

Serie A

Last laugh Lazio's



ROME, May 15: Lazio were crowned Italian champions for the second time in the club's history on Sunday after they beat Reggina 3-0 here and overnight leaders Juventus suffered a shock 1-0 defeat at Perugia, reports AFP.

Lazio, who won their only other league title back in 1974 but had been runners-up to AC Milan in 1999, finished the season with 72 points.

Juventus stayed on 71pts - a two point lead over Lazio evaporating with their upset at Perugia in a match that was interrupted for 75 minutes by a rainstorm.

They had been nine points clear at the top in late March but a run of defeats saw them caught by Lazio, who could yet do the league and Cup double. The Rome club beat Inter Milan 2-1 in the first leg of the Italian Cup last month.

Lazio's victory prompted celebrations in the streets here with car horns sounding, motorbikes being ridden with Lazio flags and banners flying, and fans singing and chanting in the ancient city squares.

Lazio coach Sven Goran Eriksson said: "It wasn't just me. It was the team who did a great job. They believed they could do it right until the very end and now we've won. And we're just delighted."

Winning Serie A is like winning the Champions League, said the Swede, whose team lost in the quarter-finals to eventual finalists Valencia.

Juventus were sporting in defeat with honorary president Umberto Agnelli saying: "Congratulations to Lazio - a great team has won. We'll meet again next year. But thanks to Juventus for all they've done."

Juventus coach Carlo Ancelotti said: "This was a really bad afternoon - and it's one that will stay in my thoughts and my memories, unfortunately."

But he added: "Despite all the great bitterness, for a league title lost by hair's breadth, I have to say that this has been an excellent season for Juventus."

"I don't think any of the players have let me down. All of them have given everything. And he summed up: 'We deserved to win, but so did Lazio.'"

Elsewhere, outgoing champions AC Milan beat Udinese 4-0 to finish third and reach the preliminary rounds of the Champions League.

Milan's Ukrainian striker Andriy Shevchenko, who scored a penalty, finished as the Serie A's top scorer with 24 in his debut season - a remarkable feat.

"I never thought that I'd score so many goals," Shevchenko said.

But teammate Genaro Gattuso added: "If we'd played like this all season the league title would have been ours. No-one could have taken it away from us."

The other place in the Champions League preliminaries will be decided by a play-off between Inter Milan, who had Roberto Baggio to thank for a last-minute 2-0 win at relegated Cagliari, and Parma, who triumphed 4-1.

Gabriel Batistuta scored a hat-trick in Fiorentina's 3-0 win over Venezia, earning them a place in the UEFA Cup, but then asked to be transferred.

Alessandro Calori only needed to score once to deny Juventus a 26th league trophy - volleying home just four minutes after play re-started.



Simone Inzaghi, the Lazio striker, sends Reggina custodian Taibi(R) the wrong way to score from the penalty spot during their crucial Serie A fixture at Rome on May 14.

—AFP photo

STANDINGS

ROME, May 14 (AFP): Final Italian league table of the season on Sunday (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points; Lazio champions, bottom four clubs relegated to the Serie B):

Lazio	34	21	9	4	64	33	72
Juventus	34	21	8	5	46	20	71
AC Milan	34	16	13	5	65	40	61
Inter Milan	34	17	7	10	58	36	58
Parma	34	16	10	8	52	37	58
AS Roma	34	14	12	8	57	34	54
Florentina	34	13	12	9	48	38	51
Udinese	34	13	11	10	55	45	50
Verona	34	10	13	11	40	45	43
Perugia	34	12	6	16	36	52	42
Bologna	34	9	13	12	32	39	40
Reggina	34	9	13	12	31	42	40
Lecce	34	10	10	14	33	49	40
Bari	34	10	9	15	34	48	39
Torino	34	8	12	14	35	47	36
Venezia	34	6	8	20	30	60	26
Cagliari	34	3	9	18	29	54	22
Piacenza	34	4	9	21	19	45	21

Title for

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was full of quality batsmanship, exciting fielding and outstanding bowling.

Kalabagan opener Harun-ur Rashid scored a stroke-filled 66 that included three massive sixes to lay the foundation of his side's impressive total. Pakistani Salim Elahi scored 35 off 41 balls while his compatriot Tariq Mehmud chipped in with 31 and former national right-arm seamer Saiful hammered a vital 23.

For Abahani, off-spinner Naimur Rahman and Anisur Rahman claimed three wickets each.

