

Busta Cup cricket

KINGSTON, Jan 24: At the close of the third and penultimate day of their Busta Cup match, Jamaica had champions Barbados on the ropes, chasing a victory target of 356 at 48 for the loss of four wickets, reports AP.

Veteran fastbowler Courtney Walsh and off-spinner Nehemiah Perry picked up two wickets apiece in the hour before close of play. The move put Jamaica in a strong position to take 16 points from the Barbados, who came into the match leaders of the six-team tournament.

Walsh bowled captain Philip Wallace for one with the score on 12. Perry then removed Sherwin Campbell for 22 when the score had reached 37.

Floyd Reifer was the next to go, caught by Adams off Perry for four by Perry. Then, in the day's penultimate over, Walsh returned to bowl nightwatchman Dave Marshall for one.

At the close, Adrian Griffith was unbeaten on 11 and the experienced Roland Holder was yet to score. Barbados needed another 308 runs to win.

Walsh and Perry followed up on the batting heroics of teammates Robert Samuels and Matthew Sinclair, who made 55 and 40 respectively in a sixth wicket partnership worth 102 runs.

The pair came together in the final stages of the second day's play and batted throughout the morning session, with Samuels stroking seven fours and one six off 143 deliveries.

Sinclair was eventually dismissed for 40 by spinner Marshall, who also claimed the wicket of Samuels and finished with figures of four for 68.

Ridsdale hopes players will not be charged

LEEDS, England, Jan 24: Leeds United chairman Peter Ridsdale said Saturday he believed two of his key players will not face charges over an incident which saw them questioned by police over an alleged assault of an Asian man, reports AFP.

Defender Jonathan Woodgate and striker Lee Bowyer - two of the Premiership leaders' outstanding crop of young players and outside candidates for England's squad for Euro 2000 - were quizzed by police investigating the allegations and will learn if they will be charged on March 14.

Ridsdale said in remarks reported in The Times newspaper: "My hope and my belief is that both players are in a position where charges will not be brought. It is also my understanding that there is no suggestion that this was a racially motivated attack."

However, the Leeds chairman admitted that - if the players were to be eventually punished by the courts - that sacking them or placing them on the transfer list "would have to be on the agenda".

Ridsdale's comments come a day after Leeds manager David O'Leary spoke to BSkyB about the incident.

Former Republic of Ireland international O'Leary, choosing his words carefully so as not to prejudice the police probe, said: "I was brought up a certain way. I believe in discipline."

"There are things I can't say because I'm restricted. But what I can say is that I'm very disappointed with what's gone on off the field here."

"I'd like to say more but I'm governed at the time being. I'm just not too pleased and I've not had the best of weeks."

The incident could not have come at a worse time for Leeds. Both players are considered two of the outstanding prospects in English football and Leeds are challenging for honours in the Premiership, the FA Cup and the UEFA Cup.

Ridsdale has also worked hard during his time at Leeds to eradicate a racist image that stained the club in the 1970s until the early 1990s.

While the club itself has never been racist the hooligan element among its supporters were some of the most notorious and racist in England when football violence was at its zenith.

Extreme right groups are known to have been involved in some of the crowd violence incidents at Leeds and other top clubs during that period.

There is a large Asian community in Leeds and Ridsdale and the club have tried to embrace the ethnic diversity of the city in order to banish racism from the club for good.

Ridsdale admitted: "There is no doubt that the publicity we have had this week has undone a lot of our good work."

Woodgate and Bowyer have both been named in the squad for the Premiership clash with Sunderland on Sunday but it is not clear if they will play in the match.

Rivaldo's night

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the award after his two goals in France's 3-0 World Cup victory over Brazil.

Other prizes will be presented to Brazil as best international team of 1999, while Slovenia will also win the accolade for most improved team in the world following their shock qualification for Euro 2000.

A fairplay award is due to be presented to New Zealand, while three members of the United States women's World Cup winning side, including Michelle Akers will receive awards.

Three players in the FIFA Confederations Cup will also receive awards. These are Brazil's Ronaldinho Gaucho, Mexico's Cuauhtemoc Blanco and Saudi Arabia's Al Otaibi Marzouk.

Serie A

Juve going great guns



MILAN, Jan 24: French star Zinedine Zidane sent Juventus three points clear at the top of the Serie A on Sunday, scoring a stunning goal as the new title favourites beat Reggina 2-0, reports AFP.

Juventus took full advantage of Lazio's 0-0 draw at bottom club Cagliari on Saturday, while two other title rivals also suffered setbacks - with Milan drawing 2-2 with Lecce and Parma losing 2-1 to Perugia.

Juventus lead the Serie A with 39 points, ahead of Lazio (36) and AS Roma (35), who beat Piacenza 2-1 on Saturday, with three more teams seven points adrift - Inter, AC Milan and Parma all on 32.

Yugoslav Darko Kovacevic, making his first league start for Juventus, gave them a 35th minute lead - meeting Alessandro Del Piero's corner from the left with a glancing header.

Zidane confirmed his superb run of form in the 64th minute, beating three men in the Reggina area before smacking an unstoppable shot under the bar.

Zidane, who cracked home a free-kick last Sunday against Perugia, took Juventus' unbeaten league run to 14 matches and one six off 143 deliveries.

