

Asian Cup

Thai player fails
dope test

BEIRUT, Oct 16: A Thai footballer faces disciplinary action after failing a drugs test at the Asian Cup, a tournament official confirmed here on Monday, reports AFP.

The unidentified player tested positive for a banned substance after Thailand's 2-0 defeat against Iraq in Saidia last Thursday, the official said.

"I can confirm that the player tested positive in his A sample," said the official, who asked not to be named. He did not state which drug the player had tested positive for.

The Thailand team management had been informed of the test result but no action would be taken until results from the player's B sample were analysed, the official added.

Lucky escape!

LONDON, Oct 16: An investigation was under way Monday into a double shooting in a bar where several Liverpool footballers were relaxing following their Premiership clash at Derby, reports AFP.

Two masked men wielding a pistol burst into Jalons Wine Bar in Liverpool at around 1030GMT Sunday night and shot two men in the legs.

There were no injuries among the six players - goalkeeper Sander Westerveld, defenders Sami Hyypia, Markus Babel and Christian Ziege, striker Erik Meijer and German international midfielder Dietmar Hamann, who were later driven away in a mini bus.

The two casualties, both customers in the bar, were treated in hospital for their injuries, which are not thought to be life-threatening.

The gunmen, in balaclavas, escaped in a silver Vauxhall car, which was later found burned out in a nearby road.

"At this stage the motive to the shooting is not clear and police are appealing for anyone to come forward," said a spokesman for Merseyside Police.

Ex-detective
given Brazil
squad post

RIO DE JANEIRO, Oct 16: Brazil have named Antonio Lopes, who used to be a police detective, as a technical coordinator of the national team, reports Xinhua.

The new post was created by the Confederation of Brazil Football (CBF) after complaints that former coach Wanderley Luxemburgo had enjoyed too much power.

Lopes, currently in charge of First Division Atletico Paranaense, is expected to have a say in appointing the successor to Luxemburgo, who was sacked as national team coach last month after a disastrous Olympic campaign.

Bundesliga
Berlin hot on
Bayern's heels

BERLIN, Oct 16: Bayern Munich's chances of retaining their Bundesliga title took a jolt Saturday when the Bavarians slid to an embarrassing 1-0 loss at Eastern German outfit Energie Cottbus, reports AFP.

In games played Sunday, Hertha Berlin continued their solid start to the season with a fine 2-0 away win at Hansa Rostock, while VfL Wolfsburg added to the woes of Unterhaching pasting the basement dwellers 3-0 on their own pitch.

Berlin stay fourth but only just behind third-placed Bayern on goal difference while Wolfsburg moved up to eighth place six points behind new leaders Schke 04.

Primera Liga
Celta miss
chance

MADRID, Oct 16: Real Madrid are sitting pretty at the top of the Spanish First Division Sunday, thanks to a 3-0 drubbing of reigning champions Deportivo La Coruna on Saturday night, reports AFP.

Celta Vigo missed out on a chance to regain the lead Sunday, when they were held to a 1-1 home draw against Alaves in a match that featured both goals within the first four minutes.

