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## ***Match officials appointed for UEFA Champions League final***

The UEFA Referees Committee today announced the match officials for the final of the 2002/03 UEFA Champions League to be played on Wednesday 28 May 2003 at Old Trafford in Manchester, kicking-off at 19.45 local time (20.45 Central European Time).

The referee of the match between Juventus Football Club and AC Milan will be Markus Merk of Germany, who will be handling his first UEFA club competition final. His Assistant Referees will be Heiner Müller and Christian Schräer, while the 4<sup>th</sup> Official will be Wolfgang Stark. Like the referee, the other match officials are from Germany.

Markus Merk, 41 on March 15<sup>th</sup>, combines refereeing with his dental practice in the southern German city of Kaiserslautern. Apart from German, he speaks French, English and – of most relevance for the final at Old Trafford – Italian. He has been an international referee since 1992, making his debut at an Under-21 match between Belgium and Cyprus. In the same year, he handled two games at the Barcelona Olympics. More recently, he was the referee of the Belgium v Sweden and Slovenia v Spain matches at EURO 2000 before handling the memorable semi-final between Italy and the Netherlands in Amsterdam, settled by a penalty shoot-out that was won 3-1 by the Italians. At last year's FIFA World Cup finals, he handled the Japan v Russia and Denmark v England matches.

This will be Markus Merk's 90<sup>th</sup> international match but only his second visit to Old Trafford. His previous visit was on 10 April 2002 when Manchester United FC defeated Deportivo La Coruña 3-2 in the second group stage of last season's UEFA Champions League.

His first contact with Juventus Football Club came in September 1996 when he officiated at the 1-0 home win over, curiously, Manchester United FC. He then handled their 2-2 home draw with Galatasaray SK in September 1998 and their 1-1 draw with Olympiakos Piraeus FC in March 1999. He then went almost four years without crossing paths with Juventus Football Club until he returned to Turin in February 2003 to handle their 3-0 home defeat by, once again, Manchester United FC during the second group stage of the current UEFA Champions League campaign.

This final will be the first time that Markus Merk has officiated at a match involving AC Milan.