

FA Cup Liverpool crash out

Football

REUTERS, London

First Division Crystal Palace, playing with 10 men for the last 20 minutes, knocked Premier League Liverpool out of the FA Cup with a superb 2-0 victory at Anfield in their fourth round replay on Wednesday.

A brilliant goal by wing back Julian Gray after 55 minutes and a late own goal by Stephane Henchoz won it for Palace, who had striker Dougie Freedman sent off in the 70th minute.

The night's all-Premier League replay went to penalties after Sunderland and Blackburn Rovers were level at 2-2 after extra time, Sunderland winning the shoot-out 3-0.

Southampton midfielder Matt Oakley, with just two goals in the last two and half seasons, doubled his tally at the New Den as the Premier League side overcame First Division Millwall 2-1 after extra time in the other outstanding tie.

Liverpool totally dominated in the first half against Palace but despite a series of chances could not find a way through.

Cedric Berthelin, playing in goal in place of Latvian Alex Kolinko, who was dropped for "attitude reasons", made several good saves to keep Palace in the game, the best to deny England striker Emile Heskey.

Palace's classic 1990 semifinal victory over Liverpool seemed a long way away at halftime but 10 minutes after the break they took a shock lead when Gray arrived unmarked at the far post to smash a shot past Jerzy Dudek, who had not had to make a save previously.

Things appeared to swing Liverpool's way in the 70th minute when Freedman, on as a 36th-minute substitute, inexplicably elbowed Liverpool centre-back Sami Hyyppia and was sent off.

Palace, 11th in the first division, defended superbly from then on though and got a second goal after Gray broke for 50 metres and forced Henchoz to put through his own net 11 minutes from time.

Their reward is a fifth-round home tie against Leeds United, managed by former boss Terry Venables, who beat 2-1 Gillingham in their replay on Tuesday.

Current manager Trevor Francis said it was a "good feeling" to beat Liverpool.

"In the first half they played us off the park, we couldn't live with them," he told Sky Sports TV.



GRAY DAY: Crystal Palace's Julian Gray (C) celebrates his goal against Liverpool with his teammates in their FA Cup fourth round replay match at Anfield on Wednesday.

"But they missed chance after chance and I said at halftime maybe it was our night."

"We put them under more pressure in the second half, got in their face, and that performance was what I have come to expect from my team."

"With 20 minutes to go I thought it would be very difficult for us to hold out but we did, and increased our lead and it was fantastic for our supporters."

Liverpool boss Gerard Houllier said: "It was just one of those nights when the ball wouldn't go in."

"When Emile missed his chance the whole team seemed to be deflated."

Blackburn came from 3-1 down to draw 3-3 with Sunderland 10 days ago and needed another late goal on Wednesday to take the game into extra time.

Kevin Phillips put Sunderland ahead after 10 minutes and the home side, currently bottom of the Premier League, should have had more as they dominated the first

half.

Garry Flitcroft levelled five minutes into the second half but Sunderland remained on top and got a deserved second in the 79th minute when Gavin McCann smashed home a brilliant 25 metre volley only for Flitcroft to grab his second in the last minute.

Sunderland keeper Thomas Sorensen then saved two Blackburn spot kicks in the shoot-out. David Johnson missing with another, allowing McCann to drive home the decisive penalty to give Sunderland a 3-0 success and a home game against First Division Watford in the fifth round.

Oakley fired Southampton ahead at Millwall after 21 minutes with a superbly-struck left-foot shot from just outside the box.

It was a first goal of the season for the midfielder, who has scored just once in each of the last two campaigns.

Millwall had not been in the game for most of the first half but somehow fashioned an equaliser in the

37th minute through Irish international Steven Reid.

Southampton's James Beattie sent a header against a post in a rare second half attack but 12 minutes into extra time Oakley found the way to goal again from outside the box to earn Gordon Strachan's team a home fifth round tie with Norwich.