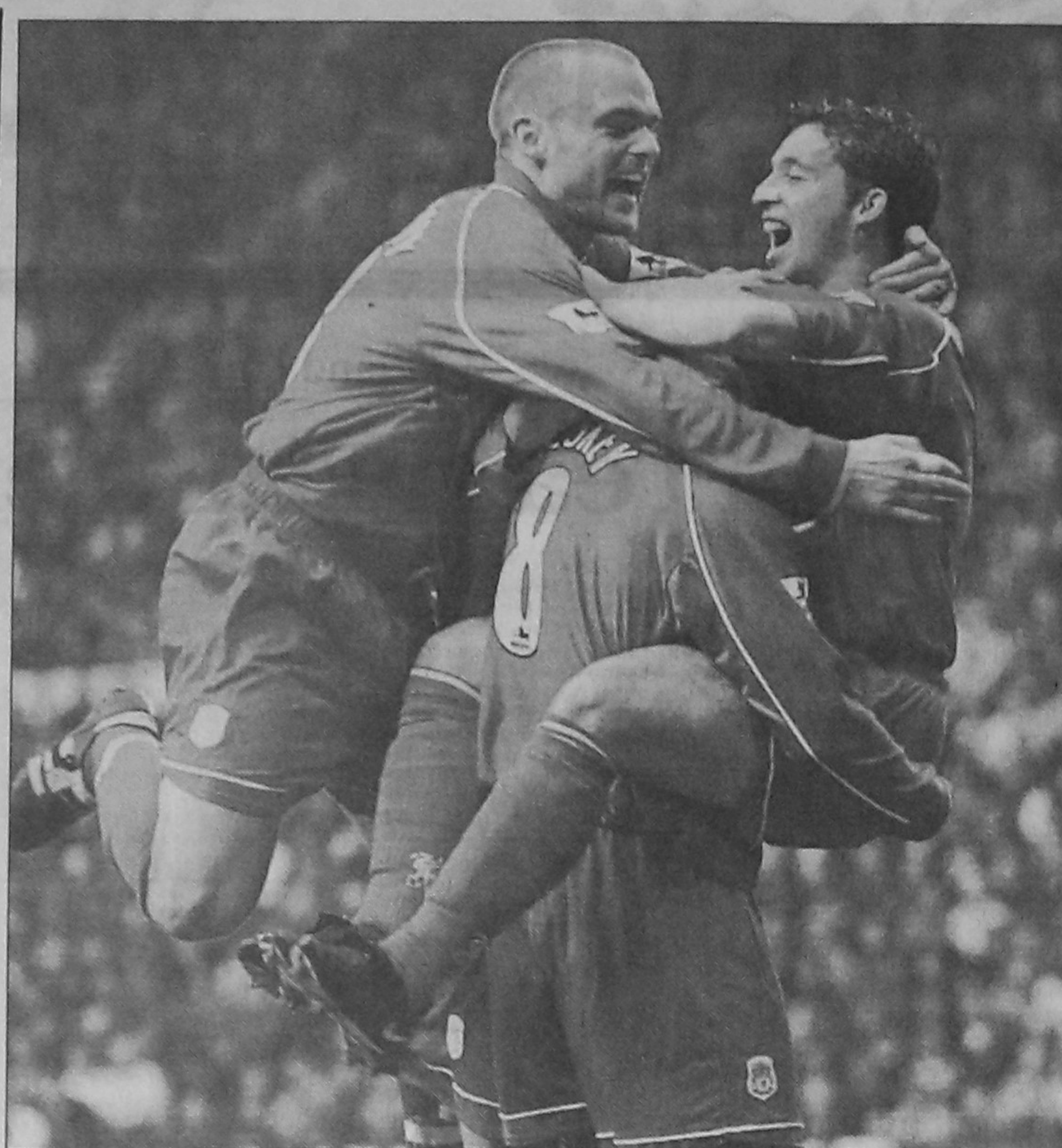
Other Sunday matches saw surprise strugglers Real Zaragoza unable to escape the relegation zone playing out a dismal 0-0 draw at home to Valladolid, while Mallorca picked up their first league victory with a 2-1 win over Racing Santander moving up to fourth from bottom.

Numanica against Athletic Bilbao and Osasuna versus Oviedo both finished scoreless on an evening barren of goals after the goal-fest on Saturday.

WEEKEND RESULTS

Sunday: Osasuna 0 v Oviedo 0, Real Zaragoza 0 v Valladolid 0, Mallorca 2 (Luque 54, Carlos 86) v Racing Santander 1 (Rushfeldt 45), Numancia 0 v Athletic Bilbao 0, Celta Vigo 1 (Karpin 4) v Alaves 1 (Javi Moreno 2-pen).

Saturday: Villarreal 1 (Moises 64) v Valencia 1 (Juan Sanchez 59), Espanyol v Rayo Vallecano 0, Real Sociedad 0 v FC Barcelona 6 (Rivaldo 2, 30-pen, Alfonso 17, 21, Luis Enrique 36, Simao 40), Real Madrid 3 (Raul 18, Hierro 45-pen, Gutiierrez 87) v Deportivo La Coruna 0, Las Palmas 2 (Oulare 77, Orlando 82) v Malaga 1 (Valcarlos 60).



Liverpool's (L-R) Danny Murphy, Emile Heskey and Robbie Fowler celebrate after Heskey's strike against Derby County during their Premiership fixture at the Pride Park in Derby on October 15.

Premiership

Heskey hammers Derby



LONDON, Oct 15: Liverpool beat Derby 4-0 at Pride Park on Sunday to move into fourth place in the Premiership.

