

Ballack's future talks in three days

AFP, Berlin

German international captain Michael Ballack has revealed that he will sit down with Bayern Munich chiefs on Wednesday to confirm whether or not he will accept their lucrative four-year contract extension.

Bayern host Juventus in the Champions League on Tuesday and 24 hours later midfielder Ballack, who is out of contract at the end of the season, will inform the club of his decision.

"Yes we will meet on Wednesday and hold talks," Ballack told the Sport 1 website.

English Premiership titans Manchester United have reportedly offered Ballack a contract to join them after the 2006 World Cup and Bayern responded by setting a deadline of mid-October for the player to decide his future.

"I want to get this sorted out so we can concentrate on football again," said Bayern handler Felix Magath.

"Bayern will not fall apart if Ballack goes. It could give other players, such as Sebastian Deisler, a chance to step up."

Magath recently admitted that Ballack may see a move to Manchester United as a new challenge after spending his entire career in the Bundesliga.

Ballack joined Bayern from Bayer Leverkusen in the summer of 2002 and said at the time he was not ready for a move abroad, but at 29 this could be his last chance to ply his trade in another league.

Aussies collapse

FROM PAGE 12

Harmon clean bowled topscorer Matthew Hayden (77) and Michael Clarke (5) and had Brett Lee caught in the deep for three to capture 3-41 off 12.3 overs.

Harmon struck twice before lunch to trigger the collapse with the wickets of Hayden and Clarke.

Hayden was on course for his third consecutive Test hundred after a dismal Ashes series in England before the Durham fast-bowling giant struck in his ninth over.

Hayden scored 111 in Australia's first innings but he was bowled by a Harmon yorker for 77, put together in 189 minutes off 120 balls and breaking a 122-run partnership with Ponting.

Clarke only lasted eight balls before he was bowled five in Harmon's next over.

Ponting added two runs to his lunch-time score before he was caught by wicketkeeper Mark Boucher off Flintoff for 54.

Katich looked flummoxed against Muralitharan and gave a return catch to the Sri Lankan for two in the next over.

Gilchrist, who narrowly missed out on a century in the first innings with a typical swashbuckling 94, went for one off three balls, caught at slip by Jacques Kallis off Muralitharan as Australia lost scoring momentum.

Watson survived a referred close-in catch, but padded a catch at Rahul Dravid at mid-wicket for seven, giving Flintoff his second wicket in five overs.

Gloomily light prevented play for 75 minutes after tea and the Australian innings quickly folded when play resumed. Muralitharan snared McGrath's wicket and Lee hit out to Harmon.

WATSON'S SCOREBOARD
Langer c Smith b Kallis 22
Hayden b Harmon 77
Ponting c Boucher b Flintoff 54
Clarke b Harmon 5
Katich c and b Muralitharan 2
Gilchrist c Kallis b Muralitharan 1
Watson c Boucher b Flintoff 10
Warne c Dravid b Flintoff 7
Lee c Muralitharan b Harmon 3
McGrath c Smith b Muralitharan 2
MacGill not out 0
Extras: (b-7, lb-7, nb-2) 16
Total: (All out in 65.3 overs) 199
Fall of wickets: 1-30, 2-152, 3-160, 4-167, 5-167, 6-170, 7-177, 8-192, 9-195
Bowler O M R W
Harmon 12.3 2 41 3
Flintoff 16 2 48 3
Kallis 3 1 3 1
Muralitharan 24 5 55 3
Vettori 10 0 38 0
WORLD XI: Second innings
Smith b McGrath 0
Schwag c Gilchrist b MacGill 7
David not out 17
Lara not out 0
Extras: (lb-1) 1
Total: (For 2 wkts in 8 overs) 25
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-18

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the third day of the Super Test between Australia and a World XI at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Sunday:

AUSTRALIA: First innings 345 (Hayden 111, Gilchrist 94, Flintoff 4-59)

WORLD XI: First innings 190 (Schwag 76, Kallis 44, MacGill 4-39, Warne 3-23)

