### Hopman Cup Slovaks in final

at Aussie cost

AFP, Perth

The drama continued at the one million dollar (750,000 US) Hopman Cup international mixed teams tennis tournament Friday after host nation Australia forfeited its place in the final against the United States.

Australia's leading women's player Alicia Molik announced she would not compete after again tearing a tendon in her left foot in a single's match on Thursday.

Her decision thrust the Slovak Republic into the limelight with the pairing of Daniela Hantuchova and Karol Kucera now taking Australia's

They will meet the American duo of Lindsay Davenport and James Blake at the Burswood Dome here on

Drug scandal

### Rusedski pleads innocence

AFP, London

British number two Greg Rusedski has vowed to clear his name after confirming he has tested positive for the banned substance nandrolone.

"In response to media inquiries, I can confirm that I have been advised by the ATP anti-doping administrator that a sample I provided tested positive for a low concentration of nandrolone metabolites," the player said in a statement on Thursday.

"There is an (ATP) hearing to be held in Montreal on February 9 which I shall attend. I fully expect to be found innocent.

"I wish to make it clear that I do ont and never have taken performance enhancing drugs," the Canadian-born Briton, who holds the record for the world's fastest serve, added.

"This is a very complex situation which once understood will clearly demonstrate my total innocence."

Earlier Thursday, the 30-year-old Rusedski, who was tested at the ATP tournament in Indianapolis on July 23 last year, had been knocked out of the Adelaide event, in the state out in the Adelaide event. his first outing since playing for Britain in the Davis Cup in Morocco in September.

### Reds burst

FROM PAGE 13

Munna, the maverick playmaker, was also instrumental in Muktijoddha's second goal as his accurate free kick from the left flank found an unguarded Toe who just gave the finishing touch with a back header in the 61st minute (2-

Sheikh Russell, who were unusua ally subdued, finally came to life after conceding the second goal. In the 75th minute veteran midfielder Asif found the net with right-footed volley from a Rashidi pass (1-2).

Moroccan forward Rashidi could have easily leveled the margin in the next minute when he got the ball in front of an open net. But his indeci-sion allowed Harry to clear the ball.

Red card: Harry (Muktijoddha).

Yellow cards: Burdif Mohammad, Jalaluddin (Sheikh Russell) and Riyadh (Muktijoddha).

Muktijoddha Sangsad: Aminul, Hasan Al-Mamun, Prodeep, Harry, Riyadh (Papel), Bidyut, Matiur Munna, Ghansha, Moni, Arcedia Toe and Kanchan.

Sheikh Russell KC: Apel (Biplab), Narayan, Kamal, Biplab, Burdif Mohammad, Abdullah, Abdel Ali, AsifYusuf, Rashidi and Milan. Referee: RAlam.

DHAKA WANDERERS-1; BADDA

Earlier, in the day's first match, Dhaka Wanderers Club registered their first Premier League win a solitary goal victory over Badda Jagarani Sangsad.

After a barren first half, Mujibur Rahman Ritu scored the allimportant match winner from a penalty in the 81st minute after Badda keeper Al-Amin had fouled Wanderers striker Williams inside the danger area.

With that win Wanderers raised their tally to five points from six matches while the Badda were glued to four points on completion of their sixth outing.

35 Fore-

front

36 Holdup

writer

Williams

39 Billy -

40 Time-

table

abbr.

41 See 19

Across

group

problem

48-Across

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

54 For fear

55 Just out

1 Took the

2 Scoundrel

format

Santa's

laundry

Landon

ranking

laborer

8 Between

9 Symbol of

intrigue

10 Raw

rock

11 Kinsey

6 Politico

4 Off the

boat

bus

3 Exam

that

DOWN

16 Marque

24 Stanford

rival

(on)

25 Hinge

26 Crony

27 Sound

29 Saturn

model

32 Sunshade

33 Senses

hand

38 Iced tea

39 Appor-

tions

(out)

43 "Moon-

struck'

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44 Recog-

nize

15 Harper

org.

46 Branch

blip

49 Zoo

Valley

47 Polygraph

enhance-

36 Upright

system

28 "Åmerican

20 Annoy

# Fleming praises 'new' Pakistan

Cricket

REUTERS, Christchurch

New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming has heaped praise on the Pakistan side leading up to the third one-day international on Saturday.

