

NBL v'ball

Brothers Union Club earned a straight 25-15, 25-15, 25-12 victory over East End Club in the National Bank Metropolis First Division League at the Volleyball court yesterday, reports UNB.

In the day's other match, Fire Service beat East End Boys 25-19, 23-25, 25-23, 25-17 at the same venue.

The Premier Division League match between War Club and Azad Sporting Club was in progress till filing this report.

Aldridge let off the hook

LONDON, Feb 28: Leicester have decided not to press for Football Association action to be taken against Tranmere manager John Aldridge over his alleged attack on their substitute Theo Zagorakis during the League Cup final, reports AFP.

Aldridge is reported to have confronted Zagorakis on the bench after the Greek captain allegedly applauded when Tranmere defender Clint Hill was red-carded in the second period.

The Tranmere chief is alleged to have slapped Zagorakis and then become involved in a verbal hush-up.

Samir

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the BKSP," said BFF joint-secretary Badal Roy yesterday.

BKSP however said that they were not informed by the BFF. Badal on the other hand refuted the BKSP claim.

"I got the five days back and assigned someone to relay the message to the BKSP. I think, he has informed the BKSP," said the joint-secretary without disclosing the identity of the person.

Badal was however quite critical about the unpredictable nature of Samir Shaha.

"We had an intention of retaining him as the national coach. We could have convinced the AFC (Asian Football Confederation) to appoint him as our coach. But we are now totally fed up with his indiscipline nature," said a frustrated Badal.

The AFC would sponsor two coaches for Bangladesh - one for the senior team and the other for the youth development programme.

"Samir is no longer fits in our plan. We are thinking otherwise. We want to appoint Mark Harrison as the coach of the senior team. We are considering other candidates for the youth. But, it's for sure that Samir is not in our list," Badal said.

Nothing much

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will turn things around for us," he said. "We have not played good cricket for three months now, but the team as an entity is a good one."

Ganguly's appointment was hailed by both coach Kapil Dev and his predecessor Tendulkar. "Saurav is conscious of the responsibility and would do a decent job," Tendulkar said, but refused to offer any advice.

"He has captained India before and know what needs to be done. I am not surprised he was made captain. I did not expect anyone else to get the job."

Kapil said Ganguly was a "thinking cricketer who will settle down well in the job."

Ganguly immediately sought more powers in picking the playing eleven, rather than leaving it to the selectors.

Once the 14-member team is selected, it should be left to the captain and coach to choose the final eleven," Ganguly said.

He brushed aside queries on the return of former captain Mohammad Azharuddin to the team for the first time after the World Cup in England last June.

"That's the past. He's back in the team and he's put the past behind," Ganguly said about the reported resistance by Tendulkar and Kapil Dev to Azharuddin's comeback.

"Azhar has a job to do, he is a good wristy batsman and fielder," the captain-designate said about the 37-year-old.

Anwar gives

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PAKISTAN: First innings 182 (Inzamam 44; P Wickremasinghe 4-37; M Muralitharan 4-45).

SRI LANKA: First innings (overnight 290 for eight).

Atapattu c Wast b Waqar 8

Jayasuriya c Moh b Waqar 17

Arundel c Moh b Waqar 26

De Silva lbw b Saqlain 112

Jayawardene run out 42

Ranatunga b Razaq 49

Kaluwitharana lbw b Razaq 0

Vaas not out 53

Wickremasinghe c sub (Afidi) 0

b Saqlain 0

Zoya c Yousuf b Waqar 26

Muralitharan c Moh b Sohail 7

Extras (lb-2, lb-4, lb-3) 33

Total (all out in 123.2 overs) 353

Fall of wickets: 1-9; 2-38; 3-69; 4-117; 5-248; 6-246; 7-280; 8-280; 9-331; 10-353.

