

## 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 booed 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 put us back on course -- and has put."

"We've showed 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 dates 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 disciplinary 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 characteristics 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 absentees from a list supplied by world governing 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 here 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

MOMENSHAH, Oct 18: The Savar area annexed the title of the annual volleyball championship of the Bangladesh Army which concluded at the Momen Shah Cantonment yesterday, reports BSS.

They defeated the Jessore 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 crown Barcelona can both take big strides towards the next phase of the European Champions League if they prevail in away assignments with their closest pursuers Tuesday, reports AFP.

With matches in Groups E to G to be played Wednesday it is Groups A to D that take centre stage Tuesday night.

Group D leaders United make the trip to Marseille, who ran the continental kings close in their most recent European outing at Old Trafford before United pulled off one of their trademark comebacks to win 2-1.

Barca, top of Group B, visit United's English Premiership rivals Arsenal who snatched a point with a late Nwankwo Kanu goal when the teams clashed at the Catalan club's legendary Nou Camp arena last time out in a match that finished 1-1.

And the parallels do not end



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.

Barca'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

take in what I see. I become like a sponge."

Neither team will be taking their trip lightly, though.

Marseille came very close to taking 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 Steve 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.

But north London holds sweet memories for Barca. It was at Wembley that the Nou Camp outfit won their one and only European title in 1992 thanks to Ronald Koeman's extra-time strike against Sampdoria.

One man running into form for Arsenal is Croatian striker Davor Suker who scored twice at the weekend in a 4-1 drubbing of Everton. He will be eager to put one over the Spanish side - he was roundly booed at the Nou Camp as he was formerly on the books of Barca's bitter rivals Real Madrid.

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

but now they've seen what we can do."

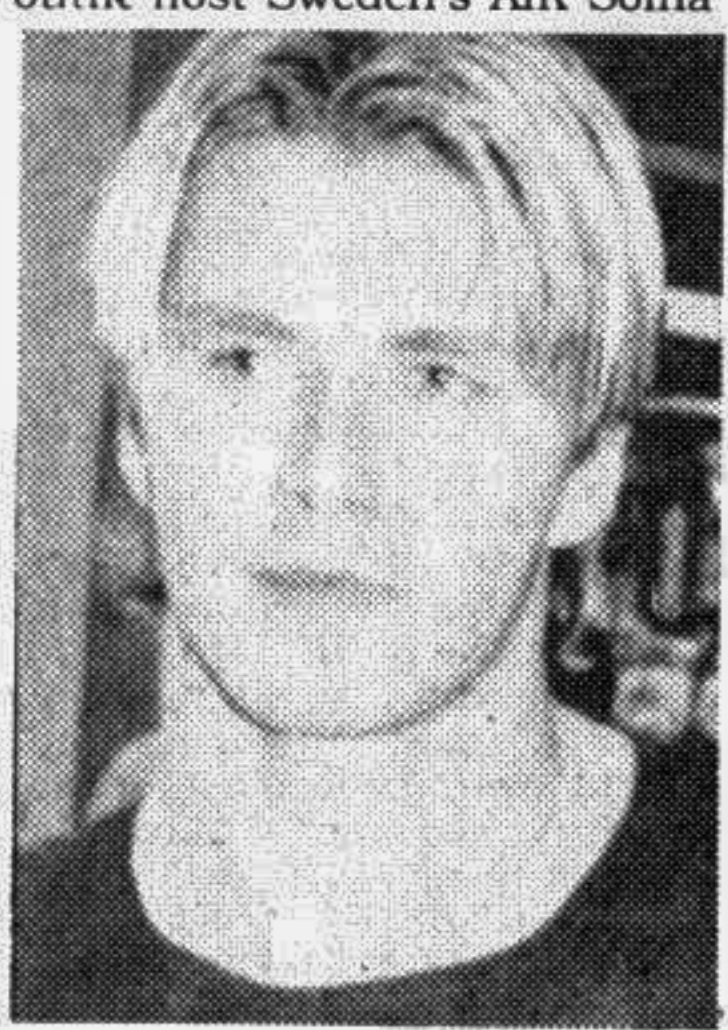
He confirmed that, of the teams playing Tuesday, that he saw United and Barcelona as the main contenders.

Suker said: "It is my belief we are among the favourites to win the Champions League. There are six top contenders - Real Madrid, Barcelona, Bayern Munich, Manchester United, AC Milan and Arsenal. And we are capable of beating all those teams."

