

We proved a point: Aminul

Sports Reporter
Skipper Aminul Islam believes Bangladesh have gained the confidence to compete against established teams on the first class circuit.

"We are not at the learning stage any more. We are playing better cricket nowadays. We have proved it with our nearly consistent performances in last few matches," said the confident captain after his team clinched a draw from a precarious position. Bangladesh have so far played nine first-class matches, of which they lost in four matches and drew the rest.

"Well, there will be mistakes in the last two days. But those happened unfortunately."

"Nerves of the boys were tested in the second innings. And the way Khaled Masood and Al-Shahriar batted I never felt that we were under any pressure."

"Hats off to Khaled Masood and Al-Shahriar for their magnificent batting. They have showed how Bangladesh cricket is coming up."

When asked about his team's performance in the limited-over match, Aminul, sounding apologetic, said they should have won the match.

"Again it was the batsmen who let us down. We should have scored more than 250 after we had such a tremendous start. Aminul hoped that his team would be allowed to play more matches abroad."

"Our cricketers need the experience of playing on bouncy and fast wickets," he said.

Akram turns up heat

BRISBANE, Nov 4: The Rawalpindi Express may have been put off limits by the management but Pakistan skipper Wasim Akram says Shaoh Akhtar is ready to fire in Friday's opening cricket Test with Australia here.

The 24-year-old tearaway has been in the headlines over the legality of his bowling action and recently declined requests for interviews. Thursday, because I've been told not to talk all out."

The Australian Cricket Board (ACB) gave short shrift to a video tape of Akhtar's action sent by Australian spinners Ross Emerson and Terry Prue from last week's one-day game against Western Australia in Perth.

The ACB said because the video was not contained in the match report and there was no international Cricket Council (ICC) match referee no further action could be taken.

The Australian camp will raise their eyebrows when they read Akram's rating of Akhtar, who has 21 wickets from 10 Tests at an average of 34.61, because they regard Akram himself as the more dangerous proposition.

"He (Akhtar) is the best bowler in the world and he's going to show it in the Test match, we don't have to say much about him because he's going to perform and we will talk about his performance," Akram said.

"He'll be quite fun to watch. I can assure you of that."

"Nothing's going to make him think about his action or anything, he's going to bowl normally, he's the sort of bloke who nothing bothers him much."

"He wants to enjoy his cricket and I told him enjoy your cricket and we'll look after you, stay away from the press and you can just perform with the ball out there, and answer them back."

Akram also predicted Pakistan would win the three-match series.

Australia, to be led by Steve Waugh, have never lost a Test series against Pakistan at home but Akram, playing his 89th Test, said that was about to change.

"It has always been my dream to come and win here and this time we have a good enough side to beat them," he said.

"Our bowling has much more variety (than Australia), we have medium pacers and all-rounders and we have five or six bowlers in the side."

Pakistan will name their team on the morning of the match.

Akram said he was considering playing both off-spinner Saad Mushtaq and leg-spinner Mushtaq Ahmed despite a greenish-looking Gabba pitch.

Waugh's words

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Waugh said Australia had to go into the Gabba Test with the same approach as their eight-wicket win over Pakistan in the World Cup limited over final at Lord's on June 20.

"We have to go in with the same kind of mentality as the World Cup final, discipline, patience and consistency will win the day."

"That's what Test match cricket is all about... you play over five days and you don't have to win the game in the first hour, first session or first day, it goes over four or five days."

"If you're consistent, and you don't have too many bad sessions you are going to win more Test matches than you lose."

The opening Test puts the spotlight on the top-four Australian batsmen - Michael Slater, Greg Blewett, Justin Langer and Mark Waugh.



Bayern Munich's Thomas Strunz scores from the spot against Glasgow Rangers during the Champions' League fixture on Wednesday.

Tense Bayern see off Rangers

MUNICH, Germany, Nov 4: Last season's beaten finalists Bayern Munich limped into the second phase of the European Champions League here on Wednesday with a 1-0 win at the expense of Scottish champions Rangers, reports AFP.

Bayern, who lost in last season's dramatic final to Manchester United, needed a first-half penalty converted by Thomas Strunz in a match they had to win.

