

Premiership Vintage United

Football

AFP, London

Normal service was resumed at Old Trafford Wednesday as Manchester United ended their three-match losing streak in the Premiership with a convincing 5-0 win over struggling Derby.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer scored twice, while Roy Keane, Ruud van Nistelrooy and Paul Scholes netted the other goals.

The win took United up to fifth in the table and allowed them to make up some ground on leaders Liverpool who were held to a disappointing 0-0 draw by Fulham at Anfield.

Sir Alex Ferguson, who on Tuesday performed a U-turn and pledged reigning champions United can still win the title, insisted his team will not give up the race for the championship.

"We can't give up. The nature of the club, the players can't do that. With players like Keane, (Nicky) Butt, Scholes and the Nevilles (Gary and Phillip) they will make sure it doesn't happen," said Ferguson, who will retire at the end of the season.

"We just need to make sure we don't make any more mistakes."

Ferguson was delighted to see his side bounce back in style after suffering six league defeats this season.

"It was as good a performance as we expect from the players. They performed very well tonight," he added.

"We can make chances and we can score goals - that part of our play has been good this season. We just need to start getting clean sheets."

Michael Owen, looking for his 100th goal in a Liverpool shirt, had several chances to break the deadlock at Anfield but was denied by some brilliant goalkeeping by Fulham's Dutch goalkeeper Edwin van der Saar.

Owen was told by caretaker manager Phil Thompson to relax because he believes his star striker's milestone is just around the corner.

The England hitman had half a dozen clear-cut openings to reach a ton but had one of those rare nights when it just would not run for him



Ruud van Nistelrooy (C), Manchester United's Dutch international striker in sandwiched between two Derby defenders at Old Trafford on Wednesday.

after 20 goals for club and country this term.

"It was a frustrating night for us all, and in particular Michael," said Thompson.

"You wonder with so much being written and said about him and his goals that you wonder if it is affecting him."

"But he had his chances, and this time they just didn't go in. He had an outstanding game and his work-rate was outstanding. But he shouldn't worry, the goal will come sooner or later. It's no problem."

At Old Trafford, Manchester

United opened the scoring after six minutes.

Mikael Silvestre crossed from the left where Solskjaer was lurking. The Norway international controlled the ball with his chest before lashing the ball home.

Four minutes later it was 2-0 and this time Solskjaer was the provider, setting up his captain Keane who rammed in his first goal of the season from close range.

The goals gave United the lift they so badly needed and they began to look like their old selves, knocking the ball around with

supreme confidence.

United continued to pepper the visitors' goal and Keane drove narrowly over after he had been teed up by Gary Neville.

Derby goalkeeper Andy Oakes was being kept busy and he denied Juan Sebastian Veron and Scholes before parrying a shot from van Nistelrooy.

However, Oakes was at fault for United's third goal on 58 minutes when he failed to hold van Nistelrooy's cross-shot and Solskjaer bundled home his second of the night.

United were not finished and they scored a fourth in the 63rd minute when Keane pulled the ball back for van Nistelrooy to score his 12th goal of the season.

Scrooge-like Barthez, who was later replaced by Roy Carroll, denied Derby a consolation goal when he made a great point-blank save from Christie.

There was still time for a fifth and Scholes scored in the 89th minute to chalk up United's biggest win of the season.

Spanish Cup Real shock

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid suffered an upset 1-0 first leg defeat to Second Division Gimnastic Tarragone in the last 16 of the Spanish Cup on Wednesday.

An 84th-minute own goal from Real defender Karanka sunk the Madrid giants, to leave minnows Gimnastic ecstatic.

German Cup Bayern's double delight

AFP, Berlin

German international midfielder Jens Jeremies made a successful return from injury for Bayern Munich Wednesday as the Bavarian giants eased into the last 16 of the German Cup.

Jeremies, who has been sidelined with a knee injury for seven months, lasted the full 90 minutes as Bayern overcame Third Division VfL Osnabruck 2-0.

