

Ronaldinho the remarkable

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

REUTERS, Barcelona

Ronaldinho led Barcelona to a scintillating 4-1 win over 10-man Udinese with a hat-trick in their Champions League Group C match at the Nou Camp on Tuesday.

The World Player of the Year put Barca ahead with a curling free kick on 12 minutes and grabbed his second when he stroked the ball home from 15 metres after Felipe had equalised for the visitors.

Portugal midfielder Deco extended Barca's lead before the break with another curling free kick and Ronaldinho completed his hat-trick with a last-minute penalty after he was brought down by a bemused Felipe as he jinked past him in the area.

The win left Frank Rijkaard's side top of Group C with a maximum six points from two games. Udinese are second on three points.

It was also a triumph for the Dutchman's policy of rotating his squad after he had rested Ronaldinho and Deco for the 4-1 victory over Real Betis at the weekend.

"The boss knows what he's doing," said Brazilian Ronaldinho. "We understand his policy and he has our full confidence."

"The team played very well and I was delighted to help out with three goals."

He was in such generous form that he handed his shirt to Udinese coach Sese Cosmi afterwards for a gift for his son.

"It was a kind gesture from Ronaldinho, though if he'd scored fewer goals than I'd have happily lost out on the shirt!" joked Cosmi.

Barca, who beat Werder Bremen in their first group match, were the first to threaten when Lionel Messi had a shot saved by keeper Morgan Di Santis after the young Argentine had cut across the edge of the area.

Four minutes later the 18-year-old surged through midfield only to be brought down two metres outside the area by Portuguese midfielder Vidigal.

Ronaldinho stepped up to take the free kick and Di Santis was left rooted to the spot as the ball sailed over the wall and into the top corner.

Udinese, missing Italy striker Vincenzo Iaquinta because of a contractual dispute, responded with dynamic attacking play and almost equalised when midfielder Damiano Zenoni unleashed a ras-



PHOTO: AP

A STEP AHEAD: Barcelona's superstar Ronaldinho (L) controls the ball in front of Udinese's Valerio Bertotto at the Nou Camp on Tuesday.

ing drive from 20 metres.

The two sides traded a series of well-worked moves in a breathless 20-minute spell but it was the Italians who scored next when defender Felipe stabbed in a 24th-minute corner at the far post.

The frenetic pace never slowed and a minute later Samuel Eto'o saw a goalbound shot scrambled off the line by Vidigal.

The Cameroon striker set up Barcelona's second on 32 minutes when he raced on to a clever pass from Messi and cut the ball back from the byline for Ronaldinho to coolly stroke a low shot into the far corner.

Four minutes before the break Deco earned his side a free kick when he was felled outside the area following a driving run through midfield.

Deco and Ronaldinho stood over the ball before the Brazilian stepped back to allow Deco to curl it over the wall and inside the near post.

Udinese suffered another setback at the start of the second half when Vidigal was dismissed after picking up a second yellow card for a foul on Juliano Belletti.

Ronaldinho then made it 4-1 with his last-gasp penalty.

Ganguly wants some rest now

PTI, Kolkata

A day after the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) brokered a compromise between him and coach Greg Chappell, skipper Sourav Ganguly on Wednesday said he was looking forward to some well deserved rest to prepare himself for the coming assignments.

"Now I only want some rest for the next few days," Ganguly told newsmen at the NSC Bose International Airport here returning after attending Tuesday's review committee meeting in Mumbai.

Asked whether he was feeling relieved, Ganguly smiled and said "Tell me, what do I do on this?" On the Challengers Tournament next month, he said "Oh, it's a long way off."

The cricketer, however, refused to give any further detail about the deliberations in Tuesday's meeting saying that it was a board decision.

The BCCI has already clamped a gag order on the coach, captain and other players about speaking out to the media on the issue.

Aussies have a point to prove

AFP, Melbourne

Australia's cricketers are keen to face a World XI next month so they can prove they deserve to retain their number one ranking after the Ashes defeat in England, captain Ricky Ponting said Wednesday.