American international Claudio Reyna returned to the Rangers starting line-up for the first time in five weeks after recovering from a hamstring injury while former Hamburg star Jorg Albertz was also back in the side despite suffering a recurrence of an ankle injury in training on Tuesday.

But Rangers could have been three goals down within the first six minutes.

Bayern skipper Stefan Effenberg delivered a corner from the left and Brazilian forward-Giovane Elber peeled away

to get in a header in the third minute that was only marginally off target.

Rangers were grateful to their German keeper Stefan Klos two minutes later when the veteran Lothar Matthaus played the ball through the middle.

Paraguayan striker Roque Santa Cruz sprung the offside trap and raced clear only for Stefan Klos to react superbly and block his effort.

Rangers hardly had time to draw breathe in the infant stages of the game and Elber missed another glorious chance in the sixth minute to put them ahead.

Rangers re-grouped and started to pick up the pace of the game with Michael Mols trying to chip keeper Oliver Kahn, only to see his elaborate effort drift into the crowd.

Mols was only inches away from giving them the lead in the 26th minute when his header thumped the post following a delightful cross from Giovanni van Bronckhorst.

However, Bayern made the breakthrough after 33 minutes

when van Bronckhorst bowled over Mehmet Scholl and referee Vitor Pereira had no hesitation in awarded a penalty.

Keeper Klos got a hand to Strunz's spot-kick but could not prevent it going into the corner, leaving Rangers facing an uphill task.

It needed a moment of brilliance from Germany's number one keeper Oliver Kahn to prevent an equaliser four minutes later.

Rod Wallace's effort from point-blank range after a cut back from Arthur Numan was hit firm and true but Kahn got up superbly to turn the ball onto the bar.

In the second half Rangers dominated but the equaliser proved beyond them.

Finn Jonatan Johansson was denied by Kahn and Argentinian Gabriel Amato miskicked when well placed to score.

Rangers continued to pressure but it was all in vain and the Scottish side must again accept that - despite their domination of domestic football - that they are a lightweight outfit in European competition.

Italy's favourite English team

MILAN, Nov 4: Italian newspapers were falling over themselves to praise Chelsea's sportsmanship on Thursday, saying that the Blues' 2-0 win over Hertha Berlin was a lesson in British fair-play, reports AFP.

Like their German opponents, Chelsea only needed a draw at Stamford Bridge on Wednesday night to reach the Champions League second round.

Many Italians expected it would finish 0-0 by tacit agreement, even though coach Gianluca Vialli had promised that his team would play their last Group H match the English way by going out to win.

And Chelsea, who are regularly pilloried in Britain for having hardly any home players, kept that promise by quickly taking a decisive lead.

The Gazzetta dello Sport said Wednesday night had two sides, one that was "shining and splendid, and the other dark and unwatchable."

The latter was AC Milan's 3-2 defeat to Galatasaray, but the former was "the unforgettable lesson in sporting fairness which Chelsea gave us... by winning a match for the sheer pleasure of the challenge."

"A draw would have qualified Vialli's Blues and the Germans. Who would risk doing themselves damage by daring to upset the balance? The answer, only people who live sport like the English do."

"God save the Queen and this way of approaching sport," the paper said. "Surrounded as we are by all kinds of meanness and wretchedness, let's find consolation and hope in the British way of behaviour."

"This is sport," the paper concluded. "Even after a night

like this, let's stand up and applaud it."

The Gazzetta dello Sport was on the same wavelength, highlighting the fact that Chelsea's first goal was scored by ex-Juventus midfielder Didier Deschamps and headlining: "Vialli gives everyone a lesson."

It went on: "AC Milan fans had to bow down before the fairness of Vialli and Chelsea."

The London team were sure of reaching the next round; a

draw would have been the most convenient and least risky solution against Hertha.

"Instead... they took the lead through a former sworn enemy of AC Milan, Deschamps, and then added a second goal with the determination of people who aren't used to performing the little tricks that Italians do."

Tuttosport commented: "Chelsea did their duty right to the very end by beating Hertha."



