

PRIMERA LIGA

Real show real fight

Football

AP, Madrid

The phenomenal Ronaldo and fighter Michel Salgado scored second-half goals to help Real Madrid rally to a 2-1 victory over Villarreal on Saturday for their fifth straight win in the Spanish league.

The Brazilian superstar made up for Juan Roman Riquelme's first-half penalty at Santiago Bernabeu Stadium by heading home in the 70th minute, although Real were immediately hit by the ejection of their Argentine defender Walter Samuel.

Salgado struck the winning goal in the 74th minute, and Real moved to within three points of league leaders FC Barcelona, who visits Malaga on Sunday.

Real's Zinedine Zidane and Villarreal defender Quique Alvarez were also sent off following an injury-time clash.

In Saturday's other game, Osasuna edged Atletico Real 1-0.

Villarreal dominated the opening half-hour although David Beckham then spurned the best chance when he drilled his shot just wide from a good position on the right in the 31st minute after Ronaldo's clever pass set him free.

A counterattack led to Villarreal's 39th-minute penalty when central defender Francisco Pavon was adjudged to have fouled striker Diego Forlan as he attempted a tackle just inside the area.

Argentina midfielder Riquelme, who is in his second season on loan from Barcelona, beat goalkeeper Iker Casillas by sending his shot into the roof of the net.

Samuel missed a golden opportunity in the 47th minute when he headed wide from an unmarked position, and Forlan squandered an equally good chance 11 minutes later by firing into the side scoring from a Riquelme pass.

Zidane created Real's game-winning goal when he dribbled the ball to the goal-line before floating a

precise left-footed cross for Ronaldo to head in from the far post. The goal was his 16th of the season and his fourth in the last three games.

Samuel then received his second yellow card for hitting striker Jose Mari Romero with his arm.

Yet Real soon took the lead when an opportunistic Ronaldo passed from the left and Salgado shot home from the edge of the area.

Ronaldo had tried to muscle his way inside the box only to lose his balance. But he reacted first to the loose clearance as he got to the flash and put a precise pass in the path of Salgado to fire first time into the net.

Real's Portuguese midfielder Luis Figo appeared as a 75th-minute substitute after being left on the bench for the third successive game.

The game ended with Alvarez's wild attempted tackle on Real captain Raul Gonzalez near the corner flag, which brought an angry response from Zidane, leading to both players' ejection.

Osasuna's Australian striker John Aloisi headed home in the third minute from midfielder Ludovic Delport's left cross to beat Atletico and settle a match which bore the same scoreline as the teams' Copa del Rey first-leg semifinal on Wednesday.

In the closing stages, Osasuna defender Carlos Cuellar was ejected for a second yellow card, as he had been in the game three days earlier.

TOP SIX

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

Barcelona	32	22	6	4	61	25	72
Real	33	22	3	8	59	29	69
Sevilla	32	15	7	10	37	35	52
Villarreal	32	14	10	8	53	30	52
Betis	32	13	12	7	52	42	51
Espanyol	32	14	8	10	41	39	50

Proteas pile

FROM PAGE 12
Dippenaar and de Villiers, who took 40 minutes and 22 balls to get off the mark, were unflappable and batted all but the last three minutes of the morning period, but it took a bit of misfortune for Dwayne Bravo to bring Smith onto the field, and for the West Indies to get the wicket they so badly desired.

Bravo left the field with a gash over his left eye, when he attempted a diving stop at cover and the ball bounced awkwardly. He returned after South Africa had taken lunch at 335 for two.

In the afternoon, the West Indies continued to bowl with discipline and field like their lives depended upon it.

They got themselves back into the match with the wickets of de Villiers and Herschelle Gibbs just

Davis Cuppers off to Myanmar

SPORTS REPORTER

A five-member Bangladesh team left Dhaka yesterday for Myanmar to take part in the Davis Cup.

The Asia-Oceania Group-4 qualifiers of the Davis Cup will begin in Yangon today.

Bangladesh will play Oman, Syria, Singapore, Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Turkmenistan, Kirghyzstan, Iraq and hosts Myanmar in the weeklong round-robin competition.

The top two teams will move into Group-3.

Team: Sheikh Moinuddin Waliullah (non-playing captain), Shibu Lal, Amal Roy, Alamgir Hossain and Dipu Lal.

before the break.

De Villiers was caught behind off Reon King for 178, when he under-edged a cut low to wicketkeeper Courtney Browne.

The South African opening batsman hit 15 fours and one six from 352 balls in almost 9-1/4 hours of batting.

