

SERIE A
Del Piero of the old

Football

AFP, Rome

Alessandro Del Piero scored the only goal as Juventus beat Reggina 1-0 on Saturday to open up a three-point lead over AC Milan at the top of Serie A.

The 30-year-old Juventus captain struck in the 65th minute, latching on to Zlatan Ibrahimovic's intelligent backheel to bury a left-footed shot into the bottom corner for his 11th league goal of the season.

Juve hit the bar twice before taking the lead, but they struggled to shake off a Reggina side that dominated the first-half and always looked dangerous on the break.

Juventus have 66 points from their 29 matches played, three more than title-holders AC Milan who play away to Roma on Sunday.

Defeat for Reggina, one of only three teams to have beaten Juve in Serie A, saw them fall one place to 12th.

Juve coach Fabio Capello said Del Piero deserved the man-of-the-match award for the way he almost single-handedly lifted his team in the second-half.

"Del Piero has been improving with every game and after his goal we saw him play the kind of football that earned him praise all over the world years ago," he said.

After the break, Juventus were twice denied by the woodwork with

Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Del Piero both hitting the bar.

Juve finally made the breakthrough when Jonathan Zebina's cross was flicked on by Ibrahimovic and Del Piero swept the ball home from six yards out.

Earlier on Saturday, Siena boosted their hopes of surviving the drop with a battling 1-0 home victory over Lazio.

A scrappy tussle in Tuscany was decided by Igor Tudor's towering header on the hour.

The Croatian defender, who won back-to-back league titles with Juventus in 2002 and 2003, is on loan from the Turin giants until the end of the season.

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TOP SIX

Italian league table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Juventus	29	20	6	3	47	16	66
Milan	28	19	6	3	47	17	63
Inter	28	10	17	1	50	33	47
Sampdoria	28	14	5	9	31	21	47
Udinese	28	13	6	9	41	28	45
Palermo	28	11	10	7	31	26	43

PRIMERA LIGA

10-man Barca prevail

Football

AFP, Madrid

Ten-man Barcelona's 1-0 victory at Deportivo La Coruna on Saturday night put them a massive and surely unbeatable 14 points ahead in the Spanish title race.

Although Rafa Marquez was sent off for a second yellow card early in the second half as they defended Ludovic Giuly's 10th-minute opener, Frank Rijkaard's men held on for victory to put pressure on second-placed Real Madrid.

Madrid are looking set for their second successive season without silverware as anything less than a good result at home to Malaga on Sunday would put yet further pressure on coach Wanderley Luxemburgo.

It was Frenchman Giuly's sixth goal of the season for the Catalan club in a very lively match.

Following a freekick by Marquez, Deportivo keeper Gustavo Munua

punched it away. Though Barca's Brazilian defender Sylvinho intercepted the ball in the area, he completely mistimed his shot but Giuly, surging forward at the far post, got on to the end of it to find the net.

Marquez's marching orders came in the 52nd minute but Barcelona managed to hold on to their result although undermined.

Earlier on Saturday, Real Betis took third spot after beating Albacete 2-1 at home and Barcelona's neighbours Espanyol could only draw 2-2 at home to Real Sociedad.

TOP SIX

Spanish football league table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Barcelona	29	21	5	3	54	18	68
Real	28	17	3	8	48	25	54
Betis	29	13	9	7	47	37	48
Villarreal	28	13	8	7	48	26	47
Espanyol	29	13	7	9	37	35	46
Valencia	28	11	10	7	41	29	43

Clijsters captures Indian Wells

Tennis

AFP, Indian Wells

Former world number one Kim Clijsters captured her second Indian Wells WTA title in three years on Saturday, capping a remarkable run in just her second tournament back from injury.

The 21-year-old Belgian continued her stranglehold on American Lindsay Davenport by beating the world number one 6-4, 4-6, 6-2 in the final.

It was the 22nd career singles title for the Clijsters, who won her first crown in more than a year after missing most of 2004 with a wrist injury.

"This is incredible," said the unseeded Clijsters, who pocketed 332,000 dollars in prize money.

"There couldn't be any better way to start my year off.

"It is very satisfying to have this now and so soon."

Clijsters fired five aces and hammered 37 winners in the two-hour, five minute match in front of 7,000 at centre court. She made 30 unforced errors to Davenport's 35.

This was the 15th career meeting between Clijsters and Davenport with Clijsters now holding a 9-6 lead.

Saturday's final was also a rematch of the 2003 championship which was won by Clijsters 6-4, 7-5.

It was at Indian Wells last year where Clijsters suffered the wrist injury that lead to surgery in June.