WHO PLAYS WHO

Revised draw for the fifth round of the English FA Cup after Wednesday's replays (Roman numerals denote division of non-Premier League team, kick-off times 1500 GMT unless stated):

February 15: Manchester United v Arsenal (1215) Southampton v Norwich (I) Fulham v Burnley (I) Sunderland v Watford (I) Sheffield United (I) v Walsall (I) February 16: Crystal Palace (I) v Leeds United (1300) Stoke (I) v Chelsea (1600) Wolverhampton (I) v Rochdale (III) (1900)

Spanish King's Cup Deportivo dumped

REUTERS, Madrid

King's Cup holders Deportivo La Coruna suffered a setback in their bid to retain their crown after they were handed a 3-2 home defeat by Real Mallorca in their semifinal first leg match at the Riazor on Wednesday.

It could have been far worse, though, for Javier Irureta's team, who trailed 3-0 to the islanders with just a minute of normal time left on the clock.

A well-taken double from former Deportivo striker Walter Pandiani and a fine finish from Cameroon forward Samuel Eto'o had appeared to set the islanders comfortably on their way to the final.

But an 89th minute penalty from Diego Tristan and an injury time strike from Roy Makaay were enough to keep the Galician side's hopes of winning the competition for the second year in succession alive.

The game, which had been delayed for 15 minutes because of floodlight failure, began in cagey fashion with both sides spending most of the first quarter sizing each other up.

The Galicians had the better of the possession, but appeared content to push the ball around the midfield and in the face of the home side's lack of ambition it was the islanders who decided to take the initiative.

The deadlock was eventually broken six minutes from the break when Pandiani sent a powerful header past the sprawling Juanmi after he had stolen a march on the Depor defence who had been wrong-footed by a deflected cross from midfielder Alvaro Novo.

Depor coach Javier Irureta spiced up his attack at the start of the second half with the addition of the league's leading scorer Roy Makaay, but it was Mallorca who continued to look more dangerous.

Novo sent a 20-metre drive thundering onto the post after he had outpaced the Depor defence and Juanmi had to produce a fine reflex save to deny Eto'o seconds later.

Italian Cup Roma win Roman duel

REUTERS, Rome

Goals from striker Antonio Cassano and Brazilian midfielder Emerson gave AS Roma a 2-1 win over city rivals Lazio in the first leg of their Italian Cup semifinal on Wednesday.

The result leaves Lazio, who were the home team for the first leg at their shared Olympic Stadium, facing an uphill struggle to qualify for the final, with away goals counting double.

Roma dominated the early exchanges and went ahead in the 12th minute when Lazio's defence gave Cassano time and space to head Cafu's cross past keeper Luca Marchegiani.

Lazio lifted their pace and ex-Italian international striker Enrico Chiesa nearly equalised in the 40th minute, hitting the post with a vicious hooked shot from the edge of the area.

Emerson doubled Roma's lead four minutes into the second half with a spectacular 35-metre drive that went in off the underside of the bar.

Lazio gave themselves hope in the 76th minute when from a neat pass by Chiesa, Italian international midfielder Stefano Fiore slotted his shot past Roma keeper Ivan Pelizzoli.

Lazio manager Roberto Mancini felt his side had not got what they deserved from the match.

"Roma didn't do a thing," he said. "After the first 15 minutes they'd had one shot on goal and they had scored once. I don't recall any other chances."

"Their second goal was fantastic but this defeat wasn't such a big thing."

Mum's the word

Football

REUTERS, London

The day that Robert Pires' angry mother talked her son out of quitting football has come back to haunt Arsenal's rivals with a vengeance.

The 29-year-old Pires, who scored both goals in last weekend's 2-1 win over Fulham to extend their lead on the day at the top of the English Premier League, has long been feted for his part in Arsenal's swashbuckling league and FA Cup

idea of football as a career option. "I was 14," Pires recalled. "We had a French lesson and we had to write an essay about our dream job. Mine was to be a professional footballer, so I wrote the essay, handed it in and a week later got it back with a very bad mark."

