

## Premiership

## Leeds indebted to Bowyer



LONDON, Dec 27: Lee Bowyer's winner earned Leeds a 2-1 victory against Leicester to keep them top of the English Premiership yesterday, reports AFP.

Manchester United are still two points off the pace after taking 75 minutes to break Bradford down yet finished with a quickfire 4-0 victory.

Everton had a real goal spree with a 5-0 thrashing of Sunderland, who remained in third spot as Arsenal failed to win at Coventry, going down 3-2, in the late game.

Duncan Ferguson meanwhile gave Newcastle a late Christmas present with a goal to earn a point in a 2-2 draw at home to Liverpool.

The match did not start well for Leeds when Tony Cottee put visitors Leicester ahead after just 10 minutes, but before the half-hour was up, Leeds had pulled themselves level.

After good initial work from Harry Kewell, Michael Bridges shot in off the post in the 29th minute.

Then in first half injury time, Bowyer shimmied past a couple of Leicester defenders after a great pass from Bridges before shooting home into the top right-hand corner.

Kewell nearly made it 3-1 with a diving header after a great pass from Bridges.

Leeds manager David O'Leary praised his players for dominating the match from start to finish despite only winning by the odd goal.

"We were superb from the first minute through to the 90th. They got their goal against the run of play and what we then had to do was keep playing the way we had done."

"We then got our two goals and in the second half their keeper was the difference. He was superb because we perhaps should have had five or six."

Champions United were flattered by their winning scoreline at Bradford.

It took them till the 75th minute for them to open their account when South Africa's Quinton Fortune, on his full debut, scored after a David Beckham cross.

Midfielder Fortune, a 1.5-million-pound (2.3-million-dollar) buy from Atletico Madrid in August, came within inches of scoring in the first half after hitting the underside of the crossbar from a freekick.

Dwight Yorke, on 79 minutes, Andy Cole on 87 and then Roy Keane a minute later completed the goal spree.

Manager Sir Alex Ferguson was particularly delighted with the performance of his South African international Quinton Fortune who scored the first goal to put United on their way.

"I was very pleased with him. Ryan Giggs had a bit of flu, so I sent him home."

"Quinton's been a bit unlucky in that he got an ankle injury when he first came but he's been free of injury in the last two months."

"It's just been a matter of getting him involved in a few games recently. He's got a great appetite, a willingness to work up and down and he showed great temperament."

"The goal will help him but I think he made a great all-round contribution today."

Everton's Don Hutchison got them off to a good start in the 16th minute against Sunderland, playing with England international striker Kevin Phillips. It was Hutchison again who scored the second from 22 metres on 26 minutes.

Francis Jeffers hit Everton's third on 41 minutes then after the break Mark Pemberton on 61 and Kevin Campbell, on 72, finished off the goal jamboree.



Leeds' Michael Bridges scores against Leicester at Elland Road. Leeds won 2-1.

— AFP photo

Campbell, with his back to goal, turned and fired the ball home from six metres.

Newcastle's Alan Shearer opened the scoring against Liverpool after 12 minutes with his 17th goal of the season with a little flick in from Nolberto Solano's freekick.

Michael Owen, who has scored in Liverpool's last five games against Newcastle, slipped a goal through from an acute angle on the right for Liverpool's equalizer on 31 minutes and then put them ahead in the 52nd minute.

Then came Ferguson's goal in the 67th minute to draw matters level.

George Boateng and Ian Taylor hit second half goals for Aston Villa who won 2-0 at Derby County. Peter Atherton scored a 28th minute winner for Sheffield Wednesday in their 1-0 win at home to Middlesbrough.

Wednesday's skipper had stayed up front after a corner

and, when Nicolas Alexanderson whipped a right-wing cross into the danger zone, he was first off the mark to power the ball past Mark Schwarzer from close range.

Earlier, Chelsea without Graeme Le Saux, Chris Sutton and Dennis Wise, still managed to win 2-1 at Southampton with goals from Tore Andre Flo.

It was the first time a Premiership club had a starting line-up without a British player but manager Gianluca Viali was quick to defend his team selection.

"I never thought about it. I've got a squad of 22 players and the more I've got available then the better it is," Viali said.

"Sometimes a team picks itself because of injuries and suspensions."

"We are an English team with English players and foreign players. It makes no difference as long as we talk the same

language on the pitch."

"We had a few players out — and unfortunately a few of them were English — but nationality is not important."

Croatia's Davor Suker scored in the 86th for Arsenal, giving the London club hope of claiming a late equalizer, but it was not to be.

Gary McAllister, thanks to a deflection off defender Martin Keown, put Coventry ahead after just six minutes and Moroccan Mustapha Hadji put them two goals ahead five minutes before the break.

Fredrik Ljungberg pulled one back for the Gunners but Robbie Keane scored Coventry's third, hooking the ball back with the outside of his right foot, to virtually ensure victory despite Suker's late score.

Tottenham Hotspur beat Watford 4-0 and Wimbledon earned a 2-2 draw at home to West Ham in other games.



