

Del Piero returns

ROME, Oct 4: Ales-sandro Del Piero's long-awaited re-turn to Italy's national team be-came official Monday when coach Dino Zoff put the star on the roster for the country's final Euro 2000 qualifying match, reports AP.

Del Piero hasn't played for the Azzurri since October 10, 1998, a month before suffering knee ligament damage that kept him out of action until the be-ginning of the current Serie A season.

THE ROSTER

Goalkeepers: Gianluigi Buf-fon (Parma), Francesco Toldo (Fiorentina).

Defenders: Fabio Cannavaro (Parma), Ciro Ferrara (Juventus), Paolo Maldini (Milan), Alessandro Nesta (Lazio), Christian Panucci (Inter), Gianluca Pessotto (Juventus), Paolo Vanoli (Parma).

Midfielders: Demetrio Al-bertini (Milan), Massimo Am-brosini (Milan), Dino Baggio (Parma), Antonio Conte (Juventus), Luigi Di Biagio (Inter), Eusebio Di Francesco (Roma), Francesco Moriero (Inter), Gianluca Zambrotta (Juventus).

Forwards: Alessandro Del Piero (Juventus), Vincenzo Montella (Roma), Filippo Inza-ghi (Juventus), Francesco Totti (Roma), Christian Vieri (Inter).

The nation

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players are laying for England at Lords tomorrow.

Only when a Dhaka football league match between glorious rivals Mohammedan and Abahani will be played with each missing three-four-more players on national duty in some other part of the world will we be able to say, 'Yes! The SAF gold is not the end of our journey. We are looking forward.'

Only when the same teams will be locked in a cricket league match at Dhaka when half their players are playing for Bangladesh in Australia or South Africa will we be certain that cricket is heading some-where. Who knows? Maybe the India, the Pakistan, the Sri Lanka way!

So why do we lay more emphasis on our clubs? In one word, money. The clubs simply pay much more than what the nation does. Who said social-ism was not dead?

The government has one single role to play if they want our footballers to one day em-barrass Ronaldo and our crick-eters to do he lap of honour af-ter a World Cup. It simply has to put in more money for national players. Let them feel secure, wanted, cajoled.

No one can remember when on the same evening we rejoiced as a nation in cricket and in football. Perhaps because there was no such evening before tonight. Let us make full use of it and think 'national' from tonight. Let clubs continue to be the breeding ground for our tal-ent. But let their ambitions soar beyond.

Party time

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Championship held India.

Meanwhile, custodian Biplab Bhattacharjee, who made some brilliant saves to keep the desperate Nepalese at bay, said, "Firstly, I will re-member my guru (mentor) and former Bangladesh keeper Motaheb. Without his guidance I would not have such a success," said Biplab.

When other members of the victorious team singing and dancing at the players' dressing room striker Alfaz Ahmed, the scorer of the lone goal, appeared pretty calm.

"I would like to thank the Almighty for making me able to score today and win the first ever gold for my country," he said.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Olympic Association secretary general Zafar Imam announced a 5000 US dollar cash award for the national football team.

Bangladesh walk

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the penalty for showing a little less respect for the opposition bowlers and eventually holed out in the deep for frequently taking liberty. He was caught at long-on off Perry with 10 runs short of what could have been a well deserved half-century.

