The Champions League returns this week after the winter recess with titleholders Liverpool in high spirits for the last-16 first leg tie at Benfica buoyed by their weekend FA Cup victory over age-old rivals Manchester United.

After a difficult few weeks, during which the Reds lost three matches in a row away from home. Liverpool have responded in style, winning three straight matches and beating Arsenal and United in the space of a single week.

Manager Rafael Benitez is in confident mood and believes his side has proved its doubters wrong following 2-0 defeats at Chelsea and Charlton and a 1-0 reverse at Old Trafford in the Premiership.

"We were told we were slipping, having a blip, but three wins on the bounce is our answer to that," he said. "We can look forward now to the rest of the season with real

Giant striker Peter Crouch, who scored the FA Cup winner against United on Saturday, said his team have proved in the last few weeks that they can compete with, and

Akram inswinger

very important to make sure once

you have spent some time on the

wicket you carry on and build an

innings. Alok Kapali came back after one year and looked impressive but I

don't know why he was sent at No 9. In

the end he ran out of partners, had he

been sent in the middle-order

for the batsmen is to see the new ball

off without losing one or two wickets

no matter what is the score and to get

to at least 200 plus to put some pres-

really impressed me. Both the new-

ball bowlers used the ball well and got

early breakthrough. The fielding was

and gutsy knock of 36. He had been a

regular for Bangladesh for 10 years

and to retire at the age of 34 is a right

decision to make way for the young-

sters and it also shows his sporting

series. And after six months of

absence from international cricket

Bangladesh have done well. They

need to work on the batting and put a

decent score on the board to give their

bowler a chance and who knows what

can happen. After all it's cricket, the

He was missing from the opening

up to the following ODI games".

Rani Hamid's

Arifa Khatun Moni, Kishwara

Shajrin Evana beat Shabana

Parveen Nipa, Zakia Sultana drew

with Sharmin Sultana Shirin and

Masuda Begum split points with

(5-6th, 6 points), Shirin (7th, 5.5),

Moni (8th. 4.5), Masuda (9th. 4),

Shimmi (10th, 3.5), Evana and Moly

England make

The only disappointment for

England was that Andrew Flintoff

and Kevin Pietersen, heroes of their

Ashes triumph over Australia last

year, were dismissed cheaply for

Pietersen contributed 26 and 10 in

the unofficial practice match in

which all 16 members of the tour-

first-class game against the Indian

cricket board president's XI in the

western city of Vadodara from

ENGLAND: 299 (Bell 78, Vaughan

54, Strauss 51, Collingwood 47 not

out, Pietersen 26, Flintoff 20;

Waigankar 3-53, Bachani 2-66) and

265 (Trescothick 88, Blackwell 59;

CCI: 251 (Samant 53, Redkar 36,

Shah 30; Blackwell 4-57, Hoggard

1-24, Panesar 1-45, Harmison 1-46)

and 75 (Jones 2-9, Harmison 2-3,

Result: England won the match by

Panesar 2-15, Blackwell 2-0)

The tourists play a three-day

Flintoff made 20 and five and

the second time in the match.

ingparty took part.

BRIEFSCORES

Redkar3-64)

238 runs.

Mumbai from March 18-22.

The other positions: Nipa, Zakia

FROM PAGE 12

and fourth places.

Mahmuda Haque Moly

FROM PAGE 12

game of many uncertainties.

Bravo likely

Still a plenty of cricket is left in this

Khaled Mahmud played a good

Bangladesh's fielding and bowling

sure on the opponent.

spoton and looked good.

The lesson to learn from this game

Bangladesh could have done better.

FROM PAGE 12

"Considering the win came only a few days after we've beaten Arsenal the last couple of results have given us a real boost," he said.

There is so much now left to play for this season. We are in three huge competitions still, and we want to do as well as we can."

The Portuguese champions geared up for the match in Lisbon with a dismal 2-0 defeat at lowly Guimaraes, their third loss in a row.