Her first comeback attempt in October was thwarted after just three matches and she was on the sidelines until February, when she reached the quarters in Antwerp.

"This makes me more confident, especially because I was able to play five or six matches in a week's time. My wrist is holding up and I was moving well out there," Clijsters said.

Davenport looked unbeatable early on, but Clijsters cooled her off by winning six consecutive games to take the first set. But after a second-set stumble Clijsters was able to bounce back in the third.

The turning point came in the sixth game of the third set when Clijsters broke Davenport's serve to take a 4-2 lead. She then held serve

and broke Davenport again in the final game.

After playing flawless tennis through the first four games of the first set, the match ended on two errors by Davenport.

World number one Davenport was serving at deuce in the final



KIM CLIJSTERS

game when she double faulted to get to match point. She then hit a shot into the net to hand the win to Clijsters.

Davenport broke Clijsters twice to start the match and extended her winning streak to 24 consecutive games.

Satkhira cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Munshipara Juba Sangha, Echo Club, Young Mohammedan and Kamal Nagar Club won their respective matches in the Police Super Cup Second Division Cricket League yesterday.

In the first match at Satkhira Stadium, Munshipara Juba Sangha defeated Gava Krira Sangstha by five wickets while Echo Club defeated the Occasional Cricket Association by 28 runs.

At the Satkhira Government College, Young Mohammedan defeated Anirban Sangstha by seven wickets. In another match at the same ground, Kamal Nagar Cricket Club defeated Tarun Sangha by 130 runs.



PHOTO: AFP

Juventus superstar Alessandro Del Piero celebrates after scoring against Reggina at the Delle Alpi stadium in Turin on March 19.

PREMIERSHIP

Kezman Chelsea's man

Football

AFP, London

Mateja Kezman claimed a late double as Chelsea edged a little closer to their first English league title in half a century with a 4-1 win over struggling Crystal Palace on Saturday.

The win ensured Jose Mourinho's side remain 11 points clear of Manchester United -- who beat Fulham 1-0 at Old Trafford -- with just eight matches left to play.

Arsenal stay in third, two points adrift of United, after a 1-0 win at Blackburn Rovers that will give the Gunners a valuable psychological edge when the two clubs meet again in the FA Cup semi-final next month.

Palace made the champions elect work harder for the points at Stamford Bridge than the final scoreline suggests.

Finnish international Aki Riihilahti cancelled out Frank Lampard's 25-yard opener to ensure the two sides went in at the break on level terms.

But a Joe Cole strike 10 minutes after the restart and Kezman's late double wrapped up Chelsea's 24th

win out of 30 league outings this season.

Cristiano Ronaldo's 20-yard strike in the 21st minute proved enough for Manchester United to claim a victory that leaves Fulham still in serious danger of being drawn into the relegation dogfight.

Chris Coleman's side are just six points clear of the drop zone and the manager admitted: "We are not safe by any stretch of the imagination."

Arsenal's win at Blackburn was secured by a superbly taken goal by Dutch winger Robin van Persie two minutes before half-time.

Receiving Ashley Cole's pass with his back to goal, van Persie produced a lovely turn to leave himself with only Brad Friedel to beat and he skimmed round the Blackburn goalkeeper before tapping the ball into the net.

At the other end of the table, West Brom gave their survival chances a massive lift by beating ten-man Charlton 4-1 for their first away win of the season.

Crystal Palace's defeat at Chelsea means Southampton could escape from the relegation zone if they beat Middlesbrough on Sunday.

Portsmouth inched a little closer

to safety with a controversial point against in-form Newcastle. Kieron Dyer had put the visitors ahead two minutes before half-time only to see his effort cancelled out seconds before the break by Steve Stone, who looked distinctly offside as he scored the equaliser.

Stuart Pearce's reign as Manchester City's caretaker manager started with a frustrating 2-1 defeat at Tottenham.

Jermain Defoe's early strike was cancelled out by US midfielder Claudio Reyna and City were the better side for long periods.

But it was Spurs who took the points thanks to substitute Robbie Keane's 84th-minute winner.

TOP SIX

English Premiership table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Chelsea	30	24	5	1	58	10	77
Man Utd	30	19	9	2	48	17	66
Arsenal	30	19	7	4	68	32	64
Everton	29	15	6	8	34	30	51
Bolton	30	13	7	10	38	34	46
Liverpool	29	13	5	11	41	30	44

Gilchrist goes berserk

Cricket

AFP, Wellington

Adam Gilchrist and Damien Martyn blasted Australia into an unbeatable position in the rain-affected second Test against New Zealand here Sunday with twin centuries in a masterful 256-run sixth wicket partnership.

