

# Do or die for United

AFP, Wolfsburg  
 Louis van Gaal says Manchester United only have themselves to blame ahead of Tuesday's winner-takes-all clash at Wolfsburg as they bid to avoid an early Champions League exit.  
 Van Gaal's Red Devils must beat Group B leaders Wolfsburg to ensure their place in the knockout stages having allowed the Germans to usurp them at the top of the table by being held to a goalless draw at home to PSV Eindhoven a fortnight ago.  
 Leaders Wolfsburg will reach the knock-out stages for the first time in the club's history with just a draw, while United, who are a point behind, know anything less than a win could see them eliminated.  
 However, United could still qualify even if they draw or lose to Wolfsburg, provided PSV do not better their result at home to CSKA Moscow in the other group match.  
 But Van Gaal wants to leave nothing to chance in Germany.  
 "We have a huge Champions League match at Wolfsburg," Van Gaal told the club's United Review magazine.  
 "After the disappointing result against Eindhoven at Old Trafford, we now know what we have to do in order to progress to the knockout stages of the competition: win.  
 "We have not made it easy for ourselves, but we know that victory in Germany will not only guarantee qualification, but also ensure we finish top of our group."  
 Finishing top of Group B will mean United avoid the likes of Real Madrid, Barcelona and Bayern Munich in the last 16.

United lost at the same stage four years ago when a 2-1 defeat at FC Basel saw them bow out in the 2011/12 group stage and Van Gaal's side is still looking for their first away victory in the group for this campaign.  
 United's overall away record against sides from Germany is won five, lost five with four draws.  
 Their fans will have good memories of their last trip to Wolfsburg when former England striker Michael Owen scored a hat-trick in their 3-1 win in December 2009 as the Red Devils reached the quarter-finals.  
 Diego Benaglio and Marcel Schaefer are the only survivors in Wolfsburg's first team and VfL have lost seven in a row against Premier League clubs in Europe.  
 Their last home defeat to an English club was a 2-0 loss to Everton last season in the Europa League's group stages.  
 During his two-year reign as Bayern Munich coach, Van Gaal was unbeaten in four encounters with Wolfsburg, winning three of them.  
 Manchester United midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger is set to play his first game for the Red Devils in Germany since transferring from Bayern Munich.  
 United were held to a goalless draw by West Ham at Old Trafford on Saturday which left them fourth in the Premier League table, while Wolfsburg suffered a 2-1 defeat at home to Dortmund on Saturday.  
 In all competitions, Wolfsburg have lost just four of their last 42 home games and have a 100 per cent record there in the Champions League this term.  
 "We have to win the game to progress, so we have to get back to business and prepare for what is a huge game for us," said Wolfsburg coach Dieter Hecking as his side look to keep their dreams alive of reaching the knockout stages.

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Real Madrid stars Cristiano Ronaldo (L) and James Rodriguez take part in a training session at the Valdebebas training ground yesterday ahead of tonight's Champions League fixture against Malmo. PHOTO: AFP

## Benitez to rest stars

AFP, Madrid  
 Real Madrid coach Rafael Benitez admitted he will rotate his squad for the visit of Swedish champions Malmo on Tuesday with Madrid already assured of their place in the last 16 of the Champions League.  
 Madrid's better head-to-head record against Paris Saint-Germain means the 10-time winners will finish on top of Group A no matter what happens on matchday six.  
 And with a crucial league clash away to Villarreal to come on Sunday, Benitez hinted that the likes of Cristiano Ronaldo, Gareth Bale and Karim Benzema could be set for a rest.  
 "It is a day to rotate, albeit still with the idea of winning," Benitez said on Monday.  
 "We are very satisfied to have qualified as group winners, but we want to keep on winning and manage both things. The possibility to win and to change some players so that everyone is in the best condition possible for the game against Villarreal."  
**BFF's EC meeting postponed**  
 SPORTS REPORTER

## Cazorla out for 4 months

AFP, London  
 Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger has confirmed that key midfielder Santi Cazorla has undergone knee surgery and will be sidelined for up to four months.  
 The 30-year-old Spain international was injured early in the second half of Arsenal's draw at Norwich last weekend, but remained on the pitch for the rest of the game.  
 It was unclear at first whether or not the former Malaga star would have to go under the knife.  
 But in the aftermath of Saturday's 3-1 win over Sunderland, Wenger confirmed that Cazorla will be missing until March after having surgery on a ruptured ligament on Friday.  
 "We know now. It has happened already. It's not the season. It is at least three months, maybe four," said the Frenchman.  
 Cazorla's misfortune could be a blessing in disguise for Aaron Ramsey who has been keen to play in the Spaniard's central midfield role.

