

Premiership Pires stuns Liverpool

 Football

AFP/PA, Liverpool

Robert Pires fired in a stunning 25-yard winner as Arsenal came from behind to secure a 2-1 win over Liverpool that could have effectively ended Gerard Houllier's side's Premiership title hopes barely six weeks into the season.

Liverpool's third defeat in eight matches leaves them nine points adrift of Arsenal, who ensured they could not be overtaken by Chelsea or Manchester United this weekend.

Harry Kewell put Liverpool ahead in a first half they dominated, and only an unfortunate Sami Hyypia own goal gave the worried Gunners parity at the break.

But Liverpool were treated to a master class in the second period, lost Michael Owen with a leg injury and then saw Robert Pires crown Arsenal's day with a brilliant curling winner.

Both managers produced surprises in their team selections. Gerard Houllier relegated Emile Heskey to the bench and opted for another midfielder in Salif Diao, while Chris Kirkland returned to the bench after a groin injury.

Arsene Wenger gave French youngster Jeremie Aliadiere his full debut, while Sol Campbell returned to defence following a spell out because of the death of his father.

Liverpool's one change meant Steven Gerrard had a more forward midfield role, while Harry Kewell was playing off Michael Owen in a central position.

And the Merseysiders produced an impressive display for the first half hour and should have been further ahead before the Gunners struck with a fortunate own goal.

Jens Lehmann was tested twice early on, by Owen and Steve Finnan from long range as Liverpool got to grips with the league leaders from

the start.

Liverpool's pace, width and enterprise had given them the upper hand and in the 14th minute they grabbed the lead.

John Arne Riise's cross from the left was hammered into Owen's face from close range by Edu and cannoned invitingly for Kewell to strike from 18 yards into the far bottom corner.

Arsenal were struggling to get a foothold on the game at this point and almost conceded a second to Kewell when Finnan's cross was nodded down by Riise, but the Australian hooked high over from 12 yards.

Jerzy Dudek was forced into a diving save to turn round a Thierry

Henry drive, while Liverpool were still fuming by a tackle from behind by Aliadiere on Diao that referee Graham Barber failed to penalise.

Kewell's pass then found Owen 20 yards out and his attempted lob over Lehmann finished on the roof off the net, before Gerrard whipped in a free-kick and Owen lunged forward to send a near-post header wide.

Arsenal's response came when Smicer fouled Ray Parlour on the right, Robert Pires curled the free-kick into the box and Edu emerged from a mass of players to make contact. But the effort was going wide until it bounced in off Sami Hyypia.

It was tough on Liverpool, and

more misfortune struck three minutes from the break when Smicer limped off to be replaced by Anthony Le Tallec.

Liverpool's response was to bounce back with more attacking play, Diouf and Finnan combining to give Owen a chance that he headed just over three minutes after the break.

Diouf's continued attacks down Ashley Cole's flank severely tested the England full-back, while Kewell's ability to keep finding space was a constant worry for Campbell and Kolo Toure.

Henry's influence was growing, and on 59 minutes he worked his way across the box to force Dudek into a low save to his right.

Owen had to be taken off for treatment on his right leg after landing awkwardly, and there was considerable concern for him as 10-man Liverpool were clearly distracted by the incident.

Owen returned, but still limping, Arsenal by now having gained the initiative.

And the Gunners struck with a classic goal in 68th minutes. Gerrard and Finnan both conceded possession 20 yards out and Edu was able to find Pires, the Frenchman curling a stunning shot into the far top corner to claim the lead.

Owen was eventually withdrawn in the 71st minute, Heskey taking over, while Arsenal replaced Aliadiere with Sylvain Wiltord.

Liverpool kept going despite Arsenal's dominance, and Cole had to hook off the line from Diouf on 77 minutes. Then Heskey broke down right and fired in a cross that Edu scooped away from Kewell.

Le Tallec curled a shot just wide before youngster John Welsh came on for his Premiership debut in place of Diao. Welsh's first act was to be booked for a foul on Parlour.

Chopra gets Test call up

AFP, Rajkot

Opener Akash Chopra was Saturday named in the Indian team for the first Test against New Zealand to be played at Ahmedabad from October 8-12.

The 26-year-old's fine showing in two warm-up matches against New Zealand helped clinch a berth even as the selectors stuck to a tested batting line-up which included Venkatsai Laxman.

