

## Esperance, Raja set for final

JOHANNESBURG, Oct 25: Esperance of Tunisia and Raja Casablanca of Morocco edged closer to the African Champions League final despite failing to win this weekend, reports AFP.

Title holders ASEC of Cote d'Ivoire ended the perfect Group 2 record of Esperance with a 1-0 victory in Abidjan and Raja drew 0-0 in Accra against Hearts of Oak of Ghana.

There were handsome successes in the other matches with Al-Ahly of Egypt outclassing Shooting Stars of Nigeria 4-1 in Cairo and Dynamos of Zimbabwe humiliating Saint Louisienne of Reunion 7-2 in Harare.

Raja need one point when they host Al-Ahly on November 7 in the final round to top Group 1 while a draw for Esperance at home to Dynamos 24 hours earlier will ensure first place in the other section.

ASEC needed three points to keep alive their wafer-thin chances of a second successive final appearance and the only goal came with 15 minutes left through 18-year-old Bakary 'Baky' Kone.

'Baky' is one of many rising stars promoted to the first team this year when new French coach Jean-Marc Goullou ditched the squad that defeated Dynamos 4-2 on aggregate in the 1998 final.

Esperance, suffering their first loss in nine qualifying and pool matches, had veteran goalkeeper and captain Chokri al-Ouair ordered off at the Felix Houphouët-Boigny Stadium.

Dynamos became the first team to score seven goals in a group match since the Champions League was launched two years ago as they avenged a shock away loss to Saint Louisienne.

Hearts of Oak dropped out of contention after being held on a waterlogged Accra Sports Stadium pitch and had star striker Ismael Addo sent off midway through the second half.

Former champions Al-Ahly struck regularly in each half against struggling Stars with substitute Alaa Ibrahim scoring off his first touch before Duke Effiong sprinted from halfway to grab a consolation goal.

## Scottish Premier League

### Celtic leave it very late

GLASGOW, Oct 25: Morten Wieghorst scored with a controversial injury time header to earn Celtic a 2-1 victory at St Johnston in the Scottish Premier League on Sunday night, reports AFP.

The Dane's far post effort which hit the woodwork was adjudged to have crossed the line in a dramatic finale which earned the visitors an unlikely win.

It looked a point at best for them after Mark Burchill delivered a vital moment of evidence in his bid to prove himself a worthy long-term replacement for Henrik Larsson.

Trailing to Nathan Lowndes' 29th minute opener, which stemmed from a rare Paul Lambert error, Celtic equalized after Burchill's 48th minute individual effort.

The loss of Larsson with a broken leg in Lyon on Thursday night had dominated the build-up to this contest with Celtic faced with proving they can cope without him.

Celtic closed the gap on leaders Rangers to one point with the opportunity to move top should they defeat Motherwell in midweek.

St Johnstone scored with their first attack when Celtic were punished for a moment of slackness inside their own half. Lambert delayed in possession and was robbed by Paul Kane who fed George O'Boyle. His through ball was finished smartly by Lowndes for his eighth goal of the campaign.

Celtic's response was a Wieghorst shot which was deflected wide, but they were still struggling to sustain any kind of momentum and Saints moved to the interval with their advantage intact.

Celtic took just three minutes after the restart to draw level and it was a goal out of virtually nothing after Regi Blinker played a hopeful pass to the feet of Burchill.

The 19-year-old Scotland international had both John McQuillan and Stuart McCluskey closing him down but spun expertly to create the space to drill a low shot just inside the post.

## Prosecutors favour jail term

ESSEN, Germany, Oct 25: Four German football hooligans who brutally beat up and nearly killed a French gendarme during last year's World Cup should be given long jail sentences, the prosecution said at their trial Monday, reports AFP.

Daniel Nivel, who was beaten within an inch of his life at Lens in northern France in June 1998, was in a coma for months and has been left handicapped.

Prosecutor Joachim Lichtinghagen demanded 14 years in prison for the chief accused, Andre Zawacki, 28, who is said to have repeatedly beaten Nivel with the stock of his tear-gas grenade-launcher and is charged with attempted murder.

Lichtinghagen sought between six and eight years for the other three - Frank Renger, 31, Tobias Arno Reifschlaeger, 25, and Christopher Rauch, 24 - who are accused of assault causing grievous bodily harm. The trial opened in the German Ruhr Valley town of Essen on April 30 and a verdict is expected on November 5.