## 'Defeat exposes hype'

AFP, Newcastle  
  
 Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp voiced hope that his team's 2-0 defeat at Newcastle United would puncture some of the giddiness engendered by their recent resurgence.  
 Liverpool were elevated to potential Premier League champions by some observers following a run of seven wins in eight games in all competitions, which saw them move to within sight of the Champions League places.  
 But Sunday's defeat, inflicted by a Martin Skrtel own goal and a late Georginio Wijnaldum strike, left them six points off the top four in seventh place and Klopp said it was a timely reminder of the improvements that his team still have to make.  
 "If you think after a few weeks everything is perfect, it's a little bit crazy, no?" the German told his post-match press conference.  
 On suggestions that his team had played their way into the title picture, he gestured to the journalists sitting in front of him and said: "Everybody on this side of the table, maybe.  
 "I didn't hear anybody on this side (his side) of the table talk about this.  
 "I have no problem with everything you can talk about, but please don't ask me




JURGEN KLOPP

because of this. I didn't say before, so why should I explain now why we are not?  
 "We feel this defeat. We know it's deserved, but it hurts, like it should."  
 The key, Klopp said, was "not going nuts when you win, not getting crazy when you lose".  
 "It's not a reality check," he added. "It's only a bad game."  
 Liverpool had won 6-1 at Southampton in the League Cup on Wednesday, but a side showing six changes toiled badly at St James' Park, registering only one attempt on target.  
 Wijnaldum's shot was turned in for an own goal by Skrtel in the 69th minute and with the visitors pushing for an equaliser, Moussa Sissoko freed Wijnaldum to loft a sweet finish over Simon Mignolet in added time.  
 Klopp was frustrated that Alberto Moreno had seen a lobbed effort chalked off for a questionable offside call at 1-0 -- he called it a "world-class goal" -- but he also found a partial explanation for his side's disappointing display in the failure of their high press.  
 Asked what had gone wrong, he replied: "Nearly everything. The start, the middle and the end.  
 "Open game, with no rhythm from our side. Our defending in the last line was good. Our midfield pressing was not good. I couldn't see offensive pressing."

## Kusal Perera tests positive

AFP, Colombo  
 Sri Lanka Monday recalled wicketkeeper-batsman Kusal Perera from New Zealand after he tested positive for a banned steroid, the national cricket board said.  
 The 25-year-old was randomly tested during the recent Pakistan tour of Sri Lanka and the just released results were positive, Sri Lanka Cricket said in a statement.  
 "In view of this and in terms of the applicable ICC regulations, SLC has recalled Perera from New Zealand," the board said, adding that they would test a "B" sample in line with anti-doping regulations.  
 Sri Lanka is sending Kaushal Silva, 29, who is also a wicketkeeper-batsman, to take his place.  
 Perera becomes Sri Lanka's second international player to fail a doping test. Left hand batsman Upul Tharanga was suspended for three months after testing positive during the 2011 World Cup.

## Zidane worried for France

AGENCIES, Paris  
  
 French football legend Zinedine Zidane hopes his compatriot Karim Benzema, is not suspended from representing his country due to his alleged participation in a blackmail case involving international teammate Mathieu Valbuena.  
 The president of the French Football Federation Noel Le Graet is expected to make an announcement on Benzema's international future on Thursday, just two days before the draw for next year's European Championships which France will host.  
 "I hope for the sake of the French team and for the player, it [a suspension] is not the decision that is taken," said Zidane.  
 "A player like Benzema is an important; he can bring so much to the team, strictly speaking from a sporting perspective. To cope without a player like that can be complicated."  
 Zidane also added that he hopes Benzema's "personal affairs" are cleared up quickly seeing as that is one of the most important aspects of the ordeal.  
 The Real Madrid forward Benzema, was not called up for last month's friendly matches against Germany and England, officially due to injury.  
 However, the games came just after he was charged with complicity in blackmail and conspiring to commit a criminal act in relation to a sex tape and told that he was not allowed to contact Valbuena.  
 Benzema claimed in an interview on Sunday that he still has the support of France coach Didier Deschamps  
 "I have had a message from him. He, as well as players in the national team support me," said Benzema.  
 On the field Benzema was back to his best on Saturday as he scored for the first time since the scandal began with two goals in Madrid's 4-1 win over Getafe.

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) postponed its emergency meeting, which was supposed to give a ruling on the players' transfer of the upcoming Bangladesh Premier League following demand of a few top clubs including Sheikh Jamal DC and Mohammedan SC.  
 However, it has been learnt that meeting may take place at somewhere outside the BFF House today.  
**SUPERMOKH CUP U-13s draw, U-12s lose**  
 SPORTS REPORTER  
 Bangladesh national under-13 team played out a 2-2 draw against the under-13 team of Thailand's Buriram United in their opening match of Supermohk Cup at the KLEA Training Centre Field in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia yesterday. Rezwon struck both the goals for Bangladesh.  
 However, the national under-12 team suffered a 1-2 defeat against Seoul Shindap FC of South Korea at the Maybank Academy Field, with Tapu scoring the only goal for Bangladesh, said a press release from the Bangladesh Football Federation.

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(noun) a state of perplexity or uncertainty over what to do in a difficult situation.

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