New Zealand were left clinging to the hope they can bat out the final two days to save the match and at stumps on the third day were 122 for four in their first innings replying to Australia's 570 for eight declared.

All the New Zealand bowlers

suffered at the bats of Gilchrist and Martyn, and Shane Warne followed with a rapid half-century before Ricky Ponting put New Zealand out of their misery with the declaration just before tea.

Australia then bagged the plum wicket of New Zealand captain Stephen Fleming off the first ball he faced, and Hamish Marshall, Craig Cumming and Nathan Astle followed after tea as the home side struggled to stay in the game.

After the first day was lost to rain, as was the first hour of the third morning, Australia took a stranglehold on the Test with the inspired batting of Martyn, whose 165 was his highest Test score, while

Gilchrist smashed an 86-ball hundred on the way to 162.

Martyn surpassed his previous best 161 rather shakily when he edged the unlucky Chris Martin just past the outstretched glove of Brendon McCullum and down to the boundary for four.

He fell in the next over when he nicked Iain O'Brien directly to the New Zealand wicketkeeper.

BRIEF SCORES

AUSTRALIA: First innings 570 for 8 declared (Martyn 165, Gilchrist 162, Hayden 61, Warne 50; Franklin 4-128)

NEW ZEALAND: First innings 122 for 4 (Vincent 38 not out, Cumming 37; McGrath 2-31)

Rani, Liza going neck and neck

SPORTS REPORTER

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN MASTER RANI

Hamid and Shamima Akhter Liza won their respective eighth round games to share the lead in the 26th National Women Chess Championship at the federation hall-room yesterday.

Rani beat Kiswaara Shajirin and Liza beat Sharmima Sultana to increase their tally to 7.5 points.

Nazrana Khan Eva followed them with six points when sharing point in the eighth round with Zakia Sultana.

Sourav sings

FROM PAGE 12

Pakistan's batsmen had fought to salvage draw in the first Test in Mohali after going into the final day just 53 runs ahead with four wickets in hand.

"Today, if we had not lost a wicket for one full session in the afternoon, we could have saved it," Inzamam added.

He praised Anil Kumble.

"Kumble is a great bowler and he was tough to handle on a fifth day pitch of inconsistent bounce," he added. "We need a combined effort now, hopefully that will come in Bangalore."

Pakistan received a boost for the final Test in Bangalore starting on Thursday when fast bowler Navedul Hasan was declared fit.

He missed the Kolkata match due to a shoulder injury and rookie left-arm Mohammad Khalil went wicketless.

WI leave Lara out

Cricket

REUTERS, London

Captain Brian Lara has been left out of the West Indies squad for the first Test against South Africa after failing to reach agreement with the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) over personal endorsement contracts.

Shivnarine Chanderpaul will lead the team in Lara's absence, the WICB said in a statement on Sunday.

Lara and six other senior players were initially not invited to play in the home series against South Africa and Pakistan due to the dispute which centres on a potential clash between the West Indies' main sponsor Digicel and the players' personal deals with Cable & Wireless.

On Friday the WICB did invite Lara alone to make himself available for the first Test after a resolution to the problem with his contract and he said he would respond within 24 hours.

However, his reply did not satisfy the WICB.

"Brian Lara gave a non-committal response to the West Indies Cricket

Bashundhara Cup Golf

SPORTS REPORTER

BS Lee became overall winner of Bashundhara Cup Golf which ended at Army Golf Club last Friday.

Hafizullah was the senior winner, Master Shamim clinched junior title and Lydia Ericson was the lady winner.

Sharif carded the best gross in the three-day meet.

Same India

FROM PAGE 12

scheduled to play six one-dayers after the Tests.

SQUAD

Sourav Ganguly (captain), Rahul Dravid, Virender Sehwag, Gautam Gambhir, Sachin Tendulkar, Venkatsai Laxman, Yuvraj Singh, Dinesh Karthik, Zaheer Khan, Irfan Pathan, Ashish Nehra, Laxmipathy Balaji, Anil Kumble, Harbhajan Singh.

The pichichi hunt is on

Football

INTERNET SOURCE

The pichichi, they call it over in Spain. The top scorer, the goal-grabber, the fox in the box.

Every year La Liga garlands its finest marksman with this rather silly-sounding title. The roll call of honor includes such names as Romario, Hugo Sanchez, Emilio Butragueño and Hristo Stoichkov. Here are this year's candidates.

