

Sport

Juve smile at last

MILAN, Oct 18: Juventus showed they are still a force to be reckoned with in Italian soccer after cutting Fabio Capello's AS Roma down to size at the Olympic stadium, reports AFP.

Juventus, revered in Italy as "The Old Lady", put weeks of discontent behind them with a 1-0 victory on Sunday night which hoisted the club into joint second place with Inter Milan.

It was a personal triumph too for Frenchman Zinedine Zidane, who had been booted on his previous outing but was this time hailed for his match-winning free-kick in the 50th minute, a copy of the one he steered past Manchester United's Peter Schmeichel at Old Trafford in 1997.

The triumph was marred though by a surprise sending-off in stoppage time after Zidane was judged to have taken a dive, his second yellow offence of the night.

"Juventus showed that they've got their game back together again," said the Frenchman. "That goal has put us back on course - and me too."

"We've shown that when it comes to fighting for the league title, we're up there too. I'm not in top condition yet, but I'm improving. I just hope that it won't be long before I am at my peak."

Zidane's last league goal came right back to last season.

Delighted coach Carlo Ancelotti quipped: "Let's hope we don't have to wait another 265 days before he scores another one."

Capello was in no mood for jokes though after the tough disciplinarian watched his team suffer the domination of the former world champions.

Insisting that the free-kick which Zidane scored from should never have been given, he went on to criticise how own side saying: "We missed a chance to go top. And that's the biggest disappointment."

But he added: "This wasn't a typical Roma performance. We were too timid, and when it came to dealing with their pressing, we didn't have the usual character which we've shown up till now."

We were also making too many bad passes, even simple ones were going astray, especially the through-balls for the strikers."

However, Capello also accepted that Juventus, the most successful team in the history of Italian football, are still an opponent to be wary of.

"You have to give credit to Juventus," he said. "They played well. We weren't playing against any old team."

FIFA misses Zambia, Ghana!

JOHANNESBURG, Oct 18: Several leading African football nations have not been officially enrolled for the 2002 World Cup qualifying draw 18 days after the deadline, reports AFP.

Notable absences from a list supplied by world controlling body FIFA are Zambia, Ghana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Namibia, Gabon, Guinea and Liberia.

All rank among the top 20 national teams on the continent except Liberia, whose captain is former World, European and African Footballer of the Year George Weah.

A FIFA statement said requests from more than 40 other unspecified nations to feature in the December 7 draw at the Tokyo International Forum are being considered.

The list of enrolments among the 202 FIFA members is headed by Europe with 50. Africa has 36, Asia 32, North and Central America and Caribbean 26, South America 8 and Oceania 6.

Europe is also guaranteed the most places at the finals in South Korea and Japan with 14, including defending champions France, followed by Africa with five.

Qualifying matches begin on March 1 and must be completed by November 11 2001. The 32-nation finals kick off in South Korea on June 1 2002 and end on June 30 in Japan.

Stern stars in Columbus win

COLUMBUS, Ohio, Oct 18: Trinidad's Stern John scored in the 77th and 84th minutes to give Columbus a 2-0 victory over Tampa Bay here Sunday in the opening match of their Major League Soccer playoff series, reports AFP.

The best-of-three opening round Eastern Conference series continues Friday at Tampa. A third game if needed will be held October 27.

The winner will face D.C. United or Miami for a berth in the United States premier league football final on November 21 in Foxboro, Massachusetts against the Western Conference champion.

The Los Angeles Galaxy took their first step toward being that team by beating visiting Colorado 3-0 Sunday.

Edra Hendrickson scored in the eighth minute, Greg Banney added a penalty kick goal in the 52nd minute and Cobi Jones completed the scoring in the 57th minute.

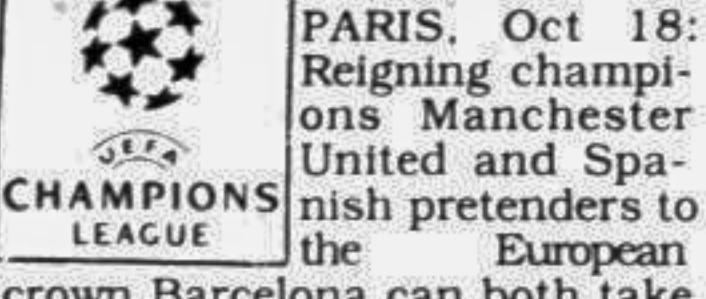
Army v'ball

MOMENSHAI, Oct 18: The Savar army annexed the title of the annual volleyball championship of the Bangladeshi Army which concluded at the Momenshai Cantonment yesterday.

