

PRIMERA LIGA

Barca denied by former 'keeper

Football

AFP, Madrid

Reigning Spanish champions Barcelona got off to an unimpressive start to the new season when they were held to a 0-0 draw by newly-promoted Alaves on Saturday.

To add the frustration of Barca coach Frank Rijkaard, the man responsible for denying the Spanish giants victory, Alaves' Argentine international goalkeeper Roberto Bonano, was told 20 months ago that he was not wanted at the Catalan club.

Bonano, who spent two-and-a-half miserable seasons at Barca until January 2004, pulled off a series of spectacular saves to salvage a point for the Basque club.

But Rijkaard bore no grudges against the player he once deemed surplus to requirements.

"We did everything we could to win this game on a tricky pitch. We created a lot of opportunities but between the posts and Bonano, we failed to find the goal. We did well but we let a victory slip from our grasp," said Rijkaard.

"I still think we are carrying on where we left last season and you saw a team that was working for 90 minutes. We showed off our talent but just couldn't get a goal."

Bonano thwarted good efforts by Samuel Eto'o and Ludovic Giuly during the first half and then carried on where he left off after the interval.

Ronaldinho looked set to score on two occasions in the opening minutes of the second half but Bonano added the World Player of the Year to the list of opponents unable to get past him.

The Brazilian hit the post after 51 minutes, the one occasion when Bonano was beaten, but Ronaldinho's near-miss was to be the closest Barcelona came to scoring.

Bonano continued to make it a bad night for Barca with a host of crucial stops, including a couple from former European Golden Boot Henrik Larsson, who came on midway through the second half for Giuly.



PHOTO: AFP

NO WAY PAST HIM: Alaves' goalkeeper Bonano (R) denies Barcelona's Cameroonian striker Samuel Eto'o at the Mendizorrosa stadium in Vitoria on Saturday.

Bonano had to bear the brunt of the Catalan club's fans anger for their failure to win a trophy during his time at the Nou Camp from the summer of 2001 until Rijkaard finally showed him the door.

At the other end, Alaves' strikers themselves looked more likely to find the net as the game progressed, with their best chance coming when Rodolfo Bodipo hit the post on counter-attack after 74 minutes.

Barcelona will now be looking carefully at how their bitter rivals Real Madrid perform on Sunday at last season's second division champions Cadiz.

Athletic Bilbao found the net three times in the second half to win 3-0 over rivals Real Sociedad in the Basque derby later on Saturday.

Francisco Yeste got the first goal of the Spanish season from close range, barely two minutes after the break.

Fernando Llorente then put Athletic in control, moving quickly onto a loose ball and chipping it over the head of Sociedad goalkeeper Asier Riesgo five minutes later.

Ten minutes from time, Athletic defender Luis Prieto clinched victory with his first goal in six years, sneaking in unmarked by the far post to slot home a Tiko Martinez free kick.

Pablo Aimar got the only goal in Valencia's 1-0 win over Real Betis, a splendid strike six minutes after the break.

The Argentine international midfielder controlled a long ball with his left boot before switching sides and finding the net with his right foot from the edge of the area.

SERIE A

Palladino's memorable debut

AFP, Rome

Raffaele Palladino scored on his Serie A debut to give Livorno a 2-1 home victory over Lecce in the first match of the new season on Saturday.

The 21-year-old forward struck shortly after the break to secure a hard-fought win over the Puglian side whose defence was the worst in the top division last season, leaking 73 goals.

Cristiano Lucarelli, last season's top scorer in Serie A with 24 goals, gave Livorno the lead in the 12th minute with a low, right-footed drive from the edge of the penalty area.

Lucarelli was denied a second goal when he headed Marc Pfertzel's right-wing cross against a post before Lecce drew level six minutes from half-time.

Jorge Vargas bundled over Souleymane Diamoutene in the box and Alex Pinardi coolly converted the penalty kick.

The home side kept their composure and regained the advantage three minutes after the interval.

Poor defending by the visitors let Palladino in on goal and his rising shot from 12 yards gave Vincenzo Sicignano no chance.

Later Saturday, Fiorentina play at home Sampdoria.

On Sunday, champions Juventus host Chievo, AC Milan visit Ascoli and Inter Milan entertain Treviso.

Ronaldo in drugs probe

AP, Sao Paulo

Ronaldo will be questioned by Brazilian police after his name came up in tapped phone conversations between alleged members of an Ecstasy ring, local media said Saturday.

