

AC Milan's mythic malaise

ROME, Oct 19: AC Milan are now undefeated in 40 straight games in the league, equalling the record set by Fiorentina in 1955-56. It will be a surprise if the record isn't beaten next Sunday on the road at Parma, reports AP.

Sunday's game saw Milan triumph 5-3 over Lazio of Rome. The defence made mistakes, but only after the attack had all but guaranteed victory.

And Milan's rivals? Juventus of Turin were held to a scoreless draw by visitors Brescia. Torino played to a scoreless draw at Atalanta of Bergamo. Only Sampdoria of Genoa collected two points, at home against Cagliari.

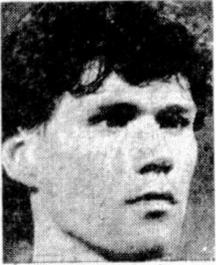
Most of the pursuers have eight points, two behind the leader, but Milan and Sampdoria have played one less game. Their match last month was postponed due to a flooded stadium.

Of the other potential challengers, cross-town rival Internazionale crashed 4-1 to AS Roma and Napoli lost 2-0 to newly promoted Udinese. The

Neapolitan team has won only once this season.

"After only five games you can't talk about the championship being dead already," said Milan's Dutch striker Marco Van Basten after Sunday's win.

Nonetheless, the doubts and worries expressed by the Milan camp about the



MARCO VAN BASTEN

prospects of total victory by season's end are not entirely convincing.

Club president Silvio Berlusconi cited the weakening of his team as a result of his players' international matches in midweek. Seven played for the Italian national team, two for Holland and one for France.

"We are proud to supply players," he said. "But the tribute risks becoming a little

too heavy. The team had little time to prepare for the game and many players were not in the best physical condition."

The point is valid, of course, though undermined by the quality of replacements at Milan's disposal.

For example, French striker Jean Pierre Papin, who played for France the previous Wednesday, was substituted during the second half of Sunday's game. He was replaced by Italian striker Marco Simone, making his first league appearance of the season. Simone scored Milan's fifth goal.

Milan's other worry concerns not tired muscles but mental laxity.

"There was some carelessness in defence," said coach Fabio Capello. "I'm not criticising the players, but when you have the game in hand you must control and close it down."

Three times in the course of the game Lazio reduced a two-goal deficit to one, but couldn't draw level. "In effect the team admires its own bravura in the mirror, it's a little narcissistic" was Capello's final verdict.

If Milan's weaknesses can be characterised as an excess of international stars and narcissistic tendencies, then they have problems that other teams can only dream of.

Philippines seek Magic's help in anti-AIDS drive

MANILA, Oct 19: The Department of Health plans to invite American basketball star Ervin "Magic" Johnson to Manila to help boost the government's AIDS awareness campaign, a senator said Monday, reports AP.

"It's a good idea and we might as well try it," said Sen. Wigberto Tanada, who has urged the government to establish a comprehensive programme to fight the disease.

Johnson, point-guard of the Los Angeles Lakers and a three-time most valuable player of the NBA, has become an influential campaigner in the fight against AIDS since admitting he was infected with the virus that causes Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

He recently resigned from an anti-AIDS commission created by President Bush, saying the US administration was not doing enough to prevent the spread of the disease.

Sen. Freddie Webb, chairman of the Senate committee on health, said a health official told him of the plan to invite Johnson during a committee hearing on AIDS last week.

Webb, a former basketball star himself, said the health department was trying "everything possible" to bring Johnson here.

"Considering magic Johnson's stature this will somehow ring a bell and create an atmosphere and convey the message to the Filipino people that this disease is something that is there, dreaded, and that precautionary measures must be taken," Webb said in the hearing.

Webb has proposed legislation to make AIDS awareness part of the school curriculum in elementary grades 5 and 6 and in high school.

At least 53 Filipinos have been reported to have died from AIDS-related diseases. The health department has documented 348 cases of people infected with the AIDS virus since 1984.

But health officials say the number of Filipinos with the virus or suffering from full-blown AIDS could be 100 times higher, but unreported because of improper diagnosis.