Fleming, who led New Zealand the last time Pakistan toured three years ago, said the current squad was much more unified than the bitterly-divided team of 2001 and had a more measured approach to

"We were given a valuable lesson in one-day batting in Queenstown and our guys have taken on board just how Imran (Farhat) and Yousuf Youhana worked us around," Fleming said.

"That was something that was

unusual for Pakistan -- taking the quick singles and really working a team over. We've learnt from that and hopefully we can put it into practice tomorrow.

With the expected return from a groin injury of paceman Shoaib Akhtar, Fleming said his presence provided an additional challenge for his team.

"We like to play against the best, even if he does bowl at 155 kmh. We've got to be on our game and as we've seen from Shoaib in the past, in the one-day game he can be expensive. But he is a world class fast bowler" Fleming said.

"With him in the side Pakistan are a very powerful side and they are well led from the sidelines by (coach) Javed (Miandad)."

Shoaib was taking a full part in Pakistan's practice session on Friday and Miandad said he hoped the player would be fit. The coach

did concede, however, that a decision to play was the bowler's alone.

Fleming said he was hoping for more from his experienced core of players, like Chris Cairns and Craig McMillan, who had yet to deliver in

While not naming anyone in particular, the skipper said the experienced players had to drive the team and drive the game.

"These players need to respond," Fleming said.

"They've won games for New Zealand in the past and we need to see some action. We don't expect them all to fire at once, but fire they must at some stage.

Fleming said the problem with the team in the two matches to date had been the poor batting starts, which both times have been rescued by the lower order.

Tendulkar c Ponting b Symonds

### India falter at the death

Agarkar struck twice in two balls in his next over, the 11th, when he dismissed opener Matthew Hayden for 20 and had Damien Martyn caught at fine leg for a first-ball

Ponting was caught and bowled by Lakshmipathy Balaji for 18 in the 16th over as Australia slumped from 59 without loss to 89-4.

Left-hander Michael Bevan (1) fell cheaply to Sehwag's off break bowling but Harvey paced Australia's innings in the closing overs before becoming Agarkar's fifth victim.

Australia host Zimbabwe at Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday in the second match of the triangu-

Ponting said he was conscious of the need for Australia to improve their fielding.

**SCOREBOARD** 

Scoreboard of the triangular one-day

AUSTRALIA Gilchrist c Pathan b Agarkar Hayden c Yuvraj b Agarkar Ponting c and b Balaji Martyn c Balaji b Agarkar Symonds c Kumble b Agarkar Clarke c Laxman b Kumble Bevan c Ganguly b Sehwag Harvey c Tendulkar b Agarkar Richel run out Gillespie not out Williams c Yuvraj b Agarkar Extras: (lb-10, w-14, nb-3) Total: (All out in 48.3 overs) Fall of wkts: 1-59, 2-70, 3-70, 4-89, 5-232, 6-233, 7-258, 8-272, 9-287, 10-288. Pathan Balaii

romania or c	9	00,01		00				
Ganguly run out (Harvey)								
Laxman c Clarke b Symonds								
Dravid c Harvey b Clarke								
Yuvraj c Clarke	eb Har	vey		25				
Bangar c Ponti	ingbH	arvey		3				
Agarkar c Clar	ke b Gil	lespie		1				
Pathan c Hayd	len b W	illiams		3				
Kumble c Clar	ke b Wi	lliams		5				
Balaji not out				0				
Extras: (b-1, lb	-8, w-1	1, nb-1)		21				
Total: (All out i	in 49 ov	ers)	2	70				
Fall of wkts: 1 5-257, 6-257, 270.								
Bowler	0	M	R	W				
Gillespie	10	1	50	1				
Williams	9	0	52	2				
Bichel	6	0	38	0				
Harvey	10	1	52	3				
Symonds	10	0	47	2				
Clarke	4	0	22	1				
Result: Aust	ralia v	von by	18 run	s.				
Man-of-the	-matc	h: A.	Symo	nds				
(ATTS)			•					

(AUS)

