

Fowler will not appeal against ban

LIVERPOOL, Apr 17 (Reuters/Internet): England striker Robbie Fowler has decided not to appeal against a six-match ban for misconduct.

The Liverpool forward received a two-match suspension from the English Football Association for an incident involving Chelsea defender Graeme Le Saux during a match on February 27.

Fowler was handed a further four-match ban and a fine for his controversial goal celebration during a match with city rivals Everton when he pretended to snort cocaine from along the goal-line in response to chants from the Everton fans.

Duncan felt Let down

LONDON, Apr 17 (Reuters/Internet): Newcastle United striker Duncan Ferguson said he did not want to leave former club Everton and was badly treated by the club.

Speaking ahead of the two teams' English premier league meeting on Saturday, Ferguson told Liverpool's Daily Post newspaper, "I was happy at Everton but they bought me for four million (sterling) and sold me for eight million. I wonder how many other signings have brought that return."

"I remember someone saying the only thing loyal in football is a dog. Well, I must have been a dog because I was loyal to Everton and still got sold," said the Scot, who moved last November.

"Maybe me going would have been a good thing for the club if they could have used the money to get two or three quality players in as a springboard to strengthen the team. But that never happened."

Ferguson was sold after Everton chairman Peter Johnson accepted Newcastle's offer without speaking to Ferguson and without consulting manager Walsh Smith.

Smith threatened to resign over the issue but eventually agreed to stay.

Ferguson, a big favourite with the Everton fans, has had a difficult time with injuries at Newcastle but came on as a substitute in last week's F.A. Cup semi-final victory over Tottenham Hotspur.

Sunderland in Premier League

LONDON, Apr 17: Sunderland earned the English First Division title on Friday with a 3-1 victory at Barnsley following goals from Nicky Summerbee, Lee Clark and Kevin Phillips, reports AFP.

Sunderland had already guaranteed their place in the Premiership for next season following Tuesday night's 5-2 hammering of Bury at Gigg Lane.

Now they were hoping to avenge their only league defeat at the Stadium of Light this term and make certain of the title with a win over Barnsley.

They set about their task in perfect fashion as Summerbee beat keeper Tony Bullock just a minute before the break with a low shot under the advancing keeper.

The second goal came in the 63rd minute as Clark ran on to Kevin Ball's pass, with Bullock again beaten by a low side-foot shot as he came out to block.

In the 86th minute, Mike Sheron scored from Craig Hignett's corner to give Barnsley hope of securing a point.

Phillips crowned Sunderland's victory however with a brilliant goal, cutting inside before curling his shot past Bullock from 20 yards.

Rajshahi cricket

From Our Correspondent RAJSHAH, Apr 17: Upashahar Cricket Club and Town Club won their respective super league matches in the Rajshahi First Division league today.

In the first match of the day at the Rajshahi Stadium, Upashahar defeated Willow Krira Chakra by two wickets.

Winning the toss, Upashahar invited their opponents to bat first. Willow Krira Chakra got all out collecting 125 runs in 41.4 overs. Murteza scored highest 30 runs followed by 28 of Nazmul.

Babu captured four wickets. In reply, Upashahar made 129 for eight in 37.1 overs. Tony scored an unbeaten 27 followed by 22 of Berli. It captured three wickets.

In the second match at the Divisional Stadium, Town Club defeated Mahubagan club by 31 runs.

Town Club batted first and made 134 for nine in 40 overs. Lenin collected highest 42 runs followed by 26 of Rabhani.

In reply, Mahubagan were all out for 108 in 31.01 overs. Imran made highest 26. Tapan and Dollar captured two wickets each.

French move for Houllier

LIVERPOOL, Saturday, Apr 17 (Mail/Internet): Paris Saint-Germain will exploit the turmoil at Liverpool and try to tempt Gerard Houllier back to the club where he made his name.

Houllier guided PSG to the French championship in 1986 and they want his expertise to revive a club which has had an horrendous season and have only just banished the threat of relegation.

