

The winners take it all



AFP, Liverpool

Luis Garcia defended his controversial winner against Chelsea which put Liverpool into their first European Cup final in 20 years.

The Spaniard's fifth goal in this season's Champions League sent Liverpool into the final on May 25 in Istanbul but Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho claimed Slovakian linesman Roman Slysko should have ruled the ball never crossed the line.

However, Garcia insisted he had hooked home a fourth-minute winner, although TV replays failed to confirm the ball was over the line, with William Gallas hooking clear.

"When Milan Baros was brought down by the keeper I just kept going and hooked it towards the goal, I felt it went in and I am very happy now," he said.

Chelsea keeper Petr Cech had flattened Baros in the run-up to the goal, but all appeals for a penalty were ended when referee Lubos Michel allowed Garcia's follow up.

But Gallas was unconvinced the ball was in.

"I don't think the ball crossed the line but even if it was a refereeing error we still had 85 minutes to win the match. We lost our heads a little

bit and that's something we've been strong at all season but it just wasn't our night," said the France defender. Coach Rafael Benitez insisted Liverpool would not fear AC Milan or PSV Eindhoven in the Champions League final having beaten Juventus and Chelsea.

"Each time this season, the favourites against us have lost, so we would be happy to have the same situation again," he said.

"We need to wait to see the team that we play against but it's the same to us either way, although normally it would be AC Milan, with the experience of Italian teams and being 2-0 up.

"But after that, why can't we win? If we have beaten Bayer Leverkusen, Juventus and Chelsea, why not AC Milan or PSV? It's possible, for sure.

"If you play in the final, it's for winning, not for losing."

The last time Liverpool reached the European Cup final was in 1985 when the match ended in the Heysel tragedy with 39 fans crushed to death and they lost to Juventus.

Liverpool are the first English club since Manchester United's 2-1 triumph over Bayern Munich in 1999 to reach the final.

Benitez, who won the UEFA Cup with Valencia last year, paid tribute to the incredible support of the Anfield fans, believing that it had

inspired his players to extra heights. "To work hard and have our supporters behind us and believing until the end, you run a little bit more," he said.

"Before, I said that they were maybe the best supporters in England. Now maybe they are the best supporters in Europe."

A furious Mourinho meanwhile, blamed linesman Slysko for the defeat but then vowed that his side would come back stronger than ever next season.

"Football sometimes is cruel," said Mourinho.

"We have to accept the result. They scored a goal, if you can say they scored it. I can say that the linesman scored it."

He was generous, though, to Liverpool, and specifically their crowd, who maintained a constant level of raucous support throughout although he typically turned that praise into a jibe at Slysko, whose raised flag persuaded referee Lubos Michel to give the goal.

"The Anfield Road experience, I felt it, it was magnificent," Mourinho said.

"I felt it did not interfere with my players, but maybe with some other people. It maybe interfered with the result.

"I think you must ask the linesman why he gave the goal. To give it you must be 100 percent certain.

You must be sure that the ball is in. My players say it was not a goal.

"From TV I could not see, but other people say you could not confirm it was a goal. Only one person decided the future of players who have never played in a Champions League final," added Mourinho who last season won European club football's biggest prize while in charge of Porto.

But, following a goalless first leg, there was equally no denying the role of Benitez, his five-man midfield blanket and defensive fulcrum Jamie Carragher.

Eventually, Mourinho acknowledged just how impressive his opponents had been.

"If he's in the final, all credit to Benitez. I'm happy for him and I hope he can win the Cup for himself and for Liverpool."

With this season over bar the routine of the final league games, Mourinho is already looking ahead to next year.

"I know I can't win everything," he said. "I can't complain with my success, with my players or my career. I'm a happy man. I'm just sad because of the result today. But tomorrow (Wednesday) I will be at training preparing for next season."

Ronaldinho hasn't been excused

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Brazil's Football Federation (CBF) declared Tuesday that no players have been excused from Confederations Cup duty, in what will be viewed as thinly-veiled reference to Barcelona striker Ronaldinho.