BRIEF SCORES

WEST INDIES: First innings 296 (Lara 176, Chanderpaul 53, Bravo 26, Sarwan 10, R Hinds 10, extras 10; Zondeki 4-50, Nel 4-56, Kallis 1-37, Ntini 1-61)

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 521 for 8 (De Villiers 178, Smith 104, Kallis 78, Dippenaar 71, Boucher 28, Prince 23; Gayle 3-85, Powell 2-89)

BAF Shaheen School boys' handball champs

SPORTS REPORTER

BAF Shaheen School clinched the Sunnydale Third Boy's Mini Handball title beating Bangladesh Ansar and VDP 12-7 in the final at the Dhanmondi Women's Sports Complex yesterday.

The winners led the first half 7-5. Reefat and Azizul scored six and four goals respectively for Shaheen School while Bappi netted three goals for Ansars.

Reefat was adjudged the best player of the tournament.

Agriculture Minister MK Anwar distributed prizes as chief guest.



Selim R F Hussain (L), chief financial officer of Standard Chartered, hands over the winners' trophy to Dhaka North Zone-1 captain, who became champions in the Standard Chartered Young Tigers U-17 cricket tournament recently.



THAT DIDN'T COUNT: Real Madrid superstar Ronaldo (L) putting the ball into the net past Villarreal goalkeeper Reina during the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid on Saturday. The goal was disallowed for offside.

Boca job becons Diego

BUENOS AIRES

The legendary Diego Maradona is about to start working with Boca Juniors, announced the boss of the Argentine soccer club on Saturday.

"Next week there will be a meeting of the board of directors to discuss this issue," Mauricio Macri, President of Boca, told Argentine Radio Mitre station as he was taking part in the installation of pope Benedict XVI in Italy.

Macri declined to reveal what position Maradona will take.

Maradona, 44, who retired from soccer in 1996 and has been struggling to control obesity and drug-addiction since then, said he would never take a job as a club's official and he wishes to share his experience with players. (Internet Source)

PSV Dutch champions

AFP, The Hague

PSV Eindhoven opened their bid for the triple this season by securing their 18th Dutch league title after a 3-0 win at home against Vitesse Arnhem.

Coached by Guus Hiddink, PSV have 79 points after 30 games and cannot be caught by last year's champions Ajax, sitting second with 62 points after 29 matches.

PSV are now on course for the triple they last achieved in 1988, when they won the Dutch league and Cup titles and the European Cup, now the Champions League, also under the guidance of Hiddink.

They travel to Italy on Tuesday for their Champions League semifinal away match against AC Milan, and meet Willem II Tilburg in the Dutch Cup final on May 29.

South Korea's Ji-Sung Park opened the scoring after 23 minutes of play on Saturday night with Mark Van Bommel (43) and Gerald Sibon (88) wrapping up the title.

STANCHART CRICKET Rahmatullah Model outplay Mishu Pre-Cadet

SPORTS REPORTER

A five-wicket haul by Waliullah helped Rahmatullah Model High to register a massive 238-run victory over Mishu Pre-Cadet and High in the Standard Chartered Under-15 Young Tiger School Cricket Tournament at the Orient Club ground yesterday.

Waliullah captured five wickets for 15 as Mishu Pre-Cadet were bundled out for 94 in reply to Rahmatullah Model's huge 332.

In the day's other matches, Tejunipara High (290) thumped Scholastica (129) by 161 runs, Government Laboratory (171) overwhelmed Manarat Dhaka International (126) by nine wickets, West End (110) outplayed Saheed Nabi (105) by nine wickets, National Bank Public School (265) thrashed Adhunik Vidyalaya (241) by 24 runs, Happy Times International (191) managed an eight-run victory over Nabakumar Institute (183), Uttar Badda Vidyaniketan (211) recorded an exciting one-wicket victory over Blue Bird International (207) and BKSP-B (215) beat BKSP-A (214) by two wickets.

Meanwhile, West Zone-4 (181) defeated East Zone-3 (178) by one wicket in the under-13 competition.

PREMIERSHIP

Chelsea just a whisker away

Football

AFP, London

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho insisted he does not want to win the title just yet, despite his side moving to within one result of the Premiership crown following Saturday's 3-1 win against Fulham.

Goals from Joe Cole, Frank Lampard and Eidur Gudjohnsen gave the home side victory and ensured that champions Arsenal must beat Tottenham on Monday night to prevent the title moving across London to Stamford Bridge for the first time since 1955.

But Mourinho stunned the press room at Stamford Bridge by declaring: "I do not want to win the league on Monday. I am hoping Arsenal can beat Tottenham and I want to put this mentality on to my players."

"If we win the league on Monday it is possible we could lose at Bolton next Saturday. I do not want to do that. If we need a result there I prefer to get it."

The Portuguese manager paid tribute to Fulham, who scored through teenage Dutch striker Collins John, for their part in an entertaining encounter and said they did not deserve to leave empty-handed.

