

Sport

Raja remains focused

ISLAMABAD, Aug 13: Former Test all-rounder Wasim Raja, who has been appointed coach of the Pakistan cricket team...

"If you are a professional, you can not do anything deliberately," the 46-year-old political science lecturer and qualified cricket coach from England said...

The 46-year-old told the English daily "The Dawn" that mental approach, self-respect, self-discipline and country's respect will be his priorities to rebuild the Pakistan team.

Raja, a stylish left-handed batsman and right-arm seamer has appeared in 37 Tests and 54 one-dayers in the 1970s and early 80s. He quit his job in England and signed a contract for 40,000 pounds (approx. 28.80 lakh rupees) per annum with the Pakistan Cricket Board.

PCB appointed Raja after failing to enlist the services of former South African coach Bob Woolmer, who reportedly demanded 80,000 pounds (about 57.60 lakh rupees), officials said.

PCB ad hoc committee chairman Mujeeb ur Rehman has said Raja's appointment would be a long-term affair. "We believe in long term policies and the appointment of Wasim as coach for two to three years reflects our priorities," he said.

Ranatinga ban lifted

COLOMBO, Aug 13: Sri Lanka has lifted a ban on foreign skipper Sunil Ranatunga training with the national team after accepting his explanation on leaving on a tour of Canada, officials said today, reports AFP.

Ranatunga, 35, who was dismissed as Sri Lanka's captain last month, was asked to explain why he went to Canada to participate in an exhibition match this month. New cricket manager Chandra Schaffter cleared Ranatunga after the two met late Thursday, officials said adding that an earlier explanation had been rejected.

The controversy prevented Ranatunga from practising for the three Test series against Australia but by late Thursday he was again given the green light to join the national squad.

DPRK workers beat ROK

TOKYO, Aug 13: A football team of North Korean workers defeated a side made up from their South Korean counterparts in a groundbreaking international in Pyongyang, it was reported here Thursday, reports AFP.

North Korea's Korean Central News Agency reported the home team -- from the north's Gihuk Central Committee -- beat a side from South Korea's Confederation of Trade Unions 5-4. The game was the first between two North and South Korean teams since the division of the country following the Korean war.

The match was a "soccer game of workers in the North and the South for reunification" the agency reported.

It was part of the grand reunification festival on August 15.

Hasselbaink back in Dutch fold

AMSTERDAM, Aug 13 (Reuters/Internet): Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink was recalled to the Dutch squad on Thursday for the first time since the World Cup for the friendly against Denmark on August 18.

August has proved a good month for the former Leeds United striker who moved to Atletico Madrid in a 19 million dollars deal last week.

Edgar Davids of Juventus, Feyenoord's Peter van Vossen and PSV Eindhoven's Andre Ooijer were all ineligible after being sent off in the 3-1 defeat by Brazil in June.

Davids is currently awaiting a decision from the Italian Olympic Committee on whether he can play for club and country with eye drops containing a banned diuretic to cure a temporary glaucoma.

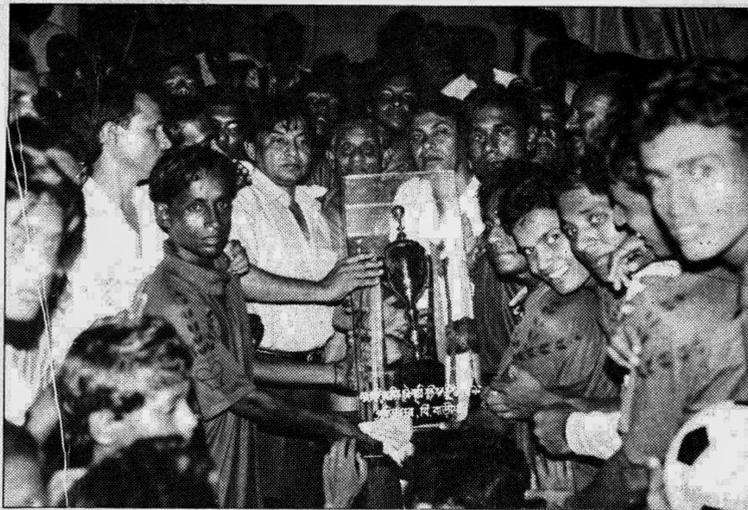
Arsenal's Dennis Bergkamp and Jaap Stam of Manchester United return after missing the trip to South America. Injuries exclude defender Kees van Wonderen of Feyenoord and forwards Marc Overmars of Arsenal and Pierre van Hoojdonk of Vitesse Arnhem.

