



SWEET RETURN: Middlesbrough's Brazilian star Juninho (2nd L) runs around Everton's defence at the Riverside Stadium on March 1.

Premiership Hammers nail Spurs

Football

AFP, London

West Ham finally gave their long-suffering fans something to cheer about with a 2-0 win over London rivals Tottenham in a huge boost to the club's Premiership survival hopes.

Former Spurs favourite Les Ferdinand put the Hammers on course for only their second home win of the season with his first goal for his new club after 31 minutes.

England midfielder Michael Carrick made the points sure two minutes after the break, capitalising on a fumble by Tottenham's American goalkeeper Kasey Keller to fire home.

It was West Ham's second straight win after Sunday's precious victory at West Brom. Although it was not enough to lift them out of the

relegation zone, West Ham are now level with Bolton on points and within three points of Birmingham.

Beneath West Ham, West Brom and Sunderland look to be running out of time to escape the drop after both succumbed to 1-0 defeats.

Southampton striker James Beattie's 18th Premiership goal of the season - a 30-yard superstrike - condemned West Brom to their 18th defeat of the season.

Sunderland dominated Fulham for long periods of their clash at Loftus Road but Louis Saha's break-away late winner for Fulham left Howard Wilkinson's men anchored to the bottom, seven points away from safety with only nine games left.

At the other end of the table, nine-million-pound England defender Jonathan Woodgate celebrated his Newcastle debut with a solid display in a 2-1 win over Chelsea.

The victory lifts the Magpies to within five points of leaders Arsenal, who play Charlton at Highbury on Sunday, and level with Manchester United.

French defender Olivier Bernard was Newcastle's hero with a deftly-taken second-half winner after Frank Lampard's sweet volley had cancelled out a spectacular own goal by Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink.

Everton failed to take full advantage of Chelsea's second successive defeat but a 1-1 draw at Middlesbrough was enough to move them above the London club into fourth place, the final qualifying spot for the Champions League.

Defender Steve Watson's 23rd-minute shot had put the visitors ahead.

But Juninho delighted the home

crowd by coming on as a second half substitute to equalise a quarter of an hour from the end. It was the Brazilian midfielder's first appearance since he suffered a serious knee injury in August, just weeks after rejoining the club after helping Brazil win the World Cup.

There was a sense of deja vu for the visiting fans as Juninho's last premier league game had also been against Everton, in the final match of the 1999/2000 season, when he scored the winner in Boro's 2-0 victory.

Saturday's strike earned a point for his club and ended a long road back to match fitness for the 30-year-old, who had brought nearly 20,000 flocking to the Riverside on Tuesday for his appearance in a reserve game.

His goal in that 9-0 win over Bradford City's reserves proved to be a good omen for his senior debut, though the player himself was just glad to be back in the game.

Looking back on his operation and rehabilitation after getting injured against Modena last August, Juninho told Sky Sports on Saturday: "I was never out for a long time in my career -- that was the first time and I hope it's the last."

"It's so hard when you're not playing. Only those who have been through this TOP SIX very hard said Juninho who missed out on the 1998 World Cup finals after breaking Saturday's matches played his leg playing for Atletico Madrid in Spain, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points)

David Dunn scored the winner as Arsenal 28 18 6 4 62 30 60 Blackburn beat Manchester City 1-0 at Middlesbrough 16 7 5 45 26 55 Newcastle 28 17 4 7 47 33 55 Everton 29 14 7 8 38 34 49

7-up Bichel

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Despite taking three wickets against the Netherlands and two against Namibia, Bichel is still very much the support act here for McGrath, Gillespie and Brett Lee.

The 32-year-old fast-medium bowler, whose aggressive batting makes him a useful man to have coming in lower down the order in a one-day match, rarely lets his captain down when called upon.

In his seven Tests, spread over a period of five years, Bichel's 17 wickets have come at a respectable average of 32.29 with a best of five for 60 against the West Indies at Melbourne in 2000-01.