"The teacher came up to me and said 'Listen Robert, I think you ought to know, being a professional footballer is not a career'. I said 'okay'. But I continued to see things my way."

That way had started when Pires was just a five-year-old, following

The latter, though, brought its share of hard times and even moments when he feared for his safety after being caught in an ambush by 250 disgruntled fans.

Looking back, Pires said: "To be honest, I'm still glad to have been at Marseille. It toughened me up as a person and taught me that you never get something for nothing in life." His international career was no bed of roses either. After he appeared as a bit player at the 1998 World Cup, French opinion was divided on his presence in the line-up for Euro 2000.

For some, his ball skills were the key to unlocking defenses; for others he was a luxury France could do without.

Pires silenced his critics one July afternoon in Rotterdam after his pride had been stung by teammate Marcel Desailly in the European championship final against Italy.

Sylvain Wittord's late equaliser meant extra time and as the two sides caught their breath, Desailly surprisingly asked Pires if he was going to carry on.

Given an affirmative answer, Desailly said curtly: "Well, we'll see what you're capable of doing then, won't we?"

"Marcel's comment had a lot of effects -- negative and positive," Pires recalled. "Negative, because I wondered why he'd asked such a thing -- and at such a time."

"But it was positive too because I thought 'If you say that, it's because you don't have faith in me well I'll show you. I'll prove to you that if I'm here it's because I deserve to be here'."

"I was stung but it did me good because 10 minutes later I broke down the left, put in a cross for David Trezeguet, he scored and we won Euro 2000."

Along with another trophy, Pires also secured another club -- joining Arsene Wenger's Arsenal once the tournament was over.

After a difficult beginning, not helped by a serious accident suffered by his wife while on holiday in Canada, Pires hit sensational form in 2001-2002.

Voted Player-of-the-Year by the Football Writers' Association, despite his season being prematurely ended by damaged knee ligaments, Pires played a major role in securing Arsenal's Double.

The injury ruled him out of the French debacle at the 2002 World Cup, when the holders were bundled out of the group phase without scoring a goal.

He regrets not having been there but does not over-dramatise his spell on the sidelines.

"There are a lot worse things in life," he said. "I knew that after the injury I would be back on a football pitch and that I would play again, though I didn't know at what level."

Looking ahead, Pires has a key role to play in Arsenal's tilt at a league, FA Cup and Champions League treble, and France's qualifying campaign for Euro 2004 in his father's native Portugal.

His family, and the moral support over the years from club coaches, have been influential in the rise of Pires from dreaming schoolboy to world and European champion.

"There have been moments when I might not have carried on," he admitted. "If I've kept going, it's because I've always had important people by my side my wife, my parents and my coaches. They have always protected me. I have been very lucky."



ROBERT PIRES

double last season. Yet life for the Frenchman could have been very different if he had not been on the receiving end of a telling-off which he still remembers vividly.

"When I was 15, I wanted to give up football," Pires told the news agency in an interview. "I'd signed for a new club, Stade de Reims, and for months I found myself playing in their third team."

"That was very hard to accept. What's more, I was small, I was thin and I didn't think I was any good. One day, I came home from training and told my mother I was giving up football."

"It wasn't the right thing to say -- she took it badly. 'Do you think life is easy?', she said. 'Let me tell you, you have to fight to get what you want in life. You have to fight to make your dreams come true.'"

"It was true, being a professional footballer had always been my dream. If I've made it to where I am today, it's thanks to my mother, who pushed me and helped me to get there."

Fortunately for Arsenal, and for France, the gangly teenager listened more to his Spanish mother than to the schoolteacher who a year earlier had dismissed the very

his Portuguese father around the amateur playing fields of northern France at weekends.

"He loved the game, he played it and he would have loved to have been a professional," Pires said.

"When I was little, I couldn't wait for the weekend to come because it meant going off with father and playing football... I just wanted to be like my dad. He was my idol."

Pires junior began playing with his local team Sainte-Anne, before moving on to Stade de Reims and then being scouted in 1992 by First Division Metz.