No players from Ajax Amsterdam have been called.

SQUAD
Goalkeepers: Edwin van der Sar (Liverpool), Sander Westerveld (Liverpool).
Defenders: Frank de Boer (Barcelona), Marc van Hintum (Vitesse Arnhem), Bert Kontermann (Feyenoord), Michael Reiziger (Barcelona), Jaap Stam (Manchester United).

Midfielders: Ronald de Boer (Barcelona), Giovanni van Bronckhorst (Rangers), Phillip Cocu (Barcelona), Wim Jonk (Sheffield Wednesday), Patrick Pauwe (Feyenoord), Clarence Seedorf (Real Madrid), Boudevijn Zenden (Barcelona).

Strikers: Dennis Bergkamp (Arsenal), Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink (Atletico Madrid), Patrick Kluijver (Barcelona), Ruud van Nistelrooy (PSV Eindhoven).



Victorious Astagram soccer team members receive the SI Arif Chowdhury Smriti League trophy after the last game of the tournament in Brahmanbaria on August 6. —Star photo

English Premiership

Gaps widening already

LONDON, Aug 13: Suspicion that the English game is a league of two halves are strengthened by the already familiar look to this season's English Premiership, reports AFP.

The second round of games hasn't even been completed but there is a definite sense of déjà vu about the early league table, with the heavyweights scrambling to register their first wins.

Aston Villa, who topped the table for most of the pre-Christmas period last season, are once again top of the pile with 6 points, chased by Arsenal (6), Manchester United (4), Leeds (4) and Chelsea (3).

Like last season, Villa aren't expected to last the pace and they must wait until Monday for their third game, at home to their claret and blue brothers West Ham United.

By then Arsenal will hope to have sprung clear at the top by eclipsing Sunderland at the Stadium of Light on Saturday to make it three wins out of three.

The Gunners will come face to face with their former defensive lynchpin Steve Bould.

"We'll probably have a beer afterwards," said Arsenal right-back Lee Dixon, adding: "They've got a great stadium and they'll obviously make it hard for us."

Arsenal, who once again will be without new Croatian striker Davor Suker who is on international duty, have been boosted by the early season form of their velvet-footed Dutch master Dennis Bergkamp.

"I believe Dennis is really fit physically and hungry. He has rediscovered his confidence in his body," said manager Arsene Wenger warned.

"He had no real break after the World Cup and I believe being right physically is a huge influence on the confidence of a player."

There will be an even more raucous atmosphere at Elland

Road when Leeds take on Manchester United in their now-traditional noon kick-off for the fixture.

Leeds were boosted this week by the signing of Coventry City forward Darren Huckerby and an impressive hat-trick by 20-year-old capture Michael Bridges in the 3-0 win at Southampton.

United, 4-0 winners over Sheffield Wednesday in mid-week, should know by kick-off whether midfield engine Roy Keane has decided to stay with the club.

The Wednesday win extended their unbeaten run to 35 games, excluding the Charity Shield loss to Arsenal, and manager Sir Alex Ferguson reckons if they can keep the unbeaten run going it would be a great platform for the new season.

"It's a nice thing and it gives them targets," said the United boss. "It gets us up to the top of the league and we want to make sure at the turn of the year that we are up there with the top two or three teams."

David Beckham, Ryan Giggs and Dwight Yorke came off with injury niggles against Wednesday but should all be fine for Saturday.

David O'Leary believes his exciting young Leeds team has the potential to match the great Don Revie side of the 1970s.

"I think people do get carried away with this team and want to compare us to the Don Revie team," he said.

"That was a great team and, maybe, we might develop into that. We have got the potential and let's see where it takes us."

"I believe in pace and I believe in young people."

Chelsea, who have only played one league game so far, took their tally to seven goals without reply in two matches with their 3-0 win over Skonto Riga on Wednesday in the Champions' League third qualifying round.

Manager Gianluca Vialli charitably left expensive striker Chris Sutton on the

pitch long enough to score on Wednesday and he will probably stick with a winning line-up in which Uruguayan Gustavo Poyet and Italian Gianfranco Zola have starred to date for Saturday's trip to Leicester City.

Like Chelsea, Liverpool have played - and won - only one game so far, last Saturday's 2-1 win at Sheffield Wednesday prompting premature talk of a title challenge.