Hertha Berlin's Iranian striker Ali Daei (L) fights with Celestine Babayaro of Chelsea for possession during their Champions' League clash at Stamford Bridge on November 3.

Neville out of play-off

MANCHESTER, England, Nov 4: Manchester United right-back Gary Neville will miss England's Euro 2000 play-off with Scotland after suffering a recurrence of his groin injury, reports AFP.

The injury flared up again after Neville had played the full 90 minutes of Manchester United's 2-1 Champions League victory over Sturm Graz on Tuesday.

United refused on Wednesday to say for how long the defender will be sidelined, but they are certain he will miss both legs of England's Euro 2000 play-off with Scotland later this month.

A United spokesman said: "Last night Gary Neville had a recurrence of his injury which means he will not be available for England selection."

"He will also miss the Leicester game on Saturday."

Against Sturm, Neville was playing his first senior game in two months after he tore an abductor muscle playing for England against Poland at the start of September.

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Collated European Champions League results on Wednesday:
Group E
At Athens
Olympiakos (Gre) 1 (Giannakopoulos 55) Porto (Por) 0
At Molde
Molde (Nor) 0 Real Madrid (Spa) 1 (Karembou 43)
Group F
At Munich
Bayern Munich (Ger) 1 (Strunz 33-pen) Glasgow Rangers (Sco) 0
At Valencia
Valencia (Spa) 1 (Lopez 70) PSV Eindhoven (Ned) 0
Group G
At Prague
Sparta Prague (Cze) 5 (Lokvenc 1, 66, Rosicky 10, Fukal 49, Labant 63-pen) Spartak Moscow (Rus) 2 (Bulatov 38, Berzdny 45)
At Tibur
Willem II (Ned) 0 Bordeaux (Fra) 0
Group H
At London
Chelsea (Eng) 2 (Deschamps 11, Ferrer 44) Hertha Berlin (Ger) 0
At Istanbul
Galatasaray (Tur) 3 (Capone 27, Sukur 86, Umit 89-pen) AC Milan (Ita) 2 (Weah 20, Giunti 51)

Barca, MU, Lazio William Hill's choice

LONDON, Nov 4 (AFP): Latest betting from leading English bookmakers William Hill on European Champions League following Wednesday's final round of opening group phase:
4/1-Manchester United, Barcelona and Lazio, 8/1-Real Madrid, 10/1-Chelsea, Bayern Munich, 16/1-Valencia, 20/1-Bordeaux, Dynamo Kyiv, Fiorentina and Marseille, 33/1-Feyenoord and Rosenborg, 40/1-Hertha Berlin, Porto, 66/1-Sparta Prague.

Referee assists in Valencia's win!

VALENCIA, Spain, Nov 4: Spain's Valencia chalked up another impressive European victory, beating Holland's PSV Eindhoven 1-0 to emerge as Group F winners, reports AFP.

It was a bizarre strike from Argentinian talisman Claudio Lopez that settled the match after 70 minutes.

Lopez struck a freekick against English referee Graham Barber but the ball rebounded at his feet and he lashed the rebound with his left foot past PSV goalkeeper Ronald Waterreus.

It is no small achievement for Valencia to join Primera liga rivals Barcelona and Real Madrid in the second phase after topping a pool featuring last year's runners-up Bayern Munich, big-spending Scottish champions Rangers and Dutch league leaders PSV, winners of this competition in 1988.

PSV were already eliminated and looked a beaten side leaving Valencia goalkeeper Andres Palop a virtual spectator for most of the night.

But Valencia's Argentinian strikers Kily Gonzalez and Lopez were menacing throughout with the latter again showing he is a difficult man to handle for any defence.

Waterreus was the only visiting player to shine and several times came to the rescue of his teammates.

In the closing minutes PSV made their only significant attack of the match with Palop foiling Danish striker Dennis Rommedahl.