Bayern's goals came through striker Carsten Jancker in the 49th minute with playmaker Mehmet Scholl doubling the tally on 62 minutes. Croatian defender Robert Kovac was sent off late in the game for a second bookable offence.

Bayern now face VfL Wolfsburg in the next round on January 23.

Another Colombian tragedy

AFP, Bogota

A Colombian footballer has been shot dead in the town centre of Medellin in the north east of the country, legal sources said on Wednesday.

Police said the 39-year-old Norberto Cadavid, a former international, was shot several times by an individual with a pistol at a bus stop on Tuesday.

Striker Cadavid, playing for Colombian club American, won the national championship three times and was a finalist in the Copa Libertadores, the South American club championship, in 1985, 1986 and 1987.

English League Cup Hassailbank breaks Newcastle's heart

AFP, London

Jimmy Floyd Hasselbank struck deep into stoppage-time to give Chelsea a 1-0 win over Newcastle at Stamford Bridge and take the Blues into the League Cup semi-finals here Wednesday.

An evenly balanced contest appeared to be heading for extra-time when substitute Boudeijw Zenden crossed for Dutch compatriot Hasselbank to break the deadlock and extend Newcastle's failure to win a game in London to 29 matches.

Hasselbank believed Chelsea deserved the late breakthrough against a determined Newcastle side.

"We worked hard and battled away," he told ITV.

"We had the better chances in the first half and at the beginning of the second."

"But they came back strongly and hit us with some nice crosses - it was a little bit 50-50 at the end."

"It was a tight game for both teams that could have gone either way - but luckily for us we won. The Dutchman said he was relishing the chance to appear in a final for the very first time.

"It's very important that we get to the final and try to win it," he added. "But first we have to play a hard semi-final. Only if you win that can you think about the final."

Radebe's endless woes

AFP, Leeds

Leeds' South African international defender Lucas Radebe faces another three months on the sidelines after the latest injury to hit the jinxed player.

Radebe was stretchered off midway through the second half of a reserve game for Leeds against Sunderland on Wednesday with initial concerns that he had broken his leg.

But after undergoing tests on Thursday, it was revealed Radebe had suffered ankle ligament damage.

The 32-year-old centreback was playing his third comeback match following two serious knee operations, having been missing from action since March.

The latest injury has dealt a cruel blow to Radebe's hopes of playing for South Africa in next summer's World Cup finals as he was looking to force his way back into manager David O'Leary's first-team plans.

Radebe, who only recently said "one more setback would be a disaster" has vowed to battle back from this latest injury.

"This is a major blow and I am very disappointed, but I am determined to fight my way back into the first team," stressed Radebe.

Italian Cup Pleasing outing for Mazzone

Football

AFP, Milan

Brescia coach Carlo Mazzone had a happy return to former club AS Roma on Wednesday as his present team pulled off a 1-0 shock win in their quarter-final first leg Italian Cup tie at the Olympic Stadium.

Mazzone, born in Rome and a self-confessed Romanista, is fondly remembered by the Roma fans who credit him with laying the base on which current Roma coach Fabio Capello built a Scudetto-winning team.

And the veteran coach, at 64 the oldest in Serie A, gladly accepted the hospitality as his team posted a slender advantage for the second leg game at Brescia.

The only goal, when it came in the closing minutes, was a simple one as Austrian forward Stefan Schopp leaped above the Roma defence and scored with a header.

Earlier Wednesday a Juventus 'B' team proved up to the task in a last 16 tie against Second Division Sampdoria, winning 5-2 on the night to seal a 7-3 aggregate and a quarter-final tie with Atalanta.

Any remaining doubts about the outcome of the tie were settled within 15 minutes of kick-off when Juve scored twice, adding to their 2-1 first-leg lead.

Enzo Maresca, who gained



CARLO MAZZONE

valuable professional experience with English club West Bromwich Albion, grabbed the first goal with a fine finish and then veteran defender Ciro Ferrara - a survivor of the Juve team that won the 1995-6

Champions League - scored a rare goal with a header.

Pasquale Luiso of Sampdoria pulled one back but then Uruguayan striker Mariano Zalayeta restored Juve's two-goal advantage on the night.