Li Yueming (L) and Zhou Hong of China celebrate their women's volleyball Super Challenge Cup victory in Hong Kong on Sunday. Li Yueming was awarded the best player prize. — AFP photo

English shuttler wins Danish Open

AALBORG, Denmark, Oct 19: Darren Hall became the first Englishman to win badminton's Danish Open title in over 50 years when he beat European champion Poul-Erik Hoyer-Larsen 15-11, 18-13 on Sunday, reports Reuter.

Hall, himself a former European champion, had only beaten third seeded Hoyer-Larsen once before. He led 13-10 in a rapid fire match before being caught at 13-13.

But from there he hit back with five straight points on service to win.

On Saturday, Hall defeated his teammate Peter Knowles, a surprise semifinalist, while Hoyer-Larsen overcame Olympic champion and top seed Allan Budi Kusuma of Indonesia in three tough games.

There was some compensation for Kusuma on Sunday when his fiancée, Susi Susanti, who won the women's Olympic title in Barcelona beat Lim Ziao Qing of Sweden 11-3, 11-3 in her final.

Laroupe wins Great London Run with ease

LONDON, Oct 19: Tecla Laroupe's idea of an easy proved too tough for her opponents when the Kenyan won the women's 10 km Great London Run in 32 minutes and 7 seconds here on Sunday, reports AFP.

She finished ahead of a field of 3,200 and pulled away from her nearest opposition, Romania's Iulia Negura and Britain's Andrea Wallace after three-quarters of the race.

"I've had some hard runs recently in Sweden and France so I was planning to take it easy," said Laroupe, who finished 17th in the Olympic 10,000 metres final.

Carl Thackery won the men's race in 29 min 16 sec. The Yorkshireman was using the Docklands outing as a tune-up for what he hopes will be a fast marathon in Capri, Italy, next weekend.

Dead-heat result in Paris road race

PARIS, Oct 19: Mohammed Mourhit and local runner Paul Airin were credited with a dead-heat in the Paris 20-km road race here Sunday after the Moroccan took a wrong turning 50 metres from the finish, reports AFP.

Gazza goes to England with Lazio

LONDON, Oct 19: Paul Gascoigne returns to England on Tuesday just under a week after playing a full 90 minutes for England against Norway at Wembley, reports AFP.

Gascoigne returns with his Italian club Lazio for the second leg of their friendly series with Tottenham.

Spurs boss Doug Livermore said: "Gazza was magnificent for England at Wembley."

"He's a fantastic character, and this is a chance for everyone to welcome him back. He's a special player and a special person, and I'm sure it will be a marvellous evening."

Gascoigne left Spurs for Italy in June for a 5.5 million fee and yesterday played his first full match for his club as they were beaten 5-3 by AC Milan in an enthralling game.

A month ago Gascoigne scored Lazio's goal in their 3-0 win over Spurs in Rome — his first game for 17 months following his bad knee injury in the 1991 FA Cup final.

Hughes United's hero

LONDON, Oct 19: Mark Hughes scored twice in the final 11 minutes as Manchester United staged an impressive fightback to draw 2-2 with old rivals Liverpool in an English Premier League soccer match on Sunday, reports Reuter.

The Welsh international struck in the 79th and 89th minutes to stun the Merseysiders, who had led 2-0 at halftime and looked to be cruising.

Liverpool's Don Hutchison opened the scoring in the 23rd minute when his shot took a deflection off United skipper Steve Bruce and ended up in the bottom corner of the net.

Israeli forward Ronny Rosenthal set up the second on the stroke of halftime when he burst into the penalty area and squared the ball to striker Ian Rush to notch up his first

goal at Old Trafford from close range.

United became increasingly frantic in the second half until the calm Hughes decided to take matters in hand.

Substitute Clayton Blackmore crossed and Hughes met the ball on the volley to lob it over goalkeeper Bruce Grobbelaar.

Hughes then delighted the Old Trafford fans in the final minute with a superb diving header after a cross from Ryan Giggs, a constant threat throughout the match.

Liverpool's Danish midfielder Jan Molby went off on a stretcher in the closing minutes with what looked like a serious leg injury after receiving a heavy tackle.

In the First Division, Newcastle continued their 100 per cent start by beating local rivals Sunderland 2-1 for their 11th consecutive league win of the season.

