

# Primera Liga Real too classy

Football

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid kept up the pressure on league leaders Real Sociedad with a 4-1 victory over Real Betis on Saturday.

The win means the European and world club champions are only one point behind their Basque rivals although Real Sociedad have a game in hand and play host to Espanyol on Sunday.

Betis had the best of the first half and nearly took the lead after just 10 minutes when Brazilian international Denilson hit the post.

The Seville-based side finally went in front when Fernando Fernandez scored after 36 minutes, bundling the ball into the net after Denilson had slotted the ball through to him from the left wing.

However Madrid took only seven minutes to get back on level terms when Raul Gonzalez regain his scoring touch with his first goal in seven games.

The body blow just before the break left Betis badly winded and they were on the ropes throughout the second half as Madrid improved immeasurably from their lacklustre first-half performance.

The hosts took the lead four minutes after the break when Luis Figo got his ninth goal of the season, and his fourth from the spot, after Betis captain Juan Jose Canas had crashed into Roberto Carlos.

Zinedine Zidane added Madrid's third just after the hour when he played a clever one-two with World Player of the Year Ronaldo and then sent a curling right foot shot past Betis goalkeeper Toni Prats.

Ronaldo then got himself on the scoresheet two minutes before the end of regulation time, although he made hard work of his ninth goal of the season.



Real Madrid's Ronaldo (R) skips a sliding Filipescu of Real Betis during their Primera Liga match at Madrid on February 8.

Steve McManaman set Ronaldo free with a inch-perfect pass into the box and Prats decided that the only course of action was to bring Ronaldo down.

Figo then decided to pass the honour of taking the penalty to the Brazilian World Cup winner, only for Prats to stop the half-hearted effort with his legs.

However Ronaldo had the presence of mind to jump quickly on the loose ball and rounded the sprawling Prats before eventually finding the net, and then walked back to the centre wiping his visibly sweating brow in an exaggerated fashion.

The victory also extends Madrid's undefeated streak in the Santiago Bernabeu stadium to 44 league games, although it is still some way short of their own Spanish league record of 121 home games between the 1957 and 1965.

Villarreal continued their impressive start to 2003 with their fourth win in six games, beating Valladolid 1-0 to move up to eighth.

The game was a dull affair with the only goal of the game coming from the penalty spot, Jorge Lopez scoring after 24 minutes after Martin Palermo had been brought down in the box by Valladolid goalkeeper

Albano Bizarri.

TOP SIX							
Spanish league table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):							
Sociedad	20	12	7	1	36	24	43
Real	21	11	9	1	46	22	42
Valencia	20	11	5	4	33	16	38
Deportivo	20	10	5	5	29	24	35
Betis	21	9	6	6	32	28	33
Celta	20	9	3	8	22	19	30

## Friendly Argentina edge USA

AFP, Miami

Luis "Lucho" Gonzalez' eighth-minute goal gave Argentina a 1-0 victory over the United States here Saturday, a friendly match that marked the United States' first match since the quarter-finals of the World Cup.

Gonzalez both created and completed the lone goal of the match, passing first to Andres D'Alessandro then reclaiming the ball and chipping it over US keeper Tim Howard.

Argentina's speed and smothering defence frustrated the United States throughout the match, which was the Americans' first since they fell to Germany by the same score to end their improbable World Cup run last year.

With the victory Argentina improved to 5-2 against the United States, a record that dates back to 1928.

It was the third victory this month for Argentina after a 3-1 victory over Honduras and a 1-0 win over Mexico.

## Ligue 1 Marseille alone atop

AFP, Paris

Marseille took over top spot in France when they beat Ajaccio 2-0 on Saturday while title rivals Monaco were held to a goalless draw by Rennes.

A cheeky overhead kick from Ibrahim Bakayoko put Marseille on their way to a victory which keeps them in the driving seat for their first title since 1992.

Defender Johnny Ecker crossed to captain Frank Leboeuf, whose header fell into Ajaccio's box before former Everton striker Bakayoko produced an athletic finish to beat Stephane Trevisan after 34 minutes.

Lamine Sakho completed the victory in Corsica with a 78th minute penalty after Mamadou Seck had tripped Sebastian Perez.

Monaco failed to break down a rugged Rennes defence, forcing Didier Deschamps' side to settle for an away draw which leaves them two points adrift of Marseille in second.

Nice moved up to third, three points behind Monaco, after a 2-2 home draw with Sochaux.

Auxerre slipped to fourth but can leapfrog Nice if they beat Nantes on Sunday.

Lyon were held to a goalless draw at home to bottom club Troyes which leaves the misfiring reigning champions fifth, six points behind Marseille.

Paris St Germain's season is rapidly deteriorating as, without Brazilian star Ronaldinho, they were stunned 3-1 by second-bottom Montpellier at the Parc des Princes.

