

Sport

Boca beat Barca

ALICANTE, Spain, Aug 12: Argentine champions Boca Juniors edged out Barcelona 3-2 in a fiercely contested pre-season friendly on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

A controversial goal from Antonio Barroso gave Boca the lead on 18 minutes, the linesman ruling that the striker's shot, which hit crossbar and post before bouncing down, had crossed the line.

The Argentine side went up 10 minutes into the second half as Guillermo Barros squeezed in a free kick but Barcelona reduced the arrears midway through the half, Boudewijn Zenden sliding in to convert Jari Litmanen's neat cross.

Boca restored their two-goal lead through Martin Palermo on 75 minutes before Luis Figo got back Barca back into the game once more with the pick of the goals. The Portuguese international, picking up the ball outside the Boca area, danced through a crowd of players and planted a shot into the far corner.

The Spanish champions came close on several occasions to an equaliser but with Patrick Kluivert still short of match fitness they lacked a cutting edge and had to settle for a narrow defeat their second in four days after their 1-0 reverse to Valencia in the Spanish Super Cup.

Keegan stands by Alan

LONDON, Aug 12: England coach Kevin Keegan on Wednesday backed Alan Shearer over his controversial sending off against Aston Villa last weekend, reports AFP.

Keegan reckons referee Uriah Rennie got it wrong when he gave Shearer his marching orders during Newcastle's United's 1-0 opening day Premiership defeat against Villa on Saturday.

Shearer, already booked, was dismissed for tangling with Colin Calderwood. It was the first red card of his career.

"(Shearer) shouldn't have been sent off for it. I don't think you'd find anybody who'd look at that incident and say 'that's a yellow card' or 'he deserved to be sent off.' That was a mistake," Keegan told Sky News.

Keegan predicted Shearer would bounce back from the sending off and Newcastle's losing start to the season, which continued on Monday night with a 3-1 defeat at Tottenham.

"I've talked with him and he's fine," said Keegan. "The greatest thing that Alan Shearer has going for him is that you can't knock him down."

"I don't suppose last week was the greatest week in his life because he lost two games and he got sent off. But you know he'll bounce back from it because he's got a lot of character and, if you've got that, you've got a chance."

Fergie not too sure about Keane

MANCHESTER, England, Aug 12: Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson has admitted Irish midfielder Roy Keane may turn down a new contract offer because he is looking for a new challenge abroad, reports AFP.

Club captain Keane is due to tell United whether or not he has accepted their new offer by the weekend, with a host of Italian and Spanish clubs ready to snap him up if he decides to leave.

"The things he will be thinking about are not monetary," said Ferguson after Wednesday's 4-0 win over Sheffield Wednesday.

"I don't think money has come into it to be honest with you."

The only reason he would want to leave is for the challenge of another league. Maybe he wants a change. Who knows?

"But we will see whether he's going to stay when the time comes and hopefully he will do so because he's such a marvellous player."

"The club have tried hard to construct a deal which will encourage him to stay. I have had some chats with him and he's certainly undecided when I have spoken to him."



Fabio Cannavaro (L), Parma's Italian international defender, being shown the red card by referee Jose Maria Garcia-Aranda Encinar during their Champions League qualifier against Glasgow Rangers' at Idrox on August 11.

— AFP photo

Rangers rock Parma



LONDON, Aug 12: Scottish treble winners Rangers beat UEFA Cup holders Parma 2-0 on Wednesday to raise hopes of a place in the Champions League, reports Reuters.

Goals by Tony Vidmar and Claudio Reyna after Parma's Fabio Cannavaro was sent off in the 26th minute gave Rangers a memorable victory in the third qualifying round, first leg.

Other opening leg winners included last year's beaten semi-finalists Dynamo Kiev, 1997 champions Borussia Dortmund, Chelsea, Fiorentina and Galatasaray.

Kiev, who lost to Bayern Munich in the semifinals last season, won 2-1 at Denmark's AaB Aalborg.