Barcelona, according to a recent report in German magazine Spiegel, want Ronaldinho to be part of their squad when they travel to Japan to play two friendlies on a post-season promotion tour.

The Spanish league giants have organised friendly matches against Yokohama Marinos on July 12 and Urawa Red Diamonds three days later that will net the Catalan club around three million euros (3.87 million dollars).

Barcelona, claimed Spiegel, had been assured by the CBF that they would free Ronaldinho from national duty.

But a statement on the CBF website Tuesday appeared to deny that information, adding that no clubs had approached them to ask for any players to be excused.

The Confederations Cup involves eight teams - hosts Germany, Greece, Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Japan, Mexico and Tunisia - and will be held in Germany from June 15-29.

Eight-ton Test draw



AFP, St. John's

West Indies captain Shivnarine Chanderpaul and Dwayne Bravo completed hundreds here on Tuesday that established a new Test record of eight centuries in a match on the last day of the fourth and final Test against South Africa.

The day ended in a tame draw on Tuesday giving the tourists a 2-0 series win.

Chanderpaul scored 127 and Bravo made 107 in a West Indies first innings total of 747.

The previous record had been seven. Three previous Tests had produced that many hundreds - England and Australia at Trent Bridge in 1938, West Indies and Australia at Kingston in 1955, and last year's Test between the South Africans and West Indies at Cape Town.

For a moment, the record had overshadowed that South Africa had won the four-Test series 2-0, and reclaimed the Sir Vivian Richards Trophy, symbol of supremacy between the two teams.

They won the second Test at Port of Spain by eight wickets, and the third Test at Bridgetown by an

innings and 86 runs. The first Test at Georgetown ended in a draw.

At one stage towards the end, Boeta Dippenaar, in particular, and Graeme Smith, the South Africa captain, looked like they wanted to add to the new record, but finished unbeaten on 56 and 50 respectively, as South Africa, trailing West Indies by 159 runs on first innings, ended the match on 129 for one in their second innings.

Dippenaar struck seven fours and two sixes from 101 balls, and Smith smote seven fours from 87 balls and finished the series with 505 runs.

South Africa suffered an early setback batting a second time, when Tino Best claimed the wicket of Abraham de Villiers caught at mid-on for 12 mistiming a pull, but Smith and Dippenaar soon short circuited any ideas of an exciting finish.

Before lunch, Chanderpaul had completed his record-equalling 13th Test hundred as he flicked Shaun Pollock through backward square leg for three to reach his milestone.

After lunch, Bravo, with whom Chanderpaul added 130 for the sixth wicket, needed 32 more runs for his landmark hundred, when West Indies continued from their interval position of 690 for seven.

It was the second time in the last four Tests at the Antigua Recreation Ground that a captain had used every player in his side to bowl.