Gerard Houllier's newlook side should make it six points out of six against Graham Taylor's Watford, who are already suffering from a bad case of top flight vertigo having lost both games so far.

Watford will be relieved to hear England striker Michael Owen is not yet ready to play despite returning to training this week, allowing French signing Titi Camara to continue alongside Robbie Fowler in attack for Liverpool.

Four teams - Coventry, Watford, Newcastle and table-proppers Sheffield Wednesday - have yet to get off the mark.

Despite their first-day win, Bradford City's Yorkshire derby against Wednesday at Valley Parade already has a relegation six-pointer about it, as does Southampton's home clash with Ruid Gullit's unhappy Newcastle United squad on Sunday.

"When things like this happen, it means I have not done my job properly," said Gullit, who had previously blamed his players for their two consecutive losses.

"I'm in charge so it's my fault - not the fault of anyone else."

Fixtures (kick-offs 1400 GMT unless stated):
Saturday: Bradford City v Sheffield Wednesday, Derby County v Middlesbrough, Leicester City v Chelsea, Liverpool v Watford, Manchester United v Leeds United (1100 GMT), Sunderland v Everton, Tottenham Hotspur v Everton, Wimbledon v Coventry City.
Sunday: Southampton v Newcastle United (1500 GMT)

M'singh summer sports ends

From Our Correspondent

MYMENSINGH, Aug 13: A week-long summer sports competitions organised by District Sports Association concluded at the local stadium recently.

The competition included kabaddi, football and swimming. A total of 250 boys and girls aged between 12 to 16 took part in the meet.

Bhaluka thana won the title while Gafargaon thana became runners up. In kabaddi, Phulbaria thana lifted the title and Gafargaon became runners up.

Gafargaon clinched the swimming title earning 80 points and Sadar thana took second position with 41 points.

Additional Deputy Commissioner of Mymensingh distributed the prizes among the winners. Meanwhile the district level inter-school sports competitions will start from August 20 at the local stadium.

Hanoi freaks out

HANOI, Aug 13: Police armed with riot gear and water cannons kept Hanoi under tight security late Thursday as hundreds of thousands took to the streets to celebrate Vietnam's football victory against Indonesia, reports AFP.

Trucks full of security forces were stationed at major intersections of the capital, with extra personnel deployed around Hoan Kiem Lake, a route favoured by high speed motorcycle racers.

Police in Ho Chi Minh City said they had despatched an extra 3,000 officers in anticipation of late night revelry following Vietnam's semi-final victory in the SEA Games football championship.

Nasser skips tour match

CHELMSFORD, England, Aug 13: England captain Nasser Hussain dropped out of Essex's match against New Zealand today but said he was still hopeful he would be fit for the fourth and final test next week, reports Reuters.

Hussain, who broke a finger during the second test defeat at Lord's, missed the third Test but was expected to make his comeback by leading his county against the tourists.

In the end, however, he opted not to play preferring to practise in the nets at Chelmsford. "I still haven't quite healed sufficiently but Nasser is still hopeful of being ready for The Oval. He just did not want to risk further damage in this game," said an Essex official.

2nd round draw of Asian Olympic qualifying

HONG KONG, Aug 13 (AFP): Groups and fixtures for the second round of the Asian qualifying tournament for the Sydney Olympics football tournament:

GROUP A
Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait
Oct 1: In Doha, Qatar v Saudi Arabia
Oct 8: In Dammam, Saudi Arabia v Kuwait
Oct 15: In Kuwait City, Kuwait v Qatar
Oct 29: In Dammam, Saudi Arabia v Qatar
Nov 5: In Kuwait City, Kuwait v Saudi Arabia
Nov 12: In Doha, Qatar v Kuwait

GROUP B
China, Bahrain, South Korea
Oct 3: In Seoul, South Korea v China
Oct 10: In Shanghai, China v Bahrain
Oct 17: In Manama, Bahrain v South Korea
Oct 29: In Shanghai, China v South Korea
Nov 5: In Manama, Bahrain v China
Nov 13: In Seoul, South Korea v Bahrain

GROUP C
Thailand, Japan, Kazakhstan
Oct 2: In Almaty, Kazakhstan v Thailand
Oct 9: In Almaty, Kazakhstan v Japan
Oct 17: In Tokyo, Japan v Thailand
Oct 30: In Bangkok, Thailand v Kazakhstan
Nov 6: In Tokyo, Japan v Kazakhstan
Nov 13: In Bangkok, Thailand v Japan

Heggem collides with patrol car
LIVERPOOL, England, Aug 13: Police were on Thursday investigating an accident in which a car driven by English Premiership club Liverpool's right-back Vegard Heggem was in collision with a patrol car answering an emergency call, reports AFP.

