

Milan aim at Madrid triumph

Football AFP, Paris

Real Madrid have been given fair warning - AC Milan will show them the utmost respect by aiming to win their Champions League quarter-final tie at the Bernabeu stadium on Wednesday.

In different circumstances the reigning European champions might be pleased by the Italian giants' offer of playing to their full potential.

Borussia Dortmund, third in the same group and who take on Lokomotiv Moscow the same evening, will certainly be happy about the Italians' sporting promise.

However AC Milan are already qualified for the quarter-finals, and Real's pre-match nerves will be strained in the knowledge that star Brazilian Ronaldo, who has been so influential recently in their domestic campaign, could be sidelined.

"He might or might not play," said Real's club doctor Alfonso del Corral Monday, who explained that the Brazilian was carrying a thigh injury.

"But the possibilities of Ronaldo playing are not enormous."

Ronaldo's absence is arguably irrelevant to a Real side which is brimming with stars. The situation would definitely be worse if Zinedine Zidane, Luis Figo, Raul and Guti were all on the injury couch.

However the fact is that Real, second in group C on five points - only one ahead of Dortmund - are still battling to secure their quarter-final place.

AC Milan, on the other hand, have breezed their way to the top, claiming 12 points from their four matches so far, and their renaissance as a European footballing power does not appear to be slow-

ing down.

"We will be going to Madrid to win the match - out of respect for Real and for Borussia Dortmund," vowed the Serie A club's vice-president Adriano Galliani.

"We will play as though our qualification depended on it."

With influential Ukrainian Andrei Shevchenko fit for selection, after his promising return to the league last weekend, Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti has the luxury of resting striker Filippo Inzaghi.

"We have a squad that will allow us to be challenging on all fronts," said Ancelotti, who will nevertheless be without midfielder Massimo Ambrosini and 22-year-old Georgian defender Kakha Kaladze, both injured.

Borussia Dortmund will be hoping AC Milan stick to their promise - although the German outfit, Champions League winners in 1997, should get the desired result if history is anything to go by - they have never lost to a Russian team in European competition.

Dortmund also won their away match 2-1 in the Russian capital before Christmas - although that was their only win of the group phase.

In group D fixtures are just as delicately poised.

Manchester United, also qualified following their 3-0 win over a flu-hit Juventus, are in a similar position to their Milanese counterparts.

And going on recent performances in Europe, Alex Ferguson's men would have to have a severe breakdown before allowing FC Basel to leave Old Trafford with three potentially life-saving points.

Basel have been the revelation in Europe this season although their only points in the group came from a 1-0 win over Deportivo La Coruna in February.

The Swiss minnows may take solace in the knowledge that

United could field a more youthful side in the absence of key players such as Roy Keane, while

Argentine Juan Sebastian Veron is doubtful.

"It gives the manager a chance to play a few of our younger players against different

opposition, which can only help them learn," said Keane.

Juventus, who sit second in the group on four points, host Deportivo, third on four points, in a crucial match where coach Marcello Lippi will ask French phenomenon David Trezeguet to come up with more of his magic.

Trezeguet came off the bench on Sunday to score a spectacular goal to end Udinese's unblemished home record and hand Lippi a 1-0 league win which pushed Juventus three points clear of Inter Milan.

As far as history is concerned, Juventus have the upper hand, only conceding one defeat from 17 matches against Spanish teams at home.

But Lippi would be wise to command his troops to keep close tabs on Deportivo's Dutch striker, Roy Makaay, who has netted 27 times in all competitions this season.

Ronaldo buys Salamanca share

REUTERS, Madrid

World Player of the Year Ronaldo has bought shares in Spanish second division side Salamanca to help them realise their dream of returning to the top flight.

The Real Madrid striker said he had been delighted to accept the invitation of club president Juan Jose Hidalgo to buy 30,000 euros (33,130 dollars) of shares in the modest second division outfit.

"I am good friends with president Hidalgo and I wanted to be part of his plans to do something good for this team," he told reporters when he went to visit the club on Sunday.

