

PREMIERSHIP

No stopping Chelsea

Football

AFP, London

Champions Chelsea continued their cruise towards the English Premiership title, though Arsenal sent them a reminder that the race is not over as football paid tribute to the late legend George Best on Saturday.

Players and supporters observed a minute's silence before kick-off in memory of the former Manchester United and Northern Ireland ace who passed away aged 59 on Friday after a long battle with alcoholism.

Chelsea stroled to a 2-0 win at Portsmouth to leave them 11 points clear of the rest, while the Gunners saw off Blackburn Rovers in a 3-0 win at Highbury to creep up into second place.

Champions League winners Liverpool earned a rare fourth consecutive league win, beating Manchester City 1-0 as Tottenham Hotspur confirmed that Premiership debutants Wigan Athletic's honeymoon is over with a 2-1 away win.

Chelsea's Argentine striker Hernan Crespo showed his predatory instincts, dashing from the pack of players in the penalty box to divert in a Paulo Ferreira drive in the 27th minute.

Pompey's Dejan Stefanovic felled England midfielder Joe Cole in the penalty box and Frank Lampard -- making a record-breaking 160th consecutive Premiership appearance -- swept in the resultant penalty on 67 minutes.

"Looking very cool, very solid from a defensive point of view. I think we deserved these three points," Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho told Sky Sports television.

"It was not easy. There was not a lot of space to play, they were fighting hard."

"It's difficult to be a better side than last season because last season was incredible for us. I think this season we are doing well again."

Sorry Portsmouth were under the temporary charge of Joe Jordan after Alain Perrin was axed during the week.

Arsenal delighted their fans with three sizzling strikes.

The Gunners were not firing on all cylinders but manager Arsene Wenger was nonetheless pleased.

"Even if we are a little bit flat we

can always score goals. That's very positive," he said.

"The finishing qualities made the difference between the two sides. We were always in front and maybe didn't have to dig very deep."

"Overall, we did the job well and we won in the end with three great goals."

Spanish midfielder Cesc Fabregas gave Arsenal an early lead and France striker Thierry Henry curled in his 100th Premiership goal at Highbury.

Netherlands forward Robin van Persie completed the rout to send Chelsea a message that the Gunners are not yet ready to give up in the title race.

England striker Peter Crouch clocked up his 17th Liverpool appearance without scoring as Norway midfielder John Arne Riise hit the only goal on 61 minutes to defeat Stuart Pearce's City.

The Reds had not managed four straight Premiership wins for two

and a half years.

"All in all I think Liverpool had a bit too much for us," Pearce said. "These are the champions of Europe we're playing."

"They're a team full of internationals right through their squad so you know they're a good side with a great pedigree," he added.

Birmingham won 1-0 at sorry Sunderland, condemning them to a seventh straight defeat thanks to Julian Gray's goal in a clash between the bottom two.

Apologetic and "cheesed off" Sunderland boss Mick McCarthy slammed his players, labelling them "disgraceful", an "embarrassment" and "gutless" in a contest between "two rubbish teams playing rubbish football".

After Arsenal ended Wigan's eight-match winning streak, Tottenham inflicted a second straight defeat on the Latics at the JJB Stadium.

"That's probably our least effective performance at home this season," disappointed Wigan boss Paul Jewell said after the 2-1 loss.

"We've made mistakes in the last couple of games and we've been punished for it -- that's what happens in this league."

"I think I'm just trying to keep things in perspective. We're third after 13 games we've got 25 points."

Robbie Keane and Edgar Davids scored for Spurs, the latter claiming his first goal in English football.

Wigan's Lee McCulloch tapped in a late consolation strike amid signs that the Latics' excellent Premiership start could begin to unravel.

In a dour match at Villa Park, Aston Villa beat Charlton Athletic 1-0.

At Parkhead for Celtic's game with Dunfermline, and Molineux prior to Wolves' goalless draw with Southampton, there was a minute's applause.