Ponting said team members felt they had a point to prove after fierce criticism in Australia following the 2-1 series defeat that handed England the Ashes for the first time in 16 years.

Despite the defeat, Australia remain atop the International Cricket Council World Rankings and Ponting said the Super Series was a chance to prove the critics wrong and demonstrate the team's credentials.

"I've been looking forward to this for a long time. We've known about it for a long time and after, I guess, the disappointment of the Ashes tour for us, this is our next chance to prove to ourselves and prove to everybody that we're a very good team," he said.

"Let's not forget we're the No.1 ranked side for a reason. Our performances over a long period of time have ensured we were No.1 and still are No.1."

Ponting also backed beleaguered Australian coach John Buchanan, whose contract expires next month.

"I'll always support John, I think he's been tremendous with what he's done for the Australian cricket team and sometimes undervalued," said Ponting.

However, Ponting said it might be time for Australia to employ specialist batting and bowling coaches. "I think that's the way the game is going," he said.

Ponting agreed with World XI coach John Wright's assessment that forging team spirit among the superstars of the invitational squad would be a crucial factor in the Super Series.

"That might be one of the slight advantages we do have over this team who haven't been together and played as a group yet," he said.

The World XI take on Australia in three limited-overs games at Melbourne's Docklands Stadium on October 5, 7 and 9 and the Test match from October 14-19 at Sydney Cricket Ground.

King seeks more courage from WI

BBC ONLINE, undated

West Indies cricket coach Bennett King says he wants his players to show plenty of spirit during what will be a difficult tour of Australia.

King spoke to the media at the start of a training camp in Barbados. He said: "If the boys show a committed and courageous performance, trying to incorporate consistency in there as well, they are things I want to see."

The board and players association are working hard to ensure there are no high-profile drop-outs from the tour.

West Indies toured Sri Lanka in July and August without 10 regular players, including Brian Lara, Ramnaresh Sarwan and Chris Gayle, and lost both Test matches.

Contract disputes have played a major role in West Indies cricket in recent years, but King insisted: "The coaching staff and the operations team haven't been distracted."

"Our job is always to coach cricketers and to put the best team on the park that's available."

On the players' fitness levels, King commented: "A lot of the people have improved their fitness from when we started, which is very encouraging."

"Some players still have a little way to go, but some of them are at a level where they just need to maintain it."

West Indies have three Tests in Australia, all in November.

Gunners edge Ajax

UEFA CHAMPS LEAGUE

BLOOMBERG

Arsenal, missing three forwards, won at Ajax 2-1 in a hard-fought European Champions League encounter on Tuesday.

Bayern Munich and Juventus won their second straight games in Group A; Panathinaikos beat Werder Bremen 2-1; FC Thun beat Sparta Prague 1-0; and Villarreal drew 0-0 at Lille.

The other half of the eight four-team groups in Europe's top club tournament play their second games tomorrow. The top two from each group make it to the final 16, while third-place finishers qualify for the second-tier UEFA Cup.

Manchester United leads Group D by one point over Benfica after their 2-1 win at Old Trafford.

Barcelona has two wins to lead Group C by three points over Udinese who they beat 4-1 at the Nou Camp, and Panathinaikos. Ezequiel Gonzalez, on a penalty kick, and Vangelis Mantzios scored in the first 10 minutes for Panathinaikos against Werder Bremen.

Fredrik Ljungberg took a pass from Jose Antonio Reyes and flicked the ball into the net in the second minute as Arsenal won on the road for the first time in four games this

season. Arsenal won its Group B opener 2-1 over FC Thun.

"Not a bad start," Ljungberg said. "It's a bit easier to play away from home. We controlled the game a little bit."

Robert Pires made it 2-0 on a penalty kick in the 69th minute when Reyes was taken down. Markus Rosenberg cut the lead two minutes later on a rebound after a first shot hit the goalpost.

Ljungberg was forced to play as a striker due to injuries to leading scorer Thierry Henry and Dennis Bergkamp, and the suspension of Robin van Persie.