## Ctg one-day leaders

Kumble

Ganguly

FROM PAGE 13 country yesterday:

CHITTAG	ONG V	BAR	ISAL						
Venue: Comilla Stadium									
BARISAL									
Rashedur b Debi	obata			2					
Imran st Arif b Ya	sin			46					
Jamal run out				76					
Nahidul b Masur	n			13					
Nayan b Yasin				27					
Salauddin c Faisa	al b Sabl	bir		12					
Mustadir b Debr	obata			3					
Towhid not out				1					
Arman not out				2					
Extras: (b-5, lb-7	nb-1, w	v-9)		22					
Total: (For 7 wkts	in 50 ov	vers)		204					
Fall of wkts: 1-22	2, 2-76,	3-100	), 4-15	6, 5					
188,6-197,7-200									
Bowler	0	M	R	W					
Debrobata	6	1	18	2					
Obaidul	4	1	21	0					
Sabbir	10	1	43	1					
Yasin	10	0	47	2					
Ahsanullah	10	1	27	0					
Macum	10	0	26	1					

Fall of wkts: 1-22	, 2-76,	3-100	), 4-15	56, 5-
188, 6-197, 7-200 <b>Bowler</b>	0	м	R	w
	_			
Debrobata	6	1	18	2
Obaidul	4	1	21	0
Sabbir	10	1	43	1
Yasin	10	0	47	2
Ahsanullah	10	1	27	0
Masum	10	0	36	1
CHITTAGONG				
Anisul b Anisur				17
Salauddin b Anisu	ır			18
Masum b Tariqul				53
Faisal st Nayan b I	Mustad	lir		17
Akram not out				61
Arif c Bikash b Tar	iqul			8
Sabbir run out				10
Ahsanullah b Mus	tadir			2
Yasin run out				2
Obaidul not out				5
Extras: (lb-6, nb-2	, w-7)			15
Total: (For 8 wkts i	n 49.4	overs	()	208
Fall of wkts: 1-30	, 2-45,	3-87	, 4-14	1, 5-
153, 6-186, 7-189,	8-200			
Bowler	0	M	R	W

Arman	10	0	34	0
Salauddin	8.4	1	32	0
Mustadir	9	0	33	2
Tariqul	10	0	47	2
Imran	2	0	9	0
Result: Chittag	ong won b	y two	wick	ets.
Man-of-the-1	natch: A	Akra	m K	han
(Chittagong)				
DHA	KA V SYL	нет		
Venue: Dhani	mondi Cri	cket	Stadiu	ım
DHAKA				
Al-Shahriar c Re	ezaul b Par	rvez		33
Razzak b Rezau	1			7

DHAKA V SYLHET									
Venue: Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium									
DHAKA									
Al-Shahriar c Rezaul b Parvez 33									
Razzak b Rezaul				7					
Mehrab run out				82					
Sanwar c Rana b M	Masud			71					
Naimur lbw b Eja	Z			16					
Kadir c Imtiaz b E	jaz			5					
Neeyamur c Mab	ud b Eja	az		21					
Sajjad st Mabud b	Ejaz			10					
Masudurnotout				0					
Extras: (b-8, lb-9, w-10) 27									
Total: (For 8 wkts in 47 overs) 272									
Fall of wkts: 1-27	, 2-55,	3-184,	4-20	9, 5-					
215, 6-258, 7-270,	8-272								
Bowler	0	M	R	w					
<b>Bowler</b> Rezaul	<b>0</b> 10	<b>M</b> 1	<b>R</b> 36	<b>W</b>					
20202	•								
Rezaul	10	1	36	1					
Rezaul Sami	10 5	1 0	36 31	1					
Rezaul Sami Parvez	10 5 5	1 0 0	36 31 27	1 0 1					
Rezaul Sami Parvez Nabil	10 5 5 10	1 0 0 0	36 31 27 46	1 0 1 0					
Rezaul Sami Parvez Nabil Imtiaz	10 5 5 10 2	1 0 0 0	36 31 27 46 18	1 0 1 0 0					
Rezaul Sami Parvez Nabil Imtiaz Masud	10 5 5 10 2 6	1 0 0 0 0	36 31 27 46 18 49	1 0 1 0 0					
Rezaul Sami Parvez Nabil Imtiaz Masud Ejaz	10 5 5 10 2 6 9	1 0 0 0 0	36 31 27 46 18 49	1 0 1 0 0					
Rezaul Sami Parvez Nabil Imtiaz Masud Ejaz SYLHET	10 5 5 10 2 6 9	1 0 0 0 0	36 31 27 46 18 49	1 0 1 0 0 1 4					
Rezaul Sami Parvez Nabil Imtiaz Masud Ejaz SYLHET Mabud lbw b Elia	10 5 5 10 2 6 9	1 0 0 0 0	36 31 27 46 18 49	1 0 1 0 0 1 4					
Rezaul Sami Parvez Nabil Imtiaz Masud Ejaz SYLHET Mabud lbw b Elia Imtiaz b Ashraful	10 5 5 10 2 6 9	1 0 0 0 0	36 31 27 46 18 49	1 0 1 0 0 1 4					

