

## LAXMAN IN Fleming replaces Tendulkar as captain of MCC

REUTERS, London

New Zealand's Stephen Fleming is to replace the injured Sachin Tendulkar as captain of the MCC side to face an International XI at Lord's on June 14 in a match to raise funds for the victims of the Asian tsunami.

Tendulkar had surgery this week on his left elbow and is expected to take four months to recover fully.

Indian teammate VVS Laxman will now play in the game which Tendulkar will attend to help with fund-raising. Brian Lara will captain the International XI.

## FIRST DIV FOOTBALL Mohakali blank Badda

SPORTS REPORTER

**Mohakali** Eleven blanked Badda Jagarani Sangsads 3-0 in a First Division Football League fixture at the Bir Shreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

After barren first half, Alaudin put Mohakali ahead in the 75th minute while Arafat doubled the margin in the 82nd minute.

Masum sealed the match five minutes from the time.

## Ganguly cleared to play county

PTI, London

Decks were cleared for Indian captain Sourav Ganguly to play for Glamorgan in the County Championship and other domestic matches in England with the Board of Control for Cricket in India giving a formal clearance on Friday.

Glamorgan were making arrangements for Ganguly's work permit which they said should be with him well in time before he takes the field in a championship match against Sussex at Swansea on June 1.

"It is going to be okay. We will be getting the work permit for Ganguly next week," a spokeswoman for the club told this news agency here.

It may be recalled that last year around the same time, left-arm paceman Zaheer Khan had to render his service to Surrey for free since, having originally come to England for training, could get the work permit in the last minute.

## Owen isn't jealous

AFP, London

Former Anfield star Michael Owen has denied he is jealous of Liverpool's Champions League triumph following his move to Real Madrid.

The England striker told The Times: "you can't keep looking back and second-guessing decisions like my move to Real Madrid."

Owen, who could be on his way back to England if rumours in the Spanish press are to be believed, added: "Who knows if I was leading the attack or if I would have done things differently from Milan Baros."

"People will say my timing for leaving Anfield was suspect but how was I, or anyone else, to know that Liverpool were about to go on the most incredible run to the final?"

