Brazil Serie A in the spotlight

Stand by for some mega payouts in TAB’s soccer pools as the curtain comes down on most European soccer leagues and Brazil’s Super-competitive Serie A league takes centre stage.

By Mark Gleeson

For TAB soccer customers, this week marks the transition from the traditional European winter leagues to those played inside one calendar year.

The curtain is coming down on the top championships in Europe, but those in Scandinavia, Ireland and further afield in Brazil and the USA now begin to get some traction.

Midweek marks the penultimate round of the Swiss league season, in which Young Boys have a 24-point lead and were long ago crowned champs. FC Basel with be the other Swiss club heading to next season’s Champions League.

The French and Italian leagues come to an end this weekend and the curtain also comes down in Germany and Spain, where the cup final is the last encounter of the campaign in both countries.

In Sweden, Malmö and Hacken have jumped into an early lead in the Allsvenskan, the country’s premier league. Malmö were champions in 2016 and 2017 and overall have won the championship a record 23 times, so more than their nearest challenger. Hacken have been in the top flight of Swedish football for 19 seasons, but are yet to win the league, coming closest seven years ago when they were runners-up.

Malmö’s Serie A season only kicked off last weekend and is among the more competitive leagues. Of this year’s 20 protagonists, 14 have won the league title previously in what is a clear indication of how tough it can be for TAB soccer pools’ players to find winners.

But simultaneously the sheer competitiveness of the Serie A and B leagues in Brazil often makes for big payouts.

Defending champions Palmeiras are the early Serie A leaders with perennial challengers Atletico Mineiro in second. But there are always many twists and turns through what is a long season.

Major League Soccer in the USA kicked off in March and is rapidly moving to the halfway mark. But it is again another league in which dominant clubs are rare and Screamer 6 and 10 punters can always find some decent payouts in pools with these matches.

Top Anglers FC, led by former US men’s team coach Bob Bradley, are four points clear at the top of the Western Conference, but it is a lot tighter in the east with Philadelphia and Wayne Rooney’s DC United the early leaders.

To take a bet, go to www.bettingworld.co.za or www.tabonline.co.za or www.soccer6.co.za.

**Barca, Bayern chase doubles**

It’s time for the final act in the 2018-19 Spanish and German soccer seasons as big guns Barcelona and Bayern Munich ready for the Copa del Rey and DFB Pokal finals respectively on Saturday.

Barcelona have won five times with three draws. Valencia last beat them in the league, away in the Catalan city three years ago.

Bayern Munich have won the DFB Pokal three times in the last six years and were runners-up last season, when Eintracht Frankfurt upset them in the final with two late goals.

Tomorrow’s final in Berlin’s Olympic Stadium is a first opportunity for RB Leipzig to win silverware.

Leipzig have emerged over the last years as a credible challenger in German football and were runners-up in the Bundesliga two seasons ago. This campaign they finished third behind runners-up Borussia Dortmund.

This weekend also sees the leagues in France and Italy end. In both the championship was settled early, but there are still Champions League places up for grabs and relegation issues to be settled.

In Italy Inter Milan should come third by beating Empoli and thereby offering Genoa a chance to escape relegation at the same time. Atalanta should grab fourth place and the last Champions League spot.

In France, the only question left to be decided is Caen beat Bordeaux to jump above Amiens and avoid having to play in the end of season promotion-relegation play-off. Amiens have a home game too against already relegated Guingamp and should also escape.

To take a bet, go to www.bettingworld.co.za or www.tabonline.co.za or www.soccer6.co.za

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**TS Galaxy hero Zakhele Lepasa was going nowhere when 2019 dawned, but has shot to stardom with The Rockets in Dobsonville.**

The 22-year-old slotted the penalty that saw the National First Division side make history by becoming the first second-tier side to lift the Nedbank Cup after they defeated Kaizer Chiefs in Saturday’s decider in Durban.

Lepasa grew up in Snake Park, a small suburb of Dobsonville, and was heavily influenced by his football-mad mother Ophopolang Monyai, who would take him to the FNB Stadium to watch her beloved Kaizer Chiefs.

Given that it was his goal that ensured Chiefs would end their fourth season without silverware, he might have some apologising to do the next time he sees her!

Just a few months ago Lepasa seemed miles away from a Premier League contract, but his exploits in the Nedbank Cup have made him a household name.

