

What to WATCH

SET Max

Indian Premier League

Kolkata v Pune

Live from 4:30pm

Mumbai v Rajasthan

Live from 8:30pm

ESPN

Sportscentre India

Sports News

Live from 8:30pm

TEN Sports & TEN Action

UEFA Europa League

FINAL

Benfica v Chelsea

Live from 12:45am

(Thursday)

Messi's season over

Barcelona's Lionel Messi will not play again this season after suffering a thigh injury in his team's 2-1 win at Atletico Madrid in La Liga last weekend, the Catalan club announced on Tuesday.

The Argentine striker has a right thigh strain that will prevent him from playing for between two and three weeks and will not feature again this season, as La Liga ends on June 1.

Barcelona secured the league title -- their fourth in five seasons -- on Saturday when second-placed Real Madrid were held to a 1-1 draw at Espanyol.

- AFP

15

Drogba hits back

REUTERS, Istanbul



Galatasaray striker Didier Drogba hit back at a Fenerbahce fan who waved a banana towards him and team mate Emmanuel Eboue during the weekend's league encounter by highlighting some home truths about racism.

Ivory Coast players Eboue and Drogba, who was instrumental in Chelsea's run to the Champions League title last season, were heckled during Sunday's 2-1 league win by Fenerbahce in the high-octane encounter.

A Fenerbahce fan was stabbed to death and more than 100 fans were detained following Turkey's most popular derby.

Drogba, whose Galatasaray team have already secured the Turkish championship, wasted little time in highlighting that both Fenerbahce goals were scored by Cameroon striker Pierre Webó.

"You call me monkey but you cried when Chelsea beat Fenerbahce in 2008, you called me monkey but you jumped in front of your screen when I won the Champions League," Drogba said on Galatasaray's Facebook page.

"You called me monkey but you got mad when I became champion with Galatasaray and the saddest thing is you called me monkey and forgot that you jumped when my 'monkey' brother scored twice yesterday... and you call yourself a true fan? Check all the Galatasaray fans comments and learn from them."

Drogba also posted an image on the online photo-sharing network Instagram depicting humans evolving from apes.

A man claiming to be the supporter who waved the banana told a local television show that he had the fruit in his hand to eat but declined to give his name.

Italy to call for tougher racism sanctions

AFP, Milan



Italian football federation president Giancarlo Abete will ask UEFA chief Michel Platini to introduce tough new legislation in a bid to drive racism from the sport following the latest incident to tarnish the game in Italy. The move follows a match between AC

Milan and Roma on Sunday at which Milan players Mario Balotelli and Kevin Prince Boateng were racially abused by a section of the visiting Roma fans.

It led to the match referee implementing an existing but rarely-used Serie A rule by halting the game for almost two minutes to ask the fans, via a tannoy address, to curtail their behaviour.

Abete said he will propose the introduction of tougher anti-racism measures to replace the much-criticised existing system of fines when UEFA's executive committee congress meets in London on May 24.

In a statement on www.figc.com, Abete called for powers to close "whole sections of grounds" in the event of incidents similar to those at the San Siro.

"Fines don't solve the problem (of racism), because some people don't care whether their club is fined 10 or 20,000 euros... we have to block certain people from the ground," said Abete.

"Then, by using tickets with names, we have to stop people going to other parts of the stadium."

Abete said if need be, "some whole sections of grounds could be closed" in the event of repeat incidents.

Heynckes set to retire

REUTERS, Berlin

Bayern Munich coach Jupp Heynckes will sit on the coaching bench for a Bundesliga game for the last time when the champions meet his former club Borussia Moenchengladbach in the season finale on Saturday, and hinted on Monday that he might retire.

The 68-year-old, who won the Champions League with Real Madrid in 1998 and had a long playing and coaching career at Gladbach, will make way for Pep Guardiola after the end of the season following two years in charge at Bayern.

"Saturday will be my last Bundesliga game as a coach," Heynckes, who coached Bayern in three stints in his career, told reporters.

"What will happen after that, we will have to wait until after our two finals. I will probably say something in June after the German Cup final."

His team have clinched the Bundesliga title and could win an unprecedented treble of titles for a German club with the Champions League final against Borussia Dortmund on May 25 and the German Cup final on June 1 still to come.

Fergie thanked fans

AFP, Manchester



Alex Ferguson thanked tens of thousands of Manchester United fans as they massed to salute him and his final title-winning side on an open-top bus parade through the city streets on Monday.

United manager Ferguson, one of world football's most successful bosses, is retiring at the age of 71 after guiding the Red Devils to the English Premier League title for a 13th time.

After arriving at Manchester Town

Hall following the victory parade from United's Old Trafford ground, Ferguson was seen singing fans' favourite "Glory, Glory Man United" from the balcony.

And he briefly took to a temporary stage below in the city's Albert Square, which was packed with thousands of flag-waving supporters bedecked in the club's red, white and black colours.

In what was likely his final public address to his adoring faithful, the Scot said the jubilant scenes surpassed even those of 1999, when the northwest side completed an unprecedented trophy treble of the Premier League, FA Cup and European

Champions League.

"I thought 1999 would never be beaten but you have beaten it," Ferguson said.

Red streamers hung in the trees, coloured flares went off and people clambered all over monuments for a glimpse of the United players bouncing around on stage with the Premier League trophy.

