

Tour de Armstrong

Cycling

AFP, Paris

American Lance Armstrong secured his seventh Tour de France yellow jersey following the 21st and final stage, his final race before retiring, held over 144km from Corbeil-Essonnes here Sunday.

The 33-year-old Discovery Channel team rider finished the race with a 4min 40sec lead on Italian Ivan Basso with Germany's Jan Ullrich, the 1997 winner, finishing third on the podium at 6:21 behind Armstrong.

Alexandre Vinokourov of Kazakhstan, who rides for Ullrich's T-Mobile team, won the 21st and final stage after pulling ahead of Australian Brad McGee in the last 200 metres on the Champs Elysees.

It was Vinokourov's second stage win of this year's race after his stunning win on the second day in the Alps on stage 11.

Michael Rasmussen of the Rabobank team managed to avoid any mishaps and secured the polka dot jersey for the race's best climber while Norwegian Thor Hushovd of Credit Agricole won the points classification whose prize is the green jersey.

Yaroslav Popovych, of Armstrong's Discovery Channel team, won the race's white jersey

for the best placed rider in the general classification aged 25 years or under.

Armstrong came into the race as a favourite despite his imminent retirement, which he decided on a few months ago in order to spend more time with his three young children from his previous marriage.

And the American made sure he gave his rivals no quarter with a time trial performance on the first stage which left Ullrich and Basso playing catchup at over a minute behind.

Ullrich, a five-time runner-up, has now claimed his sixth podium place on the race. The 31-year-old T-Mobile team leader came fourth last year -- the first time in his career he had finished off the podium.

Ullrich's team tried in vain to attack Armstrong in the mountains, and from the first day in the Alps he was left with a huge deficit of four minutes to the American who finished second behind Spaniard Alejandro Valverde on stage 10 from Briancon to Courchevel.

In the remainder of the race Armstrong simply asked his Discovery Channel team to counter any attacks, and he did not strike himself until the 55.5km time trial in St Etienne on the penultimate day.

Armstrong won the race against the clock 23 seconds ahead of

Ullrich to claim his first stage of the race and the 22nd on the Tour de France which he has participated

in 11 times. On the final stage from the suburbs of Paris to the finish line at

the world famous Champs Elysees, Armstrong avoided a potential disaster when he narrowly missed crashing before they had arrived in the capital.

The roads were slippery after a night of rain and his teammate George Hincapie, who won the most difficult climbing stage of the race last week, came crashing down on a right hand turn.

Two other Discovery riders followed suit and Armstrong had to brake to avoid the same fate.

Once into the capital, however, the sprinters teams eventually took over the race. With the green jersey still to play for, as well as the prestigious final stage of the race, there were numerous attacks in the final few kilometres.

However there was a shock in the final kilometres as McGee, who had been hoping to secure a first victory on this year's edition for his Francaise des Jeux team, attacked with a little over a kilometre to race.

The Aussie move shook up the teams trying to chase him down, but Vinokourov wisely followed his wheel.

McGee finally ran out of steam in the final few hundred metres, where Vinokourov was able to benefit from the energy saved by following his wheel to pull past McGee shortly before the finish line.



PHOTO: AFP

SEVENTH HEAVEN: Lance Armstrong shows seven fingers after retaining his Tour de France title on Sunday.

Inter's England concern

Football

AFP, London

Inter Milan are reviewing their decision to call off next week's four match tour of England over safety fears sparked by the London bombings.

The Italian club on Sunday told the BBC they were "looking into the possibility of finding a positive solution".

Inter's tour was due to kick off against Leicester on Monday, and the Midland club's chief executive Tim Davies said he had not given up hope of the game taking place.

"At the moment, we are assum-

ing it's off but we are doing the best to get the match on," he told BBC Radio Five Live's Sportsweek programme.

"We'll lose in excess of 250,000 pounds, which, for a Championship club, is quite a lot of money."

British sports minister Richard Caborn has held talks with his Italian counterpart Mario Pescante and Italian football chief Franco Carraro in a bid to rescue the tour.

As well as Leicester Inter were scheduled to play games against Crystal Palace, Norwich and Portsmouth.

Inter's announcement on Saturday that they were calling off the visit had been criticised by London mayor Ken Livingstone.

"I think that this is a very silly thing to do because it is playing the terrorists' game. They want to change the way we live," Livingstone said.