United top among clubs

PARIS, Nov 4 (AFP): Latest club world rankings released by the International Federation of Football History and Statistics (IFFHS) on Thursday:

Teams	Points
1. Manchester United (Eng)	367
2. Parma (Ita)	336
3. Palmeiras Sao Paulo (Bra)	320.5
4. Bayern Munich (Ger)	302
5. Lazio (Ita)	282
6. Chelsea (Eng)	263
7. Dynamo Kiev (Ukr)	259
8. Valencia (Spa)	257
9. Real Madrid (Spa)	253
10. Juventus (Ita)	241
11. Olympie Marseille (Fra)	234
12. Atletico Madrid (Spa)	232
13. Galatasaray (Tur)	227
14. Glasgow Rangers (Sco)	225
15. River Plate (Arg)	221
16. Corinthians (Bra)	221
17. Lyon (Fra)	220
18. Real Mallorca (Spa)	219
19. Fiorentina (Ita)	218
20. Bordeaux (Fra)	214
21. Galatasaray (Tur)	206.5
22. Bologna (Ita)	205
23. Cruzeiro (Bra)	204.5
24. Arsenal (Eng)	204
25. Cali (Col)	198
26. Olympiakos (Gre)	190
27. Celtic (Sco)	188.5
28. Celta Vigo (Spa)	187
29. Velez Sarsfield (Arg)	187
30. San Lorenzo (Arg)	183

Leeds release Kewell

MELBOURNE, Australia, Nov 4: English Premiership club Leeds United have released forward Harry Kewell to play for Australia against Brazil later this month, reports AFP.

Soccer Australia said Thursday Kewell would play at Sydney's Olympic stadium on November 14 but Leeds wanted him back before the second international at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on November 17.

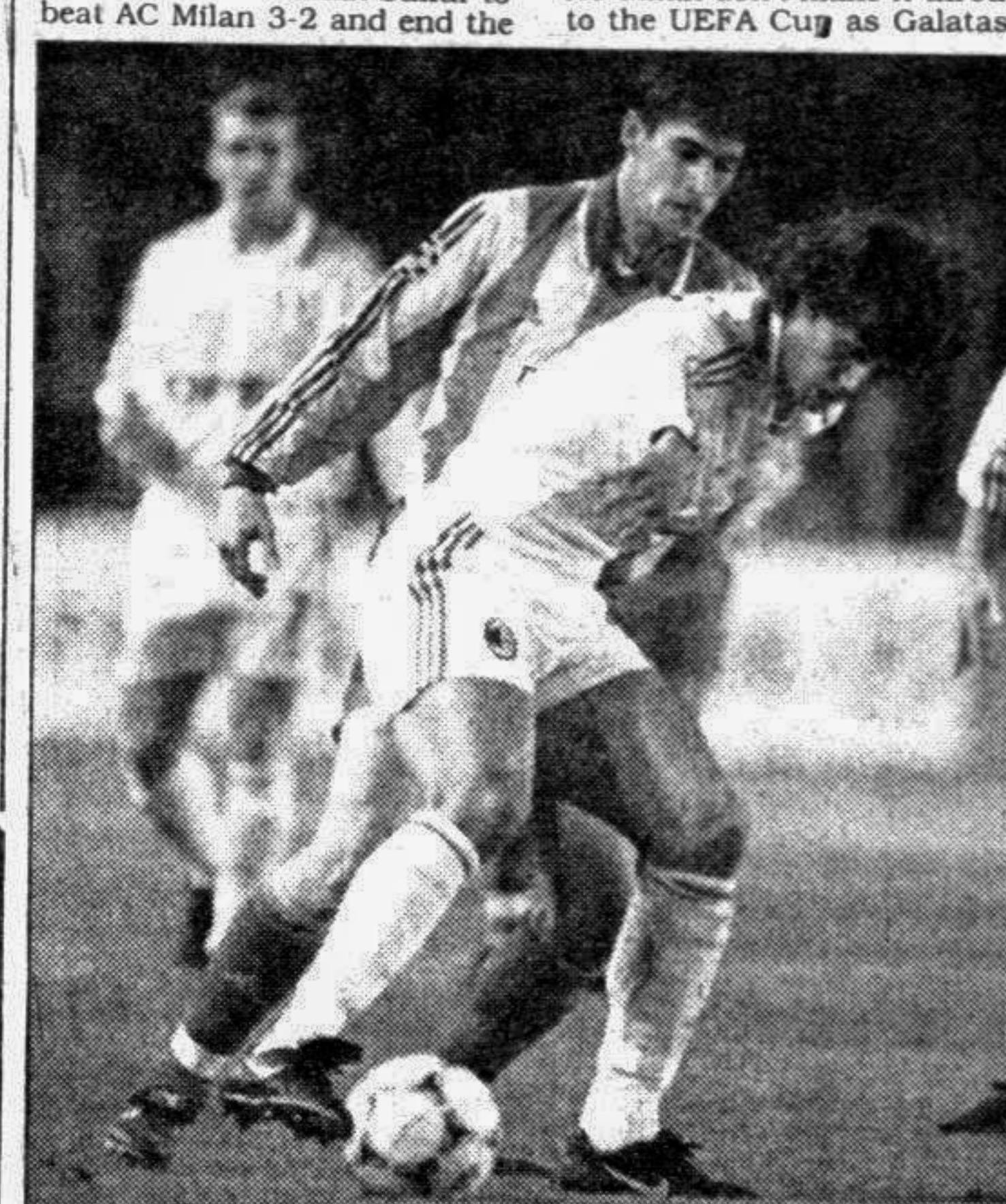
Leeds want Kewell back for a Premier league match against Bradford City on November 20.

