

SUPER CUP
Gerrard's chances slim today

AFP, Monaco

Liverpool's inspirational skipper Steven Gerrard is set for an overdue rest as the European champions take on UEFA Cup winners CSKA Moscow in the Super Cup here on Friday.

Gerrard missed the midweek Champions League qualifier against CSKA Sofia with a calf injury and coach Rafael Benitez is tempted to keep the England international under wraps with a long Premiership and European season ahead.

"It is only a possibility that Steven can play," said Benitez.

"But it will now be difficult, even if we will still consider the possibility because the player wants to play. But we need to be careful with him.

"I have talked to the doctor and it will be hard for Steven to play on Friday. He wants to play and I want him to play, and it is a trophy we want to win, so we will wait and see."

Gerrard's presence was missed on Wednesday when Liverpool slumped to a 1-0 defeat to the Bulgarians but they still made the Champions League group stages courtesy of a 3-1 lead in the first leg.

CSKA Moscow's Croatia striker Ivica Olic will miss Friday's game after suffering a knee injury in the 1-1 friendly draw against Brazil.

INZAMAM'S EXCLUSION
PCB not to lock horns with ICC
PTI, Karachi

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has expressed its disappointment over Inzamamul Haq's exclusion from World XI teams but said it would not take up the matter with the International Cricket Council (ICC).

PCB chairman Shaharyar Khan, after a meeting with President Pervez Musharraf, told PTI from Islamabad that he was personally disappointed that the country's best batsman had failed to find a place in either of the two teams.

"As chairman of PCB, I am disappointed because Inzamam is a class act and a proven performer and deserved to be in the team. But while saying this, I add that I respect and accept the selection process and would not take up the matter with the ICC or its selectors," Shaharyar said.

Inzamam, who led Asia in last week's Afro-Asian series, was overlooked for October's Super Series.

The Pakistan captain averages 94 in Tests and 52 in one-day internationals this year. The 35-year-old has averages of 34 in Tests and 32 in one-dayers against the world champions.

His exclusion has been severely criticised by country's former Test stalwarts while the skipper's fan club is holding a demonstration in front of Karachi Press Club Thursday afternoon against ICC president Ehsan Mani and chairman of selectors Sunil Gavaskar.

Rain holds

FROM PAGE 16
It was the bowler's sixth no-ball and 17th of the innings.

Before play began Thursday spectators dressed as umpires managed to evade security staff and walk to the middle before they were escorted off the field.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at tea on the first day of the fourth Ashes Test between England and Australia at Trent Bridge in Nottingham on Thursday:

ENGLAND: First innings				
Trescothick not out	65			
Strauss c Hayden b Warne	35			
Vaughan not out	15			
Extras: (nb-19)	19			
Total: (For 1 wkt in 30.1 overs)	134			
Fall of wickets: 1-105				
To bat: Bell, Pietersen, Flintoff, G Jones, Giles, Hoggard, Harmison, S Jones.				

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Lee	9	1	44	0
Kasprowicz	10	1	42	0
Tait	6.1	1	26	0
Warne	5	1	22	1

AUSTRALIA: Langer, Hayden, Ponting, Martyn, Katich, Clarke, Gilchrist, Warne, Lee, Tait, Kasprowicz.

Toss: England.
Umpires: Aleem Dar (Pakistan) and Steve Bucknor (West Indies)

India cricketers

FROM PAGE 16
"If there are any adverse remarks against any player, we will put up the issue before the board."

Indian media had reported that some players, including captain Sourav Ganguly, reached Mumbai late on Monday evening to take the Harare flight past midnight.

Cricket officials said the players had been asked to arrive in Mumbai by Monday afternoon.

Ganguly's late arrival forced the pre-tour news conference to be delayed by over three hours. Mahendra said coach Greg Chappell did not lodge a formal complaint.

The incident comes after media reports of some differences within the side during the recent one-day tri-series in Sri Lanka.

