

Robinho's fitting home farewell

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Robinho celebrated his last home game for Santos by converting two penalties in a 4-3 Brazilian championship win over Figueirense on Sunday.

The Brazil international was greeted by dozens of children as he took the field for his last match at the Vila Belmiro stadium before he completes his move to Spanish side Real Madrid.

His teammates lifted him into the air as he celebrated his first goal while he kneeled and kissed the pitch after converting the second.

Santos raced to a 4-0 lead in half hour with Robinho's two penalties and goals by Elton, who fired home a rebound after Ricardinho's shot hit the crossbar, and former Barcelona and Olympiakos midfielder Giovanni.

But the Brazilian champions suffered a fright as struggling Figueirense replied with three goals in 13 minutes after halftime from Cleber, Michel Bastos and Edmundo.

Cleber also hit the crossbar with a header in the 77th minute.

"I'm very happy," said Robinho, who has one more game to play for Santos away to Paysandu on Wednesday.

"I wanted to bid farewell to the Vila with a win."

Santos moved up to fourth in the table with 36 points from 21 games.

Corinthians, who have 39 points, stayed top as the competition reached its halfway stage after a late equaliser gave them a 1-1 home draw against second-placed Goias, who are two points behind.

HOOKES KILLING Doorman acted in self-defence

AFP, Melbourne

A doorman charged with killing prominent Australian cricket coach David Hookes outside a Melbourne pub claimed in court Monday that he had acted in self-defence.

Zdravko Micevic, 23, went on trial charged with manslaughter and assault over the January 2004 incident outside the pub in Melbourne's Saint Kilda neighborhood. He has pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Hookes, 48, a former Test batsman and coach of the Victoria state team at the time, died of head injuries a day after being punched by Micevic outside the pub, where members of the Victoria team were celebrating a victory.

Defence lawyers told the jury Monday that Hookes and his friends acted aggressively when told to leave the pub at closing time and that the coach was forcibly ejected from the building by security guards.

The prosecution alleges Hookes then walked away from the pub and had his hands by his sides when he was punched by Micevic, causing him to hit his head on the road.

But Micevic's lawyer said Monday that his client, a former amateur boxer, had acted in self-defence after Hookes punched him twice.

Monday's session before the Victoria state Supreme Court was taken up with opening arguments. The first witness will give evidence on Tuesday.

Where hope

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team will be reminded about, is that instead of crowds numbering tens of thousands, they will note spectators in mere hundreds, scattered among the small stands and on banks below the trees.

There has been some confusion here whether India will arrive in Harare at mid-day tomorrow Tuesday, onward to Bulawayo from there, or fly directly from Johannesburg.

Either way they will have little time to prepare for the imminent tri-national tournament against the Kiwis and Zimbabwe.

The former have been here three weeks adjusting to climate, environment and pitches. They have also enjoyed sampling the magnificent Victoria Falls and played some golf (rather badly apparently) among the locals.

The New Zealanders have also shown strength in depth on the cricket field, both batting and bowling, not least the spectacular recovery of Shane Bond following 27 months out of the game with back problems. Now they have welcomed one-day specialists including Chris Cairns and Craig McMillan to the squad.

India will go right into the deep end against them at Bulawayo on Friday. It will be quite a baptism to the tournament.

At least they will be able to make some rapid assessments by watching the first match on Wednesday between the home side and the Kiwis.

These two sides are playing a glorified match Monday following "kill time" practising on the Queens Sports Club grounds.

This time in the year in Zimbabwe is inclined to be windy and warm, so some great cricket is in prospect.



PHOTO: REUTERS

(L) Fans of Santos watch as their star Robinho (R) waves goodbye after playing his last home match in the Brazilian Championship before his departure for Spain's Real Madrid, at Santos on Sunday. The banner reads 'Robinho, you will be in our hearts, always'.

PREMIERSHIP

Fortune favours Chelsea

Football

AFP, London

Didier Drogba overshadowed debutant Michael Essien to poach a fluke winner for Chelsea's first league victory over Arsenal in 10 years in Sunday's Premiership clash at Stamford Bridge.