Bowler: O M R W

Akram 2.1 0 8 0

Waqar 30 3 103 4

Razaq 32.5 7 99 2

Saqlain 34 9 78 2

Sohail 23.2 5 55 1

Wast 1 1 0 0

PAKISTAN: Second innings

Anwar b Vaas 84

Wast c Wickremasinghe b Zoya 1

Sohail c Jayawardene 24

b Muralitharan 6

Inzamam c sub (Chandana) b Vaas 20

Yousuf not out 6

Waqar not out 19

Extras (lb-4, lb-3, lb-12) 154

Total (for 4 wickets in 68 overs) 154

Fall of wickets: 1-9; 2-72; 3-136; 4-148.

Bowler: O M R W

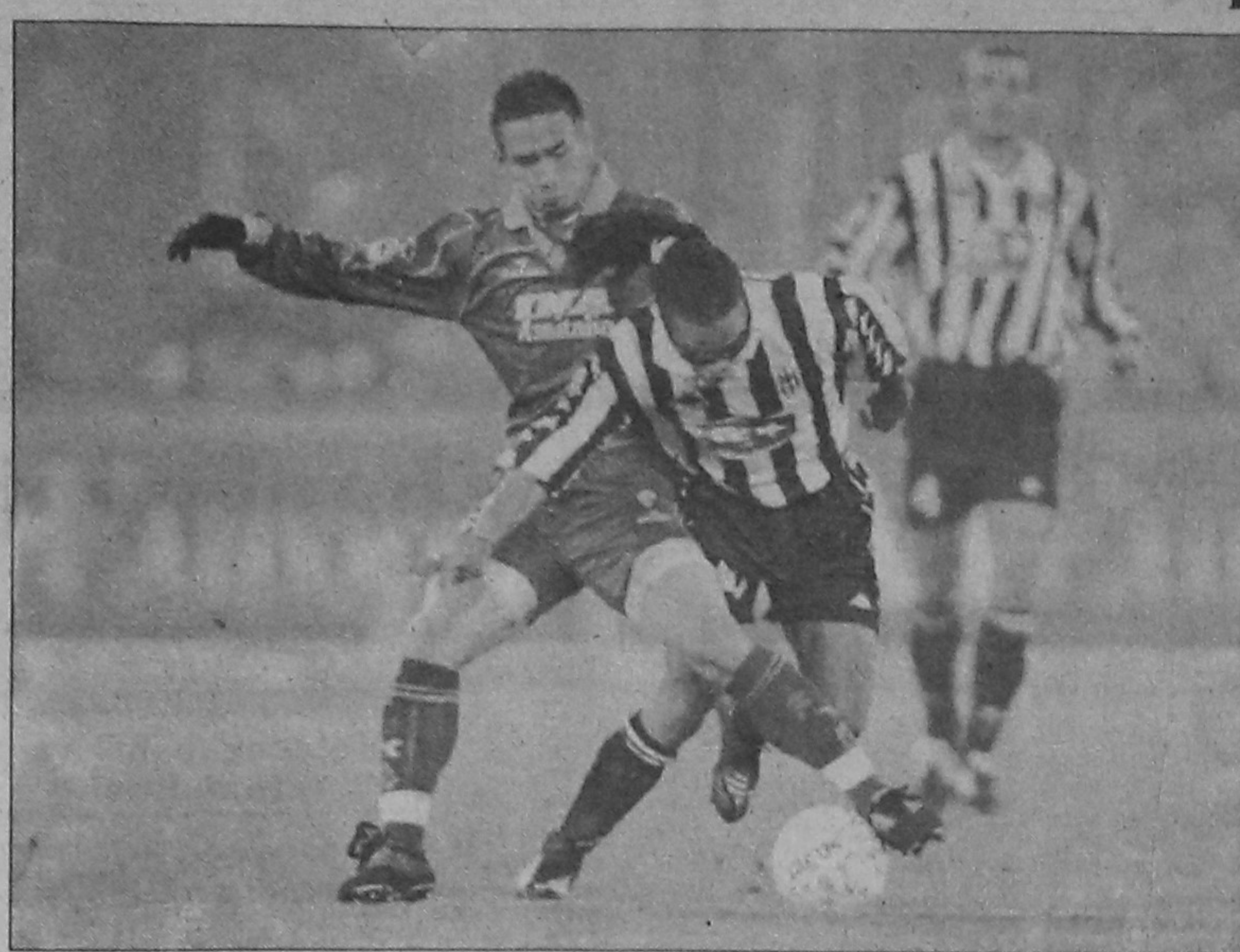
Vaas 19 5 34 1

Zoya 15 5 34 2

Wickremasinghe 10 3 27 0

Muralitharan 23 7 52 1

Arnold 1 1 0 0



Roma's Japanese international Hidetoshi Nakata (L) and Juventus' Dutch star Edgar Davids battle for possession during their Serie A encounter. — AFP photo