"I hope that they will soon be able to return to the first division."

Ronaldo, whose goals fired Brazil to a record fifth World Cup triumph last year, stayed on to watch Salamanca in their mid-table clash against Numancia, although he is unlikely to have been impressed by their performance in a dull 0-0 draw.

Salamanca, who were relegated in 1999 after two seasons in the top flight, are in 13th place in the second division, 14 points adrift of the final promotion slot.

Beck's hatrick of a different kind!

AFP, Manchester

David Beckham has moved to dispel suggestions he could be on his way out of Manchester United - and revealed he and pop-star wife Victoria are aiming for at least a hat-trick of kids.

Beckham was reported to be on the verge of quitting United after being hit in the face by a boot kicked across the dressing room by manager Alex Ferguson after last month's FA Cup defeat by Arsenal.

But the England captain, who already has two sons, Brooklyn and Romeo, says he is more concerned about planning a larger family than a summer move to Italy's Serie A.

"For now I just want to win things with United and England and make sure Victoria and my sons Brooklyn and Romeo are happy," Beckham told Ford magazine.

"And maybe even have some more kids as well. That would be nice."

Ferguson has never made any attempt to disguise his dislike for the Beckhams' huge media profile, which he believes David helps to foster with his ever-changing haircuts and love of fashion.

But relations between the traditionalist Scot and his most celebrated player have never reached breaking point because Beckham's commitment on the field has never been in doubt.

"Some people seem to think I am out at restaurants and premieres every night but that's not true," said Beckham.

"You can't do that and play professional football.

"My family is the most important thing to me - that and playing for Manchester United.

"They are the team I supported as a boy and they mean so much to me. It makes all the hard work over the years worthwhile."

Wasim to play on

INTERNET, Lahore

Pakistan veteran Wasim Akram has banished thoughts of retirement and vowed to extend his career in international cricket.

Pakistan had a disappointing World Cup, failing to reach the Super Six stage of the competition after defeats to India, England and Australia.

And rather than resigning to allow an influx of young players, Wasim, a former captain of the national side, now insists he feels a responsibility to guide the team through difficult times.

He said: "Cricket is not finished in me and I have no intention of quitting the international scene, particularly when the team is in a bad shape after being dumped out of the World Cup."

"I believe that the team needs senior players who can lift its morale."

"That's why I have decided to change my mind in the best national interest."

Wasim took his 500th one-day wicket at the World Cup, but he believes that continuous changes in the batting order led to a fatal instability.

He added: "If our batting had clicked, the results could have been different."

Caught out by TV

INTERNET, Pietermaritzburg

Hundreds of cricket fans were caught out on Monday after a World Cup schedule put out by SABC TV incorrectly stated that the India versus Sri Lanka Super Six match would be screened on SABC 3.

Witness staff handled scores of calls from irate people who planned to watch the match complaining that their day had been ruined.

The majority of calls were from Indian fans who were unable to watch their team annihilate the Sri Lankans by close to 200 runs.

Pietermaritzburg resident Pat Pillay said he was hopping mad when he realised he could not watch the match. "I rushed home from shopping, made myself a cup of tea, turned on the TV and what was on SABC 3 but some insurance programme. Gutted!"

Kiwi expatriate Keith Moore of Howick said his day was ruined. "Some of the best cricketers in the world were playing yesterday. We couldn't all be at the Wanderers but there was no warning given."

SABC 3 outsourcing spokesperson Janet de Kretser said SABC 3 successfully bid for five of the nine Super Six matches while Supersport won the bid for the other four.

Sachin the best

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However, Flower's total of 6,685 runs remains the highest individual aggregate by a Zimbabwean.

"I'm playing well at the moment," Flower said.

Wednesday's match may present Flower with the ideal opportunity to improve his statistics, but Zimbabwe also needs to win it, as well as beating Sri Lanka in East London on Saturday, to stay alive in the race for the semifinals.

Tendulkar, the world's leading batsman, has scored a record 571 runs at the 2003 tournament.

Captaincy calling?