The Frenchman must decide whether to return home or continue his battle to impose his personality on a Liverpool squad which is trademarked by underachievement and indiscipline.

PSG's interest would allow Liverpool and their manager to call it quits and neither could fail to be tempted.

Houllier arrived at Anfield in July last year to forge a partnership with Roy Evans. But it didn't work and Houllier was left in charge on his own three months into the season.

Liverpool's form has been intermittent, some of the players appear to have difficulty in toeing Houllier's line and the club are sliding to their worst league finish for years.

Houllier must be aware that a club like Liverpool cannot allow their decline to continue and are likely to give the coach only until Christmas next season to show dramatic improvement.

The French coach's brief time at Anfield has comprised a succession of controversies, indiscipline and lack of convincing form which leave a huge question mark over his suitability.

PSG know that there is already a firm tide of opinion within the once mighty champions of England and Europe that Houllier does not com-

mand the respect from his players which is vital to ending the Anfield slide.

The Robbie Fowler incidents, one of which was laid to rest yesterday when the player confirmed he would not appeal against his fine and six-match suspension, epitomise the Frenchman's difficulties.

Houllier's public pronouncements on Fowler's abuse of Graeme Le Saux and the striker's mock cocaine sniffing in the Merseyside derby detracted from his support within Anfield and among the club's influential extended family in the city.



Houllier's perceived problems seem to be similar to the difficulties Christian Gross, another well respected continental coach, endured at Spurs. But he remains in high regard in France thanks to his title win with PSG and the way in which his role as technical director of the national team eclipsed his moderate performance as French coach.

PSG want to team him up with his ex-goalkeeping coach from France 98, Philippe Berg-

erou, who was handed the job of saving the once dominant club from relegation this season after both Alain Giresse and Artur Jorge came and went within a matter of months. Yesterday Houllier was still knee deep in his current difficulties in England.

In an attempt to rein in the unruly element in his senior squad, Houllier has issued an ultimatum about their conduct.

He laid down the law by warning them that any further bouts of indiscipline would cost them their Anfield careers.

Fowler's season will finish early, following his reluctant acceptance of the FA's six-match suspension and 32,000 pounds fine. He leads the attack in today's home game against Aston Villa and then sit out the last six matches of the season. But, although the action stops, his workload will carry on.

"It is best for everyone that Robbie can get this ban out of the way and start next season with a clean slate," said Houllier. "I am sure he has grounds for an appeal but now he can get the matter over with as quickly as possible."

"I have no problem with Robbie and I hope that his decision today is a sign that he is responding to the maturity I asked him to start showing."

"He will not be on holiday when his suspension starts, though. He will have two sessions on the training pitch every day and it will feel like four weeks' hard labour by the time he finishes."

"He will work hard on various aspects of his game and it could help him become an even more valuable asset for us next season."

"We will strengthen the knee he injured last season and we will also work on his shooting, heading and control when he receives the ball with his back to goal."



Hansa Rostock's Slawomir Majak (C) drives through the Kaiserslautern defence during their Bundesliga match on April 16.

Bayern rebound

BONN, Apr 17 (Reuters/Internet): German Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich bounced back to winning ways ahead of next week's European Cup semifinals with a 3-1 defeat of lowly Eintracht Frankfurt on Friday.

Bayern, who slumped to a rare defeat when they were beaten 2-1 by last year's champions Kaiserslautern on Tuesday, boosted their confidence with a win before Wednesday's European semifinal return leg at home to Dynamo Kiev.

The Munich club kept alive their hopes of reaching the final with a 3-3 draw in the first leg. Bosnian midfielder Hasan Salihamidzic put Bayern ahead with a header in the 26th minute. Striker Alexander Zickler gave them a 2-0 lead in the 34th minute and midfielder Thomas Strunz made it 3-0 in the 72nd minute.

Eintracht scored a consolation goal from Norwegian striker Jan Aage Fjortoft 10 minutes from time.