e	Z			5	0	27	7	l	Shamimul c Hasibu
1			1	10	0	46	6 (	)	Rezaunul c Razzak l
12	5			2	0	18	3 (	)	Aminul not out
10	d			6	0	49	)	l	Shahjada c and b Ru
				9	0	48	3 4	1	Saifullah not out
I	ET								Extras: (b-6, lb-6, nl
u	dlbw	b Eli	ias				12	2	Total: (For 9 wkts in
12	b As	hrafı	ul				21	l	Fall of wkts: 1-50, 2
ez	z b As	hraf	ul				4	Į	128, 6-138, 7-188, 8
rı	ıl run	out					31	l	Bowler
W	la b I	Elias					42	2	Russel
11	uno	ut					2	2	Foizul
u	l c Sa	jjad l	b Me	hrab			16		Salauddin
rı	ın ou	t					6	6	Razzak
									Bashir
					,		,	-	Sajjadul
	6	7		8	9	10	11		Raziul
-		-		14	-		├	ļ	KHULNA
				ļ' <sup>-</sup>			1		Sajjadul c Nuruzzai
				17				1	Hasibul b Shahjada
_		12	200	<u> </u>		į.			Raziul c Shamimul
		19	20						Hasanuzzaman lbv
_		22	<del> </del>		23	24	25	1	Monirul c Hasanuz
									Salauddin c Hasan
	29				30				0
		-		33	-	-	├	1	Asadullah b Aminu
				33	l		1		Bashir not out
			36		1		1	1	Razzak lbw b Rezwa
_		30	<b>—</b>	-			_		Russel b Rezaunul
		- 70		1					

					1		_	1			ļ .		Ш	Salauddin c Hasanuzz	zan
26	27	28				29		Π		30				0	
31	1	$\vdash$	1		32		$\vdash$	-	33	_	-	<del> </del>	Н	Asadullah b Aminul	
<u> </u>														Bashir not out	
34				35	l l			36		1		1	Ì	Razzak lbw b Rezwanu	ıl
37	+-	+-	38		┼		39	┡	-	-		_		Russel b Rezaunul	
31		1	30		-		39	ı						Foizul lbw b Saifulla	ah
			40				41			42	43	44	1	Extras: (b-5, nb-1, w	7-9
45	46	47	┡		48	49	-	-	$\vdash$	╫	╀╌	$\vdash$	1	Total: (All out in 20.	1 o
45	100	7'			40	1-0		1			1.		H	Fall of wkts: 1-1, 2-	1. 3
50	Τ		Ţ		51		Π	T		52	Τ	1	1	6-25, 7-36, 8-37, 9-4	ń
53	+	+	+	-	54	+	+	+-		55	-	+	╢	Bowler C	) )
		1										<u></u>	ا	Aminul	7
				(	CRY	PT(	οQt	IIP						Shahjada	7
1	R C	,	3./	r D	17	117	1.0	11	M	т т		, ,	ι,	Saifullah 3.1	Ĺ
J	K C	,	10.	I D	V	VV	) U	п	IVI	J	) G	, /	<sup>7</sup>	Rezaunul 3	3
0	עע	117	D	T1 T	1.1	р О	C	C (	` W	1.0			,,	Result: Rajshahi wo	on
U.	VV	VV	K	U J	IVI .	K U	3	(	JW	10	U S	SU	니	Man-of-the-mat	ch

Ejaz r

10 1 47 2

TBQVMHVK TUTC Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF LADIES LIKE PURCHASING STOCKS BEST, MIGHT YOU SAY THAT GENTLEMEN PREFER BONDS?

