

Real Madrid hopes Monaco match will be business as usual

GUY HEDGE COE, Madrid
Real Madrid faces Monaco tonight in the quarterfinals of the Champions League (Canal+, 8.45pm), with one foot already in the semifinals of the competition.

Real won the first leg of the tie two weeks ago, with a 4-2 victory in Madrid and Monaco needs a 2-0 victory or to win by three goals in its own stadium, in order to turn the result around.

Both teams are leading their respective domestic leagues, although their expectations in this competition could not be more different.

Real hopes to reach the semi-finals for the fifth time in as many years and win the European Cup for a remarkable 10th time. The Spanish team is set on winning both the Champions League and Spanish title, after losing the King's Cup final last month.

Midfielder David Beckham will not be available due to a suspension, but Roberto Carlos returns from suspension, to bolster the notoriously rickety Real defense.

Meanwhile Monaco, coached by French World Cup winner Didier Deschamps, last made the semi-finals in 1998 and even reaching this stage of the competition has been seen as an impressive feat.

The French team will not include midfielder Lucas Bernardi, due to suspension, or defender Sebastien Squillaci and midfielder Andreas Zikos, because of injuries. Real's own Fernando Morientes, however, who is currently on loan to Monaco, is expected to play.

Real undoubtedly go into tonight's match clear favorites, having won all three of their matches against French opposition this season. However, Monaco can take heart in the fact that they have scored 23 goals in their last six Champions League home games, including putting a record eight past Deportivo Coruña in the group stage of the competition.

Under the circumstances, complacency could be Real's biggest opponent during this match.

Female athletes still lacking respect

Women's sports equals or exceeds the men's success, but are still treated as inferior

CARLOS ARRIBAS, Madrid
In 1992, women accounted for only 33 percent of the working Spanish population. By 2003, that percentage reached 44 percent. Since February 1992, when Blanca Fernández Ochoa became the first female Spanish athlete to win an Olympic medal (in the Albertville Winter Olympics), more than two and a half million women have entered the workforce. For the 2004 Olympics in Athens, nearly half the Spanish team is expected to be female.

Women's roles in Spanish society have changed over the past 12 years, and more so concerning women athletes. Although there are fewer female athletes since 1992, their winning percentages have increased. They are better, braver and more competitive. Just 20 years ago, the presence of women in track and field, for example, was merely symbolic. Last year, at SuperLeague, where Europe's best track teams compete, the Spanish men's team dropped a category. The women's team, on the other hand, which had recently ascended a category, maintained its new status brilliantly. Just one month ago, women outnumbered men on the Spanish track and field team at the World Indoor Championships in Budapest. And the athlete who represents the current state of Spanish track and field — the fighting spirit, the aggressiveness — is a woman: Marta Domínguez.

"Right now, women tend to exercise more," explains Mari Sol Casado, general secretary of the Spanish Triathlon Federation. "You see more women running in parks, and there are also more top-class female athletes." But progress is still slow, she says, because women still have to deal with the double burden of working inside and outside the home. And women's sports still receive less financial backing and coverage.



Joane Somarriba celebrates winning the world time trial championship.

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After ranking the number of wins in 2003, the best Spanish athlete last year was not the Formula 1 driver Fernando Alonso or tennis player Juan Carlos Ferrero. Nor was it basketball player Pau Gasol or even soccer star Raúl. It wasn't a man at all, but a woman: the Basque cyclist Joane Somarriba, winner of the Tour de France and the world time trial champion.

However, as Somarriba says, women's newfound promi-

nence is still far below the importance given to men's sports. "Sure, everything seems so perfect, our situation is changing little by little, we are more valued, we are already as good as the guys...but emotionally, our world is totally different."

Somarriba and, to a lesser degree, Dori Ruano, are the only Spanish women who can make a decent living as professional cyclists. "Perhaps because of that," she says, "and because of the difficult years of injuries and illness I've gone through, I'm tougher when it comes time to work,

to train, to compete." The need to win has made her more of a fighter. "If I didn't win races," she says, "I wouldn't be able to make a living from cycling. And that has really toughened me up."