The 24-year-old Norwegian international walked away unscathed from the BMW following the accident in the Old Swan district of Liverpool on Wednesday evening.

Joachim Standfest was another hat-trick man as Graz AK of Austria overpowered KI Klaksvik of the Faroe Islands 5-0 in Toffir.

Torpedo Kutaisi of Georgia, Legia Warsaw, Croatia's Hajduk Split also claimed 5-0 victories to ensure their progress to the first round proper.

Northern Ireland's Linfield were happy to lose only 1-0 at Lokomotiv Tbilisi after suffering an attack of food poisoning. "We lost a half of our team," said Linfield assistant coach W.J. McCoubrey.

Celtic had the best result of the three former European Cup winners, thrashing Welsh outfit Cwmbran Town 6-0 away, helped by two goals from Henrik Larsson.

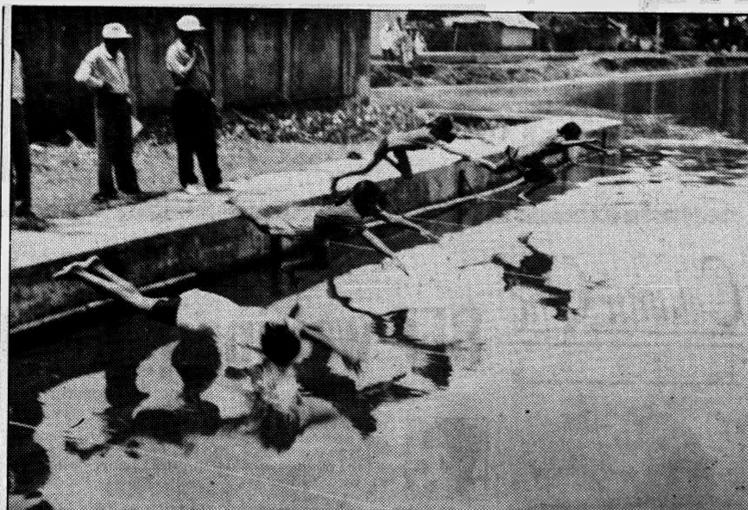
Crvena Zvezda Belgrade, European champions in 1991, must have wondered how they ever reached such giddy heights as they travelled to Nefchi Baku of Azerbaijan and collected a 3-2 victory.

Steaia Bucharest, like Crvena Zvezda, European Cup winners on a penalty shoot-out, had a comfortable 3-0 home win over Estonia's Levadia Maardu with two goals from Sabin Ilic and one from Cristian Ciocoiu.

Chen plans to swim English Channel
BEIJING, Aug 13: Chen Xiongguang, 38, is aiming to become the first Chinese to swim the English Channel, reports AFP.

Chen is to try to swim from Calais, on the French side of the Channel, around August 22, the official Xinhua news agency said.

He hopes to finish the swim of about 24 miles (40 kilometers) in 12 hours, the report added.



Scene from the Mymensingh Summer Swimming Competition. —Star photo

Bayern open without new faces

BERLIN, Aug 13 (Reuters/Internet): Bayern Munich will be without newcomers Roque Santa Cruz and Paulo Sergio on Saturday when they start the defence of their German league title at home to Hamburg.

Paraguayan striker Santa Cruz, 17, who joined from Olimpia Asuncion for 10 million marks (5.44 million dollars) will only be eligible to play for his new club when they visit title contenders Bayer Leverkusen in their second match on August 22.

"A few problems still have to be sorted out," Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld said.

Brazilian midfielder Paulo Sergio, who came from AS Roma for 15 million marks, is recovering from groin surgery and should stay out of action for another couple of weeks.

Hitzfeld has other worries as keeper Oliver Kahn and playmaker Stefan Effenberg are also sidelined with injury.

Hamburg, ideally placed to reach the UEFA Cup after their 1-1 draw at Montpellier in the first leg of their Intertoto Cup final tie, will miss Dutch defender Nico-Jan Hoogma through suspension.