A statement on Inter's website, explaining their reasons for staying at home, said: "Football takes a step back because of increasing serious events which touch the sensitivity of everyone."

If Inter stand by their original decision they may find themselves the target of a 250,000 pound compensation claim from lost gate receipts from Leicester.

Bomb attacks in London on July 7 left 56 people dead. Further bombs left on tubes and a bus on Thursday failed to detonate.

Carlos' EU passport is good news for Robinho

Football

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid left-back Roberto Carlos hopes securing dual-citizenship of Spain and Brazil will free up one of the club's three non-European Union places for transfer target Robinho.

Roberto Carlos has been given the go-ahead to complete the process to obtain an EU passport when he returns from the club's tour of Asia and the United States on July 30, Spanish sports daily AS said on Saturday.

"I am delighted to be able to get an EU Passport," said the Brazilian. "We have been waiting for this to

happen for a long time and at last it has been resolved."

Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) rules allow clubs only three non-EU players in each squad.

Last season Real's were occupied by Argentine defender Walter Samuel, Brazilian striker Ronaldo, and Roberto Carlos.

With Real trying to close the deal to sign Brazilian striker Robinho, the latest news would free up a place in the squad should the deal be completed.

"It would be really satisfying to free up my place to my friend Robinho when it is all resolved," Roberto Carlos added.

Samuel and Ronaldo are also reported to be close to securing dual-nationality.

Pele's all-stars game postponed

AFP, Bangkok

A team of World Cup all-stars led by Pele has indefinitely postponed their tsunami charity match in Thailand as the Brazilian football legend tends to family matters, a Thai official said Sunday.

The likes of France's Eric Cantona, Argentinian great Claudio Caniggia and Rudi Voller of Germany had been due to lace up their boots in the July 30 match in Bangkok against veteran Thai internationals to help raise money for tsunami victims and promote the country's crippled tourism industry.

But Pele, 64, considered by many to be the greatest ever player of the game, is likely occupied with family problems. Theptak Chansuthep, chairman of the Senior Football Association of Thailand, told AFP.

Pele's son Edson do Nascimento was arrested in Brazil last month on suspicion of being a member of a drug trafficking and kidnapping gang.

"The match is indefinitely postponed," Theptak said. "Because Pele could not make it, the match will be rescheduled when Pele is available."

The other all-stars, who were to include French World Cup winners Frank Leboeuf and Youri Djorkaeff and Uruguayan midfielder Gustavo Poyet, remain committed to a future charity match in the kingdom, Theptak said.

Pele, who won three World Cups for Brazil, and the squad were due to tour tsunami disaster zones along Thailand's southwest coast, where nearly 5,400 people died and 2,822 remain missing from the December 26 disaster.

Reds return

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before the defenders half cleared the ball. But the danger was over yet and Ripon's first-time low drive out from the box was exquisitely deflected in by Masud with the back of his heel through a forest of legs.

Youngmen's were celebrating too early and Paul, dashing down the right with a crossfield pass from Pappu, made it 2-1 11 minutes later with a low drive that went in off the sidebar for his sixth goal.

Substitute Kanchan added another one in the dying moments when he fired the ball into the roof of the net after Youngmen's goalie Shiplu failed to hold on to a shot by Titu.

Yellow cards: Belal, Amin Rana (Muktijoddha)

TEAMS

MUKTIJODDHA: Titumeer, Riad, Harry, Rajani, Titu, Belal (Kanchan), Saiful, Pappu (Biddyut), Arman, Paul and Amin Rana (Moni).

YOUNGMEN'S: Shiplu, Mamun, Ariful, Shipon, Masud (Nayan), Ripon (Rony), Chanchal, Monaem, Baten, Robin and Rajan.

Referee: Mansoor Azad.

'Noretirement plans,' says Ronaldo

Football

AP, Sao Paulo

Ronaldo said he is not planning to leave the Brazilian national squad after the 2006 World Cup.

"I can't predict the future, but my intention is to stay in the national team until the end of my career," Ronaldo told the local Globo TV during Real Madrid's tour in Beijing on Friday. "The national team is part of my life, just like football is."

Ronaldo confirmed, however, that he has begun thinking about retirement.

"It's time to start thinking about when to stop playing football, and consequently when to stop playing for the national squad," Ronaldo said. "But I haven't decided anything yet."

