

Sport

Maradona mucks up the show

BILBAO, Spain, Oct 5: Diego Maradona returned to competitive play for the first time in 18 months Sunday, assisting on Sevilla's lone goal in a 2-1 loss to Athletic de Bilbao, but left the field midway through the second half limping and appearing tired, report agencies.

The 31-year-old striker, swarmed by photographers and greeted by cheers when he took the field, helped Sevilla take the lead in the 43rd minute when his free kick escaped from the hands of Athletic de Bilbao's goalkeeper and was slammed home by Sevilla's Marcos Martin de la Fuente.



DIEGO MARADONA Sevilla bought Maradona Sept 22 from Napoli of the Italian league for a dirrs 7.5 million transfer fee after he refused to return to Napoli for the final year of his contract.

Maradona, who was suspended in April for testing positive for cocaine, assisted on two goals and played all 90 minutes in a 3-1 exhibition victory last Monday over the Bayern Munich in Sevilla.

Maradona tested positive following Napoli's Italian league match against Bari on March 17, 1991, and was suspended three weeks later. His last official match before returning Sunday was March 24, 1991, when Napoli played Internazionale of Milan.

Maradona's return to top level football after a 15-month ban for cocaine use caused the match to be sold out hours after the announcement here on Saturday.

Maradona was far from the player that carried Argentina to a World Cup final victory in 1986. He seldom joined in Sevilla's attacking movements, content to play his part in the defence.

Edberg loses No 1 spot

SYDNEY, Oct 5: Stefan Edberg arrived in Australia on Monday to receive the news that he had lost his No. 1 tennis ranking to American Jim Courier without either player hitting a ball, reports AP.

Edberg also has slipped below Pete Sampras of the United States, who has achieved his highest ranking ever at No. 2.

The Swedish player is in Australia for the dirrs 1.1 million Sydney Indoor championships, where he is defending champion.

This is the fifth time that the No. 1 spot has changed hands this year in rankings that are calculated weekly based on results over the previous year.

This week's Australian Indoor falls a week later than last year on the ATP tour calendar so the 240 computer points Edberg earned here in 1991 drop out.

By contrast, Courier and Sampras had few points to lose from the week. Neither of the new top two are playing this week but Edberg is unlikely to make up any ground on them as the Swede is defending the 304 points he won by taking the Tokyo Indoor title a week after the Sydney event.

Edberg reclaimed the No. 1 spot from Courier when he beat Sampras to win the US Open title last month.

The Swede was philosophical about the ranking drop. "That's the way it goes," he said. "There's nothing I can do about it."

"I still have a chance to get back to No. 1 by the end of the year and that's important to me. I don't know if I can do it, but I'd like to — no one remembers who was No. 1 on October something."

First-round results at the Sydney Indoor on Monday included Italian Gianluca Pozzi's 6-2, 6-2 victory over Niclas Kroon of Sweden, a 6-3, 6-2 win by Australian Richard Fromberg over Canadian Chris Pridham and David Pate's 7-6 (7-5), 3-6, 7-6 (7-5) victory over fellow American Bryan Shelton.

Edberg is idle Tuesday, but Richard Krajicek of the Netherlands, Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia and American John McEnroe all will play their first singles matches of the tournament.

B'ball super league from Oct 8

The super league phase of the Partex First Division basketball league will begin from October 8 at the wooden-floor gymnasium.

Retiring champions Agels Club, runners-up Dhaka Winners, Azad Boys, Panthers, Dhumketa and Gregs are the six teams who will vie for the honours of the 1992 league championship.

This was officially disclosed by the Bangladesh Amateur Basketball Federation at a press conference held at the conference room of the National Sports Council yesterday with its president Professor Rashiduddin Ahmed in the chair.

Among others who were present at the function were BABF general secretary Dastagir Nawaz and the marketing manager of the sponsors Partex Group of Industries.

The BABF President lauded the role of the sponsors and called for more involvement of private concerns in the country to replenish the famished sporting bodies of the country.

Wright let off once more

LONDON, Oct 5: England and Arsenal striker Ian Wright is set to escape disciplinary action for his second brush with the police inside a month, reports AP.

The fiery forward, who was not charged by the Football Association or the police following complaints by Wimbledon fans on September 5, looks like being let off once more after Chelsea fans complained he made rude gestures to them at Highbury on Saturday.

A lack of evidence is likely to bring the same "non-proven" verdict to the complaints made to holloway police as happened last month.

Wright's agent, Jerome Anderson said: "Having studied the video several times it appears to me that this is once again, a malicious attack on Ian."

"At no time does the video which focuses on Ian celebrating his goal, show his hands involved in any gestures of any kind."

But he said: "Nothing was witnessed or reported to me by any members of my force at the match."

A Scotland media office spokesman added: "Police are looking into this matter including a video recording of the match, but we can only take it further if there is sufficient evidence."



Boris Becker of Germany returns to Petr Korda of Czechoslovakia in the final of the Swiss indoor tennis tournament in Basle, Switzerland on Sunday. Becker defeated Korda 3-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-4.