Milan's nightmare in Turkey

ISTANBUL, Nov 4: Galatasaray scored two late goals including one from legendary striker Hakan Sukur to beat AC Milan 3-2 and end the

five-time European Cup winners AC Milan's hopes of progressing to the next stage of the Champions League here on Wednesday, reports AFP.

The defeat also means that AC Milan don't make it through to the UEFA Cup as Galatasaray, who won the match with a last minute penalty by Davul Umit, leapfrog over them in the Group H table and leaves coach Alberto Zaccheroni's job very much in doubt.



AC Milan captain Paolo Maldini (R) is under pressure from Galatasaray's Umit Davala

It had seemed an unlikely scenario after Milan had regained the lead in the 51st minute as Federico Giunti, who had replaced the suspended Brazilian playmaker Leonardo, ran on through a gaping hole in the Turks defence to slot coolly home.

Weah, back from a six match suspension, beat Galatasaray's Brazilian keeper Claudio Taffarel to score the opening goal of the night with a neatly taken right-footed shot from about five metres out following a storming run and cross down the right wing by Andriy Shevchenko.

It was rough justice for Abbiati as he had saved brilliantly from Sukur prior to the goal.

Shock all around

MILAN, Nov 4: AC Milan's headquarters may not be located in an earthquake zone, but there are all the signs of a complete disaster after they were bounced out of European soccer by Galatasaray, reports AFP.

Milan's dreams of winning the European Cup in their centenary season lay in ruins, coach Alberto Zaccheroni was contemplating his biggest defeat yet and the press were saying good riddance to bad rubbish after Italy's champions lost everything during four minutes of madness in Istanbul.

Chelsea kept the promise that coach Gianluca Vialli made here last week at San Siro: that the Blues would beat Group H rivals Hertha Berlin and give Milan the chance to qualify.

But after leading 2-1 until the 87th minute on Wednesday night, Milan conceded an equaliser and then handed the Turkish side a 90th penalty, a 3-2 victory on a plate and a place in the UEFA Cup.

AC Milan fans have waited three long years for European football to return here - and all they've had to savour is a few first round matches and a lot of embarrassment.

Zaccheroni is unlikely to be sacked. But club president Silvio Berlusconi will certainly make his feelings clear about the sporting and the financial losses suffered by such an early exit from the Champions League.

Vice-president Adriano Galliani said: "I've had a long conversation with Berlusconi and he is very disappointed. It's incredible. In two minutes, we've been out of everything... it's a heavy blow."

Asked whether his team lacked the mental strength to see the job through, Galliani spat: "I don't know, I'm not a football coach or a psychiatrist."

Zaccheroni didn't dare to guess whether his job was now at stake or not, saying: "I don't know. You'll have to ask the club that."