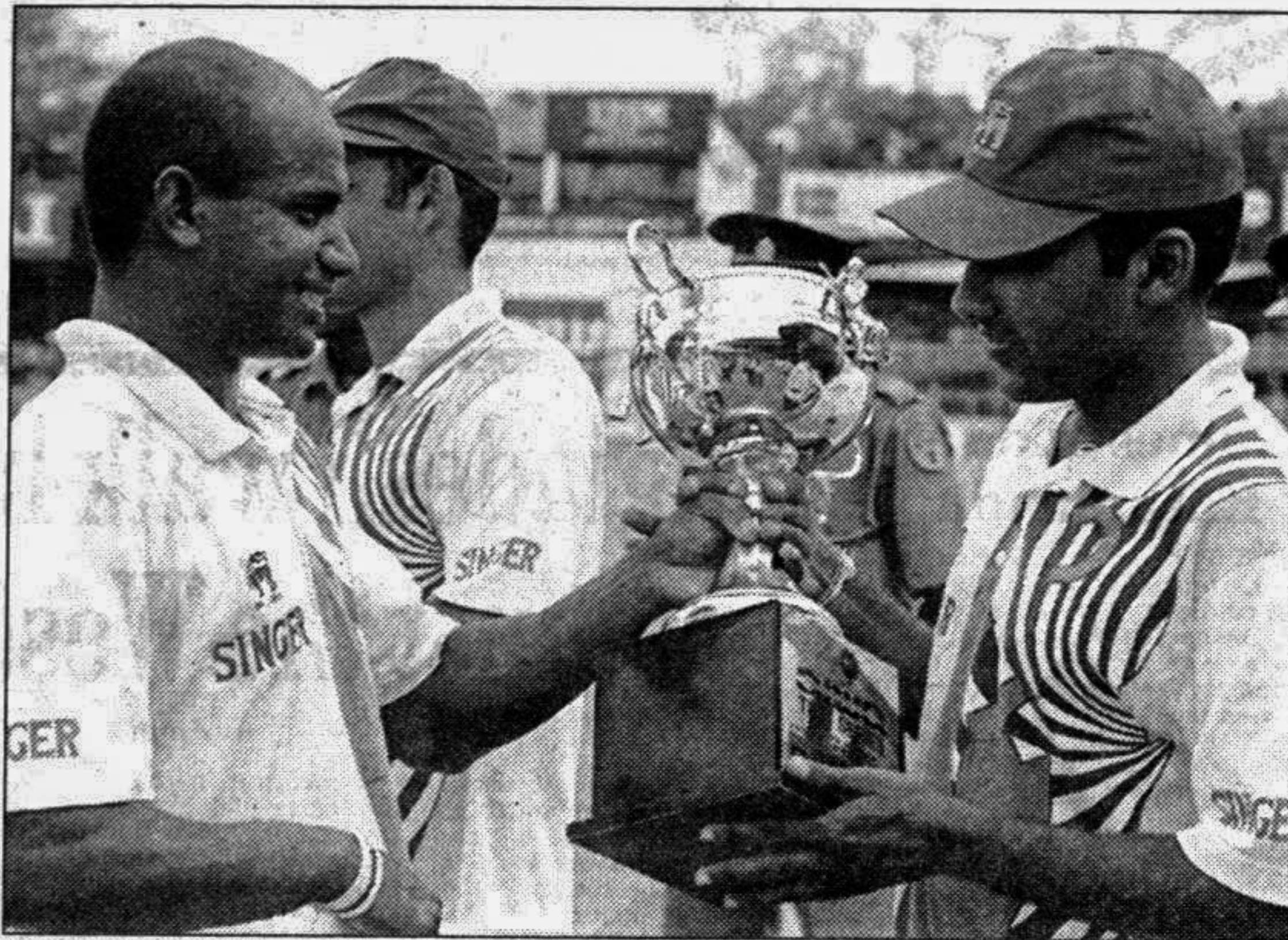
Javed completed his half-century off 109 balls and with the help of a quartet of fours, including a delectable back-foot square drive against Collins. The day's top right-hander how-ever did not last long after com-pleting his fifty. He was clean-bowled by Reon King for 53.

Javed's departure however paved the way for the most en-terprising partnership in the Bangladesh innings, that be-tween Khaled Masood and Enamul Haq. Together they put on 87 runs for the seventh wicket to make sure Bangladesh crossed the 200 mark.

Although Masood got off to a nervous start, he exploited a couple of dropped catches by Wavell Hinds in the early stage of his innings to score a wel-come half-century with the help of five delicate hits across the rope. While Masood made the West Indies spin attack look generous, Enamul played the perfect foil at the other end. Enamul scored a defiant 32 be-fore becoming the third victim of Perry.

The West Indies off-spinner then mopped up the Bangladesh tail, claiming the last two wickets in successive deliveries to finish with five for 85 in his 25.3 overs. It was a cherished return for the Jamaican, who had been out of the team due to injury since the Singapore Challenge tournament.

The second day of the match resumes this morning at ten.



