

Davis Cup Belarus abase Argentina

Tennis

REUTERS, London

Belarus sustained their giant-killing run in the Davis Cup on Saturday after Max Mirnyi and Vladimir Voltchkov grabbed a winning 3-0 lead against Argentina in the quarterfinals.

US when he faces Bjorkman in the first of Sunday's reverse singles rubbers.

If Bjorkman prevails, Mardy Fish and Thomas Enqvist will contest the deciding fifth rubber.

World number one Federer proved to be the weak link in the Swiss partnership as he was broken three times during the first three sets.

The Wimbledon and Australian Open champion failed to reproduce the form that had helped him to demolish Escude in Friday's singles.

Left-hander Llodra, winner of the Melbourne Park doubles title with Fabrice Santoro, was the architect of France's triumph, never dropping serve during the three-hour contest.

"I think the difference between the two pairs was that we were able to raise our level at the most impor-

tant moments," said Llodra.

"The role of (France captain) Guy (Forget) was also very important, especially after we lost the first set. He got us into the right frame of mind for the second set."

Despite the setback in the doubles, Federer will go into his match against the 25th-ranked Arnaud Clement as a clear favourite. If Federer wins the match, the tie will go into a live fifth rubber.

In Palma, Spanish pair Tommy Robredo and Rafael Nadal were leading Dutchmen John Van Lottum and Martin Verkerk by two sets to one when rain halted play in their tie.

The match will resume at 0830 GMT on Sunday before the reverse singles.

Spain went 2-0 up on Friday after Carlos Moya and Juan Carlos Ferrero had both claimed easy straight-set victories.

Mashonaland goes all-black

AFP, Harare

Zimbabwe's premier provincial cricket team Mashonaland, which is usually stuffed with Test players, was taking the field this weekend with an all-black eleven for the first time in its more than 100-year history.

In normal circumstances, and maybe in a few years' time, this might be a cause for rejoicing here, but it actually forebodes disaster for the sport in Zimbabwe this week.

The lack of whites in the Mashonaland side is the result of a boycott by four senior national cricketers of this premier inter-provincial team for its first-class match against Midlands in the central town of Kwekwe. Another senior player was dropped by the Mashonaland selectors.

The boycott was the first direct consequence of the simmering crisis over the ousting of national captain Heath Streak, which has split cricket here along racial lines.

Despite being instructed to play by Zimbabwe Cricket Union director Ozias Bvute, spin bowler Ray Price, all-rounders Sean Ervine and Travis Friend and senior batsman Craig Wishart all failed to show up for the first-class match. And Andy Blignaut, although fit and the best bowler in the country after Streak, was left out by the Mashonaland selectors.

Blignaut had joined Grant Flower and lawyer Chris Venturasi in support of Streak at their lengthy crisis meeting with the ZCU chairman Peter Chingoka, chief executive Vince Hogg and three directors on Thursday.

Ranatunga

FROM PAGE 13 won the election and formed a minority government Saturday.

Ranatunga, a hero in Sri Lanka after leading its cricketers to victory in the 1996 World Cup, said he was offered but declined the position of deputy minister of industries, tourism and investment promotion.

"It was a good position offered to me, but that was not what I was supposed to be doing. I am not keen on just getting some position. I don't want positions. All I wanted to do was contribute to improving sports."

However, Ranatunga said he will remain a backbench MP from the Freedom Alliance.

Primera Liga

Jekyll and Hyde Ronaldinho

Football

AFP, Madrid

Brazilian World Cup winner Ronaldinho scored one of the goals which set Barcelona on their way to a 3-1 at Valladolid on Saturday but then put his good work to waste by getting sent off.

Barcelona now have 59 points, seven behind second-placed Valencia and eight off the pace set by Real Madrid, but their ongoing push for a Champions League place was overshadowed by Ronaldinho's dismissal.

The Brazilian star had already been booked for refusing to retreat the full ten metres from a free-kick and then received his second yellow card in the 55th minute when he tried to kick the ball out of the

hands of Valladolid goalkeeper Albano Bizzarri.

The dismissal will rule him out of Wednesday's league clash with Real Betis.

Barcelona were cruising at the time having gone 2-0 ahead.

Argentinian international Javier Saviola had put them in front after just two minutes when he was set up by Dutchman Michael Reiziger.

Half an hour later, Saviola turned provider to create a goal for Ronaldinho who found the net for the 20th time this season.

After the Brazilian's dismissal, Valladolid took full advantage with Oscar pulling a goal back in the 66th minute but Andres Iniesta then scored his first goal in the top flight to make sure of the three points in the 85th minute.

Barcelona's Luis Enrique hit out at Ronaldinho's sending-off.