Cricket

INTERNET, London

being the one-day captain. He's probably not quite ready for it yet but I can't see why not in the future.

"He is captaincy material... hopefully he'll get the chance to do the job."



PAUL COLLINGWOOD

Durham fast bowler Steve Harmison has tipped county teammate Paul Collingwood as a future England one-day captain.

The England selectors are looking for someone to lead the one-day side following Nasser Hussain's decision to give up the job after the World Cup.

Marcus Trescothick, Michael Vaughan and Adam Hoolioake are believed to be the leading candidates with Collingwood seen by some journalists as a long shot.

And Harmison thinks the opportunity has come too soon for Collingwood, who has made 38 one-day appearances since his debut two years ago.

But Harmison told BBC Radio Newcastle: "He's had a great winter. They're talking about him

"They're talking about a short-term replacement for Nasser for two years. Paul will hopefully have played between 50 and 70 one-day internationals (by then).

He admitted he was flattered to be among the players considered for the job.

"It's been great to even get mentioned," said Collingwood. "A few months ago I wasn't even playing and then I get my name mentioned in the captaincy debate."

"It's great to have that statement made about you. But I'm just concentrating on my own game now and having some time off."

Of his rivals for the job, he added: "There are certainly some great candidates out there."

Boycott beats cancer

Cricket

INTERNET, Johannesburg

therapy sessions to in England. His no-holds-barred opinion was not completely lost to television audience worldwide, however, courtesy phone-ins to the legendary batsman on an analysis show.

However, co-commentator Alan Wilkins revealed that Boycott has been declared 'all clear', meaning the radiation therapy has completely cured the cancer. Once he completes his recovery programme, the renowned former cricketer will be back to reclaim his seat in the commentator's box.

It is believed that Boycott will be ready to commentate around the

time South Africa tour England in June. Wilkins said the rest of the commentary team were relieved by the Yorkshire legend's recovery and progress.

Boycott, a much-loved figure in India for his no-nonsense brand of commentary, also tied the knot a week ago. In a hush-hush ceremony, Boycott wed Rachel, a lady who took great care of him during his illness and played a major role in his recuperation process.

"We were all rather surprised by Geoffrey's quiet wedding," said Wilkins.

Srinath basks

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fifth. With his 10th delivery, Srinath trapped Aravinda de Silva plumb in front and then shut out Sri Lanka's hopes by removing captain Sanath Jayasuriya in his fourth over to a catch in the covers.

"Getting Atapattu in the first over was very good and Aravinda's was a good wicket too because he can turn the match around," Srinath said.



BTVCricket Super Six Zimbabwe vs Kenya Live at 1:45 pm

ESPNTaking Guard Super Six Match-6 WC Cricket Programme Live at 1:00 pm

Western Union World Football Repeat at 8:00 pm Sportscentre Hindi Sport News Live at 8:30 pm

Follow Through Super Six Match-6 WC Cricket Programme Live at 10:00 pm

UEFA Champions League Juventus vs Deportivo La Coruna Live at 1:30 am (Thursday)

STAR Sports Taking Guard Super Six Match-6 WC Cricket Programme Live at 1:00 pm

Sportline Tonight Sport News Live at 8:00 pm

Follow Through Super Six Match-6 WC Cricket Programme Live at 10:00 pm

Star Whizz Kid Competition 191. Tick the correct answers, post to The Daily Star. Win attractive prizes. Competition closes at 8 pm March 21, 2003 and draw shortly afterwards.

1. Who clinched the Shahjahan Bank International Rating Chess title? Lovlu Rajib Zia. 2. New Zealand beat South Africa in a World Cup Group B match by: 102 runs 9 wkts 5 wkts. 3. How many runs did Bangladesh score against South Africa in the World Cup Group B match? 120 108 110. 4. Bangladesh lost to Canada in the World Cup Group B match. Name: Class: Roll No: School Address: Phone: (if any):

Indian press

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between two veteran gunslingers turned out to be a no-contest. The Indians entered the arena with bazookas only to find the Sri Lankans were armed with water-pistols," the paper said.

"India showed they are the only team that can actually stop the mighty Aussie march in this World Cup."

The Asian Age also said India could pose a serious threat to Australia after their emphatic win over Sri Lanka.

"Beware Aussies, here we come," screamed a headline.

"On current form, Indians are the only true challenge to Australia. The massacre at the Wanderers has given India a place in the semifinals," said the paper.

Former India captain Dilip Vengsarkar criticised Sri Lankan skipper Sanath Jayasuriya's deci-

sion to elect to field after winning the toss against a "strong batting line-up".

"I just could not believe my eyes when, on winning the toss, Jayasuriya preferred to field first on a placid track. It was a mistake he will rue for the rest of his life," Vengsarkar wrote in his column in Indian Express.

"The only way the Sri Lankans could have put India under pressure was by opting to bat first and posting a decent total on the board. Instead, he (Jayasuriya) invited them to take the first strike."

"It was not only unbelievable, but suicidal as well."

"India too had made the same mistake in the 1996 World Cup semifinal against the same team at Eden Gardens (Calcutta) and paid the penalty. It seems the wheel of (mis)fortune has turned a full circle."

Harper lets

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coaching job.

The former England all-rounder, who moulded South Africa into a dominating combination from 1994-99, confirmed he had discussions with WICB officials, but that he had proposed working more in a technical advisor's role than as a full-time coach.

"I haven't said no. I was quite up front with them in terms of my physical capabilities," the 54-year-old said. "I've got a lot of knowledge and I want to share that. If I can help in any way, I'd be willing to hear what they say."

"Since my retirement from the South African team I've done a lot of research on coaching and I'm quite keen to try one or two things. To do it full time is too much for me at my age."

"The five years with South Africa was probably the most stressful of my life, and I won't forget that," he said.

However, Woolmer said he considered the West Indies job a challenge and he's open to negotiation on how it could work.

Saurav hard

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strengths and we play to our strengths and we've got match-winners in every position which makes a huge difference.

"We're playing well. But the important games are still to come, and we have to continue to play this well."

"It's a special tournament, a World Cup and it's coming down to a knockout situation now so the past has to be forgotten. It's what we do from now on that counts."

If India are to maintain such a high standard of performance they will also have to shrug off any thoughts of fatigue as the gruelling nature of the biggest World Cup ever starts to bite on players.

Ganguly, though, is a great believer in success being a good cure for fatigue and stressed: "When you're in a World Cup semifinal I think that takes all the tiredness out of a cricketer."

Woolmer said the West Indies were "a team of the future" based on their performances against India last year and the fresh talent coming through at the World Cup.

"They seem like a country on the move, wanting to get back to the top," Woolmer said. "A strong West Indies side is very important to cricket."

Woolmer was appointed as the International Cricket Council's high performance manager in October, 2001, responsible for preparing associate member countries Canada, Netherlands, Kenya and Namibia for the World Cup.

His tenure was due to expire at the end of the tournament, although he's also been approached about continuing in that capacity.

Among the other candidates for the West Indies coaching job are Bennett King, coach at the Australian cricket academy; Eldine Baptiste, the former Leeward Islands and West Indies all-rounder.

"It's a lifetime ambition for all of us. As cricketers we have all dreamed of playing in a World Cup semifinal or a World Cup final."

"I've never played in a World Cup semifinal before, so I don't think any of our guys will feel any tiredness."

While India set their sights on the last four, Sri Lanka must now beat Zimbabwe in their final Super Six game and hope other results go for them to also qualify for the latter stages of the competition.

"It was extremely disappointing against India," admitted coach Dav Whatmore.

"We thought we had a little bit of fight from the previous game against Australia that I was hoping to rebound into the next game but I was pretty wrong."

"We weren't at the same park as the opposition. That's two wins and two losses in a row now, and if we win our next we could still reach the semifinals."

"But it's not the best way to do it we're not playing well at all."

Advertisement for Star Whizz Kid Competition 191. Includes details about the competition, prizes, and a form for participation.