Other matches on the opening weekend of the season:
Friday (both 1800 GMT):
VFL Wolfsburg v TSV 1860 Munich

Wolfsburg, who ended a surprising sixth last season to clinch a berth in the UEFA Cup, have a new striker in Nigerian Jonathan Akporbie. They lost only two home matches last

season. TSV 1860 Munich count on the playmaking skills of veteran midfielder Thomas Haessler, who joined them after a frustrating spell with Borussia Dortmund.

MSV DUISBURG v BAYER LEVERKUSEN
Duisburg, who failed to reach the Intertoto Cup final stage, miss several players through injury. Leverkusen want a shot at the title after three consecutive top three finishes. Their two major signings, midfielder Michael Ballack and striker Oliver Neuville, should start the match.

Saturday (all 1930 GMT):
KAISERSLAUTERN v BORUSSIA DORTMUND
French World Cup midfielder Youri Djorkaeff should make his debut for Kaiserslautern as they entertain Borussia Dortmund in one of the highlights of the opening programme. Dortmund have spent millions in a bid to recapture the form which led them to the 1997 European Cup title.

Schalke 04 v Arminia Bielefeld
Schalke 04 miss four players through injury to host second division champions Arminia Bielefeld. Schalke have lost only once at home to Bielefeld, in the 1970-71 season.

VfB Stuttgart v Werder Bremen
Stuttgart, who suffered last season, have lost their two top strikers, Jonathan Akporbie

and Fredi Bobic. Stuttgart beat Bremen 1-0 in their final match last season to make sure they would stay in the first division. The visitors will be without midfielder Andreas Herzog, nursing torn ankle ligaments.

EINTRACHT FRANKFURT v SPVGG UNTERHACHING
Eintracht, who narrowly avoided relegation last season, will start with their two most spectacular signings, midfielder Horst Heldt and Togolese striker Bachirou Salou. Unterhaching make their Bundesliga debut with no other ambition than to remain in the top flight.

Sunday (both 1530 GMT):
SSV Ulm v SC Freiburg
Promoted SSV Ulm and SC Freiburg, who rejoined the first division last season, meet in the Bundesliga for the first time. Freiburg will be without Georgian striker Alexander Iaschvili, who has a knee injury.

Hertha Berlin v Hansa Rostock
Ambitious Hertha will miss defender and captain Kjetil Rekdal. The Norwegian international broke his left leg in the Berlin club's 2-0 win over Anorthosis Famagusta in a Champions' League third qualifying round first leg match on Wednesday. Rostock have lost their two best players, defender Marko Rehmer and striker Oliver Neuville, and made no major signing.

Ronaldo's fear for Rivaldo

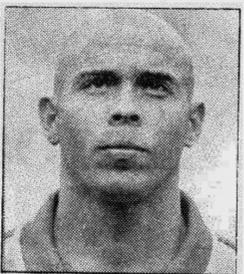
BARCELONA, Aug 13 (Reuters/Internet): Brazilian striker Ronaldo has urged his former club Barcelona not to repeat the mistake they made with him two years ago and let his compatriot Rivaldo slip through their fingers.

Ronaldo left Barcelona after a single, highly successful season at the Nou Camp in 1996-97, shocking everyone connected with the club as he left to join Inter Milan.

Barcelona are now negotiating a new contract with Ronaldo's replacement, Rivaldo, who has reportedly received a lucrative offer from European champions Manchester United.

Rivaldo has pledged his future to Barcelona, saying he is happy with the Spanish champions, but Ronaldo is still concerned that history might repeat itself and the Catalans may once again lose their best player.

"Barcelona made a mistake with me," Ronaldo told the



RONALDO

Barcelona based newspaper Sport. "They won't want to make the same mistake with Rivaldo, one of the best players in the world."

"I had also decided to stay on at Barcelona but I was disappointed with the way the club treated me. I hope the same thing doesn't happen with Rivaldo."

"Barcelona need Rivaldo but Manchester United are also a

great team. The discussions will be tough and that could be good for Rivaldo."

Ronaldo and Rivaldo were joint top scorers in the recent Copa America, with the former looking close to his best again after a difficult 12 months hampered by injury.

He is now looking forward to the new Italian league season, which will see him link up with Christian Vieri in the Inter attack.

"I'm in good shape at the moment. I've been training throughout the holidays," he said. "I now want to have a good season in Italy, to win the championship, to keep my place in the national team and, if God is willing, stay clear of injury all season."

Looking further ahead, Ronaldo said he was optimistic about Brazil's chances of winning the nomination for the 2006 World Cup.