But Monday's celebrations were all about Ferguson, now just one game away -- at West Bromwich on Sunday - from completing an astonishing career that has yielded 38 trophies for United in the more than 26 years since he joined from Scottish side Aberdeen.



Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson (R) celebrates with the Premier League trophy with his red army outside the town hall in Manchester on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

City sack Mancini

REUTERS, Manchester



Manchester City sacked manager Roberto Mancini on Monday following his team's feeble defence of the Premier League title they won exactly one year ago.

Manchester United regained the title last month with four games to spare and City were then beaten 1-0 by Wigan Athletic in last Saturday's FA Cup final.

City had also failed to progress from the group stage of the Champions League for a second successive season despite boasting one of the most expensively assembled squads in the world.

"It is with regret that Manchester City Football Club announces that Roberto Mancini has been relieved of his duties as Manchester City Manager," the club said in a statement.

"Despite everyone's best efforts, the club has failed to achieve any of its stated targets this year, with the exception of qualification for next season's UEFA Champions League.

"This, combined with an identified need to develop a holistic approach to all aspects of football at the club, has meant that the decision has been taken to find a new manager for the 2013/14 season and beyond."

Media speculation has been rife that Malaga coach Manuel Pellegrini was being lined up as a replacement but the Chilean denied late on Sunday that he had spoken with City and said no agreement had been reached.

Assistant manager Brian Kidd will be in charge for City's remaining two games of the season and the post-season tour to the United States.

"This has been a difficult decision for the owner, Chairman and Board to make and it is the outcome of a planned end of season review process that has been brought forward in light of recent speculation and out of respect for Roberto and his extensive contributions to the Football Club," the statement said.

Former Inter Milan manager Mancini joined City in December 2009, succeeding Mark Hughes, and that season led them to a fifth-place finish which was at the time their best ever Premier League showing.

The club splashed the cash before the next season, bringing in the likes of David Silva and Yaya Toure as they went on to finish third, qualifying for the Champions League for the first time, and beating Stoke City 1-0 in the final to win the FA Cup.

It was the end of a 35-year wait for a trophy and a tangible reward for the huge funds invested by the club's Abu Dhabi owners.



Manchester City manager Roberto Mancini leaves the team hotel in London yesterday after City sacked the Italian following his team's feeble defence of the Premier League title.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Chelsea chase history

AFP, Amsterdam



After a turbulent season, history beckons for Chelsea in Wednesday's Europa League final in Amsterdam, where they will meet a Benfica team reeling from a devastating domestic defeat by arch rivals Porto.

The premature end to Chelsea's Champions League defence had threatened to leave a cloud over their entire campaign.

Roberto Di Matteo's dismissal as manager created a negative atmosphere that only got worse when the unpopular Rafael Benitez was appointed as his interim successor, but now, salvation is in sight.

Saturday's 2-1 win at Aston Villa essentially secured the club's place in next season's Champions League, and victory over Benfica would turn an unhappy campaign into one etched in Chelsea folklore.

The all-German Champions League final between Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund on May 25 means Chelsea's fans will not be able to crow that they are the champions of Europe for much longer.

But if they overcome Benfica, they will become the first club to hold both European titles at the same time.

They are also bidding to become only the fourth team to have won the Champions League, the Europa League and the now-defunct Cup Winners' Cup -- which they won in 1971 and 1998 -- after Bayern, Juventus and Ajax.

Chelsea beat Benfica in the quarter-finals en route to last season's Champions League triumph, but Spanish midfielder Juan Mata remains wary of Jorge Jesus's side.

"We're playing against Benfica, a historic team in Europe that will be very tough to beat, as we saw last season in the Champions League," he wrote on his personal blog on Monday.

Amsterdam was the scene of Benfica's second European Cup triumph, in 1962, but it remains the last venue where they have tasted success in a European final.

There have been six painful defeats since then, although the most recent was 23 years ago, when they lost 1-0 to AC Milan in the final of the 1990 European Cup.

Kit man pans Roberto

THE GUARDIAN

Stephen Aziz, the former kit man at Manchester City, has criticised Roberto Mancini following his sacking as manager, describing him as "arrogant, vain and self-centred" in one of a series of tweets that were later deleted from his Twitter account on Tuesday morning.

Mancini finally lost his job on Monday evening with one reason being his divisive management style that had upset some members of staff. Aziz, who left for Sunderland last summer, tweeted: "Arrogant, vain, self-centred no manners ignorant just some of the daily traits really made going into work a daily grind!! #karma".

Another read: "Not my style to come in here and start to bad mouth someone but this guy was really a piece of work!!!!". He added: "Fans don't get to see what really goes on and day 2 day running 2 years there seeing him every day was hard work getting a 'good morning'".

But he praised the club itself, saying: "Mcfc on the other hand what a great club to work for some great players and staff nice down to earth ppl loved working there!!!! #MFCFC".

City's fans have reacted with dismay to the sacking with Kevin Parker, general secretary of the Manchester City Supporters Club, suggesting that any lack of harmony behind the scenes was a side issue.

Ronaldinho, Kaka out of Confeds Cup

REUTERS, Rio De Janeiro

Ronaldinho and Kaka were both left out of the Brazil's squad for the Confederations Cup, named by coach Luiz Felipe Scolari on Tuesday.

Scolari had been expected to include at least one of the experienced pair in his squad for the competition which Brazil hosts in June.

Chelsea midfielder Ramires was another surprise exclusion. Brazil have played five matches under Scolari, with one win, three draws and one defeat.