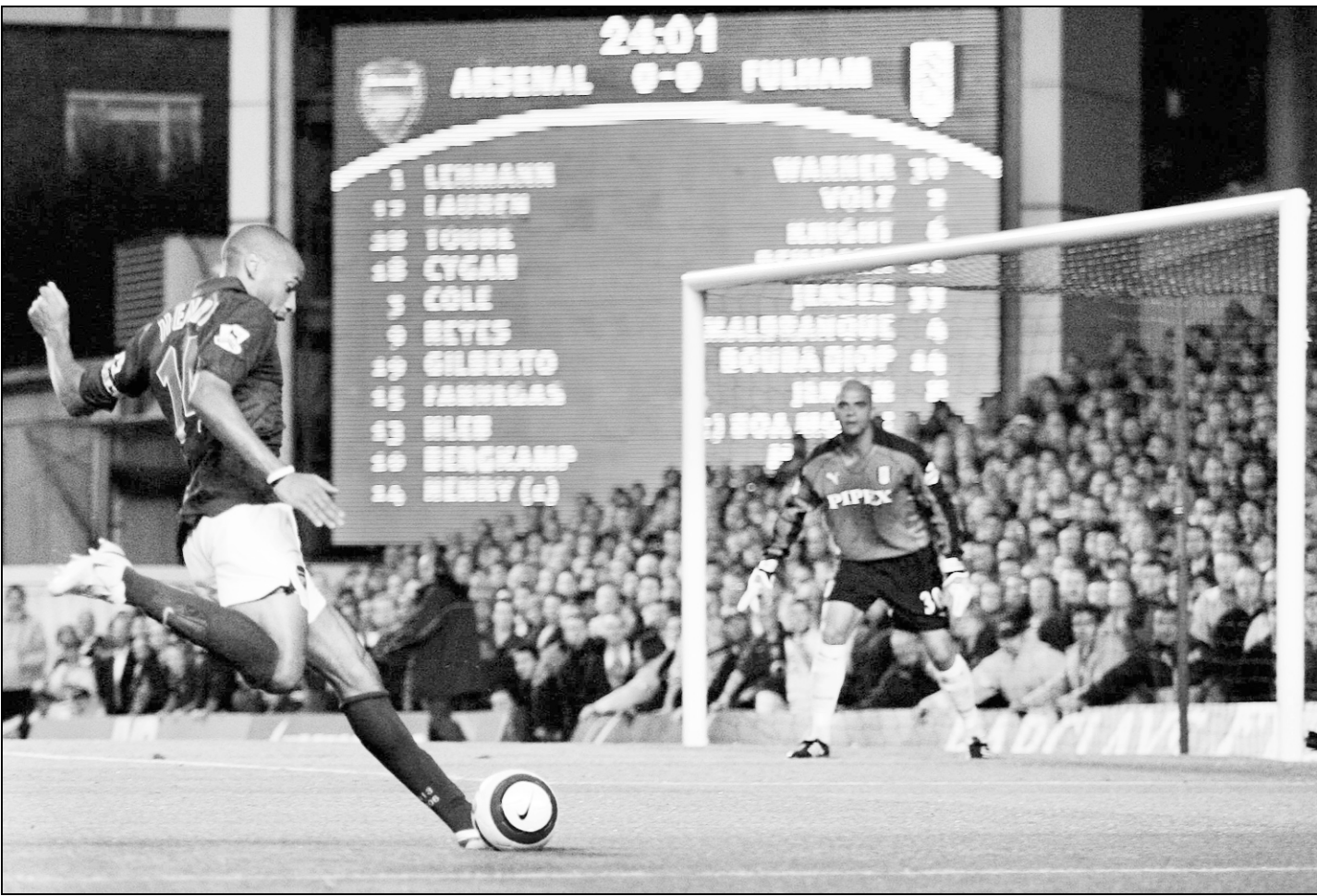


PHOTO: AFP

Arsenal Thierry Henry is about to take a shot on goal during their match against Fulham at Highbury football stadium on August 24.

No major shocks



AFP, Paris

Former European champions Manchester United and Scottish giants Rangers moved into the Champions League group stages on Wednesday but Everton's hopes of joining them were shattered in Spain.

United beat Debrecan of Hungary 3-0 in Budapest while Rangers saw off Anorthosis Famagusta of Cyprus 2-0.