PSG dropped to eighth spot, behind Bordeaux who went down 2-0 at home to Bastia to go sixth.

Lens won the northern battle at Lille 2-0.

## Serie A Juve in joint lead

Football

AFP, Rome

Reigning Italian champions Juventus joined Inter and AC Milan at the top of the table on 42 points thanks to a scrappy 1-0 home win over Empoli on Saturday.

French international David Trezeguet scored the decisive goal from the penalty spot in the seventh minute.

Juve, who have played a game more than their title rivals, stole second place because they have a better goal difference than Inter.

League leaders Milan however hold on to top spot because their goal difference is superior to Juve's.

The title-holders were gifted an early lead when Empoli's Brazilian defender Sanchez Emilson Cribari needlessly handled Pavel Nedved's left-wing cross to concede a penalty.

France international Trezeguet

made no mistake from 12 yards, rifling his spot-kick high into the net past Gianluca Bert.

On Sunday table-toppers Milan visit Perugia while Inter welcome Reggina to the San Siro.

Earlier Saturday Luigi Cagni's second spell in charge of Piacenza began on a negative note as his relegation-threatened side lost 2-1 at Udinese.

Their victory lifted them one place in the table to sixth while Piacenza remain third from bottom.

TOP SIX							
Italian football league table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):							
AC Milan	19	13	3	3	36	13	42
Juventus	20	12	6	2	36	14	42
Inter Milan	19	13	3	3	39	20	42
Lazio	19	10	7	2	34	18	37
Chievo	19	10	3	6	29	19	33

## Bundesliga More woes for Toppmoller

Football

AFP, Berlin

Bayer Leverkusen lost again on Saturday as VfL Bochum administered what could be a fatal blow to the job of their former coach Klaus Toppmoller.

The 2-1 away defeat courtesy of a double strike from Iranian international Vahid Hashemian completed Leverkusen's journey from Champions League finalists last season to relegation candidates.

Hashemian came on as a substitute on the hour and within eight minutes had driven a shot past Hans-Jorg Butt.

Toppmoller, who was warned by his board this week to start winning, urged his injury-depleted side to greater efforts and Croatian international Marko Babic brought Leverkusen level with 12 minutes remaining at the Ruhrstadion.

But Hashemian collected a pass from South African international Delron Buckley to score the winner in the 84th minute.

The defeat left Leverkusen, last year's Bundesliga runners-up, fourth from bottom.

With leaders Bayern Munich and second-placed Borussia Dortmund not playing until Sunday, Werder Bremen lost a chance to overtake Dortmund when they slumped to a 2-1 home defeat to 1860 Munich.

Hertha Berlin meanwhile hit form with a 4-2 defeat of Schalke 04 in the capital which lifts Huub Stevens' team up to eighth.

Kaiserslautern finally moved off the bottom with a 2-0 home win over Borussia Monchengladbach.

Energie Cottbus dropped to bottom spot after a 0-0 draw with Hansa Rostock.

TOP SIX							
German league table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against):							
Bayern	19	13	4	2	39	14	43
Dortmund	19	10	6	3	31	15	36
Bremen	20	10	4	6	37	32	34
Stuttgart	19	9	6	4	32	24	33
Schalke	20	8	8	4	27	21	32
1860 Munich	20	4	7	9	31	27	31

## Rooney set for record

AFP, London

Everton sensation Wayne Rooney is set to become the youngest ever England player after being included in a 27-man England squad to face Australia in Wednesday's friendly at Upton Park.

Presuming he is fit, Rooney will become the youngest ever England player after manager Sven-Goran Eriksson indicated that he intended to play the 17-year-old for at least part of the match.

"If I was Wayne Rooney, I should be delighted as it should be one of the biggest things in his career," Eriksson said after unveiling a squad that includes seven new names.

"I'm sure he'll respond like that. He's only 17 but Pele was 17 when he won the World Cup in 1958 in Sweden and he scored twice in the final.

"Maybe it was stupid of me to compare him to Pele though. That's not good for anyone. To be a Pele is extremely difficult.

"I saw him come on for 25 minutes in one game but, talking to his manager and a lot of people who know him better than I do, he has great quality, is physically very strong and makes things happen," he added.

"Everyone that I've talked to says he's a special talent, so why not look at him in a friendly game if I have chosen to pick a young squad?"

Rooney's boss at Everton, David Moyes, who has been anxious to protect his player from the frenzied media attention which has accompanied his explosive emergence this season.

"If he is good enough, and I believe he is good enough, then I believe he should play," Moyes said.

But he cautioned: "People should not get too excited about him and put too much pressure on him. Just accept that he is a 17-year-old and think that when he is 24 or 25 he might be a decent player."

The youngest England player to date is James Prinsiep, who was 17 and 253 days when he played against Scotland in 1879. Current England star Michael Owen was first capped 59 days after his 18th birthday.