England striker Emile Heskey scored his first hat-trick at this level, reports AFP.

But Liverpool's joy was overshadowed by a serious head injury sustained by Heskey's club and international strike partner Michael Owen.

In the 18th minute Owen fell in the box and sustained a blow to the back of his head from Chris Riggott while preparing to meet a Gary McAllister corner.

It was Heskey who headed home to put Liverpool 1-0 ahead but delight turned to concern as Owen was carried from the field on a stretcher.

He later had to have stitches inserted in his head. Sky Sports reported that Owen was suffering "the effects of concussion"

and would be taken to a local hospital for an X-ray.

Liverpool were 1-0 ahead at half-time and nine minutes after the break Heskey scored his second with a fierce right-foot shot.

Played in by Robbie Fowler, on as a substitute for Owen, Heskey let the ball drop to his favoured foot and hammered his shot high to 'keeper Mart Poom's left from the right edge of the box.

Despite the loss of Owen the partnership of Heskey - roundly barracked at the start by the home fans because of his Leicester connections - and Fowler must have been a bright spot for Liverpool's French manager Gerard Houllier.

On the hour the double act should have paid off again when Heskey streaked clear across the half-way line and fed the unmarked Fowler, who was only denied by a brilliant reaction save from Poom.

Heskey completed his hat-trick in the 66th minute when Derby's all-at-sea rearguard allowed England midfielder Nick Barmby to break down the right, and Heskey stretched to poke home rather fortunately with his left foot to put his side 3-0 up.

Czech international Patrik Berger increased Derby's woes 11 minutes from time with a brilliant fourth goal for Liverpool.

Barmby dummied Danny Murphy's low cross from the right and Berger pounced, rattling a 25-yard screamer into the roof of Poom's net.

Derby's fans once again made their displeasure known to boss Jim Smith as Liverpool turned the remainder of the game into exhibition stuff.

The result leaves Derby still at the bottom of the Premiership and the only team in England without a league win this season.

Real, Lazio, Gunners almost there



way Tuesday as European giants attempt to bolster their hopes of reaching the second phase of the Champions League, reports AFP.

The trio already have as good as a foot in the second group phase after putting some distance between themselves and the also-rans in their respective groups - though Lazio were jolted by last month's loss at Highbury.

On Tuesday they have the chance to wreak swift revenge at the Olympic Stadium in Rome.

Last season's finalists Valencia are, along with Arsenal, the only clubs in action in Groups A, B and D who have a 100 per cent record after three matches and a win over French strugglers Lyon would send them into the last 16.

The tie of the evening is unquestionably the Group B return between Lazio and Arsenal, however.

The Gunners were hugely effective in the home match as two goals from Swedish midfielder Fredrik Ljungberg left the Italians well beaten by an Arsenal side which had struggled to beat Ukrainian tailenders Shakhtar Donetsk.

Real Madrid, meanwhile, are on as high as they take on Germany's Bayer Leverkusen having gone top of the Spanish league on Saturday, a point clear of Valencia, with a rambling 3-0 success over Spanish champions Deportivo La Coruna.

Real lead Spartak Moscow by a point at the midway stage and have already won in Germany.

Spartak now have to attempt to close the gap and finish off the hopes of tailenders Sporting Lisbon, who since squandering a two-goal lead on the opening night against Real have not impressed.

Leverkusen have been distracted by the row about the suitability of coach Christoph Daum to take over the German national coach's post next summer amid unsubstantiated allegations of drug-taking and of involvement with prostitutes.

But a more tangible problem could be the loss through injury of former international striker Ulf Kirsten - as well as mediocre league form which currently sees Leverkusen only sixth.

Real are keeping their fingers crossed that their own talismanic forward Raul will be fit after back problems. He

would, if fit, partner either the in-form Guti or Pedro Munitis in attack as Spanish international striker, Fernando Morientes is injured. In Group C struggling debutants Lyon, beaten in Valencia last month and with just three points to their credit to date, cannot afford any more slip-ups having also lost at Athens-based Olympiakos.

The French will be without Swiss international midfielder Patrick Muller, who has an ankle injury.

They will also likely rest French international midfielder Vikash Dhorasoo as he is only just recovering from an ankle strain, while defender Serge Blanc is out with a thigh strain.

