

England painted red



AFP, Liverpool

Newly-crowned European champions Liverpool were preparing for a huge celebration in the city Thursday as the pressure mounted on UEFA to allow the club to defend their title next season.

Britain's government got involved in the row, with Sports Minister Richard Caborn contacting European football's governing body to argue it would be "a travesty" if Liverpool were excluded.

Cad in the red shirts of their team and hoarse after all-night celebrations, they awaited their heroes' return. And the party was set to switch to northwest England as the team were due to fly back to their home base in the late afternoon.

The party went on long into the night in faraway Istanbul after Liverpool had hit back from 0-3 down at half-time to defeat mighty AC Milan on penalties in a famously gripping Champions League final.

And the festivities were set to continue at a two-hour victory parade in the city, which was scheduled late in the afternoon, with skipper Steven Gerrard and manager Rafael Benitez leading the way.

Advance parties of the 30,000 Liverpool fans who travelled to Turkey to support their team were already arriving back at the city's John Lennon Airport draped in flags and banners chanting and singing their delight at one of the greatest victories in the club's long history.

But amid the joy, there was growing anger against the decision by European football's governing body UEFA to stick by its rules which bars Liverpool from defending the glittering trophy which the club won for the fifth time.

The Merseysiders' lowly fifth place finish in the English Premiership means that they have not qualified for next season's competition according

to the UEFA rule book.

Title-holders do not qualify automatically to defend the trophy. UEFA spokesman William Gaillard said that despite the emotion surrounding Liverpool's win, UEFA had no plans to change the rules at the moment.

Gaillard insisted the precedent set in the 2000-01 season, when Real Madrid defended the cup despite finishing fifth because the Spanish football federation decided to hand them Real Zaragoza's place, would make no difference.

"The rules are what they are," Gaillard told BBC Radio. "They were used already once when Real Madrid won..... and actually were not among the qualifiers in the Spanish league."

"The Spanish FA told us they would replace the fourth-placed team - Real Zaragoza - with Real Madrid."

"It is a tough decision to make but it is not for us to make, it is for the (English) FA and they told us Everton would be the fourth English club."

"Rules are rules and they were passed for a very good reason." The English FA, however are likely to step up the pressure on the Geneva-based organisation to persuade them to allow an unprecedented five English teams in Europe.

However, Caborn said he had discussed the issue with UEFA, as had FA chief executive Brian Barwick and chairman Geoff Thompson.

"I have raised the matter with UEFA's chief executive Lars-Christer Olsson and said it would be a travesty if Liverpool were not allowed to play in next year's competition, particularly after such an amazing final," Caborn said.

"It should re-think this issue and I think they will have to. Nothing is set in stone and it seems only right that the winners should have automatic re-entry rather than having to qualify through the domestic system. It is only common sense."

The final decision is expected to be made at the UEFA executive committee meeting in Manchester

on June 17.

Reaction to the stunning Liverpool win continued to pour in, with British Prime Minister Tony Blair labelling it "unbelievable, incredible, brilliant".

Liverpool manager Benitez paid tribute to his team's fans, saying: "I already knew we had the best supporters in England, now I am sure they are the best in Europe."

"I just want them to enjoy themselves. I want to see the faces of people smiling all the time. This is a day for enjoying, not for talking."

He said he had been up for a few hours celebrating with players and supporters at the team's hotel after the match.

One of the Spaniards first jobs will be to convince inspirational skipper Steven Gerrard to stay at Liverpool, his hometown club.

There has been a question mark over Gerrard's future all year with the England midfielder threatening to leave if the board's ambition failed to match his own.

However, after the greatest night of his life, Gerrard, who received death threats when it was thought he was going to leave last summer, vowed to stay with the club he joined as a schoolboy.

"We're going to talk really soon, but how can I leave after this," he said.

"It's the greatest night of my life. After half-time I thought it was going to end in tears of disappointment," added Gerrard.

Much of Liverpool was nursing a hangover on Thursday, with an organisation representing private businesses estimating that 20 percent of the city's workforce had taken the day off work.

As well as ailing Liverpool fans, supporters of local rivals Everton were also lying low, said Frank McKenna from Downtown Liverpool in Business.

