

Hayden suffers finger injury

AFP, Brisbane
 Australian Test opener Matthew Hayden is to have scans Monday on a finger injury suffered in Queensland's opening Sheffield Shield loss this weekend, team officials said Sunday.

The big left-hander will have the scans to check for a possible crack in his right little finger injured while taking a diving catch in Queensland's seven-wicket loss to Tasmania.

X-rays originally cleared him of a displaced fracture but scans were ordered for a definitive diagnosis after Hayden batted in pain Sunday.

Coming in at No 7, Hayden showed little ill-effects of the injury as he scored a confident 36 from 46 balls, including seven boundaries.

Queensland medical director Dr Simon Carter says Hayden is in no doubt for the first Ashes Test against England starting at the Gabba in Brisbane on November 23.

"The X-ray was inconclusive. His hand is still sore and that's why he batted late today (Sunday)," Carter told reporters Sunday.

"He's going to have another scan tomorrow (Monday) to get a definitive answer on whether he has a small fracture but either way if there is a (crack) he won't be in doubt."

Beckham halts contract talks

INTERNET, undated
 David Beckham has reportedly halted contract talks with Real Madrid as he awaits news over his place in coach Fabio Capello's plans.

Beckham has started only two matches out of six so far this season for Madrid, including Saturday evening's loss to local rivals Getafe.

Beckham has long planned to sign a new deal at the Estadio Santiago Bernabeu, and often said he would like to end his career at the club.

He has only six months to run on his present contract. The News of the World claims that an insider at the club said: "Nobody expected it as a deal didn't seem that complicated. But we understand his motives."

A number of top clubs from around Europe would be interested in Beckham if he were to become a free agent at the end of the season.

Lyon overcome Etienne challenge

AFP, Paris
 Mental strength helped Lyon overcome the absence of a host of key players and a penalty miss to overhaul combative 10-man Saint Etienne 2-1 on Saturday, the champions' manager Gerard Houllier said.

Lyon pushed six points clear of second-placed Marseille when Brazil midfielder and captain Juninho blasted home a last-minute match-winner after Saint Etienne's Yohan Hautcoeur had cancelled out Tiago's 65th minute opener.

Saint Etienne's chances of inflicting the French champions' first defeat of the season took a knock when they were reduced to 10 men with the 82nd-minute red card dished out to Lamine Diatta after he'd pushed second half substitute Florent Malouda to the ground.

Referee Laurent Duhamel had no hesitation in awarding a penalty despite Diatta's ill-advised intervention coming outside the area but justice was done when Juninho's spot-kick was saved by Jeremie Spotnik, the Saint Etienne skipper diving correctly to his right.

But Juninho had the last word when he latched onto a perfect cross from Malouda to blast past Janot, who disclosed after the game that he was being courted by English premieriership outfit West Ham, from around the penalty spot in the 90th minute.

Houllier reflected: "Today this is a win for our mental ability as there were two or three occasions when we could have dropped our guard."

"We might not have had the strength to win this game a year ago."

"We scored, we then were brought back level, and we missed a penalty."

"It was a good derby on the emotional level especially in the second half against a Saint Etienne side potentially strong in attack and with a good defence."

His opposite number, Ivan Hasek, was ruing losing out in the closing seconds.

"We lost in the final moment -- that hurts. We weren't far off taking a point."

This was unbeaten Lyon's eighth win of the season and it lifted them up to 25 points, six clear of Marseille who will get a shot at reducing the deficit when they face Lens on Sunday.

