

Milan take strong lead



AFP, Milan

AC Milan rode their luck to beat PSV Eindhoven 2-0 in a pulsating first leg of their Champions League semi-final at the San Siro here Tuesday.

European Footballer of the Year Andriy Shevchenko broke the deadlock with a cool finish three minutes before half-time for his sixth goal in eight European matches, before substitute Jon Dahl Tomasson doubled Milan's advantage with a close-range effort in stoppage time.

"I'm very happy and very tired it was an extremely difficult match, it was difficult to run for 90 minutes," said Shevchenko.

"PSV were difficult opponents, their rhythm was slow but they kept the ball well.

"But our tactics were right and our counter-attacking produced two goals. Tomasson's goal was crucial and at the back we kept a clean sheet."

Victory belonged to Milan and leaves the Italian giants in a strong position to reach their second Champions League final in three seasons, but they were very fortunate to survive a second-half onslaught from the visitors.

The recently-crowned Dutch champions should have had something to show for their efforts, but they spurned chance after chance and weren't as clinical as their illustrious hosts.

Midfielder Andrea Pirlo and central defender Jaap Stam, formerly of PSV, both overcame injuries to start for Milan, joint leaders of Serie A alongside Juventus.

With Alessandro Nesta suspended, Kakha Kaladze came into the starting line-up to play at left-back and captain Paolo Maldini moved into the heart of Milan's defence alongside Stam.

PSV coach Guus Hiddink, who made himself the most unpopular man in Italy three years ago when his South Korean team beat the Azzurri in the second round of the 2002 World Cup, was able to field his strongest team with no injuries or suspensions.

Milan, crowned European champions for the sixth time in 2003 when they defeated Serie A rivals Juventus in a penalty shoot-out, began at a furious pace, carving out two gilt-

edged chances for Hernan Crespo in the first 10 minutes.

First the Argentinian's rising drive was tipped over the bar by Brazilian keeper Heurelho Gomes, then his goalbound header was headed off the line by South Korean defender Lee Young-Pyo.

PSV, who clinched the Dutch championship on Saturday to keep alive their dream of repeating their glorious treble of the 1987/88 season when under Hiddink they won the European Cup, the Dutch league and Dutch Cup, weathered the early storm and almost took the lead in the 17th minute.

Lightning-quick Peruvian forward Jefferson Farfan showed a clean pair of heels to veterans Stam and Maldini, but having put himself in the clear he shot tamely into the grateful arms of Milan keeper Nelson Dida.

Gomes thwarted two stinging shots from Kaka before Milan ended the stalemate in the 42nd minute.

Picking up the ball between centre-circle and penalty area, the eagle-eyed Kaka played in Shevchenko with a defence-splitting pass and the lethal Ukrainian outsprung Wilfred Bouma before slotting the ball past Gomes.

Three minutes after the interval, Dida spilled Lee's shot but was fractionally quicker to the loose ball than Park Ji-Sung, before Farfan's pleydrier was charged down by Stam.

The visitors piled on the pressure and Park was left kicking himself after shooting straight at Dida when an angled shot would probably have drawn PSV level.

The impressive van Bommel blazed over just Dida between him and the goal, before a breathtaking save from Gomes denied Shevchenko his second goal in a brief moment of respite for the home side.

The tie then swung heavily in Milan's favour in time added on when Kaka's shot deflected into Tomasson's path and the Dane made no mistake from six yards.

"It's a great result. Going there 2-0 up normally should mean we make the final," said Tomasson, whose goal was his first in the competition in two years.

"PSV played an excellent game and both sides had a lot of scoring chances. Tactically we didn't play well but Italian teams normally find it difficult against Dutch sides."



ONE LAST SAMBA TRAINING: Brazilian superstar Romario stretches during a training session of the national squad at Pacaembu Stadium, in Sao Paulo on April 26. Brazil will face Guatemala on Wednesday in a friendly match where Romario will wear the national jersey for the last time in his career.

Romario's farewell thoughts



REUTERS, Sao Paulo

Former World Cup striker Romario says he is still playing professional football in Brazil at 39 because the rest of the players are not up to much.

"Something that motivates me is that, technically, the gang (other players) are really weak," he told reporters in a media conference on the eve of his official farewell international, according to wire services.

