

EUROPEAN PREVIEW

Football

AFP, Paris

Following a contrasting mix of fortunes on the Champions League front Europe's finest get back to basics this weekend ready to gird their loins for a domestic assault on their respective league titles.

Many of the top sides from Italy, Spain, England, Germany and France were on a roll midweek as Juventus and AC Milan slammed in nine goals while the continent's best, Real Madrid, put six past groggy Genk.

But while the Italians in particular look to be on the march several other sides will return to the fray nursing a headache.

They include Spain's Deportivo La Coruna - humbled 4-0 at home by Milan, and Germany's Bayer Leverkusen, whose fall from grace since losing last season's Champions League final to Real - and Michael Ballack to Bayern Munich - has been brutally swift.

Bundesliga

Leverkusen lost 2-1 at home to Manchester United following a six-goal humiliation at Olympiakos in the Champions League.

And in case hard-hit Leverkusen fans think things can hardly get much worse Bayern, who escaped with a draw at Lens, will beg to differ as they and Ballack provide the opposition Saturday in the Bundesliga.

Bayern sit at the top of the tree with five wins and a draw in six matches while Leverkusen are stuck in the bottom five, one sole win to their names.

Ballack, who turned 26 on Thursday, and Brazilian Ze Roberto, Bayern's other top drawer acquisition from Leverkusen, is looking forward to showing his former employers that he made the right move in heading for Bavaria.

"I just hope we win. How the fans react is secondary," he insisted Thursday.

Leverkusen coach Klaus Toppmoller attempted to tone down the atmosphere ahead of the game.

"There is no Ballack versus Bayer game," he told reporters Tuesday.

Reigning champions Dortmund, who narrowly beat Auxerre on Wednesday, will bid to see off Borussia Monchengladbach having lost early ground with four draws in their first five games.

Silva fastest of 'em all

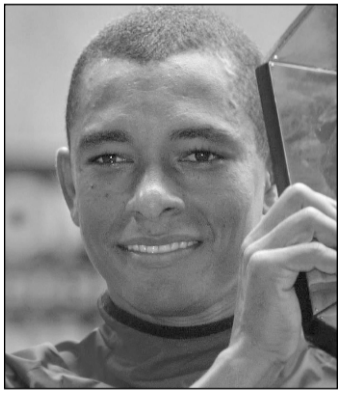
AFP, Paris

The goal scored by Arsenal's Brazilian midfielder Gilberto Silva at PSV Eindhoven was the fastest in UEFA Champions League history, European football's governing body UEFA confirmed Thursday.

Arsenal won 4-0 Wednesday night after Gilberto opened the scoring after just 20.07 seconds, eclipsing the 20.12 seconds set by Alessandro Del Piero for Juventus against Manchester United in 1997 by five-hundredths of a second.

In the first decade of Champions League football only ten goals have been scored during the first minute of play, and in only four of those ten matches did the team scoring the early goal go on to win the game.

However, further strikes from Freddie Ljungberg and Thierry Henry, who scored twice, secured Arsenal's first away win in this competition since they accounted for Lyon in February 2001.



GILBERTO SILVA

TEN FASTEST GOALS IN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE HISTORY

- 1. Gilberto Silva (Bra) Arsenal: v PSV Eindhoven, 25/09/02, 20.07 seconds
2. Alessandro Del Piero (Ita) Juventus: v Man United, 01/10/97, 20.12
3. Mariano Bombarda (Ita) Willem II: v Sparta Prague, 20/10/99, 28.21
4. Alexandros Alexoudis (Gre) Panathinaikos: v Aalborg, 22/11/95, 28.46
5. Deco (Bra) FC Porto: v Molde, 26/20/99, 30.08
6. Andreas Moller (Ger) Borussia Dortmund: v Juventus, 13/09/95, 37.04
7. Vratislav Lokvenc (Cze) Sparta Prague: v Spartak Moscow, 03/11/99, 42.58
8. Pavel Nedved (Cze) Lazio: v Bayer Leverkusen, 27/10/99, 43.25
9. Kakha Kaladze (Geo) Dynamo Kiev: v Anderlecht, 18/10/00, 44.00

Serie A

In Italy, hopes are high that the cream of the Serie A crop have turned the corner six years after Juventus last took the European Cup home to Italian shores.