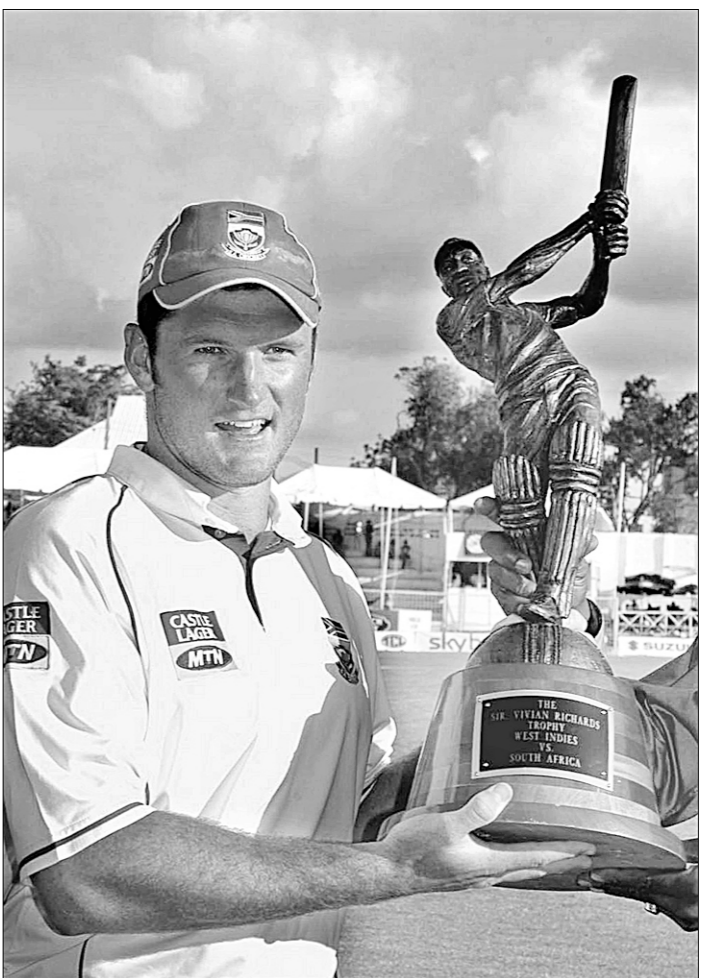
Three years ago, India's Sourav Ganguly was the unfortunate captain in a West Indies first innings total of 629 for nine declared.

WEST INDIES: First innings 588 for 6 declared (Kallis 147, Prince 131, Smith 126, De Villiers 114; Powell 2-137) and second innings 127 for 1 (Dippenaar 56, Smith 50; Best 1-31)

SOUTH AFRICA: First innings 588 for 6 declared (Kallis 147, Prince 131, Smith 126, De Villiers 114; Powell 2-137) and second innings 127 for 1 (Dippenaar 56, Smith 50; Best 1-31)

WEST INDIES: First innings 747 (Gayle 317, Sarwan 127, Chanderpaul 127, Bravo 107; Zondeki 3-120, de Villiers 2-49, Smith 2-145)

Result: Match drawn and South Africa clinch four-Test series 2-0. Man-of-the-match: Chris Gayle. Man-of-the-series: Graeme Smith.



A proud South Africa captain Graeme Smith holds the Vivian Richards trophy after the fourth and final Test against West Indies at Antigua on Tuesday.

Independence Day

soccer in Rajshahi begins today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The Independence Day Football Tournament, first of its kind in the country's northern headquarters, kicks off at the Rajshahi Stadium today.

Dhaka Premier League runners-up Sheikh Russel KC take on Bangladesh Army in the opening match.

The eight-team meet, which involves popular Dhaka giants like Mohammedan, Abahani, Muktijoddha Sangsad, has created enormous enthusiasm among the local football fans.

Rajshahi City Corporation and Dalia Binsan Group are jointly organising the tournament.

The tournament committee has fixed the rate of tickets for VIP stand at Tk 50 and Tk 10 and Tk 5 for West and Eastern galleries respectively.

Age-group Dev cricket semis nicely poised

SPORTS REPORTER

Both the semifinals in the Age-group Cricket Development Tournament (Under-17) were evenly poised at the end of first day's play in the city yesterday.

At the Jagannath Hall ground, Barisal Division were 63-2 at stumps in the two-day match against Dhaka after the latter elected to bat and were bowled out for 220 with Sabbir making 76 and Rocky 67. Barisal's Rabbi and Sohag shared six wickets.

In the other semifinal, Faisal Ali returned figures of 4-41 to help Rajshahi book Sylhet for 178 at the Uttara Friends Club ground. Al Amin was the only notable scorer with a fine 72.

Rajshahi, in reply, reached 84-4 at the close.

Asia, ME bridge finals today

SPORTS REPORTER

Indian men's and women's teams both qualified for this year's World Bridge Championships in Portugal after topping the Open team event and women's team event tables in the Asia and Middle East Regional Bridge Championships at the end of the three-tier round robin league at Hotel Sonargaon yesterday.

India and Jordan, the top two in men's competition with 274 and 256 points, respectively, will meet in today's final.