"It is ridiculous that a player of Ronaldinho's level should be sent-off for that reason," said Enrique.

"But they are the rules. It is a serious loss for any team but this is Barcelona and we can still beat Betis."

Meanwhile, Malaga beat Atletico Madrid 3-1 in a battle of UEFA Cup hopefuls.

Uruguayan international Diego Alonso scored two of the goals in the 45th and 50th minute after Ivan Leko had put them in front after 31 minutes.

Atletico's evening then got worse when Fernando Torres was sent off and he will miss next week's derby against city rivals Real.

On Sunday, league leaders Real Madrid look to bounce back from their Champions League exit

at the hands of Monaco when they entertain Osasuna with all eyes on England skipper David Beckham who is facing more lurid allegations in the British press over his private life.

Second-placed Valencia travel to Real Zaragoza.

TOP SIX

Table with 7 columns: Team, Played, Won, Drawn, Lost, Goals For, Goals Against, Points. Rows include Real, Valencia, Barcelona, Deportivo, Atletico, Malaga.

Playing without the injured Guillermo Coria and David Nalbandian, the Argentines struggled to adjust to the fast carpet surface all weekend and failed to win even a set in the three rubbers.

Mirnyi lived up to his nickname of 'The Beast' as he helped hammer the Argentine duo with a combination of powerful serves and blistering groundstrokes from the baseline.

He was ably supported by Voltchkov, who delighted the capacity 4,800 crowd with his attacking netplay.

Belarus will be hoping to continue their astonishing run in this year's competition when they travel to either the United States or Sweden in September for the semifinals.

Despite losing their service at the start of the first two sets, the Bryan brothers, the world's number one doubles team, were far too strong for Bjorkman and Johansson at Delray Beach, Florida.

World number three Andy Roddick can clinch the tie for the



Belarus' Max Mirnyi (L) and Vladimir Voltchkov parade their national flag after securing victory over Argentina in the Davis Cup quarterfinals in Minsk on April 10.

Onus on senior Pak players

REUTERS, Rawalpindi

Pakistan's senior players are feeling the pressure ahead of the deciding third Test against India starting on Tuesday.

India won the first match at Multan by an innings and 52 runs but Pakistan hit back at Lahore to win by nine wickets and level the series.

"It's a crucial decider and there will be extra pressure on Inzamam and me," vice-captain Yousuf Youhana told Reuters on Sunday.

Captain Imtiaz Ahmed, the most experienced Pakistani batsman, had scores of 77, 0 and 118 in the two Tests.

Youhana, who has played 50 Tests for his 3,677 runs and 11 centuries, scored 35, 112 and 72.

"After the retirements of Saad Anwar and Wasim Akram last year, there has been extra pressure on the two of us in the rebuilding process," Youhana said.

Farhat came good in Lahore, slamming 101 for his second Test century while Yasir scored 91 in the first Test at Multan but the batsmen have lacked consistency.

Youhana brushed aside Pakistan's bowling woes with seamers Umar Gul and Shabbir Ahmed injured and paceman Mohammad Sami doubtful because of back pain.

Vintage Lara

FROM PAGE 13

we are looking at over 400 runs," said Gayle.

"I felt good out there. I started well but got out just before lunch and wasn't able to carry on. But it's gone now and I will move on."

He became one of the wickets to fall in the morning period to leave West Indies 98 for two at lunch before rain delayed a resumption of hostilities for three hours.

Choosing to bat, West Indies saw Gayle and opening partner Darren Ganga bat through a testing first hour before Andrew Flintoff made the breakthrough.

Ganga, playing back instead of forward to a pitched-up delivery, was adjudged lbw for 10 to leave West Indies 33 for one.

Gayle and Lara added 65 for the second wicket when West Indies before the opening batsman drove back a return catch to off-spin bowler Gareth Batty off the penultimate ball before the interval.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the opening day of the fourth and final Test between West Indies and England at the Antigua Recreation Ground on Saturday.

Table with 3 columns: Player, Runs, Wickets. Rows include West Indies: First innings, Gayle c/b & Batty, Ganga lbw b Flintoff, Lara not out, Sarwan not out, Extras: (lb-1, nb-1), Total: (For 2 wickets in 52 overs) 208, Fall of wickets: 1-33, 2-98, To bat: Powell, Hinds, Jacobs, Best.

Table with 5 columns: Bowler, O, M, R, W. Rows include Collins, Collymore, Edwards, Hoggard, Harmison, Flintoff, Jones, Batty.

ENGLAND: Trecothick, Vaughan, Butcher, Hussain, Thorpe, Flintoff, G Jones, Batty, Hoggard, S Jones, Harmison. Umpires: Darrel Hair and Aleem Dar.