Romario, who was apparently referring to the standard of domestic football, has been picked as the 23rd player in the squad for Brazil's friendly at home to Guatemala on Wednesday.

Coach Carlos Alberto Parreira said the former PSV Eindhoven, Barcelona and Valencia striker is likely to play the first few minutes before being substituted.

"This is definitely my last game for Brazil," said Romario, adding he would rather the match had been held at Rio de Janeiro's Maracana stadium rather than Sao Paulo's Pacaembu.

"It would not be true to say that this is the ideal place for my farewell.

I've always told the truth and I'm not going to stop today," said Romario. "The ideal would be the Maracana because Rio de Janeiro is my home."

Wednesday's game could provide the chance for Romario to line up, albeit briefly, alongside Robinho, considered the best of Brazil's latest generation of players.

The Santos striker, 18 years Romario's junior, avoided comparisons.

"Romario is Romario, Robinho is Robinho," he said. "I don't think there's any similarity apart from the colour. He's as black as I am but he's shorter, I'm taller, he's stronger and I'm a bit more frail."

"Romario is a player who can't be compared to anyone else," added Robinho. "He has always scored goals. He has always decided matches. I've still got a lot to learn in football."

Brazil have picked a squad of home-based players for Wednesday's game, which has been arranged to celebrate the 40th anniversary of a television network.

Guatemala were the fourth choice opponents after Argentina, Uruguay and Ecuador all turned down the invitation.

Ronaldo's fiancée has miscarriage

AP, Sao Paulo

The fiancée of Real Madrid striker Ronaldo is resting at home after having a miscarriage Tuesday, MTV Brasil said.

Daniella Cicarelli, who hosts a show on MTV Brasil, was rushed to Sao Paulo's Albert Einstein Hospital on Monday afternoon after feeling sick while taping a dating game show. She had the miscarriage early Tuesday morning.

"We are both very sad ... but the important thing is that Daniella is well," Ronaldo, who is in Spain, said in a statement released by a spokesman for Cicarelli. "She is young and healthy and will soon be able to get pregnant again."

On Feb. 14, the 28-year-old three-time FIFA Player of the Year and his 23-year-old model bride-to-be threw a lavish party for more than 200 guests at France's Chantilly castle to celebrate their decision to marry.

Ronaldo, prohibited under Spanish law from remarrying within a year of his divorce from Milene Domingues, and Cicarelli plan to wed later this year.

Ex-England star arrested



AFP, Sheffield

Former England star Chris Waddle has been arrested for allegedly assaulting another man in a pub brawl it was revealed here on Tuesday.

The 44-year-old - most famous for missing a penalty in the 1990 World Cup semi-final shoot-out with ultimate winners West Germany - admitted to the BBC that he was arrested over the fight which took place last Thursday.

South Yorkshire Police said a 20-year-old local man suffered facial injuries in the alleged attack - Waddle has since been released on bail.

"A 44-year-old local man has

been arrested and bailed pending further inquiries following an alleged assault on Thursday 21 April at a pub in Dore," said a police spokesman.

"A 20-year-old local man suffered facial injuries in the alleged assault.

"We have begun an investigation into the matter which happened at about 2300 BST on that date.

"The man was arrested on Friday morning on suspicion of assault and later released on police bail."

Waddle had an illustrious career as a winger making his name first at Newcastle then with French side Marseille - where he was on the losing side in the 1991 European Cup final - and Sheffield Wednesday as well as appearing in the 1986 and 1990 World Cup finals.

'Scandal' ref let off easy

AP, Frankfurt

The referee who triggered Germany's biggest match-fixing scandal in over 30 years won't be fined by the nation's soccer federation.

The federation (DFB) said Wednesday that a lifetime ban for Hoyzer was enough punishment and withdrew its request to fine him \$65,000.

In January, Hoyzer admitted taking \$87,000 to fix games. Berlin prosecutors are investigating 25 people - including four referees and 14 players - suspected of fixing at least 10 games, mostly in lower divisions.

Hoyzer hasn't been charged, but is under investigation for fraud. If convicted, he could receive up to 10 years in prison.

Ferdinand had photographer beaten up?