However, Everton, playing in Europe's top tournament for the first time in 34 years, suffered a 2-1 defeat against Villarreal and will have to content themselves with a place in the UEFA Cup.

Also going through to Thursday's draw for the group stage were former winners Inter Milan, who saw off Shakhtar Donetsk 1-1 on the night but 3-1 on aggregate and Ajax who beat Brondby 3-1 in Amsterdam for a 5-3 aggregate win.

A high injury sustained by England defender Gary Neville soured Manchester United's 3-0 victory in Hungary.

United overcame testing periods with a double from Gabriel Heinze and a Kieran Richardson strike.

But the injury to Neville, who was stretched out after just 12 minutes, is now likely to keep the experienced full-back out of England's

crucial World Cup qualifiers against Wales and Northern Ireland next month.

Everton's brief Champions League flirtation ended in controversy when Villarreal condemned them to a 4-2 aggregate defeat.

Trailing 2-1 from the first leg, Everton conceded a 20th minute goal when Juan Pablo Sorin scored and they were indebted to a string of fine saves from veteran goalkeeper Nigel Martyn to keep them in the game.

But then Mikael Arteta gave them a 70th minute lifeline before a headed goal from Duncan Ferguson was controversially ruled out by referee Pierluigi Collina which would have taken the tie into extra-time.

Diego Forlan then scored a breakaway goal in injury time to send the Spaniards into the money-spinning group stages while Everton head for the UEFA Cup.

Scottish champions Rangers clinched a spot in the lucrative group stages with a comprehensive 2-0 win over Cypriot champions Anorthosis Famgusta at Ibrox.

Belgian international Thomas Buffel and Croatian star Dado Prso were the goalscorers as the Glasgow club moved into Thursday's draw in Monaco with a 4-1 aggregate scoreline that will be worth an estimated 10 million pounds (15 million euros).

A lack of home support failed to prevent Inter Milan from reaching the group stages.

The Serie A side's second leg match against Ukrainian side Shakhtar Donetsk was played behind closed doors at the San Siro, punishment for their fans' unruly behaviour in the competition last season.

Yet despite their handicap, Inter booked their place in Thursday's draw with a 1-1 draw which secured a comfortable 3-1 aggregate victory for the two-time European champions.

Injury-prone Uruguayan Alvaro Recoba, making his first start for Inter since February 16, gave the hosts an early lead only for Brazilian midfielder Elano to level the scores for the visitors before half-time.

German side Werder Bremen qualified for the second successive season scoring three goals in eight minutes to clinch a 3-0 second leg win over FC Basel.

Basel led 2-1 from the first leg and spurned good chances to increase that cushion but Bremen rode their luck to triumph 4-2 on aggregate and join German teams Bayern Munich and Schalke 04 in the group stages.

An eight minute spell ended Basel's dreams with Croatian international Ivan Klasnic scoring twice (64, 72) and German international Tim Borowski converting a 68th minute penalty.

She only wanted Van Persie

AFP, The Hague

The woman who accused Arsenal's Dutch star Robin van Persie of rape actually wanted to have sex with the "nice" footballer, a newspaper reported Thursday.

But what she didn't want was a foursome with two friends accompanying Van Persie, a married man she described as "nice", De Telegraaf said, quoting statements made by the woman to the police.

"I really would have wanted to sleep with him if it had all passed off peacefully," she is quoted as saying.

"But all three wanted sex with me, which wasn't really in my plans," she said.

She said she cried rape "so the police came quickly. At no moment did I think I was being raped."

She called the police from the Rotterdam hotel room the three men had taken her and was later discovered naked and dazed.

According to De Telegraaf, the woman changed her testimony to police: "I have some doubts about everything that has been said."

Van Persie has been released from custody after spending two weeks behind bars but prosecutors will continue to investigate the rape charges against him.

The 21-year-old player is not required to stay in the Netherlands during the investigation and has since returned to club duty for Arsenal.

Owen to Liverpool via Newcastle?

AP, London

Michael Owen may be returning to Liverpool after all -- via Newcastle.