Abahani in their chase got off to a sound start with opener Azam scoring 42 and skipper Akram making 35. But both ran themselves out while chasing non-existing single.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the Premier Division Super League match between Abahani KC and Kalabagan KC at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday:

KALABAGAN KC					
Harun c Rehman b Anisur	66				
Rouf lbw b Naimur	9				
S Elahi c Asadullah b Anisur	35				
Rajin b Anisur	17				
Mushfiq c Hasibul b Zakir	7				
Tareq c Hussain b Rehman	31				
Saiful c Rehman b Naimur	23				
Fahim c Zakir b Hasibul	11				
Bikash not out	14				
Imran st Mortuza b Naimur	15				
Shahen not out	1				
Extras: (b-5, lb-1, w-15)	21				
Total: (For 9 wickets in 50 overs)	240				
Fall of wickets: 1-59; 2-101; 3-135; 4-146; 5-148; 6-204; 7-211; 8-219; 9-233					
Bowler	O	M	R	W	
Hasibul	6	0	41	1	
Iqbal	3	0	12	0	
Naimur	10	0	41	3	
A Rehman	10	2	33	1	
M Hussain	10	0	42	0	
Anisur	8	0	44	3	
Zakir	3	0	21	1	

ABAHANI KC					
Azam run out	42				
M Hussain c Rajin b Saiful	10				
Asadullah lbw b Saiful	10				
Naimur c Tareq b Fahim	21				
Akram run out	35				
Anisur c Saiful b Imran	33				
Zakir run out	50				
A Rehman b Rouf	4				
Iqbal b Rouf	18				
Hasibul not out	7				
Mortuza not out	0				
Extras: (b-1, lb-4, nb-1, w-6)	125				
Total: (For 9 wickets in 50 overs)	235				
Fall of wickets: 1-20; 2-41; 3-75; 4-83; 5-133; 6-158; 7-175; 8-227; 9-229					
Bowler	O	M	R	W	
Bikash	7	0	35	0	
Saiful	8	0	29	2	
Tareq	5	0	34	0	
Fahim	10	0	47	1	
Rouf	10	0	45	2	
Imran	10	0	50	1	

Result: Kalabagan Kriya Chakra won by five runs.

Premiership

Bradford's great escape



LONDON, May 15: Bradford won the duel to retain Premiership status on Sunday after they edged

Liverpool 1-0 at Valley Parade in the final game of this campaign while fellow strugglers Wimbledon lost 2-0 away at Southampton - a result which saw the South London club relegated to Division One along with Watford and Sheffield Wednesday.

Bradford's matchwinner David Wetherall, who was outstanding in central defence, was delighted to put one over all the doubters who wrote off the Yorkshire club's chances of survival.

"That's something I will remember for the rest of my life. They have been writing us off all season and it gives us such satisfaction to prove them wrong."

Manager Paul Jewell, released as a player by Liverpool, praised the whole squad.

He said: "Everyone has played their part and the team spirit has been fantastic."

"We were playing against a world-class team we got blocks in the way and great headers away."

"On endeavour and work-rate we restricted them to not many chances. I said before the game if we lose we deserve to go down."

In contrast Wimbledon manager Terry Burton found it difficult to hide his disappointment but defiantly vowed to take the club back into the top flight.

"There's nothing to be said, you just have to look at the reaction on the faces of the players," he said.

"But there are three things you can do after a result like this. Admit it, learn from it and don't repeat it."

"We have good players who have under-performed this season but we will bounce back."

Former Leeds defender Wetherall headed the only goal for Bradford after 12 minutes and prevented Liverpool, also desperate for the three points, from securing a place in next season's Champions League.

That place went to Leeds who booked their third spot in the league after drawing 0-0 with West Ham at Upton Park. David O'Leary's side will compete with Europe's elite next season along with champions Manchester United and Arsenal.

Southampton's Wayne Bridge and Latvian international Marian Pahars con-

demned Wimbledon to the First Division after a 14-year tenancy.

Liverpool, meanwhile, finished fourth and qualify for the UEFA Cup.

Elsewhere, champions Manchester United ended their campaign on a winning note, Teddy Sheringham's 65th minute winner at Aston Villa giving the Old Trafford club a Premiership record-breaking 18-point lead on nearest challengers Arsenal.

Alan Shearer took advantage of a largely second-string Gunners line-up to bag his 300th career goal at St James' Park.

Newcastle had taken the lead through Gary Speed, only for Nwankwo Kanu to level almost immediately for the visitors, for whom manager Arsene Wenger had opted to rest the majority of his star names in readiness for Wednesday's UEFA Cup final against Galatasaray in Copenhagen.

Arsenal were level again when Stefan Malz scored after 53 minutes but Speed with his second and Andy Griffin gave the Magpies maximum points.

Already doomed Sheffield Wednesday and Watford left the Premiership on a high note.

The Yorkshire side led 2-0 at the break against Leicester courtesy of Alan Quinn and Andy Booth and doubled their advantage through Nicolas Alexanderson and Gilles de Bilde to record their biggest win of the campaign.

Watford were also in front by half-time against a Coventry side who failed to win on their travels all season. Heidar Helguson was the man who did the damage two minutes before the break and City were unable to respond.

