

April schedules will test Liverpool, Chelsea

Liverpool made the EPL a far more interesting contest to watch after they pounced on United to win 4-1 at Old Trafford. Just when everybody thought that the league was over now there is doubt, thanks to the Reds' victory. Nobody knows it better than Alex Ferguson



Soccer Scene

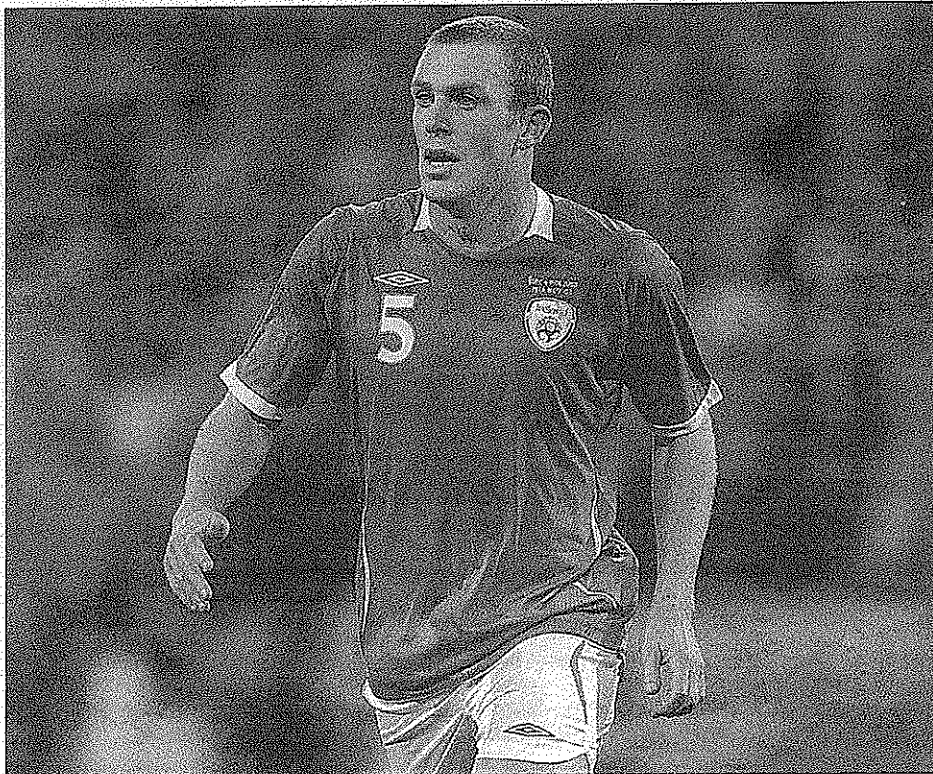
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son that you can't count your chickens before they are hatched. However expect United to respond to this setback. It's their worst home defeat in 16 years. Fergie will probably remind his players of this as they take the field away to Fulham to end the month of March on a positive note.

The big question is can Liverpool stay with United in the run in? We have seen Liverpool drop silly points as United closed in on them. Yes, the 4-1 was a great win but it will be a test of time when it comes to winning the title. And that time frame is the month of April. United are at home to Villa, Portsmouth and Spurs while away to Sunderland and Wigan mid-April.

Liverpool end March with a home game against Aston Villa and a win here would certainly keep the title race alive. Nevertheless with a game less to play than United, the Pool have to win on the road to Fulham and Hull City while at home to Blackburn Rovers and Arsenal. It's a great schedule for the fans in general as every game from here on in matters.

To make the title race even more exciting, Liverpool are not the only one putting it up to the Devils. Chelsea once again pulled through with a 1-0 triumph over Manchester City. A win away to Spurs to end March would set the Blues up for a very interesting April. Away to Newcastle and a very tricky fixture at West Ham while at home to Bolton and Everton will test Chelsea to stay in the race. Like Liverpool the Blues cannot afford to drop a single point and so far so



SPORTSFILE

Manchester City manager Mark Hughes will hope that Richard Dunne, above, doesn't pick up an injury playing for Ireland against Bulgaria.

good under Guus Hiddink. Let's hope the race keeps going in to May but April's schedule is going to test Liverpool's and Chelsea's will to win. United has a game in hand and they can afford another slip up or even two as they still have a 4-point advantage. But nobody saw that 4-1 coming, nobody expected Liverpool to do that at Old Trafford, nobody.

EPL managers dread WC games

Of course during international duty managers will cross their fingers that their star players will come back healthy. Already we have seen that when top players like Gerrard and Torres are out Liverpool are not the same. It's similar when United are without Rooney or Vidic although United's depth has proven itself a lot this season. Chelsea on

the other hand are a real dark horse but they do miss Terry when he's out.

Another key to club success in April is a little bit of luck during the World Cup qualifiers. Players must avoid injury. Nonetheless it will come down to the best squad rather than the best starting 11.