CJKS-Ispahani

FROM PAGE 13 Opener Khairul scored 41 and Rabul followed him with 35.

Shafaq Al-Jabir took four wickets for 36 and Rezaul grabbed three for 44. In reply, Mohammedan reached their target of 231 for five in 46.4 overs. Rezaul topscored with unbeaten 98 and Abu Sama made 36.

Sanjoy snatched two wickets. Meanwhile, Bangladesh Railway Sports Association got off to a flying start in the First Division Cricket League defeating Muktiyoddha Kira Chakra by three wickets at local Dampara Police Lines ground yesterday.

Pukhuria Star Club batted first and made 125-7. Siddiq top-scored with 41 and Delwar made 16.

In reply, Mona Lisa Ekadosh were bundled out for 51 in eight overs.

Magura soccer final today

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Zia Smriti Sangsad take on Shafik Smriti Sangsad in the final of the Econo First Division Football League at the Magura Stadium today.

The big match takes 25 days after the second semifinal on March 17.

Manikganj cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Pukhuria Star Club defeated Mona Lisa Ekadosh by 74 runs in the Shaheed Zia Memorial Cricket Tournament at the Muljan High School playground in Manikganj yesterday.

Pukhuria Star Club batted first and made 125-7. Siddiq top-scored with 41 and Delwar made 16.

In reply, Mona Lisa Ekadosh were bundled out for 51 in eight overs.

Narail Govt

FROM PAGE 13 Cricket Stadium while Blue Bird ran away with a two-wicket victory against National Bangla High at the Jagannath Hall ground of Dhaka University.

SAINT XAVIER'S: 130 all out in 49.4 overs (Nasif 27, Mamun 25; Enamul 2-25, Mainul 2-17, Ahsanul 2-21).

NARAIL GOVT HIGH: 132 for 3 in 24.5 overs (Sabur 77, Johnny 32; Raqibul 2-44, Saikat 1-20).

Result: Narail Govt High School won by seven wickets.

DINAJPUR ZILLA: 126 all out in 38.4 overs (Moon 24, Tazim 24; Saif 4-23, Raisul 3-20).

WILLES LITTLE FLOWER: 129 for 3 in 17.1 overs (Saif 46, Mehrab 31; Sumon 1-18, Tazim 1-21).

Result: Willes Little Flower won by seven wickets.

SABUJ KANAN HIGH: 191 all out in 36.1 overs (Rubel 36, Sony 31; Shaqir 6-22, Kamal 2-46).

Result: Sabuj Kanan won by 77 runs.

Serie A

Milan's penalty escape

Football

AFP, Milan

Andrea Pirlo converted a controversial late penalty for AC Milan as the deposed Champions League holders bounced back from their embarrassing European exit to move a step closer to the Italian league title on Saturday.

Denied a place in the semifinals of Europe's premier club competition after throwing away a three-goal first-leg advantage against Deportivo La Coruna on Wednesday, Milan appeared to be heading for their third successive league draw against a stubborn Empoli side fighting against relegation.

But with the visitors frustrating their illustrious opponents and Milan's nerves jangling, the league leaders were awarded a dubious spot-kick four minutes from the end when Empoli goalkeeper Daniele Balli collided with Jon Dahl Tomasson.

Balli was sent off for what

looked like a perfectly fair challenge on the Danish striker and Pirlo made no mistake from 12 yards to give Milan a fortuitous 1-0 victory at the San Siro.

Aside from the innocuous challenge, Empoli's players were also unhappy because they thought that several Milan players were in an offside position when the ball was played to Tomasson.

A lucky escape for Milan maintained their nine-point lead over Roma, 3-1 winners against Chievo.

Milan have 72 points from their 29 matches played, although Roma have a game in hand.

Reigning champions Juventus moved to within one point of Roma and tightened their grip on third place - and a Champions League ticket - when they beat Lazio 1-0 thanks to an 88th minute goal from David Trezeguet.

Juve have a 12-point cushion over Parma after the French striker rose to head in Mauro Camoranesi's cross for the winner at the Stadio delle Alpi. It was Juventus' 1997.

Roma, playing their home

match against Chievo in Palermo because of its first home victory over Lazio at a stadium ban imposed on them after their fans went on the rampage in last month's derby against Lazio, overcame the absence of their suspended captain Francesco Totti to beat the Verona side.

Norwegian striker John Carew put Roma in front just before the half hour mark, latching on to Gaetano D'Agostini's back-heeled flick and smashing a left-footed shot into the bottom corner from an acute angle.

Roma's advantage was short-lived however with Federico Cossato's flying header from Andrea Zanchetta's chipped free-kick leveling the scores.