Coach Ronald Koeman is also facing an attacking crisis with Brazilian Geovanni, Italian Fabrizio Miccoli and French winger Laurent Robert all ruled

In Spain faltering Arsenal are the visitors as a resurgent Real Madrid look to continue their stunning form under new coach Juan Ramon Lopez Caro.

Real have won all-but two games this calendar year, drawing 0-0 with Villarreal on January 8 and then suffering a bizarre 6-1 humiliation at the hands of Real Zaragoza in the Spanish Cup earlier this month.

But in nearly every other game, the nine-time European champions have been all but unstoppable.

England captain David Beckham will realise a dream when he turns out in the white of Real against English opposition for the

Londoners despite their recent record of six defeats in their last 11 away matches.

"Every team goes through a bad patch and, at times like this, it's useful to come up against a good team, like us," said Beckham.

"It motivates you. Arsenal are a great team with a great coach and although they are coming here at a bad time, we'll have to look out for them and concentrate.

"We don't want them to end their bad patch against us."

Lopez Caro has virtually a fullstrength squad to pick from since the return from injury of club captain Raul, who came off the bench during Saturday's 3-0 home win over Alaves.

The same cannot be said of Arsenal who are desperately missing the services of England defenders Sol Campbell and Ashley Cole while they have also failed to replace the departed Patrick Viera.

I believe in the mental strength and inner character of my young players, they've shown that before," insisted manager Arsene Wenger, despite his side's poor form. "A big part of the game will be not to be overawed by the night.

"Real's confidence is high and but I feel we are on the way up

first time but he is wary of the north despite our recent results. It is a good opportunity to show the world we are a good side."

In other games also on Tuesday, runaway German league leaders Bayern Munich are sweating over the availability of Germany keeper Oliver Khan, who has a thigh strain, ahead of the visit of AC Milan.

Last season's beaten finalists have rediscovered their form just in time after a difficult period in December where they slipped almost out of contention for the

But Saturday's 1-0 victory over Cagliari pulled them back to within

10 points of champions Juventus. In the final match, French champions Lyon are looking for revenge as they travel to Dutch league leaders PSV Eindhoven.

PSV knocked an in-form Lyon team out of last season's competition on penalties after two 1-1

But Lyon manager Gerard Houllier is determined to turn the tables this time around. "It's a difficult draw but an

exciting one," he said. "We must first believe that we can succeed, and then believe a bit more because it is PSV.

"I think the club wants to prove therefore they are more dangerous that it was unlucky last year against

Ronaldo leaving Real?

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

Brazil striker Ronaldo paved the way for his departure from Real Madrid at the end of the season by saying he has never felt loved by the club's fickle fans.

"The fans have never accepted me and their reaction is something to take into account when thinking about my future," the three times World Player of the Year told a news conference on the eve of Real's Champions League match against

"I've always said that I don't want to be where I'm not loved. I've never felt at home at the Bernabeu, the fans have never treated me with

"I will make a decision at the end of the season. After all the effort I made to come to this club I don't understand why I'm treated like this," the 29-year-old added angrily on Monday.

"I will decide on my future after treated and spoken with thousands

Ronaldo joined Real for 35 million euros (41.79 million dollars) from Inter Milan following a brilliant performance at the 2002 World Cup. He is under contract at Real until 2008

Although he has been the club's leading scorer in every season since joining Real he has never managed to win a place in the hearts of the notoriously fickle He was whistled by a section of

Real supporters when replaced by new signing Antonio Cassano after he failed to score during a 3-0 win over Alaves at the weekend. This season he has struggled

with a succession of injuries and has faced regular criticism from the press over his fitness and weight. He has not appeared for Real in their present Champions League

group games because of a ban and

campaign, missing their first two

of people, but I have never understood why the fans have so little patience with me," Ronaldo said, "As soon as I make an error people

"The Madrid fans are very special and they seem to get motivated by the idea of an impossible comeback win, but in a goalless draw in the league they start getting on our backs. We need fans that will supportus all the time.

"I don't know how the fans will react to what I said but, to be honest, I don't care

Ronaldo said he had made no concrete plans to leave Real as yet but made clear that his departure was on the cards.

"I still haven't thought about leaving Real Madrid yet. At the end of the season I will make a decision. The president knows how I feel and why I'm sad about this.

