

Thumbs down in China

REUTERS, Beijing

Real Madrid earned millions in its four-day tour of China...

The Spanish giants netted as much as \$4 million dollars in appearance fees in China...

England captain Beckham did not play in Real's rain-soaked 3-2 win over Chinese side Beijing Guo'an...

"Many female spectators came to watch their idol (Beckham) rather than the match itself and were forced to leave the stadium in frustration," the newspaper said.

Zhang Ran, an 18-year-old fan, said, "The organisers should have told us that Beckham would miss the match. It's like we have been cheated."

Despite the enormous hype behind Real's visit, the 70,000-capacity Beijing Workers' Stadium was only just over half full for the match.

Other Real stars like Ronaldo, Michael Owen and Zinedine Zidane came off the field in the second half.

In a post-match Internet survey, 62 percent of Chinese fans said they would not support Real if the team returned to China and over one quarter said they were bored by the water-logged game.

Real Madrid have flown to Japan to play on Monday and Wednesday and will wrap up the money-spinning tour with a friendly in Bangkok on Friday.

Muralitharan

FROM PAGE 12

Table with columns for Bowler, Overs (O), M, Runs (R), Wickets (W). Includes entries for Sangakkara, Jayawardena, Lawton, etc.

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Result: Sri Lanka won by 240 runs and take two-Test series 2-0.

Man-of-the-match: Kumar Sangakkara.

Man-of-the-series: Chaminda Vaas.



CHECKED! Ronaldo (C) is blocked by two Tokyo Verdy 1969 defenders at Tokyo Stadium on yesterday.

Verdy make a Real mess

Football

AFP, July

Spanish powerhouses Real Madrid suffered a shock 3-0 defeat to struggling J-League club Tokyo Verdy in the third leg of their four-country football friendly series on Monday.

The two-time world club champions looked good at the start with English star David Beckham shooting over the bar in the fifth minute.

But just a minute later Tokyo Verdy's Daigo Kobayashi netted to open the scoring.

The Japanese continued to surprise the visitors by often intercepting their opponents passes and Takuya Yamada set up Brazilian striker Washington's goal in the 26th minute.

Yamada scored his second of the match with a diving header from Kobayashi's corner to make it 3-0 in the 53rd minute.

For Verdy, struggling in 17th position in the J-League, it was sweet revenge for their 4-0 loss to Real a year ago.

Real coach Vanderlei Luxemburgo blamed tiredness for their surprise defeat.

"We couldn't play our normal game because of fatigue caused by a long trip, and we are not in good condition," said Luxemburgo.

"Because of nothing but fatigue, everybody has been worn out... The best weapon of our team is our strategy and we couldn't use it," he said.

"We also lost two goals in China on the wet pitch and we scored three goals to win it 3-2. But today, when we were down 2-0 in the first half, I felt we couldn't play our usual game."

The Spanish team, having won their three games 3-1, 2-0 and 3-2 in the United States and China, will play another J-League team Jubilo Iwata on Wednesday before moving to Thailand for their last match on Friday.

McGrath after Vaughan

Cricket

AFP, London

Ricky Ponting has promised Michael Vaughan more Glenn McGrath-inflicted misery during the Ashes series after the champion fast bowler dismissed the England captain cheaply during Australia's conclusive 239-run first Test win here at Lord's.

McGrath bowled Vaughan for just three in England's first innings 155 when home hopes were high after they'd dismissed Australia for 190.

Vaughan, who averaged over 63 with three hundreds during the last Ashes series in Australia in 2002-03 when he was an opening not a number three batsman, managed just seven runs in the match after again losing his off-stump, this time to Brett Lee, for four in the second innings.

But it is man-of-the-match McGrath, who finished with figures of nine for 82, whom Australia skipper Ponting believes is best-placed to target Vaughan and so demoralise England, just as the great West Indies teams of the 1980s did when they went after the opposition captain.

"He played superbly against us last time but he wasn't captain," Ponting told reporters after Australia won with a day to spare to extend their unbeaten Test record at Lord's to 18 matches since their last loss in 1934.

"I think we bowled exceptionally well to him in this game. We didn't give him any easy runs when he first came out and Glenn was probably the main reason for that."

"I whipped Glenn back in the attack when Michael came out in the second innings. I don't think he likes facing him to tell the truth."

"In the one-day games I had the feeling Glenn was over him as well. I can see McGrath bowling a lot more to Vaughny as the summer goes on."