On March 28 Ireland are at home to Bulgaria. The green and white must beat the Bulgarians to remain in pursuit for automatic qualification. An Irish win will also more or less knock Bulgaria out of the race. What a great day it could be for the Irish. EPL managers will keep a close watch on Dimitar Berbatov, John O'Shea, Stiliyan Petrov, Robbie Keane and Richard Dunne. Liverpool's Rafael Benitez will not only cross his fingers but he'll probably bite off his nails when

EPL Standings

Team	P	Pts	(GD)
Man Utd	28	65	(+33)
Chelsea	29	61	(+33)
Liverpool	29	61	(+28)
Arsenal	29	52	(+19)
Aston Villa	29	52	(+12)
Everton	29	48	(+10)
West Ham	29	40	(0)
Wigan	29	38	(1)
Fulham	29	37	(+2)
Man City	29	35	(+8)
Tottenham	29	35	(1)
Bolton	29	33	(-12)
Hull	29	33	(-16)
Sunderland	29	32	(-9)
Blackburn	29	30	(-16)
Newcastle	29	29	(-11)
Portsmouth	28	29	(-15)
Stoke	29	29	(-19)
Middlesbr	29	27	(-20)
West Brom	29	23	(-29)

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Shamrock vets win shoot-out

By Jay Mwamba
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Shamrock's Over-30s advanced to the Fritz Marth Cup quarterfinals after a 4-3 penalty victory over Cosmopolitan Soccer League rivals Tesoro in their first match of the calendar year last Sunday.

Emmett Harvey, Paul Wilson, Mario Angelucci and Niall Carolan scored during the shoot-out on Randalls Island to secure a date with the Garden City vs. South Baisely/NY Polet winners in the last eight of the State-wide competition on April 20.

The delayed Round of 16 tie had finished 2-2 after 90 minutes, with Tesoro

canceling out what appeared to be Angelucci's late winner [80th] with an even later leveler [88th].

Ciaran Moloney [20th] had earlier pegged back the Caribbean club's 12th minute go-ahead-goal in a match in which goalie Joe Connelly came up big.

"An absolutely great show," said Shamrock official Sean Keogh, congratulating his lads.

It was the Rocks' second straight shoot-out win in the Marth Cup after a 4-1 second round triumph over Westchester FC during the first half of the CSL season last fall.

The Sunnyside Irish defeated Queens Liberty United 3-0 in the first round.

Turkey travels to Spain. Alonso and Torres will be his main concerns.

While the Spaniards should win this one the Turks will compete for every ball and let's not forget how well they did in EURO 2008. It's on April 1 when we can expect players to pick up injuries. Hopefully they don't, but it's part and parcel of the game. At the same time it really is too much on the body. Let's not forget that some of these players have also just played in the Champions League. Once again 4 teams from the EPL make it to the least 8. Nevertheless the games to watch, alongside the nail-biting managers, on April 1, are Italy vs. Ireland, Liechtenstien vs. Russia and England vs. Ukraine.

On March 29, the big game in South America's CONMEBOL is Ecuador vs. Brazil. We see more and more Brazilians make it in the EPL. Ecuador must win this one to keep alive their 2010 WC dream. Robinho, Alex, Jo, Elano and Anderson could feature in this crunch WC game, not the kind of game that excites club managers bit it certainly excites the fans.

Boxing

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neyman Charles Wade [4-9, 1 KO] on the floor from a right hook to the ribs after the first bell.

Wade beat the count but was decked again by a double right hook to the body and head, upon which his corner threw in the towel.

"It was great," O'Connor, now 5-0 with two KOs, said.

The former U.S. Olympic alternate, a majority points winner over Jamar Saunders in Florida on February 27, was fighting in his home state for the first time.

FOE SPIKED

Cork native Gary "Spike" O'Sullivan, shamrock designs shaved into his hair, found himself in a clinch fest against Jimmy Leblanc that ended with the latter's disqualification.

Evidently wary of the big punching O'Sullivan's power, Leblanc sought to smother his man and was docked points in rounds two, three and the fourth itself before the ref waved it off.

LEE OPPONENT

Alex Sipos, who sparred with Andy Lee before his last fight, will square off with the Limerick southpaw for real at The O2 in Dublin this Saturday.

The German [19-5-2, 9 KOs] steps in after the cancellation of Irish Ropes' "Erin Go Brawl II" show scuttled Lee's bout with three-time world title challenger Antwun Echols.

"It's an interesting match-up because Sipos gave a very good account of himself when he challenged for the European title in Finland," promoter Brian Peters said, referring to Sipos' points loss to Finn Amin Asikainen back in October 2006.

In the main event at The O2, Bernard Dunne makes history when he becomes the first ever Dubliner to fight for a world title in his home town. He'll be gunning for Panamanian Ricardo Cordoba's WBA super bantamweight crown.