The Ganguly-led team has only one specialist opener in Chopra, the other berth going to Virender Sehwag, essentially a middle-order batsman who has done well as an opener in both Tests and one-dayers.

Chopra, who slammed an unbeaten 103 for Board President's XI and then a solid 66 for India A against the visiting New Zealanders, plays for Sehwag's Delhi team in domestic competitions.

TEAMS

Saurav Ganguly (captain), Virender Sehwag, Akash Chopra, Rahul Dravid, Sachin Tendulkar, Venkatsai Laxman, Yuvraj Singh, Parthiv Patel (wicketkeeper), Anil Kumble, Harbhajan Singh, Sairaj Bahutule, Zaheer Khan, Aavishkar Salvi, Lakshmithipaty Balaji.

Miandad hits back

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he is welcome to come and give it a try.

"I don't need any advice from anyone. What I have done with the team is visible to everyone. I am committed and trying hard.

"I think everyone knows what I have delivered since the World Cup."

Miandad was brought in as coach after Pakistan failed to qualify for the second round of the World Cup earlier this year. Sohail was also appointed chief selector and promptly dropped senior players Wasim Akram, Waqar Younis, Saeed Anwar and Inzamamul Haq from the squad.

Since then Inzamam has returned as captain and Pakistan, with a blend of new and experienced players, have done reasonably well in three one-day tournaments. Before South Africa's arrival they whitewashed Bangladesh 3-0 and 5-0 in the Tests and one-day series at home.

"I am satisfied with what we have achieved in the last six months," Miandad said. "We have found two or three good players for the future and they are improving. The team is now playing like a proper team."

Unlikely semifinalists

AFP, Portland



Germany's prolific attack, sparked by six goals from forward Birgit Prinz, will test a solid United States defence in the feature match

here Sunday at the Women's World Cup semi-finals.

The Germans have a Cup-best 20 goals in four matches, including a 7-1 rout of Russia in the quarterfinals, a 6-1 triumph over Argentina, a 4-1 victory over Canada and a 3-0 blanking of Japan.

"What a team," US striker Tiffany Milbrett said.

"It's a team that is very solid at every position out there on the field, a team that really knows how to play. It's going to be a tough game for us."

The defending champions US defence has allowed only one goal in its unbeaten run, that in a 3-1 opening triumph over Sweden. The hosts blanked Nigeria 5-0, North Korea 3-0 and perennial world power Norway 1-0 in the quarterfinals.

"They are performing as well as in 1999 and they are the top favourite to win the tournament," German coach Tina Theune-Meyer said.

"We have to play physically very robust against them."

The Norwegians managed only one shot on goal against the Americans in a loss that knocked them out of the 2004 Olympics. European berths at Athens went to Germany and Sweden, which will face Canada in Sunday's other semifinal.

Winners advance to the championship match October 12 in Carson, California. The top-ranked US squad seeks its third title in four Cups.

Germany's best results were second in the 1995 Cup and third at the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

Four Cup-veteran Joy Fawcett, a mother of three, anchors the US defence while Cup rookie Cat Reddick, the only collegian on the US roster, has been solid in place of Brandi Chastain, who suffered a broken foot in the US opener.

"We wanted to be the best defensive team," US coach April Heinrichs said.

"Our last two games in the back have been incredible. I couldn't be happier."

Germany's defence was hurt by an injury to Steffi Jones, whose versatility gave Theune-Meyer several options that are now lost in trying to shut down top US threats like Abby Wambach and Mia Hamm.

"She can play in the front line. She can play in the midfield and now we don't have her," Theune-Meyer said.

Germany's attack is directed by midfielder Maren Meinert, who

came out of retirement to work with Prinz, 26, on creating a formidable attack force. Meinert realises the US backline will provide the Germans' toughest test yet.

"I have a lot of respect for the American team. I know how hard they work," Meinert said.

"It will be an interesting match and I think it will be a good game for women's soccer."

Canada and Sweden pulled mild shockers in the quarterfinals to advance. The Swedes ousted South American champion Brazil 2-1 while Canada stunned 1999 Cup runner-up China 1-0.

"I didn't even imagine us winning a game, and here we've won two," said Canadian veteran Charmaine Hooper, who scored the only goal against China.

"This is bigger than anything we've done before. It's a huge step for our programme."

Now the Canadians must regain their composure and try to get past Sweden.

"It's a much better match-up for us because Sweden plays a style that is very similar to our style," Canada coach Even Pellerud said.