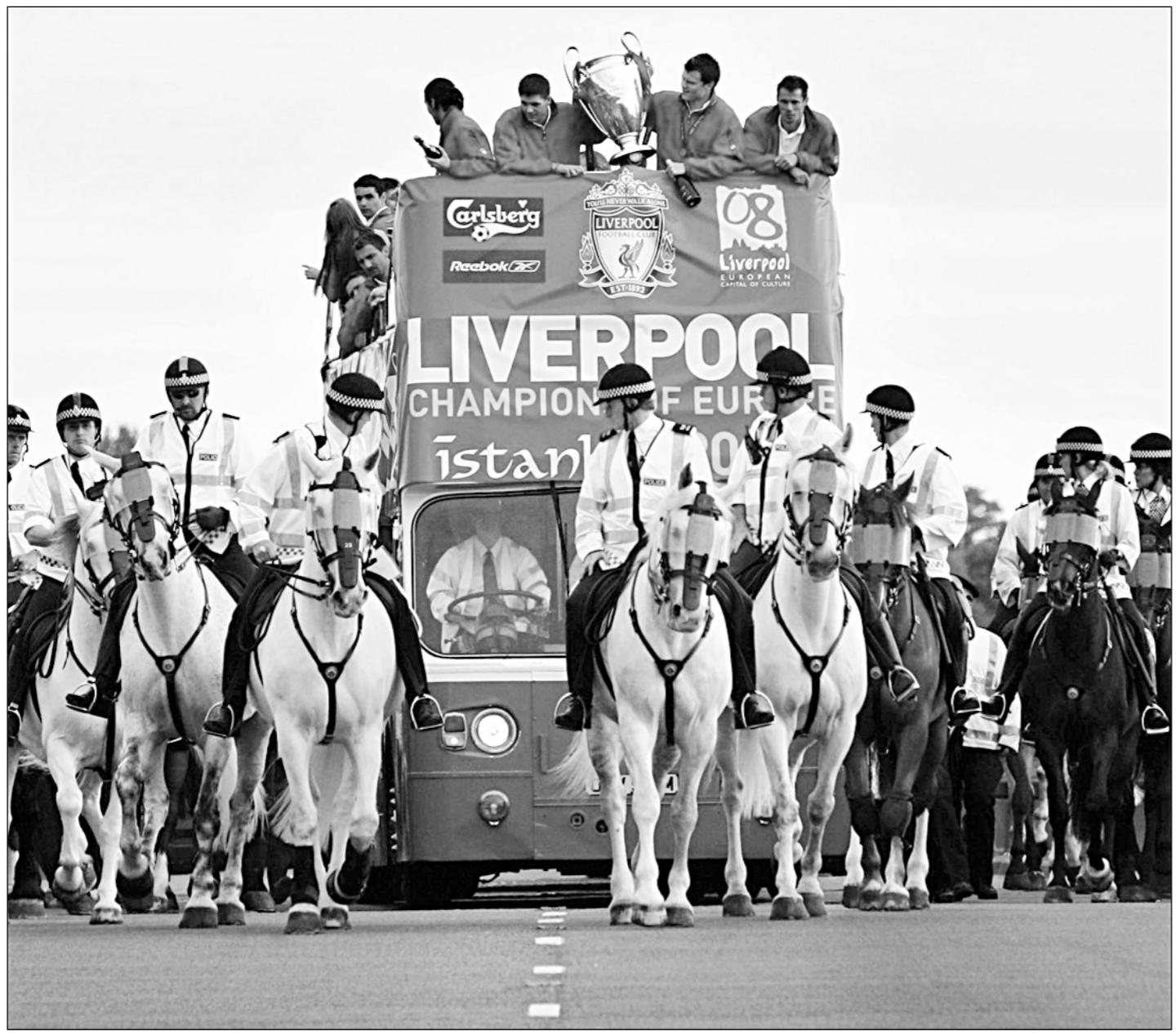


PHOTO: AFP

The Liverpool team bus being escorted by horse riding policemen as the city welcomes its Champions League heroes home on Thursday.

## Welcome home champions



AFP, Liverpool

New European champions Liverpool got a rousing hero's welcome from home-town fans Thursday, but behind the scenes pressure was growing on UEFA to let the club defend their title next season.

An estimated 500,000 Liverpudlians lined the 10-mile (16-kilometre) route towards the Anfield stadium as the victorious side—and its hard-won silverware—travelled through in a red, open-top bus emblazoned with the words: "Liverpool FC, Champions of Europe 2005".

In one of the most dramatic European finals ever, underdogs Liverpool won the European Champions League on penalties Wednesday against AC Milan after pegging back a 0-3 half-time deficit to 3-3.

Around 30,000 Liverpool fans travelled to Istanbul to support their team, and many times more that number could be seen crushed into the streets, on roofs, traffic lights and balconies or hanging off the entrance gates at Anfield to welcome the team home.

As the parade began—well after its 6.30 pm (1730 GMT) scheduled start—manager Rafael Benitez, inspirational captain Steven Gerrard and the rest of the team took turns to stand at the front of the

bus with the Champions League trophy, waving to the crowd.

"We could be looking up to half a million people" who turned the streets into a surging sea of red chequered Liverpool flags, said Ged Poynton, stadium manager at Anfield.

But amid the joy, there was growing anger against the decision by UEFA to stick by rules which bar Liverpool from defending the trophy which the club won for the fifth time.

The British 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.

The Merseysiders' fifth-place finish in the English Premiership means they have not qualified for next season's competition according to the UEFA rule book, as title-holders do not automatically defend the trophy.

UEFA spokesman William Gaillard said that despite the emotion, the organisation had no plans to change its rules.

Gaillard highlighted the pre-

dent set in the 2000-01 season, when Real Madrid defended the cup after finishing fifth only because the Spanish football federation decided to hand them Real Zaragoza's place.

"The rules are what they are," Gaillard told BBC Radio.

"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.