Serie A

Romans conquered in Turin



MILAN, Feb 2: Juventus needed only 10 men to score a morale-boosting 2-1 win over title rivals AS Roma on Sunday night and restore their four-point lead in the Serie A, reports AFP.

Filippo "SuperPippo" Inzaghi scored the winner which took Juventus to 50 points - ahead of Lazio (46), AC Milan (45), Inter (43) and Roma (42), who saw their title ambitions badly dented in Turin.

Juventus deserved their victory but there was controversy in the 29th minute when Roma striker Marco Delvecchio suffered a crunching tackle from behind by Alessio Tacchinardi just inside the penalty area.

The referee waved play on and two minutes later Juventus were in front, Dutch midfielder Edgar Davids hitting a spectacular first-time volley from outside the area.

Roma levelled seven minutes later when Delvecchio got in front of his marker to hook a high ball past Juventus' Dutch keeper Edwin Van Der Sar.

But there was more drama five minutes before the break when Juventus defender Paolo Montero punched away a goal ball that would have put Roma skipper Francesco Totti clean through.

The Uruguayan was promptly sent off, but it didn't prevent Juventus restoring their lead within a minute of the re-start, thanks to a shrewd substitution by coach Carlo Ancelotti.

Ancelotti took off midfielder Antonio Conte for defender Alessandro Birindelli to shore things up at the back. And it was the right wingback who sent over the cross which Roma keeper Francesco Antonioli

flapped at and Inzaghi guided over the line from just a few centimetres out.

Juventus, who have by far the best defence in Italy with just 11 goals conceded in 23 games, then dug in for their points and might even have snatched a third goal.

Ancelotti said: "It wasn't easy against a Rome side like this one, and with only 10 men for more than half the game. The team were both good and courageous. They played the second half with great heart and great humility."

"When you're a man down, you probably play with more tension, more character and more determination," he added. "And whenever times have been hard, this team has always brought out its very best."

Roma coach Fabio Capello said: "Psychologically, the second goal pulled the rug from under us. We didn't play with the same rhythm and the same fluidity."

Asked to comment after watching a TV replay of Tacchinardi's tackle on Delvecchio, he said: "I think the pictures are so clear that there's no comment to be made. The pictures speak for themselves."

As for his team's chances in the title race, he added: "There are a lot of difficult matches still to go. There's no reason for us to stop now."

Elsewhere, AC Milan could only draw 0-0 at Cagliari but Inter returned to the title race by beating Venezia 3-0.

Milan had won their previous four league games before arriving in Sardinia but were unconvincing in the first half and didn't manage a single shot on goal in the second.

Milan coach Alberto Zaccheroni seemed to like the hosts' performance more than his own team's.

"Cagliari did really well, they seemed more of a team and they believed more than we did in their ability to get a result," he said. "We, on the other hand, just didn't keep together."

Milan goalkeeper Christian Abbiati, voted man of the match, was less diplomatic in his verdict. "The real AC Milan never took the pitch."

"We were in big trouble all through the match, and above all our approach to the game was wrong."

Inter looked to have overcome their erratic form with a convincing win at San Siro - albeit one that came at a high price.

Christian Vieri opened the scoring with a superb 25-metre strike in the 42nd minute.

Chilean Ivan Zamorano made it 2-0 soon after the re-start and Uruguayan Alvaro Recoba with a low drive wrapped up the points.

The bad news was losing Vieri to a thigh muscle injury which coach Marcello Lippi said will keep him out of next weekend's derby - raising doubts too about their second crunch game the following week against Lazio.