Ronaldo

Club: Real Madrid

Total number of goals: 12

Headers: 2

Penalties: 0

Some are saying Ronaldo's best days are behind him. How many times have such suggestions been confounded? Admittedly, the slightly rotund Brazilian has been off the boil of late, what with weddings in Parisian chateaux, visits to the Rio carnival and a spate of niggling injuries, but he is an innate footballer, absurdly gifted, and as such can change gear and find a new level of form which would catapult him back into the fray for the pichichi.

There was a glimpse of this at Valencia on Saturday when he left Roberto Ayala in a heap of firewood on the floor and stepped round Canizares to stroke home his first goal in seven games. Nonetheless, for the moment the chubby one seems to be lacking the kind of appetite for goals he has for say, empanadas. A couple of hat-tricks, no great feat for him, and he would be back in the race.

Baptista

Club: Sevilla

Total number of goals: 13

Headers: 2

Penalties: 2

"The Beast", as he is fondly referred to in Seville, is so-called on account of his striking physical presence. Watching defenders try (in vain) to get the ball off him his like watching Mini-Me try and lay a right hook on Mike Tyson. Or airplanes swirling around King Kong like pesky mosquitoes. All right, I exaggerate. He's

just quite big. Good touch though for a big lad, and with a keen eye for goal.

Nihat

Club: Real Sociedad

Total number of goals: 13

Headers: 0

Penalties: 0

Little Nihat means Turkish delight for the Real Sociedad faithful. The Basque side have struggled this season in lower mid-table, but Nihat has returned to the kind of form which had him linked with Europe's top clubs in 2002/2003. That campaign, his partnership with Darko Kovacevich was one of La Liga's best, dragging an average Sociedad side into the Champions League places. Devilishly good technique combined with astonishing speed make Nihat a constant threat. Always a good bet for a spectacular volley or mazy dribble.

Fernando Torres

Club: Atletico Madrid

Total number of goals: 14

Headers: 1

Penalties: 3

If Torres, nicknamed "the Kid", can fire twenty goals this season which seems likely imagine what he might achieve in the future. This season has been especially tough on the young Spaniard, with excessive hype following his every step. But in a transitional phase (adolescence to maturity) and starved of service, he has still managed to grab fourteen goals in Atletico's push for a UEFA spot. Atletico's prize asset allies pace with brute strength and a sure touch. Forget the hype, this is no genius. Torres does what's expected he outpaces the defender and finds the net. That's what makes him such a valuable commodity. Word is Barcelona are trying to sign him for next season. Eto'o and Torres Amouth-watering prospect!

Luis Oliveira

Club: Real Betis

Total number of goals: 15

Headers: 0

Penalties: 1

Andalucia's top marksman, Brazilian-born Oliveira is always a danger

Ms sizzle on Day One

FROM PAGE 12

SYLHET-BARISAL

A 97-run opening stand between Moniruzzaman and Golam Rahman gave Sylhet a solid platform against their lowly opponents at the Sylhet Stadium.

In-form Golam Rahman was caught behind off right-arm pacer Mohammad Sharif for 51 but his partner Moniruzzaman, who cracked his first century against Khulna in the previous round, finished unbeaten on 105. Moniruzzaman smashed seven boundaries in his 267-ball innings.

One down Intiaz Hossain was the other notable Sylhet scorer with 56 that contained seven fours. Alok Kapali was not out on five.

SCORES IN BRIEF

KHULNA-CHITATGONG

Khulna: First innings 330 for 6 in 90 overs (Shaful 62, Sajjadul O, Bashar 20, Tushar O, Manzarul 151, Monirul 2, Hasibul 54 batting, Raj 30 batting; Alamgir 2-45, Hasan 2-76, Ilias 1-61)

DHAKA-RAJSHAH

Rajshahi: First innings 217 all out in 67.1 overs (Moniruzzaman 7, Naem 1, Reza 86, Farhad 18, Hasanuzzaman 9, Masud 5, Anisur 56, Alamgir 1, Shahajada 8, Shafaq 17 not out, Saifulah 1; Munir 1-48, Talha 4-46, Ashraful 5-58)

SYLHET V BARISAL

Sylhet: First innings 226 for 3 in 90 overs (Golam Rahman 51, Moniruzzaman 105 batting, Intiaz 56, Rajin 2, Kapali 5 batting; Mosharaf 1-46, Nadif 1-55)

8-team Champs Trophy?

Cricket

AFP, Kolkata

The International Cricket Council (ICC) is contemplating reducing the number of teams in the Champions Trophy tournament from 12 to eight, ICC president Ehsan Mani said on Sunday.

"We are looking at the possibility of reducing the teams to eight in the ICC Trophy to make it more competitive," Mani told reporters at Eden Gardens here.

Under the proposed format, the host country and top five teams in the ICC one-day rankings would get direct entry while the other