Pakistan will accompany Indian women's team to the finals after finishing second in the table. The India-Pakistan women's final will also be held today.

Bangladesh ended fifth in both groups.

School v'ball

SPORTS REPORTER

South Breeze blanked Agha Khan 2-0 in the boys' competition on the opening day of the Shah Sports School Volleyball tournament at the Suhrawardy National Indoor Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

In other matches, Scholastica beat Kamalapur Railway 2-0 while BIT-1 defeated Dhaka Purbanchal Muktijoddha Collegiate and Children Academy routed Monikanan High also by the same margin.

Moni's career

FROM PAGE 12

surgery. They have also made contacts in Singapore but it would be rather expensive. There is a chance that I might go to Bangkok, but nothing is confirmed yet," he added.

Real making ugly moves?



REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid are being accused of resorting to increasingly desperate off-the-pitch tactics in their bid to overhaul title rivals Barcelona.

Real fullback Roberto Carlos has been widely criticised for his claims that Barca are guaranteed of winning their final match of the season against Real Sociedad because fans of the Basque side want the Catalans to win the title.

The club's website has also been censured by a leading referee because of its fierce attack on the performance of a fellow official in the team's recent 2-1 victory against Villarreal.

Real Sociedad defender Aitor Lopez Rekarte dismissed Roberto Carlos's declarations as ludicrous.

"It is complete drivell when they take it for granted that Barca will win their last game here in Anoeta," the fullback was quoted as saying in sports daily Marca on Wednesday.

"The truth is that given where these declarations come from and the way in which they were said,

they don't even offend me." Roberto Carlos had claimed that Barcelona would not need to try hard to win their final game of the season against Sociedad.

"You can forget the last game in San Sebastian," he said on Tuesday. "Barcelona only have three games really because their fourth against Real Sociedad doesn't exist."

"The other day when they played us the Real Sociedad fans were cheering 'Barca, Barca' during the match and so they've already got that match in the bag.

"I don't count that game after what I saw on Saturday. Sociedad won't play as hard against Barcelona as they did against us. Everyone wants to beat Real Madrid, everyone wants to beat the best team in the world."

Referee Eduardo Iturralde Gonzalez, who will referee Real's next league game against Racing Santander on Saturday, was showered with compliments by the club's website earlier this week.

However he said he was appalled by the way the club had criticised colleague Bernardino Gonzalez Vazquez for his refereeing of the Villarreal match, a

game in which Real players Zinedine Zidane and Walter Samuel were sent off.

"A week ago the same page accused a colleague of committing seven capital sins and of being a Barcelona fan," said Iturralde Gonzalez. "Maybe now they are trying to clean up their image, but I prefer these compliments after the game not before.

"Each person tries to use the weapons at their disposal and this is the one they (Real) are trying to use at the moment ... I'm very annoyed as it seems that the only people that make mistakes are the referees.

"This campaign is being directed, but these sort of things can generate violence."

Barcelona have a six-point lead over Real Madrid at the top of the table with four matches left to play.

They have a difficult away game at last season's champions Valencia on Sunday, while Real host struggling Racing Santander at the Bernabeu on Saturday.

If Real lose and Barca win, the Catalans will claim their first league title in six years as they have a better record in head-to-head meetings between the two sides this season.

Reds face UEFA action

AFP, London

Liverpool face disciplinary action from UEFA after pitch invasions during last night's match against Chelsea by two men carrying out a stunt for an infamous Barcelona-based website.

One of the men threw a Barcelona flag in Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho's face while the other leapt into one of the goals before being caught by stewards and arrested by police.

"We want to study the reports from the referee and match delegate and we will then take action if it is appropriate," said a UEFA spokesman.

Liverpool are likely to be fined as they are held responsible for pitch security by UEFA.

The two people, who were due before Liverpool magistrates today, are well-known in Spain for their pitch invasions and have their own website www-jimmyjump.com.

