

## Salas hopes for the best

ROME, Nov 6: Lazio's Chilean striker Marcelo Salas will ask his national team coach Nelson Acosta this week if he can arrive 24 hours later than planned for the World Cup 2002 qualifier with Argentina on November 15, the player said Sunday, reports AFP.

Salas hopes to get Acosta's approval to fly out next Sunday, allowing him to play for the Italian champions in Saturday's titanic battle with Juventus at Turin.

Salas said: "I spoke with the coach Acosta and they want me to go to Chile on the Saturday but I asked him if it was possible to play at Turin and then go the day after."

Salas, who said he would speak to Acosta again this week, is determined not to lose his place in the Lazio team after regaining a starting role because of the injury to Claudio Lopez, the club's Argentinian forward who is facing four months on the sidelines after surgery.

"I want to get a run-out with Juve," said Salas. "For us it is a very important match."

Salas said his return to Lazio action had helped him forget his disappointment at the collapse of a much-touted move to Inter Milan.

"At the end of the day I am happy to stay here," he said. "But now I must start to play regularly. At the end I am happy to stay in the capital but although I am fine we will have to see at the end of the season."

Salas made an impressive first-team return against Bologna, setting up the first goal for Pavel Nedved of the Czech Republic in a 2-0 victory.

## Taibi shifts blame

REGGIO CALABRIA, Italy, Nov 6: Reggina goalkeeper Massimo Taibi admitted his blunder allowed Juventus to win Sunday's Serie A match - but promptly blamed the referee for failing to spot a foul in an incident which turned the match on its head, reports AFP.

Taibi, who acquired a reputation as a serial bungler during his brief stay at Manchester United, was left red-faced a minute before interval when he came haring out of his area to head the ball straight to the feet of David Trezeguet, who then found the space to crack the ball home with the goalkeeper stranded.

That put Juventus on the way to a 2-0 victory with Trezeguet scoring both goals, but Taibi only accepted part of the blame, insisting referee Domenico Messina should have penalised Alessandro Del Piero for obstructing him.

"I am always ready to assume responsibility for my mistakes," said Taibi. "But the first goal conditioned the entire game."

Taibi added: "Del Piero's foul was blatant. If the television pictures prove me wrong I will make a public apology. My team-mates saw it too; only the referee did not."

The defeat continues a worrying slump for Reggina who beat Inter Milan in their opening Serie A match - a win that heralded the sacking of Inter coach Marcello Lippi - but have now lost their subsequent four matches.

## Berger's season over?

LONDON, Nov 6: English Premiership outfit Liverpool may have lost Czech Republic star Patrik Berger for the rest of the season after a recurrence of his knee injury, reports AFP.

The midfielder was carried off in agony during the 4-3 defeat at Leeds on Saturday and will this week fly to America to undergo surgery by top specialist Richard Stedman.

It means 26-year-old Berger is denied the chance to play in his homeland on Thursday with Liverpool in their UEFA Cup second leg against Slovan Liberec.

Berger suffered a knee injury in the first game of the season at home to Bradford.

Now it has flared up again and Liverpool fear that even after surgery in Colorado where Stedman works, it could take Berger until the middle of next year to fully recover.

Stedman was already performing career-saving knee surgery on Liverpool captain Jamie Redknapp this season and the England man is now back in training and hoping for a January comeback.

Referring to Berger's injury after Saturday's defeat, Liverpool boss Gerard Houllier said: "Never mind losing the game at Elland Road: we've lost a good player too."

## Bonfrere's recipe for Finidi

LAGOS, Nov 6: Nigerian international Finidi George has to show his worth for new Spanish side Real Mallorca before he can earn a recall to the national team, national coach Jo Bonfrere said here Sunday, reports AFP.

Finidi has not been playing well for Mallorca, I need to see him playing well and regularly too for his club before I can include him in my plans for both the World Cup and Nations Cup," Bonfrere told a local radio station.

"It's really worrying that our top players like Finidi have been struggling to find their feet at their clubs. This is not good for the national team," he added.

## Serie A

# Batistuta, Roma on fire



ROME, Nov 6: Udinese stretched their lead at the top of the Italian First Division here Sunday, a 2-0 home victory over Lecce seeing them push a point clear of the chasing pack, reports AFP.