Former giants Saint Etienne are placed fourth, 11 points adrift of the

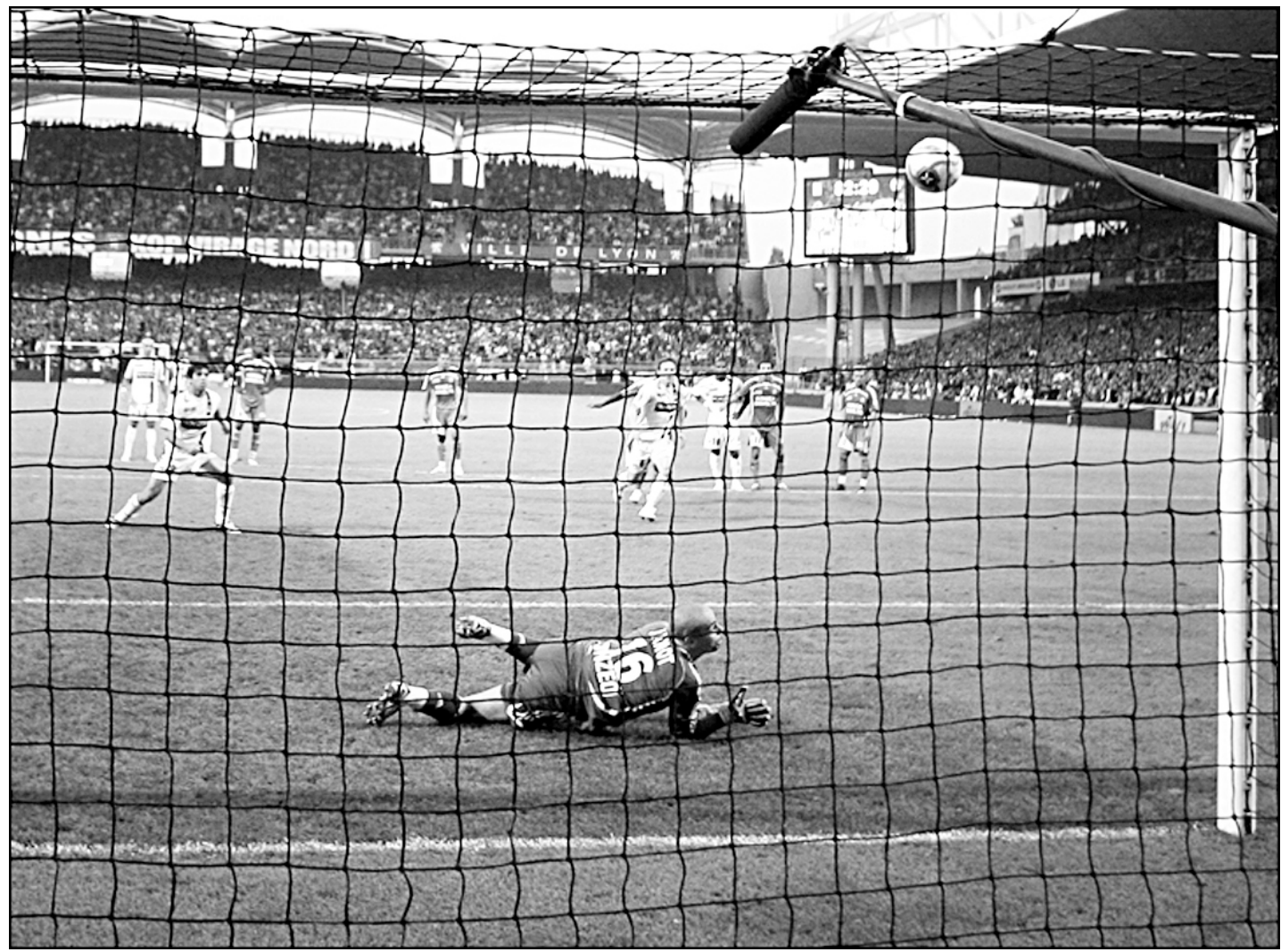
perennial pacesetters. Lyon, who were without the injured trio Gregory Coupet, Patrick Muller, John Carew and the suspended Fred, have an important schedule ahead of them -- on Tuesday they have a Champions League date with Dynamo Kiev ahead of next weekend's trip to Marseille.

Paris Saint Germain put their recent troubles behind them with a 4-2 stroll past Sedan, skipper Pedro Pauleta coming up with a second half double.

PSG's win was all the more rewarding as they lost Pierre-Alain Fraut to a red card in the 43rd minute.

