

## Xavi blow for Barca

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona on Friday confirmed that midfielder Xavi Hernandez will be out for "10 to 15 days", ruling him out of Saturday's Clasico and rendering him doubtful for the Champions League last 16, second leg, against AC Milan.

The Spanish top-flight leaders announced on their website that Xavi is suffering from a slight tear in his right hamstring.

While his absence from Saturday's trip to play Real Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu was expected -- and not a major blow with Barca currently 12 points clear at the top of La Liga -- he would be sorely missed against Milan.

The Catalans are 2-0 down from the first leg of their tie against the Italian side and face a huge task to keep their Champions League hopes alive.

The return leg at the Camp Nou will be played on March 12.

In his absence, Thiago Alcantara is likely to stand in against Madrid, and possibly for next Saturday's home meeting with struggling Deportivo.

## Special seats for obese people

INTERNET, Undated

As Brazil battles setbacks on the way to completing the 2014 World Cup stadiums that will be used in this summer's Confederations Cup, one of the certainties is that there will be special seats reserved for obese fans.

A report in The Sun claims that the seats for obese people will be twice as wide as standard seats and reinforced to support a person who weighs up to 560 lbs. But the style of seats pictured in their story were torn up from the Castelão -- the first of Brazil's World Cup stadiums to have its renovations completed. NBC Sports' Rick Chandler did some investigating though, and it turns out that some form of seats reserved for obese people are an actual thing.

The twelve 2014 World Cup Arenas are designed to offer the highest comfort and convenience to supporters. Accessibility is an important item for inclusion, also a requirement by the Brazilian government and FIFA. The Castelão in Fortaleza is an example of how football may bring about this type of legacy in the country. From the total of 63,903 seats, 1,675 are reserved for obese people, or people with disabilities.



### Star Cricket & Star Sports

2nd Test Day 2  
India v Australia  
Live from 10:00am

ESPN  
Premiership  
Tottenham v Arsenal  
Live from 10:00pm

Star Sports  
Serie A  
Catania v Inter Milan  
Live from 8:00pm

La Liga  
Espanyol v Valladolid  
Live from 10:00pm  
Malaga v Atletico Madrid  
Live from 12:00pm

Sociedad v Betis  
Live from 2:00am (Monday)

TEN Cricket  
Second T20  
South Africa v Pakistan  
Live from 5:00pm  
Second T20



Moenchengladbach forward Luuk de Jong (R) celebrates his all-important goal against Eintracht Frankfurt during their Bundesliga clash in Frankfurt on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Bale headache for Arsenal Goal-line tech at Com Shield

AFP, London



Tottenham manager Andre Villas-Boas has warned Arsenal that Gareth Bale will use Sunday's crucial north London derby to prove he deserves to be ranked as one of the world's top three players.

Bale will be firmly in the spotlight when Arsenal arrive at White Hart Lane for a potentially decisive moment in the battle to qualify for the Champions League.

Villas-Boas's third placed team are already four points clear of Arsenal, who lie fifth, and a victory over their bitter rivals would be a major blow to the Gunners' hopes of finishing in the Premier League's top four.

If Tottenham are to add to spluttering Arsenal's woes, they will need another dominant display from Bale, who underlined his remarkable talent by inspiring Spurs to a 3-2 win at West Ham on Monday.

Bale scored twice at Upton Park, including a sublime last-minute winner, to take his goal tally to 23 for club and country this season.

The 23-year-old's superb form in

recent months has led to claims that the Wales winger is now as influential as Real Madrid forward Cristiano Ronaldo and Barcelona playmaker Lionel Messi.

Villas-Boas has no doubts about Bale's brilliance and he believes this weekend's marquee match-up is the perfect stage for the winger to showcase the electric pace and lethal finishing that has the likes of Real and Barcelona contemplating blockbuster bids in the close-season.

"He is world class and those two players (Messi and Ronaldo) are," Villas-Boas said.

"Gareth at the moment is showing the form to be at the level of those two players, who have won so much throughout their careers, including European trophies.

"He still has to achieve that and we hope he can achieve it with us. I think he is very down to earth."

Although victory for Villas-Boas's side will move them seven points ahead of Arsenal with 10 games to go, the Portuguese coach believes that will still not guarantee Champions League qualification.

"We are on a good run of form and extremely confident, but I don't think (Champions League qualifica-

tion) is going to be on whatever result happens this weekend," said Villas-Boas, whose side are unbeaten in the league since December 9.

"Seven points is still recoverable for a team like Arsenal. It's all very tight still, but obviously we know the importance of the fixture and the way it can impact on both clubs moving forward."

While Bale clearly poses the greatest threat to Arsenal's bid to win at White Hart Lane for the first time since September 2007, Gunners boss Arsene Wenger is adamant his side won't just focus on stopping the Welshman.

Wenger, who considering buying Bale from Southampton before his eventual move to Spurs, said: "We don't plan for anybody. It is always the same, focus on our strengths and forget about your opponent."

"There is nobody special that you least like to face. All players have different qualities."

Wenger, whose club have gone eight years without a trophy, can ill-afford another chastening defeat on Sunday as he looks to rescue a traumatic campaign that has seen subjected to more criticism than ever before.

Football

AFP, London

England's Football Association has said it plans to use goal-line technology for the next Community Shield match -- and replays of the system's decisions will be shown on television.

However, FA general secretary Alex Horne questioned whether technology replays would be allowed on big screens in stadiums despite FIFA, football's world governing body, saying it had no objection.

The FA and the Premier League are tendering together for a system and are in advanced talks with two of the four licensed providers, including British-based firm Hawk-Eye.

