

Heynckes slates Ribery

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich coach Jupp Heynckes on Friday criticised midfielder Franck Ribery for stamping on Juventus' Arturo Vidal towards the end of their Champions League quarterfinal first leg tie.

The Frenchman had been the victim of a late tackle from the Chilean in the early part of the game and took revenge by stamping on the South American's calf in the 83rd minute, which could have seen him sent off had the referee spotted it.

Heynckes described Ribery's actions as "completely pointless" with Bayern having the tie sewn up at 2-0.

"He has to control himself better," he told a news conference on the eve of Bayern's match against Frankfurt, which could see them lift the Bundesliga title for the 23rd time.

Vidal, who played for Heynckes at Bayer Leverkusen and will miss the return leg in Turin next week after getting his third yellow card in the competition, acted without malice and got carried away in the moment, said the Bavarian trainer.

Palacio blow for Inter

AFP, Milan

Inter Milan's bid for a top three finish in Italy's Serie A has suffered a blow after top scorer Rodrigo Palacio suffered a thigh injury in training on Thursday.

Argentine international Palacio scored a brace on Wednesday as Inter claimed a precious 2-0 win away to Sampdoria in a fixture that had been postponed from March 17.

The Nerazzurri host Atalanta on Sunday but Palacio looks likely to play no part after he hobbled out of training clutching the back of his left thigh earlier on Thursday.

Palacio went immediately for scans and Inter later confirmed: "Rodrigo Palacio underwent scans which showed a muscular problem in the posterior region of the left thigh."

Reports in Italy are already speculating that Palacio, who with 12 goals is Inter's top scorer this season in the absence of already-injured compatriot Diego Milito, could miss several of his side's remaining eight games.



What to WATCH

SET Max

Indian Premier League

Delhi v Rajasthan

Live from 4:30pm

Chennai v Mumbai

Live from 8:30pm

TEN Action

Family Circle Cup

Semifinals

Live from 11:00pm

STAR Sports

English Premiership

Reading v Southampton

Live from 5:45pm

West Bromwich v Arsenal

Live from 8:00pm

Serie A

Juventus v Pescara

Live from 10:00pm

ESPN

Serie A

Bologna v Torino

Live from 12:45am (Sunday)



DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh Premier League

Sk Russell v Brothers Union

Time: 7:00pm

Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium



Chelsea striker Fernando Torres heads in the third goal during their Europa League quarterfinal first leg against Rubin Kazan at Stamford Bridge on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

Chelsea outgun Kazan 3 refs in hot water

AFP, Paris



It was a mixed night for England's trio of contenders in the Europa League on Thursday, with Chelsea winning their quarterfinal first leg while Tottenham Hotspur were held to a draw and Newcastle United lost in Portugal.

Chelsea are in a strong position at the halfway stage in their tie against Russian side Rubin Kazan after winning the first leg 3-1 at Stamford Bridge, but Tottenham have work to do following a 2-2 draw with Basel at White Hart Lane.

Newcastle are very much up against it following a 3-1 defeat to Benfica in Lisbon, while Fenerbahce beat Lazio 1-0 in Istanbul in the night's other game.

Chelsea got off to a fantastic start in west London, opening the scoring 16 minutes in when Fernando Torres -- sporting a face mask to protect a broken nose -- stabbed in a David Luiz pass.

Victor Moses then finished superbly on the half-volley to double

the Blues' lead just after the half-hour mark.

Bebbras Natcho netted a penalty after John Terry was penalised for handball to give the Russians a precious away goal just before half-time, but much-maligned Spanish striker Torres headed in a cross from compatriot Juan Mata 20 minutes from time to give Chelsea an important

RESULTS
Chelsea (ENG) 3 (Torres 16, 70, Moses 32)
Rubin Kazan (RUS) 1 (Natcho 41-pen)
Tottenham Hotspur (ENG) 2 (Adebayor 40, Sigurdsson 58)
Basel (SUI) 2 (Stocker 30, Fabian Frei 34)
Benfica (POR) 3 (Rodrigo 25, Lima 65, Cardozo 71-pen)
Newcastle United (ENG) 1 (Cisse 12)
Fenerbahce (TUR) 2 (Webo 78-pen, Kuyt 90+1)
Lazio (ITA) 0

cushion.

Across London, Spurs endured a much less comfortable evening against the Swiss champions.

Against a side challenging for a top-four place in the Premier League, Basel were a constant threat going forward, and took the lead half an hour in when Valentin Stocker converted the rebound after captain

Marco Streller's initial effort from six yards had struck the post.

The Spurs fans were stunned when Basel doubled their lead four minutes later, Fabian Frei heading in at the back post after Jan Vertonghen had helped on a Stocker corner.

The home side did fight back, with Emmanuel Adebayor reducing the deficit before half-time, sticking out a leg and forcing the ball over the line after a Scott Parker shot had deflected into his path.

Gylfi Sigurdsson then levelled in the 58th minute, his powerful shot from range deflecting into the net off Fabian Schaer.