Sri Lankan skipper Sanath Jayasuriya (L) lets his deputy Mahela Jayawardene hold the trophy of the Aiwa Test series in Colombo yesterday. —AFP photo

Lankans floating on air



COLOMBO, Oct 4 (AFP): Sri Lanka were left singing in the rain here Monday when a heavy downpour

handed them their first ever test series victory over Australia on the fifth day of the third and final Test.

The cloudburst left sections of the outfield completely un-playable, and after light rain began to fall at the Sinhalese Sports Club, umpires were left with no option but to abandon the Test — giving Sri Lanka a 1-0 series victory.

Sri Lanka finished on 61 for 4 wickets in reply to Australia's 342. Only nine hours play took place out of a possible 30 in the Test.

Sri Lanka won the first Test played at Kandy inside three days by six wickets, and then drew the rain-affected second Test at Galle with Australia on

the brink of defeat.

Monday's result also gave new skipper Sanath Jayasuriya a dream start to his captaincy career, following the decision to sack Arjuna Ranatunga after the islanders' World Cup de-bacle.

The Test series win gave Sri Lanka a clean sweep against the tourists. They beat the Australians in the Aiwa Cup tri-nations one-day tourna-ment earlier in the tour.

Australian skipper Steven Waugh tried to make the best out of the one-day world cham-pions' humiliating defeats both in the one-day series and the three-Test series.

"It is good for the game when all cricket playing countries be-come strong," Waugh said of Sri Lanka's victory in the Test se-ries. "At the top level Sri Lanka has become a very good side."

Sri Lanka's decision to bring in fresh faces at all levels of the

national team have paid divi-dends.

A new captain, a new coach and a new management laid the foundations for the win.

"It was a new strategy to play youngsters in the one-day series and get experienced players like Ranatunga and De Silva for the test series," Jayasuriya said.

Both Ranatunga and De Silva were out of the one-day matches but brought back for the Tests.

The series win was Sri Lanka's fifth over a Test-play-ing country. They have now beaten Australia, India, New Zealand, Pakistan and Zimbabwe.

They have also scored one-off Test victories against England.

Ricky Ponting won the man-of-the-match award for his un-beaten century and he also took the man-of-the-series award.



Australian captain Steve Waugh (L) shakes Ricky Ponting's hand after the latter was named both man-of-the-match and series yesterday. —AFP photo

Lippi, Ronaldo staying calm



MILAN, Oct 4: Inter Milan may have moved two points clear at the top of the Serie A but coach Mar-cello Lippi and Brazilian star Ronaldo are both keeping their feet firmly on the ground, reports AFP.

Lippi is more interested in building the fighting spirit he saw as an armchair spectator of Lazio's spellbinding 4-4 draw with AC Milan, while Ronaldo is determined to keep his head down until the derby.

"It would be absurd to make a judgement after five matches," said Lippi. "Being top isn't going to change anything and it's not that important to see who's in front or who's behind."

"What is important is that we've put all these points on the board and above all, that we keep it going. That we work hard to become as tough as the two teams I've just seen on tele-vision."

"I really enjoyed the match and it was clear that both teams had a great desire to win. There were so many chances to score that it's hard to say who de-served to be the winners."

Ronaldo also put Inter's cur-rent lead into perspective, say-ing: "It's always nice to be top, but we mustn't be too concerned about what the other teams are doing. We have to follow our own road."

The Brazilian got a much-needed confidence boost at the weekend by scoring Inter's win-ner in a 2-1 victory here over Piacenza.

Ronaldo has spent weeks improving his fitness, and a long period of injury and frus-tration, including a few poor performances for the team, looks to be coming to an end.

"I'm taking things calmly in my head now," he said. "Psychologically, I'm a differ-ent person now."

only one way to deal with it, and that is to keep working hard and to ignore it. And that's what I've done."

Ronaldo also accepted Lippi's decision to keep him on the subs' bench or even in the stands for a few weeks as he struggled to regain his fitness.

"Someone who loves football like I do always wants to play," he said.

"But the conditions were ideal for taking a decision like

that one: the team were winning matches and I was able train quietly, with no pressure."

Inter fans want to see the Ronaldo of their UEFA Cup winning season in 1997-98, preferably in time for the first derby of the season against champions AC Milan on October 24.