With Aston Villa losing, Chelsea struck a psychological blow ahead of next Saturday's FA Cup final - the winner securing a UEFA Cup place next season - by recording a 4-0 win over Derby at Stamford Bridge.

Gianfranco Zola grabbed the opener two minutes after the break and then the floodgates opened.

Gustavo Poyet and Roberto di Matteo eased Chelsea further in front before Tore Andre Flo bagged a fourth in the final minute.

Middlesbrough secured their highest Premiership finish with a 2-0 win at Everton. Brian Deane put the Teessiders in front after eight minutes, a lead they held for the bulk of the game before Juninho staked his claim for a full contract with a

Argentina's Diego Simeone headed in a third to seal victory and start an agonising wait for the return to Perugia.

Oliver Bierhoff, dropped by coach Alberto Zaccheroni and criticised by the press in recent weeks, scored a stunning first goal to put AC Milan on their way.

The German centre-forward rose majestically to head home Demetrio Albertini's free-kick from a full 12 metres out.

Nigerian Taribo West, who joined over Christmas from neighbours Inter, added the third and Brazilian Leonardo acrobatically knocked in the fourth.

Marco Di Vaio opened the scoring for Parma after three minutes and things became easier when Lecce midfielder Alessandro Conticchio was sent off in the 39th minute.

Croatian Mario Stanic notched twice, Hernan Crespo, the Serie A's second top scorer, notched his 22nd of the season from the penalty spot before Cristiano Lucarelli scored a consolation goal for Lecce.

Inter struggled to beat nine-man Cagliari, who lost Uruguayan Nelson Abejon in the 66th minute and Democratic Republic of Congo-born Jason Mayele 10 minutes later.

Baggio converted a 75th minute penalty and Chilean Ivan Zamorano added a late second, flicking the ball past the advancing goalkeeper after chipping down a through-pass from Dutchman Clarence Seedorf.

A gloomy Inter president Massimo Moratti said: "The play-off could be an opportunity - provided that we play well."

"I'm certainly not satisfied with this performance from the team and don't ask why they it was such a modest display. I've no idea. Cagliari seemed to be the team with a major objective to play for."

AS Roma will play in the UEFA Cup after being held 2-2 by Verona.

They made a promising start when French wingback Vincent Candela crossed and Damiano Tommasi sent a textbook header into the corner after seven minutes.

But Verona levelled when Adailton's floated free-kick fooled the entire Roma defence. Vincenzo Montella restored Roma's lead, swivelling round in a goalmouth scramble to hoof the ball home, but Fabrizio Cammarata equalised with a stinging first-time shot in the 55th minute.

Bari drew 1-1 with Bologna, while Torino striker Marco Ferrante notched both goals as they beat Piacenza 2-1 in a match between two relegated clubs.

That leaves both Real and Valencia on the fringes of the Champions League qualification places so victory in Paris could yet be the most likely avenue for both teams to qualify for next year's tournament.

Valencia, who met Real in the all-Spanish Champions League Final in Paris on May 24, had to settle for a 0-0 draw with Celta Vigo.

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Primera Liga

Betis banished, title still open

MADRID, May 15: Real Betis were relegated Sunday with a 2-0 home defeat by Champions League finalists Real Madrid proving the final nail in their Primera Liga coffin, reports AFP.

Goals from Brazilian Roberto Carlos after 36 minutes and rejuvenated Frenchman Nicolas Anelka after 67 minutes were enough to ensure that the Seville-based outfit join city neighbours Sevilla and once-mighty Atletico Madrid on the road to division two.

It is a shock for Betis whose playing staff includes the likes of Nigerian Finidi George and Brazilian Denilson who was the most expensive transfer in history at the time of his move.

At the other end of the table the title duel between Deportivo La Coruna and Barcelona will go to the final weekend after both teams only managed to draw 0-0 respectively away to Santander and Real Sociedad respectively.

The result means that Galicia's Deportivo need a point at home to Barca's Catalan neighbours Espanyol to lift what would be a first Spanish title.

Deportivo, who twice lost the title in the 1990s when leading at the start of play on the last day of the season, will be well aware of the old adage that it's never over until the fat lady sings.

Particularly sickening was the episode in 1993-4 when their Brazilian striker Bebeto, who six weeks later would win a World Cup winners medal, missed what would have been a title-winning penalty.

But "Super Depor" know that, this represents the best chance yet for them to finally bury their "chokers" tag.

Whether Espanyol - who may also have their minds on their appearance in the Spanish Cup Final - are willing to help out their more illustrious neighbours remains to be seen.

In fairness Barca's last match is at the Nou Camp and they face Deportivo's Galician neighbours Celta Vigo, whose fans might also have mixed feelings if a good performance by their team helps their most bitter rivals win a first Primera Liga crown for Galicia.

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