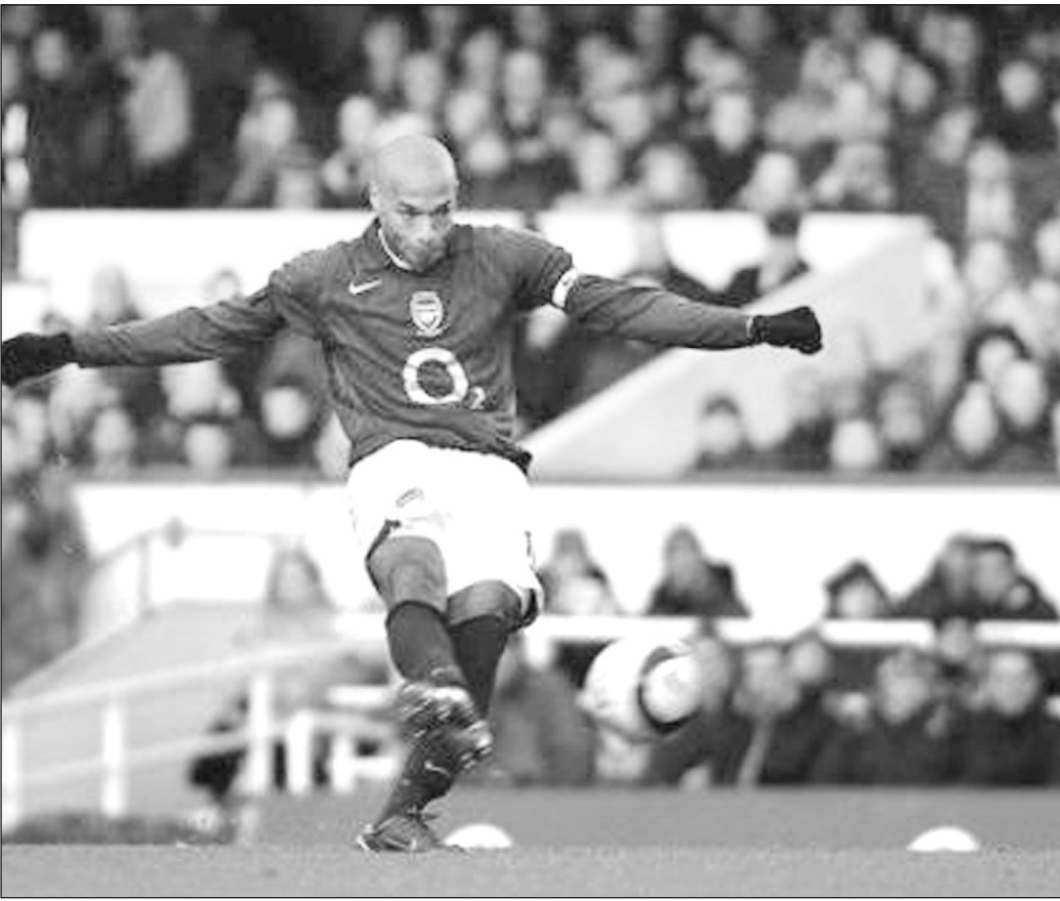


PHOTO: AP

100TH AT HIGHBURY: Arsenal's French striker Thierry Henry is set to have a crack at the goal during his side's Premiership match against Blackburn Rovers at Highbury on Saturday.

PRIMERA LIGA

Valencia leave it late

Football

AFP, Madrid

Valencia, who were Spanish champions in 2004, reignited their challenge for the 2005/2006 crown on Saturday by beating Celta Vigo 2-0 to move into fourth place in the table.

The win also put a stop to a worrying dip in form for Valencia who, since beating Real Madrid 2-1 on October 23 at the Bernabeu, had taken just four points from four games before Saturday.

They were even whistled off at half-time at the Mestalla before victory was secured by two late goals.

David Villa, who scored his first international goal in Spain's World Cup play-off win over Slovakia earlier in the month, opened the scoring in

the 73rd minute with Fabio Aurelio adding the second six minutes later.

Valencia are now three points behind leaders Barcelona who face Racing Santander on Sunday.

In Saturday's other game, Athletic Bilbao moved off the bottom with a 1-0 win at Real Mallorca with Luis Prieto hitting the winner in the 56th minute.