FC Thun, competing in the tournament for the first time, got a goal from Selver Hodzic in the 88th minute to defeat Sparta.

Juventus won its seventh straight game in all competitions this season, beating Rapid Vienna 3-0 at home. David Trezeguet scored in the 26th minute, and Adrian Mutu and Zlatan Ibrahimovic completed the scoring with less than 10 minutes left.

Bayern, which had its 15-game winning streak in the German league snapped three days ago, beat Club Brugge 1-0 on a goal from Martin Demecheels midway in the first half.

"We were anxious until the final minute," Bayern manager Felix Magath said. "Juventus are up next, and it will be a different task altogether."

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

AFP, Paris

Collated Champions League results on Tuesday:

Group A
At Munich
Bayern Munich (GER) 1 (Demichelis 32)
Bruges (BEL) 0
At Turin
Juventus (ITA) 3 (Trezeguet 27, Mutu 82, Ibrahimovic 85) Rapid Vienna (AUT) 0

Group B
At Amsterdam
Ajax (NED) 1 (Rosenberg 71) Arsenal (ENG) 2 (Ljungberg 2, Pires 69-pen)
At Bern
FC Thun (SUI) 1 (Hodzic 89) Sparta Prague (CZE) 0

Group C
At Barcelona
Barcelona (ESP) 4 (Ronaldinho 13, 32, 90, Deco 41) Udinese (ITA) 1 (Felipe 24)
At Athens
Panathinaikos (GRE) 2 (Gonzalez 5-pen, Mantzios 8) Werder Bremen (GER) 1 (Klose 41)

Group D
At Paris
Lille (FRA) 0 Villarreal (ESP) 0
At Manchester, England
Manchester United (ENG) 2 (Giggs 39, Van Nistelrooy 85) Benfica (POR) 1 (Simao 59)

Creating the craze

Tennis

AFP, Moscow

Glamour girl Maria Sharapova's meteoric rise to world number one is inspiring a new generation of Russian teenage girls to head for the courts hoping to emulate her sporting and financial success.

"The phone has been ringing around the clock for registrations since mid-August," says Igor Volkov, a coach at Moscow's famous Spartak tennis academy.

The academy now has 190 places compared to around 30 in 1994 but, since Sharapova became the first Russian woman to top the WTA world rankings last month, they've

had to turn eager teenagers away.

"I would like to become as good as her and earn as much money as her," said 15-year-old Yuliya Livotova.

Sharapova, the blonde tennis star with the top model looks, won Wimbledon last year aged just 17. Since then her advertising contracts have netted her over 18 million dollars (14.7 million euros) and by many accounts she has become the biggest earner in women's sport.

Sharapova, who was born in Siberia but has been living in Florida since she was eight, is not the first Russian player to popularise tennis.

Former Russian president and tennis enthusiast Boris Yeltsin restored the image of a sport once considered too bourgeois by the

country's Communist leaders.

Anna Kournikova, another blonde tennis star with spectacular looks, then added the glamour.

Russia now leads women's tennis, with seven players in the top 20 global rankings compared to just three to long-time top-dogs the United States.

More success came their way last weekend when a team inspired by Elena Dementieva successfully defended the Fed Cup defeating France 3-2 in the final in Paris.

"The reason we are the best lies in the Russian character, we are more resilient," said Volkov.

Coaches at the Spartak academy, where the buildings have seen better days and the fences are left to rust, earn just 200 dollars (163 euros) a month.

Many promising teenagers leave for Europe and the United States to look for better facilities.

"It's a pity the (Russian tennis) federation does nothing against this," said Kournikova's former coach, Larisa Preobrazhenskaya, 78, who fears Russian tennis will lose momentum.

Russian parents realise the problems but also know the opportunities that tennis offers and are prepared to put everything into developing their children's careers.

"At first, we had to force our grandson a bit - it's an investment," says Tamara Chikina.

She wants to spare the boy "the fate of Russia's young people, who drink too much beer and swear in the streets."

Mikhail Svintsov is putting his 10-year-old daughter Yevgeniya, who started playing when she was five, through two hours of training a day, five days a week.