"They have a tremendous team, and I've said for a long time that Sweden is one of the teams that could win this tournament. They have really impressed coming back from their loss against USA. They look stronger and stronger."

PAK-SA 1ST ODI SCOREBOARD

AFP, Lahore

Final scoreboard of the first day-night one-day international between Pakistan and South Africa which the hosts won by eight wickets at the Gaddafi Stadium here on Friday:

PAKISTAN: 277 for 6 in 50 overs (Malik 82, Youhana 68, Hameed 56, Inzamam 37; Kallis 2-53)

SOUTH AFRICA

Smith c Inzamam b Akhtar 71
Dippenaar not out 110
Kallis b Akhtar 1
McKenzie c Hafeez b Akhtar 62
Boucher b Akhtar 1
Pollock c Inzamam b Sami 0
Rudolph run out 3
Hall not out 0
Extras: (b-3, lb-5, nb-8, w-5) 21
Total: (For 6 wickets in 50 overs) 269
Fall of wickets: 1-138, 2-140, 3-241, 4-244, 5-245, 6-268

Did not bat: Dawson, Peterson, Ntini

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Shoaib	10	0	49	4
Sami	10	0	44	1
Mushtaq	10	0	65	0
Razzaq	5	0	30	0
Hafeez	5	1	26	0
Malik	10	0	47	0

Result: Pakistan won by 8 runs.

Man-of-the-match: Shoaib Malik

Toss: Pakistan

Umpires: Darrell Hair (Australia) and Aleem Dar (Pakistan)

Badani ton

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a ball that nipped back sharply off the seam and New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming, caught at point for three.

Badani had earlier enthralled the sparse crowd with an impressive display of clean hitting, reaching his century with a six over long-on off left-arm spinner Daniel Vettori.

Badani received good lower-order support from Deep Dasgupta (21) and Sree Shanthi (16), but failed win a place in India's 14-man squad for the first Test next week.

Openers Sadagoppan Ramesh (110) and Akash Chopra (66) had earlier on Friday given a solid start to the home side with a 164-run stand.

For New Zealand, seamer Daryl Tuffy and left-arm spinner Daniel Vettori finished with three scalps each.

India and New Zealand play two Tests, followed by a one-day triangular series also involving world champions Australia.

SCOREBOARD

Final scoreboard on the final day of a three-day tour match between India A and New Zealand on Saturday:

NEW ZEALAND: First innings 375-7 declared (Richardson 128, Oram 101 not out)

INDIA A: First innings (overnight 216-4)
Chopra c Wiseman b Oram 66
Ramesh c Fleming b Tuffey 110
Williams c Styris b Vettori 4
Kaif c Hart b Styris 4

Badani c Hart b McMillan 127
Kartik c Hart b Oram 10
Gavaskar c Richardson b Vettori 1
Dasgupta c Hart b Tuffey 21
Sree Shanthi b Vettori 0

Singh c Hart b Tuffey 13
Patel not out 0
Extras: (b-1, lb-9, nb-20, w-1) 31
Total: (All out in overs) 403
Fall of wickets: 1-164, 2-170, 3-195, 4-209, 5-225, 6-228, 7-300, 8-386, 9-403

Bowler	O	M	R
W Tuffey	31	14	6
3 Oram	28	4	8
2 Styris	9	2	4
1 Vettori	37	9	9
3 McMillan	6	2	2
1 Wiseman	21	3	7
0			

NEW ZEALAND: Second innings
Richardson c Gavaskar b Kartik 7
Vincent not out 28
Astle lbw b Patel 5
Fleming c Gavaskar b Patel 3
Styris c Dasgupta b Kartik 3
McMillan not out 17
Extras: (nb-8) 8
Total: (For 4 wickets in overs) 68
Fall of wickets: 1-16, 2-23, 3-34, 4-37
Did not bat: Oram, Hart, Vettori, Wiseman, Tuffey

Bowler	O	M	R
W Patel	9	2	2
2 Kartik	11	0	4
2 Gavaskar	3	1	5
0			

Result: Match drawn.

AB Bank TT

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Biman and Sheikh Russell Kira Chakra recorded their second consecutive wins in the AB Bank Metropolis Senior Division Table Tennis League at the NSC wooden floor gymnasium yesterday.

Sheikh Russell KC beat Armanitola JS by straight 3-0 sets while Bangladesh Biman came from behind and managed a 3-1 victory over Ajax SC.

In the day's other two matches, Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club beat Engineers Club by 3-0 sets while Wari Club defeated Inter Sports by 3-1.