On Sunday, Real Madrid coach Wanderley Luxemburgo will be playing for his professional life when the Spanish giants visit Real Sociedad.

Luxemburgo has come under fire before during his brief tenure at Real, having only taken over last December, but the club's fans called for his head during the last 10 minutes of the 1-1 draw against Lyon in the Champions League on Wednesday.

The traditional waving of white handkerchiefs to signal their displeasure was accompanied by jeering and shouts around the Santiago Bernabeu stadium of, "Out, out, out."

"The whistling was fair. If I'd have been in the stands then I would also have been whistling," said Luxemburgo.

The former Brazil national coach was given a stay of execution at a Real directors' meeting on Thursday night, which in theory was to look at the injury crisis in the first team squad.

However, Luxemburgo will have got a clear message about his future.

"I'm tough, I'm relaxed about carrying on. The president and vice-president are backing me. They greeted me and talked normally (after the game)," added Luxemburgo.

BCB names

FROM PAGE 12

SQUAD

Mushfiqur Rahim (captain), Mehrob Hossain (vice-captain), Sohrawardi Shuvo, Mehdi Hasan, Raqibul Hasan, Shamsur Rahman, Rezaul Islam, Kamrul Islam, Sakib-al-Hasan, Tamim Iqbal, Nabil Samad, Dollar Mahmud, Ishraq Sonnet and Sirajullah Khadem.

Bangladesh go

FROM PAGE 12

Yellow cards: Arafat (Bangladesh) and Hamid (Iran).

TEAMS

IRAN: Mehdi, Yasha, Mehrdad, Shahab, Amiri (Hosseini), Sina, Meisam, Azizvand, Obeidavi (Mostafa), Jokar and Mohsen.

BANGLADESH: Mazharul, Monu, Meshu, Kasehm, Arafat, Rony (Komal), Robin (Liton), Rajon, Mamun, Herok and Ali.

Referee: Al Delawar A Rahman (Bahrain).

Sanath vows

FROM PAGE 12

was getting good starts but after that I used to get out," he headed.

Jayasuriya felt the team had hit a new low in recent one-dayers.

"That one-day series was one of the worst tours by a Sri Lankan team in recent years. Nothing went right for us from the start, but whatever India touched turned to gold," he remarked.

Jayasuriya is recovering from a shoulder injury that he aggravated on a boat ride before the one-day series in India.

Younis loses

FROM PAGE 12

one Test and two one-day internationals for damaging the pitch at Faisalabad.

Woolmer said the team management had not asked for Younis's replacement.

"We have not asked for any replacement but we have an option of bringing in a regular opener and may ask Shoaib Malik to bat at number three," he said.

Pakistan are also likely to rest out-of-form fast bowler Mohammad Sami and include Mohammad Asif, who took 10 wickets in a warm-up match against England at Lahore early this month.

The Pakistan coach said his team were determined to clinch the series. "One has to cope with injuries and other problems. The morale is high and we enter the Test to win the series," said Woolmer.

Pakistan have yet to win a Test series since Woolmer took over in 2004.

Langer c Ramdin b Edwards 99

Hayden c Chanderpaul b Bravo 47

Ponting lbw b Bravo 56

Hodgell lbw b Edwards 18

Hussey not out 133

Symonds b Bravo 9

Gilchrist c Chanderpaul b Bravo 6

Warne c and b Bravo 0

Lee c Ramdin b Bravo 9

MacGill b Edwards 22

McGrath b Dwayne Smith 5

Extras: (lb-7, w-2, nb-14) 24

Total: (All out in 123.3 overs) 428

Fall of wickets: 1-97, 2-211, 3-228, 4-238, 5-271, 6-277, 7-277, 8-295, 9-388

**Bowler** **O** **M** **R** **W**

Edwards 23 4 114 3

Powell 24 6 80 0

Collymore 23 1 59 0

Bravo 27 7 84 6

Dwayne Smith 17.3 3 59 1

Rafique, Ashraful BSWA's best

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Bangladesh Sports Writers Association (BSWA) named cricketers Mohammad Rafique and Mohammad Asharaful as the best sportsmen for the years of 2003 and 2004 respectively on Sunday.