Rooney, who has started just nine games for the Goodison Park side, burst on to the scene when he blasted a 25-yard last-minute winner past Arsenal keeper David Seaman back in October.

## Premiership Chelsea charm

Football

AFP, London

Chelsea gave their Champions League ambitions a major boost on Saturday with a 3-1 win at Birmingham as both Liverpool and Everton dropped crucial points.

At the bottom, Sunderland and West Ham were plunged deeper into the gloom by defeats at Tottenham (4-1) and Leeds (1-0) respectively while West Brom snatched a last gasp equaliser against fellow strugglers Bolton.

A volley from Gianfranco Zola and a bullet header from Eidor Gudjohnsen either side of the half-time break put Chelsea in control at St Andrews.

Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink then came off the bench to win, then convert, a penalty that made the points secure. A late penalty from Robbie Savage offered scant consolation for the home fans.

The win lifted Chelsea above Newcastle on goal difference in third place in the table. But the Magpies can leapfrog them again if they get something out of their match with leaders Arsenal at St James' Park on Sunday.

Second-placed Manchester United also play Sunday, when they

seek revenge against Manchester City for a 3-1 humbling by their arch rivals in November.

Chelsea manager Claudio Ranieri revealed later that Zola had wanted to come off with an injury just before his goal.

"Gianfranco was fantastic, because he scored the goal playing one-legged," Ranieri beamed.

"(The win) was very important to us."

Charlton passed manager Alan Curbishley's survival target of 40 points with a 2-1 win over Everton at The Valley.

Earlier in the day, a spectacular free-kick from Cameroon international Geremi helped Middlesbrough deal another blow to Liverpool's Champions League hopes in a 1-1 draw at Anfield.

An equaliser from Norwegian defender John Arne Riise mid-way through the second half cancelled out Geremi's 38th-minute strike but Liverpool were unable to grab a winner.

The dropped points mean Gerard Houllier's side are now sixth points off the fourth and final qualifying spot for Europe's premier competition with time to make up the lost ground rapidly running out.

Sunderland had looked like putting up a fight when Kevin Phillips equalised Gus Poyet's opener for Tottenham.

Gary Doherty restored the home side's advantage with a powerful header on the stroke of half-time and second-half goals from Simon Davies and Teddy Sheringham's 300<sup>th</sup> Premiership goal saw them run out comfortable winners.

But the win was soured somewhat for Spurs after Robbie Keane suffered a suspected knee ligament injury.

Sunderland now look firmly rooted to the bottom of the table.

Fulham eased fears they could be sucked into the relegation battle by coming from behind to beat Aston Villa at Loftus Road.

David Thompson lifted Blackburn back into the top half of the table with a 26th-minute strike that proved to be the winner in a hard-fought clash with Southampton at Ewood Park.

TOP SIX							
English Premiership table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):							
Arsenal	26	17	5	4	56	28	56
Man Utd	26	16	5	5	43	24	53
Chelsea	27	13	9	5	48	27	48
Newcastle	25	15	3	7	41	31	48
Everton	27	13	6	8	35	32	45
Liverpool	27	11	10	6	38	26	43



Chelsea's Gianfranco Zola (L) is jubilant after scoring his team's first goal against Birmingham City during their Premiership clash at St. Andrews on February 8.

## Agassi back in action

Tennis

AFP, San Jose

Andre Agassi, fresh from his triumph in the Australian Open, looks to continue his stellar form when he picks up his 2003 campaign Monday at the 355,000-dollar ATP Tour tournament here.

American Agassi, the world's second-ranked player and top seed, is vying for his fifth San Jose title and his first since 1998. Another championship would tie John McEnroe's Open-era record of five titles here.

The 2002 finalist's first-round test at San Jose's HP Pavilion will be a nostalgic-fest. His opponent: boyhood rival Michael Chang.

Chang is playing his first tournament since announcing this would be his last season on tour after 15 years in the game.

"If you are going to win the tournament you have to beat the best," said a philosophical Chang upon learning of his unlucky draw.

Chang owns a total of 34 singles titles, including the 1989 French Open, but has not won an event since 2000. Last year, he finished outside the top-100 for the first time since his pro debut in 1987.

Chang and Agassi have played 20 times, with Agassi holding a 13-7 advantage. They haven't squared off since 1999.

But with retirement looming, Chang, a wildcard entrant, will be a sentimental favourite. The 30-year-old two-time titleist has always had a strong following in the heavily Asian-populated Bay Area. He won his first professional title here in 1988.

"I've known Andre since he was 10, 11 years old," said Chang, who at 17 became the youngest Slam champion ever. "I'm looking forward to it."

Unlike Chang, who has struggled with injuries and seen his ranking plummet, Agassi has thrived in the tennis equivalent of old age.