Becker's first in seven months

BASLE, Switzerland, Oct 5: Boris Becker won his first tournament in seven months when he beat Czechoslovakia's Petr Korda in four sets in the final of the Basle tournament here on Sunday, reports AP.

It was the 34th victory in the German's career and represented an excellent start under the guidance of new coach Gunter Bresnik, although he didn't find it easy.

Korda's variation of pace clearly unsettled Becker early on and the Czech had no difficulty taking the first set.

The loss, however, merely galvanised the former world number one and from then on he dominated with impressively powerful tennis.

"Seven months without winning, without beating a single top ten player, that was becoming a bit long," Becker said.

Korda partly attributed his defeat to the beginning of a cold that had been bothering him since the beginning of the week.

Dutch duo designs Fiorentina's fall

ROME, Oct 5: Dutchman Marco Van Basten and Ruud Gullit along with local star Daniele Masaro charged to the top of the Italian league with a seven-goal blitz at Fiorentina on Sunday, reports AP.

When the champions went goal crazy, the best of the league followed, bringing the Serie A tally for the day to 48 goals.

Gullit, playing only his first match for the champions because of the surplus of foreign players at Milan, scored four minutes from the interval and four minutes before the final whistle.

Van Basten, a regular, was on target in the 76th and 89th minutes, while Massaro, opened and closed the first-half spree with goals in the 25th and 45th minutes to bring his tally to six for the season.

Gianluigi Lentini, part of the multi-million-dollar talent infusion in the pre-season, sandwiched in his lone goal in the 33rd minute.

The seven strikes were matched by three from Fiorentina, normally enough for two points in a league known for a paucity of goals.

Francesco Balzani, German star Stefan Effenberg and Fabrizio di Mauro saved face for the home side.

Torino who started the day tied with Milan were held to a 2-2 draw by Sampdoria, after Enrico Annoni gave the visitors a leg-up with an own goal in the 13th minute.

Andrea Silenzi and Uruguayan Carlos Aguilera replied for Torino, but Pietro Vierchow equalised for the Genoese club a minute before the final whistle.

Juventus moved to a second place tie with Torino after beating Napoli 3-2 under Mount Nevius.

The Neapolitans were heading for a blowout after Roberto Baggio, Andreas Moller and Gianluca Vialli, whose mammoth transfer fee from Sampdoria drew the wrath of the Vatican, had scored with nine minutes remaining.

But Uruguay's Daniel Fonseca increased his season tally to five with a goal in the 86th minute, while Gianfranco Zola was on target a minute later in a frantic closing flurry for Napoli.

England player David Platt, signed in a multi-million dollar deal from Bari in the summer, was again left on the Juventus bench.

The goal bonanza continued in Udinese, who blasted five past Pescara with Abel Balbo of Argentina helping himself to a hat-trick in the 5-2 victory.

Diego Fuser, signed from AC Milan, scored Lazio's two other goals while Parma's Marco Osto kept things respectable with a pair for the visitors before the interval.

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The winless visitors with an own goal by Marco Pecoraro in the 25th minute.

In other matches, Vittorio Pusceddu gave Cagliari a 1-0 win over Roma while Uruguay Ruben Sosa's 74th minute penalty for Inter Milan was enough to defeat Atalanta.

Gullit won't play for Netherlands anymore

ROME, Oct 5: Dutchman Ruud Gullit was quoted on Monday as saying he would no longer play international soccer for the Netherlands for personal reasons, reports Reuter.

The 30-year old Gullit, who declined to play in last month's 2-1 World Cup qualifying defeat against Norway, told reporters of his decision on Sunday after a triumphant return for AC Milan, scoring two goals and making a third in his first league appearance of the season.

But the 1987 European Footballer-of-the-year declined to discuss his motives for quitting the international scene.

The tall, deadlocked Gullit failed to impress at this year's European Championships in Sweden but is not known to be at odds with Dutch team manager Dick Advocaat.

Italian newspapers have speculated his decision may be linked to the greater pressure for first team places at Milan this season.

Gullit was dropped for the first three league games of the season while his compatriots Frank Rijkaard and Marco van Basten retained their places.

The Netherlands' next World Cup qualifier is against Poland in Rotterdam on Wednesday.

Euro soccer giants keep their records clean

PARIS, Oct 5: Bayern Munich and La Coruna narrowly elung onto their unbeaten records in the German and Spanish leagues respectively this weekend as AC Milan exploded with a seven-goal flurry at Fiorentina 7-3 to go clear at the top of the Serie A, reports AP.

The Bavarians, defending a seven-match streak including six wins, went a goal down in the 89th minute when Thomas Helmer gave Borussia Moenchengladbach an apparent winner at the Olympic Stadium.

But Bayern, who came from behind after Jorg Crieis gave the visitors a lead in the 26th minute when Olaf Thom scored early in the second half, refused to crumble and

Martin Max salvaged the record with the equaliser in injury time.

La Coruna, the unfashionable leaders of the Spanish league, capitalised on defensive blunders by erstwhile giants Real Madrid to maintain their 100 per cent record.

Trailing 2-1 at half time, La Coruna equalised half way through the second after a mix-up in the Real defence allowed the home side's Brazilian star Jose Bebetto to pounce.