AFP, London

Manchester United and England defender Rio Ferdinand has been accused of getting some friends to beat up a photographer who was hassling him outside a London night club.

Police said they were investigating an alleged brawl involving the 29 million pound centre-half in which a 36-year-old photographer claimed he had been assaulted by up to four men.

Cameraman John Gyimah told The Mirror he grappled on the floor with friends of Ferdinand, including Millwall midfielder Jody Morris, after he tried to take pictures of the star.

A witness also told the newspaper of claims that Ferdinand urged Morris: "Kill him, stamp on his head."

A spokesman for Ferdinand's agents, SEM, dismissed the alleged comments as "nonsense".

Gyimah, who said he was kicked and punched in the fight, agreed Ferdinand was angry at having his photograph taken.

"Rio wasn't having it," he told the newspaper.

He claimed he was saved by some Tube workmen who intervened.

A spokesman for Ferdinand's agents, SEM, admitted Ferdinand "threw a couple of CDs" but said it was "nonsense" that he said "kill him ... stamp on his head."

"He was hassling him for ages."

DAVIS CUP BD begin brightly

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh got off to a fine start in the Group 4 Asia-Oceania Zone of the Davis Cup defeating Syria in Yangon yesterday.

Bangladesh came from behind to beat Syria 2-1 in the opener. Shibu Lal lost to Salim Laith 2-6, 6-4, 5-7 in the first singles, but Amol Roy restored parity for Bangladesh beating Ibrahim Abraham 6-1, 6-2 in the second.

In the doubles, the Bangladesh duo paired to beat Laith and Sheet Yashar 6-2, 7-6.

In the day's other matches, United Arab Emirates beat Turkmenistan 3-0, Singapore defeated Iraq 3-0 and Oman outplayed hosts Myanmar 3-0.

DU cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Soil, Water and Environment beat Geography by three wickets in the first final of the South Zone of the Dhaka University Inter-Department cricket tournament at the Jagannath Hall ground yesterday.

Geography were all out for 117 in 18.5 overs with Palash Kumar Sarkar scoring 31.

In reply, the winners posted 118-7 in 19.3 overs with Rajib Roy contributing an unbeaten 56.

A predictable

FROM PAGE 12 Muktiyoddha's equaliser was gifted by Brothers midfielder Abul, who unnecessarily tripped Moni just inside the box. Moni, wearing the captain's armband in absence of Aminul, made no mistake to slot the ball home from the spot with 14 minutes remaining on the clock.

Yellow card: Khokon (Brothers) TEAMS MUKTIYODDHA: Titumeer, Rajani, Ghansah, Al Arman, Saiful, Titu (Enamul), Biddiyut (Pappu), Iqbal, Amin Rana (Rony), Moni and Kanchan.

BROTHERS: Tareq, Siraji, Sujan, Jewel, Masud Rana, Parvez, Abul, Pranotosh, Khokon, Emily (Tapu) and Adil (Liton). Referee: Ramkrishna Ghosh.

'I can't please

FROM PAGE 12 different pressures and relishing it. "The pressures vary with time, and they're not," he said.

"The pressure on me is not to score runs but to see that my side needs to perform. My philosophy is simple. If you are concerned about the team's performance, you are bound to attract pressure.

"And I don't mind such pressures at all."

India in no hurry



AFP, New Delhi

India's cricket chiefs will not rush into naming a national coach to succeed New Zealander John Wright even as contenders line up for one of the most high-profile and demanding jobs in the sport.

Australians Steve Waugh, Greg Chappell, Tom Moody, Dave Whatmore and Dean Jones have all been linked to the post left vacant after Wright voluntarily stepped down as India's first foreign coach last month after five seasons at the helm.

With India's next assignment - a one-day series in Sri Lanka in August - still three months away, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is in no hurry to appoint a successor to the genial Kiwi.

This despite the fact that Sri Lanka and South Africa are also seeking new coaches and could poach any of the contenders for the India job.

"We will not be rushed," BCCI secretary Karunakaran Nair said Wednesday, leaving players, fans and prospective candidates on tenterhooks.

The selection process itself could take a long time.

The BCCI will first appoint a panel of experts, comprising former Test

stars, to interview the candidates. Their choice will then be debated by the board's decision-making working committee before the coach is finalised.