Frustrated at sitting on the bench at Real Madrid, Owen has asked the Spanish club's president, Florentino Perez, for a move. He wants to return to the Premier League and, preferably, Liverpool, where he spent the first eight seasons of his career.

"The (Madrid) president understood and said he would try to help me achieve this," Owen said. "If the transfer cannot be finalized in time I have agreed to go to Newcastle United, but only on a one-year loan. I need to be playing regularly in a World Cup year."

However, Newcastle said Wednesday it agreed to a club-record transfer fee with Madrid rather than a loan. Madrid confirmed the Magpies' bid and said it had heard nothing from Liverpool.

Now it's up to Owen to decide his future.

If he chooses to stay with Madrid, he risks spending most of another season on the bench watching the likes of Ronaldo, Raul Gonzalez, Robinho and Julio Baptista. That would hamper England, which needs him tuned for next year's World Cup.

If he goes to Newcastle, he'll start alongside former England teammate Alan Shearer but in a misfiring team not in the Champions League. It would also upset Liverpool fans.

While Real Madrid and Liverpool are both in Thursday's draw for the group stage of the Champions League, Newcastle failed even to reach the UEFA Cup through the InterToto competition.

Liverpool fans would welcome him back if he rejoined England teammates Steven Gerrard and Jamie Carragher. He may even provide the goals the club is lacking in its attempt to retain the Champions League trophy and challenge Chelsea in the Premier League.

PREMIERSHIP

Chelsea's best so far



AFP, London

Champions Chelsea returned to the Premiership summit just three games into the new season after a comfortable 4-0 victory over West Brom at Stamford Bridge on Wednesday.

Elsewhere Stelios Giannakopoulos proved the inspiration for Bolton as they swept past Newcastle 2-0 at the Reebok Stadium to send the Toon Army into the bottom three.

And Tottenham dropped their first points of the season but still went second after a 0-0 draw at Blackburn while Arsenal rebounded from defeat at Chelsea to beat Fulham 4-1 and move up to fourth.

Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho rang the changes before the game, bringing in Michael Essien and Shaun Wright-Phillips for their full debuts while Joe Cole made his first appearance of the season.

There was also a start for Glen Johnson in defence but rebel centre back Ricardo Carvalho had to settle for a place on the bench.

Mourinho was delighted after the game. He said: "We played well. We looked very confident and compact, there were no defensive problems and we used the ball very well.

"We had control of the game and always looked dangerous. The result expressed what happened on the pitch.

"We were better than against Arsenal, the team played better

football."

The game was all but over by half-time as Frank Lampard, with the first of two goals, and Joe Cole put the finishing touches to flowing moves from the home side.

Chris Kirkland produced two fine saves in the second half but could do nothing about Drogha's finish on 68 minutes or Lampard's second 10 minutes from time.

Following interest from Liverpool earlier in the day, Stelios boosted his transfer value with a starring role in Bolton's first win of the season.

El Hadji Diouf scored the first goal on 37 minutes and then set up the Greece midfielder to make the points secure on 50 minutes.

Newcastle slumped into the relegation zone after a second demoralising defeat in three games, highlighting their need for a new striker.

If Michael Owen was watching he would not have been encouraged but manager Graeme Souness needs to sign the England striker quickly if he is to avoid another dismal season at St James' Park.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger paid tribute to his two goalscorers, Thierry Henry and Pascal Cygan, and Dennis Bergkamp who he brought back into the side along with Jose Antonio Reyes.

"We created chances and had the mental strength to keep going and that is the important thing," he said.

"Pascal Cygan played very well. We needed experience at the back

and I wanted to give Philippe Senderos a breather.

"Thierry Henry did extremely well leading the line and Dennis Bergkamp is a great player - you never lose your touch and he still plays great games."

Lauren missed an early penalty after Zat Knight brought down Henry in the box and the Gunners were made to pay when Claus Jensen fired the visitors in front.

Cygan headed in Bergkamp's flighted free-kick to restore parity before two second half goals from Henry took him to within one goal of Ian Wright's all-time scoring record for Arsenal.

