

Blood, sweat and glory

LONDON, Apr 22: Over 4,000 runners, more than one seventh of the field in the London Marathon, needed medical attention during the hottest race in the event's 16-year history on Sunday, reports AFP.

Fun runners showed the strain as temperatures pushed up to 21°C (70°F), with thousands sinking down in exhaustion after completing the gruelling 26.2 mile course.

St John Ambulance Brigade said 4,175 people had received some kind of treatment, many for minor ailments such as cuts, grazes, bruises and blisters.

Of these, 68 needed hospital treatment, spokesman Mark Welsh said.

In addition, 114 spectators needed treatment, and 12 were taken to hospital, he added.

The temperature, 40 higher than the previous warmest race in 1986, brought extra pain for fun runners raising millions for charity, some of whom sported heavy outfits shaped like animals and made of fur or rubber.

British heroine Liz McColgan completed a remarkable comeback from injury by storming to victory in the women's race while the men's was won for an unprecedented third consecutive year by the Mexican Dionicio Ceron.

Thousands lined the route from Blackheath to the finish point in The Mall, outside Buckingham Palace, to cheer on the runners in the event.

They saw countless demonstrations of bravery, one of the most moving of which came when Chris Moon, who lost his right hand and lower right leg when he trod on a landmine in Mozambique, crossed the line hand-in-hand with his friend Bob Copsey, a former soldier who also lost his lower right leg in a similar incident in Rwanda.

Graf's double delight

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil, Apr 22: Steffi Graf not only won another tennis tournament in Rio de Janeiro on Sunday, but she was visited by soccer idol and sports minister Pele, reports AP.

Graf won the Rio Classic final Sunday afternoon beating Spain's Conchita Martinez 2-0 in sets of 7-5 and 6-3.

Pele visited the top ranked Graf and gave her a T-shirt promoting Rio's candidacy as the host of the 2004 Olympic Games.

Seles to be back in Barcelona

NEW YORK, Apr 22: Monica Seles, sidelined for the last three months with a shoulder injury, announced that she will make her only tune-up for this year's French Open in a clay-court event in Barcelona next month, reports AP.

Seles, in town to promote the release of her upcoming autobiography "Monica: From Fear to Victory," has not competed since January. Her injury makes it nearly impossible for her to serve. She made the announcement on Friday.

The book will be released in mid-June, just after the French Open. It will be the first time she has participated in the Grand Slam event in Paris since she was stabbed on April 30, 1993.

Seles won three consecutive French Open titles from 1990 to 1992.

Lewis right on to target

WALNUT, California, Apr 22: Carl Lewis, owner of eight Olympic gold medals, believes he is on schedule to qualify for his fifth Games as a 35-year-old, reports AP.

"I'm not an I-told-you-so person, but we trained to be ready in June and if anyone thinks we're not going to be ready in June they're in for a surprise," he said after winning the 200m in 20.19 seconds at the Mt. Sac relays here Sunday.

It was another confidence booster after his 100m win at the Texas relays on April 6. He will try out his long jumping at a meet in Houston, Texas, in two weeks.

Lewis, who will be 35 when the Atlanta Games begin in July, had found the perfect response to critics who put him down as over the hill after the US indoor championships in March.