Fourth-placed Toulouse ran out 3-0 winners over Valenciennes, all the goals coming in the first half an hour while struggling Nice saw off Lorient by an identical scoreline.

Monaco slipped to third from bottom after going down 1-0 at fifth-placed side Bordeaux, Nantes clung on to the foot of the table when falling 2-0 to Sochaux, Rennes beat Auxerre 3-1, and Troyes and Lille shared the spoils 1-1.



Saint-Etienne goalkeeper Jeremy Janot (C) stops a penalty taken by Lyon's Brazilian midfielder Juninho (L) during their French Ligue 1 match at the Gerland Stadium in Lyon on Saturday.

Pardew fearing the sack

INTERNET, undated
 West Ham manager Alan Pardew has admitted he fears for his future after seeing his side slip into the bottom three following a 2-0 away defeat at Portsmouth.

The Hammers have now failed to win any of their last seven competitive games, and crashed out in the first round of the UEFA Cup to Italian side Palermo.

"I think any manager who has lost six games has to have a certain amount of fear about his job. Otherwise he would be silly," admitted Pardew.

"The media attention will be very strong I'm sure leading up to our next game against Spurs, but you have to be big enough and strong enough to take it."

"I am, and I hope the players are. I try to be consistent whatever the results but six defeats in a row must be the worst run I've ever had and it is not acceptable."

"I've always thought of our players as strong characters and now it is up to them to go out and prove it."

Pardew chose to take positives out of his Saturday's defeat, and believes their next win is drawing near.

"We are not far away now," he commented. "Against Portsmouth I felt we were great up to the last third of the pitch where we

are having persistent problems. Nigel Reo-Coker was immense in the first half, as was Hayden Mullins, but we lacked that little bit of genius and flair at the end."

"And when you concede the first goal the problem is always the same. You end up chasing the game and I don't think that really suits us."

"We need a break to change the entire face of the team and I'm convinced it will come soon. The only formula which I've followed throughout my life is to come in and work harder because only we can turn it around. And that is what we will do."

Kaladze steals point for Milan

AFP, Milan
 A controversial late goal from Kakha Kaladze salvaged a point for AC Milan in a 1-1 draw at Sampdoria on Saturday.

The Georgian defender, who captained his country in their 3-1 defeat against Italy on Wednesday in a Euro 2008 qualifier, struck six minutes from time to cancel out Emiliano Bonazzoli's opener.

The Sampdoria players were incensed that Kaladze's goal was allowed to stand as they felt he controlled Cristian Brocchi's chipped pass with his arm before prodding the ball past Luca Castellazzi.

Sampdoria took the lead when Bonazzoli headed home Mirko Pieri's left-wing cross.

A third successive league draw left Milan, already weighed down by an eight-point penalty for their role in the Italian match-fixing scandal, on four points, eight adrift of joint leaders Roma and Palermo.

Siena climbed to fourth on 11 points after their 3-1 home win over Messina in Saturday's late match.

Kaladze admitted he did handle the ball before netting for Milan, but insisted it was unintentional.

"Yes, I did touch the ball with my hand, but I didn't do it deliberately," he said. Sampdoria coach Walter Novellino refused to get involved in a row about the goal which denied his team a second successive win.

"We're not ones for making

controversy, protesting doesn't get you anywhere," he said. "We'll continue to work in silence."

Sampdoria broke the deadlock in the 69th minute when Mirko Pieri crossed from the left and Bonazzoli steered an angled, downward header past Nelson Dida.

Milan were forced into attack and they got their reward in the 84th minute.

Kaladze nipped in ahead of his marker to receive Brocchi's delicate pass, and although he seemed to cushion the ball with his forearm, no whistle sounded and he neatly tucked home the equaliser.

Milan, who won their first three league games, could see their eight-point handicap reduced at the end of the month if their final appeal to Italian Olympic Committee's Court of Arbitration is successful.

Two last-gasp goals from Mario Frick and Francesco Cozza gave Siena all three points against Messina.

Christian Rigano had put Messina ahead from the penalty spot only for Abdullay Konko to level the score on the stroke of half time.