Horne, speaking in Edinburgh ahead of an International Football Association Board (IFAB) meeting, said: "We are in the middle of tendering at the moment with the Premier League, so it is effectively 20 Premier League clubs and Wembley Stadium."

"We are looking at the providers that are available and are looking at a couple and will be making a decision shortly. We expect the technology to be in place for next season, for the Community Shield."

In terms of replays, Horne said: "Certainly the broadcasters need to have that accessibility to show the goal-line incident because that's at the heart of the integrity of the decision that has been made."

"Whether you show it in the stadium falls in the 'controversial decision' element to me and we have not made a decision on that."

## Juve earn a draw

AFP, Rome



Juventus survived a second-half Napoli onslaught to draw 1-1 with their closest title rivals Friday, maintaining a six-point lead after a testing examination at a ground where they haven't won in 13 years.

Juventus, whose last league win at the Sao Paolo came way back in September 2000 when current coach Antonio Conte was playing in midfield, took the lead in the game but were indebted to veteran goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon for salvaging a point.

Napoli dangerman Marek Hamsik had fired a fierce drive over Buffon's crossbar before the visitors snatched the lead after just nine minutes.

Giorgio Chiellini rose above Miguel Angel Britos to power home a header past goalkeeper Morgan De Sanctis from a fine, pinpoint cross by Andrea Pirlo.

It was a first goal of the season in Serie A for Chiellini in his 15th match.

But he almost failed to make the game, having to undergo a late fitness test on an ankle problem.

Both sides continued to have half-chances before Napoli levelled two minutes before half-time.

Swiss midfielder Gokhan Inler unleashed a 25-yard right-foot pile-driver which took a deflection off the head of Leonardo Bonucci and flew past the despairing dive of Buffon into the top corner.

In a bad-tempered end to the first half, Edinson Cavani was booked for elbowing Chiellini in the face, just moments after the Juventus player had cheekily tugged the flowing, dark hair of the Uruguayan.

The dangerous Hamsik brought a diving save out of Buffon just before the hour mark after being given too much space on the edge of the penalty area.

On the 73-minute mark, he was almost beaten, however, when he parried a stinging Hamsik drive into the path of substitute Blerim Dzemalili who was unable to adjust his balance as the ball came towards him at speed and his shot was scuffed wide of the post.



Napoli midfielder Gokhan Inler celebrates his equalising goal during their Serie A encounter against Juventus at the San Paolo Stadium on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Carlo a fan of Becks

AFP, Paris

Paris Saint-Germain coach Carlo Ancelotti on Friday compared David Beckham to his former team-mate Ryan Giggs, who has just agreed a new contract to keep him at Manchester United for a further season.

Giggs, 39, will remain at Old Trafford until the summer of 2014, meaning he will have completed 23 full seasons at the club.

Beckham left United for Real Madrid in 2003 and, a decade later, he is settling into his short-term deal at PSG, for whom he made his full debut against Marseille in midweek.

Ancelotti chose a mocking tone when asked at a Friday press briefing whether 37-year-old Beckham's performance in the French Cup tie had surprised him.

"It is the fact that he played football that was surprising," Ancelotti said, ironically.

"Some people think that he doesn't play football," he added, with speculation rife that Beckham was signed first and foremost as a marketing ploy by a club trying to improve its brand name.

"Giggs has signed a new contract, and I think Beckham can do the same thing."

"We haven't thought about a contract extension, in the coming months there will be time to make a decision on the future."

When asked by sports daily L'Equipe on Friday whether he thought he could carry on playing as long as Giggs, Beckham said: "He is still playing at the highest level and doesn't seem to want to stop."

"But maybe in the end I will go on longer."

Beckham, who slotted seamlessly into the centre of PSG's midfield against Marseille, and is in the squad for Saturday's Ligue 1 trip to Reims, added: "I know that I only have a six-month contract, but I really want to contribute to making PSG a great club."

"At my age, I can't have a two or three-year contract. I'm just taking things one year at a time. If I continue to feel in such good shape, I will keep playing."

## 'Copycats' Bayern

AFP, Berlin



A war of words has broken out between rival Bundesliga coaches Jupp Heynckes of Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund's Jurgen Klopp after the latter accused the former of copying his coaching ideas.

Dortmund have won the last two Bundesliga titles, but are second and 17 points behind leaders Bayern in the current campaign, having also lost 1-0 in Munich on Wednesday in the quarterfinals of the German Cup.

Klopp went on the offensive after the defeat when he accused Bayern of copying his team's playing style.

"At the moment, it is like what the Chinese are doing in industry: they look at what others do, copy them, and then with more money and players follow a similar path. And then after that, you're better again."

Relations between Klopp and Heynckes have been cordial for the last two seasons, but Heynckes was clearly irritated by his Dortmund counterpart.

"Bayern have been round a bit longer than Jurgen Klopp has been a coach and we have always had our own style of play," said the 67-year-old.

"It's important to show how big you are in both defeat and victory," he added after Bayern broke their six-match winless streak in the cup game against Dortmund.

But Borussia's chief executive Hans-Joachim Watzke backed up Klopp.

"Bayern Munich is certainly not a club who have to tell us how to show grace in defeat, because they themselves have not always had a monopoly on that department," he told SID, an AFP subsidiary.

"What Jurgen Klopp has said is absolutely correct. Dortmund certainly don't need to take a lecture from Bayern."

But Heynckes, who won the Champions League title as Real Madrid coach in 1998, said Klopp, who is 22 years his junior, should change his tune.