Drogba once again out-muscled Philippe Senderos - as he did twice at Cardiff's Millennium stadium in the Community Shield - to latch onto a Frank Lampard free-kick and bundle the ball past Jens Lehmann.

The goal owed little to Drogba's skill or technique, though, as it bounced off his knee as he tried to control it in full stride in the 73rd minute.

"It's fantastic and it's important," said Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho.

"We beat our opponents for the title. We have won against them twice in 16 days - it's important but it's one more game."

"If you lose this game it's not the end of the world, if you win you're not the best team in the world - so you have to keep calm."

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger bemoaned his team's cutting edge.

"I feel our physical pressure was too weak, therefore we did not score," said the Frenchman.

"We had enough possession to score goals and we need to be more efficient."

Wenger had looked determined not to lose his 500th match in charge of the Gunners, opting for a conservative approach.

He employed a five-man midfield with Pires operating in an advanced role to support lone front man Thierry Henry, with Freddie Ljungberg and Alexander Hleb probing from the flanks.

But the French handler was forced into a change after 25 minutes as Ljungberg limped off to be replaced by Robin van Persie who went to play alongside Henry allowing Pires to revert to right midfield.

Mourinho played the in-form Hernan Crespo up front instead of Drogba but Essien had to be content with a place on the bench - more than was offered to Ricardo Carvalho who paid for his midweek dissent with a place in the stands.

The two London giants created a glut of chances in the first three minutes.

First, Damien Duff scampered

down the right on to an incisive Lampard pass only to be beaten to the ball by goalkeeper Jens Lehmann.

From the resulting corner, John Terry rose highest to power a header goalwards that beat Lehmann but not Ljungberg standing by the back post.

Next it was Arsenal's turn to threaten with Henry placing a deliberate curling shot from 20 yards just past the post after neat build-up play.

The match was briefly interrupted by a streaker who went through a whole gymnastic routine and hugged Ljungberg and Lauren before the dazing stewards reacted to his presence.

Chelsea survived a penalty appeal when Pires corner bounced up and hit Lampard's arm but referee Graham Poll was unsighted at the far end of the penalty area.

Right at the end of the first half, just as he did a week ago, Mourinho had little time in trying to find a goal, swapping the ineffectual Crespo with Drogba at half-time.

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Nutritionist revamps Ronaldo!

Football

MADRID

Real Madrid wing-back Roberto Carlos has revealed Ronaldo lost his motivation to play last season.

However, Roberto Carlos says his good pal is now showing the determination again - thanks in part to the club's nutritionist and fellow Brazilian Patricia Teixeira.

"Yes, Patricia is taking care of him very well," Roberto Carlos told AS. "She takes care of us all, but Roni especially."

"Roni has won everything in football except for the Champions League, he is an idol in the world of football, but last year he lost the motivation to play and now it has returned."

"He wants to score many goals and finally I see him very motivated and focused."

Teixeira, 29, had been hired as Real's dietician last season and she has already made a big impression on star player including England captain David Beckham. "Patricia is doing a great job," said Beckham. "Having a person who watches out for what you eat is very important."

An insider at the club said: "She's (Teixeira) smart, bubbly and strikingly beautiful - and has certainly brightened up Real Madrid."

A player at Brazilian club Santos, where Patricia used to work, said: "She always prescribed us a good



PATRICIA TEIXEIRA

diet - and also gave advice to the wives of married players."

Teixeira was brought in on the recommendation of Real's Brazilian manager Vanderlei Luxemburgo.

He is understood to have been impressed with her work at Santos. A

Real source said: "She's delighted to be working with such a talented team. She's been given the job of ridding the players of any excess fat so they can perform better on the pitch."

Over the past months players have had to get used to being weighed regularly as well as having their body fat measured.

The source said: "Patricia has been designing diets tailored to the players' individual needs.

"She has increased the intake of proteins for some and reduced the amount of fat others eat."

