



Lorient forward Andre-Pierre Gignac (R) heads towards the Marseille goal during their Ligue 1 match at the Velodrome Stadium in Marseille on Saturday.

Lyon fall at Rennes

AFP, Paris
Lyon president Jean-Michel Aulas launched a broadside at French league officials who he feels are against his five-times consecutive champions. Lyon fell to their first defeat of the season, 1-0 at Rennes on Saturday...

Aulas. "Every time we make a request to the league, they refuse it with a nauseating excuse." Earlier in the week, Rennes's Sylvain Marveaux had also claimed in the media that Lyon are favoured by referees...

It was Marseille's fourth defeat in their last six league matches and has seen them lose 11 points to Lyon since starting the season neck-and-neck with their rivals. Lyon got off to a dreadful start, going behind 1-0 after 13 minutes...

The end of the game was very tense. "We had a great first half and then defended really well in the second. Maybe it's a win that will spark something." "I was very pleased with the congratulations of Houllier and Coupet..."

Sachin's scalp a boost, says McGrath

PTI, Melbourne
Taking the wicket of Sachin Tendulkar in Champions Trophy has boosted the confidence of Glenn McGrath who feels he owes Australia an Ashes win this time around. This was revealed by renowned physiotherapist Errol Alcott...

Rafa confident of Reds revival

AFP, Liverpool
Rafa Benitez refuses to concede that his team is out of contention for this season's Premiership title after a 2-0 victory over Reading at Anfield. A goal in either half from Dutch international forward Dirk Kuyt extended the Reds' winning streak to four matches...

Next Sunday sees Liverpool visit Arsenal in a contest they cannot afford to lose if Benitez's title aspirations are to be fulfilled. Benitez added: "It's clear we have to improve our away form if we want to continue progressing. We need to do the same things we did in some of those away games, but we need to put our chances away..."

Coppell packed his defence at Anfield in an effort to avoid a repeat of his Crystal Palace team's 9-0 defeat at this ground in September 1989 -- coincidentally, the start of the last season in which Liverpool won the title. The tactic proved futile although the Liverpool manager paid them the consolation of predicting Premiership survival...

Wenger lauds Fergie

INTERNET, undated
Arsene Wenger has hailed Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson as the best manager in the business after the Scot saw his side beat Portsmouth 3-0 on his 20th anniversary in the job. The pair established a fierce rivalry after Wenger took charge at Arsenal in 1996...

UEFA boss slams Chelsea

Football
INTERNET, undated
UEFA president Lennart Johansson has slammed Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho for his behaviour before, and during last week's Champions League 2-2 draw with Barcelona. The build-up to last week's encounter had been marked by several remarks by Mourinho...



Johansson suggested another touchline ban could be in the pipeline. "If he was punished once, it shouldn't happen again," insisted the Swede. "But he's not alone. We should not just find someone who should be hunted all the time. That goes for everyone, whatever name they have..."

SA look at WC preps

PTI, Durban
After being knocked out of the Champions Trophy in the semifinals by the West Indies, South Africa are now aiming to get back to winning ways when they take to India and Pakistan in separate home series over the next three months. India will arrive in the country in the middle of the month for five one-day internationals and three Tests...

Siena salvage a point

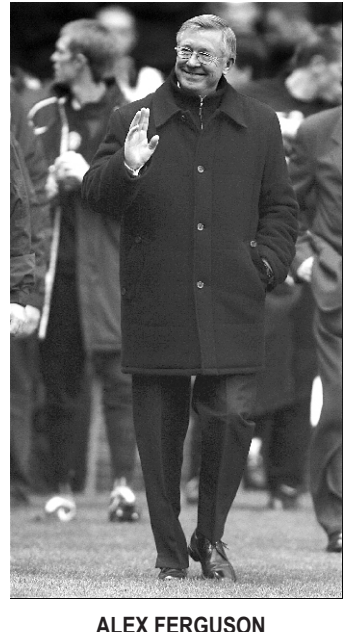
AFP, Rome
Albanian striker Erjon Bogdani scored twice in the last 13 minutes as Siena fought back from two goals down to salvage a 2-2 draw at home to Parma on Saturday. Two-time UEFA Cup winners Parma appeared to be heading for their first away win since April 15 after goals from Domenico Morfeo and Igor Budan...

season, produced a stirring late rally and Bogdani's double strike -- his second in the third minute of time added on -- earned a point for the Tuscan battlers. A draw left Siena in fourth place in Serie A on 16 points, five adrift of joint leaders Inter Milan and Palermo...

go down if they continue to throw away leads so easily. "If we want to stay up, we have got to kill off games and not let our concentration slip so easily," he said. Newly-promoted Sicilian side Catania won 1-0 in Saturday's late match in Calabria where Giorgio Corona grabbed the winner in the 69th minute...



GIMME THE SHIRT: Parma's attacking midfielder Domenico Morfeo (R) has his shirt tucked by Siena's Alberto during their Serie A encounter at the Artemio Franchi Stadium on Saturday.



ALEX FERGUSON

Roma reveals Blues interest

Football
INTERNET, undated
Monaco goalkeeper Flavio Roma has revealed that Chelsea are interested in signing him. Chelsea number one Petr Cech fractured his skull last month in a collision with Reading's Stephen Hunt and looks set to be sidelined for much of the season. Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho may decide to bring in more cover in the January transfer window and

Roma has claimed he is on the list of targets. The 32-year-old also conceded that an offer from the Premiership champions would be a very attractive proposition. "It's true Chelsea got in touch soon after the injury to Cech and asked about my availability," Roma told the News of the World...

Mourinho. Cudicini, who suffered concussion against Reading, was overlooked for Chelsea's midweek draw with Barcelona even though he had fully recovered from the injury. Federico Pastorello admits Cudicini was unhappy not to replace Hilario between the posts, but insisted there was no problem. "It wasn't a war and I'm sure Mr Mourinho would have been more worried if Carlo had shown he didn't care," Pastorello explained.

Maria aiming at win

AFP, Madrid
Maria Sharapova and Justine Henin-Hardenne aim to depose Amelie Mauresmo as world number one at the WTA Championships but reaching the end of the season in one piece is also high on their wish lists. Mauresmo, nursing an injured shoulder, was forced to pull out of her last tournament in Zurich and hasn't played since. French Open champion Henin-Hardenne hasn't been seen with a racket in her hand since the US Open. All of which led Sharapova, the world number two and US Open winner, to back calls for wide-ranging changes to the calendar in the hope of preserving players' limbs as well as the integrity of the sport. "I feel strongly that the tennis season needs to be made shorter, with more breaks for players to rest in order to be in peak condition when we do play," said Sharapova, who fell to the curse herself in Moscow last month when a hip injury forced her to withdraw. A WTA Tour report has shown that top 10 player withdrawals from the high-profile tournaments has increased by 72 percent in the last five years. Despite the gloom, French star Mauresmo, with the Australian Open and Wimbledon titles under her belt, believes her enforced rest since Zurich could work to her advantage. "I'm feeling better. I picked up my racket again last Monday and started serving and everything was OK," she said. "I haven't played since Zurich so obviously I would like to have had more matches but I'll take it as it comes. I might be fresher than the other girls and that might give me an edge at some point..."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with a key for letter substitution.

CRYPTOQUIP
WC JDL ERF R CIA WFIRO
RUDLH UGRHEWBP WB RWG,
W OLNDOI HEIJ ADLTF
UI WBONWGWBP HEDLPEHO.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: SINCE NO ONE EXCEPT COMCONWAY CAN EXPOSE OUR SECRET, I SUPPOSE ONLY TIM WILL TELL.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: W equals I
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.