Germany striker Oliver Neuville was the hero in Friday's other match, helping strugglers Hansa Rostock to a precious 2-1 win over Kaiserslautern.

Neuville scored his side's first goal in the 42nd minute before setting up Uwe Ehlers for the second in the 59th.

Striker Uwe Roesler scored for Kaiserslautern in the 89th minute but received his marching orders for a second bookable offence a few seconds later.

Bayern are now 13 points clear of second-placed Bayer Leverkusen, who entertain bottom club Borussia Moenchengladbach on Saturday.

Schmeichel refuse pleas

MANCHESTER, Apr 17 (Reuters/Internet): Manchester United goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel has rejected pleas from team mates David Beckham and Phil Neville to stay at Old Trafford.

The Danish international told the Sun newspaper he was touched by their support but was quoted as saying: "I have made up my mind to leave. There's nothing that can change that."

Schmeichel announced last November that he planned to quit the game in England at the end of the season. But he intends to continue playing.

"We all inspire each other at Old Trafford and it is a desire to win I have not experienced anywhere else. But it is time to leave."

Schmeichel's adviser Ole Frederiksen said no decision on the player's future would be made until the end of the season.

Dynamo Kiev go top

KIEV, Apr 17 (Reuters/Internet): European Cup semifinalists Dynamo Kiev reclaimed the top spot in the Ukrainian premier division from Shakhtar Donetsk with a 1-0 home win over Kryvbas Kryvyi Rih on Friday.

But Dynamo, playing without injured striker Serhiy Rebrov, were unimpressive for most of the match in their last warm-up before their European semifinal second leg clash against Germany's Bayern Munich next Wednesday.

Andriy Shevchenko, the leading goalscorer in the league, scored the winner from a 20-metre free kick on the stroke of halftime for his 13th goal of the season.

The Kiev striker missed an excellent opportunity to find the net a second time when he only had goalkeeper Olexander Lavrentsov to beat late in the game.

The visitors struggled to penetrate tight Dynamo defence and Kiev goalkeeper Olexander Shovkovsky denied them their best chance to equalise with a diving save from close range just two minutes from time.

Dynamo and Shakhtar are now level on 46 points but the Kiev side, with a game in hand, move into first place on goal difference.

Flight chaos hits Brazil

LAGOS, Apr 17 (Reuters/Internet): Brazil may still be recovering from the effects of a tumultuous trip to Lagos when they face Uruguay in Sunday's World Youth Cup quarterfinal.

The players have been unable to train properly because of the difficulties in getting a flight from Calabar, where they beat Croatia 4-0 in their second round game on Wednesday.

Coach Joao Carlos Costa said the special charter flight which was supposed to take them to Lagos was cancelled on Thursday and then again on Friday, forcing them to catch a local commercial flight and shorten training sessions.

"When we got to the airport, there was a multitude trying to embark, plus the two delegations," he told Reuters. "There was a pile of bags which they were throwing into the hold, it was amazing."

"Finally we got on the plane, but they shut the door before my

supervisor could board. He was left on the runway. He eventually got on after a Nigerian official agreed to get out."

"For the two days, the Croatian and Brazilian coaches were going between the hotel and airport in a convoy."

Brazil have overcome a 2-0 defeat by Spain in their opening match to become one of the title favourites, having hammered in 12 goals on their way to winning their subsequent three games.

This is despite an almost total lack of preparation for the competition.

Costa inherited his 18-man squad from predecessor Toninho Barroso, who resigned for personal reasons on the eve of the tournament.

"We only had the squad together for five days before leaving Brazil and even then only 10 players turned up because their clubs wanted them for championship matches," he said.

Striker Fernando Baiano and right-back Indio found themselves in the middle of po-

litical disturbances in Paraguay, where their club side Corinthians played two matches in the South American Libertadores Cup in the week of the troubles.

The team arrived hours after Paraguay's vice-president had been assassinated and their matches in Asuncion went ahead despite riots in the city.