In Group D, French champions Monaco travel to Sturm Graz of Austria with both teams on three points, three adrift of Rangers and Galatasaray.

For a match they cannot afford to lose, Monaco will welcome back Argentine playmaker Marcelo Gallardo from a three-match suspension.

Defender Ousmane Dabo, sent off against Galatasaray, is also back - in his case from a three-match ban.

Burundian striker Shabani Nonda is out after bruising a rib in Friday's win at Bastia.

Rangers manager Dick Advocaat, meanwhile, expects keeper German Stefan Klos to be fit to face Galatasaray despite missing the Premier League defeat at Hilberman.

Wednesday's matches see Spanish champions Deportivo La Coruna attempt to recover from a league drubbing by Real with a home success over Juventus in Group E while rivals Panathinaikos host Hamburg.

Bayern Munich host Paris Saint Germain needing a result having lost in France while Manchester United will look to erase memories of last month's loss in Holland when they host PSV Eindhoven at Old Trafford.

English Premiership outfit Leeds travel to Turkey's Besiktas for a match which could make or break their campaign while Group H rivals AC Milan host Barcelona.

The Italians won their match in the Catalan capital and a third straight defeat could well see Barca tumble out prematurely - with Leeds benefiting.

Recoba leaving
Inter?

MILAN, Oct 16: Italian Serie A side Inter Milan and their Uruguayan striker Alvaro Recoba are set to go separate ways this week, the Italian press reported Monday, reports AFP.

Recoba has been stalling on signing a new contract for most of the year and his angry reaction to the jeers of the San Siro supporters in the 3-1 victory over Napoli at the weekend have fuelled reports that the association is about to end with reports that Juventus are prepared to make a bid.

Recoba tried to mend fences with the Inter faithful on Sunday's Domenica Sportiva programme, apologising for his surly behaviour the night before.

"Yesterday I made a mistake but I did nothing that was serious," he said. "I hope the fans will forgive me, and that they soon forget because sometimes you do things that a moment later you regret. This was one of those moments."

But if the Italian press is to be believed then Recoba has burnt his bridges with the club.

Inter chairman Massimo Moratti has already hinted he sympathises with the fans and also took a thinly-veiled swipe at the player's agent Paco Casal, believed to be behind what the press maintains are exorbitant pay demands.

Inter and Casal are expected to meet Tuesday on what has been billed as the make-or-break meeting between the two parties.

Recoba replaced Irish striker Robbie Keane in Saturday's match - the first under new coach Marco Tardelli - but then engaged in a feud with the fans who jeered him on his entry.

Earlier this year he was unhappy about the fierce competition for places at Inter - Tardelli also has Keane, Turkey's Hakan Sukur and Chile's Ivan Zamorano contesting the forward positions while Christian Vieri is expected to return from injury before the end of the month and Ronaldo is also said to be progressing well after a long-term injury.

The press insist Juventus are interested in Recoba but he will also face stiff competition there for a starting berth from the likes of Alessandro Del Piero, Filippo Inzaghi, David Trezeguet and Darko Kovacevic.

Double dedicated
to Mom

ROME, Oct 16: Gabriel Batistuta was the toast of AS Roma Monday morning after scoring his first two goals for the Serie A side late Sunday evening but the Argentinian striker promptly dedicated his double strike to his mother rather than to the fans of his new outfit, reports AFP.

Batistuta gave Roma a first half lead against Lecce with a fine header from a Cafu cross before scoring his side's third with 10 minutes remaining with a spectacular angled drive off the underside of the crossbar as Roma coasted to a 4-0 victory over Lecce.

The goals established Batistuta, a legend during his Fiorentina days, as a firm favourite with the Roma fans but with his goals coinciding with mother's day in Argentina it was family that came first for the Argentine.

"I dedicate these two goals to her (his mother)," said 'Batigol'.

Which one pleased me most? Both were good goals. I believe but the first I think because of the way it came about."

The 30-year-old revealed that he is still feeling the effects of a knee injury that has troubled him for some time.

"I ran but during the game I felt a light but bearable pain," said the hirsute hitman.

"Now after the match the knee is hurting me and it will get worse but I am happy at the end of the day because I have played calmly."

Voller won't
change mind

BERLIN, Oct 16: German interim coach Rudi Voller said Monday he was certain to stand down next summer and pass on the reins to Bayer Leverkusen coach Christoph Daum, saying his decision was "irreversible", reports AFP.