During Euro 2004 one member ran onto the pitch when Portugal were playing and hurled a Barcelona banner at the club's former player Luis Figo.

We can surprise

FROM PAGE 12 "I will be the happiest man in the world if I can score a century at Lords. Nothing could be as beautiful."

When all the talks were centred around the Bangladeshi pace quintet, the skipper meanwhile reserved a special corner for young left-arm spinner Enamul Haque Jr, the hero of the Bangladesh's maiden Test victory against Zimbabwe.

"It is true that the English conditions favour seamers but Enamul will give English batsmen a tough time. He is a genius."

Bashar and

FROM PAGE 12 knows it's not a word used only to describe a certain small brownish jumping insect.

His role was simple: forget your American origins and pretend that you are, at least as long as the cameras are running, from a nation where people actually know what cricket is. It was a good illusion until things actually got going. He had put on white track pants and white shirt, standard of a Test match, sun-cream under his eyes and grim determination on his face.

But then the director requested him to bowl after finding a Frenchman, originally picked for that action, a disaster in the making. The American gripped the ball, feeling its dense firmness for the first time in his life. A small crowd looked on, as the director sat down at the end of the lane, his camera and crew stationed behind him. When "Action!" came, the American made a valiant but clumsy approach, his elbow breaking wildly as he unleashed, rather pitched, the ball with a fury of a baseball throw straight at the director. Gasps followed, but luckily the ball bounced before ricocheting off the director's shoulder and he was unhurt. Politely, the crew instructed the American to take a catching position behind Bashar, definitely a much safer option for everyone concerned.

"I'm just glad it didn't hit the camera," the American said. "That thing looks really expensive."

Note: The events narrated above actually happened. The American actor is originally a journalist who has made enormous strides in mastering the 'must-know' Bangla phrases including 'oi g'ei. He is still trying to figure out how something as deadly as a cricket ball can become a play thing.

Moody next SL coach?

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka has sounded out former Australian all-rounder Tom Moody to replace fellow Australian John Dyson as coach of the national cricket team, cricket officials here said Wednesday.

Talks were underway with Moody about taking over the job after Dyson's term ended last month, officials said.

Sri Lanka's cricket administration is in crisis after the government last month sacked elected office bearers of Sri Lanka Cricket, the governing body of the sport, citing financial mismanagement. They were replaced with an "Interim Committee."

A court battle is also underway for the control of the island's richest sporting body.

Moody is currently coaching the English county Worcestershire.

Liverpool near

FROM PAGE 12 brought on Robben, and with him, Mateja Kezman.

But this was not the Robben who was setting the Premiership alight three or four months ago.

He remained tentative, and slipped through by Gudjohnsen with 16 minutes remaining, he poked his shot into Carragher's legs.

Drogba had a header deflected wide, and then amid the tension, came two individual pitch-invasions, both by spectators dressed identically in black T-shirts and red hats.

The first charged straight towards Mourinho and threw a flag at him. The Portuguese reacted calmly, picking it up.

Meanwhile the fact that centre-back Robert Huth ended up being deployed as a centre-forward in the closing minutes showed just how desperate Chelsea had become.

Liverpool's Djibril Cisse twice could have ended it in injury-time with breakaway charges, but one effort glanced wide off Ricardo Carvalho, and Cech was able to punch the other one away.

And then, in the final minute of the six added on at the end of the 90 came a golden chance for Chelsea.

Terry headed a Lampard cross back across goal that left Dudek grounded. But the angle was narrow for Gudjohnsen, and his shot flashed across the far post.

Wear Adidas or get dropped



REUTERS, Berlin

Coach Juergen Klinsmann has told German players that if they do not want to wear the boots of team sponsors Adidas, they will not play in the national team.

"There won't be any Germany players with any other boot than Adidas," Klinsmann said in an interview with Sport Bild newspaper.

The newspaper reported a union representing professional football players (VdV) had written a letter saying there were "problems with individual contracts with manufacturers of sporting goods other than Adidas."