Signed as a playmaker, and placed in the reserves, his break came the day his side happened to be missing a left winger and Pires was shunted out wide.

It heralded a move into the first team and a six-year career there.

A constant menace down the left flank, where his pace and dribbling ability wrought havoc, Pires helped the unfashionable club to get within a whisker of the 1998 league title -- they lost out to Lens only on goal difference.

Compensation came swiftly, in the form of a World Cup winner's medal and a move to mighty Olympique Marseille.

Leeds spoil Woodgate return

REUTERS, London

England defender Jonathan Woodgate will not make his Newcastle United debut against his former English Premier League side Leeds United later this month.

Woodgate joined Newcastle for nine million pounds (14.8 million pounds) last Friday on the final day of January's transfer window.

However, Leeds insisted on a clause in his contract that prevents him playing at Elland Road when Newcastle visit on February 22.

"Obviously it's quite political if Jonathan came back to Elland Road so soon after leaving," Leeds club secretary Ian Sylvester told the BBC on Wednesday.

"We just agreed that we didn't want that to happen. The player's not fit anyway so I don't think it's an issue."

French Ligue 1 Marseille go joint-top

REUTERS, Paris

Olympique Marseille, spearheaded by Russian striker Dmitry Sychev and Belgian defender Daniel van Buyten, joined Monaco on points at the top of the French first division with a 2-0 win over lowly Le Havre on Wednesday.

Sychev, who had already scored twice for the Mediterranean team since joining last month -- one in the league and one in the League Cup confirmed his talent with a 16th minute goal.

But Marseille's current marksman is ironically a defender, the in-form Van Buyten, who made it two in the 53rd minute to become his team's leading scorer on six goals.

Van Buyten's scoring form has not hampered Marseille's defence as they have only conceded one goal in their last nine games at home.

Monaco who humbled champions Olympique Lyon 2-0 on Tuesday lead Marseille on goal difference, with the two sides level on 45 points.

Neighbours Nice dropped down to fourth after losing 1-0 after an exciting match at bottom-placed Troyes.

Tipped for Barca?

Football

INTERNET, London

England's hierarchy are not surprised coach Sven-Goran Eriksson has been linked with Barcelona.

Former Luton defender Radomir Antic has replaced sacked Louis van Gaal at the helm of the Spanish giants.

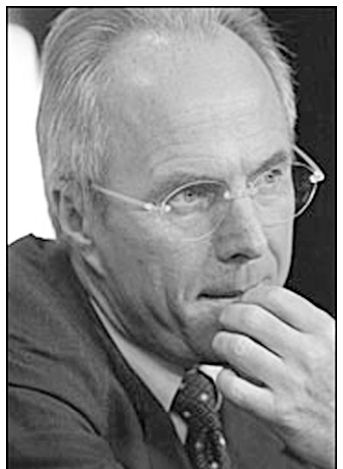
However, Antic is considered a stop-gap appointment as his contract only runs to the end of the season, and the club have admitted to an interest in Eriksson.

Barcelona general manager Javier Perez Farguell told the Daily Express: "We're very happy with our appointment of Raddy Antic, but we would always listen to a coach like Eriksson, with his reputation, experience and CV."

That does not surprise FA joint acting chief executive David Davies, who nonetheless reiter-

ated Eriksson's commitment to his current employers.

"I am not surprised Sven is



SVEN-GORAN ERIKSSON being linked with a top club," said Davies.

"I would be surprised if he wasn't linked with every top club who wanted a manager. Anyone

would be misguided not to want him because he is a top manager.

"Sven has always made it clear he wants to be part of achieving our ambitions."

"I am not aware anything has changed. If anything he is more committed now than he has ever been."

The manager's job at Barcelona is never an easy one, as the remit is to better the performance of the mighty Real Madrid, and the task is even more unenviable at the moment with the Catalans hovering above Primera Liga relegation zone.