"Obviously, you have got the Liverpoolians ringing in with sore heads but there are also a fair few Evertonians taking the day off as well to avoid the gloating from their colleagues," he said.



HE WOULD HAVE BEEN PROUD! Liverpool fans celebrate next to the statue of legendary musician John Lennon at John Lennon Airport in Liverpool on Thursday.

Sharapova, Mauresmo stay on course



AFP, Paris

Wimbledon champion Maria Sharapova and eternal French hope Amelie Mauresmo shrugged off blistering temperatures to ease into the French Open third round.

Second seed Sharapova took just 67 minutes to see off French wildcard Aravane Rezaï 6-3, 6-2, and now faces fellow Russian Anna Chak-vetadze.

Mauresmo, the third seed, edged 15-year-old compatriot Alize Cornet 6-0, 6-2, taking just a minute longer.

Mauresmo, so often let down by her fragile temperament in front of her home crowd, now takes on Serbia and Montenegro's Ana Ivanovic for a place in the fourth round.

Playing in a baking 30 degrees, Mauresmo was far from happy with her game.

Justine Henin-Hardenne and Guillermo Coria, who endured miserable appearances at the 2004 French Open, also moved into the third round.

Henin-Hardenne, who as defending champion crashed out in the second round in 2004, made the third round of the women's singles with a confident 6-1, 6-4 win over 31-year-old Spaniard Virginia Ruano Pascual as temperatures here hit the 30-degree mark.

Twelve months ago, Henin-Hardenne came here as defending champion but having not played for six weeks after being struck down by an energy-sapping virus.

Her lack of sharpness was exposed as she was dumped out at the second round stage by unheralded Italian Tathiana Garbin, becoming the first top seed in the history of the women's event to lose so early.

As she looked ahead to a third round clash against another Spaniard, Anabel Medina Garrigues, the 22-year-old Belgian

admitted she was struggling this year with a back injury.

Henin-Hardenne only returned to the tour in April this year after a seven-month absence to cure her viral problem and has been in fine form since winning three titles in a row in Charleston, Warsaw and Berlin.

Coria, who arrived here twelve months ago as hot favourite for the men's title before throwing away a two-set lead in his final loss to Argentinian compatriot Gaston Gaudio, also made it through.

The eighth-seed progressed when his Serbia and Montenegro opponent Novak Djokovic was forced to retire injured while the Argentinian was leading 4-6, 6-2, 3-2.

Djokovic, a qualifier, had to concede the match with breathing difficulties.

Coria, who faces Austria's Jurgen Melzer in the next round, said he had no problems playing in the hot and humid conditions.

"I have been working on my fitness. You should be able to play long matches in the hot weather." The conditions took their toll elsewhere in the men's event with American veteran Vince Spadea having to concede his match against German 21st seed Tommy Haas with a stomach strain while trailing two sets to love.

But there were no such problems for Argentinian ninth seed Guillermo Canas or Russian 12th seed Nikolay Davydenko who moved into the last 16.

Russia's 29th seed Mikhail Youzhny was knocked out, losing to Melzer 6-3, 6-4, 7-6.

Also progressing into the next round in the women's draw were Nadia Petrova, the Russian seventh seed, Russia's US Open champion Svetlana Kuznetsova, seeded six, and French 17th seed Tatiana Golovin.

Russia's Marat Safin, the men's third seed, was due to face Czech qualifier Lukas Dlouhy with second seeded American Andy Roddick facing Argentina's Jose Acasuso.

Ronaldo unhappy



AP, Sao Paulo

Brazilian striker Ronaldo is irritated at having to sacrifice his vacation to play in the Confederations Cup, a local newspaper reported Wednesday.

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"It would be very prejudicial to me," the Real Madrid player said in an exclusive interview with the Folha de S. Paulo newspaper, Brazil's largest. "There will be a World Cup next year, that means I'll be without vacations for two years."

Ronaldo and nearly all other Brazilian regulars playing in Europe were summoned to play in the eight-team Confederations Cup in Germany on June 15-29. Among the regulars, only World Cup veteran defenders Cafu and Roberto Carlos have not been called for the competi-

tion. Ronaldo was frustrated that the Brazilian Soccer Confederation, or CBF, called up the players despite knowing they will end up without a lengthy vacation until after the 2006 World Cup.