Spain's first female athletic juggernaut was the roller hockey team that won the gold medal in the 1992 Barcelona Summer Olympics. One of its stars, Nuria Moreno, thought that the team's success would change the way Spain viewed women's sports, but it hasn't happened that way.

"We have advanced," Moreno says, "but not that much. We are still discriminated. In my sport, compared to the treatment the men receive, the difference is abysmal. Almost all of the money allotted by the federation is sent to the men. We are always behind the men, but in the larger competitions, we always get the results."

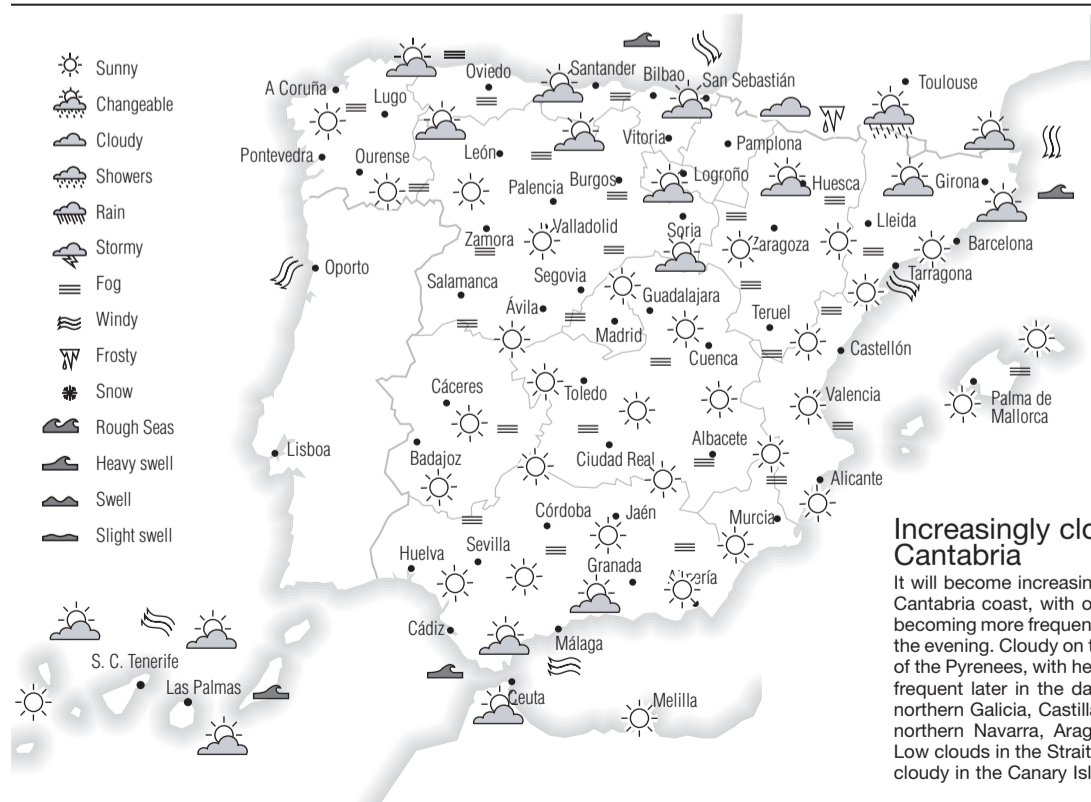
The current hockey team recently qualified for a spot in the Athens Olympic Games. The effect can be seen around the country. "More girls are now going out to play," Moreno says. "When I was in school, I was the tomboy, the only girl that took sport seriously."

Women leading the administrative side of sport are also lacking. Not one Spanish Olympic federation is chaired by a woman, and only three non-Olympic sports — golf, kickboxing and petanque (a game not unlike lawn bowling where a ball is tossed instead of rolled) — have women presidents.

"Here in Spain, the quotas of female leadership in sport is very low," says Casado, who is also the chairperson of the European Triathlon Federation. "If there are no women presidents in the national federations, how can we increase the number in the international federations?"

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