Caborn said the government and FA were pressing the issue.

"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.

"They 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."

Reaction to the stunning Liverpool victory—described by

British Prime Minister Tony Blair as "unbelievable, incredible, brilliant"—continued to pour in.

Queen Elizabeth II, back from Canada, called the win "remarkable".

Earlier Thursday the victorious team's plane had touched down at Liverpool's John Lennon Airport, with Benitez and Gerrard walking down the steps carrying the trophy between them to cheers from airport workers.

One of the Spanish manager's first jobs will be to convince inspirational skipper Gerrard to stay at Liverpool, his home-town club.

Gerrard sparked the Istanbul fightback with a marvellous header shortly after the restart and, following their second goal by Vladimir Smicer, he was brought down for the penalty kick six minutes later which allowed Xabi Alonso to equalise at 3-3.

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.

## Greats rally for Liverpool



AFP, London

Liverpool will have to wait three weeks before they will know whether they can defend their Champions League title next season—although their bid has been backed by two of football's greatest players.

Germany's Franz Beckenbauer and former Portugal great Eusebio, who both have influence in the modern game, have backed the Reds' bid to defend their title despite them finishing out of the Premiership's top four teams this season.

Liverpool have called on UEFA to let them defend the trophy they won in a penalty shoot-out against AC Milan in Istanbul on Wednesday.

UEFA rules mean Everton take the final place on offer to a Premiership club after pipping their city rivals for fourth in the table.

Beckenbauer, a three-times European Cup winner with Bayern Munich and candidate to succeed Lennart Johansson as UEFA president in 2007, is understood to be supportive of Liverpool.

Eusebio, a European Cup winner with Benfica in 1962, is confident a compromise can be reached.

He told the Daily Mail: "Liverpool have made history and it would be unjust if the champions of the biggest European competition could not defend the title. Some rules must be changed in UEFA and this is one of them."

"I believe that everything will be solved favourably and the Englishmen will be in the Champions League next season."

UEFA's executive committee are set to discuss the issue of allowing a fifth English side in the competition at their meeting in Manchester on June 17.

European football's governing body are standing by their line that Liverpool can only play if Everton, who finished fourth in the Premiership, drop out but it is under-

stood the matter will be voted on by the 15-man ruling committee.

The Football Association, who have already decided the top four sides in the Premiership will play in the Champions League, are to intensify their lobbying of UEFA.

FA chief executive Brian Barwick said: "It's an exceptional situation, that follows an exceptional match and which we believe requires an exceptional solution."

"What UEFA have, and I sympathise with them to a degree, is a situation where they are faced with not having their own champions in their own competition which is called the Champions League. I think in its own way that tells its own story."

"Liverpool finished outside the top four. I think the FA were right and proper to put the top four in to the Champions League. That's how teams kicked off in August, expecting a top-four finish to give them qualification or pre-qualification and that will not be changed."

FA chairman Geoff Thompson is a UEFA vice-president and will be able to raise the issue at the meeting next month.

UEFA communications director William Gaillard meanwhile insists he expects Liverpool to be playing in the UEFA Cup next season because a precedent had been set in the 2000-01 season, when Real Madrid defended the trophy despite finishing fifth because the Spanish football federation decided to hand them Real Zaragoza's place.

He said: "The rules are what they are. They were used already once when Real Madrid won ... and actually were not among the qualifiers in the Spanish league."

"There could be a discussion with the executive committee but we don't normally change rules in the middle of the competition."

It is not the middle of the competition however—the meeting will be between competitions and UEFA president Lennart Johansson, the most powerful man in the organisation by far, is understood to have told Liverpool chairman David Moores he would try to help.

A senior UEFA figure told the

Press Association: "If the president decides he wants Liverpool to be the fifth English side in Europe then he can try to persuade the executive committee to change the rules. It is in their power and he has definitely left the door open for discussion."

The FA will not press for Liverpool to be given outright qualification, but at least be allowed to join the qualifying rounds—Welsh champions TNS have already offered to give up their place if Liverpool beat them in a 'pre-qualifier'.

