

# Fingers crossed at Valencia



AFP, Paris

Both Arsenal and Valencia clash on Wednesday desperately seeking to land the knockout blow to either's Champions League hopes and also revive their flagging form.

Valencia, two-time finalists, have not won any of their last six matches both in the domestic title race and the Champions League, leaving them facing an uphill task to retain their Spanish crown.

Arsenal's previous dominance in England has taken a knock being held 2-2 by Chelsea in the FA Cup followed by their first defeat since December, a 2-0 defeat at the hands of Blackburn in the Premiership last Saturday.

Sandwiched in between was their third successive draw in the Champions League at home to AS Roma in Group B leaving them needing a point from their trip to Spain while Valencia effectively need to win to progress.

In the tightest group of the second phase AS Roma can even make the last eight and complete a remarkable comeback after losing their first three matches if they beat Ajax and the other match ends in a draw.

Ajax need a draw to progress as they top the group with Arsenal on seven points.

Group A has just one place up for grabs with Barcelona already qualified as they head to Newcastle to face one of their former managers Bobby Robson, who twice this season has masterminded a remarkable turnaround in the two group phases.

However with Italian giants Inter Milan a point ahead and facing pointless Bayer Leverkusen, a shadow of the side that reached last season's final, even victory cannot guarantee the Magpies a place in the last eight.

Valencia have not lost heart despite their recent woeful run of form and John Carew, their goalscorer hero from the previous time they hosted Arsenal which ended in a 1-0 victory, is confident that they can prevail.

"We are going to have to put our heart and soul into this game but

there is no reason why we cannot beat Arsenal again," Carew said.

The lanky Norwegian forward must be licking his lips at the thought of facing a much weakened Arsenal defence who are sure to be without Martin Keown and probably England keeper David Seaman and Sol Campbell.

With the improvised partnership of Frenchman Pascal Cygan and Brazil World Cup winning defensive midfielder Gilberto Silva found wanting against the Blackburn attack, Igor Stepanovs looks set for a rare appearance.

"This team has shown strength in the past and will do so again in the future. I feel that the players will respond in the next game," said Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger.

However with several complaining of fatigue and leading scorer Thierry Henry appearing unusually tetchy in recent matches Valencia

## WEDNESDAY'S FIXTURES

Group A
<i>At Newcastle</i>
Newcastle United v Barcelona
<i>At Leverkusen</i>
Bayer Leverkusen v Inter
Group B
<i>At Valencia</i>
Valencia v Arsenal
<i>At Rome</i>

may well be meeting the Gunners at the right moment.

For Roma boss Fabio Capello the Champions League remains the only viable target for the rest of the season and failure to make the last eight will represent a dramatic fall from grace for their handler, who only two years ago was hailed a hero for delivering the Serie A title.

While bizarrely the death of legendary Italian actor Alberto Sordi late last month prompted their best run of form with talismanic skipper Francesco Totti declaring they would win the Champions League for their most famous fan, it hit the buffers again Sunday with the 1-0 defeat by Perugia.

However if they are to honour Totti's promise they will have to do it without him because he is sus-

pected following his sending-off last week for felling Keown, which was slammed by Capello for the Englishman's antics.

Capello, though, knows how much is riding on making the last eight for the club more than for himself.

"If we go through it would give back the enthusiasm that has been missing from the squad this year and keep the president happy.

"If the president does not invest in the club we can say goodbye to our ambitions.

"To make it through to the quarter-finals would be impressive with a capital T."

Ajax have performed above themselves in the second round phase with largely a young side and will be boosted by the return of highly-regarded Romanian defender Christian Chivu.

However the Dutch champions, who last won the Champions League in 1995, could be without leading striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic, who ironically is a target for Roma should they make the last eight and club president Franco Sensi releases funds for next season.

Newcastle have been hit by the groin injury to experienced Welsh midfielder Gary Speed which has ruled him out though fiery French winger Laurent Berra is expected to return against what the home side must hope is a Barcelona side already with one eye on their last eight spot.

Newcastle's star striker Alan Shearer is hoping to give the home fans a night to remember.

"This is one of the most important games of my career," the 31-year-old admitted.

"I am just hoping that we can deliver one of the great nights in Newcastle's history," added Shearer, who has scored five times in the Champions League this season.

Inter for their part are struggling with their strikers as both Alvaro Recoba and Christian Vieri are suspended so Nigerian youngster Obafemi Martins could well start up front alongside Turkish international Emre Belozoglu with the option of Hernan Crespo coming off the bench after recovering from a thigh strain.