Lippi said: "The important thing for us is to keep in touch with the leading clubs and then go for it in the final month of the season."

Milan's wasn't the only 0-0 draw of the day: there were no goals either in Placenza's game at Bologna and Verona's at Perugia, where the home side look set to lose Ibrahim Ba for the rest of the season after the French winger suffered tendon damage to his left knee.

There were no winners either in Bari, where the home side finished 1-1 with Torino, but Reggina won their all-southern battle with Lecce 2-1.

Scottish Premiership

Rangers eat Dundee

GLASGOW, Feb 28: Rod Wallace hit a first-half hat-trick as Rangers thrashed Dundee 7-1 at Dens Park on Sunday to open up an 11-point lead at the top of the Scottish Premier League, reports AFP.

Wallace opened the scoring on 75 seconds and was joined by Tony Vidmar, Jorg Albertz and Seb Rozental on the scoresheet before the break.

Steven Tweed had pulled it back to 2-1 for Dundee after 28 minutes, but four goals in the final 15 minutes of the opening half left Dundee reeling.

Tweed scored an own goal to complete the rout with three minutes to go.

Giovanni Van Bronckhorst threaded pass set up Wallace after two minutes and he fired the ball low past Robert Douglas to set the tone for Rangers right from the start.

Andrei Kanchelskis' corner from the left saw Vidmar the first to react with a glancing header from close range to double Rangers' lead after 23 minutes as Dick Advocaat's side took control.

Five minutes later the home team pulled a goal back when Hugh Robertson's deep cross was headed back across goal by Lee Sharp for Tweed to nod into the net from barely a yard.

On the half-hour Rozental trickery on the right fed a Van Bronckhorst run, and his instant pass found Wallace who tapped in from close range despite protests for offside.

Three minutes later it was 4-1 as a huge kick from goalkeeper Stefan Klos caught the wind and set up Wallace for another run at Douglas.

The Dundee goalkeeper was slow to advance from his line, and Wallace nipped in front of him to clip the ball above his reach and into the net to complete a 33-minute hat-trick.

Albertz tested his range on 36 minutes with a fizzing effort that sailed over the bar and then went on better with his next attempt, a swerving 25-yard strike to see the hapless Douglas beaten again.

Right on half-time Rangers made it 6-1 when Wallace turned provider for Rozental to stab in from close range to complete an amazing opening 45 minutes.

The second half failed to live up to the first half and Rangers had to wait until three minutes from time to complete the demolition.

Tweed's 87th-minute own-goal - under pressure from Vidmar after an Albertz cross - merely compounded Dundee's misery to complete an awesome Rangers performance that lifted their 11 points clear of second-placed Celtic.

Ronaldo to join team training in March

RIO DE JANEIRO, Feb 28: Inter Milan and Brazil striker Ronaldo should be fit to return to team training next month, reports AFP.

Piero Volpi, team doctor with the Italian Serie A side told the media here Sunday, reports AFP.

Volpi carried out an examination of the former World Player of the Year at Teresopolis in the Rio de Janeiro region, where he is currently undergoing a gruelling fortnight of rehabilitation work as he battles for fitness following major surgery on his right knee in Paris two months ago.

"I no longer feel any pain in my right knee. I'm sure that I'm going to regain total fitness," said Ronaldo.

The 23-year-old works out for five hours every day and during his first five days at Teresopolis has shed 1.5 kilos but has a further three kilos to lose before a scheduled return to action.

"My finger is already thinner and I'll have to change my wedding ring," joked Ronaldo, who only married last December.

The former World Player of the Year is expected to travel to Paris in March 5, where he will undergo an examination by surgeon Gerard Sailland, who operated on him last year.

After getting back into the groove with Inter over the final two months of the season, Ronaldo is targeting an appearance at the Olympics in Sydney in September as well as playing a leading role in Brazil's 2002 World Cup qualifying programme.

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Monaco striker David Trezeguet (L) is the toast of his teammates after scoring in a French First Division match in Meinau on February 27. — AFP photo

French First Division

Strasbourg stun Monaco



PARIS, Feb 27: Strasbourg, battling to stave off relegation, beat runaway French First Division leaders Monaco 3-2 in a five-goal thriller on Sunday night, reports AFP.