(Internet Source)



PHOTO: COURTESY

National captain Habibul Bashar (C) and vice-captain Khaled Mashud (L) receiving a crest on behalf of the national cricket team from Cricketers' Welfare Association of Bangladesh president Helaluddin Khan Liton (2nd from L) and general secretary Naimur Rahman (3rd from L) and former Bangladesh Cricket Board general secretary Rais Uddin Ahmed at a function on Saturday.

Tait's hostile reminder

Cricket

AFP, London

Australian quick Shaun Tait hopes his hostile win in the drawn tour match against Northamptonshire will be enough to give him an Ashes Test debut against England on Thursday.

The 22-year-old had an eventful day at Wantage Road against the English county side taking two wickets and forcing opener Tim Roberts to retire with blood pouring from a gash above his left eyebrow.

Tait finished the contest with a wound of his own when Ben Phillips unleashed a booming drive which struck him on his knee causing him to collapse to the ground.

He left the field and is assured the bruising will not effect his chances of an international bowler in the fourth Test at Trent Bridge starting Thursday.

"It was pretty painful for a while but

it is not too bad now," said Tait who has been widely tipped to replace the misfiring Jason Gillespie in the Australian team which is locked at 1-1 against England in after three of the five Tests.

"There will probably be a couple of days of soreness but I should be alright. The boys were taking the micky out of me because it was nothing serious but there was a lot of pain for five minutes."

"Matthew Hayden kicked me on the back and told me to get up -- they are tough old blokes I suppose!"

Tait tempted Usman Afzaal into an ugly pull and knocked out David Sales' leg-stump to finish with two for 52.

"I felt pretty good, there was some decent pace but a couple more wickets would have been handy," said the South Australian who is vying with Michael Kasprowicz for the third seamer's place in the Test team.

"It would be everything for me to

play for my country, just like it would be for any young cricketer. One thing I do know is that I am ready for that sort of cricket; if the opportunity comes up I am definitely going to stick my hand up and bowl well."

"Ability to reverse swing the ball might be in Tait's favour, given the current trend for taking wickets in the Ashes, although those to have witnessed his short-lived spell at Durham last summer -- he was sent home after just two fruitless County Championship games in which he was plagued by no-balls and went at nearly 10-an-over -- might not consider him a valid threat."

However, within a week of being back in Adelaide the problem was fixed and he claimed 65 wickets in the Pura Cup upon his return to action, the second-best return in the history of Australia's first-class competition, to earn his place on this tour.

Michael Owen makes a sensational return from Real Madrid then Cisse, who has been linked with a move to Marseille, could be out.

Fernando Morientes has scored only twice and Frenchman Florent Sinama Pongolle has hardly been used.

Djibril Cisse is the club's most successful forward so far with five goals, but if Anfield's former golden boy

"I have said many times that we have six strikers here and even if we are down to five, it will be the same. I need players in another position and I am not doing anything about Owen," said Benitez.

"I am talking with my scouts about a centre-back and a winger. I am not talking about Michael."

Liverpool head into Tuesday's clash with CSKA Sofia 3-1 up hoping they can satisfy the fans with goals and a place in the group phase but a lack of goals could encourage Benitez to think twice about Owen.

On Friday, Liverpool face CSKA Moscow in the Super Cup in Monaco three days after Benitez has tackled CSKA Sofia.

Benitez not worried

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

AFP, Paris

Liverpool manager Rafael Benitez is one match away from leading the Anfield giants back into the Champions League group phase but he still hasn't solved his striker dilemma.

The European champions entertain CSKA Sofia at Anfield on Tuesday in the second leg of their third round Champions League qualifier, defending a 3-1 lead but still without leading scorer Steven Gerrard.

The club captain picked up a calf muscle injury against Sunderland on Saturday.

Gerrard has poached the limelight away from the team's forwards with six goals from seven games which is worrying for Benitez who has a pool of six strikers at his disposal.

Czech forward Milan Baros has played little part in Liverpool's new campaign and has been linked with a move to either Aston Villa or French champions Lyon.

New signing Peter Crouch picked up a hamstring injury in Liverpool's 2-0

win over Kaunas in the last round remains sidelined; Neil Mellor is also injured.

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