Real Betis' Brazilian star Denilson trying to make his way through the Rayo Vallecano defence during their Primera Liga match at Madrid on October 24. Betis won 3-1. — AFP photo

## Primera Liga

### Betis upset Valleciano plans



MADRID, Oct 25: Barcelona moved a point clear of surprise packet Rayo Vallecano in the Spanish league, after swamping Athletic Bilbao 4-0 at their majestic Nou Camp while Real Madrid lost further ground after a 1-1 draw at Seville, reports AFP.

Rayo Vallecano suffered a costly 3-1 reverse at home to Real Betis Sunday, inspired by two goals from Alfonso.

But third-placed Celta Vigo maintained their title challenge with a 2-1 home win to Espanyol, while Real Zaragoza, one point behind, trounced Racing Santander 4-1.

Barcelona, who let slip two points against modest Numancia last week, didn't touch the heights of Tuesday's 4-2 Champions League win over Arsenal at Wembley as they picked up another three points Saturday night.

In truth, they didn't need to as Bilbao shot themselves in the foot when Aitor Larrazabal earned himself a red card after 36 minutes for pulling Luis Figo's shirt having earlier second booked.

A fierce effort from Brazilian Rivaldo from the left was well saved by Bilbao keeper Imanol Etxeberria.

From the resulting corner Etxeberria missed the ball under pressure from Luis Enrique, who appeared inadvertently to

handle, as well as Frenchman Fred Dehu, who flicked the ball on, allowing Dutchman Phillip Cocu to bundle home his second goal of the season.

Satisfied with the one goal lead at the break, Barca coach Louis Van Gaal boosted his already sizeable Dutch contingent by bringing on Ronald de Boer for Luis Enrique, who had taken an early knock.

However, in a move to please the Catalan fans, who would like to see the bleeding of more Catalan talent, van Gaal gave another start to Wembley winner Francesc Arnau in goal at the expense of more experienced Dutchman Ruud Hesp.

Brilliant Brazilian striker Rivaldo volleyed in a low left-footer on the hour to make the game safe at 2-0 as Barca finally began to exploit their extra man.

Minutes later, van Gaal withdrew Rivaldo to give a run out to another of his Dutch internationals Boudewijn Zen-den.

With a little over ten minutes remaining Figo slotted home a spotkick he had won himself with a bustling run into the area and Dani then beat the offside trap to steer home the fourth in the final moments.

Earlier, a goal eight minutes from time by Spanish international Raul rescued an off-colour Real Madrid as the reigning world champions drew with 1-1 at Seville to extend their winless Primera Liga run to

seven matches.

Real needed a three-point tonic after their Champions League loss at Porto in midweek but were fortunate to escape thanks to Raul's predatory instincts in the penalty box.

Greek forward Vassilis Tsarzas put Seville ahead in the 21st minute with a superb left-foot freekick and the hosts were so close to holding on for the win despite making few clear-cut chances until Raul's late intervention.

The striker had come on as a substitute on the hour for Christian Karembeu.

Real's Welsh coach John Toshack is now coming under increasing pressure as the seven-times European champions have been completely overshadowed so far this season by table-topping little neighbours Rayo Vallecano, from the Madrid suburbs.

Vallecano play Real Betis on Sunday as they bid to go back ahead of Barcelona.

Real had hoped to welcome back England winger Steve McManaman back after a thigh muscle injury but he failed to recover in time.

In the evening's other match, Valencia continued their recent improvement after an appalling start to the season, beating Deportivo La Coruna 2-0 with goals in either half from Kily Gonzalez and Gerard Lopez Segu, the win hoisting them up seven places into midtable.

## French First Division

### Lyon solo leaders



LYON, France, Oct 25: Goals from Brazilian Sonny Anderson and Serge Blanc shot Lyon to the top of the French championship on their 2-1 fightback victory over Nancy, reports AFP.

Michael Rodriguez put visitors Nancy ahead after only 20 minutes but Anderson, a close season buy from Barcelona, scored in the 32nd minute and Serge hit home in the 60th minute to give them 24 points, one ahead of Burgundy club Auxerre.

The Monaco v Auxerre match meanwhile didn't go ahead because of a waterlogged pitch at the Louis II Stadium.

Third-placed Bordeaux, three points behind Lyon, had a 2-1 victory over Marseille at the Parc Lescurie on Saturday, and PSG, level on points with Bordeaux, are fourth following a 3-2 win over Sedan on Sunday.

