

Real eye Copa joy

AFP, Madrid



Real Madrid will hope to end a difficult season on a high when they face Atletico Madrid in Friday's Copa del Rey final, with Los Blancos aiming to continue their long-running dominance in meetings with their city rivals.

An acrimonious campaign marred by on-pitch failure and behind-the-scenes unrest is set to end with manager Jose Mourinho leaving Madrid, but the Portuguese will hope to bow out with one more piece of silverware.

Madrid will finish a distant second behind champions Barcelona in La Liga and once again failed in their bid to win that elusive 10th European Cup, losing to Borussia Dortmund in the semi-finals, so all that is left is the chance to win back the Copa del Rey, which they also won in Mourinho's first season in charge two years ago.

Both clubs wanted this game to be played in Madrid and Real's Santiago Bernabeu home, with its 80,000 capacity, got the nod

over Atletico's smaller Vicente Calderon.

That would appear to give Mourinho's side even more of an edge but, when the clubs last contested the final, Atletico beat Real 2-0 at the Bernabeu in 1992, with Bernd Schuster -- the German who later coached Los Blancos -- and Paulo Futre scoring the goals.

Madrid also lost 2-1 to Deportivo in the 2002 final despite the Spanish federation allowing them to stage the game at the Bernabeu to mark Real's centenary.

However, Atletico, the club of the grimy working-class quarters of southern Madrid, have endured over a decade of misery against their wealthier neighbours, from the upmarket Chamartin district to the north.

Remarkably, they have not won any of the last 25 meetings between the teams since a 3-1 win at the Bernabeu in October 1999, a season in which they were relegated.

In a sense, though, there is no disgrace in that -- figures reported recently by sports daily AS indicated that Real's budget for this season is 517 million euros (\$665m) compared to 123 million euros (\$158m) for Atletico.

Diego at it again

REUTERS, Buenos Aires

Argentine soccer great Diego Maradona insulted reporters and kicked a photographer after arriving home in Buenos Aires on a visit from Dubai, where he works as a sports ambassador.

A fellow passenger on Tuesday's flight further accused the former Argentina captain and coach, who was accompanied by his 22-year-old girlfriend, Rocio Oliva, of insulting and pushing him.

Maradona, 52, came to Argentina to meet Diego Fernando, the son he had with former girlfriend Veronica Ojeda, and surprise his younger daughter, Giannina, on her birthday, local media reported on Wednesday.

Television news reports showed an ill-tempered Maradona surrounded by microphones and blinded by photographers' flashes calling reporters "bad people" for asking him about his visit and screaming he would "only talk to his (journalist) friends."

Later, Maradona was driven to the home of his former girlfriend in the vicinity of Ezeiza to see his 3-month-old son for the first time.

"On the way, in heavy rain, Maradona made the car stop, got out with a Havana cigar in his hand, took some stones from the edge of the highway and started throwing them at reporters' cars and kicked a photographer's leg," a paparazzo told La Red radio.



PHOTO: AFP

Chelsea players celebrate with the Europa League trophy after their victory over Benfica in the final at Amsterdam Arena on Wednesday

Chelsea make history

AFP, Amsterdam



A 93rd-minute header from Branislav Ivanovic gave Chelsea a stunning 2-1 victory over Benfica in the Europa League final on Wednesday as the London club claimed the trophy for the first time in heart-stopping fashion.

The game in Amsterdam seemed destined for extra time after Fernando Torres' superb 60th-minute opener for Chelsea was cancelled out by an Oscar Cardozo penalty, only for Ivanovic to net a dramatic winner with a looping header in stoppage time.

Moments later, Chelsea's players greeted the final whistle with a jubilant mass embrace, as they became the first team to simultaneously hold the Champions League and Europa League titles.

They will relinquish their

Champions League crown in 10 days, but more lasting is the statistic that they are only the fourth club to have claimed Europe's three major trophies -- including the now-defunct Cup Winners' Cup -- after Ajax, Bayern Munich and Juventus.

Chelsea's interim manager Rafael Benitez, meanwhile, joins Giovanni Trapattoni as one of only two coaches to have won the trophy with two different clubs, following his 2004 success with Valencia.

The manner of defeat was cruel on Jorge Jesus' enterprising side and means that Benfica have now lost seven consecutive European finals since claiming their last major continental crown in 1962.

Benfica's previous game was a damaging 2-1 loss to Porto that may have ended their Portuguese title hopes, but they banished any fears about their mental state with an assured start to the game

that bordered on insouciance at times.

Indeed, so authoritative were Benfica, and so lacklustre Chelsea, that only an apparent inability to shoot at the appropriate moment prevented Jesus' side from taking the lead before half-time.

Cardozo headed an early chance over the bar, Eduardo Salvio saw a shot blocked, Rodrigo miscued twice during a frantic goal-mouth scramble, and Nicolas Gaitan twice fired over after neat approach play.

