

Chelsea after Schuerrle

AFP, Leverkusen

Premier League side Chelsea have made an improved offer of nearly 22 million euros (£18.8m, US\$28.7m) for Bayer Leverkusen's Germany star Andre Schuerrle, according to a media report here.

Having made an initial bid of 20 million euros for the 22-year-old, Chelsea have raised their offer with Belgium midfielder Kevin de Bruyne reported to be part of the deal and he could join Leverkusen on a one-year loan spell.

Duesseldorf-based newspaper the Rheinischen Post say Borussia Dortmund have also bid 17 million euros (US\$22.2m) for de Bruyne, who is currently on loan at Werder Bremen and impressed in Saturday's 2-2 draw at Fortuna Duesseldorf.

Earlier this month, Leverkusen's director of sport Rudi Voeller revealed Leverkusen were considering Chelsea's initial bid.

Castro meets Maradona

AFP, Havana

Fidel Castro, the retired leader of the Cuban Revolution, met with Argentine football great Diego Maradona on Saturday, the official media said Monday.

"The exchange between the two old friends was fruitful," the official Cuban Granma daily reported, describing the gathering as "brotherly" and "cheerful."

The newspaper also published photos taken by one of Castro's sons.

Castro, 86, turned over Cuba's presidency to his brother Raul in July 2006 after falling ill, and his public appearances since then have been rare.

Maradona arrived in Havana from Caracas where he lent his backing to acting President Nicolas Maduro, who was declared the winner of a snap election to replace the late Hugo Chavez. The results are being contested by the opposition.

Castro and Maradona, 52, have had close ties since the football star's first visit to Cuba in 1987. Maradona has also spent time in a Cuban hospital to treat a cocaine addiction and an array of health problems.



VIDAL

on the double

AFP, Rome



An Arturo Vidal double moved Juventus closer to retaining the Serie A title with a 2 - 0 win at Lazio on Monday.

The Chilean slotted home from the penalty spot in the 8th minute, his first league goal since November, when he scored in a 6-1 win against Pescara.

He then doubled the lead 20 minutes later, rifling home from close range.

As a result, Juventus are now 11 points clear of Napoli at the summit of Serie A with only six matches remaining.

Napoli could only draw 1-1 with third placed AC Milan on Sunday, leaving Antonio Conte's men with the Scudetto well within their sights.

Lazio, on the other hand, despite losing seven of their last 11 league matches, remain in fifth position level on 51 points with city rivals Roma, though ahead thanks to a better head-to-head record.

The home side started impressively with Brazilian Hernanes forcing Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon into a good save as he managed to squeeze his 20 yard shot through a sea of players.

That momentum didn't last long, as Mirko Vucinic weaved his way towards goal Lorik Cana clumsily tripped the Montenegrin giving the referee no choice but to point to the penalty spot.

Vidal dispatched the spot-kick with ease into the bottom right corner sending Federico Marchetti the wrong way in

the process.

Lazio could have clawed themselves back into the match when Ogenyi Onazi was played in on goal by Miroslav Klose, but the young Nigerian ballooned his shot high and wide.

That miss was a crucial one as it wasn't long before Vidal had his second.

Cana was once again culpable as he deflected a Claudio Marchisio ball into the path of Vidal who smashed past a helpless Marchetti.

In the second period Lazio once more came out with more intent. This time, a Ciani header forced Buffon into a full stretch save low to his right.

Andrea Pirlo beautifully bent a 25-yard free kick up and over the wall but

Marchetti was equal to it, though, he parried into the path of an onrushing Marchisio who could only fire over the bar when it seemed easier to score.

Second half substitutes Ederson and Libor Kozak combined well and should have halved Juventus' lead. The Brazilian's inch perfect cross was somehow headed wide with the goal gaping and Buffon rooted to the spot.

Lazio were knocking on the Bianconeri door as Onazi's 25-yard pile driver was just off target.

Kozak had one final opportunity at the death, but directed a low cross from the left wide. Before Klose also fired just past the right post with the last kick of the match.

Mallorca ride on Giovani

REUTERS, Madrid

Giovani dos Santos struck in added time to earn Real Mallorca a dramatic 1-0 win at home to Celta Vigo in a battle of La Liga's two basement sides on Monday.

A deep cross was headed goalwards by striker Tomer Hemed in the 93rd minute and when keeper Javi Varas could only parry the effort, Mexico forward Dos Santos volleyed in the rebound to set off ecstatic celebrations on the pitch.

The victory moved Mallorca up to second from bottom with 27 points and seven games left, behind Real Zaragoza on goal difference.

Promoted Celta, who now prop up the table on 24 points, have taken one point from their last six games.

Mallorca dominated the early exchanges and Dos Santos was the most dangerous player, going close with two free kicks and delivering a corner that was headed just over the bar.

However, it was Celta who had the clearest chance before the break when Alex Lopez fired wide with only the keeper to beat.