Antonio Cassano headed home from close range to restore Roma's lead on the hour before Chievo Andrea Barzagli diverted D'Agostino's left-wing cross into his own net.

Parma put the pressure on Lazio, leapfrogging the Romans into fourth place thanks to a 3-1 win at home to Lecce where Alberto Gilardino scored twice to take his Serie A tally to 17.

Relegated Ancona won for the first

time this season, edging a five-goal thriller against Bologna.

Ancona's 3-2 victory took their points total to 10, two short of the all-time low in Serie A set by Brescia in the 1994/95 season.

Reggina lost their cool as they battle to survive the drop, going down 1-0 at home to Udinese.

On Sunday, second-from-bottom Perugia play at home to Inter Milan.

TOP SIX

Table with 7 columns: Team, Played, Won, Drawn, Lost, Goals For, Goals Against, Points. Rows include Milan, Roma, Juventus, Parma, Lazio, Inter.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down.

Cryptoquip puzzle grid with a 10x10 grid of letters and numbers.

CRYPTOQUIP W U D F A X Y F P G Y X Q F A X D A Z P Z V P J W Q J D Z V W V T F W Q X , W ' P D Z G B R X G ' T X U F F B X P B R X Y W I I Saturday's Cryptoquip: IF A PIECE OF FILMING EQUIPMENT IS ALL SUGAR-COATED, I GUESS IT'S CANDIED CAMERA. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: W equals I

Becks' second lover!

Football

AFP, London

David Beckham faced a new rash of lurid headlines on Sunday as "Kiss-and-tell" stories alleging affairs with two women were splashed across British newspapers.

A second woman joined his former personal assistant in alleging a steamy fling with the Real Madrid star, whose love life and marriage with pop star Victoria has become the focus of a media frenzy here.

The footballer's former PA Rebecca Loos spilled the beans in an interview published a week after the allegations first surfaced that she had bedded Beckham.

"What happened between me and David was more than just sex," Loos told the News of the World, which reportedly paid her 350,000 pounds (530,000 euros, 640,000 dollars) for her story.

"He needed a woman to be with him and to help him through a difficult lonely spell in his life," said 26-year-old Loos, who claims to have slept with Beckham on four occasions.

The England captain, reputedly the world's best-paid footballer, has denied the allegations.

A second woman meanwhile came forward claiming to have had an affair with the former Manchester United star.

Malaysian-born Sarah Marbeck, 29, who now lives in Australia, alleged she had an affair with the father-of-two for up to two years, after meeting in Singapore in July 2001 when he was on tour with Manchester United.

"Sleeping with David Beckham was a momentous day for me, not just a one-night stand," she told the News of the World.

"I certainly didn't take our affair lightly and nor did he. This is probably the most famous father, family man and husband in the world and he changed my life," said Marbeck, described as a barrister's daughter.

Loos meanwhile met Beckham while chaperoning him in Madrid, where the midfielder plays for giants Real Madrid.

Beckham's wife Victoria, a former member of now-defunct British band The Spice Girls, continued to base herself in England in order to pursue her own career,

fuelling media speculation that their marriage was under strain.

"His wife was thousands of miles away all the time and was no support to him at all," said Loos, the daughter of a Dutch diplomat.

England manager Sven-Goran Eriksson says he was confident his skipper would be at his best for the Euro 2004 finals this summer despite the allegations about his private life.

Eriksson said that the newspaper coverage was part of the package for top footballers like Beckham who are constantly in the public eye.

"All international players in England realise they have to live with this kind of thing. He is very strong," the England chief told the Mail on Sunday.

"They know how the English media works. They are not too worried about what people write."

Beckham reportedly nets around 20 million dollars a year in wages and sponsorship deals, dwarfing the earnings of his wife who is trying to revive her pop career.

US Masters Woods goes on rollercoaster

REUTERS, Augusta

Tiger Woods's rollercoaster ride at the US Masters continues as the world number one tumbles down the leaderboard.

In search of his third green jacket in four years, it has been a stomach-churning three-days of hair-raising highs and lows for Woods, who will enter Sunday trailing the co-leaders Chris DiMarco and Phil Mickelson by nine shots after firing a third round three-over 75.

Having hauled his way back into contention with a second-round 69 after opening with an out-of-sorts 75, Woods stepped onto the first tee on Saturday poised to make one of his patented charges but instead flirted with his worst round ever as a professional at Augusta.

After 14 holes a bewildered Woods, a look of anguish now permanently etched on his famous face, was reeling from the effects of four bogeys and a double bogey.

The 28-year-old American, however, remained unbowed, two birdies from the last four holes breathing a bit of life into his fading hopes.