They went ahead after 13 minutes with a goal from last season's midfield inspiration, Serhiy Rebrov, Ukraine's current leading scorer.

Maxim Shatskikh made it 2-0 in the 39th minute and although Frank Strandli pulled one back for the hosts 10 minutes into the second half, Kiev will be confident of progressing.

Chelsea needed 76 minutes to break through 10-man Skonto Riga and then scored twice in a minute.

Latvia international keeper Aleksandar Kolinko had made a series of great saves to keep Chelsea at bay after Skonto full-back Andrejs Tereskiwas was sent off for kicking Frank Leboeuf in the 33rd minute.

Chelsea looked in danger of an embarrassing goalless draw until substitute Celestine Babayaro shot home in the 76th minute and Gustavo Poyet

smacked in a second a minute later.

Chris Sutton, signed for 15.7 million dollars from Blackburn Rovers in the close season, made up for an early miss to add the third six minutes from the free kick after 17 minutes.

Dortmund won 1-0 at Czech side Teplice with a 66th minute goal from Christian Nerlinger, who drove home a Fredi Bobic header from eight metres out.

Teplice went close in the 28th minute when midfielder Petr Fousek fired over the bar and Dortmund goalkeeper Jens Lehmann made two good saves to keep the lead intact.

Enrico Chiesa crashed a late free kick against the crossbar before Portuguese midfielder Rui Costa restored the home side's two-goal lead with a fine individual strike in injury time.

Galatasaray had an impressive 3-0 success at Rapid Vienna thanks to first half goals by Hakan Unsal and Fatih Akyel and one in the last minute by Gheorghe Hagi.

Goals from Russia internationals Alexander Shirkov and Andrei Tikhonov gave Spartak Moscow a 2-0 home victory over Partizan Belgrade while Valencia won by the same score at Hapoel Haifa.

The Israelis had much the best of the match but Argentine Claudio Lopez curled in a cross-shot after 68 minutes and Javier Farinos drove in the second six minutes later.

PSV Eindhoven winners in 1988, could only manage a 0-0 draw at Moldova's Zimbru Chisinau.

Croatia Zagreb against Hungarian champion MTK Budapest also ended goalless. There were red cards for Edin Mujicic of Croatia and Gabor Almai of MTK.

Batistuta's knee in trouble

FLORENCE, Italy, Aug 12: Fiorentina's Argentine international striker Gabriel Batistuta could be out of action for two weeks after he limped out of Wednesday's Champions League qualifier with Poland's Widzew Lodz with a knee injury, Leboeuf in the 33rd minute.

Chelsea looked in danger of an embarrassing goalless draw until substitute Celestine Babayaro shot home in the 76th minute and Gustavo Poyet

side beat Widzew Lodz of Poland 3-1.

Adani, who completed his move from Serie B side Brescia this month, put the Florentines ahead with a diving header from a free kick after 17 minutes.

The Thais, managed by former England and Aston Villa forward Peter Withe, took the game to the Singaporeans from the kickoff and it was no surprise when their captain Kitatisuk Senamuang set up Tawan Sripan for their first goal.

Tawan lashed home an unstoppable shot from the edge of the box at the 21st minute.

Indra Sadhan Daud rattled

Thai goalkeeper Wirat Wangchan's crossbar eight minutes later and captain Mohamad Nazri Nasir nearly

scored as half time approached when a Thai defender botched a headed clearance.

But the Thai midfield, marshaled by Thawatchai Ongtrakul and Tawan, finally overwhelmed Singapore who were also guilty of lax marking.

This was duly punished late

in the match when Thawatchai

found himself in acres of space on the right side and drilled home a rising shot inside the far post.

Meanwhile Vietnamese

midfielder Nguyen Hong Son

settled the issue in the other

semi-final. Vietnam have yet to

concede a goal in this tourna-

ment.

The Thais, who are also un-

defeated, have scored 22 goals

so far while conceding only one.

They have kept an iron grip

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Villa take solo lead

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