The awardees of 2003: Habibul Bashar (cricket), Matjur Munna (football), Shahin Mahmood (hockey organiser), Abdul Hashem (swimming coach), Mahbubur Rahman (cricket umpire), Bangladesh Chess Federation (best federation) and Dutch-Bangla Bank (sponsor).

The awardees of 2004: Khaled Masud (cricket), Rubel Rana (swimming), Zahid Hossain (hockey), Sharmin Akhter (shooting), Biddyut Kumar (weightlifting), Fouzia Huda Jui (athletics), Mostafa Kamal (cricket organiser), Shafiqul Islam Manik (football coach), Akhteruddin Shaheen (cricket umpire), Narail District Sports Association (best organisation), Partex Group (sponsor).

The BSWA will also honour Dulu Afendil and Col (ret'd) Kazi Shahed Ahmed for their special contributions to the sports in a function next January.

Div I cricket

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Boys Club, Kathalbagan GCC and Jatrabari KC won their respective matches in the First Division Cricket League at different city venues yesterday.

Bangladesh Boys made 173 to register an 86-run victory over Dhaka Wanderers Club at City Club ground. Wanderers were bundled out for 87 in 26.5 overs.

At Dhaka University central ground, Jatrabari (122/6) beat Eskaton SS (118/10) by four wickets while Kathalbagan (160/10) registered a hard-fought nine-run win over Prantic KC (151/10) at BKSP ground in Savar.

DIV I CHESS

Muktis take solo lead

SPORTS REPORTER

Muktijoddha Sangsad took a solo lead in the Dutch-Bangla First Division Chess League after the end of the second round at the federation hall room yesterday.

The title aspirants Muktijoddha outplayed Farashganj Sporting Club 4-0 to secure 7.5 points.

Defending champions Leonine Chess Club and Biman were one point adrift to follow the leaders. Leonine managed a hard-fought 2.5-1.5 victory over Destiny 2000 while Biman also scored same marginal win against BJMC.

Javed leads

FROM PAGE 12

fours and two sixes.

Dashing batsman Al Shahriar then joined Javed to build on the good foundation and the pair added 91 runs before Shahriar was caught in the covers off leg-spinner Arif for 53.

And the dismissal paved the way for gentle medium paceman Hannan to come up with his career best figures of 5-58 as Dhaka lost six wickets for 63, but they finally managed to cross the three hundred mark thanks to Shahadat Hossain's blazing 36-run knock.

In reply, Barisal lost one wicket while negotiating the last seven overs of the day but Dhaka could finish the day on even higher note if left-handed Humayun Kabir had not been dropped twice against Khaled Mahmud, who operated with the new ball despite the presence of two quickies -- Shahadat and Talha Jubair.

RAJSHAHI - KHULNA

National pacer Syed Rasel led Khulna to shot the home side out for a paltry total after putting them into bat.

The left-arm seamer claimed four wickets for 17 in 16 overs and he got good supports from his new ball partner Ziaur Rahman and left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak Raj, both capturing three wickets each for 26 and 27 runs respectively.

Farhad Reza top scored with 32 for Rajshahi.

Rajshahi pacer Mohammad Shahajada initiated the tourists' early damage picking up two wickets but Bashar along with his national teammate Tushar Imran (26) repaired the early hiccup adding 89-run in the third wicket stand.

CHITTAGONG - SYLHET

Deciding to bat first the port city side struggled to 72-4 but Ehsanul and Wasel staged a fightback for the home side to recover from the bad start.

Seasoned campaigner Ehsanul scored 75 off 185 balls with seven hits to the fence while Wasel contributed a 160-ball 71 with nine fours to his credit, but both the batsmen were trapped lbws by pacer Hasibul Hossain.

Hasibul was the most successful Sylhet bowler with 3-56 and Ashiqur Rahman claimed two for 17 runs.