Meanwhile 35-year-old pace-man McGrath, who in the course of the match became only the fourth bowler to take 500 Test wickets, said: "If you get on the captain then it can have an effect on the rest of the team."

McGrath, who dismissed former England skipper Michael Atherton a record 19 times in Tests, added: "It's not Vaughan's technique, it's his confidence."

"You don't lose your technique overnight, but he's got a bit of work to do now. I enjoyed bowling to him in the last series as well. I didn't have to target him then, because he announced he was coming after me, but he wasn't captain then."

Meanwhile Vaughan admitted: "At my age there are hardly any scope to change my action. At best what he can do is correct minor faults. I think Karpainen is doing an excellent job for us," said the right-arm paceman.

But young Nazmul Hossain welcomed the chance to work under a specialist bowling coach.

"He will help us to deal with small problems like how to bowl to a left-hander. I think we can get valuable tips from him (Roberts)."

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Inter to tour England

AFP, London

Italian giants Inter Milan performed a u-turn on Sunday and agreed to come over for their four match tour of England after originally cancelling it over safety fears sparked by the London bombings.

British Government Sports Minister Richard Caborn told Sky News that after the club had received reassurances from the Italian FA and its Italian counterpart, Mario Pescante, they had agreed to fly to England.

"I contacted my opposite number Mario Pescante and he spoke to the Italian FA head Franco Carraro. They then spoke to Inter Milan and I believe they are on their way to the Midlands," said Caborn, referring to Inter's first match against Championship side Leicester on Monday.

"Sometimes clubs get a distorted view of what is going on but the reassurances they were given by the Sports Minister persuaded them to come."

"We've had the Ashes Test and the athletics in recent days in London and they have passed off okay."

"We are not going to offer them any more security than they already have."

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

Doha Games

FROM PAGE 12

Al-Khulaifi security would be tight for the Games, in which over 10,000 athletes from 45 countries are expected to take part.

"We have security plans in place to provide a trouble-free games. Terrorism is a global menace and it is not just in one country," Al-Khulaifi said at a press conference.

Qatar will be the first Arab country to host the continental games and he promised a spectacular event from December 1 to 15, 2006.

my country in the past and I hope I can continue doing that. As far as the world record is concerned, whichever of us plays longer will hold the record. It is as simple as that."

Warne, at 35, is two years older than Muralitharan. The Sri Lankan wants to play on for another three to four years.

"I want to go on for some time, maybe three to four years. We have a lot of cricket in that period."

Muralitharan's 14th haul of 10 wickets in a match – he claimed 2-37 in the first innings – gave him 17 wickets in what was his first series in 11 months following a shoulder injury.

He also holds the world record of 46 hauls of five wickets or more in an innings.

"I have no problem with my shoulder now," he said. "I am fit as I have even been but it will take me time to get back to my best."

Muralitharan, whose brilliant career has been marred by accusations of chucking, says the controversy may never leave him.

"It is really hard to say if it will ever be over," he said.

"I know I have been cleared but people may have something new to say. They always do whenever I do well. I never know what will happen next."

The West Indies, missing 10 top stars including the world's leading batsman Brian Lara following a sponsorship dispute at home, had no clue how to play spin on the wearing wicket.

Muralitharan made up for the absence of left-arm seamer Chaminda Vaas, who has been ruled out of cricket for at least a week due to a hamstring strain.

Vaas, who had claimed 13 wickets in three previous innings in the series, was advised to rest ahead of the one-day tri-series against India and the West Indies starting later this week.

"Vaasy is a great bowler but unfortunately he got injured," Muralitharan said.

"So it was my turn to fight for the team. The West Indian batsmen were a bit inexperienced so I just had to keep the ball in the right place."

"The West Indian batting was a bit thin in the absence of Lara and others but they are a young team always willing to learn."

Benitez high on confidence

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, Paris

Liverpool boss Rafael Benitez believes his Champions League winners are stronger than last season and is confident his new signings can see the Anfield giants into the lucrative group stages again this season.

The five-time champions face FBK Kaunas of Lithuania in the second qualifying round first leg on Tuesday.

And Benitez insists that his summer spending spree, which peaked with the seven-million-pound capture of Peter Crouch from relegated Southampton and an improved deal for skipper Steven Gerrard, will propel his team onwards.

