

Ronaldo blasts Pele, Platini

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Troubled Brazil forward Ronaldo launched an astonishing attack on two of football's legends, Pele and Michel Platini in Sunday's edition of Brazilian newspaper O Globo.

The overweight and under-fire Real Madrid galactico branded Pele, commonly regarded as the greatest player ever, as a "two-bob opportunist" and hit out at European legend Platini as "jealous".

Ronaldo's outburst comes after his latest failing on the football field. He started Saturday's vital league match at Valencia on the bench but came on in the second half only to have a penalty saved.

The striker has already spent much of the season under fire from Real's expectant fans and Madrid's demanding media.

"At the World Cup, I will make a lot of people eat their words," declared a defiant Ronaldo, showing more fight than he has been accused of displaying in the white shirt of his club.

"I was disappointed with Pele, he's a two-bob opportunist," added Ronaldo, who proceeded to allude that the great goalscorer would be better off looking after his family amid allegations his son is involved in a drug trafficking scandal.

"I care nothing for Platini. I have a French teammate friend (Zinedine Zidane) who has surpassed everything he ever did and he has always told me that Platini is jealous."

After denigrating two of the world's greats, Ronaldo then somewhat ironically, added: "All I want is for people to treat me with respect and that is not what is happening."

"I am not saving myself for the World Cup. I want to do a lot to arrive in Germany full of confidence. I want to rediscover my happiness."

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Gaibandha cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Mohammedan Sporting Club handed a humiliating 204-run to Sapient Sporting Club in the Naheed Cotton First Division Cricket League at the Gaibandha Stadium yesterday.

In reply to Mohammedan's 256-7 in the stipulated 50 overs, Sapient were shot out for 52.

Mohammedan's Shakil was adjudged man-of-the-match for his 104.

Independence Day tennis Mar 23-26

SPORTS REPORTER

The Independence Day tennis tournament will begin on March 23 at the National Tennis Complex.

The four-day competition includes men's singles, men's doubles as well as age group events like under-13 singles for boys and an under-16 draw for girls.

British Council cricket carnival from Mar 16

SPORTS REPORTER

The British Council will arrange different type of cricket tournament at BKSP under their 'British Council Leadership Programme through Sports' programme.

Under-17 cricketers will take part in the event divided in three groups - Blue XI, Green XI and RED XI - that starts from March 16. The tournament consists three two-day and three limited-overs games.

Players will enjoy on and off the field freedom to take decisions about the game to cope with leadership quality.

British Council's deputy director Richard Sunderland said at a press conference on Monday that they have been organising this programme for the last couple of years as part of talent hunting, but this year, the council has concentrated on bringing players together from across the country.

He also said that the three "most talented" players would be sent to UK to play in the Surrey League.

"Under this programme, two national players Mushfiqur Rahim and Syed Rasel were benefited. I think it will also be helpful for the upcoming cricketers," said Khondokar Jamiluddin, chairman of Bangladesh Cricket Board's development committee.

The course has been designed such a way that the players would be accustomed in using computer, Internet, improving the English language, facing pressure under different situation during the matches, encouraging communications through oral English language.



PHOTO: AP

Arsenal captain Thierry Henry scores past a full-stretch Liverpool goalkeeper Giuseppe Reina during their Premiership clash at Highbury in London on Sunday.

PREMIERSHIP

Gerrard hands it to Henry

Football

AFP, London

Steven Gerrard has often proved a saviour for Liverpool, but his wretched error gifted Arsenal a dramatic 2-1 Premiership win at Highbury on Sunday.

The Merseysiders were primed to take a valuable point despite being reduced to 10 men after Xabi Alonso's sending-off, before Gerrard produced his embarrassing blunder with nine minutes remaining.

The England midfielder failed to look before sliding a backpass towards his goalkeeper Jose Reina, and the lurking Thierry Henry snafed possession and slid into the gaping net for his second goal of the game.

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Wenger had been lambasted for his failure to field one English player in the goalless draw with Real but once again there were no natives in his starting 11.

Encouraged, Liverpool crept back into the game. Xabi Alonso, Garcia and Gerrard all came close with spectacular efforts, but the best chance of all fell to Peter Crouch. The England striker was left alone from Finnan's cross, but he headed wastefully wide from eight yards.

Arsenal needed the interval but they emerged with their assertiveness restored and Henry showed he had added to his tally in the first five minutes of the second half.

First he seized upon Pires' through-ball and slid his shot inches before half time with Fabio Quagliarella, Massimo Paci and Igor Budan all on target.

But Roma, whose 11-match winning streak was ended last week after their 1-1 draw with Inter Milan, mounted a rousing comeback with a Rodrigo Taddei tap-in and a Gianluca Comotto own goal reducing the deficit with 15 minutes to go.

Amantino Mancini almost levelled the score with a stooping header that rolled inches wide of the post, before Roma's Christian Chivu was sent off for a professional foul on Alfredo Cariello in the closing stages.

Roma remain in fifth spot on 55 points, one behind Fiorentina whose match at Cagliari was abandoned in the 30th minute due to security concerns as winds reaching 100mph battered the Sant'Elia Stadium.

Sixth-placed Livorno failed to make ground on the teams above them after losing 2-1 at in-form Parma, while Lazio climbed to seventh following their 3-1 home win against Reggina.