SCORES IN BRIEF

DHAKA-BARISAL

**DHAKA:** First innings 331 all out in 80.3 overs (Javed 106, Rashedul 59, Shahriar 53, Mehrob 9, Ashraf 20, Sanwar 6, Mahmud 4, Anwar 17 not out, Shahadat 37, extras 19; Anisur 1-17, Sajid 3-68, Arif 1-90, Hannan 5-58).

**BARISAL:** First innings 35-1 in 7 overs (Imran 10, Nafees 9 not out, Kabir 15 not out, extra 1; Mahmud 1-12).

RAJSHAHI-KHULNA

**RAJSHAHI:** First innings 130 all out in 54.5 overs (Johrul 31, Farhad 32, Mushfiqur 0, Masud 14, extras 17; Ziaur 3-26, Rasel 4-17, Razzak 3-27).

**KHULNA:** First innings 144-4 in 34.1 overs (Bashar 82 not out, Tushar 26, Manzarul 16 not out, extras 4; Shahajada 2-38, Saifullah 2-18).

CHITTAGONG-SYLHET

**CHITTAGONG:** First innings 270-8 in 90 overs (Nafees 19, Nazimuddin 34, Aftab 15, Ehsanul 75, Wasel 71, extras 23; Nazmul 1-26, Rezaul 1-26, Hasibul 3-56, Ashiqur 2-17, Enamul 1-87).



RONALDINHO

Ronaldinho set to kiss the 'Golden Ball'

Football

AFP, Paris

Silky-smooth Barcelona striker Ronaldinho is being tipped to win the 50th European footballer of the year award at a ceremony here on Monday.

The Brazilian, whose mesmerising ball skills and two goals in a 3-0 win over arch rivals Real Madrid two weeks ago left even the Santiago Bernabeu fans in applause, would succeed Ukrainian striker Andriy Shevchenko of AC Milan.

Also in with a chance of winning the award, given to a Europe-based player deemed to have performed the best over the previous year, are Chelsea forward Frank Lampard and Liverpool's Steven Gerrard.

Gerrard, Liverpool's main midfield workhorse and a capable goalscorer for the Reds, inspired the Anfield Road club to victory through-out their triumphant Champions

League campaign last season when they ended up beating AC Milan on spot kicks in the final.

However Liverpool's failure to shine in the English Premiership both last season and currently may go against the England international.

Lampard, who seems to have blossomed under the guidance of Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho, helped inspire the Stamford Bridge club to victory in the Premiership last season, their first such title in over 50 years.

It remains to be seen if their contribution to their clubs' respective successes proves enough to convince the panel of judges, which is made up of prominent European football journalists.

Also in with a shout of what is regarded as Europe's most prestigious player award - won for the first time by Stanley Matthews of Blackpool in 1956 - is Arsenal striker Thierry Henry, who has never won it, Shevchenko, and Cameroonian

Samuel Eto'o, also of Barcelona.

However Ronaldinho's special brand of football, which helped Barcelona to the Spanish league title last season and Brazil to victory in the Confederations Cup, has tipped the balance in his favour.

Ronaldinho has already been voted FIFA's World Player of the year, in 2004, and this year was given the FIFA pro award.

If successful he would become the third Brazilian to win the 'Golden Ball' trophy after compatriots Ronaldo (1997 when he played for Inter Milan and in 2002 with Real Madrid) and Rivaldo (1999 when he played for Barcelona).

Three players share the record of having won the award three times.

Dutch striker Johan Cruyff won it while with Ajax in 1971, 1973 and 1974, Frenchman Michel Platini won it while with Juventus in 1983, 1984 and 1985 and Dutchman Marco Van Basten won it in 1988, 1989 and 1992 while playing for AC Milan.

SERIE A

Inzaghi keeps Milan alive

Football

AFP, Rome

Filippo Inzaghi scored a dramatic winner in the fourth minute of stoppage time to give AC Milan a precious 2-1 home victory over struggling Lecce on Saturday.

Inzaghi, a 74th minute substitute for Alberto Gilardino, struck with a close range volley to move Milan to within two points of Serie A leaders Juventus who host Treviso on Sunday.