"Usually they (CBF) talk to us, but nobody talked to me this time. It was strange," he said. "I'll have to contact CBF in the next few days because I'll be facing a very big problem."

CBF officials argue that the Confederations Cup will be crucial in Brazil's preparations for the 2006 World Cup.

"The competition will be played only a year before the World Cup," CBF technical supervisor Americo Faria said earlier this week on the confederation's Web site. "It will be very important to observe players who could be summoned for 2006."

Roberto Carlos - Ronaldo's teammate at Real Madrid - and AC Milan's Cafu were not called up because coach Carlos Alberto Parreira said he wants to test newcomers Leo de Santos and Cicinho

of Sao Paulo. Brazil is hoping to avoid a repeat of its 2003 showing, when it fielded a squad of veterans and less experienced players and was eliminated in the first round.

Ronaldo said that the speculations about him being overweight are an "exaggeration."

"I weigh 87 kilograms (193 pounds) right now and I'm very fine with it," he said. "The problem is that people look fatter on television, when I meet with people personally, they are surprised."

GROUP B FIXTURE

- Thu., June 16 Japan vs. Mexico
- Friday, June 17 Brazil vs. Greece
- Sun., June 19 Greece vs. Japan
- Monday, June 22 Greece vs. Mexico
- Tuesday, June 23 Japan vs. Brazil

Dudek pays tribute to Grobbelaar

REUTERS, Istanbul

Goalkeeper Jerzy Dudek said Liverpool were in heaven after winning the Champions League on penalties despite trailing favourites AC Milan 3-0 at halftime on Wednesday.

"It was difficult to come back from 3-0 down but we did it. This is our night and for all the people who came here to support us, it was fantastic. We are in heaven now," he said.

The Pole, who finished the job in the shootout, said his constant movement before the spot kicks was a leaf out of Bruce Grobbelaar's book when he steered Liverpool to a penalty shootout win over another Italian team, AS Roma, in the 1984 European Cup final.

"Jamie Carragher came to me and said 'Remember Grobbelaar put them off all the time, you do the same' - and I was trying to do it."

Standing next to manager Rafael Benitez, who had lifted his men at halftime, Gerrard said: "All credit to this man, he never let us put our heads down."

Liverpool walk alone

FROM PAGE 16

The fightback was completed on the hour when Gennaro Gattuso fouled Gerrard to concede a penalty, and although Dida palmed away the Spaniard's first effort he was powerless to stop the rebound.

Crespo had a golden opportunity to restore Milan's lead and claim a hat-trick 10 minutes from time, but rather than shoot after being put clear by Shevchenko, he unselfishly tried to tee up Kaka and the chance went begging.

Shevchenko almost nicked it for Milan three minutes after the dreaded penalty shoot out, but an incredible double save from Dudek left the European Footballer of the Year with his head in his hands.

The normally reliable Shevchenko, who scored the winning penalty against Juventus in 2003, then missed the decisive spot-kick in a gripping finale and Liverpool jumped for joy.

Dietmar Hamann, Djibril Cisse and Smicer scored for Liverpool while Kaka and John Daal Tomasson were on target for Milan.

"Not even the Brazil team that won the 1970 World Cup final would have been able to come back from 3-0 down like that," said Maradona, who helped Napoli to the Italian league title in 1987 and 1990 and was in Turkey working for SKY Italia television.

"I thought that there was no way back for Liverpool and I was proved wrong."

The Brazil side that won the World Cup in Mexico 35 years ago included footballing greats such as Pele and Jarzinho and is widely regarded as the best team of all time.

Ancelotti to stay

AFP, Istanbul

AC Milan owner Silvio Berlusconi has given a vote of confidence to Carlo Ancelotti, despite his coach's failure to win a trophy for the Italian club this season.

On Wednesday Milan threw away a three-goal half-time lead to draw a 3-3 with Liverpool before losing a gripping Champions League final to the English Premiership side on penalties.

Their heart-breaking defeat here came five days after Juventus pipped them to the Italian league title, but Berlusconi insisted Ancelotti was the right man for the job.

Kang seeks BFF's help, will go to AFC soon

SPORTS REPORTER

Korean coach Man Young Kang has finally sought the help of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) to get his dues from Mohammedan Sporting Club.