And the Brazilian responded by promising: "Let's say it now. Ronaldo is ready to be the real Ronaldo for the derby."



Inter Milan striker Christian Vieri congratulates partner Ronaldo (No 9) after the Brazilian grabbed the winner against Piacenza on October 2. —AFP photo

Vieira in thick soup

LONDON, Oct 4: French World Cup winning midfielder Patrick Vieira is facing more disciplinary action from the English Football Association (FA) Monday over allegations of spitting and a wrangle with a police officer following his sending off during the 2-1 defeat at West Ham Sunday, reports AFP.

Vieira picked up the latest red card of his Arsenal career after two cautions at Upton Park for second-half fouls on West Ham's Italian goal hero Paolo Di Canio in a stormy English Premiership clash.

Vieira's boss and compatriot Arsene Wenger claimed referee Mike Reed had been hood-winked into sending off the Senegal-born star by play-act-ing from Di Canio.

But it is Vieira's behaviour after being sent off that is likely to land him in trouble.

Television evidence sup-ported West Ham defender Neil Ruddock's claim that Vieira spat in his face and a police of-ficer has reported the Arsenal player for an incident which followed in the players tunnel.

"He spat at me, and as far as I'm concerned, that is the lowest of the low. Maybe that's some-thing the FA can look into," Ruddock said.

Wenger had defended Vieira and said: "Di Canio had a great game but I'm very frustrated by his behaviour. It's not really fair play. He dived and it was just in front of the bench. I'm very upset."

"I think Patrick has to keep his nerves better but the referee has been cheated by Di Canio. I'm not sure he deserved the first booking and I'm sure he didn't deserve the second one."

The FA handed Vieira a then-record 20,000 pounds fine after his V-sign to the crowd during the infamous game at Sheffield Wednesday last sea-son, when Di Canio — then play-ing for Wednesday — pushed re-feree Paul Alcock to the floor.

Vieira was exonerated by an FA disciplinary committee of assaulting a police officer at Hillsborough on the same day, just over a year ago.

MU profits up

LONDON, Oct 4: Manchester United football club produced a better result on Monday a day after the club's heaviest Premiership defeat for three years, unveiling a 20-percent jump in profits for the 1998-99 season, reports AFP.

Manchester United, the biggest British club, still smart-ing from a 5-0 defeat at the hands of Premiership chal-lenger Chelsea, said that sales had topped 100 million pounds for the first time, to 110.67 mil-lion (170 million euros, 183 million dollars). Operating profits was 32.31 million pounds from 26.99 million.

The better figures were put down to the higher number of home matches in United's Old Trafford stadium and a boost in the increase of television in-come to 22.5 million pounds on the back of the club's triumph in the 'European Champions' League.

Manchester United also won the domestic league and FA Cup last season, but success came at a price: player wages increased by 7.7 million pounds in the year, 3.5 million in higher bonus payments arising from winning the three competi-tions.

A Greek tragedy

ATHENS, Oct 4: Seven sup-porters of Greek first division team PAOK Salonika were killed and 30 injured in a road accident near Tembi, Greek po-lice revealed Monday, reports AFP.

The accident happened at dawn on Monday when the driver of a coach carrying the PAOK fans, returning from the match with Panathinaikos, lost control of the vehicle.

The coach crashed into an articulated lorry travelling in the opposite direction.

First indications are that the driver fell asleep at the wheel.

Three shine

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wrist when they delivered."

For Khaled Masood, it was a case of rising to the occasion.

"The fact that I was playing against a team of the calibre of the West Indies made me more determined to do well," ex-plaind the chirpy 'keeper.

"I don't get that many oppor-tunities to bat a long innings because usually I'm left with the tail-enders. But today, thank-fully, I had the support from Enamul Haq and we put on a much-needed partnership for the team."

"On previous occasions, we were a little taken aback by the Caribbean reputation. But now we are stronger mentally," added Masood.

Bangladesh skipper Aminul Islam was full of praise for the two half-centurions but thought the innings of the day was played by Khaled Mahmood.

Both Javed and Masood batted excellently, but I think Mahmood missed a hundred today. He was looking great," said the skipper.