AUSTRALIA: Second innings (overnight 66-1)

Langer c Smith b Kallis 22
Hayden b Harmon 77
Ponting c Boucher b Flintoff 54
Clarke b Harmon 5
Katich c and b Muralitharan 2
Gilchrist c Kallis b Muralitharan 1
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Total: (For 2 wkts in 8 overs) 25

Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-18

Bowler O M R W

McGrath 1 1 0 1

Lee 1 0 4 0

Warne 3 0 13 0

MacGill 3 1 7 1



PHOTO: AFP

Ronaldo (L) starts celebrating after scoring one of his two goals against Atletico Madrid at the Vicente Calderon Stadium in Madrid on Saturday.

PRIMERA LIGA

It's all Ronaldo

Football

AFP, Madrid

Ronaldo grabbed two goals but left the field on a stretcher in Real Madrid's 3-0 derby victory over local rivals Atletico on Saturday.

The win sent Real to the top of the Spanish first division with 15 points from seven games although Getafe and Celta Vigo, who started the weekend ahead of Real, could overtake them as they have a game in hand and play on Sunday.

The game was almost over as a contest after just eight minutes.

Atletico defender Antonio Lopez brought down Real captain Raul Gonzalez and the foul proved to be a double blow for the hosts.

Lopez got his marching orders and Ronaldo stepped up to score from the spot.

The three-times World Player of the Year got his second goal, and his seventh of the season, just after the hour after a wonderful pass from inside his own half by Jose Maria 'Guti' Gutierrez.

Guti had only been on the pitch six minutes after coming on for a lacklustre Zinedine Zidane.

However, the night was to end in pain for Ronaldo when the Brazilian World Cup star collided with Atletico defender Luis Perea two minutes into injury time.

Perea was trying to cut out a pass between Robinho and his fellow

SERIE A

Juve owe it to Abbiati

Football

AFP, Rome

Juventus coach Fabio Capello singled out goalkeeper Christian Abbiati for special praise after his last minute heroics in Saturday's 1-0 home win over Messina.

The Serie A leaders missed a host of chances after Alessandro Del Piero had given them a 24th minute lead and only a superb reflex save by the on-loan keeper ensured Juve maintained their 100 per cent record.

In trying to clear a cross, Juve defender Lilian Thuram succeeded only in sending the ball towards his own goal and Abbiati reacted quickly to save the Frenchman's blasts.

"Abbiati was excellent, he saved the result," Capello said of the keeper who was strangely loaned to Juve by their title rivals AC Milan after Gianluigi Buffon dislocated his shoulder in a pre-season match.

"We should have put away our chances and killed the game off. Every team in Serie A has players that are capable of causing danger."

Juve's seventh consecutive win left them one victory short of the best ever start to a Serie A season and saw them open up an eight point lead at the top of the table.

Juventus have a maximum 21 points from seven games, eight more than AC Milan and Fiorentina who play on Sunday.

Messina, meanwhile, are still looking for their first win of the season.

Juventus, the reigning champions, made all the early running and their pressure told in the 24th minute.

Del Piero, whose talent may be fading but whose creativity always poses a threat to the opposition, picked up the ball 40 yards

Brazilian but only succeeded in putting the ball into his own net and accidentally cutting down Ronaldo, who was left clutching his left shin and writhing in agony.

Reigning Spanish champions Barcelona squandered a two-goal lead with 20 minutes to go and had to settle for a 3-3 draw at Deportivo La Coruna.

One positive note for Rijkaard was the form of Ronaldinho, who had been struggling to hit his stride in the league until Saturday.

He scored two of Barca's goals and helped create the other for Samuel Eto'o.

Barca got off to a bad start when Deportivo's Juan Carlos Valeron put the hosts in front after just nine minutes before Eto'o equalised from a wonderfully worked move by Barca five minutes from the break.

Ronaldinho sent the ball to the African Player of the Year's head on the edge of the area.

Eto'o then nodded it back to Deco while continuing to surge through the Deportivo defence and, after latching onto the return, he then finished off the sequence with a right foot volley for his seventh goal of the season.