The Brazilian will be 29 when he tries to win his third World Cup title in Germany next year.

Ronaldo will be 29 years old when he tries to win his third World Cup title next year in Germany and will be 33 in the 2010 Cup in South Africa.

"There's still one year to go to the (next) Cup," he said. "I just want to

prepare myself to arrive in Germany in top form."

Ronaldo was released from the Confederations Cup roster in June after saying he needed a rest following the Spanish league season and that it would be his only break before the 2006 World Cup.

Waugh paints familiar picture

CRICINFO

Mark Waugh, who won the Ashes six times, believes England's quick return to the mistakes of previous sides will remain for the rest of the series. Writing in his Sun-Herald column, Waugh said most of the bowlers had gone missing at crucial times and the batsmen were guilty of indecision.

"Under pressure, old habits have quickly resurfaced with sloppy fielding, poor body language, negative batting and inconsistent bowling coming to the fore," he said.

"All the talk before this Test was how much England have improved, but apart from Harmison and Flintoff I can't see how they are any more dangerous or likely to beat us than other English teams."

Waugh said his suspicion of a suspect batting line-up that was untried against quality bowlers had been confirmed at Lord's. "With the bat, indecisive strokeplay and a negative mindset has given the Aussies a head start."

A player who scored 1,189 runs in 17 Tests in England, Waugh said Australia's batsmen "foolishly tried to force the issue" on day one.

"It is a fine line to tread balancing aggressive, positive cricket, but not going overboard and losing respect for your opponents and your wicket," he said. "This is one of the few chinks in their armour... I doubt whether the Australians will bat as recklessly as they did on the first day again."

Ball in captain

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Bashar until the next World Cup (in 2007) but everything will depend on him. No doubt Bashar has a bright record as a captain because during his time Bangladesh have won seven one-day matches and also their maiden Test and one-day series," said the BCB chief.

Bashar has been leading the Tigers since the tour of Zimbabwe in January 2004 after replacing Khaled Mahmud.

Under his captaincy Bangladesh have played ten Tests winning one, drawing three and losing six. They also recorded seven ODI wins from 27 matches.

Mahmud also emphasised on the importance of the captain given a more active role in the selection process.

"I had felt during my duration how important it is to have a say in selection. Almost all the Test captains around the world enjoy that privilege but unfortunately that has never been the case here," said Mahmud while talking to Daily Star Sport.

"If the players see that the skipper is not considered as a voice in team selection, naturally they will not look up to him with the kind of respect normally reserved for someone with authority," said Mahmud.

Killing 'em softly

Cricket

REUTERS, London

The key, according to England, was to play the ball, not the reputation.

Shane Warne, they decided before the first Ashes Test, could no longer spin the ball square. The world's greatest spinner was not the player he used to be.

They may have been right but that did not stop Warne tearing the heart out of England's second innings at Lord's on Saturday, condemning the home team to almost certain defeat in the first Test.

Warne made an indelible imprint on Ashes history with his first ball of the 1993 series, ripping a heavenly delivery from outside leg to clip the top of Mike Gatting's off stump.

On Saturday, he took three for 10 runs in 32 balls to all but seal the result and each of his wickets came with a straight delivery.

In all, he bowled 15 overs unchanged from the Nursery End and ended with three for 46. England, needing a monumental 420 to win in their second innings, closed the third day on 156 for five. Warne, his shoulder and fingers stiffened by surgery, may not have the ability to shock that he once had. He admits as much. But foxes do not

lose their cunning with age, even if they begin losing their hair.

"Most people have an opinion, they say 'he's not as good as he was' or 'he's getting better with age'. I don't know," Warne said before Lord's.

"All I know is my results over the last year or so have probably been my most successful of any stage I've played. Whether that means I'm a better bowler or not who knows. You'd have to ask a batsman."

Ask Marcus Trescothick, caught at first slip off a straight ball on Saturday. Ask Ian Bell, who was brilliantly set up with a series of big leg-spinners before he padded up to



SHANE WARNE

was palpably lbw. Ask Andrew Flintoff, who drove hard off the back foot and was caught behind as the ball again went straight through.

Warne began the first Test with 583 Test wickets, the best record in history. Last year, returning for a 12-month drugs ban, he took 70 in 12 games, at an average of 24.07, a smidgeon better than his overall career average.