However, that has done nothing to dissuade Antic, who told the Express: "Eriksson is one of the best coaches in Europe and he has been a success at every club he has managed."

"But I will be working very hard with the players to bring success to Barcelona."

Wembley Twin Towers set to say farewell

INTERNET, London

Demolition work will finally start in earnest on Wembley's Twin Towers on Friday, bringing an 80-year-old landmark to an end by the middle of next week.

Work to remove the towers actually began in December, with the crowns and flagpoles being removed, but the main work will now take place ahead of the building of the new national stadium.

A short ceremony, celebrating the past and future of the ground, will be held before an excavator nicknamed Goliath -- presumably in honour of the all the 'David and Goliath' FA Cup finals at the ground -- then moves in.

The tops of the towers are being kept in storage until the new stadium is completed and will eventually feature in a Wembley Hall of Fame museum at the new ground.



Baggio tackles Trapattoni

Football

REUTERS, Milan

Former European-Player-of-the-Year Roberto Baggio has responded to appeals for him to be recalled to the Italy side with a jibe at coach Giovanni Trapattoni's interest in picking Argentine-born winger Mauro Camoranesi.

Baggio, 35, has been in good form for Brescia lately and scored a well-taken goal against Piacenza in Serie A on Saturday, his eighth of the season.

With Juventus forward Alessandro Del Piero ruled out of next week's friendly against Portugal there has been a clamour for Trapattoni to recall Baggio who last played for Italy nearly four years ago.

Asked about the popular support for his recall, Baggio told the daily Corriere della Sera: "Leave me alone I am going to play for Argentina."

The comment comes after Trapattoni said on Sunday he was ready to pick Juve's Argentine-born Camoranesi, who holds an Italian passport but has only lived in Italy for two-and-a-half years.

Baggio's return to form and fitness prior to the World Cup finals last year prompted a vocal but ultimately unsuccessful campaign for him to be given a place in the Italy squad.

After Trapattoni's side were knocked out in the second round of the finals with a defeat to co-hosts

South Korea, some critics suggested Baggio might have made a difference.

Baggio said he was pleased by the fresh backing he has received but that the decision lay in the hands of Trapattoni.

"What can I say? It pleases me, but the discussion remains the



ROBERTO BAGGIO

same in the end it is one person who needs to decide," said the former Juventus forward.

But Baggio, known as the 'divine ponytail' due to his Buddhist beliefs and his hairstyle, clearly believes he could be of use to Italy adding he is in better shape now than before the World Cup.

"I was fine then as well but let's say I am in great shape now, even if I can still develop further," he said.

Baggio, who has played 55 times for Italy last appeared in a European Championship qualifier against Belarus in March 1999.

German Cup lucky L'kusen

REUTERS, Berlin

Bayer Leverkusen struggled past amateurs SpVgg Unterhaching after a penalty shoot-out to reach the German Cup semifinals, giving coach Klaus Toppmoller a stay of execution.

Toppmoller, who took Leverkusen to the Cup final and the Champions League final last season, would probably have lost his job if his side had been defeated again. Two Bundesliga losses have put Leverkusen within one point of the relegation zone.

They led twice in a match played on a poor, snowy pitch but could not snuff out the threat from Unterhaching who were level at 2-2 after 90 minutes.

On the ninth minute of the shoot-out Darlington Omodiagbe had his shot saved by goalkeeper Jorg Butt and Butt then scored the final penalty to take his side through to the lastfour.

Reiner Calmund, Leverkusen's commercial manager, said: "We won today, that was important. But we shouldn't exaggerate this victory, there's no reason for that."

Financially-troubled Kaiserslautern, bottom of the Bundesliga, were also taken to a penalty shoot-out against VfL Bochum after their Czech striker Vratislav Lokvenec scored a hat-trick.

The match was level at 2-2 after 90 minutes and 3-3 after extra time but Kaiserslautern, whose financial future could be sorted out on Thursday, won 4-3 in the shoot-out thanks to goalkeeper Tim Wiese who saved two Bochum attempts.