# A refreshing change

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Sri Lanka, a feat which briefly entered the World Cup top 10 bowling returns. Collins simply kept bobbing in and inviting them to hit across the line. He can bowl leg-breaks all right; what he must now do this to develop some variations.

Kenya have hardly looked back. Further wins against Bangladesh and Zimbabwe have almost, but not quite, silenced those observers who maintain that their advance is

because of the boycott by New Zealand of the group match in Nairobi. It is true that the four points Kenya were awarded have been vital, but nobody can suggest that they have not helped themselves.

The advance has left Kenyan cricket with a sense of high expectation. Pre-tournament criticism of the administrators has been forgotten and the application for full membership of the International Cricket Council, which brings Test status and a greater share of the game's cash, has been revived.

It provides a conundrum for the ICC. How can they deny a country which has reached the last four of the sport's premier competition? A deal will probably be cut. Kenya recognise that if they began playing Test matches now they would probably follow Bangladesh as cannon fodder. Rather than have an uplifting effect, it would eventually debilitate the side and the development of the game.

"We want to play Test matches but we realise that before that can happen we must get experience in the longer version of the game," said Mehmood Quarishy, the team manager.

"There are plans for more three-day games at domestic level, but the (small) number of players does not make it easy. I would like us to have matches against other countries' A teams."

There are hundreds, rather than thousands, of senior cricketers in Kenya. Cricket has been given an enormous boost because of the World Cup. The deputy prime minister

and sports minister will attend the semifinal against India in Durban on Thursday. But athletics, football and boxing remain the big three sports. Collins himself was a

long-distance runner before cricket finally ensnared him.

The ICC have plans for an inter-continental tournament for countries like Kenya. Andrew Eade, the global development manager, has the template in mind. Nations from America,

Asia, Europe and Africa would play in separate tournaments, with the winners qualifying for a separate competition.

"That is a way for sides to gain experience," he said. "The idea is not for the eventual globalisation of Test cricket."

I don't think that will happen because I don't think that many countries have that desire.

"But they will want to play one-day international cricket, and while it might seem perverse, a way to play that better is to play three-day cricket. I hope we can get this off

the ground soon."

It is likely that Kenya will be given a set of targets in developing first-class cricket. If they are achieved, Test status might be granted by 2005. But the ICC dare not risk

a repeat of Bangladesh. Their haplessness since being granted full membership by a unanimous verdict, which makes everyone culpable is helping to make the international game a laughing stock.

Kenya ought not to go down that road. True, they are left with the immediate problem of replacing their national coach, Sandeep Patil, but they have a sound youth structure in place. The graduation of Obuya is demonstration of its effectiveness.

Surprisingly, in view of the bland mediocrity likely to be on show in some English county sides this summer, he has not had an approach.

"I would like to play in England some day and club cricket would be a possibility. But I am signed to Kenya," he said.

He has put on hold his plans to study medicine. Some 21 players have been enlisted by the Kenyan association and are in effect full-time cricketers. Their rewards have been multiplied. It was agreed beforehand, when nobody expected them to progress, that they could keep the prize money.

It would be appalling if they were full-time cricketers without anybody to play. At the least, they should expect more invitations to one-day tournaments.

"It's been a big problem, just getting games," said Quarishy.

"We've got to have them otherwise this will be for nothing."

Whatever happens next, Kenya and Collins Obuya will not be disappearing.

## Afridi aims

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English counties for this summer's championship. Others include Shoaib Akhtar (Hampshire), Saqlain Mushtaq and Azhar Mehmood (Surrey) and Abdul Razzaq (Middlesex).

Pakistan cricket authorities are set to announce a new captain, coach and team this week for the Sharjah Cup, which will also be contested by South Africa and Sri Lanka.

Board sources said several players were being considered for the captaincy. "Javed Miandad is a front-runner to take over as coach from Richard Pybus," a PCB source told Reuters, adding there were three candidates for captain, including wicketkeepers Rashid Latif and Moin Khan.

The Pakistan board and selectors have come under intense pressure to revamp the team after the country's miserable World Cup campaign in South Africa. There have also been calls to axe some senior players, including captain Waqar Younis.

Waqar and established players Wasim Akram, Saeed Anwar, Inzamam-ul-Haq and Rashid Latif have said they had no plans to retire soon.

## Bitter-sweet

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246-6 following an opening stand of 121 between Shah and Kennedy Otieno.

Thomas Odoayo followed the openers with the third half-century of the innings, a blazing 51 off 52 balls with six boundaries and a six.

India were shot out under the lights for a meagre 176 after Tendulkar was bowled for three by seamer Joseph Angara, who finished with 3-30 and Odoayo ran through the tail with 3-41.