Going in late in a powerful Australian order has done him few favours and a Test haul of 65 runs at an average of just over eight is not a true reflection of his ability.

"The way I look at it I have served my apprenticeship and want to make the most of whatever opportunities come my way," said Bichel.

In first-class cricket Bichel's ten figures and one century from 99 matches since his Queensland debut against Western Australia in 1992-93 gives a fairer indication of his talent with the bat.

But it's in one-day international cricket that Bichel has become best known with his 35 matches now yielding 44 wickets, a solid return considering both the strength of the Australian bowling line-up and how the limited overs game stacks the

odds in favour of the batsmen. Unfortunately for Bichel, it has been his bad luck that his international career has coincided with those of McGrath and Gillespie, one of the most effective new-ball combinations in world cricket.

Not that Bichel, who enjoyed great success on the English county circuit with Worcestershire, was ideally ever quite quick enough to open the attack.

However, with Paul Reifel taking the third seamer role for Australia early in Bichel's career, his international chances have been further reduced by the emergence of out and out speedsters Lee.

And adding to Bichel's, not to mention Damien Fleming's misfortune, has been a general drift against swing bowling at anything other than top pace.

Speed and sharp spin are what win games these days and, given Australia's record, it's a hard theory to argue against.

But while others may feel sorry on his behalf, Bichel shows no sign of feeling sorry for himself - he's a man who enjoys cricket.

Bichel takes second best World Cup figures

Australia's Andy Bichel took 7-20 against England in the World Cup at St George's Park here on Sunday to record the second best ever figures in the history of the tournament.

Leading bowling figures in all World Cups:

WORLD CUP'S BEST BOWLING FIGURES					
Figures	Player	Country	Opponent	Venue	Season
7-15	G McGrath	Australia	Namibia	Potchefstroom	2003
7-20	A Bichel	Australia	England	Port Elizabeth	2003
7-51	W Davis	West Indies	Australia	Leeds	1983
6-14	G Gilmour	Australia	England	Leeds	1975
6-23	A Nehra	India	England	Durban	2003
6-25	C Vaas	Sri Lanka	Bangladesh	P'maritzburg	2003
6-39	K MacLeay	Australia	India	Nottingham	1983
5-14	G McGrath	Australia	West Indies	Manchester	1999
5-21	A Hurst	Australia	Canada	Birmingham	1979

Primera Liga Real hot Ronaldo

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

World Player of the Year Ronaldo was in devastating form as he fired a brilliant hat-trick to help Real Madrid to a 5-1 away win over a demoralised Alaves and send his side top of the Spanish first division on Saturday.

Spanish international Raul weighed in with two trademark opportunist strikes to put the pressure on Real Sociedad who will need to win their match at Valladolid on Sunday if they want to recover the top spot from the European champions.

At the other end of the table three quick-fire goals in the first 20 minutes earned basement club Recreativo Huelva a 3-2 win over Athletic Bilbao at San Mames, while Espanyol gained their first win in five outings 2-0 over Real Mallorca.

Anxious to erase the memory of last week's 6-0 thrashing at the hands of Deportivo Coruna, Alaves began in ambitious mood at their Mendizorrosa stadium as they pushed forward deep into the Real Madrid half in search of an early goal.

But the Basque side's attacking formation left too many gaps at the back and Real were able to take advantage when Raul launched a lightning break on 12 minutes.

The Spain striker slipped the ball to Ronaldo who mesmerised the Alaves defence with three quick step-overs before drilling into the far corner past Richard Dutruel with his left foot.

Alaves responded to the setback by strengthening their defence and went close to claiming an equaliser when Jordi Cruyff fired over the bar on the half-hour mark.

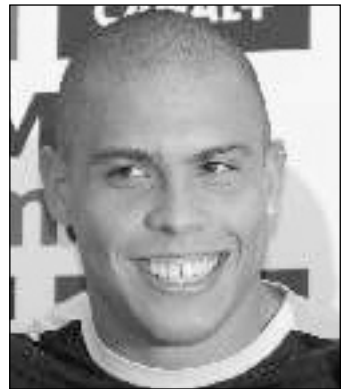
But just when they looked to be getting back into the match Real struck again.