Lyon, who beat Scotland's Celtic 1-0 in the UEFA Cup on Thursday, had the worst possi-

ble start on a sodden pitch at the Stade Gerland.

Nancy opened the score when Rodriguez got a touch from a freekick by Cedric Mourci. Lyon keeper Gregory Coupet could only push the ball out for a corner following another effort by Mourci as Nancy gained confidence from their goal.

Auxerre's Stephane Guivarch and Monaco's Italian striker Marco Simone both have eight goals.

PSG put an end to two consecutive losses with their victory over promoted Sedan.

Mickael Madar opened the scoring for PSG with a header after a centre from Laurent Robert in the 12th minute. However Sedan were back in business in the 19th minute when Pius N'Diefi shot past Lama after getting the ball from a deflection off Eric Rabesandratana's knee.

All Benarbia put them back ahead on 33 minutes but, a minute after the break, a tenacious Sedan equalized once more after a shot by Pierre Deblock. Robert, however, settled the game from a freekick in the 79th minute.

In other matches over the weekend, Montpellier drew 1-1 with Bastia, Strasbourg beat Nantes 3-2, Metz thrashed Le Havre 3-0, Lens won 1-0 at Troyes, and Rennes had a goal spree, beating St Etienne 4-1.



Lyon striker Tony Vairelles (L) under pressure from a Nancy defender during their French First Division encounter at Lyon on October 24. — AFP photo

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## BAF hockey

Base Bashar and hosts base Motiur won their respective matches in the Bangladesh Air Force inter-base hockey competition held at the Jessore Base Motiur Rahman ground yesterday, reports UNB.

Base Motiur beat base Paharkanchapur 3-0 while base Bashar defeated BAF Headquarters Unit 3-1.

## Bundesliga

### Bremen baffle Dortmund

DORTMUND, Oct 23: Leaders Borussia Dortmund were beaten 3-1 at home by Werder Bremen on Sunday but stayed a point clear of Hamburg at the top of the table, reports Reuters.

Dortmund, who had clearly not recovered from their 3-0 hammering by Rosenborg Trondheim in the Champions League on Wednesday, had their misery compounded by having Brazilian midfielder Dede sent off in injury time.

Bayern Munich's South American strike force of Roque Santa Cruz and Giovane Elber sank Kaiserslautern 2-0 while Hertha Berlin and VfB Stuttgart split 1-1 draw.

### Beckenbauer not interested

BERLIN, Oct 25: German football legend Franz Beckenbauer has ruled out speculation that he is to become the next president of the German Football Federation (DFB). Kicker magazine reported here Monday, reports AFP.

"I won't be president of the DFB. I'm not a candidate to succeed Egidio Braun," said Beckenbauer, who is president of German first division side Bayern Munich.

Beckenbauer said that his main priority was to ensure the success of Germany's bid to stage the 2006 World Cup.

"It's the most important mission for the future of German football. For me it's a personal goal," added the former German captain.

### Trapattoni has to stay

ROME, Oct 25: Fiorentina were thrown into turmoil on Sunday three days before their vital Champions League match with Arsenal as manager Giovanni Trapattoni offered his resignation only for the club to reject it hours later, reports Reuters.

Trapattoni announced he was quitting after watching his side slip to their third successive Serie A defeat by going down 2-0 at lowly Piacenza.

This could be the ideal shock for the team as long as the club have the right solution," said the 60-year-old coach who has won seven Serie A titles.

Within three hours, Fiorentina managing director Luciano Luna rejected Trapattoni's resignation.

"Right now it's important to keep together," said Luna. "We've reached rock bottom, now we must start climbing back up together and the match with Arsenal could relaunch our season."

Fiorentina must defeat Arsenal on Wednesday in a tough Champions League clash at Wembley to qualify for the next round.

Despite reinforcing their side in the summer with the likes of Yugoslav international Predrag Mijatovic and Enrico Chiesa, Fiorentina have slumped to 11th in Serie A.

Sunday's defeat at Piacenza, who started the day bottom, followed two defeats at the Artemio Franchi stadium, where Fiorentina had not lost in 22 months.

The 'Will he, won't he' saga at Fiorentina diverted from a superb performance by Yugoslav Dejan Stankovic, who scored twice in two minutes as league leaders Lazio recovered from a goal down to beat Lecce 4-2 at the Olympic Stadium.

With second-placed Juventus conceding a late equaliser and having Darko Kovacevic sent off in a 1-1 draw at Bari, Lazio now have 17 points, three clear at the top of Serie A.