Contrasting feats in continental soccer

PARIS, Oct 19: AC Milan earned a slice of Italian footballing history on Sunday when they remained unbeaten after 40 matches — while Marseille broke the wrong sort of record in France, reports AFP.

Milan, who have not lost in 17 months and crushed Lazio 5-3 on Sunday, matched a Calcio record set by Fiorentina back in 1955-56.

By contrast, Bernard Tapie's French champions suffered their second consecutive league defeat on Saturday night — a disappointment not experienced by Marseille fans for four seasons.

Elsewhere, La Coruna proved their leadership credentials by handing Spanish and European champions Barcelona their first defeat of the season, while Bayern Munich stumbled to a disappointing 1-1 draw in the Bundesliga.

Jean-Pierre Papin, the European footballer-of-the-year who has struggled to secure a first team slot all season, got Milan under way after 14 minutes.

Dutch master Ruud Gullit, who has also had trouble getting onto the pitch, made it 2-0 a minute later — shortly before Ajax-import Aaron Winter pulled one back for Lazio.

The third Dutchman to get on the scoresheet, Marco van Basten, notched the first of his two penalties after 35 minutes.

only for Lazio to pull another one back before the break through Diego Fuser — scoring against his old club.

It was goal-for-goal in the second half as well, as England playmaker Paul Gascoigne continued to engineer Lazio's successful strike force.



RUUD GULLIT

Van Basten rattled home his second penalty on the hour but Lazio's Giuseppe Signori scored his ninth goal of the season just five minutes later.

Milan's killer punch was delivered by substitute Marco Simone, 10 minutes from the whistle, after coming on to replace Papin.

The victory leaves the champions two points clear of an illustrious but not always successful trio of Prusker — Juventus, Torino and Sampdoria.

The first two were both held to goalless draws — the mighty Juve at home to Bres-

cia, the best defensive side in Theseria and Torino at Atalanta.

The only team with their heads high were last season's European Cup finalists, with their new signing from Juventus, Eusebio Corini, scoring both goals in Sampdoria's 2-0 victory over Cagliari.

The day's other big win went to as Roma with an inspired 4-1 demolition of Inter Milan.

In France, Nantes' reward for upsetting Tapie was to go top of the First Division, as overnight leaders Paris St Germain were held to a disappointing 1-1 draw by Lens at the Parc Des Princes.

Japhet N'Doram scored Nantes' winner just two minutes before half time, after cleverly finding space to collect a perfect pass from Jean-Michel Ferrit.

It was the Chad striker's fourth goal of the season and sent the normally vocal Marseille supporters home in an atmosphere of pending gloom just four days before their side's European Cup clash against Dinamo Bucharest.

The Parisians were lucky to salvage a draw after going behind to a 72nd minute goal by Lens' new recruit from Marseille — Francois Omani-Biyik.

The Cameroon striker Tuld No Thave made a more impressive start with his new club, rising majestically to head home from Australian

midfielder Robby Slater's free-kick.

But Francois Calderaro let fly with a tremendous drive after a cross from Paul Le Guen five minutes later for the equaliser.

PSG's stumble proved to be a carbon copy of Bayern Munich's earlier in the day in the Bundesliga as their scintillating early pace was slowed further when Oliver Kreuzer earned the Bavarians their second consecutive draw with a 51st minute equaliser.

A goal by Saarbrücken's Thomas Kristl in the 27th minute threatened to break Bayern's unbeaten record in the league this season, but Kreuzer's goal kept the newly promoted side at bay.

Rivals Bayern Leverkusen and Eintracht Frankfurt both won to close the gap at the top to only one point. Leverkusen's Lif Kirsten gave his team a 10th minute lead against Kaiserslautern and defender Jurgen Radschuwweit sealed it in the 75th.

All three goals in Eintracht Frankfurt's 2-1 win over Nuremberg were scored in a five-minute flurry.

Uwe Bein scored the first of his two goals in the 22nd minute, Percy Olivares of Peru replied for Nuremberg in the 25th and Bein struck again two minutes later.

Champions VfB Stuttgart gave their fans something to cheer about with a 4-0 hammering of Dynamo Dresden.