Ronaldinho then showed some more of the style that has, at times, been missing this season by cleverly picking up an inch-perfect cross from Eto'o in injury time at the end of the first half.

The Brazilian darted down the left edge of the box before sliding the ball past Deportivo goalkeeper Juan Francisco

out and dribbled past two defenders before firing right-footed into the bottom corner.

Marco Storari pulled off two superb saves from Mauro Camoranesi and Zlatan Ibrahimovic to prevent Juventus from increasing their advantage while at the other end Arturo Di Napoli's drive almost caught out Abbiati.

David Trezeguet came on for Juve in the closing stages and was unfortunate to see his angled half-volley come back off the post before Abbiati came to the home side's rescue with seconds remaining.

In Saturday's early match David Di Michele scored a hat-trick as Udinese survived a fierce second-half onslaught to win 3-2 at Siena.

The 29-year-old striker struck twice in a five-minute, first-half spell before

completing his treble seconds after the restart to put the visitors 3-0 up.

Enrico Chiesa's sixth goal of the season and a Valerio Bertotto own goal breathed life into the home side but Udinese hung on to secure their fourth win in seven matches.

Unheralded Schiavone, who was playing her fourth career final, reduced the arrears with a break in the eighth game but Pierce managed to keep her advantage through to take the first set 1-0 up in 47 minutes.

In the second Pierce broke early but Schiavone, 25, replied immediately to level at two games all.

Pierce, who is currently seventh in the WTA rankings, made two more breaks to win the set and the match in one hour 27 minutes on the first match point.

The Canadian-born French player pocketed 189,000 dollars and a silver trophy, while runner-up Schiavone received 102,000 dollars.

"I'm really happy to be here and win. I have special memories about this place," Pierce said.

"I won singles and doubles titles here in my first appearance. I've also played several Fed Cup matches here winning and losing the finals."

"Moscow always has special place in my heart."

Pierce took the Moscow trophy after an incredible quarter-final tie when she hit back from 0-6 down in the third set tie break against Russia's Elena Likhovtseva of Russia to win 7-5, 4-6, 7-6.

BUNDESLIGA

Ref lets Bayern down

AFP, Berlin

German champions Bayern Munich were left cursing referee Michael Weiner as Schalke 04 used a dubious penalty three minutes into stoppage time to secure a 1-1 home draw on Saturday.

Danish international Soren Larsen won the questionable spot-kick and then converted it to peg back Bayern and the dropped points allow Werder Bremen to replace Bayern at the summit on goal difference.

Bremen hammered FC Nuremberg 6-2 at the Weserstadion with German international Miroslav Klose scoring a first half hat-trick.

It was indeed a day for hat-tricks with two players scoring all the goals in the thrilling 3-3 draw between Kaiserslautern and Borussia Dortmund.

Polish international Ebi Smolarek must have thought he had won the game for Dortmund scoring three times inside the first 40 minutes, but Turkish star Hamit Altintop responded with a treble of his own (13, 57, 78).

SV Hamburg could have gone top themselves but fell to a surprise 1-0 home defeat against VfL Wolfsburg and slip to third, two points behind Bayern and Bremen.

Netherlands international Rafael van der Vaart, one of the stars of the season so far, was sent off for Hamburg in the final minute for pushing an opponent.

With 93 minutes gone it looked like Bayern would retain their position at the Bundesliga summit after Paraguayan international Roque Santa Cruz had put the visitors ahead after 19 minutes.

Bayern had never won at the Arena Auf Schalke since the venue opened in 2001 - losing their last five matches in Gelsenkirchen - but were preparing to celebrate before referee Weiner awarded the suspicious penalty.

Bastian Schweinsteiger was adjudged to have fouled Larsen and the Dane got off the floor to throw the ball in and leave Munich coach Felix Magath raging on the touchline.

TOP SIX

German football league table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Table with 7 columns: Team, P, W, D, L, GF, GA, PTS. Bremen, Bayern, Hamburg, Schalke, Mgladbach, Wolfsburg.