Kang, who was appointed Mohammedan coach in December 2004, was sacked by the club in late March this year. Two Korean footballers Kim Tae Young and Kim Jae Woo, were also sent back but Kang stayed back to receive their salaries and air fares. Kang has received a part payment and the club still owe the three Koreans an amount of Tk 4,51,000.

Kang handed over a letter to the BFF on Wednesday night lodging complaints against Mohammedan.

"I have asked for BFF's consideration to solve the matter," Kang told the Daily Star over phone.

"I have tried to contact the club officials repeatedly but they have not responded. I have been struggling to live in Dhaka because I hardly have any money," said Kang, who was initially contracted for one year.

"I will send another letter to the Asian Football Confederation within one or two days about this," added the former Bangladesh national team coach.

Top BFF officials were not in the country to make comments.

The Dhaka heavyweights, in turmoil following disastrous results, have already brought a Nigerian booter. Two more footballers and former Nigerian international Emeke, who played for Mohammedan in the 80s, was due to arrive in the city yesterday night as coach.

It was surprising to see why Mohammedan have kept Kang waiting if they could afford bringing more foreigners.

When stars are not shining



AFP, New Delhi

Indian batting great Sachin Tendulkar is passing through that unfortunate phase of his illustrious career when his health bulletins are being as closely followed as his runs.

The stars are not smiling on the champion batsman these days as he has already been ruled out of international cricket for four months following surgery on his left elbow in England on Monday.

The tennis elbow also forced Tendulkar to skip three one-day tournaments and two home Tests against Australia last season.

When he scored a double-century in Bangladesh last December to equal compatriot Sunil Gavaskar's world mark of 34 Test hundreds, many believed he had recovered completely.

But the injury continued to haunt him as he was again advised rest for six weeks after the Bangladesh series.

The recent blow came just when he was under fire for losing much of his batting flair and flamboyance, especially after his 98-ball 16 against Pakistan in the third and final Test at Bangalore in March.

A stonewalling Tendulkar was just unacceptable to fans and critics, who had been spoilt by watching the master batsman tear bowling attacks apart on any surface with amazing strokeplay.

But even Tendulkar cannot resist the ravages of time.

He has already spent an incredible 16 of his 32 years in highly-competitive international cricket, where

no quarter is asked and none given.

Tendulkar is the fourth-highest scorer in Test cricket with 10,134 runs in 123 matches. He is also the world-record holder in one-day cricket with 13,642 runs in 348 matches with 38 hundreds.

But such is his greatness that fans always wanted him to be injury-free without realising that he is also a mortal.

He has had more than his fair share of injuries - back, finger, toe, ankle and now elbow.

Tendulkar suffered a back sprain during the opening Test against Pakistan at Chennai in 1999 but batted in pain in the second match at Delhi, just to deny his opponents a psychological advantage.

Greatness demands a price and who knows it better than Tendulkar, who has often breached the pain-barrier to serve his team.

It pained him a great deal when critics recently questioned his ability to repeat his old magic despite his insistence he had changed his batting style.

"I batted with a certain style when I was 16. At 20, I batted differently. It again changed when I was 25 and again when I turned 30, with age, my role in the team changed too," Tendulkar said recently.

"It's a process that everyone experiences. In the past too, batsmen have made changes when compelled by certain factors like age."

Even batting great Viv Richards of the West Indies said Tendulkar would remain a vital cog in the Indian batting machine despite shedding much of his aggressiveness.

Tendulkar appears to be a victim of lofty standards he has set for himself, for a slight slip is considered a major fall.

Youhana misses first Test

REUTERS, Karachi

Pakistan batsman Yousuf Youhana will miss the first Test against West Indies starting on Thursday to return home to be with his ill father.

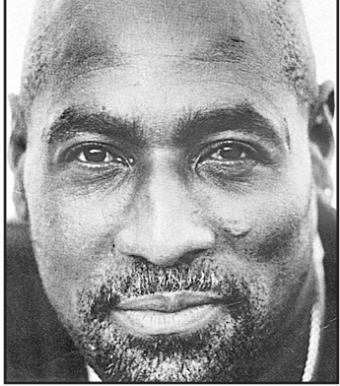
"He will be returning home by Saturday because his father is very ill and he wants to be with him," Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) director Abbas Zaidi said on Thursday.