"If I look over the whole ninety minutes I think they did not deserve to lose the game," he added.

Everton consolidated their grip on fourth place and the last Champions League spot as a late Duncan Ferguson goal, his second in four days, earned a 1-1 draw at home to Birmingham while city rivals Liverpool slumped to a dismal 1-0 defeat at Crystal Palace.

Manager David Moyes paid tribute to his veteran Scottish striker and defended his decision to relegate Ferguson to the bench after a match-winning display against Manchester United on Wednesday.

"Duncan has done particularly well coming off the bench and scored a few goals for us. We have used him like that effectively," he said.

"He put an awful lot of effort into the game in midweek and we decided to change it around and put some fresh legs into it."

Former Liverpool striker Emile Heskey did his former team mates a favour by opening the scoring on five minutes with a powerful drive but Ferguson was the final word.

Liverpool, cursed by inconsistency in the league, tumbled to a 10th Premiership defeat away from home, courtesy of Andy Johnson's 20th Premiership goal of the season, just three days after an excellent 2-1 win at Portsmouth.

Johnson met Wayne Routledge's cross-cum-shot with his head to send the ball looping

over Liverpool keeper Jerzy Dudek on 34 minutes.

The win helped Palace move out of the bottom three but defeat left Liverpool trailing Everton by four points in the race for the final Champions League spot.

Manager Rafael Benitez was seething afterwards and was reluctant to discuss yet another defeat. "I am very disappointed. We tried until the end and now we have three more games and two more in the Champions League and we have to think about these," he said before concluding: "I don't want to talk."

Middlesborough reinvented their push for European qualification with a comfortable 4-0 win against relegation-haunted West Brom.

Two goals from Szilard Nemeth and a Jimmy-Floyd Hasselbaink tap-in within 10 first half minutes put paid to the Baggies who had been the better side until Nemeth's 27th minute opener.

Stuart Downing added an injury-time fourth as Middlesborough took over the crucial seventh and final European qualification place from Tottenham, while West Brom slumped to 19th place.

Aston Villa and Bolton hindered their respective UEFA Cup and Champions League aspirations with a 1-1 draw.

Fernando Hierro scored an own goal in the first half after a mix-up with Jussi Jaaskelainen at a corner but Gary Speed rose to head home an El-Hadji Diouf cross 10 minutes into the second half to earn a share of the spoils for Bolton.

They trail Everton by four points while Villa are two points behind Middlesborough.

Heart in boot effort

Ronaldo best since Maradona: Sacchi

Football

AFP, Madrid

The Spanish title could still be decided several weeks before the end of the season but leaders Barcelona will be looking over their shoulders until they have the trophy in their hands after Real Madrid's 2-1 win over Villarreal on Saturday.

Real's come-from-behind victory moves them to just three points behind their bitter rivals, although the Catalans have a game in hand and play at Malaga late on Sunday, as well as the advantage in their head-to-head encounters.

Goals by Ronaldo and Michel Salgado after 70 and 74 minutes earned Real their fifth consecutive victory after they had fallen behind to a controversial Juan Roman Riquelme penalty late in the first half.

"This victory belongs to the players. They put their hearts in their boots. They stood up to be counted," said Real's Brazilian coach Wanderley Luxemburgo in the early hours of Sunday.

Luxemburgo has quickly developed a reputation almost as notorious as one of his predecessors John Toshack for mangling a cliché or a popular phrase, but everyone who saw the game knew what he meant.

"Whether the result was fair or not, I can't say. Sometimes football is like that."

"The early penalty changed the game. I am not going to crucify the referee on this issue. Football is about passion and when you calm down maybe you regret some of the things you have done."

"We know that winning the championship is out of our hands but we are going to fight all the way."

"What has really pleased me in recent weeks is the way the squad has responded after a bad spell. We have guaranteed second place and that's fine," added the former Brazil boss.

Luxemburgo was lenient on the referee Bernardino Gonzalez Vasquez, who gave Villarreal a penalty after an apparent dive by Diego Forlan, but Ronaldo was less forgiving on Sunday.

"The referee was lamentable. We

won with everything stacked against us," said the three-times former World Player of the Year, who has now got four goals in his last three games.

"Now we can only hope that Malaga help us out against Barca. I've put a bet on that it will be a draw," added Ronaldo.

Ronaldo's exploits on Saturday, where he first scored and then the winner for Salgado must have pleased Real Madrid's technical director Arrigo Sacchi who went on record on Thursday by hailing Ronaldo as second only to the great Diego Armando Maradona.

"I've been a Ronaldo fan from the first moment I saw him play. When he suffered that terrible injury during his Inter days I was very sad because the game of football lost an extraordinary player," said Sacchi.