Ronaldo, who is not a suspect in the investigation, will have to talk to authorities because the alleged ring members said the Real Madrid striker was at a party in which drugs were consumed, police investigator Luiz Marcelo Xavier told the Folha de S. Paulo newspaper.

Authorities said Ronaldo would only be charged with a crime if there was strong evidence that he actually consumed drugs during the party, Folha reported.

The former FIFA player of the year has denied any wrongdoing.

One of the alleged ring members who cited Ronaldo's name was Amon Lemos, the brother of the striker's former girlfriend, Brazilian model Livia Lemos. He was one of the men arrested during a police bust last month in Rio de Janeiro on charges of dealing Ecstasy on the Internet.

Amon Lemos said Brazilian pop star Gabriel Pensador also attended the party, but the singer has also denied any wrongdoing.

It wasn't immediately clear when the party happened.

Ronaldo is expected to talk to authorities next week after returning to Brazil for the country's World Cup qualifying match against Chile on Sept. 4.

Ricky faces hearing

AFP, Nottingham

Australia captain Ricky Ponting was to appear before match referee Ranjan Madugalle after stumps Sunday following his angry reaction to being run-out during the fourth Test against England.

Ponting was run out by substitute Gary Pratt's direct hit for 48 having batted well as Australia were made to follow-on for the first time in 17 years.

Pratt was fielding as substitute for fast bowler Simon Jones, who was off the field with a right ankle injury that prevented him taking the field on Sunday.

Throughout the series Australia have been concerned by England's use of substitute fielders which they believe are a way of giving the home side's quick bowlers a rest.

Sonali Atit gives ailing Nannu Tk 75,000

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Sonali Atit Club donated Tk 75,000 to ailing former national footballer Monwar Hossain Nannu yesterday.

Nannu has been suffering from cancer.

Founder of the club, former national booter and the Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmed visited Nannu at his residence and handed over the cheque.

President of the club Golam Sarwar Tipu, general secretary Badol Roy and former national defender Kaisar Hamid accompanied the minister during the visit.

PREMIERSHIP

Chelsea into their stride

Football

AFP, London

Champions Chelsea maintained their grip on the Premiership with a commanding 2-0 victory over 10-man Tottenham at White Hart Lane on Saturday.

Manchester City moved into second after stretching their unbeaten run to 12 games, coming from behind to defeat Portsmouth 2-1 while Milan Baros proved the match-winner on his Aston Villa debut as they beat Blackburn 1-0.

But it was in north London where the main fireworks took place as goals from Asier Del Horno and Damien Duff sealed victory for Chelsea and stretched their unbeaten run in the English Premiership to 33 matches.

The eagerly anticipated top-of-the-table clash erupted on 20 minutes as Michael Essien brought down Edgar Davids as he ran through on goal.

Essien escaped with a yellow card and Spurs wasted the ensuing free-kick but they were dealt a hammer blow five minutes later.

Egyptian striker Mido was sent off by referee Rob Styles after leading with his elbow in an aerial challenge with Spanish full-back Del Horno.

He then rubbed salt into Tottenham wounds as he headed home a Frank Lampard corner on 39 minutes to put the Blues in front and score his first goal in English football.

Chelsea coach Jose Mourinho played down the significance of Mido's sending off.

"It was a tough game, but I told

the players beforehand that everyone now wants to beat us. We had to control ourselves and we did," he said.

"People will talk about the sending-off but sometimes 11 players do not beat 10 players.

"Its easy to do win these games if you play properly and I said to the players at half-time that they just had to keep playing their same game, in attack and defence.

"I didnt want to win the game 4-0 - we are playing football, not hockey. I just wanted three points so I'm very satisfied."

Chelsea made a number of changes from the team that thrashed West Brom 4-0 in mid-week, bringing back Duff, Paulo Ferreira and Petr Cech although Joe Cole kept his place in the side.

And it was the recalled Duff who clinched the three points, bundling the ball home after latching on to a cross from substitute Shaun Wright-Phillips.

New signing Baros was paired in the attack with Kevin Phillips as Aston Villa manager David O'Leary dropped Juan Pablo Angel to the bench.

The move quickly paid off as Phillips set up Baros to tuck away his first goal of the season on 11 minutes.

Jason Roberts made history by scoring Wigan's first ever Premiership goal, picking himself up after he was felled in the box by Gary Breen to score from the spot after just two minutes against Sunderland.