The 30-year-old is Pakistan's most experienced batsman after captain Inzamam-ul-Haq with 59 Test and 199 one-day international appearances.

Zaidi said Youhana was not in a state of mind to play the Test and did not know if he would return for the second test in Jamaica in early June.

Inzamam and all-rounder Shoaib Malik are already unavailable for the first Test in Barbados.

Inzamam was banned by the International Cricket Council (ICC) for one match for excessive appealing in the third Test against India in Bangalore while Malik was banned for a match by the PCB after admitting to throwing a domestic Twenty20 match.



Vivian Richards

(West Indies cricket legend) "Tendulkar is now a very mature player. He is now more into a fortifying role and not flamboyant. But you must respect that he has grown older and cannot always fulfil the things that are expected of him."

India keen to keep Champs Trophy



AFP, New Delhi

India will amend an income tax regulation to allow the cricket-obsessed nation to host the Champions Trophy limited-overs tournament as scheduled next year, finance minister P Chidambaram said on Thursday.

"The cabinet has approved amending the law so that India is not deprived of the tournament," Chidambaram told reporters after a cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

According to current regulations, income tax is imposed on all earnings, including gate receipts and sponsorships, for international sporting events held in the country.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) had said in March that the biennial Champions Trophy, the second biggest event after the World Cup, could be taken away from India and handed to Pakistan if tax exemption was not granted.

A sorry batting

FROM PAGE 16

	O	M	R	W
Bowler	13.2	5	42	4
Hoggard	14	3	38	2
Harmison	5	0	22	2
Flintoff	6	4	4	1
S.Jones				

ENGLAND: First innings

Trescothick not out	34
Strauss not out	28
Extras: (lb-4, nb-4)	8
Total: (For no loss in 11 overs)	70
To bat: Vaughan, Bell, Thorpe, Flintoff, G Jones, Batty, Hoggard, Harmison, S.Jones.	

	O	M	R	W
Bowler	6	1	18	0
Mortuza	4	0	41	0
Shahadat	1	0	7	0
Anwar				

Toss: England

Olympic torch on Everest!

REUTERS, Beijing

China wants to take the Olympic torch to the top of the world and across Taiwan on its route to the 2008 Beijing Games, one of the top organisers said on Thursday.

Liu Jingmin, executive vice president of the Beijing Organising Committee for the Games, told Reuters he hoped the spirit of Olympic cooperation would allow the torch relay to cross Taiwan in spite of tension with independence-minded leaders on the island which China regards as its own.

Liu said Beijing was investigating how to haul the torch to the summit of Mount Everest, the world's tallest mountain at 8,850 metres (29,035 ft), and broadcast the ascent live around the globe.

"We have organised a research team and they are assessing it. It depends on the weather at the time and on when it will happen," said Liu, who is also vice mayor of Beijing.

China was scheduled to submit a route plan for the relay to the International Olympic Committee by the end of 2006.

The relay of the "flame of peace" has become a spectacle. Ahead of the Athens Games in 2004, it circled the world on a six-week tour under tight security, flying from country to country in a specially chartered jumbo dubbed Zeus.

Logistically, taking the flame to the highest point on Earth was not a big problem, Liu said.

"Going up may not be too complicated, but filming the whole thing will be very complex," he said.

In 1999, China took a ceremonial flame to the top of Everest, which

straddles the China-Nepal border, during a sports competition among China's ethnic minorities.

That torch was outfitted with a special oxygen tank to keep it burning in the thin air and an igniter to re-light the flame when gusting winds blew it out, but the experience showed it could be done.

"The torch is not a problem," Liu said. Broadcasting the images live is another story, though.

In 2003, China's state-run broadcaster showed live footage of climbers reaching the peak using a portable microwave transmitter to send a signal to a satellite ground station.

The cost of transporting the gear up just the middle reaches on yaks was 200,000 yuan, Xinhua news agency reported.

Liu said no decision had yet been made about who would carry the torch up the mountain, but he noted that most torch bearers in the past had been local.

"Not everyone can climb Everest," he added.

"In Nepal there is an ethnic group for whom climbing Mount Everest is as easy as eating breakfast. Maybe we'll go with them."

Liu said China