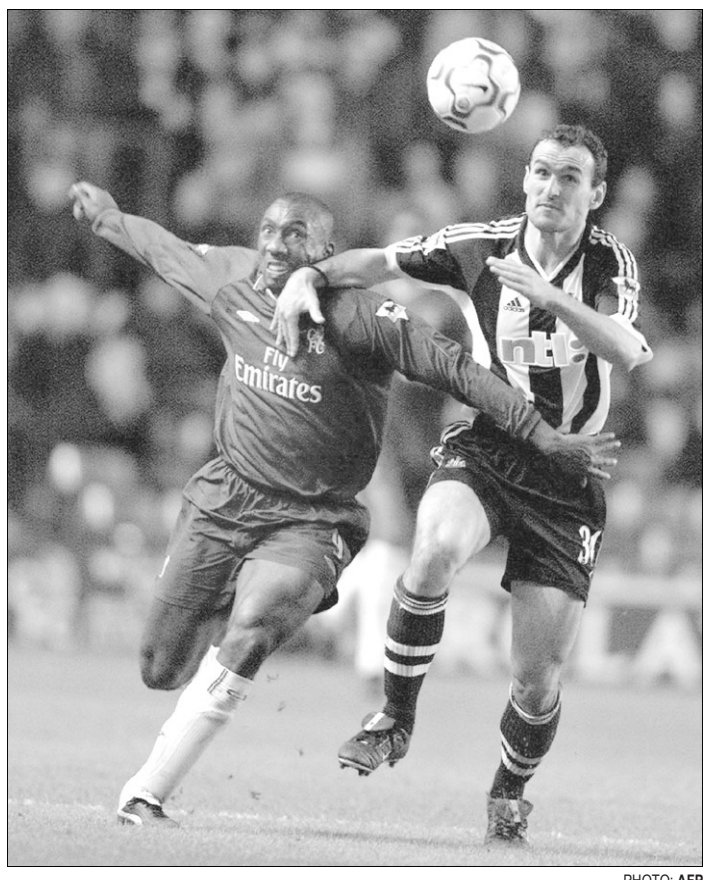
Nicola Amoroso, signed from relegated Napoli in the summer, was next to get in on the act with two goals.

First he converted a penalty after Sampdoria goalkeeper Fabrizio Casazza was, unconvincingly, deemed to have fouled Dutchman Edgar Davids.

Amoroso then finished off a fine move involving Zalayeta, ensuring the Turin side led 5-1 at the interval.

The goals dried up after the interval but with 11 minutes remaining Sampdoria's David Possanzini made his mark, beating the offside trap and dribbling past stand-in Juve keeper Michelangelo Rampulla before scoring.

Juve are behind schedule in the Italian Cup because they had to reschedule a Champions League match that was postponed in the wake of the September 11 terror attacks in the United States.



Jimmy Floyd Hasselbank (L), Chelsea's Dutch ace being put under pressure by Newcastle United's Nikos Dibazas during their English League Cup quarter-final at Stamford Bridge on December 12.

32-team format to stay



AFP, Nyon

UEFA is to maintain the current format of its top-flight Champions League with 32 teams and two phases, European football's governing body said on Thursday.

UEFA's executive committee shrugged off recent proposals from its own director-general Gerhard Aigner that it should be reduced in size to reduce the burden on players and maintain television interest.

UEFA president Lennart Johansson announced UEFA had decided "to support the current format of the UEFA Champions League with 32 clubs and two group stages following the completion of an extensive consultation exercise".

"We have turned to clubs, leagues, internal administration and it ended up that the absolute majority who support 32 teams, two phases. This is the present situation," Johansson said.

"It's a format that will be pursued for three years, afterwards it's difficult to predict," he added.

Aigner had said in a newspaper interview three weeks ago that he favoured getting rid of the second group phase but keeping the same number of clubs, although several formats had been under consideration.

"The market is going to evolve," Aigner told journalists afterwards, adding that three years was a short period compared to ten years of

Champions League history and that UEFA would have to make another decision on the subject within about two years.