Sinclair was eventually dismissed for 40 by spinner Marshall, who also claimed the wicket of Samuels and finished with figures of four for 68.



BAGGIO ... back with a bang

with Baggio, he said: "I haven't got a bad rapport with any of the players, and I'm happy for him today."

A beaming Baggio said: "The secret is always the same - to work hard and hope to do well when your moment comes."

This is a goal which repays me for a lot of disappointments and follows a very difficult period," he said. "And it's a goal for all those people who

STANDINGS

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

	18	11	6	1	24	8	39
Juventus	18	11	6	1	24	8	39
Lazio	18	10	6	2	33	16	36
AS Roma	18	10	5	3	36	19	35
Inter Milan	18	10	2	6	34	16	32
AC Milan	18	8	8	2	36	24	32
Parma	18	9	5	4	30	20	32
Bari	18	7	5	6	22	21	26
Udinese	18	7	4	7	30	27	25
Lecce	18	6	6	6	19	26	24
Bologna	18	6	5	7	15	18	23
Perugia	18	7	2	9	18	32	23
Fiorentina	18	5	7	6	18	21	22
Torino	18	5	5	8	16	22	20
Reggina	18	3	8	7	18	27	17
Verona	18	4	4	10	14	27	16
Venezia	18	4	3	11	15	28	15
Cagliari	18	1	8	9	16	28	11
piacenza	18	2	5	11	10	24	11



—Internet photo

Return of the Zidane



MILAN, Jan 24: (AP): Zinedine Zidane was basked in the spotlight of Italian football on Monday, as praise down on the Frenchman for his sparkling performance in Juventus' latest victory.

The Zebras have now stormed three points clear at the top of the Serie A, with Zidane rounding off his display on Sunday with a superb solo goal as Juventus beat Reggina 2-0 away.

Juventus' win was also a shot across the bows of title rivals Lazio, who had played in Reggio Calabria the previous day and managed only a 0-0 draw.

But Zidane, who remains as sombre off the pitch as he is illuminating on it, tried to down his contribution and insisted that Juventus' strength was their team effort.

Reggina showed their southern pride against Italy's most successful club and Zidane admitted: "It is a difficult ground. Not many teams have won there."

"But we managed it and we played good football, especially in the first half. I'm pleased about that, and the fact that we're clear at the top of the table. But let's not have any talk about leaving the others behind."

Inter and Roma both won

and there's a long way to go yet."

As for himself, Zidane told reporters: "I didn't have a great game. But I did score a great goal. I don't know if it was my best ever - I scored one like it for Bordeaux against Betis Seville in the UEFA Cup."

"But more than the goal or our place in the league table, what I'm really happy about is how the team have been playing for the last six or seven matches now. We've all improved and we're always winning."

And he insisted: "The real strength of this team is not Zidane, or anyone else, but the fact that we're all playing well and playing together."

Zidane tried to deflect some of the spotlight onto striker Darko Kovacevic, who in the Serie A had always been passed over in favour of star duo Alessandro Del Piero and Fil-

ippo Inzaghi.

The Yugoslav had scored 14 goals since arriving from Real Sociedad last summer and celebrated his first ever league start with a goal on Sunday.

"Kovacevic has always worked hard," said Zidane. "He started a league match for the first time and proved that he's as good as Del Piero and Inzaghi."

However, Zidane's latest performance was hailed in headlines across Italy.

Nine months previously, the morning after a humbling defeat to Manchester United in the European Cup semi-finals, Tuttosport had branded Zidane "useless" and called on Juventus to sell him.

On Monday, the same Turin paper managed to cram a dozen superlatives into just two sentences to describe the Frenchman.

Sport

Premiership

Leeds stay clear atop

LONDON, Jan 24: Leeds went four points clear at the top of the Premiership on Sunday after beating Sunderland 2-1 at the Stadium of Light, reports AFP.

Jason Wilcox scored his first goal for his new club to put United ahead after 24 minutes and former Sunderland favourite Michael Bridges added a second against his old club five minutes after half time to seal the points for David O'Leary's side.

The Premiership's leading marksman, Kevin Phillips replied for the home side on 52 minutes but for all their pressure in the second half the hosts were unable to draw level.

Jonathan Woodgate and Lee Bowyer played for Leeds despite their arrest earlier this week in connection with an attack on Asian student Sarfaraz Najeib 12 days ago.

United top the table on 47 points, four ahead of Manchester United in second although United - who play Arsenal at Old Trafford on Monday - have three games in hand.

Leeds were threatening to run riot but Peter Reid's side showed the kind of spirit which has lifted them to fifth in the table in their first season in the top flight.

Parma slipped to sixth place after the upset of the day saw them slump to a 2-1 home defeat to Perugia - a side who had lost their previous three games, with an aggregate scoreline of 13-0.

Elsewhere, Gionatha Spinesi headed the 83rd minute winner as Bari beat Fiorentina 1-0 and Udinese roared back from 1-0 down to crush Venezia 5-2.

Torino, who had ended a run of six consecutive defeats last weekend by beating Piacenza, notched a second straight win by defeating Bologna 2-1 thanks to two goals from centre-forward Marco Ferrante.

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