With the "Old Lady" in irresistible form after walloping Dynamo Kiev 5-0 and four-times continental kings Milan similarly on an upward curve recent poor performances - and what was a potentially ruinous row on broadcasting rights which delayed the season Kick-off - appear forgotten.

Both clubs' recent showings call to mind the opening stanzas of the Italian national anthem - Fratelli d'Italia, L'Italia s'è desta - Italian Brothers, Italy has awakened.

And at home both northern sides have yet to concede a goal in their two league matches to date, to head the table along with Piacenza and Inter Milan.

Juventus could give a start to fit-again David Trezeguet as they host fourth-placed Parma while Milan travel to Lazio.

Milan will be looking to striker Filippo Inzaghi to carry on his scoring form from Tuesday's stunning 4-0 away win over Deportivo La Coruna where he grabbed a hat-trick to take his total to eight in four matches this term.

Roma would love to have even the three points that Lazio have as the 2001 champions have yet to win a match this season and Wednesday's 0-0 draw away at AEK Athens was their first without defeat - though coach Fabio Capello appears unthreatened for now.

Primera Liga

Don't do it, Madrid. Real Madrid will do the white of Real Madrid for the first time.

The Brazilian trained on his own Thursday and will be on the sidelines for Saturday's trip to Valladolid.

The Phenomenon is now set for a debut on October 2 against AEK Athens in the Champions League or more likely against Alaves at the Bernabeu four days later.

Early leaders Celta Vigo take on Malaga bidding for a fourth win on four games.

Champions Valencia, too good for Liverpool and Spartak Moscow, take on Rayo Vallecano on Sunday - but Rayo won't be able to play the new ace in his club's pack, Ronaldo's wife Milene Domingues, who has joined the female incarnation of their club.

Barcelona have a tough match at

on-form Real Betis - although the match will be played at Huelva with Betis' stadium closed following crowd trouble at the local derby with Sevilla last season.

FIXTURES

Primera Liga
Saturday (kick off GMT in parentheses): Alaves v Deportivo La Coruna (1830), Real Betis v Barcelona (1930), Valladolid v Real Madrid (1930)
Sunday: Athletic Bilbao v Real Sociedad (1600), Atletico Madrid v Recreativo Huelva (1600), Celta Vigo v Malaga (1600), Espanyol v Sevilla (1600), Racing Santander v Villarreal (1600), Osasuna v Real Sociedad (1700), Valencia v Rayo Vallecano (1830)

League One
Friday: Marseille v Ajaccio
Saturday: Nantes v Auxerre, Montpellier v Paris Saint Germain, Sochaux v Nice, Guingamp v Strasbourg, Troyes v Lyon, Bastia v Bordeaux, Lens v Lille, Monaco v Rennes, Sedan v Le Havre

Bundesliga
Saturday: 1860 Munich v Hertha BSC, SV Hamburg v VfB Stuttgart, Arminia Bielefeld v Schalke 04, Hansa Rostock v Hanover 96, Energie Cottbus v VfL Wolfsburg, Bayer Leverkusen v Bayern Munich, Borussia Dortmund v Borussia Monchengladbach
Sunday: FC Nuremberg v Kaiserslautern, VfL Bochum v Werder Bremen

Serie A
Saturday (kick off GMT in parentheses): Juventus v Parma (1600), Lazio v AC Milan (1830)
Sunday (1300 GMT unless stated): Bologna v Piacenza, Brescia v AS Roma, Como v Reggina, Modena v Torino, Perugia v Empoli, Udinese v Atalanta, Inter Milan v Chievo (1830)

Premiership
Saturday (1400 GMT kick off unless stated): Birmingham v Newcastle Utd (1630), Bolton v Southampton, Charlton v Man Utd, Chelsea v West Ham, Everton v Fulham, Leeds v Arsenal (1100), Manchester City v Liverpool, Sunderland v Aston Villa, Tottenham v Middlesbrough
Monday: West Brom v Blackburn (1900)

Premiership

In England, Manchester United's bid undermined by the club's shortage of top class strikers.