"If we want to achieve a balance, we have to reconsider our total offer to television," Aigner added.

He had argued in recent newspaper interviews that television coverage of football was becoming saturated and broadcasters were cutting down on the number of matches they showed.

"We have to look at the market carefully and there is an indication that football is not as important as it used to be," Aigner maintained on Thursday.

Aigner said television stations would not necessarily abandon top-flight European competitions but are already showing less national league or cup matches.

"We have to be aware there is a selection process going on and not every match is shown nowadays."

Aigner had questioned the value of the second phase of the Champions League, which is currently being played, involving four groups of four clubs. Some top clubs and players have complained about the burden of a potential 17-match European competition run on top of their national season commitments.

But UEFA officials have left open questions about qualifiers within the current format, including the possibility that national Cup winners should qualify directly for the Champions League.

Johansson also indicated that UEFA would continue to take a tough line with world football gov-

erning body FIFA about FIFA's budget and troubles with its collapsed marketing partner ISL-ISMM, at an extraordinary FIFA executive committee meeting in Zurich scheduled on December 18.

"We expect and demand there is a full audit," Johansson said of FIFA's balance sheet, dismissing a recent FIFA independent audit as simple financial report.

"We will ask the questions and the answer will be official" Johansson, a long-standing critic of alleged lack of transparency at FIFA, added. UEFA has already put a list of 25 questions to FIFA about the ISL issue.

Several UEFA executives have seats on the world body's executive committee as well.

In other decisions on Thursday, UEFA said it had asked Switzerland to host the European Under 21 championship in May 2002, and had decided to abolish levies imposed on national football associations for national team matches.

A decision on the choice of a marketing partner for the 2003 Champions League was put off until next month while UEFA continued negotiations with shortlisted agencies IMG/TWI and Team Marketing.

The executive committee also decided to recommend acceptance of Kazakhstan's transfer from the Asian region into the European governing body to the next UEFA Congress in Stockholm in April 2002.

Stewart USA's best

Football

AFP, Los Angeles

Earnie Stewart, who led the United States with five goals during their successful 2002 World Cup qualifying campaign, was named the 2001 Honda Player of the Year on Wednesday.

In its 11th year, the award is open to American players who have participated in at least three international matches.

Stewart, 32, captured the award for the first time. He outplayed US captain and midfielder Claudio Reyna -- the 2000 recipient -- and defender Jeff Agoos in a vote of 251 American sports journalists.

Stewart became the career goal-scoring leader in World Cup qualifiers for the US with 11.

The 11-year national team veteran scored three times in two matches against Honduras. He also found the net at Columbus Crew Stadium in a triumph over Mexico and at Foxboro Stadium in a win over Trinidad and Tobago.

"It is great to be recognized as

one of the best American players, especially since I have been playing for clubs in Holland my entire career," said Stewart, who was born in Vegel, Netherlands, to an American father and a Dutch

mother.

A fixture in the US starting lineup, Stewart has 15 goals in 73 appearances for the US national team. He also competed in the last two World Cups.

"The Honda Player of the Year award is the most prestigious honor

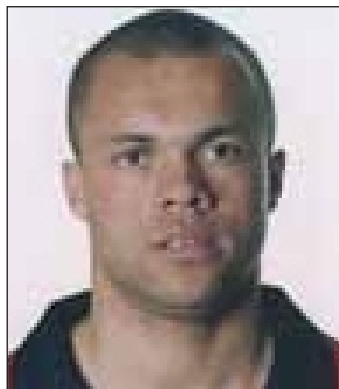
an American player can receive," Stewart continued. "To win it in a World Cup qualifying year really means a lot to me."

Perhaps his most famous effort came on June 22, 1994, when the United States hosted the world's biggest single-sport event. Stewart scored the winner in a 2-1 victory over Colombia to help the Americans advance past a World Cup opening round for the first time since 1950.

Stewart became the 10th different winner of the award. Forward Eric Wynalda, the US all-time leading goal scorer, is the lone two-time recipient, winning in 1992 and 1996.