"If I decide to leave Real Madrid at the end of the season then all

"I've thought about the way I'm options will be open." India in Yuvraj scare

Cricket

ODI in Wellington, his general AFP, New Delhi

condition aggravated by the same influenza bug that kept Ramnaresh Yuvraj Singh, India's batting star on Sarwan out of the Twenty20 interthe Pakistan tour, could miss the upcoming Test series against A cryptic release from the England because of a hamstring team's media manager, Imran injury, team officials sald on Khan, stated only that Bravo "is

receiving treatment and being The left-hander tore a muscle in monitored by physiotherapist his left leg during a match-winning Stephen Partridge and will con-107 not out in Sunday's fifth and tinue to be monitored in the lead final one-dayer against Pakistan in Karachi, which India won by eight wickets to clinch the series 4-1.

Yuvraj, who was on 82 when he pulled up while completing a run, Parveen on 6.5 points and the two was treated on the field by team will meet in a play-off for the third physiotherapist John Gloster and continued to bat with the help of a On the final day, Tanima beat

He hobbled off the field after victory was secured, and captain Rahul Dravid and coach Greg Chappell feared the worst ahead of the first Test against England starting in Nagpur on March 1.

"We won't really know for

another couple of days but I would runs to take the series 1-0. think he must be in serious doubt Karachi. "I'd say he is going to miss

Dravid admitted Yuvraj's injury "was a bit of a worry"

"We will soon know how serious the injury is and when he can play again. But I have to admit it's a bit of a worry.

Yuvraj himself said he could be out of the game for some time.

"Let's hope it is not for long, but it does not feel too good at the moment," the 24-year-old said.

Yuvraj has 10 days to recover before the first Test starts but it is uncertain if the selectors will risk naming him in the squad when they meet in Vadodara on Thursday.

The second Test will be played in Mohali from March 9-13 and the third in Mumbai from March 18-22.

Yuvraj hit 344 runs in the five one-dayers against Pakistan at an average of 172. He had earlier scored 122 in the final Test match in Karachi which the hosts won by 351

Yuvraj's injury is almost certain for the first Test," newspapers to help former captain Sourav quoted Chappell as saying in Ganguly retain his place in the middle-order for the first Test.

Ganguly, who was sacked as captain after a bitter spat with Chappell last September, was a controversial selection for the Test series against Pakistan before being dumped for the one-dayers. The left-hander did not get to

bat in the first Test in Lahore, was dropped for the second in Faisalabad and made 34 and 37 in the third Test in Karachi.

A place was created for Ganguly in the middle-order in Karachi only because Dravid opted to open the innings himself with Virender Sehwag in place of two specialist openers, Wasim Jaffar and Gautam

Dravid indicated after the Karachi Test that he may revert to the middle-order for the England series, leaving Ganguly and Yuvrai in contention for the number six spot behind Sachin Tendulkar and Venkatsai Laxman.



Bangladesh youth cricket team upon their arrival on Monday at the ZIA from Sri Lanka where they finished fifth in the ICC Under-19 World Cup.

Ronaldinho on revenge mission

INTERNET, undated

Barcelona striker Ronaldinho is still tormented by the Champions League defeat by Chelsea a year ago and is determined to get his revenge when the big guns meet this week.

"I still have images in my head of when the game finished in London and we were out. I do not want this to happen again this year," said the

He also admitted that victory in the match on Wednesday was a matter of Spanish national pride.

"I know everyone is talking about this match, it is the kind of event which stirs a country. We represent Spain so we aim to do well and we are only thinking about victory," he said.

"The game in London will be vital and the objective will be to get a good result so we do not suffer in the Nou Camp.'

Chelsea defender John Terry has claimed he plans to give Ronaldinho some rough treatment but the Brazilian is unconcerned.

"This does not bother me. I am training as much as I can so I can escape any markers. The only thing that interests me is to play at my best and help the team," said the 25-year-old.

"I respect the Chelsea defence but I am not worried or scared," he added. "We have to try to forget the past - we committed errors and we will aim not to repeat them.