Saturday's trip to struggling Charlton would not normally have been one United fans would have lost much sleep over.

With Arsenal engaged in a tough away battle at Leeds, it looks on paper to be the ideal chance for United to close the six-point gap that the London club have opened up over their northern rivals.

But with Ruud van Nistelrooy a doubtful starter with a hamstring injury incurred in the midweek Champions League win over Bayer Leverkusen, Alex Ferguson's side could have their work cut out to secure three points they badly need.

Liverpool coach Gerard Houllier faces another Michael Owen dilemma as the second-placed side make the short trip to Manchester City.

Owen has just one goal to his name this season and looked badly out of sorts as Liverpool failed to convert their chances in a 1-1 mid-week draw with FC Basel.

On the bright side, 20-year-old Czech Milan Baros is in superb form and will definitely fancy his chances of adding to the four goals he has notched from three starts so far this season.

League One

and Monaco and in Europe away to Ajax.

The reigning champions came good with a 5-0 win Wednesday over Rosenborg and now travel to lowly Troyes - although striker Sidney Govou is out with a thigh injury.

The doyen of French managers, Auxerre's Guy Roux, could be celebrating a remarkable comeback on Saturday as his side can go top of the table should they beat Nantes and current league leaders Nice fail to win at Sochaux.

The 63-year-old Roux almost retired last year following emergency heart surgery - but was soon back in the dugout.

Roux received a boost Thursday when a scan of French international striker Djibril Cisse's foot injury showed he could return.

Ganguly captain against Windies

AFP, Bombay

India's revamped cricket selection committee expectedly retained Saurav Ganguly as captain for the upcoming home series against the West Indies, officials said on Friday.

The elegant left-hander will lead India in three Test matches and seven one-day internationals against the West Indians in October and November, the Board of Control for Cricket in India secretary Karunakaran Nair said.

But the new selection panel, headed by former Test batsman Brijesh Patel, resisted giving Ganguly a longer term till the World Cup in South Africa early next year.

One-day batting star Mohammad Kaif was, meanwhile, named captain of the board president's team to play the West Indies in the three-day tour opener at Bangalore from October 4.

The home team includes nine players who have played for India in Tests and one-day internationals in recent years.

The first Test will be played at Bombay from October 9-13, the second in Madras from October 17-21 and the third in Calcutta from October 30 to November 3.

BOARD PRESIDENT'S XI

Mohammad Kaif (captain), Gautam Gambhir, Sanjay Bangar, Hemang Badani, Dinesh Mongia, Parthiv Patel, Amit Mishra, Murali Kartik, Laxmi Balaji, Tinu Yohannan, Ajay Ratna, Sarandeep Singh, Irfan Pathan, Aakash Chopra.

Nehra doubt for India

REUTERS, Colombo

Indian pace bowler Ashish Nehra is nursing a hand injury, causing his side some concern ahead of their ICC Champions Trophy final on Sunday.

The left-arter hurt himself while attempting a run out during India's thrilling 10-run win over South Africa in the first semifinal on Wednesday.

"He needed five stitches in the webbing between the middle and index fingers," team physio Andrew Leipus said on Thursday.

"There is a question mark over whether he will recover for the final, but we have three more days," he said.

Nehra was forced off the field because of the injury but returned to bowl three more overs as India rallied in the late stages to clinch victory.

Tendulkar

FROM PAGE 13

Tournament in New Zealand, he batted at the top of the order in 193 of his 298 matches, scoring 8,743 runs and making 30 centuries. He bats at four in Tests.

Tendulkar moved back down during the West Indies series earlier this year in order to bolster the middle-order and the strategy is expected to remain until next year's World Cup in South Africa.

The change has added depth to India's batting, with young Virender Sehwag easing into the role as a pinch-hitting opener.

Some former Indian Test players have also argued for Tendulkar to continue as opener but others argue Tendulkar's batting at four has given added confidence to the rest of the batsmen.

Tendulkar, though, said: "It's the players who have done the job...not worrying about whether this guy is going to follow me or bat before me. They deserve a big congrats."