Trying to salvage something from the wreckage, he said: "It's bitterly disappointing, because we were on course after three rounds, until four minutes from the end of the last match."

"We knew it would be extremely hard to come here and play a decisive match. We knew we'd be facing really determined opponents, supported by a rousing crowd."

But I've got nothing to criticise the team for, they gave all they had, at least in terms of willpower."

As for himself, he told the Gazzetta dello Sport: "This is

my biggest defeat yet, given that one of our main objectives this season was European football."

But he added: "It may be a really bad blow, but we've shown character in the past and I hope that will help us to react to this. And quickly."

The bitter disappointment was shared by skipper Paolo Maldini, who said: "In four minutes, we've gone from the Champions League to nothing."

But his verdict on the performance was far more severe than Zaccheroni's.

"In the second half we lacked personality, we weren't worthy of AC Milan," he said. "We should have played the ball more. Chelsea came here and won 5-0. But in the second half, we just didn't play."

"Now we have to convince ourselves that we still have the Serie A and the Italian Cup to play for."

Criticism rained down from the Italian papers, led by the Gazzetta, who said: "Milan have been deservedly kicked out of the Champions League and the UEFA Cup."

"It's hard to say this without harming the sensibilities of people who work hard and who suffer. But the truth is that the team this season are ridiculous... Milan didn't deserve to go through, it would have been almost an insult to the club's history."

It would be much better to start all over again."

Chelsea win group in style

LONDON, Nov 4: Chelsea beat Hertha Berlin of Germany 2-0 at Stamford Bridge on Wednesday to win Group H of the Champions League with strikes by Didier Deschamps and Albert Ferrer, both scoring the first goals for the club, reports AFP.

Deschamps opened the scoring after 11 minutes with a fierce shot and Ferrer neatly added a second just before the interval.

Chelsea's night was marred only by the late sending-off of Chris Sutton for two bookable offences.

The victory means Chelsea win the group on 10 points two ahead of Hertha who also qualify for the second phase of the tournament thanks to Galatasaray's 3-2 win over AC Milan in Istanbul.

Galatasaray will now go into the UEFA Cup as the third-placed team.

Chelsea manager Gianluca Vialli was quick to congratulate his goalscorers who both rarely appear on the score sheet: "I was flabbergasted. The way Didier scored his goal and for Albert to add the second will give the players greater confidence, particularly when players who don't usually score, score."

When asked if it was important for Chelsea to win the group rather than finish as runners-up to avoid a stronger club in the next round Vialli added: "It does not matter who we play in the next phase as any of the last sixteen teams are all great teams who will all prove difficult opponents."

Vialli started with an attacking line-up by playing three strikers, Gianfranco Zola, Tore Andre Flo and Sutton and forfeiting attacking Uruguayan midfielder Gustavo Poyet, while in defence Frank Leboeuf was left on the bench for Danish international Jes Hogg.

However, it was Hertha who started the brighter of the two sides with American international Anthony Sanneh heading just over the bar after two minutes from a free-kick.

After a nervous few moments Chelsea slowly got into their stride with Romanian Dan Petrescu shooting wide on nine minutes after good approach play by Flo and Deschamps.

A minute later Chelsea were in front. Iranian international Ali Daei lost possession in midfield and Deschamps unleashed an unstoppable shot from 25 yards which flew into the top right hand corner of Gabor Kiraly's goal, his first goal since making the move from Juventus in the summer.

Flo almost put the home side further ahead moments later after jinking his way past two defenders and into the penalty area only to shoot wide of Kiraly's right upright.

Sutton was fouled after sixteen minutes and the resulting free-kick from Zola almost had Kiraly in trouble.