Messina, who finished third from bottom last season but were saved from the drop because of Juventus' relegation for match-fixing, had Nicolas Cordova and Carmine Coppola sent off, while Vincent Candela saw red for Siena.

'Cech lucky to be alive'

AFP, Reading
 Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho accused Reading's Stephen Hunt of putting Petr Cech's life at risk with a challenge that left the Chelsea goalkeeper in hospital.

Mourinho was furious with Hunt after the midfielder's knee struck Cech on the side of his head just 16 seconds into Chelsea's 1-0 win at Reading on Saturday.

Czech Republic international Cech was knocked out by the clash and had to be carried off before being taken to hospital for tests.

He was kept in hospital overnight.

In an extraordinary end to the match at the Madejski Stadium, Chelsea finished with John Terry in goal after Cech's replacement

Carlo Cudicini was forced off following a nasty aerial collision.

Italian goalkeeper Cudicini suffered a concussion and was also taken to hospital after a match which finished with both teams down to 10-men following the dismissals of Chelsea's John Obi Mikel and Reading's Andre Bikey.

Mourinho told Sky Sports: "I am not surprised by what Petr has -- to be alive he was lucky."

"I think it was that bad. The speed of the keeper sliding on the pitch and after that a knee coming into his direction, you can imagine the consequences. It was a disgraceful challenge."

"The ball was far from the player but the boy was out of his shape when he challenged Petr and I had a few words for him."

"The first one is absolutely unbelievable. Around the world professional footballers should respect one another." Hunt was adamant he had not

meant to harm Cech and said: "I was 100 per cent on winning the ball. I hope Petr Cech is not too badly hurt and I hope he makes a full recovery."

Mourinho compared Hunt's challenge to the forearm smash by Manchester City's Ben Thatcher on Pedro Mendes earlier this season that put the Portsmouth midfielder in hospital.

The Portuguese coach said: "I'm just waiting for the keepers to leave the hospital and to get a report about their injuries."

"I have to wait and see what the FA is going to do about it. The big story with (Ben) Thatcher and (Pedro) Mendes is comparable to the challenge on Cech."

"But I prefer to wait because what happened last season with (Michael) Essien when he tackled (then Liverpool player) Dietmar Hamann was not even close to what happened today."

"Both were completely knocked out. Carlo's was maybe a

consequence of the way he hit the ground. It was a bad challenge but I do not think the player meant it."

Mourinho will now have to turn to third choice keeper Hilario for Wednesday's crucial Champions League home match against Barcelona.

"I have a third choice and he has experience of playing in the Champions League. He has played against Barcelona twice before," added Mourinho who added he thought he had seen Hunt laughing at the end of the match.

Reading boss Steve Coppell insisted Hunt is not a dirty player and said: "Our disciplinary record last season was outstanding and we are trying to do the same this year."

"If he was laughing it was not about the injury. None of my players would laugh at another player being injured, I can guarantee that."

Hingis ready for return

AFP, Zurich
 A year ago, Martina Hingis was finished with playing tennis, with no indication that she would return.

Instead of competing, she was employed at the Zurich Open in a public relations capacity, mixing with sponsors, players, guests, even the media, smiling broadly and apparently comfortable in her new role.

But her smile hid her desire to compete again, and what she saw convinced her that perhaps her playing days were not really over.

"I just love to compete. I love a challenge. I just love to play the game," she said when she embarked upon her comeback in Australia at the beginning of the year.

"I played some exhibitions, I played some World Team Tennis, I did the commentary and watched the girls, and that's kind of an inspiration. But what I hated more was not having a regime. I'd wake up in the morning, and there'd be sometimes you had no reason to wake up, and that's what I was missing."

She knew it would be difficult, appreciating that the tennis she played before would no longer be good enough.

"I should be better than that," she said.

"If I wanted to play the tennis I played three years ago I would not survive, I know that. You have to grow with the game. You have to get better, physically and tennis-wise."

And she did, so successfully that she is now back in the top 10 and, instead of meeting and greeting, she is competing at the Zurich Open as the number six seed.