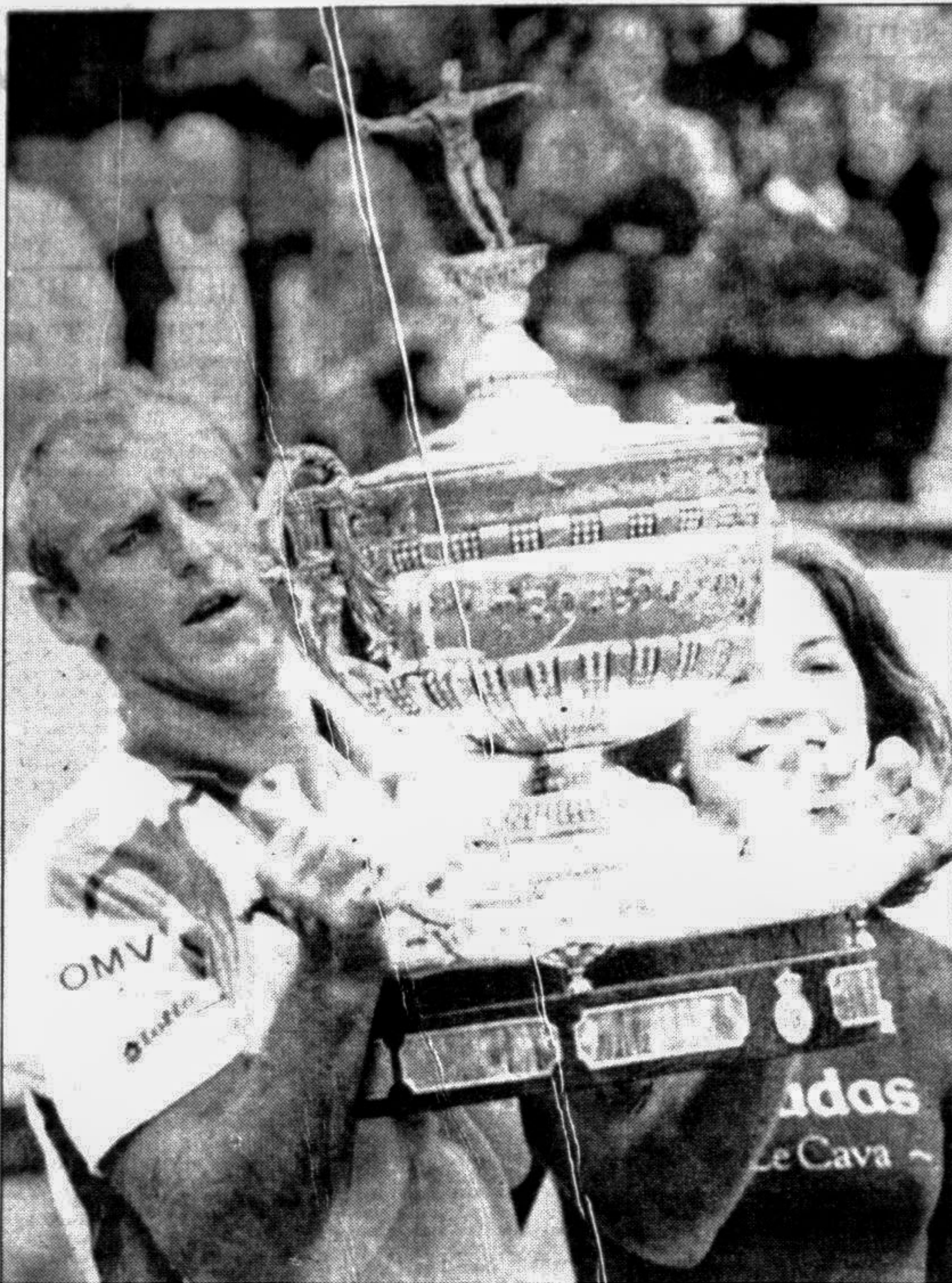
He has competed at three Olympics since 1984, although he did qualify for the 1980 Moscow Games which the United States boycotted. The US Olympic trials will be at Atlanta in June. He got off to a tremendous start although he said he saw room for improvement in his first 50 metres.

The middle hundred was as good as I can run it," he added. Santa Monica Track Club teammate Floyd Heard was second in 20.42.

Trinidad's Ato Boldon claimed the year's best 100m time in 9.93 sec. He equalled the meet record set in 1992 by Mike Marsh, whose late surge brought him second place in 9.95.

The University of California, at Los Angeles, student, who ran 10.19 last week, said he could have run faster.

Boldon said it was too early in the Olympic season to read much into the time.



Clay-court maestro Thomas Muster, the Austrian world No. 2, holds the Spanish Open trophy high after overcoming Marcelo Rios of Chile 6-3, 4-6, 6-1 in the final on Apr 21.

Muster on another streak

BARCELONA, Apr 22: Thomas Muster retained his Spanish Open title on Sunday, ousting Chilean sixth-seed Marcelo Rios — and then took a verbal swipe at Andre Agassi in their ongoing debate about American domination of the sport, report agencies.

Muster criticised US control of the circuit on Friday, saying it meant clay-court tennis was dying because tournaments played on the surface were squeezed into just eight weeks.

Agassi responded on Saturday by suggesting the Austrian "would not be so paranoid if there weren't so many people following him everywhere" and Muster could not resist the temptation of another verbal volley.

"His comments probably come from eating too many Hamburgers with English meat," said Muster, after clocking up his 30th consecutive victory on clay with a 6-3, 4-6, 6-4, 6-1 win over Rios.

Agassi, who pulled out of the Spanish Open, has been in Barcelona to film a television commercial.