They defeated the Jessor area 3-1 in the final.

Lance Naik Taskinur Rahman was adjudged the best player-of-the-meet.

Prospect of mouth-watering clashes



PARIS, Oct 18: Reigning champions Manchester United and Spanish pretenders to the European

cup Barcelona can both take

the points in Manchester after taking a lead through Cote d'Ivoire international Ibrahim Bakayoko only for Andy Cole and Paul Scholes to snatch late goals for United, who - as Bayern Munich know to their cost - never give in until the fat lady sings.

United's Irish skipper Roy Keane looks set to resume for the European champions after an injury lay-off while Dutch defender Jaap Stam and striker Andy Cole should shrug off slight knocks. Manager Sir Alex Ferguson reports no injury problems other than long-term casualties Wes Brown and Gary Neville.

The French side, European champions in 1993 in a glory era that was tarnished by the match-fixing that eventually caused the team to be relegated and their flamboyant president Bernard Tapie to be jailed, are United's closest pursuers in the group and even a draw might be satisfactory for both teams.

Tapie has reinvented himself as an actor - currently appearing on a Paris stage in the McMurphy role made famous by Jack Nicholson in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. And his former team are reestablishing themselves as a force in continental football - they reached last season's UEFA Cup Final.

Croatia Zagreb, still not out of the hunt, visit Austria's Sturm Graz in the other Pool D match. Despite playing their home matches at the Arnold Schwarzenegger Stadium Sturm Graz are very much the group weaklings and are yet to register a point.

Barcelona, meanwhile, have had a less than ideal preparation for their Wembley trip after their 3-3 draw with Numancia allowed unheralded Rayo Vallecano to displace them at the top of the Primera Liga.

RIVALDO

there. Both clubs possess the only two realistic candidates for FIFA's World Player of the Year award which will be made in January.

Barcelona's contender is Brazilian Rivaldo, who most tip to succeed Frenchman Zinedine Zidane as the planet's top player. His only realistic rival is United's England international midfielder David Beckham, who may have to settle for runner-up spot although he is the runaway favourite to be named European player of the year - the first Englishman to win that accolade since Kevin Keegan.

Beckham is happy to sing the praises of his rival and told French sports paper L'Equipe: "I have always said Rivaldo is one of the best players in the world, even the best perhaps. I would vote for him. Each time I watch Rivaldo or (Inter Milan and Brazil's) Ronaldo on TV I try to

DAVID BECKHAM

in the other Group B match

Tuesday.

In Group A it is Lazio that are top dogs. They had a good weekend in Italy going top of the Serie A table and should prevail in Slovenia against Maribor, who can not be totally discounted as they shocked Dynamo Kyiv earlier in the competition.

The Ukrainians, meanwhile, face Bayer Leverkusen who are the closest challengers to Lazio in that pool.

In Group C it is Germany's

Borussia Dortmund, European

champions in 1997, who are

making the pace. A victory at home to Norway's Rosenborg

would cement a place in the

next phase.

Holland's Feyenoord, also

former champions, clash with

Portugal's Boavista in a match

that will seal the fate of the

Porto-based side should they

lose in Rotterdam.

Suker, who scored seven

goals against Barca when he

was with the "meringues", said:

"Many people in Spain thought

Barcelona would have no problem

with Arsenal when we

played them in the Nou Camp.

MU close in on Ajax mark

LONDON, Oct 18: Manchester United are in line to equal an all-time record held by Ajax Amsterdam of 19 consecutive unbeaten matches in European club competition, reports Reuters.

United, who last lost in Europe to Juventus in the Champions League group phase in December 1997, have gone 18 games without loss since and will equal the record if they avoid defeat to Olympique Marseille in the Stade Velodrome on Tuesday.