Nair said no names had been short-listed and declined to say who had officially applied for the job. "Any one is open to apply," he said.

BCCI sources, however, revealed that Moody, 39, a former Australian star who is currently coaching English county Worcestershire, was the current favourite.

Waugh has not even applied, while Chappell is also eyeing the Sri Lanka job. And Whatmore has just renewed his contract with Bangladesh.

Jones, the latest to throw his hat in the ring, was not a serious contender, the board sources insisted.

"Deano may be keen to get the job but he will not be considered," a source said.

Jones, it seems, may be blacklisted because his name figured in a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) report on match-fixing in 2000.

According to illegal bookmaker Mukesh Gupta's testimony in the published report by India's leading investigative agency, Jones was introduced to him by former Indian all-rounder Manoj Prabhakar.

The CBI report said: "MK (Gupta) offered an amount of 40,000 dollars to Jones to give him information about

the Australian teams strategy, morale, team composition and the probable result whenever Australia played.

"Jones promised to think about the offer."

"Jones rang up MK and told him he could not accept the offer since he suspected (former captain) Allan Border had seen them talking together in the hotel lobby and his career could be in jeopardy."

Jones, who played 54 Tests and 164 one-day internationals for Australia from 1984-1994, is best known in India for a magnificent 210 he made despite suffering from dehydration during the test Test in Madras in September, 1986.

Chappell, a former Australian captain who was considered too expensive five years ago when the BCCI selected Wright, reportedly enjoys the backing of India captain Sourav Ganguly.

But sources say the BCCI is wary of Chappell asking for a lot of money and additional powers like team selection that were denied to Wright.

Moody may have played only eight Tests for Australia but contributed with both bat and ball to Australia's World Cup triumphs in 1987 and 1999 and is highly regarded as a shrewd cricketing brain.

EXTRA ODI PCB may ask for 50,000 dollars from BCCI

PTI, Karachi

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Wednesday said it was contemplating demanding the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) pay 50,000 dollars more for playing an additional one-day international on their recent visit.

Pakistan, who won the series 4-2, were scheduled to play only five matches but an extra fixture was added to the itinerary to accommodate Ahmedabad as a venue.

The PCB said that when they acquiesced to BCCI's request they did so on the hope that one more ODI could be fixed on reciprocal basis when India toured Pakistan next time.

But with a tight international schedule, that seems unlikely. Hence the demand for lump sum.

"Initially we had thought that we would also ask them to play an additional one-day match when they tour Pakistan early next year but due to packed international schedule this does not seem likely," a PCB official said.

Asia, ME bridge begins today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Southeast Bank 13th Asia and Middle East Regional Bridge Championships begin today at the Hotel Sonargaon here.

India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Jordan, Palestine and hosts Bangladesh will take part in three events.

On the eve of the tournament, Bangladesh Bridge Federation (BBF) arranged a press conference at National Sports Council conference room yesterday.

The events are open event or Bermuda Bowl, women's event or Venice Cup and senior event or Senior Bowl.

Two teams from each event will qualify for the World Bridge Championships, which commence on October 22 in Portugal. Except the ME zone, 14 teams from other seven regional zones of WBF will participate in the world meet.



Niaz Ahmed, Managing Director of Southeast Bank, addresses a press briefing on the eve of the 13th Asia and Middle East Bridge Championships at the National Sports Council conference room on Wednesday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	38 Follower (Suff.)	DOWN	22 Bracelet site
1 Hand-warmer	39 "Lion King" villain	1 Look dejected	24 Hands out
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12 Be an 18-	44 Scepter	4 Joe Rogan's show	27 Singer Cole
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19 Compton or Coulter	55 Pound of poetry	11 Labyrinth goal	40 "All I Wanna Do" singer
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21 Craze			43 "Awaiting reply"
23 Praise in verse			45 Hide-away
25 Bicycle-seat style			46 "Woe—!"
28 Form in droplets			47 Out of bounds
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37 Ramparts			

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CRYPTOQUIP

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Yesterday's Cryptquip: IF A WITCH WERE TRAVELING VERY FAST, DO YOU SUPPOSE SHE MIGHT BE ON A SONIC BROOM?
 Today's Cryptquip Clue: N equals T