Muster, who last week yielded his number one world ranking to Pete Sampras, lost his serve in the third game but broke back twice to take the first set.

Rios survived two break points at 4-4, kept his serve and then broke Muster to take the second set but after a break at the beginning of the third set there was no way back for the Chilean.

"I knew when I took the first set, even though I won the second, that I would win. He tired and started missing a lot of balls towards the end," said Muster, whose third title of the season was achieved in characteristically uncompromising style.

Muster had words of praise for Rios after the game: "He's a great player with a great future, though perhaps his shots

are more suited to slower hard courts than clay," he said.

Muster now returns to the Monte Carlo tennis tournament in the midst of another long victory streak as the 2.2 trillion dollars tourney begins Monday.

Muster won the final last year in a dramatic comeback against Boris Becker after the Austrian was two sets down and saved two match points.

He went on to win the tournament and added the Italian Open and the French Open on his way to a 40-match winning streak on clay.

This year he has six tournaments in a row and is in the middle of another streak, stretching up to 30 matches dating back to August of last year.

If he wins at Monte Carlo it will be a unique triple double for winning those three tournaments in a row for the second consecutive year.

Muster is top-seeded in the event. He has won once before, in 1992.

Safe sail for Medvedev

MONTE CARLO, Apr 22: Ukraine's Andrei Medvedev erased painful memories when he beat Spaniard Alberto Berasategui in straight sets today to reach the second round of the 1.9 million dollars Monte Carlo open, report agencies.

The 12th-seeded Medvedev needed only two breaks, early in each set, to dismiss a hapless Berasategui, a shadow of the player who reached the French Open final two years ago, 6-4, 6-4.

It was a nice comeback for the world number 15 who bowed out in the first round last year to Richard Fromberg in bizarre circumstances as he was defending his title on the Monte Carlo clay.

Then, he wandered aimlessly around the court, suffering with what he called "low blood pressure" — one of many health problems which have

affected the 22-year-old Ukrainian since his professional debut.

"Actually it was a blood infection in one of my nostrils because my nose was not straight but now it's fixed and I haven't had a cold for a long while," he said today.

After surgery on his nose late last year and a foot injury Medvedev dropped from sixth to 15th in the world rankings.



MEDVEDEV

Things have improved since he took on Bob Brett as his coach.

"With him, I think I have improved every aspect of my game and I'm confident results will come to due course. This year I'm concentrating on improving my ATP ranking," he said. Against Berasategui, Medvedev showed he had improved his serve, played consistently and hit punishing forehands.

But he faces a tough second-round match against either Australian Open sensation Mark Philippoussis or solid Austrian baseliner Gilbert Schaller.

"I obviously want to do well in the coming week because I won here in 1994 and because I'm seeking residence here too," he said.

Sampras is one of only three top 20 players not in Monte Carlo. Andre Agassi is seeded second, making his clay-court debut this year after

dropping out of Barcelona along with Boris Becker and Goran Ivanisevic.

Michael Chang, direct from Tokyo to third seeded and Becker, still fighting a lingering bronchitis, is fourth. Becker has not played a tournament since February although he was on the doubles team for Germany that lost to France.

Ivanisevic, with a sore neck, is fifth seeded followed by Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov. Thomas Enqvist and two-time French Open champion Jim Courier follow in the seedings.

The top eight seeds get first round byes and will not be in action until Tuesday or Wednesday. However the quality of the 56-player field is so high Monday's opening round play is highlighted by 1994 champion Andrei Medvedev against French Open finalist that year Alberto Berasategui and Stefan Edberg versus Alex Corretja, who stopped top seed Muster's clay winning streak in last July.

The winning shot came from veteran center forward Paul Tegal Davis, whom the coach substituted for Michael Graham after a goalless first half at Kingston's National Stadium.

Jamaica went into the game with a similar 1-0 victory over Suriname from a March 31 match in Paramaribo, in their second-round Caribbean Zone World Cup qualifying action.

After several tries at every opportunity, the Jamaicans came through when Paul Young, on the forward line, center-passed to Davis, who lobbed the ball past Suriname's goalie Rodney Oldenstam.

Jamaica now will take on the winner of the Dominican-Barbados series.

WC qualifier Jamaica jolt Suriname

KINGSTON, Jamaica, Apr 22: Jamaica won an action-packed World Cup qualifying match against Suriname by a lone goal on Sunday, reports AP.