Chelsea's Tore Andre Flo makes an attempt on the Southampton goal. Chelsea won 2-1.

— AFP photo

## Penev named Bulgaria's coach of the century

SOFIA, Dec 27 (Reuters/Internet): Former head coach Dimitar Penev, who led Bulgaria to the World Cup quarter-finals for the first time in their history in 1994, was voted soccer coach of the century in Bulgaria on Monday.

Penev also took Bulgaria to their first European championship finals in 1996 but when the side failed to progress past the first round the country's soccer body sacked him and he returned to CSKA Sofia.

Penev began his coaching career in 1978 with Second Division Dimitrovgrad and has had three spells as CSKA coach since 1979 as well as jobs in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Penev's second stint with CSKA between 1985 and 1990 brought the club three league championships and three Bulgarian Cups and also took them to the European Cup semifinals in 1989.

Under his leadership CSKA, who have been champions 28 times, are second after 15 rounds of the current Bulgarian league season. The team ended fifth last season.

Penev's nephew Lyuboslav Penev was elected CSKA president earlier this year and quit his career as a striker with Celta Vigo.

Bulgarian fans remember Penev as one of the country's best central defenders with 364 matches in the first division and 90 appearances for his country.

## Edilson Brazilian league's player of the year

BRASILIA, Dec 27: Corinthians midfielder Edilson was elected player of the year in the Brazilian league and Oswaldo de Oliveira of the Sao Paulo club earned the coach's award, the Brazilian federation (CBF) said on Sunday, reports AFP.

Corinthians were crowned Brazilian champions for the second consecutive year and third time this decade on Wednesday night following a 0-0 draw against Atletico Mineiro.

Edilson, who started the day at the summit, were held to a 1-1 draw at Crewe with little equalizing for the home side after Chris Beech had put Huddersfield ahead.

Charlton struck twice in a minute in their 2-1 win over Crystal Palace, who had taken an early lead when teenager Andy Martin put them in front with his first goal for the club.

John Salako netted against his old team-mates and Martin Pringle knocked in the winner to move Alan Curbishley's side up to third place.

Fulham slipped a place in the table as Ipswich extended their unbeaten run to nine games in a 0-0 draw at Craven Cottage.

Substitute Ian Moore snatched victory for Stockport with his second goal in injury time in a 3-2 scoreline against Wolverhampton.

Moore, on the bench because he was delayed by motorway hold-ups, had equalised after Neil Emblen and Ludovic Pollet gave Wolves the advantage before the break, cancelling out Tony Dimmy's opener.

Barnesley's Craig Hignett scored twice to bring his tally to five goals in two games before Matt Appleby rounded off a convincing 3-0 victory away to Grimsby.

They lost 3-2 at 13th placed Coventry City — the three goals conceded sending a shockwave through fans unused to seeing their club let in more than one or two.

Last season, Arsenal conceded just 17 goals in the league and finished runners-up to Manchester United. The three at Highfield Road took their tally so far to 20. They have 36 points to Leeds' 44.

While the four clubs above

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## Pitch getting on Fergie's nerves



MANCHESTER, Dec 27 (Internet report): Sir Alex Ferguson has ordered Manchester United ground staff to sort out Old Trafford's atrocious pitch, before their next home game in four weeks.

Ferguson is losing patience with the pitch and blasted the surface as "terrible" after the Boxing Day win over Bradford.

The Old Trafford surface, despite being re-laid four times in the past 19 months, remains the worst in the Premiership.

Ferguson said: "The pitch was very heavy. It was terrible and the players would need to be Trojans to get through that. We can give a bit of thought to our next game because it's a month away and we have to make sure the pitch is in good condition for that game."

Ferguson is adamant that head groundsman Keith Kent and his staff improve the surface ahead of United's next home game against Arsenal on 24 January.

Fortunately, Kent and his team have four weeks to work on the pitch because United will be in Brazil competing in the World Club Championship.

It looks likely, though, that United will have to re-lay the pitch again in the summer to try to solve the problem.

The grass was originally dug up in May 1998 because the crown had become too high and spectators in the front seats could not see the opposite side.

The pitch did not bed in properly and was dug up again that October. United thought they had cracked the problem

where you felt that all the work they had done would get a result for them.

"We were always going to make substitutions; it's all about when and who. You don't only bring two players on; you're bringing a freshness on. I think that was the key for us."

Ferguson heralded Quinton Fortune after the South African ended his full Manchester United debut with a goal.

Fergie said: "I was very pleased with him. Ryan Giggs had a bit of flu, so I sent him home."

"Quinton's been a bit unlucky in that he got an ankle injury when he first came but he's been free of injury in the last two months."

"It's just been a matter of getting him involved in a few games recently. He's got a great appetite, a willingness to work up and down and he showed great temperament."

"The goal will help him but I think he made a great all-round contribution today."

It took United 75 minutes to break the deadlock, but when they did, three more quickly followed. "I don't think we made hard work of it. I sent the pitch and the way they set their game out meant it would be a hard struggle," Fergie continued.

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This fourth surface has failed because of the heavy rain in November and December.

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