"One of the key things is to play our own football and to play how we know. On top of this to have the second game at the Nou Camp is an advantage we have to make the most of.

The FIFA World Player of the Year also played down the poor quality of the Stamford Bridge

"We know it is bad but it will be the same for both teams. It does not

Mismatch spoils

horrible batting. You would have seen a different battle if we had scored 220-230," he said.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the first one-day international between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium here on Monday: BANGLADESH Saleh Ibw b Maharoof

Nafeez c Sangakkara b Maharoof 0 Aftab b Perera Ashraful c Sangakkara b Maharoof Bashar c Jayawardene b D. Fernando Mashud c Sangakkara b Perera Mahmud lbw b Jayasuriya Rafique c Jayasuriya b D. Fernando Kapalinotout Mortuza b Perera Rasel c Perera b Jayasuriya Extras: (w-8, nb-2) Total: (All out in 35.5 overs)

5-37, 6-51, 7-82, 8-98, 9-109. Bowler O M R W Perera 1 23 Maharoof 30 DFernando 23 0 23 HFernando Bandara 0 10 2 Jayasuriya

Fall of wickets: 1-5, 2-31, 3-35, 4-36,

SRILANKA Mubarakb Rasel Jayasuriya b Mortuza 13 Sangakkara c Mortuza b Kapali 50 Jayawardene not out Kapugedera c Kapali b Rafique Dilshan b Rafique Fernando not out Extras: (lb-1, w-7, nb-5) 13 Total: (For five wkts in 24.1 overs) 119 Fall of wickets: 1-11, 2-41, 3-111, 4-

111,5-117. Bowler Mortuza 0 30 0 35 20 Razzak Mahmud 15 Rafique 1 10 2.1 0 8 Result: Sri Lanka won by five wick-

Man-of-the-match: Ruchira Perera (SRI) Super-subs: Abdur Razzak (BAN); Kaushal Lokuarachchi (SRI) unused.

Toss: Bangladesh Umpires: Krishna Hariharan (IND) and Mahbubur Rahman (BAN) TV umpire: Nadir Shah (BAN) Match referee: Alan Hurst (AUS) Next match: February 22 at Bogra.

Mahmud signs

FROM PAGE 12 stances," said Mahmud, popularly known by his nickname Sujan and 'Chacha' to the cricketers.

"We lost everything in the first ten overs and it was the same old story. I think the players lacked the fighting spirit. The youngsters should have understood that they have to handle pressure in the middle "There are a lot of fond memories

in my 10-year international career but definitely I don't want to recall what happened today," said an excited Mahmud, whose 80-year old father along with other relatives attended the farewell.

"It was fantastic to see my father beside me in my last international game. My family have always supported me," said Mahmud adding that he would be happy if he could serve cricket in any other capacities.



AS Roma captain Francesco Totti wants him to be substituted after suffering an injury during their Serie A match against Empoli at the Stadio Olympico in Rome on Sunday.

Totti blow in Roma record

Football

AFP, Rome

Roma defeated Empoli 1-0 here on Sunday to equal the record of 10 consecutive Serie A wins and snatch fourth place from Fiorentina in the race for Champions League places next

But their joy at taking their flawless run into double figures was overshadowed by a serious injury to their talismanic captain Francesco Totti.

The 29-year-old striker suffered a fractured fibula in his left leg following a crude challenge by Richard Vanigli and is expected to be out of action for two months.

Totti's injury is also bad news for the Italian national team with the World Cup just four months "As soon as I saw the tackle I

knew it was a serious injury," said Roma coach Luciano Spalletti. "It spoiled what should have

despair by Italy coach Marcello We will do our utmost to help

him recover in time for the World Cup," Lippi said.

The news was also met with

"It would be a great shame if he doesn't make it to Germany. He is a very important player for Italy."