No wonder, Kenya's current coach and former India player, Sandeep Patil, believes Saurav Ganguly's India will be foolish to take victory for granted on Thursday.

If the Super Sixes clash between the two sides earlier this month is any indication, a close match is in the offing.

India, chasing Kenya's modest 225-6, were reduced to 24-3 under the Newlands lights at Cape Town before Ganguly hit a match-winning 107 and Yuvraj Singh made 58 to steer their team home.

It was at Kingsmead on Saturday night that 39-year-old Karim gave the mighty Australians a scare with figures at one stage reading an incredible 8-6-2-3.

Entire Kenya will be hoping for an encore on Thursday.

## Fairytale

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lightly now," he said.

"All the teams came here to win the World Cup not just to stand around at the opening ceremony.

"I enjoyed my cricket in the 1980s, winning the World Cup was a very pleasant memory, and with Kenya now I have the same sort of feeling.

"But the good thing about this Kenyan team is that its feet are still on the ground.

"We are playing with nothing to lose and it does help. We've beaten India in India. In one-day cricket the team that plays well stands a good chance of winning."

Kenya leg-spinner Collins Obuya, who spun Sri Lanka to defeat, was smashed for 62 runs in eight wicketless overs by Australia on Saturday.

But Tikolo was confident Obuya would recover by Thursday.

"We've seen Collins turn into a good leg-spinner. This is a new game. He'll bounce back."

## His oyster

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Lee, who has been placed second twice and third once, is the highest player in the standings not to have been named man-of-the-match in the tournament to date.

The man-of-the-tournament is based on the cumulative man-of-the-match results awarded by the ICC match referee.

After every game the ICC match referee selects the top three players. As well as being presented with a gold watch worth 1,460 dollars, the man-of-the-match also receives three points towards the man-of-the-tournament award.

The second best player on the day receives two points and the third best gets one point.

The man-of-the-tournament will be presented by legendary West Indies all-rounder Sir Garfield Sobers at the end of the final.

## STANDINGS

Points	Player
12	Sachin Tendulkar (Ind)
8	Marvan Atapattu (SL)
	Chaminda Vaas (SL)
7	Saurav Ganguly (Ind)
6	Wasim Akram (Pak)
	James Anderson (Eng)
	John Davison (Can)
	Sanath Jayasuriya (SL)
5	Andy Bichel (Aus)
	Andy Bignault (Zim)
	Vasbert Drakes (WI)
	Herschelle Gibbs (SA)
	Lance Klusener (SA)
	Brett Lee (Aus)
	Thomas Odoayo (Ken)
	Ricky Ponting (Aus)

## MSC trounce Dev Squad



### SPORTS REPORTER

Title aspirants Mohammedan Sporting Club finished their first phase of the GrameenPhone Premier Division Cricket League with a 73-run thrashing of BCB Development Squad at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Opener Javed Omar's patient half century helped the Mojibheel outfit to fighting 237 for nine in the stipulated 50 overs after they were put into bat.

Javed, the discarded national opener, scored 77 off 121 balls hitting only five boundaries while most of his other colleagues struggled.

Skipper Minhazul Abedin was the next top scorer with 29.

In reply, the Development Squad reached 164 before being all out in 45.3 overs.

Pakistani leg spinner Shahed Mahmud was the wrecker in chief taking four wickets for 42 runs while veteran left arm spinner Enamul Hoque gave him support with three for 15.

It was Mohammedan's eighth win against four defeats. They finished with 44 points from 12 matches. Second placed City Club also have 44 points but they have two games in hand in the first phase.

On the other hand, it was the seventh defeat for Development Squad. They have won five games.

### SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the GrameenPhone Premier Division Cricket League match between Mohammedan SC and BCB Development Squad at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium yesterday.

### MOHAMMEDAN SC

Javed c Saghir b Enamul	77
Nafees b Arafat	20
Aftab c Saghir b Arafat	1
SMahmud b Bashir	21

Minhazul c Kafi b Bashir	29
Naimur c Shafaq b Bashir	18
Fahim run out	11
Enamul not out	22
Anwar c Sahafaq b Arafat	11
Kafi b Ziaur	1
Munir not out	5
Extras: (b-4, lb-5, nb-4, w-8)	21
Total: (For 9 wickets in 50 overs)	237
Fall of wickets: 1-47, 2-55, 3-86, 4-132, 5-166, 6-182, 7-199, 8-223, 9-227.	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Shafaq	5	0	26	0
Ziaur	7	0	50	1
Arafat	10	0	38	3
Nayeem	5	0	22	0
Bashir	10	0	44	3
Enamul	10	1	30	0
Tanveer	3	0	18	0