Empoli and Messina boosted their survival chances with 2-1 home wins against Chievo and Lecce respectively, and Palermo beat Udinese 2-0.

First he dived bravely at the feet of Filippo Inzaghi as his fellow Italian international tried to take the ball round him.

And then he flung himself acrobatically to punch away Gennaro Gattuso's header.

Milan's task of trying to reopen the title race became that much harder when Gattuso was sent off in the 69th minute for two yellow cards.

Juve's Brazilian midfielder Emerson refused to say that the championship was now in the bag.

"You can't say the title has been won, but certainly we have gone some way to winning it," he said. "At this stage of the season, it will be hard for Milan to make up 10 points."

Roma's hopes of playing Champions League football next season were dented after they lost 3-2 at Ascoli - their first Serie A defeat since December 4.

Ascoli stormed into a three-goal lead

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Both the sides scored 265 in their first innings.

SCORERS IN BRIEF
CHITTAGONG: 473 and 153-2 in 18 overs (Tamim 71 n.o., Salahuddin 49, Nazimuddin 16 n.o., Mehrab Jr 1-44, Sajjad 1-21).
DHAKA: 302 and 323 all out in 91.5 overs (Uttam 39, Anwar 51, Shahriar 57, Mehrab Jr 79, Riyad 33, Opee 14, Sajjad 14, Munir 15, extras 10, Yasin 4-120, Ilias 5-80, Faisal 1-36).
Result: Chittagong won by eight wickets.
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FOUR-DAY TABLE

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Deputy Director of British Council Bangladesh Richard Sunderland (C) on Monday briefs the reporters at a city hotel in connection with an 11-day cricket carnival starting at the BKSP on March 16.



wide of the far post, then, four minutes later, he placed another low drive too close to Reina, who saved comfortably.

Liverpool had escaped and they made the most of their good fortune in the 75th minute when Jens Lehmann could only parry Gerrard's swirling drive and Garcia nodded in from close range.

Suddenly Liverpool looked the more likely winners but their momentum was stalled six minutes after their equaliser when Alonso, who had been booked moments earlier for a rash tackle, hacked down Mathieu Flamini and was promptly dismissed.

Still the visitors appeared likely to eke out a valuable point, until Gerrard's brainstorm handed Henry his second goal and Arsenal the victory their performance thoroughly merited.

The ticket release followed finalisation of venue plans such as seating and scoreboard positions and camera platforms.

But despite the sales surge, almost 395,000 tickets remain to Games events, including 5,000 to the opening ceremony, 26,300 for the closing ceremony and about 200,000 for athletics events.

In an effort to ensure the 80,000-capacity Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) is packed for the opening ceremony broadcast to some 1.5 billion people, 5,000 tickets will be given away to Games volunteers.

Harnden continues to be upbeat about ticket sales, pointing out that despite the shortfall, a record number of tickets have been sold.

"We have had an enormous take up, we have sold over 1.3 million tickets and I just think that's phenomenal," he said.

"It's a record by a long way from any Commonwealth Games."

Hooper said the federation felt the ticketing process had produced a "tremendous result".

Team	P	W	D	LG/FG/A Pts
Chelsea	29	24	3	2 58 18 75
Man United	28	18	6	4 56 28 60
Liverpool	28	16	7	5 33 17 55
Tottenham	29	13	10	6 41 28 49
Blackburn	29	14	4	11 38 34 46
Bolton	27	12	9	6 37 28 45

5th Semester lift v'ball title

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The 5th Semester of the Agriculture department during the 7th Semester of the Patuakhali Science and Technology University (PSTU) 2-0 in the final of the volleyball competition on Monday at the University ground.

Dr. Prof. Wahid-uz-Zaman, VC of PSTU, distributed prizes among the finalists.

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Rijkaard unruffled after defeat

INTERNET, undated

Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard shrugged off his side's defeat at Osasuna and insisted they still have a comfortable advantage over their title rivals.

The Catalans had two men sent off as they crashed at Estadio EL Sadar, but - still sitting on a nine-point lead at the top of the table - Rijkaard cut a less than concerned figure.

"We still have a big advantage over our rivals," the Dutch coach said after the game.

"I don't believe that it is a warning about the final phase of the league.

"I am happy with the performance of my players.

"To play with ten and finally nine players on the pitch is very difficult because we kept fighting until the final minute.

"There are no easy matches in this league and Osasuna are one of the best teams in the championship.

"The defeat hurts, but it is not always possible to win."

C'WEALTH GAMES
Slump in ticket sales shadow event

Nearly 400,000 tickets remain unsold for the Commonwealth Games despite a mini-surge when a new batch was released Monday for blue ribbon events.

Although tickets are going begging, Melbourne 2006 chief executive John Harnden and Commonwealth Games Federation chief executive Mike Hooper praised the ticketing process.

"We're absolutely delighted with where we are at," Harnden said.

"With 72 hours to go we think we are ready to put on the biggest and best show ever in Melbourne."

Sports fans snapped up almost 19,000 tickets in just four hours Monday as organisers released extra seats to some of the most sought after events, such as swimming, diving, gymnastics and track cycling.

The ticket release followed finalisation of venue plans such as seating and scoreboard positions and camera platforms.

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