Costa has also been trying, in vain, to fend off agents. "I've heard that there have been a couple of attempted deals," he said.

"I tell to the players that they should concentrate on the championship, that if they do well here things will happen of their own accord afterwards. But the hotels are open to the public and we can't stop people phoning or talking to the players."

The other three quarterfinals on Sunday see Nigeria playing Mali in Enugu, Ghana meeting Spain in Kaduna and Mexico, who eliminated champions Argentina, playing Japan in Ibadan.

USA-Croatia Fed Cup tie

Davenport sidelined

RALEIGH, Apr 17: Croatia's loss of the home court advantage in this weekend's Federation Cup series against the United States was balanced out Friday when the world's No. 2 player, Lindsay Davenport, pulled out because of a wrist injury, reports AP.

Iva Majoli, the top-seeded player on the Croatian team, will play second-seeded Chanda Rubin in the first match Saturday. The second match will pit top-ranked Monica Seles against second-seeded Seljvija Talaja.

Sunday's two singles and one doubles matches were also chosen Friday during a ceremonial draw on the lawn outside the North Carolina governor's mansion.

The Fed Cup match was moved from Zagreb, Croatia, because of NATO bombing in Yugoslavia. The move allowed US captain Billie Jean King to add Seles, who was born in Novi Sad, Yugoslavia.

International Tennis Federation officials also decided against playing the series in Hamburg, Germany, where Seles was stabbed during a match nearly six years ago.

The four Croatian women and their captain said they were excited to be playing in Raleigh, with or without Davenport, who decided Wednesday her wrist was not well enough to play.

"This is a big thing for Croatia," said Majoli, who has played in the last seven Fed Cups. "We should just enjoy the weekend."

"I haven't played Chanda in



LINDSAY DAVENPORT

But Majoli, who has been beaten Davenport four times in their eight meetings, said Davenport's injury "is a disappointment."

Her captain, Vjeran Frisic, however, seemed pleased with the draw.

"Frankly, I prefer Chanda, but all the players are top and everyone knows how to play well," he said.

Rubin leads their head-to-head series three to two, winning in three sets at the Hopman Cup in 1997. Both players are coming off three-set losses in the Bausch and Lomb Championships in Amelia Island, Florida.

"I haven't played Chanda in

so long. It's going to be a tough match," Majoli said.

Davenport, who lost to Anna Kournikova in two sets in the Bausch and Lomb last weekend, was forced to drop out of the Lipton Championships earlier because of her sprained left wrist. She said she hopes to recuperate in time for the French Open.

"(Davenport's injury) doesn't have much of an impact," King said. "The US is lucky to have great depth... We have Monica and Chanda."

In the second match, nine-time Grand Slam winner Seles will face Talaja, who lost in the third round of the Estoril Open last week and took Venus Williams to three sets before losing in the first round of the Australian Open.

"(Seles) is playing the best tennis of her life," King said. "If she maintains her physical fitness, there's no stopping her now."

Seles' Bausch and Lomb title last weekend was her first since September.

The players switch opponents Sunday. The series ends with a doubles match between Seles and Lisa Raymond and Majoli and Talaja to determine which teams advances to the second round.

Davis Cup This lead 2-0

TEHRAN, Apr 17: Thailand took a 2-0 lead against Iran in their Asia-Oceania Zone Group Two, second round match on Friday, reports Reuters.

Dennis on the spot

LONDON, Saturday, Apr 17 (Mail/Internet): Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger will let Dennis Bergkamp decide if he wants to remain Arsenal's penalty-taker in the wake of Wednesday's miss against Manchester United.

The Holland striker's injury-time miss in the FA Cup semi-final replay, which Arsenal eventually lost 2-1, was his third spot-kick failure in five attempts this season.

Wenger said: "When you miss a penalty it's like being in a car crash - you either don't drive your car again, or get straight back in it."