Dutruel failed to gather a cross from Oscar Minambres, who was deputising for the injured Luis Figo on the right wing, and Raul pounced on the loose ball to hit home from close range 10 minutes before the break.

Alaves threatened to claw their way back into the game after the restart, but they received a ham-

mer blow when the Raul-Ronaldo combination sprang into action once again midway through the second half.

Ronaldo outpaced the Alaves defence as he latched onto Raul's pass then left a bemused former Barcelona team mate Abelardo flat on his back with his trademark shimmy before finishing off by slotting home under Dutruel.



RONALDO

Alaves eventually managed to pull one back when Uruguayan striker Ivan Alonso headed in from a free kick on 77 minutes, but Real showed no mercy as they restored their three-goal cushion immediately after the restart.

Ronaldo raced away unopposed to complete his first hat-trick since joining Real with another perfect finish -- this time with his right foot -- to bring his total for the season to 13.

Raul chipped in with his second and Real's fifth on 82 minutes with another fine finish after he had snapped up a neat through ball from substitute Guti to leave their disheartened opponents praying for the final whistle.

TOP SIX							
Spanish football league table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, against, points):							
Real	24	13	9	2	54	25	48
Sociedad	23	13	8	2	40	27	47
Valencia	23	13	6	4	40	17	45
Deportivo	23	12	6	5	37	25	42

Big win not enough

FROM PAGE 16

secure a big win over Canada and improve their run rate.

"It's important to be patient despite the need to win quickly because it's easy to fall into the trap of trying to make something happen with every ball," Fleming said.

"That can play into the hands of the opposition."

Canadian captain Joe Harris said his team's ambition was to give New Zealand a good run.

"We know they're going to come after us and it's going to be hard," Harris said. "But we have to hang out there and do our best."

Canada's John Davison hit the quickest century in World Cup history against West Indies, while Ishwar Maraj batting through the full 50 overs against South Africa.

LINE-UPS

FORM GUIDE					
FROM PAGE 16					
Jan 14, 2003	beat India by 6 wickets	Hamilton			
Jan 11, 2003	lost to India by 1 wicket	Auckland			
Jan 8, 2003	lost to India by 2 wickets	Wellington			
Jan 4, 2003	beat India by 7 wickets	Queenstown			
Jan 1, 2003	beat India by 5 wickets	Christchurch			
Canada (won 1 lost 4)					
Feb 27 2003	lost to South Africa by 118 runs	East London			
Feb 23 2003	lost to West Indies by 7 wickets	Centurion			
Feb 19 2003	lost to Sri Lanka by 9 wickets	Paarl			
Feb 15 2003	lost to Kenya 4 wickets	Cape Town			
Feb 11 2003	beat Bangladesh by 60 runs	Durban			

League Cup Liverpool's

Football

AFP, Cardiff

Liverpool won the English League Cup final here on Sunday beating arch-rivals Manchester United 2-0 for a record seventh triumph in the competition.

Goals by England international duo Steven Gerrard and Michael Owen, his 19th of the season, saw them to victory.

Gerrard, whose shot took a deflection off David Beckham's shin, said his goal had come at a vital time.

"That settled us down as we had been a bit slow out of the blocks and the United midfield were running things," he said.

Owen said it was great to have given the fans something to smile about after fading in the

Premiership and being knocked out of the Champions League and the FA Cup.

"We've taken a bit of stick but this is worth it and gives us something to build on."



MICHAEL OWEN

Crisis turned

FROM PAGE 16

games against Sri Lanka and New Zealand.

The Sri Lankans honoured their match in Nairobi but probably wish they hadn't as they lost while the Kiwis opted to forfeit the game and lose four points.

"It was awful back then," said captain Steve Tikolo. "The situation is fine now but people still talk about the attack."