"Let's not talk about our title lead, we've got Inter Milan next week," warned Lazio's Swedish coach Sven-Goran Eriksson.

Inter are level with AC Milan on 13 points, after losing to their neighbours 2-1 in Saturday's derby. Star Inter striker Ronaldo was sent off for elbowing a defender.



Fiorentina coach Giovanni Trapattoni during the Serie A match between his team and Piacenza on October 24. After the game, Trapattoni surprised everyone by submitting his resignation. — AFP photo

## Serie A

### Lazio going great guns



MILAN, Oct 25: Lazio crushed Lecce 4-2 and tripled their lead at the top of the Serie A to three points on Sunday, convincing many that this could be their season for glory, reports AFP.

Juventus were denied all three points by Bari's late equaliser but still leapfrogged over both Milan teams into second place; champions AC Milan on goal difference after winning Saturday's derby 2-1.

But the best team in Italy at the moment is clearly Lazio, who are fulfilling the promise made throughout 1999.

The Rome club only narrowly failed to win the league title last time around, they beat European champions Manchester United in the Super Cup

Lucarelli pulled one back just a minute later after his shot took a deflection off Paolo Negro, but Lecce's pressure failed to yield an equaliser and Simone Inzaghi notched Lazio's fourth in stoppage time.

Lazio coach Sven Goran Eriksson said: "We deserved to win, even though we suffered. But we're up there at the top."

However, Eriksson knows that he needs to have another look at the defensive mechanism of his team.

The two goals we conceded came when the defence was all lined up. I honestly can't understand it. Away from home we've only conceded two goals this season, but at the Olympic stadium we've conceded six."

"I have to say this was the one negative thing about the match today," he said. Asked



AS Roma striker Francesco Totti (R) being tackled from behind by Torino's Uruguayan defender Gustavo Mendez during their Serie A fixture at Turin on October 24. — AFP photo

and were top of the list of favourites before this season started.

On Sunday, striker Cristiano Lucarelli gave Lecce a surprise lead and the southerners held out until the 26th minute when Lazio defender Giuseppe Pancaro levelled with a header from a Sinisa Mihajlovic corner.

Yugoslav midfielder Dejan Stankovic then took the match in hand, poaching two opportunistic goals from close range in the 30th and 32nd minutes to give Lazio a decisive lead.

for the positive aspect, the Swede added: "The great ease with which we are able to create a lot of scoring opportunities."

"It's just wonderful to watch this team play football."

But he rejected the idea that after just seven matches, Lazio had already made the breakthrough, saying: "It's too early to use that word."

Lazio are top with 17 points, three clear of Juventus, who drew 1-1 at Bari after dominating the match and missing a host of scoring opportunities. Juventus looked set to take

## Premiership

### Thrilling draw keeps Leeds atop



LONDON, Oct 25: Leeds stayed top of the English Premiership Sunday after an astonishing 4-4 draw at Everton, reports AFP.

Sunderland had to settle for a 1-1 draw at West Ham while Middlesbrough won 3-1 at Watford in the other matches played Sunday.

A late equaliser from Everton's Scottish international defender David Weir denied Leeds victory but the top dogs themselves had conceded the lead three times to the hosts earlier in the match and a draw was probably a fair result.

Kevin Campbell (twice) and Don Hutchison gave Everton the lead three times but goals from Michael Bridges and Australian Harry Kewell made the interval score 3-2.

Further goals from Bridges and highly-rated defender Jonathan Woodgate in the second period put the visitors 4-3 to the good but Weir's late intervention ensures they go a single

point ahead of Arsenal, who won 3-2, at Chelsea in an equally exciting match Saturday.

In stoppage time Weir planted a header past Leeds goalkeeper Nigel Martyn from a freekick from David Unsworth.

Earlier Everton had taken a 1-0 lead after four minutes. John Collins' neatly touched pass put Campbell clear on the left, and he surged into the box before curling a superb right footer into the top corner.

Leeds' response was emphatic and they squared the match after 17 minutes. Kewell's fierce cross from the left was missed by Alan Smith in the six yard box, but Bridges was on hand to fire in from close range.

But Hutchison then played an astute pass to Campbell whose delicate chip left Martyn for dead to complete a breathtaking move.

Again Leeds retaliated. After 35 minutes Kewell produced a stunning goal from way out on that touchline. It may have been a cross, but the Aussie's towering ball in completely deceived Paul Gerrard, who was left flailing at the air as the ball dropped behind him into the corner of the net.