Second-half goals from Argentinian Roberto Soriano and substitute Massimo Margiotta ensured Luigi De Canio's men go clear - before the weekend they led only on goals scored from Atalanta who drew 3-3 in a thriller with AC Milan at the San Siro and are relegated to third.

Up to second are AS Roma whose Argentinian striker Gabriel Batistuta scored a second-half hat-trick to overturn an interval deficit and ensure his side won 4-2 at Brescia.

Another man in form was French striker David Trezeguet, who scored twice as Juventus ended an indifferent run with a well-deserved 2-0 triumph at Reggina.

Inter Milan came back twice to draw 2-2 at 10-man Verona in the Sunday evening match in a game that saw the visitors' striker Christian Vieri return as a second-half substitute after a five-month injury absence.

But Udinese are top although De Canio admitted his team would face a tough task to stay in pole position.

We are up against some very good teams with the likes of Parma, Juventus and Roma," admitted the Udinese coach. "But we are happy to be occupying that place right now."

On a day of incident-packed games the San Siro clash probably took the honours with AC Milan coming from 3-1 down at the break to snatch a 3-3 draw with Atalanta.

Cristiano Doni - one of three Atalanta players facing match-fixing allegations - gave the unfashionable visitors from Bergamo the lead after 21 minutes.

Three minutes later Brazilian Serginho equalised for the San Siro giants, firing home from a tight angle but in first-half stoppage time Milan were rocked with a combination punch from Atalanta.

First Doni converted a penalty and then Fausto Rossini made it 3-1 with a header in a classic counterattack.

Early in the second half German striker Oliver Bierhoff pulled one back for AC Milan before an Andriy Schevchenko spot kick completed the comeback.

Roma, whose 2-0 defeat by Inter in midweek had topped them from the summit, took an early lead at Brescia with French defender Vincent Candela on the mark after 13 minutes.

Batistuta equalised in the second period and went on to net again after 78 and 90 minutes.

"We were not at our best in the first period," admitted Batistuta, who now tops the Serie A goalscoring charts with six goals. "We played well but not well enough but we were a different team in the second half."

His coach Fabio Capello said the midweek defeat had not disturbed him, saying: "I had

no worries with the team after the San Siro match - I think this squad of players is capable of great things."

Juventus, meanwhile, deserved their win at Reggio Calabria.

Trezeguet made the breakthrough for the Bianconeri just before the interval to put them in good heart ahead of next week's crunch Champions League match in Athens with Panathinaikos.

Trezeguet struck his first after Reggina goalkeeper Massimo Taibi - a former Manchester United player - had hopelessly uncommitted himself, leaving an unguarded goal.

Trezeguet also bagged the second home victory over Lecce seeing them push a point clear of the chasing pack, reports AFP.

Just as important for Ju-

ventus will be the fact that their under-fire defence kept a clean sheet.

"We did very well," said a relieved Juventus coach Carlo Ancelotti. "It was exactly the performance we wanted."

Verona took the lead at home to Inter Milan when Emiliano Bonazzoli - their loan signing from Parma - gave them a 16th minute lead but 10 minutes later Francisco Javier Farinos equalised for Inter after being set up by Uruguayan Alvaro Recoba.

Vincenzo Italiano put Verona back in front on the verge of the interval but within a minute the goalscorer was sent off.

In the second half Vieri came on as a substitute for Clarence Seedorf and hit the bar with a header but it was Turk Hakan Sukur who came up with a hat-trick and Luca Sautaudone.

Goals from Angelo di Livio and Brazilian Leandro (two) proved in vain for the Florence outfit whose Turkish coach Fatih Terim is under renewed pressure.

"We lacked concentration and we were punished for some defensive errors," admitted Inter

coach Marco Tardelli. "But we showed determination and got ourselves back in the game."

Vicenza's Vincenzo Sommese, returning to his native city, gave his side a 2-1 win at bottom side Napoli.

Sommese struck first before Napoli's highly-rated Czech striker Marek Jankulovski restored parity with a brilliant strike.

But Sommese struck his second shortly after the resumption to leave Napoli coach Zdenek Zeman's position looking precarious with one point in five games despite some heavy investment by the newly-promoted club - a board meeting has been convened Monday.

Parma pulled off their second win of the week when forward Camerounian Patrick Mboma struck the only goal

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.

Vieri's half-hour appearance

as a substitute in the 2-2 draw at Verona was his first since last May under the regime of Tardelli's predecessor Marcello Lippi.</