About his team's prospects in the match, Aminul said that if they can get at least three wickets before lunch on day two, then anything can happen.

Premiership

Chelsea swallow United



LONDON, Oct 4: Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson claimed his hu-miliated team would bounce back from their 5-0 thrashing at Chelsea in a setback that allowed Leeds, 2-1 victors at Watford, to depose the reigning champions at the top of the English Premiership, reports AFP.

And while Sir Alex was eager to accentuate the positive his Leeds counterpart David O'Leary was keen to ensure his men did not allow their lofty position to go to their heads.

O'Leary said: "You get no prizes for being top in October. Let's see where we finish at the end of the season and not start congratulating ourselves now."

In other games Sunday England striker Alan Shearer confirmed his return to form by

now's already count Liverpool and Chelsea among their vic-tims and a third prize scalp looked within reach when Mark Williams put them ahead, beating Nigel Martyn after latching onto a long ball from Peter Kennedy.

It took Leeds less than a minute to reply. Michael Bridges, signed by Leeds boss David O'Leary from Sunderland, found himself in space with the Watford defence still celebrating and drilled the ball home from 15 yards.

In the 70th minute Australian international Harry Kewell conjured up the goal that would send Leeds to the summit.

There seemed little danger when he let fly from 30 metres but the ball swerved viciously, deceiving Watford goalkeeper Alec Chamberlain.

If Leeds were unconvinced then the same could not be said

Sir Alex said: "We'll just have to bite the bullet and get on with it," he said, but he added "there will be a reaction, no question about that."

"It's another of those days we get now and then. Just like the Newcastle game two or three years ago."

Significantly United won the title that season.

Vialli was delighted to see Sutton score his first goal for the club and beamed: "Chris is a lovely lad, he's a great profes-sional player and wants to im-prove. He's really worked hard."

Meanwhile, Shearer plun-dered his 10th and 11th goals of the season as Newcastle United tore Middlesbrough to shreds in the north east derby.

Shearer struck with two trademark back-post headers on 17 and 45 minutes minutes as Middlesbrough felt the full force of a side transformed



Chelsea's Dennis Wise goes for high tackle on Manchester United's Nicky Butt during their Premiership fixture. —AFP photo

scoring both goals in Newcastle's home 2-1 win over local rivals Middlesbrough while West Ham edged a bad-tempered London derby, with Arsenal 2-1. Leicester City pre-vailed 3-2 over Tottenham in another incident-packed clash.

Leeds had to battle to see off Watford, tipped by many pun-dits at the start of the season for an immediate return to the first division.

But Graham Taylor's min-

or for Chelsea whose victory over the Treble winners could hardly be more emphatic, inflicting United's first league defeat since September and their heaviest since they another 5-0 battering at Newcastle three years ago.

The Londoners seized an early advantage when Uruguayan Gustavo Poyet headed them in front after just 28 seconds with United's Italian keeper Massimo Taibi hope-lessly stranded.

since Bobby Robson replaced Ruud Gullit at the helm. Brian Deane's late consolation goal gave the scoreline a flattering look.

Another man in goalscoring form is West Ham's maverick Italian Paolo Di Canio.

The former AC Milan, Celtic and Sheffield Wednesday man scored both goals as his side cruised to a 2-0 lead against Arsenal.

Di Canio — once nearly drummed out of English foot-ball after a much-documented disagreement with referee Paul Alcock — produced a brilliant second to kill the game.

Taking a long ball he flipped it over Martin Keown before giving David Seaman no chance with a precise finish.

Croatian Davor Suker put Arsenal back in the game after 77 minutes but it was the home side that prevailed 2-1.

Arsenal's plight was not helped by the late dismissal of French World Cup winner Patrick Vieira who became in-volved in a fracas with Di Canio and Neil Ruddock.

Ruddock squared up to Vieira after the midfielder had tackled Di Canio and while Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger though his man was hard done by Ruddock claimed Vieira spat at him.

The former England man said: "He spat at me and as far as I'm concerned that is the lowest of the low. Maybe it's something the FA can look into."

Wenger said: "Di Canio had a great game, but I'm very frus-trated by his behaviour. It's not really fair play. He dived, and it was just in front of the bench. I'm very upset."