Sunderland laid seige to Wigan's goal after that but failed to find the net and Mick McCarthy's team's miserable losing run now stands at 19 Premiership matches, while

Wigan gained their first ever victory in the top flight.

Fulham completed a miserable week for Everton, who were knocked out of the Champions League by Villarreal in midweek, beating the Merseysiders 1-0.

Former Everton striker Brian McBride scored the game's only goal on 57 minutes.

Bolton celebrated a 2-1 win at West Ham. Bolton took the lead as Kevin Nolan prodded the ball home after a typical Trotters bombardment from a corner caused mayhem in the box.

Ivan Campo doubled Bolton's advantage five minutes from time before a last minute Teddy Sheringham penalty salvaged some pride for the hosts who slipped to their first defeat of the season.

Manchester City goalkeeper David James did his England hopes no favours as he flapped at a left wing cross from Portsmouth's Laurent Robert leaving John Vialfa with a simple header to score.

The lead did not last long, though, as Claudio Reina levelled matters on 66 minutes and then Andrew Cole scored a trademark poachers' goal to turn the game on its head.

The victory sent City up to second in the table with only the champions sitting above them.

In the early game, Emile Heskey scored twice as Birmingham won 3-2 at West Bromwich.

Geoff Horsfield also scored twice for the hosts and Jiri Jankowski scored his first goal in English football as Birmingham won their first game this season.

US Open

FROM PAGE 12

Federer spoke at a dinner in the days leading up to the US Open, which begins Monday, about how his life and tennis had come together in the past two years - how it all became less of a struggle than it had been when he was younger and still throwing rackets and tantrums.

"I know what I'm sacrificing for," he said.

"It makes sense to me now. I really have my life in control. Everything is pink, no, I mean, how you say, rosy."

That was a rare language mistake for Federer, who speaks English almost as fluently as he does Swiss-German, German and French.

Federer, already popular throughout Europe, is hoping to follow in the footsteps of the relatively few other European players who became equally popular in the United States - such as Bjorn Borg, Stefan Edberg and Boris Becker.

"I would like to be loved, to have fans around the world," he said.

"I had a moment last year when I felt people always wanted me to lose because I was winning too much. Now I think differently about that. Maybe losing in the Australian (to Marat Safin), but fighting and fighting, showed I was human. In Paris when I lost I felt the fans were for me. Those losses were so important to me. They made a difference in how fans see me and how I see the game."

Agassi lost in the first round of the French Open when sciatic pain shot down his right leg from a herniated disc in his lower back. That injury forced him to skip Wimbledon.

When he returned, after taking a cortisone shot in his spine and working harder than ever to strengthen his abdominal muscles, he won his first title in almost a year at Los Angeles. He followed that up more recently by reaching the final in Montreal before losing to Nadal.

Inzy told not to tolerate indiscipline

PTI, Islamabad

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, also the Patron-in-Chief of the country's cricket board, has asked skipper Inzamam Haq to adopt a "zero-tolerance policy" while handling disciplinary issues.

"President Musharraf told Inzamam clearly that he should be very strong when it came to discipline in the team and should not tolerate any sort of attitude or violation of rules by any player," local daily the News quoted board sources as saying.

"Inzamam was told to adopt a zero-tolerance policy while handling disciplinary issues and to ensure that no player got bigger than the team or the game. The President told Inzamam that he would like to see complete cohesion and discipline in the team as this was the key to success and in building a strong combination for the next World Cup," the sources added.

The sources said Musharraf also made inquiries about the conduct and present form and fitness of star bowler Shoaib Akhtar.

Ponting says sorry

Cricket

REUTERS, Nottingham

Australia captain Ricky Ponting apologised for losing his temper following his dismissal at a crucial stage during the third day of the fourth Ashes Test on Saturday.

Ponting made it clear, however, that he was still annoyed over England's use of specialist substitute fielders during the series.

England coach Duncan Fletcher responded by suggesting that the Australian captain was perhaps in danger of cracking under the pressure.

"I was disappointed over my dismissal, given that it was at a crucial stage of the game and I had worked very hard to get to that point," Ponting said in a statement.

"I let myself down with my reaction and for that I apologise to those who see me as a role model."

Ponting had scored 48 and was helping to stabilise Australia's second innings after they had been forced to follow on when he was run out by a direct hit from specialist

England substitute fielder Gary Pratt. Damien Martyn had called for a risky single. The skipper's dismissal made it 155 for three.

Australia ended the day on 222 for four, still needing 37 more to make England back again. The five-match series stands at 1-1.

