced Foster into a fine one-handed stop to prevent the England captain's powerful effort hitting the back of the net.

The hosts' pressure finally seemed to have paid off when Suarez went down in the Albion penalty area under pressure from Jonas Olsson in the 75th minute.

West Brom's players were unhappy but referee Jon Moss was quick to award the penalty.

Gerrard stepped up to take it, but his low strike wasn't hit with enough power, allowing Foster to plunge to his left and make the save.

Rodgers tried to spark Liverpool back into life by sending on Brazilian playmaker Philippe Coutinho for his debut, but it was Albion who stole the points.

Yousouf Mulumbu's stinging drive forced Liverpool goalkeeper Jose Reina to concede a corner in the 81st minute and from Chris Brunt's set-piece, McAuley rose highest to power his header past Reina via the crossbar.

As Liverpool poured forward in search of an equaliser they were left exposed at the back in stoppage-time.

James Morrison released Lukaku and the on-loan Chelsea forward showed impressive pace and power to surge clear of Agger before driving his shot through Reina's weak attempted save.



West Bromwich Albion defender Gareth McAuley (R) celebrates his opening goal with teammate Claudio Yacob (C) during their Premier League encounter against Liverpool at Anfield on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Rossi says sorry

AFP, Milan

Sampdoria coach Delio Rossi has issued an apology to Argentine Nicolas Burdisso after making a rude hand gesture to the Roma defender during Sunday's 3-1 Serie A win in Genoa.

Rossi courted controversy when he stuck his middle finger up at Burdisso at the end of the game.

Sampdoria immediately issued Rossi with a fine, which the coach has accepted and will donate to charity.

"I'm sorry for my gesture near the end of yesterday's (Sunday's) game, especially as I'm someone who demands respect and always tries to show respect to others," Rossi said in a statement on the club's website.

"I accept the fine and together with the club we've decided to donate the money to Giannina Gaslini Pediatric Hospital."

Sampdoria sit in 11th place in Serie A with 28 points, 27 adrift of leaders Juventus.

Roma's 10th defeat of the campaign came a week after the club sacked coach Zdenek Zeman.

## Mancini ready to wield axe

AFP, London



Roberto Mancini has revealed he is ready to drop several of his Manchester City flops after accusing the champions of lacking the stomach for a fight.

Mancini was livid with City's lacklustre performance in Saturday's surprise 3-1 defeat at Southampton and he is prepared to make a host of changes for the club's FA Cup fifth round tie against Leeds at Eastlands this weekend.

The Italian is determined to lay down the law to his squad, even if it means axing some of the club's more high-profile stars.

"I am sure we will change that, because I will change players next week," Mancini told the Manchester Evening News on Monday.

"I only want players who are ready for the fight in the last 12 games.

"I am very angry with a lot of my players, and very disappointed at the performance, because it is impossible to play the way we did.

"We didn't fight for every ball. We can't always win by playing well - that is normal.

"Sometimes we play well and win, but you also need to be able to win because you fight for every ball, and fight against an opponent who also wants to win the game.

With City now 12 points behind Premier League leaders Manchester United, it appears their hopes of retaining the title are all but over, leaving the FA Cup as the only trophy they have left to win this season.

Mancini knows Championship club Leeds - who beat Spurs in the previous round - will be desperate to add to his team's woes and he challenged his players to use the cup tie to restore morale.

Argentine striker Carlos Tevez is expected to return this week after a family problem, and captain Vincent Kompany should also be available after injury, while Matija Nastasic and Kolo Toure are back after late returns from international duty.

## Keshi changes his mind

AFP, Lagos

Nigeria coach Stephen Keshi has withdrawn his resignation after he guided the country's team to a third Africa Cup of Nations triumph, he said on Tuesday.

In a statement signed by the coach and made available by the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF), Keshi said he will continue as the Super Eagles' coach after the country's sports minister intervened.

"I have had cause to express my displeasure over some issues that happened in the course of our participation in the AFCON 2013, which my team won by the grace of God, especially concerning my relationship with the Nigerian Football Federation, I have since had opportunity to discuss the various issues with all concerned.

"I am therefore pleased to say that I have reconsidered my position and have decided to continue with my job," according to a statement signed by Keshi.

"I want to thank the Honourable Minister of Sports, Mallam Bolaji Abdullahi, for his swift and kind intervention."

## Dortmund aim to bounce back

AFP, Donetsk



Borussia Dortmund coach Juergen Klopp has insisted his side will bounce back at Shakhtar Donetsk on Wednesday in their Champions League Last 16 first leg clash following a heavy home defeat by Hamburg.

Dortmund went down 4-1 at home on Saturday as they conceded four goals without reply at the hands of Hamburg and now face a tough trip to Ukraine.

The German champion's pressing game deserted them as Hamburg found plenty of space to attack down the wing with South Korea's Son Heung-Min and Latvia's Artjoms Rudnevs both scoring twice.

"We weren't good against Hamburg and deserved to lose, we'll be better on Wednesday," said Klopp with his side looking to reach the last eight for the first time since 1998, when as defending champions they lost in the semi-finals against Real Madrid.

Having finished unbeaten on top of Group D with eye-catching wins over Real Madrid, Manchester City and Ajax at home, Klopp's side must prove they can

again forge a result away from home in the first-leg clash at the Donbass Arena.

Shakhtar are looking for a third win in four home matches in this season's competition after beating both Danish champions Nordsjaelland and holders Chelsea before a 1-0 home defeat to Juventus in October, cost them first place in Group E.

Dortmund have impressed on the road so far in Europe, picking up a 4-1 win at Ajax, and they were only denied victories at City and Madrid by late equalisers.

They will be without German winger Kevin Grosskreutz, who was hospitalised at the weekend with pneumonia, while defensive midfielder Ilkay Gundogan is doubtful as he is carrying a thigh and toe injury.

Klopp received a boost on Sunday, as centre-back Neven Subotic passed a fitness test after a long lay off while Germany left-back Marcel Schmelzer is fit to be included after a throat infection and a bruised foot.

The Ukraine league and cup double winners are backed by mining billionaire Rinat Akhmetov and have ambitions to become one of Europe's major forces.

Coach Mircea Lucescu said his team will have to produce something special to beat Dortmund.