**Barcelona seek to take the trophy for the first time in 21 years.**

Barcelona finished the Spanish league 11 points clear of nearest rivals Atletico Madrid and now meet Real Madrid in Saturday’s Copa del Rey final on Saturday.

The game is being played in neutral Sevilla as Barcelona seek to take the trophy for a fifth successive year in an unprecedented streak of success in the Spanish Cup.

“Football has pressure on its own but I think it’s also a question of how people respond to it,” Lepasa said.

“People will start noticing me, start to ask who this person is. But it’s not easy because when that happens it means every team plans against you.

“For me it means I must come up with new ways of playing because they will target you as a player.”

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**SPORTS EXPRESS 6 POOL OF THE WEEK**

**Wednesday 22 May**

**Soccer S6 V2 P1**

- **M1 Shakhtar Donetsk vs Dynamo Kyiv:**
  The top two clash in the Premier League in Ukraine, where Shakhtar have won the title again for a third year in a row. Dynamo have won all of their last six league games.
- **M2 Grasshoppers Zurich vs FC Sion:**
  Grasshoppers have been relegated, ending an unbroken 68 years in the top flight. Sion have lost four of their past five games.
- **M3 FC Luzern vs FC Zurich:**
  Clash between fifth and sixth in Swiss Super League. Luzern have lost five of their past seven matches. Zurich are chasing a Europa League place after winning three of their past four games.
- **M4 Neuchatel Xamax vs FC Lugano:**
  Neuchatel have lost their last two games and sit second bottom in the Swiss league. Third-placed Lugano have won only once in 10 previous trips to Neuchatel Xamax.
- **M5 FC Thun vs FC Basel:**
  These two clubs meet in this league clash just three days after they clashed in the Swiss Cup final, won 2-1 by Basel.
- **M6 Sparta Rotterdam vs TOP Oss:**
  Dutch promotion play-off after Sparta finished second but have only one win to show in their previous six games. TOP Oss finished sixth and lost the first leg of this tie 0-2 at home.

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**THEY SAID IT . . .**

“I’m really thinking in the moment - 30 minutes after finishing the game - and in think in we definitely have to sit down and see in general what’s happening. Not only in the last months but what happened with Kaizer Chiefs probably in the last years, and we will definitely have a discussion if I have to make a decision.”

Kaizer Chiefs coach Ernst Middendorp

“Football has pressure on its own but I think it’s also a question of how people respond to it.”

Zinedine Zidane

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**PROFILE FROM NOWHERE TO INSTANT FAME IN CUP FINAL**

By Nick Said

As the Netherlands’ Grasshoppers hosted Swiss Cup holders Sion, Sparta Rotterdam moved a step closer to claiming their place in the Europa League.

Zinedine Zidane has accepted his share of the blame for Real Madrid’s disastrous season but has big plans for 2019-20.

**PICTURE: BACKPAGE PIX**

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**PICTURE: BACKPAGE PIX**

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**PICTURE: BACKPAGE PIX**
Bologna's last two home games against Napoli have ended in draws.

Rapperswil-Jona lost 4-0 at home to Winterthur earlier this season.

Shakhtar have won the title again for a third year in a row. Dynamo have won all of their last six league games.

The top two clash in the league in Ukraine where Young Boys could end the season with a 25-point advantage over fifth placed Montpellier, who are just a single point ahead of them.

Marseille are sixth in the Ligue 1 standings and finished third from bottom and going into a post-season promotion-relegation playoff. Bordeaux have lost their last six in a row.

Zurich have not won in their last five clashes with Basel.

This is the first meeting between the two clubs in 16 years. The last five meetings have resulted in a home victory.

Both teams from Iceland have resulted in a home victory.

Produced three wins for Derry City, two for St Pats and a draw.

After seven games without a win, Reims won away to Rennes and Lille can both look back with satisfaction on their achievements.

March in their only previous meeting.
Real Madrid looks to spend big and boost squad

Real Madrid seem certain to spend heavily to boost Zinedine Zidane’s squad and try to close the growing gap to LaLiga rivals Barcelona.

Zidane has indicated he will not be afraid to overhaul an ageing team that ended the campaign third, 19 points behind Barca, after a 2-0 home loss to Real Betis on Sunday.