No spat between

FROM PAGE 12

"We state that the story of Sourav calling Sachin a tourist and Sachin refusing to play under Sourav and thereby pushing Dravid is completely untrue," the statement said.

"(Kiran) More's conveying to his colleagues that Sachin did not want to play under Sourav is completely false and misleading," it added.

The two players said they expected an apology on behalf of the newspaper "because such made up, false stories are harmful for Indian cricket. If this is not rectified, legal action will have to be taken in future," they said.

Kremlin Cup Pierce's

AFP, Moscow

Third seed Mary Pierce of France won the 2.3-million dollar Kremlin Cup for the second time on Sunday with a comprehensive 6-4, 6-3 win over Italy's Francesca Schiavone.

In so doing, Pierce, winner here in 1998, clinched the 18th title of her career and second of the year.

The 30-year-old two-time Grand Slam winner broke the Italian twice in the opening set to gain a commanding 5-1 lead.

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PREMIERSHIP

Unstoppable Chelsea

Football

REUTERS, London

Chelsea's marauding start to the Premier League season continued as they came from behind to thrash Bolton Wanderers 5-1 at Stamford Bridge on Saturday.

Manchester United moved up to third with a 3-1 victory at Sunderland but Arsenal's problems increased with a 2-1 reverse at West Bromwich Albion that leaves them 14 points off the pace.

Tottenham Hotspur maintained their best ever start to a Premier League season with a 2-0 win over bottom club Everton at White Hart Lane to go second.

Promoted Wigan Athletic also have plenty to celebrate after a 1-0 victory at home to Newcastle United that elevated them to the giddy heights of fourth.

Chelsea's last league defeat came exactly a year ago at Manchester City and, for 45 minutes, Bolton Wanderers looked capable of snapping their 37-game unbeaten league run.

Greek striker Stelios Giannakopoulos silenced Stamford Bridge with a four-minute opener and the visitors threatened to add to their tally before the break.

The match turned completely in nine devastating second-half minutes when Didier Drogha and Frank Lampard both scored twice for the champions and Bolton's Ricardo Gardner was red-carded for a deliberate handball on the edge of the area.

Lampard's double took his tally for the week to four after his winning goals

against Austria and Poland sealed England's place in next year's World Cup finals.

Eidur Gudjohnsen completed the rout to make it nine wins out of nine for Chelsea in the Premier League this season and keep them nine points in front of London rivals Tottenham.

"I went in early for halftime to prepare what I was going to say to them," Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho, who is yet to lose any match at Stamford Bridge, told Sky Sports.

"They did what I wanted in the second half, they were fantastic."

Second-half goals from Egypt striker Mido and Jermaine Jenas, his first for Tottenham, clinched the points for Martin Jol's high-flying side after a four opening period.

Everton have now lost six league games in a row without scoring a goal, equalling their worst ever sequence in the Premier League, and are rooted to the bottom with three points.

Wayne Rooney's classy finish gave United the lead at Sunderland just before halftime and Ruud van Nistelrooy made it 2-0 after the break only for Stephen Elliott to pull one back.

Italian teenage substitute Giuseppe Rossi sealed the points to keep United 10 behind Chelsea with a game in hand.

"We were lucky to be winning at halftime. We never got going in the first half and Rooney's goal was our only decent move," said United boss Alex Ferguson. "But in the second half we could have scored four or five."

Arsenal looked on course for victory at West Bromwich Albion when Swiss defender Philippe Senderos volleyed in

after 17 minutes to score his first goal for the club.

But former Arsenal striker Kanu came back to haunt the Gunners with an equaliser before the break and substitute Darren Carter got the winner from 20 metres in the 76th minute.

"We should have won easily," said Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger after his side's third loss of the season. "We were punished for a little bit of bad luck and lack of maturity."

Wigan ended their match with 10 men after a late red card for Lee McCulloch but hung on grimly to Jason Roberts' 40th minute opener against Newcastle.

Liverpool struggled to break down 10-man Blackburn Rovers after Georgia defender Zurab Khizanishvili was sent off for a professional foul at Anfield.