Cygan added his second in stoppage time, prodding home from close range to make the most of his inclusion in place of Senderos who suffered a torrid time against Drogha on Sunday.

Tottenham went into the night's games top of the Premiership but manager Martin Jol bizarrely rested England forward Jermain Defoe and first choice central midfield pairing Michael Carrick and Edgar Davis.

Miguel Pedro Mendes and Michael Brown came in to the midfield with Robbie Keane making his first start up front but Tottenham looked disjointed and impotent.

Blackburn were by far the more adventurous of the two teams as Spurs created nothing in front of goal.

The game became heated in the final moments with Lucas Neill sent off after a second booking 14 minutes from time.

Tamim propels U-17 cricketers

BDNEWS, Dhaka

A brilliant 86 by Tamim Iqbal guided the Bangladesh under-17 cricket team to seven-wicket win over over Sri Lanka in the International Golden Hope Challenge tournament at the Bayuemas Oval in Malaysia yesterday.

It was the Bangladesh's fourth successive victory and they will now play either Sri Lanka or the hosts in Sunday's final.

Winning the toss, captain Saquib Al Hasan sent Sri Lanka into bat and the Bangladesh youths bowled the islanders out for only 131 in 45.2 overs after he and Shuvo did their damage sharing seven wickets.

Saquib captured four wickets while Shorwardhi Shuvo bagged three wickets.

Bangladesh cruised to 133-3 in just 19 overs thanks to Tamim, who cracked a century in their opening game. He was later named man-of-the-match. Amit Majumdar scored 24 runs.

Remembering

FROM PAGE 16
Board president Saber Hossain. Former sports minister Obaidul Quader called for keeping politics out of sports.

Former national footballer Tutul informed that the best 30 players would be picked for a long-term training after the tournament under national coach Golam Sarwar Tipu.

The 22 teams will be split into seven groups and eight teams will play in the second round before the semifinals and the final.

PARTICIPATING TEAMS

Doel: Mirpur, Sabujbagh, Cantonment; **Pairst:** Ramna, Tejgaon, Khilgaon; **Moins:** Shyampur, Kotwali, Demra; **Tias:** Badda, Sutrapur, Pallabi; **Kokils:** Gulshan, Lalbagh, Dhanmondi; **Malchanga:** Motijheel, Kafrul, Motijheel; **Shaliks:** Biman Bandar, Uttara, Hazaribagh and Kamrangirchar.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	DOWN
1 It's all in your head	1 Actor James
6 Sand unit	2 Baffler
11 To get to the other side?	3 Citric quaff
12 Having a border	4 Dr.
14 Didn't disembark	5 Singer
15 Fit for consumption	6 Lichriated
20 Stratagem	7 Frees (of)
21 Towel designation	8 Chartres chum
23 Hippies' gathering	9 Permeates with dye
24 Hagar the Horrible's dog	10 Journalist
26 Reads under	11 They're often penciled in
28 Aye	13 Campus bigwigs
30 "Agnus --"	18 Marceau role
31 Combined genetically	
35 Painting of a scene	

Solution time: 27 mins.
ACROSS
1 ACHED
2 LUMBAR
3 ORAL
4 RAMES
5 GYOTIS
6 ELYTH
7 GLOD
8 SILE
9 ACTION
10 LOP
11 GIN
12 THEN
13 VANISH
14 HEADWAY
15 LOWED
16 ORR
17 INN
18 ADAGE
19 SITS
20 GEE
21 RAYON

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11						12			13
14						15			
16				17	18			19	
20		21		22			23		
			25		26		27		
		28		29		30			
31	32	33		34		35	36	37	38
39				40		41		42	
43				44			45		46
47			48			49		50	
51						52			
		53				54			

CRYPTOQUIP
DBY SYLQICU, JRZZHZQ
DY QY YLD HZ UNICSF
YE EYGY, BNCN FNICG
UIKHZQ. "RND LU JCNK."
Yesterday's Cryptquip: IF THE CLINICAL LAB WERE RECRUITING, I THINK IT COULD BE LOOKING FOR NEW BLOOD.
Today's Cryptquip Clue: B equals W
The Cryptquip 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.