Ajax set their record between 1994 and 1996, surpassing an earlier record of 17 set by Barcelona in the late 1950s in the old Fairs Cup and European Cup when European club competition was in its infancy.

AC Milan hold the European record for successive victories in competition with 10.

Four English teams feature

in a top 10 of European clubs

with the best unbeaten run.

Curiously absent from the list are Real Madrid, who despite winning five European cup titles in a row between 1956 and 1960, peppered their two-leg ties with away defeats and never put together a substantial unbeaten run.

The Spaniards do, however,

hold the record of 19 successive

titles won.

1. Ajax Amsterdam (Netherlands) 19 1994-96.

2. Manchester United (England) 18 1998-99.

3. Barcelona (Spain) 17 1955-60.

4. Tottenham Hotspur (England) 16 1968-73.

5. Dynamo Kiev (Ukraine) 14 1985-87.

5. IFK Gothenburg (Sweden) 14 1980-82.

5. Liverpool (England) 14 1980-82.

8. AC Milan (Italy) 13 1987-89.

8. Inter Milan (Italy) 13 1962-65.

8. Olympique Marseille (France) 13 1992-94.

8. Nottingham Forest (England) 13 1978-79.

Ronaldo unhappy

MILAN, Oct 18: Brazilian star Ronaldo slated his team's performance at the weekend after Inter Milan were topped from the leadership of the Serie A by lowly Venezia, reports AFP.

Inter's first defeat and the hosts' first win of the season left the centre-forward criticising the quality of his team's football and the squandering of three easy points.

"We played badly," said

Ronaldo. "And there was nothing to do about it. We didn't play like we did in the other matches, we were too slow, we didn't move the ball around much and when we did, we did it badly."

"We just didn't read the game properly."

The season may be only six

matches old with another 28 to play by next May, but the striker warned his teammates: "If we want to win the league, we have to win matches like that one."

"Now, at least, we have a week to prepare for the derby."

Defender Christian Panucci, who will be facing his old club when Inter meet AC Milan this weekend, said: "We mustn't get demoralised. One of the hallmarks of a great team is their ability to get calmly back to work."

"We're all intelligent lads, we know that any team can have an off day. Today it happened to us," he said. "But now we've got the derby coming up and that's always a special match."

Beckenbauer's peace making mission

BERLIN, Oct 18: German football legend Franz Beckenbauer will travel to Madrid in a bid to end a rift between German and Spanish football chiefs that is damaging Germany's bid to stage the 2006 World Cup, a German newspaper will report Monday.

Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) chief Angel Villar had said he was rethinking Spain's pledge to support Germany's bid in the light of the German Federation president (DFB) Egidius Braun's remarks during this week's UEFA meeting that Villar considers damaged Spain's bid to host the 2004 European Championships.

Portugal were Tuesday

awarded that tournament.

In Monday's edition of the Handelsblatt newspaper Beckenbauer, a 1974 World Cup winner as a player and coach to the 1990 winning side, admits: "It would have been better if certain things had not been said."

Braun, in charge of UEFA's candidature committee, had angered the Spanish body by putting the Spanish bid on a level with those of its two competitors - Portugal and a joint Austrian-Hungarian campaign.

Villar, who as a member of world governing body FIFA's executive committee will have a big say in deciding who will stage the 2006 tournament, considered that move "partisan" and maintained after Portugal won the vote that Spain's had been the best bid. He then said he was considering whether to continue supporting Germany's 2006 campaign.

Germany faces stiff opposition from another European candidate England while South Africa, Morocco and Brazil are still contenders.

Beckenbauer tried to soothe Villar's anger, saying: "I can understand his unhappiness and I will go to Spain to smooth over the ground. Now we must work hard to make up the lost ground."

STANDINGS

Serie A table on Sunday night (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):

Country	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lazio	6	4	2	0	14	6	14
Inter Milan	6	4	1	1	11	3	13
Juventus	6	4	1	1	8	4	13
AS Roma	6	3	2	1	10	5	11
AC Milan	6	2	4	0	16	10	10
Parma	6	2	2	2	9	9	8
Florentina	6	2	2	2	9	9	8
Reggina	6	2	2	2	7	7	8
Lecco	6	2	2	2			