Celta grew in confidence in the second half as Borja Oubina volleyed over and home keeper Dudu Aouate saved a point-blank header from Andres Toney.

The home side showed more desire to seek a winner in the closing stages and were rewarded when former Tottenham Hotspur forward Dos Santos scored.

MU close in on title

AFP, London



Having returned to winning ways at the weekend, Manchester United can close to within four points of the Premier League title with victory at West Ham United on Wednesday.

United's morale took a blow after last week's defeat at home to Manchester City, but Sunday's 2-0 success at Stoke City saw Alex Ferguson's side re-establish a 15-point lead over their derby rivals.

It left them seven points from an unprecedented 20th English league crown and they could even capture the title as early as Sunday if City slip

up against Wigan Athletic and Tottenham Hotspur this week.

However, before that can happen, United must prevail at Upton Park, and the boisterous east London stadium has not always been a happy hunting ground for the men from Old Trafford.

United had title bids derailed there in both 1992 and 1995; the latter occasion a game in which home goalkeeper Luděk Mikloško produced save after save to deny United the goal they needed to pip Blackburn Rovers to the Premier League trophy on the season's final day.

More recently, United were given a searching examination in an FA Cup third-round game in January, when

the visitors needed an injury-time goal from Robin van Persie to take the tie to a replay.

All in all, United have won on just three of their last seven visits to West Ham in all competitions, including a chastening 4-0 thrashing in a League Cup tie in November 2010.

At least van Persie has recovered his scoring touch, having gone 10 games without a goal before finding the net from the penalty spot in the second half at Stoke.

Ferguson praised United for their "battling performance" at the Britannia Stadium and captain Nemanja Vidic believes a similarly committed display will be required on Wednesday.

Jupp won't call Pep

AFP, Munich



Bayern Munich coach Jupp Heynckes has rejected advice from Germany legend Franz Beckenbauer to ring Pep Guardiola and gleam some tips for their Champions League semifinal against Barcelona.

"I don't understand how a former player and coach can say that," said Heynckes ahead of Bayern's German Cup semifinal against Wolfsburg on Tuesday, with his team bidding to become the first German side to win the treble.

"Maybe I should ring Johan Cruyff, after all he instigated the Barcelona system," he quipped.

Bayern host Barcelona at Munich's

Allianz Arena in the semifinal, first leg on Tuesday April 23, but Heynckes has repeatedly insisted he will not be speaking to ex-Barca coach Guardiola, who will succeed him as Munich coach in July.

Last Friday, Heynckes angrily refuted a German reporter's question on the subject by saying: "Have a little respect for me and my work. I have never consulted anyone for advice".

After Beckenbauer told German daily Bild that Heynckes "shouldn't be too proud" to contact Guardiola, the Bayern coach said he did want to put the Spaniard in the awkward position of revealing his former employers' secrets.

"(Bayern) have a very good scouting department. I know Barcelona very well and we wouldn't be doing Pep Guardiola any favours," said Heynckes.

What to WATCH

Maasranga TV & TEN Cricket
Bangladesh v Zimbabwe
First Test, Day-1
Live from 2:00pm

SET Max
Indian Premier League
Pune v Hyderabad
Live from 4:30pm
Rajasthan v Mumbai
Live from 8:30pm

ESPN
Sportscentre India
Sports News
Live from 8:30pm

English Premiership
Fulham v Chelsea
Live from 1:00am (Thursday)

STAR Sports
English Premiership

DAY'S EVENT

Bangladesh U-19s v Sri Lanka U-19s
(2nd four-day match, day-2)
Time: 9:30am

Fight for tickets

AFP, Dortmund



Borussia Dortmund CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke has admitted his club underestimated ticket demands for their Champions League home semifinal against Real Madrid after fights broke out on Tuesday.

Dortmund host Real at Signal Iduna Park stadium on April 24, but there was chaos before tickets went on sale at 0900 (0700 GMT) on Tuesday, half an hour later than planned, as brawls broke out between fans, many of whom had queued overnight.

Around 100 police officers were deployed to break up scuffles amongst supporters waiting in queues at separate locations in Dortmund city centre as the tickets available were snapped up within an hour.

"We had honestly underestimated this incredible stampede, it's our fault" admitted Watzke after some fans had queued since Sunday evening.

"We will learn our lessons from this and not offer a free-for-all ticket sale in future."

Police had organised the lines from midnight Monday after gangs had tried to aggressively jump in, but officers reported fights breaking out in the early hours of Tuesday morning.

Two people were arrested and charged with assault, while a third was taken into custody and paramedics had to twice intervene after fans collapsed in the lines.

Watzke said Dortmund will reorganise their advance ticket sales in future so organised gangs, operating on the black market, can not profit and to avoid the chaos that left some fans empty-handed despite queuing overnight.



Borussia Dortmund fans queue for the Champions League semifinal tickets in Dortmund on Tuesday. More than 1,000 supporters of Dortmund spent the night to stand in line.

PHOTO: REUTERS