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger is contemplating a recall for French World Cup winning midfielder Emmanuel Petit, who is convalescing from an injury, in place of compatriot Gilles Grimandi, suspended for three matches after his red card in the Nou Camp battle.

However, rushing Petit back too early in such a highly-charged encounter may be a risk Wenger is not ready to take.

Meanwhile, Suker, French midfielder Patrick Vieira and Martin Keown know another yellow card will lead to suspension against Fiorentina in the next match. The Florence-based outfit host Sweden's AIK Solna



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.



Real Mallorca's Yugoslav striker Iovan Stankovic skips a sliding tackle from Carlos Cuartero of Real Zaragoza during their Primera Liga match on October 17. — AFP photo

## Primera Liga

# Vallecano return to top

MADRID, Oct 18: Unheralded suburban Madrid outfit Rayo Vallecano were sitting pretty on top of the Primera Liga Sunday night after their 1-0 win at Alaves, reports AFP.

The victory had to be eked out and was secured by a single goal from the unfashionable side's Basque striker Jon Perez Bolo with seven minutes remaining.

Rayo topped the table briefly earlier this season - the first time the club had reached pole position in their modest 75-year history.

But Bolo's strike was good enough to see Rayo jump back ahead of reigning champions Barcelona who only managed a 3-3 draw Saturday night at Numancia, who were promoted alongside Rayo Vallecano last season.

Yugoslav international striker Savo Milosevic, formerly of English Premiership club Aston Villa, scored twice - once from a penalty - as Real Zaragoza drubbed visiting Real Mallorca 3-0 while Valladolid beat Seville 2-1 and Espanyol shared a goalless draw with Real Sociedad.

Rayo's other wealthy neighbours Atletico Madrid's disappointing campaign took another turn for the worse when they lost 2-1 to Real Betis.

On Saturday Barcelona, 2-0

up through Portugal's Luis Pigo and Finland's Jari Litmanen with seven minutes to go, amazingly let that lead slip during a goal frenzy in the final minutes.

Making matters more difficult, Barcelona only finished the match with 10 men after Holland's Winston Bogarde was sent off.

Numancia pulled back a goal by Ojeda in the 83rd minute then equalized with a goal by Navarro, set up by Ojeda.

A minute before the end, Dani scored a spectacular headed goal from a Zenzen centre and it looked as though Barcelona had sneaked an away

victory.

But Pacheta made matters level once more in the final seconds of injury time.

Meanwhile Rayo's more illustrious neighbours Real Madrid, Barca's eternal rivals, also could only draw 2-2 at home to an in-form Real Oviedo side. It was Real's sixth draw of the season and not the kind of performance for supposedly perennial title challengers.

They were 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."

## 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 records.

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 wins.

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.
6. IFK Gothenburg (Sweden) 14 1980-82.
7. Liverpool (England) 14 1980-82.
8. AC Milan (Italy) 13 1987-89.
9. Inter Milan (Italy) 13 1962-65.
10. Olympique Marseille (France) 13 1992-94.
11. 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 toppled 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 be done 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."

Inter coach Marcello Lippi said: "We lost the match because we didn't have a good game. And in Italy, when you don't play well you can lose against teams from the lower end of the table."

But he added: "I'm not making a drama out of it. We hit too many long balls forward, which were easy for a well-organised defence. We did better when we kept the ball low."

And he summed up: "They won because they played better than us. We've suffered in the past and won, this time we suffered and lost."

Inter president Massimo Moratti praised a "magnificent" Ronaldo but added: "We should have finished it in the first half."

French World Cup hero Zidane, who told the Juventus fans earlier in the week that he was coming into form, put that theory into practice by curling home a 50th minute free-kick to silence the Olympic stadium crowd.

## 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 considered damaged Spain's bid to host the 2004 European Championships - Portugal were Tuesday away in the 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 Austria-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 all 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."



Scene from the Serie A encounter between Inter Milan and Venezia on October 17. — AFP photo

## Serie A

# Inter crash at Venezia

MILAN, Oct 18: Lazio finished up one point clear at the top of the Serie A without kicking a ball on Sunday, after Inter Milan and AS Roma both crashed to their first defeats of the season, reports AFP.