With languid former Chelsea man Nemanja Matic orchestrating Benfica's attacks from a deep position, the English side were struggling to find a foothold.

They did not test Benfica goalkeeper Artur until Oscar put an effort straight at him in the 27th minute, although the Brazilian was almost deceived by a swerving Frank Lampard shot that he palmed over the bar in unorthodox fashion seven minutes before half-time.

BECKHAM calls it quits

AFP, London



David Beckham is to retire from professional football at the end of the season, his representative announced on Thursday.

The 38-year-old midfielder has played for Manchester United, Real Madrid, Los Angeles Galaxy and AC Milan, as well as winning 115 caps for England, and recently won the French Ligue 1 championship with Paris Saint-Germain.

"I'm thankful to PSG for giving me the opportunity to continue but I feel now is the right time to finish my career, playing at the highest level," he said, in comments reported by the BBC.

"If you had told me as a young boy I would have played for and won trophies with my boyhood club, Manchester United, proudly captained and played for my country over one hundred times, and lined up for some of the biggest

clubs in the world, I would have told you it was a fantasy.

"I'm fortunate to have realised those dreams."

Beckham's title triumph with PSG made him the first British player to have won league championships in four different countries, after previous successes in England, Spain and the United States.

He won six league titles, two FA Cups and the 1999 Champions League with United, before joining Madrid in 2003, where he won the Spanish league title four years later.

Beckham moved to Los Angeles in 2007, winning two MLS Cup titles with the Galaxy, but spent two loan spells at Milan and then returned to Europe in January this year, when he signed a short-term deal with PSG.

He captained England between 2000 and 2006, played at three World Cups, and has played more times for his country than any other outfield player.



England (1996-2009)	App 115	Goals 17
Man Utd (1993-2003)	App 265	Goals 62
Real Madrid (2003-07)	App 116	Goals 13
LA Galaxy (2007-2012)	App 98	Goals 18
AC Milan (2009/2010)	App 29	Goals 2
PSG (2013)	App 9	Goals 0

- Champions League winner: (1999)
- Intercontinental Cup winner: (1999)
- 6 Premier League titles: (1996, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003)
- 2 FA Cups: (1996, 1999)
- 1 Spanish league title: (2007)
- 2 MLS titles in US: (2011, 2012)
- 1 French league title: (2013)

Kiwis in charge

AFP, London



New Zealand took charge of the first Test at Lord's on Thursday, reducing England to 160 for four when rain forced an early close to the first day.

England captain Alastair Cook won the toss and batted but his side rarely got out of first gear in the face of some accurate bowling by the tourists.

Trent Boult was the pick of the attack, removing both Cook and Jonathan Trott after lunch on his way to an economical return of two wickets for 29 runs in 17 overs.

Fellow left-arm seamer Neil Wagner then dismissed

Ian Bell for 31 in the final session.

When rain forced an early close, the inexperienced Yorkshire duo of Joe Root (25 not out) and Jonathan Bairstow (three not out) were at the crease.

England's plight would have been worse had not Jonathan Trott, who made a painstaking 39, been dropped by Bruce Martin off his own bowling when on nought.

New Zealand bowled 30 maidens in 80 overs on Thursday -- a testament to their accuracy and the inability of an England top-order missing the injured Kevin Pietersen to hit them out of their stride.

England made just one change from the side that

drew the third Test against New Zealand at Auckland in March, with Graeme Swann, fit after an elbow injury, replacing fellow spinner Monty Panesar.

SCOREBOARD

ENGLAND: First innings				
Cook c Watling b Boult	32			
Compton c Southee b Martin	16			
Trott c Brownlie b Boult	39			
Bell c Watling b Wagner	31			
Root not out	25			
Bairstow not out	3			
Extras: (b-1, lb-7, w-1, nb-5)	14			
Total: (For 4 wickets in 80 overs)	160			
Fall of wickets: 1-43, 2-67, 3-112, 4-157				
To bat: M Prior, Broad, Swann, Finn, Anderson				
Bowler	O	M	R	W
Boult	17	7	29	2
Southee	16	5	32	0
Wagner	20	6	46	1
Martin	24	11	37	1
Williamson	3	1	8	0
Toss: England				
Umpires: Aleem Dar and Steve Davis				

CLEAR

YOUR CHANCE TO WATCH BARCELONA VS REAL MADRID LIVE IN SPAIN

CARRIER

3480

SEQ NBR

182

BANGLADESH-SPAIN

FLIGHT

QF43

SEAT NO.

39F

*Scan the QR code or check the inner page for TERMS & CONDITIONS

Buy 180ml Clear Men shampoo

Get a chance to fly to Spain

Watch El Clásico LIVE!