"I think we are strong in midfield. We have Steve, Xabi (Alonso), Didi (Hamman), Momo Sissoko and we have lots of options. It means I can rest players when they need to be and bring others in who will do a very good job," said the Spaniard.

Benitez was also happy with Crouch's goal-scoring debut in the 4-3 friendly win against Greek side Olympiakos in Liechtenstein at the weekend.

"Peter played well. He did very well for the first goal and he is a

Murali not chasing Warne

Cricket

AFP, Kandy

Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan said on Monday he was not after Shane Warne's world record after demolishing the West Indies in the second cricket Test here.

The off-spinner grabbed eight for 46 as the tourists, set a huge victory target of 378, fought for 137 before tea on the fourth day at Kandy's Asgiriya Stadium.

The 33-year-old now has 549 Test wickets from 93 matches, second only to Australian Warne, who took his tally to 589 from 124 games after Sunday's first Test against England at Lord's.

"I think I have a long way to go before I can catch up with Warne," Muralitharan told reporters after the win helped Sri Lanka sweep the short series 2-0.

"Shane is a great bowler and he is bowling beautifully at the moment. Frankly, I do not think of the record when I go out there to bowl. My job is to bowl well and help Sri Lanka win."

"I have won quite a few matches for



US goalkeeper Kasey Keller (L) sends Panamanian Luis Tejada (C) flying during the CONCACAF Gold Cup final at Giants Stadium in East Rutherford on Sunday.

Robben downs Milan

AFP, Foxboro

Dutchman Arjen Robben scored in the 12th minute to give reigning English Premiership champion Chelsea a 1-0 victory over UEFA Champions League runner-up AC Milan on Sunday in a football friendly.

Robben took a pass from Frances Claude Makelele and blasted a 20-meter shot into the bottom right corner for the game winner against the Italian Serie A powerhouse before 26,208.

AC Milan, a loser on penalty kicks to Liverpool in this year's UEFA Champions League final in May, was without Ukrainian standout Andriy Shevchenko as well as Brazilian star Kaka and talented Italian striker Paolo Maldini.

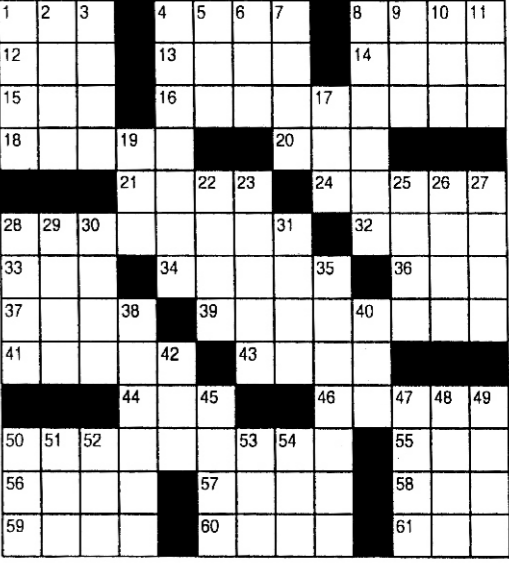
Argentina's Hernan Crespo received the start for Chelsea against AC Milan, the club for which he played last season.

AC Milan and Chelsea will meet again next Sunday at Giants Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, to conclude their US tour.

Each will face a Major League Soccer club in an exhibition friendly before the rematch. AC Milan will visit the Chicago Fire on Wednesday while Chelsea will travel to D.C. United, the reigning US league champion, on Thursday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS 39 Cohort of 41 Key 4 Actress Downey 8 Billie - King 12 Affliction 13 McCormack of "Will & Grace" 14 Glee club member 15 Bowl over 16 Clingy types 18 2005 "Survivor" setting 20 Wapiti 21 ... Congeniality 24 Wild 28 He had a list of citations 32 Ms. Moore 33 Simile center 34 Tire pattern 36 Pigs' digs 37 Spectacles wearer's choice



CRYPTOQUIP R Z T X Q L J S U G L J Q T S S TAG Y T X Z V M R Z L Q L W V I

Y M L W H A U H T A T ? H R L J S U I T G " Z L L I H V M U T U U G ! " Yesterday's Cryptoquip: ALTHOUGH MY FINGERS OFTEN AGREED WITH ME, MY THUMB ALWAYS SEEMED TO BE OPPOSED.

Today's Cryptiquip Clue: S equals L. The Cryptiquip 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.