The letter was sent to Thomas

Brdaric, Miroslav Klose, Frank Baumann, Thomas Hiltspurger, Timo Hildebrand, Jens Lehmann, Arne Friedrich, Dietmar Hamann and Christian Woernis, it said.

Under the terms of Germany's sponsorship and equipment contract, players must be completely kitted out in Adidas gear.

Klinsmann said: "If any player believes he has to take legal action so that he can play in his own boot (brand), well he can't sue to play for us."

"If he doesn't accept the terms, he won't come with us and he can watch the match on television."

In October, goalkeeper Lehmann was told by the German football association (DFB) he must change his gloves to Adidas or risk losing his chance of playing in the 2006 World Cup, to be staged in Germany.

Pakistanis clinch Abu Dhabi title

CRICINFO, undated

Three solid half-centuries by the middle-order batsmen helped Pakistan Masters post a crushing 145-run win over their Indian counterparts and lift the Sheikh Zayed Cup at Abu Dhabi on Tuesday.

The Pakistan Masters had earlier beaten the Sri Lankans in another one-sided contest. The Pakistanis amassed 283 for 8 after winning the toss, and then took early wickets to ensure that India were never in the hunt.

"I am disappointed at not being selected for the West Indies tour," Shoaib, who has 144 Test wickets to his name, said on Wednesday.

"Missing the Indian tour due to injury was bad enough, but this is a big let down."

"I am looking forward to playing with Worcestershire and hopefully it will allow me to prove to the selectors that I am match fit and in form."

Pakistan's selectors did not consider him for the West Indies tour which starts this month saying he needed more time to regain his match fitness and shed some weight.

Shoaib begins his quest to comeback

REUTERS, Karachi

Pakistan fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar will play for English county side Worcestershire this season in a bid to regain his place in the national side.

The 29-year-old has struggled with a hamstring injury since the third Test against Australia in Sydney in January and was left out of the West Indies tour on fitness grounds.

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AFP, St. John's

Recently retired West Indies wicket-keeper-batsman Ridley Jacobs left no stone unturned as he slammed the state of West Indies cricket and especially former captain Brian Lara.

Jacobs, who played most of his 65 Tests and 147 limited-overs internationals under batting star Lara, said poor captaincy was the main reason behind their weak performances in recent years.

"Honestly, the biggest problem is the skipper," Jacobs told Essential, a bimonthly magazine covering his native Antigua Barbuda.

"The skipper sets the tone for the whole team. You can't be captain and always in the spotlight. You can't be a good captain and have an attitude when you don't do well."

"A captain has to be able to motivate his team. He can't afford to be selfish. With this captain, it is not for the love of the game anymore, it's for him."

The 37-year-old Jacobs also revealed that the unity of the team is not what it should be for the side to be competitive on the international stage.

"For the most part, there is good camaraderie, but there is a lot of pulling and tugging too," he said.

"Most of the guys are keen and willing to put everything in the game, so there is hope. With a strong team

and a new captain.

"There must be a strong programme too, and unity. The other teams are more unified. They know how to use psychology, that mental game, to destabilise a player. That's why the Australians are as good as they are. They are unified."

Jacobs, who was the top batsman and wicketkeeper in this year's West Indies first-class champion-



RIDLEY JACOBS

ship, disclosed that his treatment by the management of the team after he was injured on the tour of Britain last year helped influence his decision to retire.

"I would not go back, even if they had asked. The feelings are too deep to explain, but I'm not motivated any longer."

"After my injury and knee surgery in Britain, I lost my motivation. I

realised at that time they didn't care about me. Well, I knew before that because they were always doing things to frustrate me.

"But when I got injured, the manager (Tony Howard) said, Pack your bags! And if the doctor didn't insist that I could not travel, that I needed a few days to heal before I could travel home, they would have put me on the plane immediately."

"They don't care for some of us!" Jacobs, a devout born-again Christian, also criticised the selection policy of selectors he feels are heavily biased against players from Leeward Islands.

"I have seen clearly that in West Indies cricket, the system doesn