Two months shy of his 33rd birthday, the Las Vegas, Nevada, native is proving that he can still win

major tournaments and dominate his younger peers.

The eight-time Grand Slam champ, who lost to No. 1 Lleyton Hewitt in last year's final here, has won 10 tournaments since turning 30. Only Ken Rosewall, Rod Laver, Arthur Ashe and Jimmy Connors won more after that age.

His 6-2, 6-2, 6-1 dismantling of Germany's Rainer Schuttler in the Australian Open final - the most lopsided in tournament history - made Agassi the oldest Grand Slam champion since a 37-year-old Rosewall won the same event in 1972.

Second-seeded Paradorn Srichaphan also will be shooting for his second title of 2003. The soaring Thai player rose 110 places in 2002, won two titles and comes into San Jose ranked a career-best 13th, having already captured an event in Chennai, India, in January.

The 23-year-old nabbed wins over the top four players in the world last year, including a second-round shocker over Agassi at Wimbledon. A trio of Americans in the 32-man field will be aiming to stop Agassi and Srichaphan. They include rising

star James Blake, seeded third, Jan-Michael Gambill, seeded fourth, and veteran Todd Martin, seeded fifth.

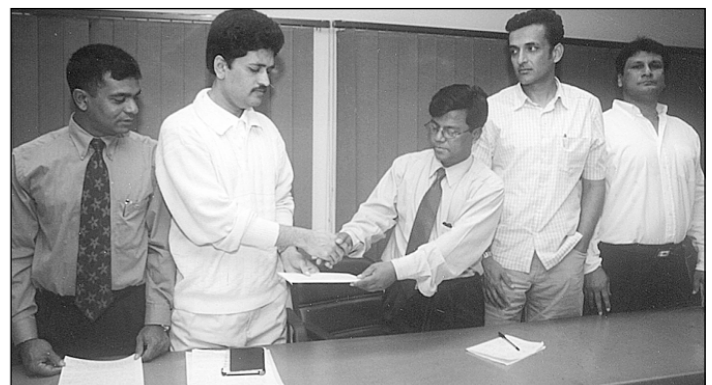
Former Harvard University star Blake is coming off his best season, winning his first ATP title and finishing in the top-30 for the first time.

Gambill, a semi-finalist here in 2002, is looking to regain his peak form after a mediocre campaign last year. Martin, 32, has played only one event since the US Open and should be fresh and ready to go.

David Sanguinetti of Italy, Nikolay Davydenko of Russia and Kenneth Carlsen of Denmark round out the top eight seeds.

Dangerous floaters include Australia's Mark Philippoussis, San Jose champion in 1999 and 2000, and Hung-Taik Lee of South Korea.

The big serving Australian faces off in the first round against France's Jean-Rene Lisnard. Lee won his first ATP title in January by beating world No. 3 Juan Carlos Ferrero and is playing the best tennis of his seven-year career.



Chief cricket selector Aliul Islam (C) hands over a cheque worth Taku four lakh thirty-two thousand to former cricketer Amir Babu for his kidney treatment at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. The fund was raised by cricketers and organisers through a benefit dinner and donations to help Babu, the founder of Madaripur Cricket Clinic. Former Bangladesh captain Aminul Islam (L), opener Athar Ali Khan (2nd from R) and former BCB director Tanjeb Ahsan Saad (R) were also present during the occasion.

DAY'S EVENT

GrameenPhone Premier Cricket League  
Victoria SC vs Brothers Union  
Venue: BNS  
Mohammedan vs Uttara SC  
Venue: Fatullah Cricket Stadium

What to WATCH

BTV  
Cricket World Cup 2003 Preliminary Round  
Sri Lanka vs New Zealand  
Live at 2:00 pm

ESPN  
Taking Guard Two 2  
WC Cricket Talk Show  
Live at 1:00 pm  
Sportscentre Hindi  
Sport News  
Live at 8:30 pm

STAR Sports  
Primera Liga  
Barcelona vs Athletic Bilbao  
Repeat at 10:30 am  
English Premier Football League  
Liverpool vs Middlesbrough  
Taped Version at 2:00 pm  
Sportsline Tonight  
Sport News

Star WHIZZ KID COMPETITION 19

Tick the correct answers, post to The Daily Star. Win attractive prizes. Competition closes at 8 pm Feb 22, 2003 and draw shortly afterwards.

- Name who became AFC's team of the month in January  
Bangladesh Sri Lanka  
India
- Who finished first in the Prof Abdur Razzak 29th National Chess Championship qualifiers?  
Nasir Aminul  
Taibur
- Who clinched the Pan-Pacific Open tennis title?  
Davenport Hingis  
Serena
- Bangladesh beat Kwazulu Natal in their second World Cup leg-up match by?

Name .....  
Class ..... Roll No .....  
School Address .....  
Phone: (if any) .....