Two minutes later Everton went ahead for the third time. Campbell flicked on a cross. Nick Barmby juggled with the ball and eventually lost possession just a few yards out, but the ball broke kindly for Hutchison to drill the ball into the bottom corner.

The second half saw Everton strive to stretch their lead, and Martyn made a fine save from a long range Hutchison drive, but could only watch as the same player scooped another effort wide from just 10 yards.

And Everton could easily have got another with the game's most controversial incident.

Leeds skipper Lucas Radebe looked to have brought down Hutchinson from behind as the Scot muscled his way clear.

The tackle looked to be feet from the ball, but referee Dermot Gallagher waved play on, and despite furious complaints from Walter Smith and his number two Archie Knox Leeds were off the hook.

That seemed to deflate Ever-

### Cuban boxer arrested

MIAMI, Oct 25: Cuba's champion super heavyweight boxer Teofilo Stevenson was arrested in Miami after he was accused of roughing up an airline worker, Miami-Dade County police said on Sunday, reports Reuters.

all three points following a 21st minute goal from defender Gianluca Pessotto, only for Bari's Gionatha Spinesi to squirt a free-kick through the wall in the 86th minute.

"We played well, but unfortunately we didn't finish it when we had the chance," said coach Carlo Ancelotti.

"And in football, when you don't take your chances you sometimes pay for your mistake. And today we did...the draw was a gift."

The Turin club move into second place, one point ahead of both Inter Milan and also AC Milan, who won Saturday night's derby 2-1.

AS Roma lie fourth (12pts) after drawing 1-1 away to Torino in Sunday's night match.

Torino's Alessio Scarchilli opened the scoring in the 21st minute but Roma levelled in the 55th when Brazilian Assuncao floated over a free-kick and Eusebio Di Francesco nodded the ball home.

But if there was disappointment for Roma and Juventus, there was a disaster for Fiorentina as they crashed to a shock 2-0 defeat at Piacenza, prompting coach Giovanni Trapattoni to offer his resignation.

The offer was refused and the club renewed their faith in the most successful in Italian soccer history, but the crisis could yet have an impact on Wednesday when they face Arsenal in the Champions League.

Fiorentina looked good for at least a point against the bottom club in the Serie A, only for unmarked Paolo Cristallini to head home in the 83rd minute and Arturo Di Napoli to convert an 89th minute penalty.

The Florence club have lost three of their last four matches and haven't won in the Serie A for over a month.

Argentina striker Hernan Crespo scored in the first minute but the fireworks came in a six-minute spell after the re-start. Roberto Baronio equalised with a 53rd minute free-kick. Crespo scored 60 seconds later and Reggina's young playmaker Andrea Pirlo, on loan from Inter, levelled five minutes after that.

Udinese cruised to a 3-0 victory at Cagliari thanks to two goals from new striker Roberto Muzzi, who was in tears after scoring against the team he played with for five years was still cheered by the home fans.

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ton, and Leeds showed their quality and will to win with two goals in five minutes to take the lead.

Substitute Darren Huckerby on for Smith, found Bridges in space 25 yards out. The resulting dipping drive flashed into the top corner. Gerrard again totally beaten in the air.

Gerrard made a cracking save from an Ian Harte free-kick, but when Harte's corner came in from the left, Woodgate was in the six-yard box to clip home the fourth after 73 minutes.

That looked the end of it, with Leeds' fans already celebrating another success but Weir would prove otherwise.

Sunderland were denied the chance to go top when West Ham's Trevor Sinclair conjured up an 89th minute leveller at Upton Park after prolific England striker Kevin Phillips had put the visitors a goal ahead after 24 minutes with his 13th goal of the campaign.

Sunderland had been reduced to 10 men five minutes by the sending off of former England and Arsenal defender Steve Bould, dismissed after allowing West Ham's Costa Rican star Paulo Wanchope.

Danny Dichio had a glorious chance to secure the points for Sunderland after 80 minutes but spurned the chance, shooting straight at West Ham goalkeeper Shaka Hislop after being set up by Phillips.

West Ham had threatened to equalise with Italian Paolo Di Canio hitting a post and youngster Joe Cole and Frank Lampard both failed by Sunderland goalkeeper Thomas Sorensen.

But Di Canio set up Sinclair in the 89th minute and the former Blackpool and QPR man made no mistake.

Phillips had opened the scoring with a header for Sunderland after a well-worked freekick.

Watford crashed to a 3