WHIZZ KID-179 winner



Shah Alam (UCEP School, Segunbagicha, Dhaka)

WHIZZ KID-180 correct answers

Who will lead the Bangladesh U-17 team in the tri-nations series in Sri Lanka? Ans: Ashiqur

What was the result of the England and India Test series? Ans: 1-1

Who won the US Open singles title? Ans: Sampras

Who became Champions Trophy hockey champs? Ans: Netherlands

Who clinched the Grand Prix Chess title? Ans: Rajib



PHOTO: AFP

Palestine team members stand solemnly while the national anthem is being played during a ceremony welcoming their delegation at the 14th Asian Games Athlete Village in Busan yesterday.

Interesting guests

14th Asian Games BUSAN 2002

AFP, Busan

The 14th Asian Games officially get underway here on Sunday with hosts South Korea hoping to capitalise on their successes at the World Cup, but with attention firmly fixed on their northern neighbours.

Of the 9,900 athletes from 44 nations, it will be the 159-strong contingent from North Korea who will be the most closely watched although the visitors from Pyongyang will not be the only objects of desire over the next two weeks.

Afghanistan, East Timor and Palestine will be hoping to put aside their dark days of turmoil, while a group of women from the tiny Gulf state of Qatar has been handed the chance to represent their Muslim nation for the first time.

Anyone hoping for a sight of the North Koreans has been left disappointed.

South and North Korea have remained hostile since the 1950-53 Korean War and Busan organizers agreed to provide the North delegation with stepped-up security at the Games.

But when the squad arrived on Monday, spectators were hustled away by police while reporters have been kept at arms' length at training sessions.

Games officials were reluctant to discuss security arrangements but chief spokesman Sohn Yohl admitted that heavy security was causing complaints.

"Under an agreement reached in South and North Korean sports talks we have worked out plans to protect North Korean athletes," he said.

"There was also a need from our side to prevent unhappy incidents in addition to North Korea's request."

When the Games come to an end on October 14, China, Japan and South Korea will be the three nations battling top spot in the medals table.

After a poor finish of just 12th at the recent world basketball championships, the country's national squad will be looking to giant center and this year's NBA number one draft pick Yao Ming to turn around their fortunes.

The Chinese are also expected to dominate in the pool where there are 43 golds up for grabs and China has its eye on at least 20 of them.

After a series of drug scandals, China returned empty-handed from the Sydney Olympic Games but bagged two gold medals from the world championships last July in Fukuoka, Japan.

The 200m breaststroke world record holder Qui Hui is on the Chinese team sheet, but 200m individual medley world record holder Wu Yanyan is not.

Chinese officials say she has retired. Luo Nan, the second fastest woman in the world this year behind Qi Hui in the 200m breaststroke, is also missing.

Japan is keen not to be upstaged by South Korea again, following its lower-keyed performance at the World Cup.

Japan will field 659 athletes with South Korea entering 769.

But the Japanese Olympic Committee (JOC) has set its gold medal target at "more than 65," one better than its best-ever result produced in the 1994 Games at home in Hiroshima.

China could pick up more than 150 of the 419 gold medals at stake

while South Korea is aiming for more than 80 which officials feel is a target beyond the reach of the Japanese.

If the big three are destined to dominate the medals table, there are other countries and competitors just happy to have made it this far.

Twenty-three athletes will represent Afghanistan - the country's first appearance for six years at a major international sports event.

Most eyes will be on a three-woman taekwondo team whose scheduled appearance has already sparked controversy in the deeply conservative country.

Women were banned from playing any kind of sport during the hardline Taliban regime which was ousted late last year. The three - Hakima Khashai, 16, Roya Zamani, 23, and 24-year-old Fatima Hamidi - have spent much of the last five years training in neighbouring Iran.

Meanwhile, seven women shooters from the oil-rich state of Qatar will take a giant leap into the record books - win or lose.

That's because they will become the first female athletes from the Arabian Gulf state, traditionally a conservative Muslim, male-dominated region, to be allowed to take part in the tournament.

Although there seems to be plenty on offer to generate interest, there has been a lukewarm response by the Korean public who gorged themselves on World Cup success and now look to have lost their appetite for another sporting occasion.

At the start of the week, organizers were scrambling to jump-start sluggish ticket sales with ninety percent unsold just days before the opening ceremony.