In the First Division League, Modhumita KS beat Mohammodpur Boys, Reazul Smriti Sangha defeated Young Pegasus Club, North South University outplayed Angels Club and Swamibagh Boys overcame Khawja Printing by 3-0 sets each. Barna TT Club beat Khelaghar SKS and Sports World defeated ORCA by 3-1 sets each while Dhaka TT Club beat New Colony Red team by 3-2 sets in the day's other fixture at the same venue.

Hectic cricket

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department cricket competition.

Besides, Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has also invited a Bangladesh team to take part in the Dulip Trophy this season.

Mahbub said that the national team would spend 12 days in Namibia as part of their build-up for their Zimbabwe tour next February.

The Tigers will play a three-day match and three one-dayers in Namibia before heading for Zimbabwe to play two Tests and five one-day internationals.

Simons seeks

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matches in the past as well and I think he is one of those guys who takes time to adjust to new conditions," said Simons.

A happy Pakistan captain Inzamamul Haq said his side would have a psychological edge with a win in the pocket.

"It was very important to have a win in such an important and close series so we definitely have the edge," said Inzamam, who has won all eight matches as captain.

TEAMS

PAKISTAN (from): Mohammad Hafeez, Yasir Hameed, Yousuf Youhana, Inzamamul Haq (captain), Younis Khan, Abdul Razzaq, Shoaib Malik, Rashid Latif, Mohammad Sami, Shoaib Akhtar, Umar Gul, Shabbir Ahmad, Saqlain Mushtaq, Mushtaq Ahmad, Faisal Iqbal and Salman Butt.

SOUTH AFRICA (from): Graeme Smith (captain), Mark Boucher, Jacques Kallis, Shaun Pollock, Neil McKenzie, Jacques Rudolph, Robin Peterson, Andrew Hall, Alan Dawson, Makhaya Ntini, Charl Langeveldt, Andre Nel, Boeta Dippenaar, Herschelle Gibbs, Paul Adams.

Umpires: Darrell Hair (Australia) and Nadeem Ghauri (Pakistan)

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Sibling rivalry victim

5 Felon's flight

8 Assessment

12 Andersen offering

13 In olden days

14 Com-motions

15 Earthen-ware pot

16 Capitol address (Abbr.)

17 Profound

18 Ferrante & Teicher's equipment

20 Actor LaSalle

22 Some timber

26 Wassail-ers' refrain

29 Roulette bet

30 "Caught ya!"

31 Fin change

32 Auction action

33 Bedazzle

34 Moment of "The Daily Show"

36 Motif

37 Part of Revere's signal

40 Cartoon-ists' supply

41 Mob-scene members

45 Festive

47 Shelter

49 Winning margin,

50 Bad sign

51 Shade provider

52 Malific-ence

53 Ocean motion

54 Insult (Sl.)

55 Authentic

DOWN

1 Over

2 Island near Java

3 Ms. Fitzgerald

4 Sheds

5 Cow catcher

6 The time of your life?

7 Affluent

8 Bob and Ray's

9 Good enough

10 Place-kicker's pride

11 Clair-voyance

19 He gives a hoot

21 Mayberry mail abbr.

23 Saline

24 Baba au

25 Logical

26 Expense

27 From the beginning

28 Shrunk back in fear

32 Luge's cousin

33 "TekWar" author

35 1991

36 John Ritter's dad

38 Foolish

39 Appears to be

42 Act the nomad

43 Largest of the seven

44 Broker's advice

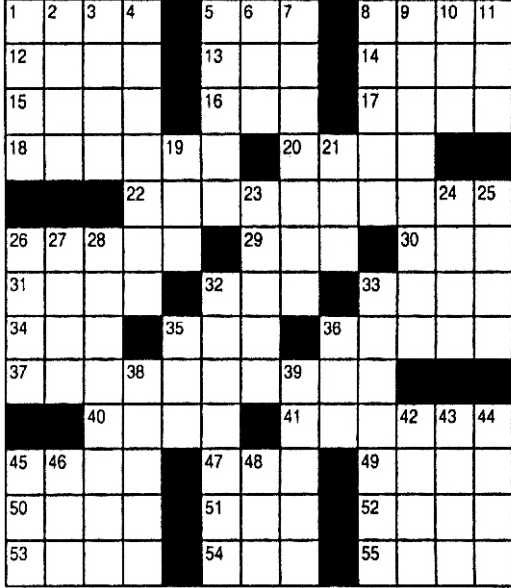
45 Compre-hended

46 Parisian pal

48 Inventor Whitney

Solution time: 25 mins.