Monaco's unexpected loss in Alsace still left them with an unassailable-looking 10-point cushion over second-placed Lyon, who leapfrogged Paris St Germain to go second after beating Marseille 2-0 on Saturday.

But Monaco coach Claude Puel was damning in his summing up of his team's effort.

He said: "We didn't deserve to win. We had good chances of scoring in the first half but our minds weren't in it. We reacted well after going down 1-0 but we were frail."

"When we put in a bad performance I acknowledge it. We didn't have the necessary concentration and motivation. If we want to be consistent we have to have the mental strength for it."

In contrast, listening to Strasbourg coach Claude Leroy one might have been forgiven for thinking it was the struggling Alsatisans and not Monaco who were within a stone's throw of the 1999/00 championship.

"We won with our heads, our hearts and our legs. That combines to make a team with a soul which gave pleasure to 30,000 fans," he enthused.

"We know we have enormous potential, but also that there is work to be done. It's a real honour to work with these guys."

It was Strasbourg's Olivier Echouafni who put the hosts ahead, the midfielder's header rocketing past a hapless Fabien Barthez after 17 minutes.

But that lead lasted all of eight minutes as Monaco's newly-wed David Trezeguet connected with a flick from Sabri Lamouchi, the offside trap having been deftly overcome.

Trezeguet, who hours after tying the knot Saturday in Monaco risked the wrath of his new bride by flying out to prepare for this game, got his second goal soon after, slotting the ball past Thierry Debès.

That double lifted the French international level with Brazilian Sonny Anderson of Lyon as the league's top scorer with 18 goals.

But in a hugely entertaining spat Strasbourg were back all square when their pony-tailed defender Teddy Bertin hit a 35m haymaker off a pass from a freekick, the ball whistling past Barthez right ear five minutes from the interval.

Strasbourg then ensured a famous win in the 63rd minute when a high cross found Ibrahim Hemdani, who scuttled the ball into the left hand corner of Barthez's goal.

Strasbourg's star performance capped a week which had

started encouragingly with the news that Leroy had rejected an offer to coach the Moroccan national team to devote all his energies to Strasbourg's relegation battle.

This result puts them five points clear of the relegation zone.

Lyon's goals against Marseille in a match that saw 10 bookings and a player sent off from either side came from their expensive strike pairing - Tony Vairelles and Anderson.

Third-placed PSG, meanwhile, had to rely on a last-minute equaliser to grab a point in a 1-1 draw at home to Nancy while Auxerre lost ground with a 2-0 defeat at Bastia, the Corsican side maintaining their 100 percent home record.

Reigning champions Bordeaux hammered Nantes 3-0 with all their goals coming in the last 20 minutes.

Metz carved out their 15th draw of the campaign against fourth-placed Sedan, both sides getting a penalty apiece in a stormy and one player red carded from each side in the last five minutes.

Elsewhere Montpellier, anchored to the foot of the table, grabbed a point in a 1-1 draw against Lens, ten-man St Etienne hung on to a 1-0 lead away to Troyes, and Rennes battled back after going a goal down to visitors Le Havre to win 2-1. Benoit Le Bris getting the decider in the 88th minute.

Moment of truth for Europe's best



PARIS, Feb 28: The European Champions League "Month of Death" begins this week amid cries from

many quarters that the calendar remains too busy and needs to be drastically reduced, reports AFP.

Four consecutive weeks of Champions League matches mean teams will have to play at least two games a week and burn-out through injury is a major concern.

Bayern Munich manager Uli Hoeness called for a reduction in the number of Champions League matches, saying the round-robin matches should be followed by a knockout phase featuring the final 16 teams rather than the second round-robin series that is the current format.

Sir Alex Ferguson, manager of current European champions Manchester United is less phased about the frenzied fixture list, believing his large squad has experience in this situation.

Ferguson believes his own side will be far better prepared for the challenge ahead than their group rivals Borussia Dortmund and Valencia.

