

Inter and Benfica fined

AFP, Lausanne

Inter Milan and Benfica were hit with fines from UEFA on Friday over the behaviour of their fans and poor organisation during the Europa League last 16 round.

Inter were fined 45,000 euros after monkey chants were reported during their clash with Tottenham on March 14.

Benfica copped a 32,000-euro fine for the actions of their fans during their game with Bordeaux a week earlier.

Inter have already been hit with a fine for racist chanting by their fans during a Serie A clash against neighbours AC Milan earlier this season.

Former players Mario Balotelli and Sulley Muntari were both subjected to racial abuse, resulting in a 50,000-euro fine for the Nerazzurri.

Jupp plays down Real speculation

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich coach Jupp Heynckes on Friday played down speculation he is set for a return to the Bernabeu to replace Jose Mourinho at Real Madrid at the end of the season.

Heynckes' three-year deal with the Bavarian giants finishes on June 30 and the 67-year-old will be replaced by Pep Guardiola, but he dismissed reporters' questions when asked about a possible second stint in Madrid.

Heynckes coached Real to the 1998 Champions League title during his single season at Madrid and has been linked with a second spell as rumours abound that Mourinho is set to return to Chelsea.

"Please don't think I am going to discuss with you what I am going to do after the 30th of June," he told journalists in Friday's press conference ahead of Bayern's Bundesliga match against Freiburg.

"There are forests of pages being written and speculation flying around.

"But I have known what I will do for a long time."

With Bayern having already been confirmed Bundesliga champions three weeks ago, Heynckes said he will rotate players for Saturday's game against fifth-placed Freiburg, who are chasing a Champions League place.

"That makes sense, it's an advantage when you have a lot of games at the end of the season," he said.

Bayern are on the verge of their third Champions League final in four years after their 4-0 rout of Barcelona in the semi-final, first-leg.

The Bavarians are bidding to become the first German side to win the treble of European, league and cup titles.

What to WATCH

Maasrange TV & TEN Cricket
Bangladesh v Zimbabwe
Second Test, Day 4
Live from 2:00pm

SET Max
Indian Premier League
Chennai v Kolkata
Live from 4:30pm
Delhi v Pune

Live from 8:30pm
STAR SPORTS
English Premiership
Reading v QPR
Live from 6:30pm
Arsenal v Man Utd



PHOTO: AFP

Manchester City midfielder Yaya Toure (R) celebrates his goal with teammate Samir Nasri during their Premier League encounter against West Ham at the Etihad Stadium yesterday.

City bounce back

AFP, Manchester



Sergio Aguero and Yaya Toure gave deposed Premier League champions Manchester City a 2-1 win at home to West Ham United on Saturday, although victory also featured an uncharacteristic error from goalkeeper Joe Hart.

Moments after being injured while making a save from West Ham striker Andy Carroll, Hart allowed a shot from the same player to squirm through his grasp, and his legs, as he gifted the visitors an injury-time consolation.

Earlier, Aguero's 16th goal of the season, his 11th in the Premier League, put the hosts in control after 28 minutes of a contest that was predictably subdued, coming at the end of a week in which City had finally seen their league title move across the city to Manchester United.

Samir Nasri exchanged neat passes with both Toure and David Silva on his way into the West Ham area, where, having reached the left-hand by-line, he pulled the ball back for Aguero to convert clinically from six yards.

City had to wait until the 83rd minute to be certain of the three points, when Toure collected a short pass from Nasri and sent a stunning 20-yard shot soaring into the roof of the West Ham goal, but victory should have been far more comfortable.

Moments after the opening goal, defender Pablo Zabaleta almost doubled the lead when West Ham goalkeeper Jussi Jaaskelainen failed to hold a sharp, long-

range shot from Nasri.

The Finn made up for his error, however, with a reflex block to deny the Argentine's follow-up attempt.

There was also a gilt-edged chance for Aguero mid-way through the half, after Silva's pass had been deflected into his path, but on this occasion, the City forward hit the foot of the post from 12 yards when a goal looked a certainty.

In response, Carroll placed a header over the crossbar, although the forward's major contribution to the first half was a trip on Silva that earned him a 19th-minute caution; the fourth consecutive game in which he has been booked.

The visitors opened the second half in more enterprising fashion, although City came closest to adding to the goals tally, after 54 minutes, when Nasri's excellent pass split the West Ham defence and played in Carlos Tevez, who showed poor technique in flashing a shot over the bar from eight yards.

Tevez returned the compliment six minutes later with a pass that put through the Frenchman, whose fierce shot from the corner of the six-yard area was well saved by Jaaskelainen.

West Ham's increased desire to commit men forward was allowing City more room to play and yet another incisive counter-attack ended with Tevez delivering a superb low cross from the right with which Nasri somehow failed to connect from point-blank range, with an open net gaping.

Wayward efforts from James Collins and Carroll threatened the home goal late in proceedings, before embarrassing Hart with a powerful shot from 12 yards.

Barca party delayed

AFP, Madrid



Barcelona will have to wait until at least next weekend before sealing the La Liga title as Ander Herrera's 89th minute equaliser rescued a 2-2 draw for Athletic Bilbao at San Mames.

The Basques had the better of the opening period and went in front on 27 minutes when Aritz Aduriz turned Gerard Pique and his driven cross was forced home at the back post by Markel Susaeta.