W	A	S		C	A	N	
H	O	B		A	I	R	E
M	O	R		A	L		
I	N	S		T	A	N	T
L	E	T		C	A	R	O
U	N			Z	E	R	O
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A	R	I		P	A	N	E
I	N	S		T	A	N	T
S	O	R		T	I	E	
N	A	I		L	S		
P	O	E			S	I	T



CRYPTOQUIP
Y K V B F C Z S L X Q Y B Y W M
L F Z X S C F Y U M Y B F C P F
U Y P F U V Q V C V P F O F X K
C R V X K - C F X O Z R Y W M .
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I GORGED ON SO MUCH EXCESS FOOD AT DINNER THAT I'M SUFFERING FROM EAT EXHAUSTION.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: V equals O
The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

 Football

THE GUARDIAN/REUTERS, London

Police investigating the alleged rape of a 17-year-old girl by up to eight Premiership footballers Saturday appealed for witnesses to come forward amid growing speculation about the identity of the individuals and clubs involved.

The senior investigating officer in charge of the case also said that everyone who was at the Grovesnor Hotel last weekend, where the attack is alleged to have taken place, would be interviewed.

Police are understood to believe that the girl's story is credible; interviews with players alleged to have been involved are expected to start next week.

Commander John Yates warned that it could be a number of weeks before charges are brought or the case is dismissed.

"This investigation is still at an early stage," he said.

"I will not put a timescale on how the matters would progress. Rape and sexual assault investigations are by their very nature extremely complex. It is thus vitally important that the police are in a position to

consider all of the circumstances prior to taking any action. This will take time and I urge all those involved to show patience and restraint."

Publicist Max Clifford said that he has been engaged by the girl's father to "advise them and to protect them."

"They are very conscious of the fact that people they know are being approached by all kinds of people claiming to be the media with all kinds of information," he said. "No one is discussing anything about selling stories."

Several newspapers claimed that a Chelsea employee was one of those involved, reporting that he had initially met the girl and invited her back to his room.

Chelsea's chief executive, Paul Smith, said: "The club has seen the reports in which we have been named. We would like to make it clear that these are pure speculation and we have had no approach or contact from the authorities over this matter."

Aston Villa, one of the clubs that played in London last weekend, has already issued a statement insisting that none of its players was connected with the case.

The Sun also published a partially pixelated photograph of a player reported to have booked the

room where the alleged attack took place. It reported that the photograph, which showed the player leaving a restaurant in the early hours of Saturday morning, proved he was not present when the attack took place.

A barrister representing one of the players spent most of last week seeking an injunction preventing him being named, and lawyers representing another player have requested a meeting with the attorney general. That request is unlikely to be granted.

One concern is that fans of rival clubs will attempt to hound out the players in songs or by holding up placards during this weekend's Premiership games.

Fans, notorious for their colourful taunts, are expected to rile specific players with the rape allegations from the stands during live television broadcasts today.

"I don't think the seriousness of these (possible) charges will make them hold back," a spokesman for the Football Supporters Association said.

ITV, which carries Premiership highlights, said: "We will be asking our compliance lawyers to take a close look at everything to make sure nothing legally questionable gets on air."

Sky and Radio 5 Live are pre-



David Beckham will be available to Sven-Goran Eriksson as he prepares England's decisive European Championship qualifier against Turkey in Istanbul in seven days' time.

Having completed an unusually long session of light running, four-a-side games and attacking exercises, Beckham -- smiling broadly and visibly relieved -- grinned: "My foot is fine, it's all right."

The England captain suffered an injury to the sole of his right foot during Real Madrid's 2-0 defeat in Valencia last weekend. After five days working alone, he rejoined his teammates at training for the first time Saturday, suffering no apparent problems.

The club doctor Juan Carlos Hernandez announced that Beckham would be fit to travel to Turkey next weekend -- and possibly even to face Espanyol Sunday evening.



DAVID BECKHAM

"And even if there is an adverse reaction, that would mean only an extra day or two -- which leaves plenty of time for England. I am sure that David will be fully fit and ready

to play for his national side next weekend."

There was more good news for England when a scan revealed that Rio Ferdinand had not suffered ankle ligament damage in the midweek defeat against VfB Stuttgart.

Alex Ferguson