### BCB DEVS SQUAD

Nayeem c Aftab b Enamul	13
Saghir c Anwar b Enamul	18
Nazim c Anwar b SMahmud	63
Kafi b Naimur	0
Ashiq c Anwar b Fahim	18
Tanveer c Enamul b Fahim	9
Bashir c Nafees b SMahmud	13
Arafat c Anwar b SMahmud	8
Ziaur c Javed b Enamul	2
Enamul not out	3
Shafaq c Anwar b SMahmud	4
Extras: (b-1, lb-8, nb-3, w-1)	13
Total: (All out in 45.3 overs)	164
Fall of wickets: 1-31, 2-44, 3-45, 4-94, 5-105, 6-138, 7-143, 8-155, 9-159.	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Hasibul	5	0	15	0
Naimur	10	1	25	1
Enamul	8	3	15	3
SMahmud	8.3	0	42	4
Fahim	10	1	37	2
Munir	4	0	21	0

Result: Mohammedan SC won by 73 runs.

## Captain sensible

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mance away from the World Cup final at the Wanderers a week on Sunday.

"You need to enjoy everything if you are going to perform in the middle, stressed Ganguly.

"You have to enjoy the dressing room and things off the field and all credit to this squad because they have combined well as a unit.

"They enjoy each other's company, which is very important because they have been able to help each other and I think it's the reason for our success over the last one-and-a-half years.

"No captain in the world can honestly say that their bowling changes have taken the wickets, it doesn't happen like that and you have to be lucky as a captain.

"Obviously the bowlers have also bowled well so it's a mixture of everything coming right together."

Having already completed a six-wicket victory over Kenya during the Super Six stage in Cape Town, India will enter next Thursday's day-night semifinal in Durban as overwhelming favourites but Ganguly will ensure his side do not become carried away by their success.

"So far so good, but the important stages are yet to come," he

added.

"We play Kenya in a semifinal and I hope we continue playing as well in the next two games because it's the most crucial part of the tournament.

"This is what we're all looking forward to and hopefully we can keep the same form and the same luck for that."

## Patil questions

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will lose its driving force.

"I think Tendulkar and Sehwa at the start of the innings are key.

"If we can get the two out, we would reduce India's batting potency a great deal."

Should Kenya lose, it will Patil's last game in charge before taking up a new role with the Board of Control for Cricket in India.

"I have an offer from Bangladesh, but I have decided I would only be willing to help out cricket in my native country."

"I will be willing to do any job which (the) BCCI asks me to do. It could be the role of a senior coach, or one who is minding an under-sevent team," he added.

## Planet Vaas

FROM PAGE 13

Srinath is on 15, with a semifinal against Kenya to come.

### MOST WICKETS IN A WORLD CUP

Wkts	Player	Country	WC
23	Chaminda Vaas	Sri Lanka	2003
20	Geoff Allott	New Zealand	1999
20	Shane Warne	Australia	1999
18	Roger Binney	India	1983
18	Craig McDermott	Australia	1987
18	Wasim Akram	Pakistan	1992
18	Glenn McGrath	Australia	1999
17	Asantha De Mel	Sri Lanka	1983
17	Madan Lal	India	1983
17	Imran Khan	Pakistan	1987
17	Saqlain Mushtaq	Pakistan	1999
17	Lance Klusener	South Africa	1999
17	Glenn McGrath	Australia	2003

## More Martyn misery

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"The main symptoms of this fracture are limitation of movement, pain and swelling," Alcott said.

"We will be waiting to see whether those three problem areas subside, before making any further decisions about Damien's short-term future.

"Until that time it will just be a case of reviewing the finger daily and treating it accordingly," Alcott said.

Martyn said he was terribly disappointed to miss the semifinal.

"Naturally I'm disappointed, but the finger's pretty sore at the moment and there's not much movement there, so it's probably a wise move that I sit this one out," he said.

"Should we get through the match, I will be doing my utmost to get it right ahead of Sunday's final in Johannesburg.

"That will involve ongoing work with Errol Alcott over the next few days."

Australia have already lost leg-spinner Shane Warne (drugs test) and fast bowler Jason Gillespie (heel injury) from their World Cup squad, but Sri Lanka coach Day Whatmore didn't think the absence of Martyn would make that much difference.

"He's a steady player and a good fielder, but there've been other changes to their squad without making any difference," said Whatmore.

Martyn's injury means a recall for Michael Bevan, who missed the five-wicket win over Kenya with a back strain.

It also looks like solving a tricky selection headache for skipper Ricky Ponting who was facing having to drop either Andrew Symonds or Ian Harvey to accommodate Bevan.

Martyn has scored 235 runs for