## Unofficial holiday!

AFP, Liverpool

One fifth of all the workers in Liverpool called in sick or otherwise made their excuses for missing work on Thursday following celebrations after the Champions League final, business leaders in the city said.

As well as Liverpool fans nursing hangovers following their side's dramatic win on penalties against AC Milan, after pulling back a 0-3 half-time deficit to 3-3, supporters of local rivals Everton were also lying low.

"From our members' experience today, absenteeism is clearly running quite high at about 20 per cent, but this is for a variety of reasons," said Frank McKenna from private sector consortium Downtown Liverpool in Business.

"Obviously, you have got the Liverpudlians 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.

This 20 percent figure does not include fans who booked the day off in advance as holiday, just those who called in sick or took last-minute sick days or days in lieu.

In a not-unconnected statistic, research for supermarket chain Sainsbury's estimated that 10,000 bottles of champagne were drunk in the city on Wednesday night.

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## Champs Trophy

FROM PAGE 12

The FA had given India a June deadline to confirm the tax waiver for the Champions Trophy.

India were originally scheduled to host the tournament in 2004, but the event was shifted to England and India made provisional hosts for 2006 after the government dithered on the tax waiver.

Ronaldo, who has scored 20 league goals this season, joined Inter Milan three years ago but has only a single league title, from 2003, to show for his time in Madrid after two trophyless seasons.

He also defended the decision to field three foreign players in a match considering the fact that the country has a lack of quality players right at the moment and believed that it would reduce the gap between the competition.

Rahim also touched on the match-fixing issue and said that the only way to stamp it out was if the clubs realised the kind of damage it was doing to the development of the game.

"It is very difficult to prove a match-fixing. We have a team to look after the matter but first clubs

need to take the initiative," he added.

The league committee has decided to conduct matches with help of local referees but they are ready to bring foreign officials if needed in the crucial stages of the competition.

"Our local referees recently won acclaim in an international tournament in Nepal but I can assure you we will bring foreign referees for some key matches," he assured.

According to bylaws a replay will be taken place if two teams finish equal on points.

This year three sides will be demoted to the First Division while as many teams will qualify for the top flight. The organisers have fixed Tk 20 for gallery entry while Tk 40 for VIPs.

## WI fail

FROM PAGE 12

when he attempted a second run, after he and Chanderpaul added 49 for the fifth wicket.

Courtney Browne was caught behind off Shabbir for 12 to leave West Indies 287 for six, but Chanderpaul decided to cut loose, and tried to gallop to reach his milestone.

He however, was one of the last four West Indies wickets that fell for nine runs in the space 29 balls.

West Indies, who were beaten 2-0 at home by South Africa in their most recent Test series, have won just one Test in their last 18 matches, against lowly Bangladesh. Pakistan have never won a Test at Bridgetown, much less a Test series in the Caribbean, on five previous trips.

This is the first Test in a series of two, with the next match starting at Kingston's Sabina Park on Friday, June 3.

## BRIEF SCORES

**WEST INDIES:** First innings 345 (Lara 130, Chanderpaul 92, Hinds 28, extras 38; Razzaq 3-58, Shabbir 3-66, Kaneria 3-114)

**PAKISTAN:** First innings 22 without loss (Afzil 12 not out)

**Toss:** West Indies.

**Umpires:** David Shepherd and Darrell Hair.

**PHOTO: AFP**

**BETTER THAN RUN-A-BALL:** West Indies superstar Brian raises his arms upon reaching his hundred against Pakistan in the Barbados Test on Thursday.

**PHOTO: AFP**

## Federer, Davenport cruise along

### French Open

AFF, Paris

Top seeds Roger Federer and Lindsay Davenport took huge steps towards claiming first French Open titles on Friday as Roland Garros eagerly awaited the teenage duel between Rafael Nadal and Richard Gasquet.

Federer, bidding to become only the sixth man to win all four Grand Slam tournaments, survived a blistering first set assault by Chilean 25th seed Fernando Gonzalez to move into the last 16 with a 7-6, 7-5, 6-2 win.