Gareth Bale was an unused substitute against Betis, with his future seemingly certain to be away from the Santiago Bernabeu, while goalkeeper Keylor Navas is also expected to leave.

But how could the Los Blancos squad look ahead of the 2019-20 season?

Madrid have already sealed a deal for Porto centre-back Eder Militao, boosting an increasingly leaky defence that shipped 46 league goals last term. Reports in Germany have claimed Luka Jovic will soon follow, with the Serbia striker previously linked with Barcelona - set to leave Eintracht Frankfurt despite only completing his permanent transfer from Benfica earlier this year.

Former coach Fabio Capello has said Madrid have €300 million to spend, so Zidane can afford to be ambitious with his targets. Paul Pogba has long been linked with the club and despite being Manchester United’s top goalscorer in the Premier League this year, he could be allowed to leave.

Kylian Mbappe would be a classic Madrid Galactico signing and he signalled he would be open to leaving Paris Saint-Germain when he collected both the Ligue 1 Best Player and Best Young Player of the Year prizes at the National Union of Professional Footballers’ awards on Sunday. Mbappe would likely cost a world-record fee, with Neymar another top-tier player potentially on the move.

The former Barca attacker has reportedly failed to settle in the French capital and he could be Madrid’s next superstar after last year’s surprise sale of Cristiano Ronaldo to Juventus, but Madrid’s long-term interest in Eden Hazard - who has a year left on his Chelsea contract - may scupper a potential deal for the Brazil star.

Even with a vast amount of cash to splash, it is hard to see Madrid bringing in four new attackers in Hazard, Jovic, Mbappe and Neymar, while PSG - regardless of doubts over their financial situation - would surely not allow both of their forwards to leave in the same transfer window.

The level of spending at Madrid during the close-season will partly depend on who they can sell, with Gareth Bale a prime candidate to be moved on. Zidane’s lack of trust in the Wales forward is no secret, even though Bale scored twice in last year’s Champions League final defeat of Liverpool in Kiev.

Bale cost what was then a world record £85m when he joined from Tottenham but his huge wages, coupled with a short list of potential suitors, could be a problem.

Another key member of the Madrid team that won three Champions League titles in a row in Zidane’s first spell, goalkeeper Keylor Navas is expected to be sold after last year’s arrival of Thibaut Courtois, with the current boss said to be keen to make son Luca his number two option with the gloves.

Isco seemed certain to depart when he was out of favour before Santiago Solari’s sacking, while Marcelo could also be allowed to leave due to the breakthrough season enjoyed by left-back Sergio Reguilon.

But Toni Kroos is staying put after signing a new four-year deal with the club. PSG were linked with a treble swoop for Kroos, Isco and Bale, so the latter two players could be used as potential makeweights in a deal for either Mbappe or Neymar.

At the back, Zidane has said Raphael Varane will stay but with Juventus reported to be interested in the World Cup winner, a big offer could tempt Madrid to sell. Ballon d’Or winner Luka Modric, meanwhile, was previously linked with Inter and had a poor second half of the season. - Omnisport
**SOCCER 6 POOL Thursday 23 May**

Mark 54 V1 P1 - BET from Thu 23 May - Closes 10:00 Wed 22 May

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**SOCCER 4 POOL Wednesday 22 May**

Mark 54 V1 P1 - BET from Wed 22 May - Closes 20:00 Mon 27 May

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**SOCCER 1 POOL Tuesday 21 May**

Mark 51 V1 - BET from Tue 21 May - Closes 16:45 Tue 21 May

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**SOCCER 1X POOL Saturday 25 May**

Mark 54 V1 P1 - BET from Sat 25 May - Closes 23:05 Thu 23 May

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**SOCCER 10 POOL Monday 27 May**

Mark 54 V1 P1 - BET from Mon 27 May - Closes 10:00 Mon 27 May

CARRYOVER SOCCER 10

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**SOCCER 13 POOL Monday 27 May**

Mark 54 V1 P1 - BET from Mon 27 May - Closes 10:00 Mon 27 May

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**SOCCER 1 POOL Sunday 26 May**

Mark 51 V1 - BET from Sun 26 May - Closes 16:45 Sun 26 May

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**SOCCER 4 POOL Saturday 25 May**