"We are demanding with her, we want her to be somebody," says Svintsov, sounding stressed.

Svintsov hopes to start signing his daughter up for international tournaments from next year and send her to train in Europe in the next two to three years.

"When she's 15, she will be in the WTA rankings and when she reaches 20 she will be world number one," he said.



MARIA SHARAPOVA

ASIAN UNDER-14 TENNIS

Sani sent packing

SPORTS REPORTER

Ysidora Grace Sari of Indonesia will face off India's Naik Adnyaa in today's girls' singles final of the Shetech Asian Under-14 Tennis Series.

Ysidora defeated Malaysian Thirumalichelum 6-4, 7-5 in an exciting semifinal at the National Tennis Complex in Ramna while fourth seeded Adnyaa routed Indonesia's Frederika Nadia 6-1, 6-3.

The boys' semifinals line-up was also finalised with the last local hope bowing out from the quarterfinals.

The only Bangladeshi player in the last eight, Golam Faruque Sani, lost to Philippines' Akio Si 6-1, 6-3 in the day's first quarterfinal. In the other quarterfinals, Hutaruk Farulian (Indonesia) beat Parantape Sameer (India) 6-4, 6-0, Manuja Ronak (India) defeated compatriot Sutarnam Sudanaw 6-2, 6-2 and Athore Mansingh (India) ousted Sri Lankan Fernando Arvind 6-2, 6-1.

Sheikh Russel football

SPORTS REPORTER

Shyampur stormed into the final of the Sheikh Russel Under-14 Football Tournament with a 2-0 win over Mofijheel at the Abahani ground in Dhanmendi on Wednesday.

Man-of-the-match Anwar and Apus scored one goal apiece.

Shyampur will take on winners of today's semifinal between Mirpur and Hazaribagh in the final.

Mahbub gives

FROM PAGE 12

"I have discussed the matter with my president (Ali Asghar). He assured me that he would look into the issue. I don't think that there will be any problems if I am not there in the BCB. But people like him (Shaheen) can destroy our cricket," he added.

As the Mahbub-Shaheen soap opera turned from bad to worse, a BCB high official quipped:

"This is the result of the so-called democracy in our sports."

Aftab on shortlist

FROM PAGE 12

Haq (Pakistan).
Test player-of-the-year: Gilchrist, Inzamam, Kallis, McGrath, Shane Warne (Australia).

One-day player-of-the-year: Flintoff, Gilchrist, Brett Lee, Andrew Symonds (both Australia), Kevin Pietersen (England).

Emerging player-of-the-year: Aftab Ahmed (Bangladesh), Ian Bell (England), Dinesh Karthik (India), Pietersen, AB de Villiers (South Africa).

Media call it an eyewash

Cricket

AFP, Mumbai

The truce brokered by India's cricket chiefs between captain Sourav Ganguly and coach Greg Chappell was on Wednesday rubbished by the media amid fears another flare-up was around the corner.

Ganguly and Chappell, whose damaging rift was described by one newspaper as "the biggest controversy since the match-fixing scandal" agreed to patch-up before a high-powered panel of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Tuesday. But the media remained unsatisfied at the outcome and blamed the BCCI panel, which included former captains Sunil Gavaskar, Ravi Shastri and Srinivas Venkatara-gkhan, as "spineless" for failing to take sterner action.

"Who are they kidding!" said an editorial in the Mumbai-based Daily News and Analysis.

"What makes this wishy-washy outcome even stranger is Chappell's acquiescence to this travesty. After the open bitterness, life for the two of them will be difficult."

Chappell, 56, a former Australian captain and batting great, took over as Indian coach in June for a two-year term extending until the 2007 World Cup in the Caribbean.

Relations between Chappell and Ganguly soured on the recent Zimbabwe tour and culminated in the coach writing a confidential email to the BCCI saying the captain was unfit to lead India.

The 2,334-word email, which was leaked to the media, spoke of Chappell's distrust of Ganguly, the country's most successful captain with 21 Test wins, seven more than second-placed Mohammad Azharuddin.