"After Maradona, he's the best player I have ever seen and I believe he still hasn't expressed his full potential," added Sacchi.

Ronaldo has scored four times in his last three games and is Real's top marksman with 16 goals.

SERIE A

Milan blank Parma

Football

AFP, Rome

Title-holders AC Milan thrashed relegation-threatened Parma 3-0 at the San Siro on Saturday to open up a three-point lead at the top of Italy's Serie A.

Brazilian midfielder Kaka gave the home side a half-time lead with a close range strike before Danish striker Jon Dahl Tomasson applied the finishing touch to a lightning counter-attack just after the hour.

Second-half substitute Marcos Cafu completed the scoring with an angled drive 20 minutes from time for his first league goal of the season.

Juventus can rejoin Milan at the summit if they win their match at Lazio on Sunday.

Milan have 73 points from their 33 matches played, three more than Juve who have played a game less.

Parma, who despite their precarious league position are in the semi-finals of the UEFA Cup, remain fifth from bottom, a point clear of the relegation zone.

Milan's joy was tempered by a

thigh injury to Dutch defender Jaap Stam, who may be forced to miss Tuesday's crunch Champions League semi-final, first leg at home to PSV Eindhoven.

Milan coach Carlo Ancelotti said his midfield quartet were the driving force behind an emphatic victory.

"We played well and kept the tempo high from start to finish and much of the credit for that goes to the hard work of the midfielders," he said.

"The team is motivated and every game from now until the end of the season will be like a cup final, which can only be a good thing."

Parma boss Pietro Carmignani admitted his team couldn't live with the reigning champions.

"When you find yourselves up against a Milan side in this kind of form, there is little you can do," he lamented.

Milan broke the deadlock in the 34th minute.

Parma keeper Sebastian Frey parried Manuel Rui Costa's fierce drive and Andriy Shevchenko's follow-up was blocked by Cesare Bovo before Kaka slammed in the second rebound.

Tomasson strengthened Milan's grip on the match in the 61st minute.

Kaka fed Shevchenko on the right and the Ukrainian cut inside to tee up an unmarked Tomasson for an easy finish.

Cafu, who came on for Stam, ended the contest nine minutes later, rifling a low shot into the corner of the net from after Shevchenko's strike was blocked on the edge of the 18-yard box.

Earlier Saturday, David Di Michele scored twice as Udinese boosted their hopes of securing the fourth and final Champions League spot with a 3-2 victory away to Siena.

Udinese's win was their first in four matches and lifted them up to fourth place above Sampdoria.

TOP SIX

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

Milan	33	22	7	4	55	20	73
Juventus	32	21	7	4	55	22	70
Inter	32	14	17	1	57	35	59
Udinese	33	15	8	10	50	36	53
Sampdoria	32	15	7	10	34	24	52
Palermo	32	12	12	8	39	34	48

SL cricketers in confusion

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lankan cricketers were caught up in a row over the administration of the game and the future of their contracts was in doubt, a press report said here on Sunday.

The administration plunged into crisis last month after Sports Minister Jeevan Kumaratunga suspended the official recognition of Sri Lanka Cricket and named an interim committee to govern the game.

However, Sri Lanka's Court of Appeal two weeks ago prevented the minister from dismissing office bearers of the island's richest sports governing body.

"The foremost issue concerning the players is their individual contracts," the Sunday Times newspaper said. "However, the players are worried about the validity of contracts with the interim committee."

Players were not immediately

available for comment.

However, sources said they were expected to discuss the matter with elected office bearers of the cricket board before a final decision on new contracts is taken next week.

Sri Lanka Cricket President Thilanga Sumathipala maintained that the minister's action meant they could not function as an officially recognised national body, but it had no implication on the membership of the International Cricket Council.

The cricket board is incorporated here as a private company, but is also registered with the sports ministry so that it can represent the country at international events.

Sports minister Kumaratunga sacked Sri Lanka Cricket's governing body amid allegations of financial irregularities and appointed an interim committee to oversee the game.

Interested players can enter their names in the open tournament until start of the event at 3pm.

WECCA cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Cavaliers became champions in the Partex WECCA Cricket League with a two-wicket victory over The Cricketers in the final at the Dhanmondi Cricket Stadium on Friday.

Former national opener turned national selector Athar Ali hit an unbeaten 84 off 110 balls as Cricketers scored 197-9 in the stipulated 40 overs.

Cavaliers, in reply, reached 199-8 with nine balls to spare. Tutul top scored 74 off 82 balls.

Zonal bridge from April 28

SPORTS REPORTER

The open pair competition of the Zonal Bridge Championship will begin on April 28 at Hotel Sonargon.

Interested players can enter their names in the open tournament until start of the event at 3pm.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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