After Saturday's 2-2 draw at Wimbledon, Ferguson declared: "Match is certainly a big month but it usually is a big month anyway, so we're into a situation that we usually find ourselves in at this time of year - nothing changes much, does it?"

The difference this year is that we're playing twice every week. It's the same for our group rivals but it's unusual for them to go week-to-week playing European games of such intensity, so, hopefully, that will help us."

Ferguson admits that one factor which could work against his side is that Bordeaux, Fiorentina and Valencia are not in the running for their own domestic titles - but he still feels he has the squad to cope.

With Nicky Butt set to recover from an ankle-knock, Dwight Yorke is the main doubt for the game at home to Bordeaux on Wednesday - but he should be fit to face Liverpool next weekend; although Trinidad and Tobago seem set to launch another bid for his services in a World Cup qualifier.

Paul Scholes and Roy Keane will nevertheless be back after being suspended at Wimbledon, where David Beckham returned to the side after being dropped against Leeds following his training ground bust-up with his manager.

Real Madrid's 3-0 weekend victory over perennial rivals Barcelona has given them a boost in the run-up to Tuesday's match against Bayern Munich. Just three months ago, Madrid were a point above the

relegation zone but since then Vicente del Bosque has taken over from Welshman John Toshack and the side have gone from strength to strength.

Madrid are now in third spot, six points behind leaders Deportivo La Coruna, and the sunshine has begun to come out, physically and metaphorically, at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium.

The Merengues are back on form and finally have won over their ever-demanding fans.

Madrid's Cameroonian player Geremi Ndjap believed Bayern would be anxious following his team's great weekend result - even though the Germans themselves had a 4-1 weekend win over Eintracht Frankfurt.

"The Germans will know the result and it's sure they will come to our stadium with fear in their bellies," said Ndjap, who had a great game for Madrid on Saturday.

Bayern's only injury absentee is likely to be midfielder Thomas Strunz.

Just three days to go before facing Italian giants Lazio in their backyard of Rome for their Group D Champions League clash, Dutch champions Feyenoord admitted they were struggling to find their form.

Despite subjecting struggling First Division side MVV Maastricht to a 3-0 hammering in a league match on Saturday night, it was an unconvincing win for Feyenoord, who have only had a moderate domestic campaign.

Currently third in the Dutch league, 10 points adrift of leaders PSV Eindhoven, the former European Cup champions left the home crowd waiting for

Argentinian coach for Switzerland

GENEVA, Feb 28: Argentina's Enzo Trossero has been asked to take over from Gilbert Gress as coach of the Swiss national side, a spokesman for the Swiss Football Association said Monday, reports AFP.

Association representatives were due to go to Buenos Aires at the end of the week to sign a contract with the 46-year-old Trossero, spokesman Pierre Benoit said.

Trossero is currently in charge of Independiente of Buenos Aires and is contractually tied to the club until June, he said.

Benoit added that the decision to choose the Argentinian was made at the weekend.

Swiss Sunday newspapers said that Trossero had been offered an annual salary 800,000 Swiss francs (500,000 dollars) but Benoit denied the figure would be so high.

over an hour before finally tying up the game.

"It is far too difficult for us to score," coach Leo Benekker admitted Sunday. "That's the difference from last season's all conquering team."

Feyenoord can count on a full contingent of fit players heading into crucial games this March with defender Jean-Paul Van Gastel a key member of the team, out to injury for several weeks, making his return against Maastricht.

Dynamo Kyiv will likely face Norwegian champions Rosenborg in their Group C match on Tuesday without injured first team players Vladislav Vashchuk, Artyom Yashkin and Vitaly Kosovsky.

All three recently underwent surgery and are questionable for the key clash in Kiev. Dynamo's Ukrainian international striker Serhiy Rebrov and former Russian international defender Ramiz Mamedov may also miss the clash because of ankle injuries.

Chelsea's Italian coach Gianluca Vialli is eligible for a playing role in his club's campaign, which starts at Marseille on Tuesday.

Vialli, who won the European Cup as a player with Juventus, retired as a player last summer but had now made himself available again because of a striker crisis at the London club.