Possessing speed along with a knack for scoring, Stewart has netted 42 goals for NAC Breda in five-plus seasons with the Dutch club. He joined NAC in 1996 from Willem II Tilburg, where he scored 49 goals in 170 career games.

Along with the trophy, Stewart was given a Honda Accord EX in the ceremony at the Beverly Hilton Hotel. Additionally, 5,000 dollars was donated on his behalf to the American Youth Soccer Organization.



EARNIE STEWART

Brazil plan clean-up law

Football

AFP, Brasilia

A government bill aimed at rooting out corruption in Brazilian football is to be drawn up in the next fortnight, sports minister Carlos Melles said Wednesday.

Speaking after receiving a damning 1,600-page parliamentary report on the state of the Brazilian game, Melles said no time would be wasted in implementing legislation.

The parliamentary commission (CPI) sent its report to Melles at the end of a 15-month inquiry which uncovered widespread irregularities in Brazilian football.

Melles said Wednesday he was determined to put the "morals back into football."

Melles said the bill, which will need the signature of president Fernando Henrique Cardoso, will facilitate legal proceedings against football officials suspected of

suspected in money laundering, tax evasion and other financial irregularities.

Melles admitted he hoped the sporting official would be out of the CBF by the time the World Cup finals start on May 31 next year.

"We expect that he (Teixeira) will give up his post by the start of the World Cup although the ideal situation would be that this would happen well before so that the Brazilian team has time to prepare properly," continued Melles.

"If this is not possible, Brazilian football will be the loser."

The CPI had focused a large part of its inquiry on American sportswear manufacturer Nike, who signed a 10-year, 160-million-dollar contract with the CBF, in 1997.

It had been reported that just before the 1998 World Cup final in France, Teixeira insisted coach Mario Zagallo change the starting 11 on the teamsheet named by coach Mario Zagallo which had not included an unwell Ronaldo.

Scottish Premiership Advocaat ends with draw

Football

AFP, Glasgow

Dick Advocaat's reign as Rangers manager ended with disappointment Wednesday as the Glasgow giants were held to a 1-1 draw at home to Hibernian.

The Dutchman brought a premature finish to his spell in the Ibrox hot-seat on Wednesday when he brought in Alex McLeish from Hibernian as his successor.

Advocaat, who will now move upstairs as director of football, said he was frustrated rather than emotional after his last match in the dugout.

"I have never seen a team that created as many chances as Rangers did tonight," he said. "Yet they gave a goal away and it ended up 1-1. That's frustrating. In principle, football-wise if you create chances it's important but the

final touch - and it doesn't matter how you do that - looks, for some players, quite difficult."

McLeish left the ground with plenty to think about after he watched the team he had built in Edinburgh match the one he has inherited.

And he will not have failed to have noticed the way his new charges squandered chances throughout the evening.

In the end, the points were shared when Paco Luna's first half opener was cancelled out after the break by a Fernando Ricksen effort that needed a deflection to send it into the net.

After Rangers had spurred a handful of chances in the early exchanges, Hibernian took the lead after 22 minutes against the run of play.

David Zitelli, who has rarely featured under McLeish in recent months, crossed from the left and Luna lost his marker to thump a header past Stefan Klos.

Rangers began the second half as they did the first by missing chances.

Neil McCann beat his man on the left to get in a cross and Ronald de Boer headed wide under pressure. Then Tony Vidmar did the same from a Russell Latapy corner.

But in the 58th minute, Rangers finally put the ball in the back of the net.

McCann was again the instigator on the left, taking on Alen Orman and getting in a cross that fell to Shota Arveladze's feet.

With his back to goal, the Georgian set up Ricksen whose shot cannoned off Paul Fenwick and past Hibs goalkeeper Nick Colgan.

McCann should have put his side ahead straight after when Arveladze put him through and the flag stayed down. But the winger's first touch to take the ball past Colgan was so heavy that he could only prevent the ball from going out for a goal-kick and the chance was gone.