He may not spin the ball as much and try to camouflage the fact by coining pet names like "zooter" or "slider" for particular deliveries but he remains as hard to read as ever.

"My bowling is different to how it was when I first started," he added.

"Am I at my absolute peak? I think it's impossible physically to be at my best because of my shoulder and my fingers."

"When you start you just bowl, you don't know why, you don't know how - I suppose I just tried to bowl ripping leg breaks. Now I don't bowl big spinning leg breaks as much. I try to save them for my wicket-taking delivery."

Warne did not need them on Saturday.

He played it straight, and England played for turn. England took their eye off the ball and played the man's former reputation.

Figo does it for Real

Football

AFP, Beijing

Raul, Guti and Luis Figo scored for Real Madrid as the Spanish giants did just enough to beat Beijing Hyundai 3-2 at a rain-soaked and half-empty Workers' Stadium here Saturday.

But in a big disappointment for the Chinese fans, David Beckham didn't play, still troubled by a hamstring injury he picked up during the team's victory against Los Angeles Galaxy on Monday.

Unsettled Portuguese star Figo, linked with a move to Inter Milan, was also a non-starter, although he came on as a substitute and scored the winning goal.

Put off not just by the rain but the price of the tickets, the fans stayed away in droves.

Chinese website surveys prior to the match indicated that many people thought that Real had

come to China with the sole goal of making money and said they were bored by their superstar antics.

Just 40,000 people turned up at the 70,000-seat stadium for an exhibition match that featured star quality like Ronaldo, Michael Owen and Zinedine Zidane.

Xinhua news agency reported that before the kick-off touts were selling 600 yuan (74 dollars) tickets for just 200 yuan (25 dollars) and 180 yuan ones for just 40 yuan.

It took the nine-time European champions time to find their stride on a sodden pitch, waking up only after Li Jiang jolted them in the 32nd minute with a strike for Beijing that put them 1-0 in front.

Real regrouped and Raul drew them level four minutes later.

The game lived up in the second half but Real were forced to come from behind once again after going 2-1 down to a Jelic goal in the 73rd minute.

Guti, like Figo unsettled at the Bernabeu, evened it up in the 79th

minute and Figo sealed victory with a penalty eight minutes from the end.

It was Real's third consecutive win on a pre-season tour that has already taken them to the United States where they beat Los Angeles Galaxy 2-0 and Chivas of Mexico 3-1.

The Spanish team will play another three matches in Bangkok and Tokyo after they leave China as they prepare for the new season and their quest to regain the Spanish title from Barcelona.

Like many European clubs, Real want to do more to develop its name in China, and brought its entire squad on tour minus injured defenders Walter Samuel and Jonathan Woodgate.

Real used China as a pre-season training base in 2003 and proved a big hit, with Beckham making his world debut for the club here after moving from Manchester United.

Shearer needs five more

Football

AFP, Paris

Veteran striker Alan Shearer moved within five goals of breaking Newcastle United's club record of 199 on Saturday.

The 34-year-old former England international scored twice against Slovakian minnows, ZTS Dubnica to help the Magpies win 5-1 on aggregate and qualify for the semi-finals of

the Intertoto Cup.

A crowd of 25,000 relished the Shearer headers and his goal tally has now reached 194 - only five less than the longstanding record that belongs to Tyne-side legend Jackie Milburn.

Newcastle boss Graham Souness praised the patience of his players and fans after Saturday's 2-0 win and heralded his veteran striker whose two headers set Newcastle up for a mouthwatering clash against Spanish side Deportivo La Coruna.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words.

Cryptogram puzzle grid with letters and numbers.

CRYPTOQUIP

U A D O M G W O X L S F R W T I B
M S D T R U W I T T P Q F D O X T
X L D O G X V U A Q U L B
B T T X T P D M V T M C C M B T P
Yesterday's Cryptogram: WHEN A PROLONGED RELIGIOUS WAR ERUPTS, DOES THAT RESULT IN A DOGMA-EAT-DOGMA WORLD?
Today's Cryptogram Clue: T equals E
The Cryptogram is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

TEN Sports West Indies vs Sri Lanka Second Test, Day Four Live at 10:15 am



PHOTO: STAR

Somnilito Krira Paribar's convener Mubassar Hussain addresses a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.