After his dismissal, Ponting approached the umpire before firing off angry words towards England's fielders. He also appeared to shout up at the home team's balcony, where coach Duncan Fletcher had been sitting.

Australia have been annoyed by England's regular use of specialist substitute fielders throughout the series, believing the home side's first-choice players often take breaks despite not being genuinely injured.

"My frustration at getting out was compounded by the fact I was run out by a substitute fielder, an issue which as concerned us from the start of the series and one we raised prior to the series," he said.

Pratt was on the field for fast bowler Simon Jones. England announced that Jones had been taken to hospital for treatment on an

injured right ankle.

"It's just part of the series," Fletcher told a news conference. "There a lot of pressure. Things are getting tight and it's about who can handle the pressure better."

"I don't know what he said, I haven't spoken to my players about it. There's always some sort of chat out there. I saw him mumble something but I don't know what he said."

Fletcher defended his use of specialist fielders, saying he asked county sides not in action during Tests to lend their best men to England.

"The issue was brought up during the one-day series. Australia brought it up with the match referee but nothing has been said."

Australia batsman Justin Langer later told the same news conference that England were playing within the letter of the law.

"Perhaps in this day of professionalism it's just another way of getting the best out of the resources," he said.

"If England choose to go down that path we can't argue with it because it's within the rules."

Content Connor

Cricket

BBC ONLINE, undated

Skipper Clare Connor said England's women had been inspired by their male counterparts as they won their own Ashes series against Australia.

Connor's side completed a 1-0 series victory by beating the World Cup holders by six wickets at Worcester on Saturday.

"We've been watching the guys and been inspired by their fight and the way they're playing," he told BBC Sport.

"We've had a good couple of years, beating South Africa and New Zealand, and this is the icing on the cake."

For Connor it was the greatest moment of a captaincy career which began on a dismal tour to Australia and New Zealand in 1999-2000, when England lost nine successive one-day games.

They went into the match at New Road in good heart, having beaten the Southern Stars in a limited-overs international for the first time in 12 years at Stratford-upon-Avon last weekend.

Set only 75 to win, there were a few anxious moments as they struggled to 3-2 and 39-4 before Arran Brindle and Lydia Greenway saw them across the finishing line.

"It's the first series win against Australia since '63, it's the first time Australia have lost a Test match for 21 years, so it's absolutely massive."

"After the disappointment of losing in the semi-finals of the World Cup to Australia only four or five months ago, this is just amazing. The girls are over

the moon - it just means the world to us," said Connor.

Katherine Brunt was named Player of the Match and Player of the Series for her nine wickets in the game and 52 in England's first innings.

"It's a great feeling to win after so many years of losing to Australia and for me to pull out my best performance since I've been with England is great," said the 20-year-old from Barnsley.

Brunt took on the role of chief strike bowler following Lucy Pearson's

Brunt's cricket hero is former England pacesman Darren Gough.

"I just wanted to model myself on Darren as a fast bowler. I never thought I'd come up with figures like this - and it's great to think I could be the women's version of him for England," she added.

BCCI could move to Delhi

CRICINFO, undated

A move has been initiated to shift the Indian cricket board's headquarters from Mumbai to Delhi and, more significantly, change the place of its registration from Chennai to the national capital.

The proposal has come from Jagmohan Dalmiya, the former president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), and has the support of many of its members.

According to the plan, the BCCI is not just keen to shift the headquarters to Delhi but also construct its own state-of-the-art offices, a stark contrast from the decrepit headquarters at the Brabourne Stadium in Mumbai.

According to the Indo-Asian News Service, Dalmiya raised the issue on behalf of the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) at the emergent working committee meeting in June and the matter again came up at the August 15 meeting in New Delhi.



CLARE CONNOR

retirement earlier this year and claimed nine wickets in the game - sending down 34 overs in Australia's second innings.

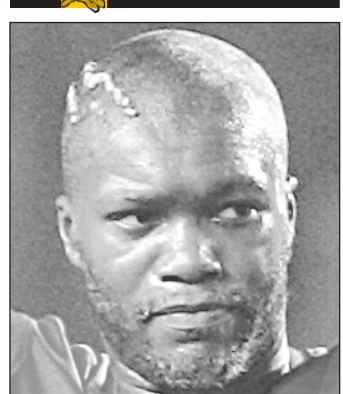
"Lucy was the best seam bowler we had, with great consistency. I just wanted to follow in her foot-steps and I seem to have done that pretty well. Hopefully I'll keep that going."