Then with only minutes to play, Real defender Ricardo Rocha headed the ball into his own net to give La Coruna a fifth successive win that never seemed likely after Fernando Rutz Hierro and Yvan Zamorano had put the visitors two up inside half an hour.

Milan fell behind at Fiorentina when Francesco Balzani scored in the 13th

minute, but then the most expensive team in European football moved into gear.

Danielle Massaro opened and closed the first-half spree with goals in the 25th and 45th minutes to bring his tally to six for the season, while Marco van Basten also reached six with a pair in the 76th and 89th minutes.

Compatriot Ruud Gullit, ignored by coach Fabio Capello until Sunday because of the surplus of strikers at Milan, proved his point with goals four minutes from the interval and four minutes before the final whistle.

Gianluigi Lentini, part of the multi-million-dollar talent infusion in the pre-season, sandwiched in his lone goal in the 33rd minute.

The 2-2 draw allowed Juventus moved to a second place tie along with Inter Milan.

Torino missed keeping pace with the champions when Pietro Vierchow equalised for Sampdoria in the 89th minute.

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Leeds ask for another favour

LEEDS, England, Oct 5: Leeds asked UEFA on Monday to schedule their Champions Cup rematch against Stuttgart at home rather than on neutral ground, reports AP.

Leeds said a neutral venue on the European continent would favour the German team and their fans.

Leeds said they would await a reply from European soccer's governing body before deciding whether to appeal against UEFA's decision not to expel Stuttgart for fielding too many foreigners.

UEFA gave the English team a 3-0 victory over Stuttgart in last Wednesday's first-round, second-leg contest at Leeds. Leeds originally won the game 4-1, but Stuttgart was later punished for playing four non-Germans at the same time — one more than UEFA rules al-

low. The Germans, who won the first leg game 3-0, would have advanced to the second round because of an advantage in away goals. But the UEFA ruling meant the teams were tied, necessitating a third game.

Basel, Berne and Rotterdam have been mentioned as possible sites for the replay. No date has been set. The eventual winner of the series will go on to meet Glasgow Rangers in the second round.

After a meeting of Leeds officials, team boss Howard Wilkinson read a prepared statement, saying: "Stuttgart were found by your committee to have breached the UEFA regulations. Leeds United have, of course, done nothing wrong."

"In those circumstances we submit that it would be wrong to create a disadvantage and

inconvenience to Leeds United by ordering a third match to take place anywhere other than at our stadium. The breach of regulations took place at Elland Road and in our view the deciding match should take place there as well."

"If the third game was to take place on the mainland of Europe then we submit that such a decision would give a clear advantage to Stuttgart," the statement said. "The match would be less convenient for Stuttgart and its supporters who could travel by road, whereas Leeds United and its supporters would have grave difficulties and inconvenience."

If UEFA agrees to schedule the match at Leeds, the home team would offer to share the gate receipts and television revenue with Stuttgart, the statement said.



Bangladesh Amateur Basketball Federation officials talking to the newsmen at a press conference at the NSC conference room yesterday.

Fischer, Spassky begin Game 15

BELGRADE, Oct 5: Bobby Fischer, playing white, sought to widen his 5-3 lead Sunday as he and Boris Spassky resumed their dirrs 5 million chess rematch after two successive draws, reports AP.

In a surprise move, Fischer did not play pawn e4 as he has done every other time that he has played White.

Instead, he played pawn c4, the English opening, harkening back to the sixth game of his celebrated, World Championship match with Spassky 20 years ago, which the American won. That win gave Fischer the lead in the match which he never relinquished.

The game 20 years ago transposed into a Queen's gambit declined, but on Sun-

day, it quickly transposed into a Catalan opening which Fischer has never played in an official game.

Spassky, a Russian-born French citizen, decisively won Wednesday against Fischer, narrowing the American's lead to 5-3. But in the two subsequent games, Thursday and Saturday, the two former world chess champions drew. Draws do not count in the point total and games cannot be adjourned under previously agreed game rules.

The match, which began on the Montenegrin island resort of Sveti Stefan, is being played in defiance of UN sanctions against Yugoslavia, now comprising only Serbia and Montenegro, for provoking the civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Fischer, 49, and Spassky, 55, played 11 games in Sveti Stefan and resumed in Belgrade last week after a 10-day break.

Fischer, who defeated Spassky for the world title in 1972, insists he is playing for the championship. But the match is not sanctioned by the International Chess Federation, which stripped Fischer of his title in 1975 for refusing to defend it.

The prize money for the rematch has been put up by Yugoslav businessman Jezdimir Vasiljevic, who hopes to promote the Sveti Stefan resort and Yugoslavia.

The first player to win 10 games will get dirrs 3.35 million, and the loser will get dirrs 1.65 million.

On Saturday, the players drew after 33 moves and 3 1/2 hours of play. Fischer had offered Spassky a draw early in the game. But Spassky declined because according to the rules of the match, the next game must be played immediately if a game finishes in less than one hour.

In Belgrade, the match is being played in the 4,000-person capacity Blue Hall of the Sava Centre which has been specially adapted with a sound-proof