West Ham's Cameroonian midfielder Marc-Vivien Foe was also dismissed as the game went into injury time.

Veteran Northern Ireland defender Gerry Taggart secured a late victory for Leicester City against Tottenham Hotspur.

City took the lead with a Muzzy Izzet penalty after Emile Heskey had been bundled over in the penalty area but Norwegian striker Steffen Iversen scored twice to give Spurs a 2-1 interval lead.

Izzet struck again to square the match and then Taggart came up with the vital clincher.

Byshovets quits

KIEV, Oct 4: Ukrainian side Shakhtyor Donetsk said Monday its coach Anatoly Byshovets had resigned after the club was eliminated from the UEFA Cup by Dutch side Roda JC Kerkrade, reports AFP.

"I feel sorrow about Bysho-vets' decision, but I can un-derstand his feelings," Shakhtyor president Rinat Akhmetov told AFP.

Byshovets told the press he felt obliged to quit following a series of poor results for the team.

The resignation of Bysho-vets, 52, also followed the Donetsk side's disastrous show-ing in the domestic Ukrainian league. Shakhtyor is currently seventh with 16 points after eight games.

STANDINGS

English Premiership table after games played Sunday (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points).										
Leeds	10	7	1	2	19	12	22			
Man Utd	10	6	3	1	23	15	21			
Sunderland	10	6	2	2	18	8	20			
Chelsea	8	6	1	1	15	3	19			
Arsenal	10	6	1	3	13	9	19			
Everton	10	5	2	3	16	10	17			
Leicester	10	5	2	3	17	13	17			
Aston Villa	10	5	2	3	11	9	17			
West Ham	8	5	1	2	11	6	16			
Tottenham	9	4	2	3	16	14	14			
Middlesbrough	10	4	0	6	11	15	12			
Liverpool	9	3	2	4	10	10	11			
Southampton	8	3	1	4	13	16	10			
Coventry	10	2	3	5	12	14	9			
Watford	10	3	0	7	6	11	9			
Derby	9	2	2	5	7	15	8			
Wimbledon	10	1	5	4	14	23	8			
Bradford	9	2	2	5	4	13	8			
Newcastle	10	2	1	7	20	23	7			
Sheff Wed	10	1	1	8	8	25	4			

Primera Liga

Barcelona stay atop

BARCELONA, Oct 4: Patrick Kluiwert kept Barcelona on top of the Spanish Primera Liga by scoring the first and setting up Rivaldo for the second with a brilliant one-two with the Brazilian in their 2-0 victory over Valladolid, reports Reuters.

John Toshack lost his first home match as Real Madrid coach in 36 matches as Valen-cia staged off a second half comeback to win 3-2 on Sunday at the Bernabeu.

Toshack was forced to leave the touchline after the referee gave him a red card for protest-ing. Real had been reduced to 10 men in the ninth minute after Brazilian defender Roberto Carlos was sent off for handling the ball on the goal line.

The result leaves Real lan-guishing in eighth place, six points behind Barca after six matches.

STANDINGS

Spanish Primera Liga table after games played Sunday (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points).										
Barcelona	6	5	0	1	14	4	15			
Rayo Vallecano	6	4	1	1	8	4	13			
Celta Vigo	6	4	0	2	7	4	12			
Espanyol	6	4	0	2	10	9	12			
Real Zaragoza	6	3	2	1	8	3	11			
Deportivo La Coruna	6	3	2	1	10	6	11			
Alaves	6	3	1	2	7	7	10			
Real Madrid	6	2	3	1	12	9	9			
Malaga	6	2	2	2	9	8	8			
Racing Santander	6	2	2	2	8	9	8			
Numancia	6	2	2	2	6	9	8			
Real Sociedad	6	2	1	3	9	10	7			
Real Valladolid	6	2	1	3	5	7	7			
Real Betis	6	2	1	3	3	8	7			
Real Mallorca	6	2	0	4	8	8	6			
Real Oviedo	6	2	0	4	4	9	6			
Athletic Bilbao	6	1	2	3	7	9	5			
Sevilla	6	0	4	2	6	8	4			
Valencia	6	1	1	4	6	10	4			
Athletic Madrid	6	1	1	4	6	12	4			