"My decision to hand over to Christoph Daum next summer is irreversible," 1990 World Cup winner Voller told Kicker magazine in a joint interview with the coach of that year's side, Franz Beckenbauer.

Voller's remarks came the day after a meeting between officials, including Bayern Munich president Beckenbauer, of Bayern and Leverkusen to calm the waters after a storm broke when Bayern manager Uli Hoeness was variously quoted as alleging Daum took drugs and was involved with prostitutes.

After Germany's first-round Euro 2000 exit the German Football Federation (DFB) nominated Daum to take over from the right side of the defence if the Spanish international fails to get fit in time.

Real Madrid have a ready-made replacement for Casillas as well, with another Spanish international Cesar Sanchez set to start his first competitive game since joining the club in the summer from Valladolid.

Raul Gonzalez also missed Real Madrid's Sunday training session with a bruised back but is expected to be ready to face the German visitors.

Del Bosque may also choose to make a tactical switch, replacing the lacklustre Brazilian midfielder Flavio Conceicao and with Ivan Helguera, just as he did in the second half against



Juventus' French international playmaker Zinedine Zidane (C) trying to make his way through two Bari players during their Serie A clash in Turin on October 15.

— AFP photo

Serie A

Batistuta gets going



MILAN, Oct 16: AS Roma thrashed unfashionable Lecce 4-0 Sunday night to go top of the Italian First Division, leading on goal difference from Juventus who earlier defeated Bari 2-0, reports AFP.

On a day where floods reduced most of the playing surfaces to quagmires Roma and Juve became the only two sides to win both their opening Serie A games but the more emphatic win by the side from the Italian capital means they have a slight edge over the team from Turin.

Roma's expensive summer acquisition from Fiorentina Gabriel Batistuta put them ahead at Lecce after 42 minutes with a typical predatory strike, heading home from a cross by Brazilian Cafu and two minutes into the second period they killed the game with a volley by Damiano Tommasi.

Batistuta then produced the goal of the match with a fine finish off the crossbar after good play by Frenchman Vincent Candela before Francesco Totti rounded off the scoring with an injury-time penalty after an incident that saw Lecce's Alberto Savino dismissed for hauling down Marco Delvecchio.

They were Argentinian Batistuta's first Serie A goals for his new side after a record-breaking stint at Fiorentina.

"We caused Lecce lots of problems but we were finding it hard to break through," said Roma coach Fabio Capello. "Batistuta's goals were really very important. But our spirit was very good this evening."

Juventus had earlier briefly topped the standings by defeating Bari 2-0 in a match where the driving rain and waterlogged pitch turned the match into a lottery.

Juventus' achievement was all the more remarkable as they had several players struck down by illness - notably Alessandro Del Piero and Filippo Inzaghi - but their new front pairing of Frenchman David Trezeguet and Yugoslav Darko Kovacevic soon made an impact.

Kovacevic gave the Turin side the lead after three minutes after a move instigated by Zinedine Zidane.

The atrocious conditions did not ease Juventus who prevailed with Zidane tucking away an injury-time penalty to make it

2-0. Juve coach Carlo Ancelotti praised both of his goalscorers.

"He (Kovacevic) got his head down and adapted better than most to the condition of the pitch," said Ancelotti. "Zizou (Zidane) had a great first half and who knows what he would have done on a normal pitch."

AC Milan, also hit by the virus, soon saw their hosts Bologna take advantage of their opponents' enforced reshuffle and the poor conditions.

Defender Giovanni Bia put Bologna ahead after 19 minutes when the ball fell perfectly for him at the far post.

But Milan were still looking a potent force in attack and Ukrainian striker Andrei Shevchenko restored parity

United goalkeeper Massimo Taibi had an inspired first half making several saves.

Massimo Marazzina gave the visitors the lead after 68 minutes but Portuguese striker Nuno Gomes struck four minutes from time to level the match before Brazilian Leandro headed home an injury time winner with Taibi left exposed on both occasions.

The victory will boost Fiorentina's Turkish coach Fatih Terim who has fallen out with club president Vittorio Cecchi Gori.

The sympathies of both players and fans seem to be with Terim, who was mobbed after the final whistle while hangers called for the president to depart.

The Turk blew kisses to the directors box but quickly made it clear that Cecchi Gori was not the recipient.