Aussies in Lankan spin

FROM PAGE 13

Australia were in a spot even before ace off-spinner Muralitharan had come in to bowl as they lost four wickets for eight runs in a space of seven overs.

Martyn put on 39 for the fifth wicket with Bevan, but that was not enough to pull his time out of trouble.

Dharmasena had Bevan caught by Arnold at square-leg, while Muralitharan dismissed Shane Watson (seven) for his first wicket to reduce Australia to 107-7.

Warne and Brett Lee (18) put on 46 runs for the eighth wicket before Muralitharan struck again.

Muralitharan had Warne stumped by Kumar Sangakkara and then bowled Glenn McGrath off successive deliveries to see to it that Australia did not cross the 175-

Fall of wickets: 1-49, 2-49, 3-56, 4-57, 5-96, 6-97, 7-107, 8-153, 9-162

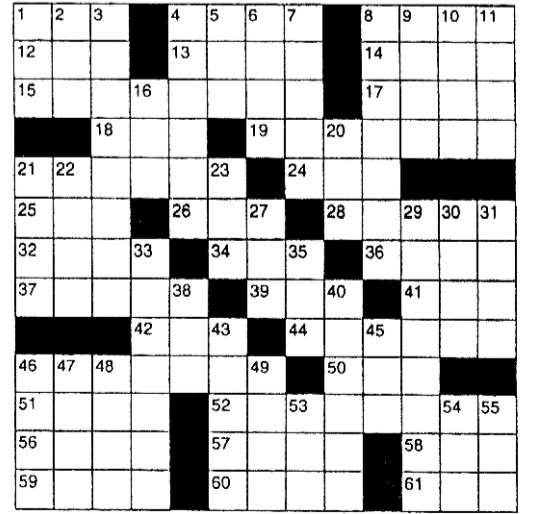
Scoreboard table with columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Includes Vaas, Gunaratne, D'sena, Aravinda, M'tharan, Chandana, Jayasuriya.

SRI LANKA: Sanath Jayasuriya, Marvan Atapattu, Kumar Sangakkara, Aravinda de Silva, Mahela Jayawardene, Russel Arnold, Chaminda Vaas, Palasthi Gunaratne, Muttiah Muralitharan, Kumar Dharmasena, Upul Chandana.

Umpires: Steve Bucknor (West Indies) and Dave Orchard (South Africa).

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 1 Poke, 4 Llaa's brother, 8 Timely query, 12 Drink enhancer, 13 Mot tune, 14 Aesopian also-ran, 15 Floggy chairs, 17 Emerald, for one, 18 Avant-garde (Pref.), 19 Hit the brakes, 21 The "I" in "IOU", 24 Absolutely Brutus', 25 Breakfast, 26 Wayne's "World" rejoinder, 28 1970s Israeli PM, 32 Streamlet, 34 Symbol of intrigue, 36 "The Way We --", 37 Cats' hangout, 39 Zero, 41 "I" line-man, 42 Shriner's... 44 Pick up some paintrols?, 46 T.J. Hooker's portrayer, 50 Rol, 51 Hirsch sitcom, 52 Boston nickname, 56 Blurple print additions, 57 Pugilism venue, 58 Bud's partner (Pref.), 59 Haiku, e.g., 60 Stud foe?, 61 A lot of years, 63 Mis-aimed pitch, maybe, 4 African monkey, 5 Coach Parseghian, 6 Fixes a light, 7 Delicious, 8 Two-part tool, 9 Padlocked fastener, 10 Stanley Gardner, 11 Requisite quantity, 16 Paycheck, 20 "The ramparts", 21 David Copperfield character, 2 Expert, Solution time: 27 mins.



CRYPTOQUIP

R M E M N E S X N R X E , H J V J P F P O O J F G N J P S R F N F G L G S F E V N J G E X Q J N Q G S " Q E L G E M R X G H E V " ?

Yesterday's Cryptogram: AT THE SUMMER OLYMPICS, ONE GUY FAILED TO GET HIS MEDAL AFTER SLIPPING A DISCUS. Today's Slipping Clue: X equals C

The Cryptogram is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.