England lift Dunhill Cup

ST ANDREWS, Scotland, Oct 19: Putting together the Masters title, the US Open champion and the three-time winner on this year's tour, the Americans believed they had a Dream Team capable of winning the richest prize in team golf, reports AP.

But Fred Couples, Tom Kite and Davis Love III only made it to the semifinal.

It was No 5 seed England who lifted the Dunhill Cup Sunday at the end of the 1.7 million competition at the home of golf. After downing the United States, England silenced the Scots fans by beating the home nation 2-0 in the final.

The Americans tumbled 2-1 to Nick Faldo-less England in the semifinal after being 2-1 ahead at halfway. It was not that they played poorly. It was just that all three lost their good form all at the same time.

Before the semifinal they were rated 6-4 favourites to win the tournament. But Couples, Kite and Love all had disastrous inward nines and the English turned the match around.

"We just didn't play as well as we thought we would," said Kite, who won his game by one

against Jamie Spence after once holding a four-stroke lead.

"We had opportunities to score even lower and we didn't take them. It just shows that over 18 holes any day, especially when you are the No 1 seed, people are going to shoot at you."

England didn't miss. With Steve Richardson ahead against Love and Kite beating Spence, Couples was the target. He bogeyed just once, at the next to last hole, and paid for it.

After a wayward drive, he bunkered his second shot for the second day in a row at the tough Road Hole. Despite an inspirational shot from the sand, he missed his putt and took five. Opponent David Gilford parred it and moved ahead for the first time in the match.

At the last, Couples even tried a 40-yard putt from well off the green after a huge drive. It wound up 15 feet (5 metres) short and he only managed par to lose by one.

Even after that first match, the Americans knew it was all over. Love was too far behind in the second match to worry Richardson and that made Kite's victory over Brand academic.

"Instead of pocketing the 170,000 each as winners, the

Americans went home with 54,000 and no trophy.

That went to an English team that played consistent if unspectacular golf yet only squeezed into the semifinal because Italy defeated its nearest rival, Japan, after a play-off.

Scotland upset No 2 seed Australia 2-1 in the other semifinal although Greg Norman carded a 68 to beat Brand by five strokes.

Montgomerie, with a 68, beat Ian Baker-Finch by four and Lyle, with a 69, downed Rodger Davis by the same margin.

In the final, Richardson compensated for a double-bogey seven at the 14th with four birdies and a round of 71 against Brand who slumped to 73.

Montgomerie had five birdies to only three by Spence but the steadier, bogey-less Englishman tied his round of 69. As against Couples in the semifinal, Gilford came through late to win the match and, this time, clinch the title. He birdied the 14th and 16th and Lyle bogeyed the last.

"Playing England without Nick Faldo, I thought we probably had our best chance of winning it," said Montgomerie, whose team has never won the trophy in their eight-year existence.

Blue Jays stun Atlanta Braves

ATLANTA, Oct 19: Toronto's Ed Sprague hit a two-run, pinch-homer in the ninth inning Sunday night as the Blue Jays stunned the Atlanta Braves 5-4 to even the World Series at one game each, reports AP.

On a night when everything looked wrong for the Blue Jays — even the Canadian flag was presented upside down, Sprague made it all right.

After a one-out walk to pinch-hitter Derek Bell, Sprague, hitting for pitcher Duane Ward, jolted Jeff Reardon's first pitch over the left-field fence.

It was Toronto's first pinch homer since Sept 20, 1991, when Pat Borders connected, and made Sprague, along with Kirk Gibson, the only players ever to rally their team from a deficit to a victory with a ninth-inning, pinch-homer.

Sprague's homer came a day after Braves reserve catcher Damon Berryhill hit a three-run homer off Jack Morris to rally Atlanta over Toronto 3-1. Earlier this week, Braves backup backstop Francisco Cabrera won Game 7 of the NL playoffs with a two-out, two-run single in the ninth.

Ward was the winner and Tom Henke pitched the ninth

for a save, Toronto relievers held Atlanta hitless for the final 4 2-3 innings.

Henke got Terry Pendleton to pop out for the final out with runners on first and second. Toronto's victory stopped a streak of eight straight wins by the home team in Series play.

The scene shifts to the SkyDome on Tuesday night for Game 3, the first World Series game outside of the United States. Steve Agry will start for Atlanta against Juan Guzman.