"I am very happy, the kisses were for my wife," said Terim. Also on the wrong end of a comeback were Vicenza, who took the lead after 52 minutes in their home match with Atalanta.

Luca Toni bagged the goal but then Cristiano Doni with a header and an unmarked Fausto Rossini with a chip struck to give the Bergamo-based visitors a 2-1 win and the three points.

Vicenza defender Giuseppe Cardone - unconscious on the pitch for a minute after a clash of heads - was another player to be hospitalised.

He will stay in hospital until Tuesday as a precaution but a scan revealed no cause for concern.

Verona's match was briefly halted because of the dreadful conditions but soon after the resumption Alberto Gilardino scored for the home side against Udinese, who had led Serie A on goals scored after the first week.

But Roberto Muzzi came up with an equaliser for Udinese shortly afterwards and the match finished 1-1.

The match between Brescia and Parma was a disappointing goalless draw.

On Saturday defending champions Lazio had drubbed Perugia 3-0 while Inter Milan, under the charge of new coach Marco Tardelli for the first time, defeated Napoli 3-1 at the San Siro.

Vicenza and Napoli are the only two teams without a point after two matches.

Del Bosque to make adjustments



MADRID, Spain, Oct 16: Real Madrid coach Vicente Del Bosque looks likely to have to make changes for Tuesday's Champions League Group A clash against Bayer Leverkusen, reports AFP.

Both goalkeeper Iker Casillas and defender Michel Salgado are highly doubtful for the European champions after both men suffered quadriceps strains in Saturday's 3-0 win over Spanish champions Deportivo Coruna.

Neither player trained on Sunday afternoon. Cameroon international and Sydney Olympics gold medalist Geremi Njitap will replace Salgado on the right side of the defence if the Spanish international fails to get fit in time.

Real Madrid have a ready-made replacement for Casillas as well, with another Spanish international Cesar Sanchez set to start his first competitive game since joining the club in the summer from Valladolid.

Raul Gonzalez also missed Real Madrid's Sunday training session with a bruised back but is expected to be ready to face the German visitors.

Del Bosque may also choose to make a tactical switch, replacing the lacklustre Brazilian midfielder Flavio Conceicao and with Ivan Helguera, just as he did in the second half against

Deportivo.

"All I want from my team is for them to play the same way against Leverkusen as they did against Deportivo," a confident Del Bosque commented.

Deportivo coach Javier Irureta was also left to count the cost, at least in terms of injuries, of Saturday's encounter.

He lost key midfielder Fran Gonzalez with a knee injury early in the game and the Spanish international will be replaced by either Emerson or Juan Carlos Vazquez for the vital Group E match at home to Juventus on Wednesday.

However Irureta was not despondent despite the comprehensive defeat and being toppled from pole position in the Spanish First Division.

"I don't think that this result will influence how things go on Wednesday in the Champions League. The match against Juventus will determine who goes through to the second qualifying phase and I'm convinced we are going to bounce back," he said.

Barcelona coach Llorenç Serra Ferrer is expected to name at least nine of the makeshift team that started against Real Sociedad and thrashed them 6-0 on Saturday, with all their goals coming in the first half.

Injuries have ravaged Serra Ferrer's squad in recent weeks and deprived him of at least five first-choice men but the only current doubts for Serra Ferrer

are over the fitness of Dutch international Philip Cocu and the form of French World Cup winner Emmanuel Petit.

Cocu is still struggling to overcome a groin strain and could be replaced by Ivan de la Pena while Petit may get axed in favour of Frank de Boer.

Winning in Milan would really give us back the confidence that we are a quality team," De Boer said.

After losing at home to Milan and away to the Turkish club Besiktas already, Barcelona need to win in Italy to ensure they are not eliminated from group H.

Valencia squandered the chance to go to the top of the Spanish league on Saturday, with only a 1-1 draw at Villarreal, and their coach Hector Cuper will have told his team that their performance was well below par.

The man most likely to feel Cuper's wrath was midfielder Miguel Angel Angulo, who this season has been a shadow of the inspirational figure who was instrumental in Valencia reaching the Champions League final last May.

Cuper rested the strikers Zlatko Zahovic and Diego Alonso on Saturday but Zahovic, who came on as a late substitute for Angulo, is likely to replace Angulo again and be asked to perform a deeper role than usual against Lyon in their Group C match on Tuesday.