"I won't know what his reaction will be until we get another penalty. All I do know is that he is still very down and that he feels responsible for Arsenal not reaching Wembley again."

"I haven't spoken to him and he has not indicated to me that he is unwilling to take them again. I will leave things to him. I don't know how much it has affected him."

Bergkamp disappeared quickly after Arsenal trained yesterday and Wenger admitted: "It takes a long time to stop hurting. He is very disappointed, but part of the game is that there is no guarantee to win every time."

"If you are a winner, you are

stronger after a defeat because you want to bounce back and stay at the top level.

But it's part of the game to miss a penalty. "Johan Cruyff has missed them, so too has Maradona and Roberto Baggio. We should remember that many times Dennis has been responsible for us winning matches. If you don't take responsibility, you don't make mistakes."

"You want your players to care about what they do, so you can't be surprised that if they lose, they are very down."

Wenger added that Wednesday's defeat at Villa Park is now history. He said: "I got over it very quickly. What is important is what's in front of you, not what you have missed achieving."

With Wimbledon due at Highbury on Monday, Wenger has a list of casualties which includes Bergkamp, Patrick Vieira and Emmanuel Petit.

He added: "This is a game we must win. If we don't, Arsenal cannot win the Premiership. It is the only chance we have and the League has always been our priority. We are looking ahead now and, despite our disappointments, there are many clubs who would like to be in our position."

"When we win, it is a collective effort. When we lose, that is also the case. I have players here passionate about winning. It is part of their heart and soul."

Wenger said that he is confident, Dennis has the ability to take penalties and he believes he is strong enough to absorb the pressure.

"I will see how things are. He doesn't show his emotions, but I know he is very hurt. Normally he is a very lively person within the group and enjoys a lot of humour with the players, but that has gone... temporarily."



Trevor Hicks, chairman of the Hillsborough families support group, looks at the floral tributes laid on the Anfield pitch on April 15 during the memorial service for the 96 victims of the Hillsborough disaster. Two of Hicks' teenage daughters were killed when fans were crushed to death against metal fences ten years ago.

Return to the fences?

LONDON, Apr 17: Relatives of the Hillsborough disaster victims fear the pitch invasion following Manchester United's FA Cup victory over Arsenal could lead to the return of perimeter fences, reports AFP.

Several hundred fans, mostly United supporters, ran onto the Villa Park pitch following the 2-1 win in the semi-final replay on Wednesday.

Villa's head of security, John Hood, accused United fans of being the worst behaved in the country and the Hillsborough Families Support Group have appealed to supporters to think before they act.

"I am absolutely fed up with the behaviour of United's supporters," said Hood. "They created the risk of a major incident."

"I would have thought they would have shown more sense, particularly at this time. They were a disgrace."

The scenes at Villa Park came the day before the 10th anniversary of the Hillsborough tragedy which claimed the lives of 96 Liverpool supporters.

Phil Hammond, secretary of the families support group, said: "We can't have people running onto the pitch because someone like (European body) UEFA might then turn round and tell clubs they must put the fences back up."

"That is the last thing we want - to go back to those days after all the progress that's been made."

Hood's accusations. Andy Walsh, chairman of the Independent Manchester United Supporters' Association (IMUSA), said: Hood is well over the top in his comments.

"Emotionally it was a very highly-charged game and whilst recognising that Hood has got his job to do, he's also got to understand that after one of the greatest FA Cup semifinals of the greatest FA Cup games ever and certainly one of the best goals ever scored in the FA Cup semifinals, emotions run high."

"We don't condone people running on the pitch, but United fans should be congratulated that it was only a few hundred rather than a few thousand."

"There was not one reported incident of United fans baiting Arsenal fans and it was just a joyous outpouring of relief and celebration and should be seen as such."



Dynamo Kiev's superstriker Andriy Shevchenko (L) scores his team's lone goal against Kryvbas Kryvyi Rih during their Ukrainian Premier Division league fixture in Kiev on April 16.