But France striker Djibril Cisse drove home a free kick 15 minutes from time to earn Liverpool their first win in five games.

Aiyegbeni Yakubu headed an equaliser against his old club to earn Middlesbrough a 1-1 draw at home to Portsmouth in the day's late kickoff.

TOP SIX

English Premiership table after Saturday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Table with 7 columns: Team, P, W, D, L, GF, GA, PTS. Chelsea, Tottenham, Man Utd, Wigan, Charlton, Man City.

India looks to 'The Wall'

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

New captain Rahul Dravid will need all his batting consistency and cool ability to keep controversy at bay if he is to lead India out of the doldrums and back to the top of world cricket.

Recent turbulence has come as much from off-field infighting as the team's non-performance on the pitch, leaving fans to wonder if things could get any worse.

Dravid, 32, was named skipper on Thursday for the home one-day series against Sri Lanka and South Africa, ending Sourav Ganguly's five-year reign as India's most successful skipper.

But he takes over a team that has earned the dubious reputation of flopping in finals, especially in the one-day game.

India have already lost more than a dozen finals in the past five years, forcing Dravid's predecessor to admit he just did not know what was going wrong in crunch matches.

The new leader, nicknamed "The Wall" for his solid defence, has also to restore order and decorum off the field after a highly-damaging public spat between coach Greg Chappell and Ganguly.

The injured ex-captain claimed during the September tour of Zimbabwe that he had been asked to step down on batting form by the coach, who then wrote in a leaked e-mail to cricket chiefs that Ganguly was unfit to lead the side.

The crisis was the worst to have hit Indian cricket since a 2000 match-fixing scandal, and saw embarrassed authorities forced to broker a truce.

It now falls on Dravid to prepare a

team to challenge for the 2007 World Cup in the West Indies. And the fans will expect him to wield a magic wand without losing his touch with the bat.

It is not an easy task, but Chappell sounded very confident Dravid has the character and ability to restore India's fortunes.

"He (Dravid) has always come across as a very positive cricketer with a good cricket brain," said Chappell.

"I think he has earned the honour. He has a fabulous record, which will be an advantage for him. This is a learning curve for him and I am sure he will learn more as he goes. To me, he is well prepared for the job."

Dravid is not considered as aggressive as his predecessor and is not known for wearing his heart on his sleeve. But even his critics concede he has the solid technique and cool temperament to assume the role.

And he has already proved his adaptability.

The man from Bangalore made his Test debut in England in 1996, but struggled to cement his place in the one-day side. Reason: he was considered too slow to force the pace in the 50-over game.

Dravid was asked to prove himself in an insignificant triangular one-day series at home in 1998, featuring cricketing babes Bangladesh and Kenya.

It appears an irony of sorts that the same man is now expected first to revive India's fortunes in one-day cricket.

Dravid adapted himself remarkably well in one-dayers. He also doubled up as a wicket-keeper for more than a

year so that the team could accommodate an extra batsman or bowler.

His record today speaks for itself in one-day cricket -- 8,429 runs with 10 centuries in 265 matches. He has also amassed 7,871 runs in 91 Tests with 20 hundreds.

Dravid of course said all the right things after his appointment emphasising the real honour of leading the world's biggest cricketing nation.

"If we can do a good job and have some success then it will be more special," Dravid said in Sydney, where he is playing for the World XI against Australia in the Super Test.

"Irrespective of who the coach or captain is, we all want India to win."

Dying with Chile!

AFP, Santiago

A Chilean football supporter was so distraught by the team's failure to qualify for the World Cup that he tried to kill himself by swallowing rat poison, local press reported on Saturday.

The 44-year-old baker was taken to hospital in the northern town of Juan Noe a Arica, in the early hours of Thursday after Chile had drawn 0-0 with Ecuador.

The result ended Chile's hopes of making the World Cup finals in Germany next summer.

La Estrella newspaper said that the man, identified only by his initials, BBC, drank a glass of wine with his wife after the result was announced.