However, the game was completely turned around by the introduction of Lionel Messi just before the hour mark as he equalised 10 minutes later with a wonderful solo run past three Athletic players before planting the ball in the bottom corner.

Messi was also involved as Barca went in front moments later as he knocked Dani Alves cross into Alexis Sanchez's path to slot past Gorka Iraizoz.

However, Ander's late intervention means Barca will have to wait to mathematically seal the title even if Atletico Madrid beat second-placed Real Madrid later on Saturday evening.

Barca boss Tito Vilanova had surprisingly made just the four changes after Tuesday's 4-0 mauling at the hands of Bayern Munich, but with Messi still suffering from the after-effects of a hamstring injury picked up against Paris Saint-Germain a month ago, he started alongside Andres Iniesta on the bench.

Despite his absence Barca started brightly and were unlucky not to be in

front on 16 minutes when Sanchez latched onto Cesc Fabregas's pass and saw his shot from the edge of the area come crashing off the post.

Alex Song then also tested Iraizoz and Xavi curled a shot wide, but Athletic started to take a hold of the game midway through the period and went in front just before the half-hour.

Aduriz showed Pique a clean set of heels on the left side of the box and his driven cross was rattled in from barely a yard by Susaeta.

Indeed Aduriz should even have given Athletic a more commanding lead before half-time as he again beat Pique to Oscar de Marcos's perfect cross a minute before the break but saw his crashing header fly just over.

Susaeta then struck the bar with a free-kick just after the restart but the game then swung massively in Barca's favour with the introduction of Messi.

Iraizoz made a smart save to deny Pedro after he had been played in by the world player of the year, however there was nothing the Athletic keeper could do moments later as Messi left three Athletic defenders trailing in his wake before placing a precise finish into the bottom corner.

And Barca had completely turned the game around two minutes later when Sanchez latched onto Messi's pass to bundle the ball past Iraizoz from close range.

Messi then came within inches of his second of the evening three minutes from time but this time his effort flew just beyond the post.

And that was to prove vital as a minute from time Ander latched onto Adriano's poor clearance to fire past Victor Valdes and salvage a point for the hosts.

Tribute paid to Foe

AFP, Manchester

Supporters from Manchester City and West Ham United paid tribute to their former player Marc-Vivien Foe, who died 10 years ago, during their Premier League encounter on Saturday.

City showed an image of Foe on the electronic display screens at the Etihad Stadium in the 23rd minute of the game, in reference to his squad number during his time at the club, and fans of both sides joined in a minute's applause.

The Cameroon midfielder died at the age of 28 after suffering a cardiac arrest and collapsing during a Confederations Cup semi-final against Colombia in Lyon in June 2003.

Speaking after Saturday's game, which City won 2-1, manager Roberto Mancini said: "I'm happy we remembered Marc-Vivien Foe, who was a great player for Manchester City."

Foe scored the last ever City goal at their former Maine Road stadium and following his death, the club retired their number 23 shirt in his honour.

Liverpool romp

AFP, Newcastle

Liverpool proved there is life after Luis Suarez by thrashing Newcastle United 6-0 on Saturday to leave their hosts nervously hovering above the Premier League relegation zone.

Leading scorer Suarez has been handed a 10-match ban for biting Chelsea defender Branislav Ivanovic, but his absence was barely noticed at St James' Park as Liverpool returned to winning ways in style after a run of three draws.

Goals from Daniel Agger and Jordan Henderson put the visitors 2-0 up at the interval, before Suarez's replacement Daniel Sturridge claimed a brace early in the second half.

Substitute Fabio Borini added a fifth and after Mathieu Debuchy was sent off, Henderson completed a brace of his own as Newcastle fell to their heaviest home defeat of the Premier League era.

Victory left Liverpool in seventh place ahead of next weekend's Merseyside derby at Anfield.

Sochaux dent Lille hopes

AFP, Lille



Relegation threatened Sochaux scored three times in an eight-minute spell at the death to salvage a 3-3 draw at Lille on Friday and hamper their hosts' hopes of qualifying for the Champions League.

Cruising at 3-0 up with 11 minutes left through a Salomon Kalou brace and one from Montenegrin Marko Basa, Lille looked set to leapfrog Lyon into third place and a Champions League qualifying position.

But an incredible eight-minute blast from Sochaux, who nevertheless remain third from bottom and in the drop zone, blew a hole in Lille's Euro hopes.

Cedric Kante set Sochaux on their way before Vincent Noguiera twice found the target.

It means Lille remain fifth, behind Saint-Etienne, but could drop three points off a Champions League place while a win for Nice at home to rock bottom Troyes on Sunday would move them level on points with Lille in the race for fifth place, and a Europa League berth.

League leaders Paris Saint-Germain could all but mathematically sew up the title on Sunday with a victory at Evian.

If Marseille lose at Lorient and Lyon fail to beat Saint-Etienne in their local derby, PSG would need only one more point to be champions.

But even then, with a +40 goal difference compared to Marseille's +5, only a remarkable swing could keep the title out of Parisian hands at the end of the season.



Barcelona's Argentine striker Lionel Messi (C) came off the bench to score a wonderful solo goal against Athletic Bilbao during their Spanish La Liga match at the San Mames stadium in Bilbao yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP