

Shearer keeps Magpies flying



AFP, Milan

Veteran striker Alan Shearer struck both his side's goals in a 2-2 draw with Inter Milan on Tuesday to give Newcastle a fighting chance of qualifying for the quarter-finals of the Champions League.

While Barcelona glided into the last eight with a 2-0 victory over last year's beaten finalists Bayer Leverkusen in the other Group A game, Arsenal and ten-man AS Roma drew 1-1 and Ajax held Valencia to the same score to leave Group B delicately poised going into next week's final second phase matches.

Any of the four sides from Group B could still qualify.

INTER 2; NEWCASTLE 2

Shearer followed up his hat-trick in the last match, against Leverkusen, with two goals at the San Siro.

However his efforts just before half-time and in the 50th minute were equalised first by Christian Vieri - with his first Champions League goal in almost six years - and then Ivan Cordoba.

The draw left Newcastle third in the group with seven points, one behind Inter and six adrift of Barcelona, who are unbeaten in this year's competition.

If Newcastle win their last match, against Barcelona at St James' Park next Wednesday, and Inter fail to beat Leverkusen in Germany the English side will qualify.

But a draw in both matches would see Inter joining their city rivals AC Milan in the quarter-finals.

Newcastle manager Bobby Robson rued his side's missed chances.

"Twice we got into the lead and twice I was delighted as we were in positions to win the game," said the 70-year-old.

"But at the start of the second half, before I'd even sat down, it was 1-1."

Inter's coach Hector Cuper was cursing the yellow card that rules Vieri out of next week's match.

"We are still in with a chance but we have a shortage of strikers," he said. "However I have confidence in my players and I know we can go to Germany and win."

ARSENAL 1; ROMA 1

Arsenal's ambitions were dealt a blow at Highbury as Roma battled back from the sending-off of Francesco Totti to keep their hopes



Arsenal French international Patrick Vieira (C) heading past Roma custodian Ivan Pelizzoli (L) at Highbury on March 11.

of a place in the quarter-finals alive.

After going a goal down to Patrick Vieira's header, the Italians had Totti controversially sent off mid-way through the first half after his hand struck the face of Arsenal defender Martin Keown as he

enough to say I'm confident. We have won in Rome, played a draw at Ajax and I'm confident we can get a result in Valencia."

Wenger's opposite number, Fabio Capello, accused Keown of play-acting in a bid to earn a red card for Totti, the golden boy of

me his side had played probably their best match in the Champions League this season - that's a huge compliment to us.

"This team might be young but it has great character."

Valencia coach Raphael Benitez said: "This was a good point won from a very good Ajax side and everything remains possible in Group B."

BARCELONA 2; LEVERKUSEN 0

Needing just a point to qualify from Group A, Javier Saviola gave Barcelona the lead at the Nou Camp in the 17th minute.

Frank de Boer's header early in the second half was deflected into the net by Leverkusen defender Thomas Kleine to guarantee Barcelona a ticket to the last eight and top spot in the group.

The Germans have meanwhile failed to score a single point in the second phase.

STANDINGS

European Champions League tables after Tuesday's second phase group matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):

Table with 7 columns: Team, P, W, D, L, GF, GA, Pts. Includes Group A (Barcelona, Inter, Newcastle, Leverkusen) and Group B (Ajax, Arsenal, Valencia, AS Roma).

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Full Champions League results from Tuesday's second group phase matches:

Summary table of results for Group A, B, C, and D, listing teams and scores.

jumped for a ball.

But the Italians grabbed an equaliser from Antonio Cassano in first half injury time and Arsenal failed to convert a host of second-half chances.

The English Premiership champions' fourth straight draw in the group leaves them second to Ajax although both teams have seven points. Valencia are one behind and Roma are hanging on with four points.

The draw means Arsenal have to go to Valencia next week and avoid defeat to ensure a place in the last eight - no easy feat against a side who have appeared in two of the last three Champions League finals.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger was confident his side could get the required result in Spain.

"We've been very strong away from home and it seems logical

Italian football.

"It is supposed to be Italian defenders who go down easily and the English who play the game fairly. But that was not very fairplay," said Capello.

AJAX 1; VALENCIA 1

Ajax coach Ronald Koeman said his young side now deserved to progress to the quarter-finals after holding Valencia to a draw in Amsterdam.

A Kily Gonzalez penalty was equalised by a header from Ajax's Petri Passanen to keep both teams in contention.

Koeman said justice would be served if his side obtained the point they need away at Roma.

"Our performance in the second half was fantastic," he said. "There's no doubt we now deserve a place in the quarter-finals."

"One of the Spanish players told

Sunderland land McCarthy



AFP, Sunderland

Former Ireland coach Mick McCarthy returned to club football after a six year hiatus here Wednesday when he was named manager of relegation threatened Premiership outfit Sunderland.

The 44-year-old becomes Sunderland's third manager of the season and replaces Howard Wilkinson, who was sacked along with assistant Steve Cotterill on Monday after just five months as they failed to revive the side's fortunes which saw them win just twice in the Premiership under them.

McCarthy, who resigned from the Irish job last November just months after taking them to the second round of the World Cup finals, said it was a privilege to have got the job even if he has only nine matches remaining to pre-serve their Premiership status.

"It is an absolute pleasure and a privilege to have got this job. Some may ask me why I've come here but it's a football club, a proper football club," said McCarthy, whose only previous experience of managing a club came with Millwall.

"It has a great set of supporters and everyone connected with it has a passion to see it do well."

"Everything about the club is right except of course the results on the field and that is my brief. Thankfully it is because everything else seems to be in excellent order," added McCarthy, who has



LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL! New Sunderland manager Mick McCarthy greets the media at the Stadium of Light in Sunderland yesterday.

brought his former Ireland assistant Ian Evans with him.

McCarthy, a former captain of the Republic and who numbered Celtic and Lyon among his clubs during his playing days, wasn't promising miracles to the hard-pressed Sunderland supporters.

"I'm not saying I will keep them up but I will try to do that."

Sunderland vice-chairman John Fickling said McCarthy had been signed for the long-term health of the club even if they

don't survive this season. "We've acted quickly to secure the services of a manager who would undoubtedly be pursued by several clubs in the summer," he said.

"By appointing Mick now to have ... given him the chance to pursue a strategy for the summer and beyond."

McCarthy faces a huge task to save Sunderland, as they are bottom of the Premiership and seven points adrift of safety.

Keown faces UEFA inquiry

AFP, London

Arsenal defender Martin Keown was expected to face a UEFA probe for getting Roma captain Francesco Totti sent off in Tuesday night's Champions League clash.

The 36-year-old defender collapsed like a pack of cards after a brush with the Italian which convinced Swiss referee Urs Meier to show Totti the red card.

Roma coach Fabio Capello described it as a "performance straight from the cinema".

"We will have to consider whether to appeal," he said. "It depends if UEFA are going to look at the television proof but I beg people to look at the video again."

European football's governing body UEFA intervened in January to ban Lee Bowyer for six matches for stamping on Malaga's Gerardo when Bowyer was playing for Leeds.

Bowyer kicked the back of Gerardo's legs and then stamped on the defender's face, but received only a yellow card for the foul and escaped punishment for the stamping. However, UEFA acted after viewing video footage.

The Roma captain was dismissed after he appeared to catch Keown in the face with his hand. UEFA will study video evidence of the incident and if they decide to rescind the dismissal, Keown himself could face action.

It is the second accusation of cheating Arsenal have faced in a week after Francis Jeffers was branded a diver after winning a penalty against Chelsea in the FA Cup quarter-final.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger claimed he did not have a clear view of the incident. However, he admitted: "I was surprised when the red card was shown. It was maybe an accident."

Fernandez leaving PSG

AFP, Paris

Paris St Germain manager Luis Fernandez said Wednesday he would walk away from the club at the end of the season.

Just three days after PSG pulled off their first-ever league double over arch-rivals Olympique Marseille, Fernandez told Le Parisien newspaper he had come to terms with his failure.

"It's best to recognise when you've failed. It's best for the club and myself that I leave," he said.

PSG, eighth in the league, have little prospect of achieving the target Fernandez set at the beginning of the season of winning the



LUIS FERNANDEZ

championship, but Fernandez was counting on Cup glory to ensure the 2002/03 season was not a complete wash-out.

The fiery 43-year-old was often at odds with his players and officials and was handed a

six-month touchline ban this season for an altercation with match officials. He has also survived a vote of confidence by his board of directors after fans called for his head.

He blamed the club's owners, cable television operators Canal Plus, for siding with Brazilian star Ronaldinho when the player broke curfews and went night clubbing.

"They always said they would put him before me," he said.

Fernandez took over at PSG two years ago for his second spell at the club after leaving Spanish side Athletic Bilbao.

He said Canal Plus refused to modernise the club's training ground and would not finance a youth development scheme.

Fernandez, a member of the French musketeers midfield formed by Michel Platini, Alain Giresse and Jean Tigana which inspired France to the 1984 European championship title and 1986 World Cup semi-finals, coached PSG to the European Cup Winners' Cup in his last spell in charge in 1996.

Odumbe looking

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real plans of qualifying for the Super Sixes," said the veteran.

"We said to ourselves, if we get there it will be well and good."

"Now that we are there, if we win a game or two it will be a bonus. But if we don't we must enjoy the game."

No more 12th man

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show what a great team man Bichel is, willing to work hard for his teammates even when he is not in the starting line-up.

Waugh's successor as one-day captain, Ricky Ponting, has been equally impressed with Bichel, who has played a key role in ensuring the side has so far remained unbeaten through eight matches in this World Cup.

"He's playing better but there is no difference in his attitude," Ponting said. "That has always been outstanding whether he is playing or not and he is just great to have around."

"Whether he has got the bat or ball in his hand he just gives his best all the time and that is all you can ask."

"He has obviously had more chance in the last couple of games to show what he can do with bat

and ball and he has come up both times.

"That is very pleasing as he has got in and won us two matches," Ponting added.

Bichel made his international debut back in 1996/97 and has regularly topped the wicket-taking charts for his native Queensland for almost a decade, but his bad luck has been to be born in the same era as Glenn McGrath, Jason Gillespie and Brett Lee.

With those three thoroughbred bowlers to call on, Bichel's brand of wholehearted endeavour has been seen primarily as valuable back-up if any of those big three got injured.

There have been occasions when Bichel has made the side ahead of one of them, and at the start of the season he took Lee's spot for three successive Tests against Pakistan and England.

However, that has been the

exception rather than the rule and even now, despite his fantastic performances in this tournament, the shadow of the big three still looms large over his future.

No matter what he does, there still seems to be an expectation that when Gillespie is fit again he will simply return to the side and Bichel will be the man to make way.

Bichel is resigned to that prospect, and for the time being is just enjoying his chance in the limelight.

"That is a long way off and there is still a lot of cricket to be played yet," he said when asked about Gillespie's comeback.

"Jason is working hard on his fitness to be right for the West Indies tour but I am just happy to be around and get the opportunity. It is up to me to make the most of it."

Greg Sachin-awed

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Bradman developed his similarly exquisite skill on his own, with the help of a golf ball thrown against a tank stand, and played with a stump.

"Had Bradman learned to bat with the heavy bats in vogue today he may have played very differently?"

"Tendulkar goes closest to emulating him, but has the added advantage delivered by the heavier modern bat of being able to block the ball back past the faster bowlers more quickly than it was delivered."

Chappell said the current form of the Indians, which has seen them win seven of their eight games the lone defeat coming against the Australians could see them seriously challenge Ricky Ponting's men for the title.

"It will need the same level of commitment shown since the loss to Australia and it will need a team

effort.

"Tendulkar has shown them the way out of the gloom that had descended on the team, and their supporters, over the poor form leading into the World Cup.

"Even the best of players will have bad days or will make mistakes, so the fact that Saurav Ganguly, Rahul Dravid and Yuvraj Singh have shown some form is an excellent sign for India.

"Javagal Srinath has also bounced back to top form and is enjoying the support of Zaheer Khan and Ashish Nehra and the infusion of youth to the fielding side is paying off.

"It will now require everyone in the squad to apply themselves to the basics in training and matches. The other thing is they need to enjoy what they are doing and enjoy each other's success."

India and Australia are the only teams so far to qualify for the semi-finals.

Argentina the best!

REUTERS, London

Argentina's Cricket Association has won an award for the best run national body by the International Cricket Council's development programme, the ICC said on Wednesday.

The ICC paid tribute to Argentina for the major strides it has taken in recent years. Argentina's Cricket Association (ACA) employs eight coaches for youth development and has a dedicated team of administrators to promote the sport.

"While maintaining control of a tight budget, the ACA successfully organised the Americas Cricket Championships in March 2002, securing a number of major sponsors in the process," the ICC said in a statement.

Nigeria also won an award for the best cricket promotional programme.

Rice stands by Pollock

INTERNET, Johannesburg

Clive Rice, the man who captained South Africa when they emerged from isolation in the early 1990s has lashed out at the administrators of the game in the country while simultaneously defending Shaun Pollock.

Speaking to News24.com Rice, who has never been one to pull his punches, suggested that the reason South Africa exited the World Cup before the Super Six stage was because of team selection and off-field issues.

"Pollock is the last on the list who should take the blame for South Africa's poor performance," he said.

"Suddenly everyone is coming down on him. He was not involved in choosing the team. He had to play with the team selected for him. To blame him is poor form."

Harper afraid

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end of the month and former South African coach Bob Woolmer is believed to be the leading candidate to take over.

But Harper believes whoever is in charge faces a tough task.

"Everyone wants the West Indies to win but they all want their own people to play."

"Until we get rid of that, until we start thinking as one, until we have common ideals and common goals and stop filling our territorial players with nonsense then we're not going to get anywhere because we are creating monsters."

He added: "The associations locally have a responsibility to the players and to the region, and it is time they start doing it."

Nehra sings Srinath

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ances compared to the 100 shared by Nehra and Khan.

The trio have taken 37 of India's 61 wickets to win seven of their eight games, the last six on the trot. Srinath has 14, Nehra 12 and Khan 11.

Nehra produced one of the great World Cup spells against England, capturing six for 23.

"Zaheer and I have been bowling well in the last year," Nehra said. "But we missed him during last year's England and New Zealand test series."

India drew 1-1 in England 1-1 but lost 2-0 on seaming pitches in New Zealand.

The trio came together in South Africa after India's nine-wicket drubbing against Australia in their second World Cup game. The team management decided to play only one spinner to make room for them all.

Nehra said: "Whatever we have planned so far has worked."

"Sri is concentrating on line and length and Zaheer on movement,

which he wasn't doing so well six months back."

Nehra said the new ball pair had regularly taken early wickets to set things up for him as first change.

"Against Sri Lanka, they reduced them to five for 40. It was my job to come and finish them off."

Nehra said the new fitness regime of their South African physical trainer Adrian Le Roux had made a huge difference.

"These days I am bowling much faster," he said.

Srinath, who has spearheaded the attack since Kapil Dev's retirement in 1994, feels the Indian fast bowlers are enjoying one of their best periods.

"It looks like we have the best fast bowling combination in a long while," he said after his man-of-the-match performance on Monday.

"It's good that three fast bowlers have cemented their place. We are all doing the right things on helpful pitches."

Sehwag craves

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"Our strategy will be to preserve wickets in the first 10 overs and build a big score," he said.

Sehwag said Sachin Tendulkar had helped him to his first World Cup fifty in Monday's 183-run Super Six win over Sri Lanka at The Wanderers.

Sehwag, who averages 34.43 in

65 one-dayers and has scored five centuries and nine fifties, curbed his attacking style to score 66.

"Sachin kept telling me to curb my usual style and show more determination because I wasn't getting big scores," he said.

Tendulkar has scored a record 571 runs in the tournament.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptogram puzzle grid with letters and numbers.

CRYPTOQUIP M L V K X Y J M R H B V G V R L J Y F G B Y J F C H O O Y K G V I Y G G C Y G Y B Y O C V K Y I J Y G M K I " O B Y H F Y C V B X . " Saturday's Cryptogram: WE JUST DECIDED TO START WORK ON AN ARTIFICIAL KNEE. IT WAS A JOINT RESOLUTION. Today's Cryptogram Clue: Y equals E

What to WATCH logo

ESPN Follow Through Super Six Match-6 WC Cricket Programme Repeat at 8:00 am UEFA Champions League Arsenal vs Roma Repeat at 10:30 am Sportscentre Hindi Sport News Live at 8:30 pm UEFA Champions League Real Madrid vs AC Milan Same Day Delay at 9:30 pm STAR Sports Follow Through Super Six Match-6 WC Cricket Programme Repeat at 7:30 am Gillette World Sports Special Int'l Sport News Repeat at 8:00 am Asia Sport Show Int'l Sports News Repeat at 3:00 pm Sportsline Tonight Sport News Live at 8:00 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 wks 5 wks 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 Name: Class: School Address: Phone: (if any):