Roma's 10th league win on the trot matched the feat of three other teams: Juventus (1931-32), AC Milan (1950-51) and Bologna (1963-64)

Midfielder Simone Perrotta

scored the only goal in the 15th minute, capitalising on a blunder by Empoli keeper Christian Cejas for his fourth goal of the season. To set a new record of succes-

sive victories, Roma will have to beat city rivals Lazio in the Rome derby next Sunday. Fiorentina dropped to fifth after

losing 2-1 at home to Lazio. Kosovo-born Swiss international Valon Behrami put Lazio ahead with a superb solo effort, been a day of celebration having before Tommaso Rocchi's diving

made history with our 10th win in header doubled the visitors' lead. A stunning volleyed goal by

Bulgarian teenager Valeri Bojinov briefly stirred Fiorentina into life, but couldn't prevent them from suffering only their second home defeat of the season.

In other matches, Lecce moved off the bottom despite drawing 0-0 at home to Reggina, while Parma greatly improved their chances of avoiding the drop with a 1-0 win at relegation-

threatened Treviso. Udinese, who have not won in the league since December 21, suffered a 2-1 home defeat to Siena while Chievo and Palermo, both fighting for UEFA Cup places, played out a goalless draw.

ream		III XXIII		LOIF		PALLET P		
Juventus	26	21	4	1	53	17	67	
AC Milan	26	18	3	5	58	24	57	
Inter Milan	26	17	4	5	48	20	55	
Roma	26	15	6	5	50	26	51	
Fiorentina	26	15	5	6	42	26	50	
Livomo	26	11	10	5	28	25	43	

PRIMERA LIGA

lifts Valencia

AFP, Madrid

Regueiro double

Valencia stay in second place in

Primera Liga thanks to their

Uruguayan international winger

Mario Regueiro, who had two

moments of brilliance to earn them

a 2-1 win over Real Sociedad on

Sunday. The 2004 Spanish champi-

onds when Danish striker Morten

Skoubo scored one of the quickest

goals in league history but fought

back after Regueiro turned on the

goals from the edge of the area,

Regueiro got a pair of exquisite

style in the second half.

'Mourinho Chelsea's best player'

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

Coach Jose Mourinho is Chelsea's best player and has imprinted his personality on every member of his squad, according to Barcelona midfielder Deco.

"Every team is a reflection of

their coach and Chelsea have

taken on board Mourinho's

mentality, a winning mentality

of working hard and fighting for everything," the Portugal international told the Barcelona website on Monday. Chelsea host Barcelona, whom they beat at the same stage in last season's competition, in the first leg of their Champions League knockout tie

Wednesday. "They have got some great players, but Chelsea's strength lies in their team, the way they work together and in their winning mentality," added Deco. "I think Chelsea's best player

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22 Gratuity 61 "My

task)

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11 Told tales 44 Har-

at Stamford Bridge on

is Mourinho because he has known how to ensure that his team fights to the death. Mourinho has given Chelsea and its players, victories and trophies that they hadn't experienced before he arrived." Deco, who was a key n

of Mourinho's Porto side when they won the UEFA Cup and the Champions League in 2003 and 2004, said that Barca were capable of getting one over his former mentor this time round.

"I think we are in very good form and we are a more mature side than last year.

"Last time we were better than Chelsea but that didn't do us any good because we lost, but since then we have won the Spanish championship and have the same core of players and so we should have the right attitude.

"We now want to win the

Champions League and to do

that we have to beat Chelsea. If

we can win there we will settle

the tie."

By Eugene Sheffer

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Solution time: 24 mins.

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using his speed to leave the Sociedad defenders trailing in his wake, after 68 and 78 minutes. Valencia have 49 points from 24 games but are still six points in arrears of league leaders Barcelona, who halted their slide after two

> Betis 5-1 on Saturday. Osasuna kept in contention for a Champions League spot and stay fourth with a useful, if lucky, 3-1 win

successive defeats by thrashing Real

At the other end of the table, Real Mallorca climbed off the bottom with a 2-0 win at fellow strugglers Malaga, who slide to last place.

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Saturday's Cryptoquip: IF A FEMALE
SOVEREIGN IS A GREAT RULER, I SUPPOSE YOU ton 51 Fresh 52 2001 MIGHT SAY SHE IS VERY EMPRESSIVE. American Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals U acquisi-

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 54 Workout give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.