It will not be an easy week for her. Her first match will be against the talented German Anna-Lena Groenefeld.

If she wins that, she could come up against Moscow finalist Anna Chakvetadze of Russia. Then she might play another Russian, third seeded Svetlana Kuznetsova or one of the most-improved players of recent weeks, Jelena Jankovic of Serbia.

Amelie Mauresmo of France is seeded one and, like last year at this time, she is showing signs of fatigue as the season nears its close.

Gunners after Ribery

AFP, London
 Arsenal have Marseille's France international Franck Ribery firmly in their sights for next season, the pacy young midfielder's agent revealed on Sunday.

The 23-year-old Ribery, who rose to prominence when helping France reach the finals of this year's World Cup, was linked to a 10 million pound move to Arsenal this summer and another to French champions Lyon but eventually stayed put at Marseille.

But his agent Bruno Heiderscheid believes the man billed as the new Zinedine Zidane could be playing his club football alongside his friend and fellow Bleu Thierry Henry in 2007.

Heiderscheid told Sunday's News of the World: "(Arsene) Wenger likes Ribery a lot. He wanted to take him this summer but Marseille refused to sell."

"Arsene has made it clear he wants to take him next year."

While insisting that there has been no contact between the player and the Gunners Heiderscheid says Ribery is keen for a move to the north London giants.

He told the paper: "Franck would very much like to join Arsenal because of Arsene, the style of football they play and because his very close friend from

the France team, Thierry Henry, plays for them."

"I can categorically deny there is any agreement with Arsenal at this stage or even negotiations."

"These would have to take place in January at the earliest as we see how the season progresses with Marseille."

"Franck is now a very big player in Europe and it's true the biggest clubs want him badly."

Ribery joined Marseille in the summer of 2005 from Turkish outfit Galatasaray and has four years left to run of his contract at the Velodrome.



AC Milan defender Kakha Kaladze (L) celebrates his equaliser against Sampdoria during their Serie A match at Luigi Ferraris Stadium in Genoa on Saturday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
 1 Homer's interjection group
 4 "Planet of the Lakes" mnemonic
 8 100-yard competition
 12 Coexist
 13 Head Stone?
 14 Reed instrument
 15 Vexatious problem
 17 Collagist's need
 18 Florist's gly.
 19 Spindle-top spouter
 21 "Mikroskosmos" composer
 24 Keanu, in "The Matrix"
 25 "Sail" -- Ship of State!
 26 Fresh
 28 Reacted to pyrotechnics
 32 Uppity one
 34 Comprehend
 36 "Whip It" group
 37 Great Lakes mnemonic
 39 Acknowledge applause
 41 Intention
 42 Actor Stephen Hawk
 44 Hawk
 46 Overpowering peak
 50 Moray
 51 Rani's wrap
 52 Tough thing to fly into
 56 Baxter or Bancroft
 57 Icicle site
 58 Sister Fido
 59 "Has 1,001" --
 60 Coaster mascot
 61 Greek H
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 2 Tramcar load
 3 Vertical space
 4 Piranha territory
 5 Snapshot
 6 Reverbate features
 7 Flying gaggle
 8 Red osier, e.g.
 9 Competence
 10 Quintessence
 11 Commando
 16 Speck
 20 MGM mascot
 21 "Poppycock!"
 22 Part of A.D.
 23 Barrel
 27 "Charlotte's" --
 29 Banner
 30 Satan's speciality
 31 Cupola
 33 Holly
 35 Surpass
 38 Witness
 40 Worked with a hoe
 43 Inferno residue
 45 Morning moisture
 46 Jacob's brother
 47 Global fleet
 48 Sea bird
 49 Blue hue
 53 "Hail, Caesar!"
 54 Eccentric
 55 "CSI" evidence

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CRYPTOQUIP

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 R G N W V M G N R H W W K S H K
 H M H C X Z Z V G G V W Z ?
 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SOME PAINT, ABOUT TO BE APPLIED TO AN OLD RUSTED CAR, SHOUTED "DON'T COAT ME ON THAT!"
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: G 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.