XBGVHVK. BQJ MUXO

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: T equals B

The Cryptoquip 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

Sami c Neeyamur b Mehrab Nabil b Mehrab Extras: (b-4, lb-6, nb-5, w-13) Total: (All out in 43.3 overs) Fall of wkts: 1-43, 2-44, 3-56, 4-108, 5-120, 6-154, 7-161, 8-161, 9-165, 10-173. 0 28 Neeyamur Ashraful Masudur Mehrab 19 Result: Dhaka won by 99 runs.

RAJSHA	HIV KE	IULN	A	
Venue:	Shamsu	l Hud	a	
Stadi	ium, Jess	sore		
RAJSHAHI				
Rafiqul c Hasibu	l b Salau	ddin		27
Sharma lbw b Ra	zzak			33
Murad b Russell				30
Anisur run out				5
Nuruzzaman c H	Iasibul b	Bash	ir	6
Hasanuzzaman	c Russell	b Raz	iul	41
Shamimul c Has	ibul b Ra	zzak		3
Rezaunul c Razz	ak b Razi	ul		13
Aminul not out				21
Shahjada c and b	Russell			1
Saifullah not out				0
Extras: (b-6, lb-6	, nb-7, w	-9)		28
Total: (For 9 wkts	s in 50 ov	ers)	2	809
Fall of wkts: 1-5	0, 2-98, 3	3-112	4-12	1, 5
128, 6-138, 7-188	.8-187.9	9-189		
Bowler	0	M	R	W
Russel	10	0	45	2
Foizul	10	2	27	0
Salauddin	7	0	33	1
Razzak	10	0	37	2
Bashir	10	0	41	1
Sajjadul	1	0	5	0
Raziul	2	0	8	2
KHIII NA				

	Foizul	10	2	27	0			
	Salauddin	7	0	33	1			
	Razzak	10	0	37	2			
	Bashir	10	0	41	1			
	Sajjadul	1	0	5	0			
	Raziul	2	0	8	2			
	KHULNA							
	Sajjadul c Nuruzzaman b Saifullah							
Hasibul b Shahjada								
	Raziul c Shamimul b Shahjada							
	Hasanuzzaman lb	w b Sha	hjad	a	1			
	Monirul c Hasanu	zzamaı	n b Sh	ahjad	a6			
Salauddin c Hasanuzzaman b Shahj								
0								
	Asadullah b Amin	ul			0			
	Bashir not out							
	Razzak lbw b Rezwanul							

Extras: (b-5, nl		15						
Γotal: (All out i	)	41						
Fall of wkts: 1-1, 2-1, 3-7, 4-9, 5-2								
6-25, 7-36, 8-3	7,9-40,	10-4	1					
Bowler	0	M	R	W				
Aminul	7	1	12	1				
Shahjada	7	2	18	5				
Saifullah	3.1	1	3	2				
Rezaunul	3	1	3	2				
Result: Rajsha		•						
Man-of-the-	match	ı: Sł	ıahj	ada				

(Rajshahi) **ONE-DAY TABLE** 

Team	Match	Win	Loss	Pt
Chittagong	5	4	1	
Dhaka	5	3	2	(
Sylhet	5	3	2	(
Rajshahi	5	3	2	(
Khulna	5	1	4	:
Barisal	5	1	4	:

### Ronaldo fined for London trip

SKY SPORTS

Reports in Spain claim that Real Madrid have fined Brazilian striker Ronaldo for his trip to London this

The hit-man flew to London on Wednesday for a promotional visit, but his presence sparked rumours that he had been invited by Chelsea to attend their game with Liverpoo



**RONALDO** 

with a view to possible transfer

These claims were strongly denied by both the player and Real however, according to Radio Marca, the reigning Spanish champions have now decided to punish the South American for his actions.