Lazio, who beat Udinese 3-0 on Saturday, couldn't believe their luck as lowly Venezia secured their first win of the season by defeating Inter 1-0 and Juventus silenced their critics by winning 1-0 away to Roma in a match that saw their playmaker Zinedine Zidane score the winner and then get sent off.

Lazio, with 14 points, now lead Inter (13) and Juventus (13), while Roma, missing suspended playmaker Francesco Totti and injured striker Marco Delvecchio, slipped to fourth (11), a point clear of champions AC Milan.

Inter were fresh out of luck in Venice, with Chilean Ivan Zamorano seeing a 22nd minute lob beat the goalkeeper but not the crossbar while Ronaldo rounded the keeper minutes later only to see his shot cleared off the line.

Venezia centre-forward Filippo Maniero scored the winner 38 seconds into the second half, slamming a rebound into the roof of the net after Yugoslav Dejan Petkovic's shot was blocked by keeper Angelo Peruzzi.

Inter coach Marcello Lippi said: "We lost the match because we didn't have a good game. And in Italy, when you don't play well you can lose against teams from the lower end of the table."

But he added: "I'm not making a drama out of it. We hit too many long balls forward, which were easy for a well-organised defence. We did better when we kept the ball low."

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But his match finished miserably with a red card in injury-time after the Frenchman was judged to have taken a dive in the penalty area, his second bookable offence of the evening.

Juventus deserved their win after taking the fight to the home team, with defender Mark Iuliano hitting the woodwork in the first half and both Zidane and Alessandro Del Piero proving to be a constant menace.

Coach Carlo Ancelotti, whose team have been under fire recently for some poor quality football, was delighted with the turnaround.

"When you win convincingly, it always makes you happy," he said. "The team played well against difficult opponents... But Juventus really wanted this win and they deserved to get it."

AC Milan had German striker Oliver Bierhoff to thank for salvaging an embarrassing 2-2 draw with lowly Cagliari at San Siro.

Cagliari's new signing Domenico Morfeo opened the scoring from close range in the seventh minute following a defensive blunder.

But Milan levelled three minutes later when Bierhoff was floored by French defender Jonathan Zebina and the penalty was converted by ice-cool Ukrainian Andriy Shevchenko, who sent the ball one way and Cagliari's goalkeeper the other to become Serie A's top scorer with six goals.

Another defensive lapse in the 37th minute allowed

Daniele Berretta to rifle Cagliari back in front and the hosts had to wait until the 78th minute for Bierhoff to smack home a first-time equaliser.

"Our first half was disastrous," said Milan coach Alberto Zaccheroni.

"In fact, I told the team at half-time that if I could have made 10 substitutions right there and then, I would have done. We got our approach all wrong. They were more aggressive and more dynamic than we were."

Milan president Silvio Berlusconi was diplomatic about the performance, saying: "Today was a bad day and you can't judge a team on a bad day."

And he added: "We dropped two points. But with the way things were looking at one stage, you could even say it went well for us."

Elsewhere, a late burst from Torino saw them overpower Bari 3-1 in Turin.

Former Nottingham Forest striker Andrea Silenzi headed 'Torino' into a 42nd minute lead, but Duccio Innocenti equalised two minutes after the break.

The points looked destined to be shared until Torino striker Marco Ferrante drove home an 83rd minute penalty and Alessio Scarchilli put the result beyond doubt in injury-time.

Lecce came back from a goal down to beat Reggina 2-1 in a southern derby which saw two penalties awarded just before half-time, while Verona beat Perugia 2-0 and 10-man Piacenza held Bologna to a 0-0 draw.

## STANDINGS

Serie A table on Sunday night (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):										
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			
Lecce	6	2	2	2	7	8	8			
Torino	6	2	2	2	6	7	8			
Perugia	6	2	1	3	8	10	7			
Bari	6	1	3	2	4	6	6			
Udinese	6	1	3	2	7	10	6			
Bologna	6	1	3	2	3	6	6			
Verona	6	1	2	3	5	11	6			
Venezia	6	1	2	3	3	8	5			
Cagliari	6	0	3	3	5	10	3			
Piacenza	6	0	3	3	3	8	3			

## Olympic qualifiers

# Kuwait lead the group

HONG KONG, Oct 18: Kuwait moved to the top of their group in the Asian Olympic qualifying tournament yesterday with a 4-0 win over Qatar, who had two men sent off late in the