As well as the security fears, Kenyan cricket underwent its traditional upheaval as far as the team was concerned when, following a poor tour of Zimbabwe, veteran players like Asif Karim and Alpesh Vader were recalled after a three-year absence.

"It was very frustrating but we always try to keep going," said Tikolo.

And kept going they have all the way into the second round of the World Cup but still with plenty to say for themselves.

"The ICC should take notice," said Tikolo. "Our performances here have shown that we are worth more international matches and they will definitely be a boost for Kenyan cricket as you can see from our shirts, we don't even have a sponsor." 3

Presidential

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Kenya beat Bangladesh by 32 runs in their World Cup Pool B match at the Wanderers in Johannesburg to book their place in the second stage, the Super Sixes.

Shocking

FROM PAGE 16

The victim was identified as Zuber Mohammad Ismail, 18.

Police also fired tear-gas to control the crowds both in Ahmedabad and Vadodara, some 120 kilometers (75 miles) south of here.

Gujarati Muslim leaders urged Sunday that the community keep a low profile until passions tempered.

Ahead of the match police had intensified patrols across Gujarat, where last year some 2,000 people died in India's worst communal unrest in a decade.

India's ruling BJP party won re-election in Gujarat in December on an aggressive campaign of Hindu nationalism and hostility towards neighbouring Pakistan.

The Gujarat riots erupted a year ago when a Muslim mob torched a train carrying headline Hindu activists, killing 58. Most of the victims in the subsequent vigilante attacks were Muslim.

We're shattered

FROM PAGE 16

team to an emphatic win.

Waqar said Pakistan's highly-acclaimed bowling attack, of which he himself is an integral part, must share the blame for the defeat.

"We bowled poorly, gave the batsmen room to hit and did not maintain a good line," he said.

The world's fastest bowler Shoaib Akhtar was hammered for 72 runs in his 10 overs, Waqar yielded 71 from 8.4 overs while record-holder Wasim Akram conceded 48 in his 10.

Waqar admitted that losing to India must have left millions of fans back home disappointed.

"It was a big game for them, we too are shattered at the loss, but let's hope all ends well."

Pakistan team flew to Bulawayo on Sunday morning with an eye on the Australia-England match in progress in Port Elizabeth.

"Only when we know that England have lost, will be plan for our match," Waqar said. "Our fate rests on that game."

Mission Skip Ignominy

FROM PAGE 16

their best performance in their five matches.

For the Dutch, playing in their second World Cup, they took a degree of comfort from passing 200 as they chased 301 against Zimbabwe in Bulawayo before losing by 99 runs.

"We were pleased to get beyond 200 against Zimbabwe," said skipper Roland Lefebvre.

"Now we need to win against Namibia and I think we have a very good chance if we bowl well and perform solidly."

Despite their one-sided defeats in the tournament, the International Cricket Council (ICC) refuses to sanction any ideas that the minnows do not deserve to be at the World Cup.

"A lot of these smaller teams don't play any three-day cricket where you really learn to bat," said Bob Woolmer, the head of the ICC's high performance unit which works with the smaller sides to help build their ability and profile.

"The high-performance unit will continue after the World Cup. Some of the plans are still on the drawing board but we hope to have them playing three-day matches

and get 'A' tours by the major nations to these countries.

"We've also got plans for an inter-continental cup where teams from Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas will play other teams from their regions before going into a knockout event against one another."

LINE-UPS

NAMIBIA (from): Deon Kotze (captain), Jan Burger, Louis Burger, Sarel Burger, Morne Karg, Daniel Keulder, Bjorn Kotze, Lennie Louw, Bryan Murgatroyd, Gerrie Snyman, Stefan Swanepoel, Burton van Rooi, Melt van Schoor, Rudivan Vuuren, Riaan Walters.