The station reports that Ronaldo will be acted against because he failed to inform anybody at the club of his trip before

Madrid insist the move is in line with standard club policy, and revealed that no further investiga-tion into the incident will be

For his part, the 27-year-old was quick to play down the controversial trip, stating: "I was in England for a photo session with a company that sponsor me, and there was nothing strange about the jour-

### Cruzeiro amazes Rivaldo

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Rivaldo said he hoped him move to Cruzeiro would make him happy again after receiving a jubilant reception from fans before his official presentation by the Brazilian champions on Thursday.

security attempting to open a path to allow the Brazilian World Cup winner through the crowd after he arrived at Belo Horizonte's Pampulha airport, where an estimated 250 fans greeted him. The former World Player of

the Year joined Cruzeiro on Monday a little over a month after being released by AC Milan, where he had been relegated to the reserve team. The 31-year-old forward is

for the first time in seven years, during which he also played for Spanish clubs Deportivo Coruna and Barcelona. At Cruzeiro's training ground, Rivaldo said he was confident he

returning to play in his homeland

after an unhappy 18 months in "I want to be happy again, especially after what happened at

situation for me," he said. Rivaldo, who kept his place in the Brazil team despite his problems in Italy, also said the move

"Now I'm in Brazil, (Brazil coach Carlos Alberto) Parreira can follow my progress better,' he said.

He praised Cruzeiro's facilities, saying they were comparable to the best clubs in Europe.

certainly not behind Barcelona or Milan," he told reporters. "I think they're slight better than Milan's, I'm greatly impressed.

thing in Brazil, not just abroad." Rivaldo will lead Cruzeiro's challenge this year as they defend the Brazilian title and attempt to win the Libertadores Cup, the

"I wanted to play in the Libertadores -- it's a title I haven't conquered yet," he said. "The team has a lot of quality. I'm sure

with Cruzeiro coach Vanderlei Luxemburgo, who was in charge of Rivaldo in the memorable Palmeiras team during the mid 1990s as well as the Brazil squad which won the 1999 Copa

"It's important to have the

| *Primera Liga* preview

## Real face bogey prospect

Football

League leaders Real Madrid have been accused of complacency against lowly opposition this season but it is unlikely the reigning Spanish champions will take Real Sociedad too lightly on Saturday.

The Basques are just above the relegation zone but Sociedad were second behind Madrid last season and, by common consent, have suffered at the hands of some erratic refereeing this sea-

They were finally able to show their true colours last Sunday and emerged 2-1 winners at Malaga.

"I think you finally saw what we are capable of with that victory, and the way we played,' commented Sociedad coach Raynald Denoueix earlier this

Making the Frenchman even happier will be the return of his first-choice goalkeeper Sander Westerveld and striker Darko Kovacevic, after injury kept the pair out of last weekend's trip to the Costa Del Sol.

Kovacevic is a talismanic figure against Madrid and scored twice in Sociedad's 4-2 victory over their illustrious visitors last season, as well as contributing one goal in their 3-0 win the season before.

In total, the Serb has scored on five of the six occasions Real Madrid have visited the San Sebastian-based side and he has For Madrid it will be their second trip to the Basque country in a week, after their lacklustre 1draw against second division Eibar in the Spanish Cup on Wednesday, although admittedly Real fielded what was effectively a reserve team.

"It was important we held something back because I am also thinking about Real Sociedad," said Real coach Carlos Queiroz, demonstrating the importance he is placing on Saturday's fixture.

Real will have to face Sociedad without their injured England captain David Beckham. Beckham is still recovering

from the ankle injury he sustained last week during Real's 1-0 win over Murcia, which required four stitches. "I'm not fit to play on

Saturday. When I go to strike the ball it feels painful," Beckham told reporters at Real's training complex on Thursday. He will be replaced by Spanish international Jose Maria 'Guti'

Gutierrez, who is determined to retain the place he had to concede when Beckham arrived last "This is a new phase for me.

This position, in the centre of the field, is very comfortable for me but I am very aware that it is going to be very difficult to hang on to it," said Guti on Thursday. If Madrid can get their first points in the Anoeta stadium for

three years, then it will extend their championship lead. Real have 42 points from 18 games, two ahead of secondlaced Valencia who play at

Albacete earlier on Saturday.