The Braves acquired Reardon, baseball's all-time saves leader, from the Boston Red Sox in August, to bolster a bullpen beset by injuries and ineffectiveness.

Sprague hit .234 this year in only 47 at-bats. He batted only twice in the AL playoffs, singling and striking out in a

pair of pinch-hitting appearances against Dennis Eckersley. He was 2 for 3 as a pinch hitter during the regular season.

Along with a bad call at home plate and the flag problem, not much went right for the Blue Jays early in the game. Most of that was because of Braves starter John Smoltz.

Smoltz set down Toronto on eight pitches in the first inning, striking out Devon White and Joe Carter, and fanned the side the next inning, getting Dave Winfield, John Olerud and Kelly Gruber.

Cone's wildness enabled Atlanta to score in the second. David Justice drew a leadoff walk, stole second and was safe at third on a poor play by shortstop Manuel Lee. Jeff Blauser hit a one-out grounder to Lee, who tried to nail Justice at third and instead

hit him in the back with the throw.

Blauser also was running when Cone bounced a wild pitch to the backstop, allowing Justice to score.

Justice scored easily on Cone's wild pitch. It appeared Alomar did the same thing, against Smoltz in the fourth inning, but AL umpire Mike Reilly's call kept it 1-0.

Alomar drew a leadoff walk, stole second and went to third on Winfield's groundout. With two outs, Smoltz skipped a pitch that skidded away from catcher Damon Berryhill.

Berryhill recovered the ball a few feet from the plate and flipped to Smoltz as Alomar dove in with his left hand. Replays indicated that Alomar had his hand fully planted on the plate before Smoltz blocked him.

Reilly, working his second World Series, was in perfect position to make the call. But he said "out" and out of the dugout sprang Blue Jays manager Cito Gaston to argue one of the most blatant misses by an umpire in the World Series since Don Denkinger blew it in Game 6 in 1985.

Atlanta made it 2-0 in the fourth after another leadoff walk. Sid Bream walked on a full count and, despite five knee operations, was running when Blauser lined a perfect hit-and-run single to right. Blauser had been just 1 for 14 lifetime against Cone to that point, and the hit paid off when Mark Lemke delivered and RBI single for a 2-0 lead.

Smoltz was sailing through the fifth, having retired the first two batters, before Gaston stroled out to talk with Reilly. Gaston claimed that a piece of white tape on Smoltz's left wrist was distracting his hitters, and it was removed.

Smoltz immediately walked Pat Borders on four pitches, gave up a soft single to Lee and an RBI single to Cone.

Cone became, the first AL pitcher to get two hits in a Series game since Detroit's Mickey Lolich in 1968. Devon White then hit a chopper to the right side of the mound, and by the time Lemke got a good grasp of the ball, he was too close to first base to make a hard throw, and white was safe with a tying single.

Cone, chased after four innings by Oakland in his last start in the playoffs, was knocked out in the fifth as Atlanta scored twice for a 2-2 lead.



Recipients of the Dhaka University Blue for sporting excellence pose with VC Muniruzzaman Miah at yesterday's presentation ceremony.

19 awarded DU blue

Seventeen sports personalities were awarded the blue by Dhaka University yesterday.

Badal Roy, Ashrafuddin Ahmed Chundu and Abu Mohammad Abdullah Saif earned blues in football.

Waheedul Ghani, Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu, Nehal Hasnain Chowdhury, Asaduzzaman Misha and his younger brother Tariquezaman Munir received blues for cricket.

Abdul Gaffar and Sheikh Zafar Aziz Mukul were awarded the prestigious colour for their exploits in volleyball.

Sajed Aquil Ahmed Adel and Khwaja Manzur Nadim won blues for their feats in hockey.

Naimul Hossain Badal and Ibrahim Hossain Hiru were the blue winners in volleyball.

Sultan Arefin Badar was the award winner in badminton.

Rownakul Islam was awarded the blue for his achievement in athletics while Gazi Zebunnahar Dila was the lone female recipient of the honour for her prowess in table tennis.



A model for Christian Lacroix shows a mahogany swimsuit with 'African' motif on pale green background with matching suntop jacket in the 1993 Spring Summer fashion show in Paris on Sunday. — AFP photo