THE NETHERLANDS (from): Roland Lefebvre (captain), Luuk van Troost, Daan van Bunge, Jacob Esmeijer, Victor Grandia, Feiko Kloppenburg, Tim de Leede, Henk Mol, Klaus van Noortwijk, Aedel Raja, Edgar Schiferli, Reinhout Scholte, Jeroen Smits, Nick Statham, Bas Zuidereind.

Umpires: Daryl Harper (Aus) and Nadeem Ghauri (Pak)

TV umpire: Darel Hair (Aus)

Match referee: Gundappa Vishwanath (Ind)

FORM GUIDE			
FROM PAGE 16			
Feb 20 2003	lost to Australia by 75 runs	Potchefstroom	
Feb 16 2003	lost to England by 6 wickets	East London	
Feb 12 2003	lost to India 68 runs	Paarl	
Sept 16 2002	lost to Sri Lanka by 206 runs	Colombo	

Buchanan against

FROM PAGE 16

Buchanan. "Whether it is accurate history or not, the point is, even if it is only partially accurate, you are still unsure what you should do at the toss because there are elements that might affect the game."

That still leaves the need to explain why India's bowlers destroyed England's batting in a day-night game in Durban last Wednesday and why the West Indies, Sri Lanka and England have all won other high-profile day-night matches batting first.

"No matter what the game, the white ball offers something to the bowlers when it is new," said Buchanan.

"It is always how well the bowlers exploit that period and how well the batting side deals with that."

"In Durban the other night, a bowler began to hit the right spot accurately and regularly and the England batting was not able to respond."

The Australia coach's other reason for avoiding Durban as a semifinal venue is that he wants his side to maintain their winning momentum.

Australia have won their first five matches of the tournament and, if they can keep that form going, then they will play their semifinal in Port Elizabeth on March 18 by virtue of topping the Super Six table.

"Our preference would obviously be to continue our run and that would mean playing a semifinal in Port Elizabeth," he said.

"It would also mean we would have played two games there by that point, one in the group stage against England (on Sunday) and one in the Super Sixes, so we would be more familiar with the ground and the way the wicket plays."

Preferences apart, Buchanan said he was prepared for Australia to play at either semifinal venue, confident that his players would be able to cope with whatever situations they faced.

"All the history still comes down to the fact that, if we do progress to the semifinal and end up in Durban, it still has to be dealt with, it is as simple as that," he said.

"The prospect of losing the toss there will also have to be dealt with and the next two weeks will get us ready for whatever a possible

semifinal will throw up."

However Australia's impressive form suggests Port Elizabeth is their most likely semifinal venue, enhancing the already red prospect of the defending champions going through the tournament unbeaten.

"We have the potential to do that but the most dangerous side to stop us achieving that is ourselves," said Buchanan.

"I don't doubt our belief and there is also always an element of luck involved but it is a question of whether we have the resilience, the mental capacity and the patience to achieve it."

We're heroes

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against the third team from Pool B on March 15.

It will be India's third game in Centurion, having lost to Australia there on February 15 before defeating Pakistan on Saturday.

"It's not a bad thing to play again in Centurion," Ganguly said. "The wicket is good and we are quite familiar with the ground."

"We have a week's break before our first Super Six game, we'll relax a bit but stay focussed on the task at hand."

Ganguly conceded he was both delighted and relieved that India won on Saturday.

"Even before we left for the tournament everyone was talking of the March 1 game against Pakistan. I believe there were a lot of celebrations at home after we won."

An indication of how important an India-Pakistan game is for fans in both cricket-crazy countries came after the last World Cup in England where India lost in the Super Sixes and Pakistan made the final.

Yet, the Indians were given a rousing reception only because they had defeated Pakistan in the Super Six clash at Old Trafford in the midst of the Kargil conflict in Kashmir.

The Pakistanis, on the other hand, were roundly condemned for losing to the Indians and even accused of match-fixing after crashing to an eight-wicket defeat against Australia in the final.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Tom Hanks movie

4 Shortening

8 Devil's disciples

12 Altar affirmative

13 Gardener's pal

14 Fence opening

15 Author Buscaglia</