"Brazil has everything to be the favourites to win the nomination," he said, "although of course we respect the other candidates."

Matthaeus clears the air

COLOGNE, Germany, Aug 13: Lothar Matthaeus says his recent wrangling with Uli Hoessens and his decision to leave Bayern Munich mid season has been overblown, reports AFP.

The 38-year-old star has complained that the Bayern manager and other club officials have not shown him the necessary respect of late and not shown a total commitment in wanting to keep him until the end of the season in June.

On Wednesday however he sat down with Hoessens and

president Franz Beckenbauer and formally agreed to leave Bayern on December 31st and move to America where he will end his career playing for the New York/New Jersey MetroStars.

"I'll be starting there on February 20th, as I've always said, and hope now that everyone accepts it," Matthaeus said after training Thursday.

"One thing I'd like to put straight though is that we (he and Hoessens) have never had a problem. I respect Uli above everyone else. I owe everything to him. The whole situation got played up too much."

Matthaeus denied suggestions he was moving to the US as part of his relationship with the 22-year-old daughter of renowned Bayern Munich sports medic Dr Hans-Wilhelm Muller-Wohlharter.

"Fact is I could have earned more in the Bundesliga but the simple truth is that I have the chance to see a new country and experience a new way of doing things."

The Bayern libero will earn 820,000 dollars a year in New York, compensation money for playing in one of the MLS' worst teams. In the four years since the MLS has been running the MetroStars have lost more games than any other side (68) and have fewer wins (48).

The team trains at a school-ground near Newark airport where the showers in the dressing rooms reputedly have just one water temperature: either very hot or very cold. That is, when the water works at all.

The MetroStars are low on confidence. Not once have they come back to win a game after the opposition scored first. Of their last 12 matches 11 were lost and they have failed to score in their last four outings.

"A single player can't save us," MetroStars manager Charlie Stillitano said. "We need someone to lead the team, a winner. And Lothar is a winner."

Rajshahi soccer
From Our Correspondent
RAJSHAH, Aug 13: Shapla Sporting Club clinched the championship in the Bangabandhu Gold Cup football tournament.

In the final at Kamargaon High School playground held on last Thursday the winners defeated Mohanpur Belona Sporting Club 4-1.

Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank chairman Advocate Tajul Islam Mohammad Farooque distributed prizes among the winners as the chief guest.

Dortmund extend Sammer's contract
DORTMUND, Germany, August 13: German Bundesliga outfit Borussia Dortmund have extended the contract of former Golden Ball winner Matthias Sammer, despite the fact that he has been out of action since October 1997 because of a knee injury, reports AFP.

The club said that the contract was renewed for insurance reasons, but did not say for how long.



Goran Koponovic (R) of Hungarian side Ujpest Dozsa goes past Ivan Ristic (5) of Yugoslavia's Vojvodina Nova Sad during their UEFA Cup first leg fixture in Novi Sad on August 12. —AFP photo

Minnows enjoy moment of fame

LONDON, Aug 13 (Reuters/Internet): Three teams managed seven goals in the UEFA Cup qualifying round, first leg, on Thursday -- a veritable who's who of European soccer's lightweights.

Lokomotiv Moscow, Lyngby of Denmark and Norway's Viking Stavanger were the trio celebrating seven-up, with Anderlecht just off the pace with six as the expanded 121-team competition lumbered into action.

Although the night's 72 combatants included three former European champions it was generally an occasion for the part-timers to savour a brief taste of the big time.

Lokomotiv, European Cup Winners' Cup semifinalists in the last two seasons, won 7-1 at Belarus side BATE Borisov. Georgian striker Zaza Dzhanashia led the way with a

hat-trick in the sixth, 33rd and 60th mins.

The Belarus premier division leaders, who had lost only once in 18 league matches, were 3-0 down at halftime and simply gave up after the break.

It was a bad night for Belarus as their other representatives, Beshina Bobruisk, lost 5-1 at home to Omonia Nicosia of Cyprus.

Stavanger won 7-0 at home against Principat of Andorra and Lyngby recorded the same result against Malta's Birkirkara.

Anderlecht, UEFA Cup winners in 1983, swept past Iceland's Leifur 6-1 while Dinamo Bucharest won 6-2 at Luxembourg's Mondragon.

Celtic had the best result of the three former European Cup winners, thrashing Welsh outfit Cwmbran Town 6-0 away, helped by two goals from Henrik Larsson.

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