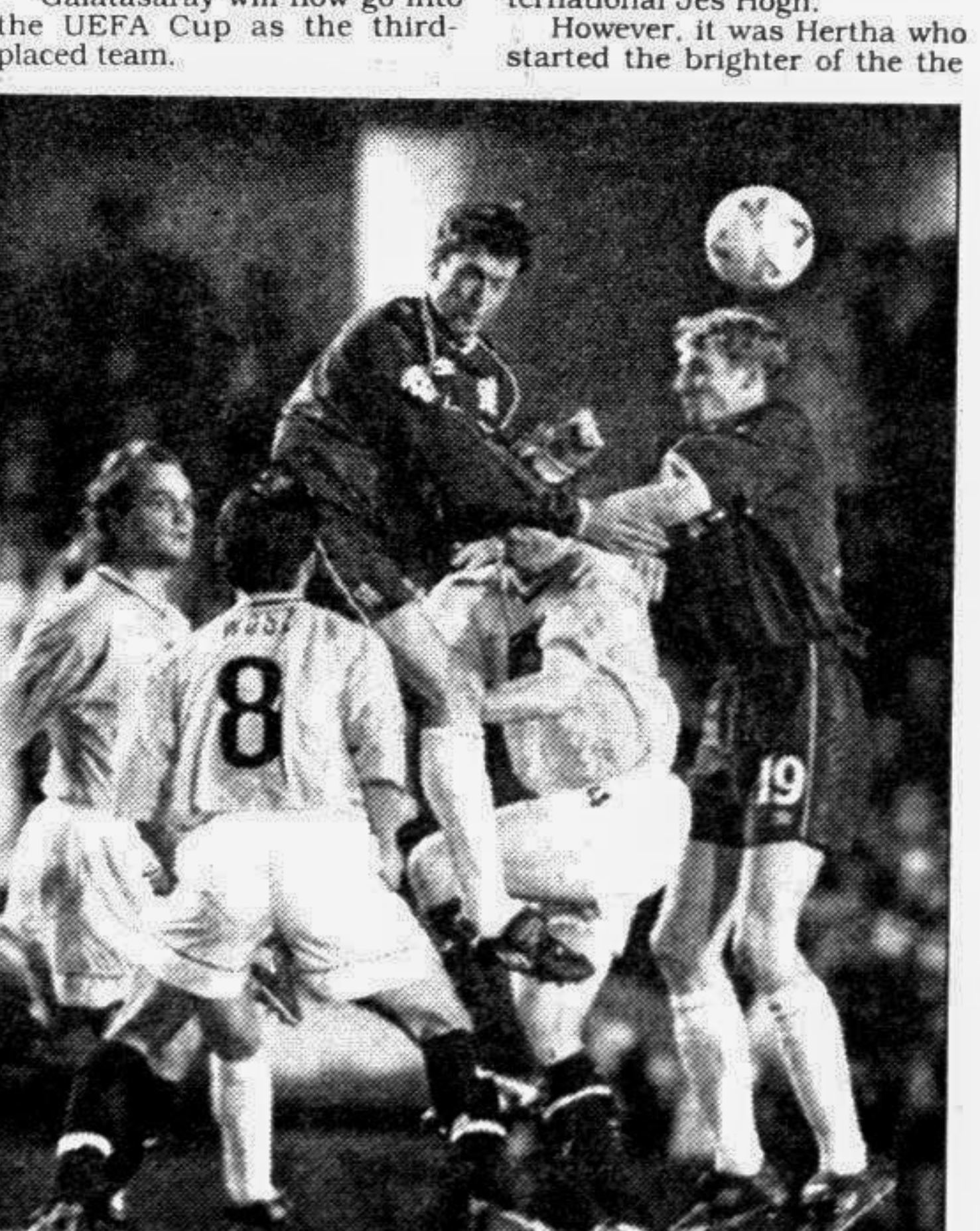
After fairly tedious 36 minutes Wise's shot was splendidly tipped round the post by Kiraly when Flo and Sutton created an opening for the Chelsea skipper.

It was no surprise when the home side added a second goal a minute before the interval when Ferrer slotted home after an excellent pass from Dennis Wise.

Hertha almost hauled themselves back in the match five minutes after the break when Deisler skinned Ferrer only to see his shot come back off the post before being cleared by Celestine Babayaro.

Flo went straight up the other end and with only the keeper to beat but somehow managed to drag his shot wide.

Ed de Goey was then called upon to produce an acrobatic save from Daei on 54 minutes as the game swung from end to end.



A scramble in front of the Hertha Berlin goal at Stamford Bridge.