Leading national broadsheet The Hindustan Times ridiculed the uneasy truce worked out by the BCCI.

"Sourav Ganguly stays. Greg Chappell stays," it said. "And Indian cricket stays in the same mess into which it had got itself ever since the row between the captain and the coach exploded into the open and became the biggest controversy to threaten the game here since the match-fixing scandal."

"Two very strong and egotistical men have lost face in the battle," said the Times of India. "They will not rest in peace until the other is eventually beaten."

"It cannot be a fair fight anymore."

Both Chappell and Ganguly were barred by the BCCI from speaking on the subject to the media. Less than 24 later, however, the media relied on "authoritative sources" to describe what transpired at Tuesday's meeting.

The Telegraph from Ganguly's

home city of Kolkata reported that "the BCCI would have considered doing away with both if an understanding wasn't treached."

Added the Hindustan Times: "The coach told the captain that he wants to be the boss. Ganguly said that Chappell was playing the blame game and creating an environment of insecurity, panic and fear."

Ganguly even seemed to have gained the moral high ground after BCCI president Ranbir Mahendra said that one of the main accusations in Chappell's leaked email -- that Ganguly faked injury -- was "far from the truth."

Former BCCI president Raj Singh Dungarpur slammed the panel for not taking concrete action.

"It's at best a temporary truce," Dungarpur said. "It's a spineless decision but where is the surprise? No one was expecting any better from spineless people."

India are scheduled to play Test series against Sri Lanka, Pakistan, England and the West Indies, besides a minimum of 33 one-dayers, in a gruelling eight-month period from late October.

The national selectors, who had appointed Ganguly captain only for the Zimbabwe tour, will meet in mid-October to select the skipper for a seven-match one-day series against Sri Lanka from October 25.

Wright won't take side

Cricket

AFP, Sydney

The row between Indian cricket captain Sourav Ganguly and the team's Australian coach Greg Chappell should never have left the dressing room, former Indian coach John Wright said Wednesday.

Wright declined to take sides in the bitter argument which has caused turmoil within Indian cricket, in his first comments on the issue during a telephone interview with AFP.

But he defended his five-year tenure in charge of the Indian team after criticism from Chappell, who accused the New Zealander of allowing Ganguly to run the team through "deceit" "rumour-mongering" and "divide-and-rule".

Wright, who stood down voluntarily from the job earlier this year, said the Indian people's passionate love of cricket meant "minor things can become major things very quickly".

But in veiled criticism of Chappell, Wright said the issue

would have been handled very differently in his years as India's first foreign coach.

"I was very fortunate from the point of view that we always believed what goes on in the changing room stays in the changing room," he said.

"Sometimes as soon as things come into the public area they can take on a momentum all of their own," Wright told AFP from Melbourne, where he is coaching the International Cricket Council World XI before their matches with Australia next month.

Wright said he had been following reports of the crisis in relations between Chappell and Ganguly during the recent trip to Zimbabwe. This culminated in the coach telling India's cricket chiefs the captain was unfit to lead the team in an email that was leaked to the media.

Chappell's email alleged Ganguly adopted "divide and rule" tactics to dominate the team and accused Wright of failing to clamp down on his behaviour.

"John Wright obviously allowed

this to go on to the detriment of the team," Chappell wrote. "I am not prepared to sit back and allow this to continue."

Wright, whose record included Test series victories against Australia and Pakistan, shrugged off the criticism and highlighted his success at team-building -- one of Chappell's alleged deficiencies.

"I stand by my record," he said. "I worked with the team I was given by the selectors. I worked as hard as I could with the whole team to try and get the performances that the Indian people wanted."

Wright said the Indian national coach could always expect criticism.

"I had criticism from all quarters during, after and before my tenure -- it's part of the role of being coach," he said.

"The only thing that I tried to do was ensure that we played well as a team and we got results as a team, that was it."

"I've moved on, I'm no longer the coach. I believe we made progress during my time with the team, I thoroughly enjoyed it."

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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