Mark 54 V1 P1 - BET from Sat 25 May - Closes 23:05 Thu 23 May

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**SOCCER 1 POOL Saturday 25 May**

Mark 51 V1 - BET from Sat 25 May - Closes 16:45 Sat 25 May

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**SOCCER 1 POOL Friday 24 May**

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**SOCCER 1 POOL Thursday 23 May**

Mark 51 V1 - BET from Thu 23 May - Closes 16:45 Wed 22 May

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**SOCCER 1 POOL Wednesday 22 May**

Mark 51 V1 - BET from Wed 22 May - Closes 16:45 Tue 21 May

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**SOCCER 1 POOL Tuesday 21 May**

Mark 51 V1 - BET from Tue 21 May - Closes 16:45 Mon 20 May

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<th>Team A</th>
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TAB carryover feast!

TAB soccer and rugby customers can get ready to tuck into a carryover feast in the next few days.

The Soccer 10 pool this Sunday 26 May comprises the last round of 10 matches in the 2018-19 Italian Serie A league. It’s a great pool to bet on, and to add to the excitement the pool will start with a R200,000 carryover.

That should generate a total pool of more than R2 million! You can take your bets from Saturday.

There’s also mega bucks to be made this Sunday’s Rugby 5 pool, which should total some R30,000.

1.15
20:45
Manchester City
2.35
Tottenham
2.65
Arsenal
3.3
Chelsea
Win.

There’s also mega bucks to be made this Sunday’s Rugby 5 pool, which should soar to R28 million!

Take your chances, more chances to win. Go red, black, green and collect.

...continued...

By Liam Del Carme

Rugby 5 Pool 1 (mark Race 1 to play)

M1 Stormers v Highlanders: The Stormers have won two of their last six matches and the Highlanders three. Stormers will hope to bog down the Highlanders at close quarters and suffocate the visitors’ potent try-scoring ability. The Highlanders’ 46 tries are twice as many as that of Stormers, who have the fourth-best defensive record this season. The home team’s pack will struggle the Highlanders, but expect the visitors to make the most of the scraps that fall their way.

M2 Sharks v Border Bulldogs: Sharks only managed to pip the Bo’Land Cavaliers by a point last week and they have been unconvincing this season. But they should be far too strong for lowly Bulldogs, who come off another defeat in which KP Elephants put 50 on them. The hosts start overwhelming favourites to run away with it.

M3 Castres v Toulon: Consucutive home defeats to Toulouse and Montpellier have put Castres on the backfoot in recent weeks, but they bounced back with an away win over Agen last weekend. Their overall form is decent with seven wins from their last 10 matches. In Toulon they face opponents who have been wildly inconsistent this season. Toulon handsomely beat Clermont last Sunday, but their form on the road has been appalling and they have only won at Newcastle Falcons and lowly Perpignan. At home, Castres are clear favourites.

M4 Clermont Auvergne v Montpellier: The manner in which Clermont suffered their 32-10 defeat to Toulon must be a little disconcerting to their coaching staff. They do have four wins from their last six matches yet will be wary of Montpellier who boast recent wins on the road at Toulon, Pau and Castres, Clermont, however, are a difficult team to beat at home so they start favourites.

M5 Sharks v Lions: Sharks hammered Lions in their previous encounter at Ellis Park. Both teams have had ups and downs since and although the Sharks boast the more impressive individual performances, the Lions have been more consistent. Lions have won three of their last four matches, while the Sharks over the same period have won one. The Sharks come off a bye while the Lions have the momentum of consecutive wins at home. The hosts’ monster pack may give them the edge, especially if Lions don’t have the calming influence of captain Warren Whiteley.

Suggested R30 permutation for Saturday’s Rugby 5 Pool closes 15.05: M1 - 1; M2 - 2; M3 - 1; M4 - 1; M5 - 3, 4.
Your top guide to sports betting!

Whilst reasonable precautions have been taken to ensure the accuracy and quality of Last 6 results with most recent on right (W=Won; D=Draw; L=Lost); AGF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Last 6 Results</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Wins</th>
<th>Draws</th>
<th>Losses</th>
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<td>West Durban</td>
<td>W-D-L</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Soweto Blues</td>
<td>W-D-L</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Polokwane Rov</td>
<td>W-D-L</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tshwane Spurs</td>
<td>W-D-L</td>
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