Determined to bounce back after their eight-match winning streak was ended by Fiorentina last week, Milan took an early lead thanks to Andrea Pirlo's free-kick.

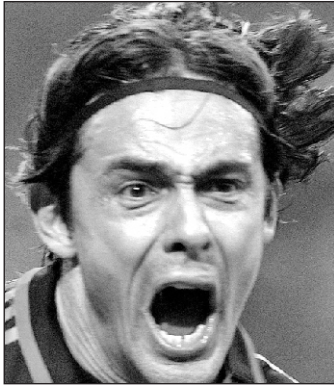
But the team that smashed Fenerbahce 4-0 in the Champions League on Wednesday tired in the second half and Cedric Konan equalised for the visitors in the 66th minute.

Juventus have 33 points followed by Milan on 31 and Fiorentina, who visit Roma on Sunday, on 28.

Milan went ahead in the third minute at the San Siro.

Souleymane Diamoutene fouled Gilardino 20 yards out and Pirlo fired a right-footed shot wide o the wall and into the top corner.

Gennaro Gattuso came close to extending Milan's lead eight minutes



FILIPPO INZAGHI

before half-time but his low drive from the edge of the box rolled inches wide.

Milan maintained the pressure and only the outstretched boot of

Vincenzo Sicignano prevented Manuel Rui Costa from giving the hosts a two-goal cushion.

Leccu refused to give in and their dogged persistence was rewarded with an equaliser.

Marco Cassetti's right-wing cross was headed into Konan's path by Mirko Vucinic and the Ivory Coast forward clipped the ball past a hesitant Nelson Dida.

Milan resorted to plenty of high balls as their frustration grew but Inzaghi came to their rescue in the 94th minute, exchanging passes with Pirlo before stabbing the ball past Sicignano.

Livorno remain in fifth place after they were held to a goalless draw at home to Chievo in Saturday's early match.

The woodwork saved Chievo twice and Livorno captain Cristiano Lucarelli had a goal ruled out for offside.

A point for Chievo lifted them above Sampdoria into sixth position on 21 points, one behind Livorno.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	36 "Lost Horizon" actress	59 Concupiscence	16 Met melody
1 One of the Three Bears	38 Zero-star review	21 Relocate	20 Alamos lead-in
5 — Tech	40 Drone selection	2 NYSE counter-part	23 Aries
8 Square	41 Lum-moxes	4 Shopping center	24 History chapter
12 Actor Sharif	43 "OI course"	5 Viny shelter	25 Betty's rival for Archie's attention
13 Three-match link	45 Set off	6 Corduroy and calico	27 Party bowlful
14 Unembellished	47 Votes off the island	7 Blackbird of "Silence of the —"	29 Old French coin
15 Not paraphrased	51 First culprit	8 Pre-serves, in a way	30 Scenery chewer
17 Cheese selection	52 Upright Rudimentary education	9 Marlini ingredient	32 Ccn
18 Exact amounts of money?	55 Morn of 51-Across	10 Canal zone?	34 In tiers
19 Pointed a finger at	56 Therefore	11 Require	37 O'er and o'er
21 Carnival city	57 Tidy		39 Barber-shop call
22 One's performance	58 "Awe-some, dude!"		42 Cut off
23 Gun the engine			44 Sales plich
26 Moreover			45 "— See Clearly Now"
28 Combine crudely			46 Kaplan who played Kotter
31 Vicinity			48 Beige
33 Part of R.S.V.P.			49 Brings up the rear
35 Old portico			50 Coin aperture
			53 Zsa Zsa's sis

PATH	FLY	SHAD
OROE	LEE	MONO
TURNO	DOWN	AUTO
STY	ROD	SCRIM
TAR	OAK	
CARRY	SUNDAYS	
ASEA	JOT	OLEO
WIT	CHIEF	SWEPT
KIT	BOV	
SLIDE	ZOO	PSI
WACO	BURNDOWN	
AVOW	OLE	ORAN
MAIN	BLVD	GETS

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15					16				17			
18							19	20				
							22					
23	24	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						55			56			
57						58				59		