The concession of two away goals means Andre Villas-Boas' Tottenham team have their work cut out if they are to progress in next week's second leg, though, and their evening ended on a sour note when Gareth Bale was stretchered off with a serious-looking ankle injury.

Newcastle got off to a terrific start at the Estadio da Luz, taking the lead in the 12th minute when Papiss Cisse turned in a Moussa Sissoko cross, and they almost netted again soon after, Cisse's shot deflecting off Ezequiel Garay and hitting the post.

Football

AFP, Singapore

Three Lebanese referees charged with corruption for allegedly accepting sexual favours to fix a football match in Singapore were remanded in custody on Friday until their bail petition is heard.

Referee Ali Sabbagh, 34, and assistants Ali Eid, 33, and Abdallah Taleb, 37, were brought to court one day after being arrested by Singapore anti-corruption agents on charges that could land them in jail for up to five years.

The trio had been due to officiate in Singapore-based Tampines Rovers' AFC Cup fixture with Indian club East Bengal on Wednesday when they were abruptly dropped and questioned by the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB).

They face a maximum prison term of five years or a fine not exceeding Sg\$100,000 (\$81,000) or both, under the Prevention of Corruption Act, after being charged with the offence on Thursday.

Ali Eid fell ill before he could appear before the judge and was brought to a hospital for observation. The two others were remanded to Changi prison, where the stricken Lebanese will also be brought after he recovers.

A representative from Lebanon's con-

sulate attended the hearing.

Sabbagh and Taleb will appear in court again on Wednesday when bail and their pleas are expected to be discussed, while the third referee was ordered to be in court on Monday.

State prosecutors opposed bail, saying the three belonged to a syndicate, but district court judge Kamala Ponnampalam ruled the offence was bailable.

The CPIB said in a statement Thursday that it had acted on "prior information of match fixing" involving the three referees.

"Subsequent investigations revealed that the trio corruptly received gratification... in the form of free sexual service from three females," CPIB said.

Singapore has a long record of match-fixing scandals and criminals from the tiny but wealthy Southeast Asian country have been blamed by Europol for orchestrating a network responsible for rigging hundreds of games worldwide.

In February, Singapore came under pressure to act against the cartels, whose activities fuel illegal gambling estimated to be worth billions of dollars, when the head of Interpol called for the arrest of an alleged ringleader.

Singapore police later said the suspect, Tan Seet Eng or Dan Tan, was assisting investigations, but he was not arrested or charged with any crime.

MU stay focused

AFP, London



Alex Ferguson insists there is no chance Manchester United will allow Manchester City the satisfaction of slowing their title charge in Monday's derby at Old Trafford.

Ferguson's team are on course to regain the Premier League crown from their bitter rivals after opening up a massive 15-point lead over champions City.

A victory against Roberto Mancini's second-placed side would move United to within touching distance of the title, but Ferguson knows City would love to at least delay their neighbours' 20th championship celebrations by winning on Monday.

And with the finish line in sight, Ferguson is determined to ensure his players don't rest on their laurels.

"We've still got to win the title. We have eight games left. That's 24 points to play for," said Ferguson, who hopes to welcome back Wayne Rooney from a groin injury.

"The way we've approached things is the correct way and that's to win the next game, that's what we've always tried to do. Hopefully it takes you to winning the league.

"The important thing is to win Monday's game. It'll be a big game for City. They'll want to come and derail us for a spell. I can understand their motivation because we would probably have the same motivation. But we're at home.

"Our consistency in the league is there for all to see. I expect us to perform really well on Monday."

United's lacklustre FA Cup quarterfinal replay defeat at Chelsea on Monday, together with the memories of last season's epic 6-1 win at Old Trafford, should give City encouragement that they can give their old enemies a bloody nose.

And while City's inconsistent league form looks to have scuppered their hopes of retaining the title, captain Vincent Kompany believes a victory over United would at least salvage some pride.

"A derby is a derby. I don't think we could care less about the league in that game," Kompany said.

"It is about who is going to be champions of Manchester, that is all it is.

"I don't expect Manchester United to be less motivated because they have these points gap between us where they are pretty safe.

"It will be like a one-off game, it will be like a cup final."