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MLS show holds out hope

EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey, Apr 22 (AP): The comparisons may not be fair, yet they are inevitable. Any soccer team that ever calls Giants Stadium home will always be measured in part against the Cosmos.

Twelve years after the Cosmos kicked their last ball and two years after the 1994 World Cup, the New York New Jersey MetroStars opened their season in the upstart Major League Soccer league before a crowd of 46,826.

While the Cosmos were a high-powered collection of international superstars, the MetroStars, who lost the game 1-0 to the New England Revolution on an own goal with just 13 seconds, are still a team very much in a state of flux.

But the atmosphere generated by the largest non-World Cup related crowd to attend a soccer game in the Meadowlands since June 5, 1983 — when 51,825 saw the Cosmos play the Seattle Sounders and Sao Paulo and battle Fiorentina in the Trans-Atlantic Challenge Cup — seems to bode well for the new kid on the block as well as MLS.

"The atmosphere was tremendous," said MetroStars vice president and general manager Charlie Stillitano. "The crowd was very knowledgeable and soccer savvy. I'm just sorry we let them down with the result."

MetroStars goalkeeper Tony Meola, who grew up in nearby Kearny and attended Cosmos games as a youngster, said the energy of the crowd was reminiscent of the glory years of 1977-82 when the Cosmos often drew 40,000 or more for home games.

"Obviously the atmosphere was tremendous," said Meola, who suffered a sprained and possibly separated left shoulder in the match. "We all would have liked to send the fans home happier."

But despite the heartbreaking setback, Vladislav Bogic, the playmaking midfielder on the Cosmos, says he feels the MetroStars are in the right place at the right time.

"It has been 12 years now since the Cosmos, and I think the fans in the New York area are starved for soccer," said Bogic, who now lives in Clifton.

"I think soccer is a sleeping giant which is ready to wake up. There will never be another Cosmos because that was a dream, a very unique thing but I think if people are patient and understand that everything does not happen overnight they will be rewarded."

Bayern stumbled to a 1-1 tie with second-from-last Eintracht Frankfurt while Dortmund downed Fortuna Dusseldorf 2-1. With a game in hand and six to go, Dortmund trail Bayern by a point and the Munich

club, defending champions Juventus, winning 2-1 at Inter. Milan's lead was cut to seven points with three games to go.

Fabio Capello, reported to be on the move to Real Madrid next season, hopes Milan will clinch the title at home to third place Fiorentina next week when Juve visits Roma.

The situation in Germany is far closer.

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Ajax closer to title



LONDON, Apr 22: Nordin Wooter's last minute goal in a 4-3 victory at Groningen Sunday moved Ajax Amsterdam within one victory of their third title in a row in the Dutch soccer championship, reports AP.

Although second place PSV Eindhoven stayed in contention by edging Nijmegen 1-0, Ajax have a five-point lead with just two games to go.

In a see-sawing game in Groningen, Ajax trailed twice and then surrendered a 3-2 lead when the home team's Romano Sion scored his second of the game.

Sion also hit the post a minute from the end with the score 3-3 and it was Wooter, who scored in his team's 3-0 Champions' league semifinal triumph at Greek club Panathinaikos last week, who hit the winner with a deflected shot.

While it was all going right for Ajax, AC Milan squandered a chance of clinching the Italian league title for the fourth time in five years and Bayern Munich allowed Borussia Dortmund to cut their Bundesliga lead to just one point.

Both clubs were held to 1-1 ties Saturday by teams they should have beaten.

Milan were held 1-1 by relegation-threatened Torino in Turin. With the other Turin club, defending champions Juventus, winning 2-1 at Inter, Milan's lead was cut to seven points with three games to go.

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team is playing like it is being distracted by the upcoming UEFA Cup final against French club Bordeaux.

In France, Auxerre's 1-1 draw with Bastia Saturday opened up a two-point gap at the top of the table but second-placed Paris Saint Germain have a chance to jump into the lead Tuesday if they can beat bottom club Martigues.

Bobby Robson's FC Porto, who had already clinched their fourth title in five years, celebrated with a 4-2 victory at lowly Tiresense and now have a 16-point lead over second place Benfica.

There were no Premier League games in England because the national team is in action against Croatia Wednesday in an exhibition game at Wembley but Division One Sunderland gained promotion to the top flight.

The Rokersmen failed however to clinch the Division One title Sunday when they were held to a 0-0 tie by fourth place Stoke. The other automatic promotion place likely will be decided next Sunday when second place Derby host third place Crystal Palace.

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