Valencia coach Rafa Benitez is expected to name the same starting 11 that were impressive 4-2 winners at home to Villarreal on Sunday, with the exception of the suspended Spanish international midfielder Vicente Rodriguez.

Vicente's enforced absence means that Benitez may decide to push Mista Ferrer out on the left ving and use Ricardo Oliveira as

the main target man. Meanwhile, Barcelona lan-guish down in 12th after last week's humiliating 3-0 defeat at Racing Santander and are starting to face the prospect of finishing in the second half of the table

for the first time since 1942. Barcelona president Joan Laporta admitted on Thursday that he was negotiating to sign Juventus' Edgar Davids as a short term remedy, but even if the battling Dutch midfielder decides to follow in the footsteps of so many of his compatriots, he will not arrive in time to face Real Zaragoza on Sunday.

#### FIXTURES

Saturday (kick off GMT): Albacete v Valencia (1830), Real Mallorca v Celta Vigo (1830), Real Sociedad v Real Madrid (2030)

Sunday: Real Betis v Malaga (1600), Deportivo La Coruna v Racing Santander (1600), Osasuna v Sevilla (1600), Murcia v Espanyol (1600), Villarreal v Valladolid (1600), Barcelona v Real Zaragoza (1800), Atletico Madrid v Athletic Bilbao (2000)

Premiership preview

## Gunners can't slip

Football

the season with their unbeaten

ensured that Sir Alex Ferguson's

champions have exploited every

little slip by Arsenal and -- to even

For Arsenal however, the

pressure generated by their

rivals' relentless form is exacer-

bated by the painful memory of

last season's title race, a nine-

point advantage just after the

turn of the year ultimately prov-

ing insufficient to prevent

Ferguson's men from romping

could be forgiven a twinge of

unease after seeing his side

outmuscled by Everton in the 1-1

draw at Goodison Park in mid-

The Frenchman was not about

to accept that the breathing space

United have established at the

top amounts to a significant

psychological hurdle for his

With that in mind, Wenger

greater effect -- Chelsea.

away at the finish.

league record intact.

AFP, London

Arsenal's stomach for a fight will be put to the test in Saturday's Premiership confrontation with Middlesbrough Arsene Wenger's men may have passed the half-way point of

But that has not been enough Television pictures showed to prevent Manchester United opening up a three-point gap at the top of the table with the kind of run which has a habit of shredding the morale of teams bidding to knock them off their throne. Eight straight wins have

could put his career back on track

Milan, which was a very difficult

would benefit his future with the national side.

"Cruzeiro's installations are

"I'd never visited Cruzeiro before and I'm surprised to discover that we have this sort of

South American equivalent of the Champions League, for the third

we can bring a lot of happiness to the fans. Rivaldo has been reunited

confidence of the coach," said Rivaldo. "He is making history in Brazilian football and I owe a lot to him. He's a great coach, he knows my capabilities and I know I won't have any problems with

players to clear. "It is a long way to go unbeaten

keep going and United do better, congratulations to them."

and what the boys have done so

far is magnificent," Wenger said.

Everton's equaliser on Wednesday was created by Francis Jeffers, the Arsenal striker currently on loan to his former club. The rules governing loan deals mean Wenger could have

insisted the thought never "I am completely against that rule because I think it is immoral," the Frenchman said. 'If you take it to its extent, it means the rich can give to the poor but they cannot be allowed

prevented him playing but

With Manchester United not in action until Sunday's visit of Newcastle to Old Trafford, Arsenal can close the three-point gap with victory, although they would have to win by at least four goals to actually knock United off their perch.

to harm us. I think it needs to be

Given the parsimonious record of the visiting defence, that looks unlikely and Wenger will be wary of the threat posed by teenage winger Stewart Downing, the architect of Boro's midweek win over Fulham.