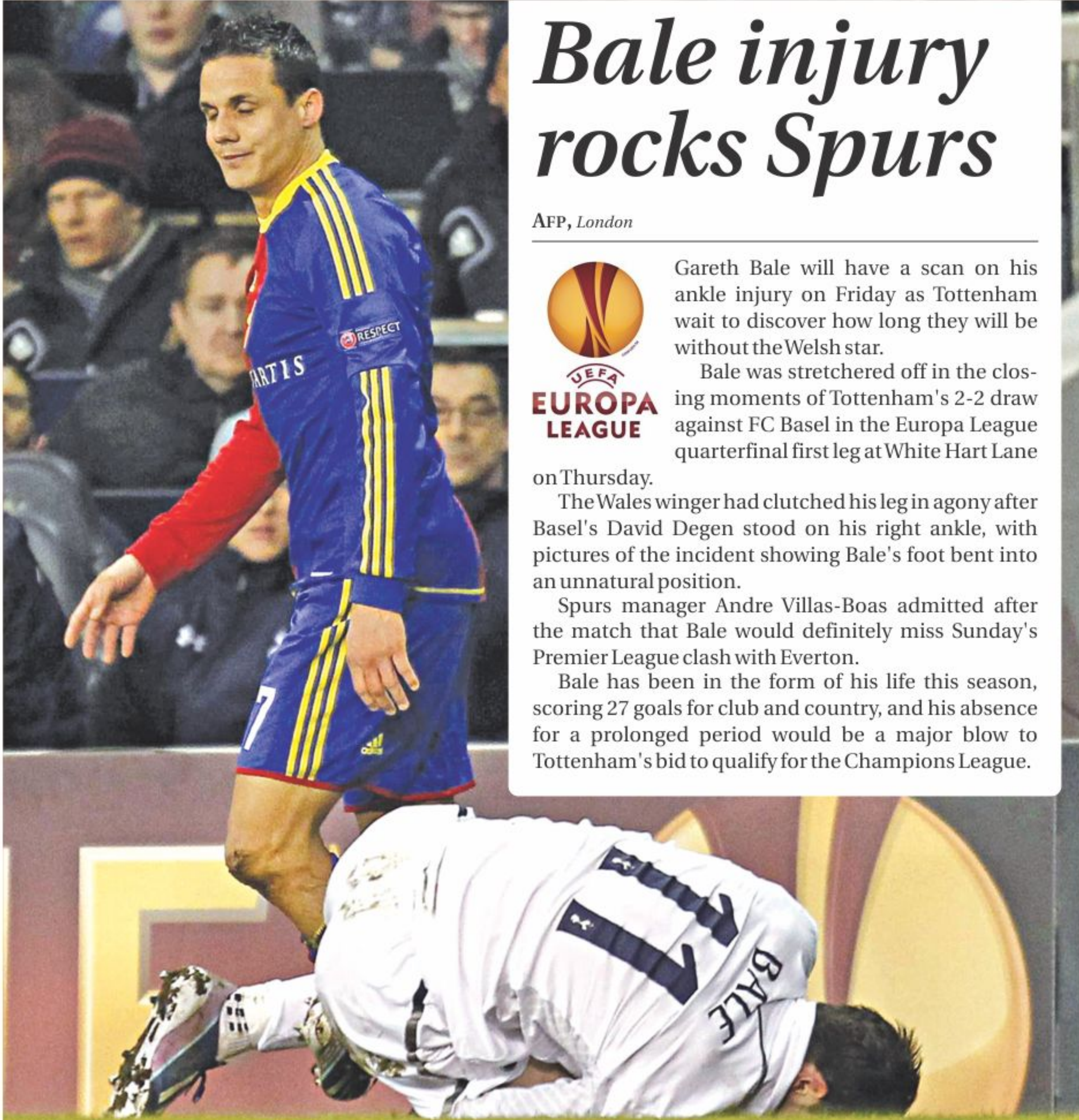
With the title race all but over, the real battles are being fought over the other two positions in the top four and at the bottom of the table.

Third-placed Tottenham host Everton looking to maintain their two-point advantage over fourth-placed Chelsea, who face Sunderland at Stamford Bridge on Sunday, while fifth-placed Arsenal can keep the pressure on with a win at West Bromwich Albion.

Sunderland's trip to west London also has significance in the relegation struggle.

The Black Cats are only one point above the bottom three, a perilous position which prompted owner Ellis Short to sack boss Martin O'Neill and make the controversial move to hire Paolo Di Canio.

FIXTURES
(1400GMT unless stated)
Saturday
Reading v Southampton (1145GMT), Norwich v Swansea, Stoke v Aston Villa, West Brom v Arsenal
Sunday
Chelsea v Sunderland, Liverpool v West Ham (1230GMT), Newcastle v Fulham, QPR v Wigan (1510GMT), Tottenham v Everton (1305GMT)
Monday
Manchester Utd v Manchester City (1900GMT)



Tottenham Hotspur winger Gareth Bale reacts after getting injured during their Europa League quarterfinal against Basel at White Hart Lane on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

Barca lodge referee protest

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona said Thursday they have lodged a written complaint with UEFA over the refereeing of German official Wolfgang Stark, who took charge of Tuesday's Champions League draw with Paris Saint Germain.

Alluding to "mistakes" in the officiating of the quarterfinal first leg, which ended 2-2, spokesman Toni Freixa said Barca "just wish to express our surprise that referees did not apply the rules in Paris."

Barcelona insist Stark erred in refusing to let Javier Mascherano and Jordi Alba back on to the field as PSG prepared to take a corner.

The visiting players were off the field receiving treatment after colliding with one another.

The Catalan club say the rules of the game stipulate that the referee should have stopped play in such circumstances.