"The old side isn't feeling too spry but after some physio treatment I'm sure I'll be back on top," she said.



Did U Know?

England's 477 in the first innings of the fourth Ashes Test is their second highest score against Australia at Trent Bridge, next only to their 658 for eight wickets declared in 1938.



Djibril Cisse

(Liverpool's French striker) "My future is with Liverpool, I'm happy there. I want to stay. I don't know why I should move."

Cricket

PTI, Harare

India will look to use their encounter against punching bag Zimbabwe on Monday as an opportunity to restore their battered pride in the Videocon Cup cricket tri-series.

A cricketing feast is in the offing and nothing less than a crushing win against the inexperienced hosts would help the Indians erase the humiliation of the batting debacle against New Zealand in their opening match two days ago.

The new season has shown up the failings of the past and it all concerns the batsmen. Monday is a good day to express their intentions and back it up subsequently against

the Kiwis.

That such resolutions must have often figured in the Indian batsmen's mind in the past season and yet it didn't reflect in the middle either proves that the stars have lost their marbles or the youngsters have not quite seized the moment with both hands.

There is a bit of truth in both though the youngsters must be excused for they are just feeling their way into international cricket.

Still, the inexorable march of time is throwing up more Suresh Rainas, Venugopala Raos, Jai Prakash Yadavs and Rudra Pratap Singhs. It is upto the seniors to react in time or face being swamped by youth. They now would be ignoring the signals at their own peril.

Practice pain

FROM PAGE 12

from England with the A side before arriving in Sri Lanka.

The new ICC rules regarding field restrictions and substitute players were applied in the match and Bangladesh used left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak Raj as their super-sub.

Narinda defeated Victoria Sporting Club 31-14 after leading the first half 17-8. Rajan was adjudged man-of-the-match netting 11 goals for the winners.

Bangladesh Police thumped Old Ideals 42-14 in the day's second encounter after dominating the first session 24-6.

Abdur Rab who scored eight goals for Police was named man-of-the-match.

Cute h'ball

SPORTS REPORTER

Narinda Progati Boys Club and Bangladesh Police earned comfortable wins in the Cute Premier Division handball league at the outer stadium yesterday.

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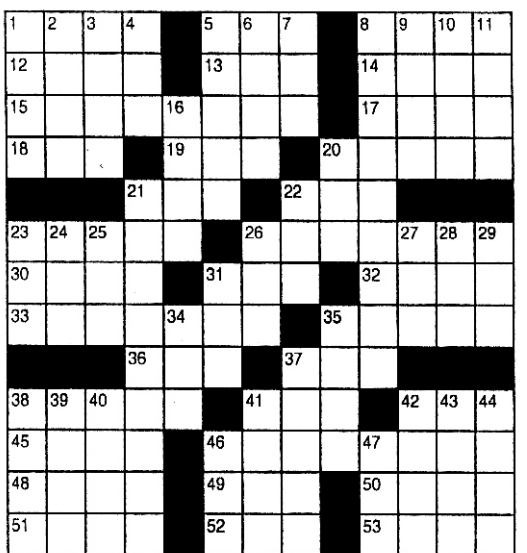
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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS 33 Pipe type 35 Oater 36 Festive 37 Symbol of 38 Made do 41 - con-strictor 42 Bach-elor's last utterance 45 Pequod agcy, 46 Handle of a sort 48 Grain storage structure 49 Moreover 50 Pinnacle 51 Pyramid, really 52 Actress Susan 53 The folks character

DOWN 22 Charged particle 23 Middle O? 24 Conceit 25 Soviet spacecraft 26 Talk on and on 27 Talk on and on 28 In need of repair key 29 Young fellow 31 Rapture 34 Scoundrel 35 Get wind of 37 Alien or Herman 38 Stage group 39 Colum-bus's home 40 Coconut provider 41 Fibula, for one 42 Part of the foot? 43 Cupola 44 Do as you're told 46 Mid-June honoree 47 "Krazy" -



CRYPTOQUIP

T N H V V Y N A N A R A S G J X G B X Y Y - J Y R T P Z B G B B G J N N F Y H J W G J J S A N T W A

O Y Z A O F A S T P G V G P W G B T P T H B . Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I'M TRYING TO TEACH SOME BABY DUCKS TO SING. DO YOU SUPPOSE THAT'S A CHEEP TRICK?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: B equals M Another Cryptoquip 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.