Liverpool are hopeful Michael Owen will be ready to return to first team action for Aston Villa's visit to Anfield. The England striker, whose

absence has been sorely felt as Liverpool have struggled to find any sustained form this season,

in six weeks during Wednesday's 1-0 win over Chelsea at Stamford Bridge.

was on the bench for the first time

The injury jinx that seems to be dogging Gerard Houllier's squad has not disappeared altogether however. The Liverpool manager has been obliged to begin a desperate search for an experienced goalkeeper after Jerzy Dudek joined Chris Kirkland on the club's list of walking wounded. If, as seems likely, Dudek fails

to recover from his groin injury in time for Saturday, Houllier may be forced to start with Patrice Luzi, the young French goalkeeper who only made his debut as a substitute in the closing stages of Wednesday's win. "If he has to Patrice will fill the

position very well but we only have him available now so we might have to look at someone for the short-term," Houllier admit-

The highlight of the day's other games comes at Elland Road, where Leeds desperately need to get something from their clash with a Tottenham side who have been revived by an unexpected 4-1 thrashing of Birmingham in midweek.

### FIXTURES

(1500 GMT unless stated) Saturday: Arsenal v Middlesbrough Birmingham v Southampton, Blackburn v Bolton Charlton v Wolves, Fulham v Everton, Leeds v Tottenham, Liverpool v Aston Villa, Portsmough v Man City Sunday: Leicester v Chelsea (1400

GMT), Man Utd v Newcastle (1605 GMT)

Serie A preview

### **Emotion can wait**

Football

Perugia coach Serse Cosmi has insisted his loyalties will not be divided this Sunday when his relegation-threatened side host Serie A leaders Roma, the club he supported as a boy.

Cosmi makes no secret of his

childhood allegiance but says his

team's desperate need for points

outweighs his affection for his former idols. "Let's forget I was a Roma fan all I am thinking about is getting out of this mess," said the gruffvoiced 45-year-old who is rarely

"Our position in the table is worrying and we need to start picking up points quickly.' Lying fourth from bottom after

seen without a baseball cap.

15 games, Perugia have drawn all of their eight home matches. But rather than see that record in a negative light, Cosmi sees the glass as being half full rather than half empty. "It's true we haven't won at

home, but then again we haven't lost either - that gives us confidence," he said The draw-specialists can also

take encouragement from their performance on Tuesday when they narrowly lost to Juventus. Perugia hit the post twice before eventually losing 1-0 in

Turin where Pavel Nedved's spectacular long range strike secured the points for the somewhat fortuitous title-holders. Roma meanwhile will be eager to bounce back after seeing their 14-match unbeaten record come

to an end at home to AC Milan. A double strike by Andriy Shevchenko gave Milan a 2-1 victory on Tuesday - their first league win away to Roma since September 1995 - and took the Ukranian's goal tally in Serie A to

14 this season, the best in the

division. The European champions' long-awaited triumph in the capital reduced Roma's lead at the top of the table to three points. Milan, joint second with uventus on 33 points, also have a game in hand on all their title

Shevchenko's clinical finishing prompted Milan vice-president Adriano Galliani to offer the prolific Ukranian striker a life-long contract at the San "As far as I am concerned, he

will stay with us forever. A player like Sheva should never be sold,' he said. "He is a player worthy of Milan

and we are prepared to add him

to our staff when his playing career Galliani said Milan's victory had

by just five points. "Everything has changed in the chase for the Scudetto," he said. The title is up for grabs and it will go right down to the wire."

thrown the title race wide open

with the top four clubs seperated

San Siro on Sunday hoping for no further slip-ups following their shock 2-1 home defeat to Udinese before Christmas. Of the top three, reigning cham-

Milan entertain Reggina at the

pions Juventus face the toughest test away to in-form Sampdoria. The newly-promoted Genoa club have been the surprise package and are sitting proudly in

match unbeaten run.

Fourth-placed Inter Milan, 3-1 winners at home to Lecce on Tuesday, face an equally difficult task on Saturday away to cashstrapped Parma.

eighth position following an eight-

#### FIXTURES (all matches 1400 GMT kick-off unless

Saturday: Chievo v Udinese (1700) Parma v Inter Milan (1930)

Sunday: AC Milan v Reggina, Empoli v Ancona, Lazio v Brescia, Perugia v Roma, Sampdoria v Juventus, Siena v Modena Lecce v Bologna (1930)

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