

Blatter criticises WC ticketing

AFP, Geneva

FIFA President Sepp Blatter on Sunday criticised ticketing arrangements for the forthcoming World Cup finals in Germany, saying the Germans still had to prove they could hold a successful competition.

"In Germany, they'll have to make an effort if they want to repeat what happened in South Korea in 2002 or France in 1998," the head of world football's governing body said in a newspaper interview.

"They'll first have to prove that the World Cup will be as good as the expectations," he told the Swiss newspaper NZZ am Sonntag.

Underlining qualms about a lottery-style draw for tickets buyers, Blatter said countless meetings with the German football federation on the issue were not getting anywhere.

"It would probably have been better if we had taken over the ticket sales ourselves. The Germans chose a system that I really don't understand," he added.

FIFA would handle ticketing arrangements for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa again, Blatter added.

The German organisers of the 2006 World Cup finals said after a third batch of sales last month that 84 percent of match tickets – 2.6 million tickets – had already been sold, with demand outstripping supply.

Black market tickets surfaced on online auction sites with prices for the knockout stages hiked up by thousands of euros.

FIFA is hoping to generate about 1.7 billion euros (two billion dollars) in revenue from the this summer's World Cup, mainly from television rights and sponsors, and its biggest ever profit from the event, about 110 million euros.

Ctg, Rajshahi

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SCORES IN BRIEF

CHITTAGONG: 579.

SYLHET: 214 all out in 68 overs (Rahman 43, Imtiaz 42, Ijaz 90, Yasin 6-56, Ilias 3-56, Sabbir 1-37) and 296 all out in 69.5 overs (Rahman 35, Imtiaz 46, Mabud 86, Rezaul 65, Yasin 2-93, Ilias 1-48, Sabbir 7-81).

Result: Chittagong won by an innings and 69 runs.

KHULNA: 122 and 332 all out in 92.5 overs (Sadat 151, Shamsur 70, Salim 43, Shafaq 3-59, Mushfiq 1-69, Alamgir 1-42, Farhad 3-26, Shuvo 2-89).

RAJSHAHI: 353 and 105-0 in 20.3 overs (Jahurul 51 n.o., Farhad 49 n.o.).

Result: Rajshahi won by ten wickets.

DHAKA: First innings- 395.

BARISAL: First innings- 305-6 in 92 overs (Imran 39, Hannan 36, Faruque 101, Nadif 57 batting, Humayun Kabir 50 batting, Munir 2-85, Sharif 1-73, Mehrab Jr 1-59, Rezaul 1-43, Opee 1-20).

Cruciani drops

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under-23 side in the SAF Games in Islamabad in 2004, got a recall.

The squad, which begins training today at the Army Stadium, is expected to play a few warm-up matches in Thailand or Myanmar after a four-day camp.

Meanwhile, SAFF champions India take up Afghanistan at the MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong on the first day. The other teams in action on the opening day are Chinese Taipei who play the Philippines and Palestine who should be favourites against Guam.

Two matches will be played at both the venues every day from April 1-6 in the group campaign with the first match kicking off at 3.30pm and the second match at 6pm.

In the quarterfinals, winners of Group C will play the runners-up from Group D at the Bangabandhu Stadium on April 8 while Group B toppers clash with Group A runners-up in Chittagong the same day.

On April 9, Group A winners play Group B runners-up in Chittagong while Group D toppers meet runners-up of Group C in Dhaka for a place in the last four.

The first semifinal will be played on April 12 in Chittagong and the second semifinal on April 13 in the capital. The final is slated for April 16 at the BNS.

Bangladesh television will telecast all the matches live.

BANGLADESH SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Aminul, Biplab; defenders: Nazrul, Wali Faisal, Faisal Ahmed, Sujan, Rajani, Sony, Siraji, Parvez Babu, Hassan Al Mamun; midfielders: Rintu, Arman Aziz, Abul, Ujjal, Joy, Asad, Monwar, Faisal Mahmud, Abdullah Parvez, Zahid Parvez; forwards: Alfaz, Kanchan, Zahid and Topu.

THE TEAMS

GROUP A: India, Taiwan, Philippines, Afghanistan

GROUP B: Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Brunei

GROUP C: Palestine, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Guam

GROUP D: Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Macau.

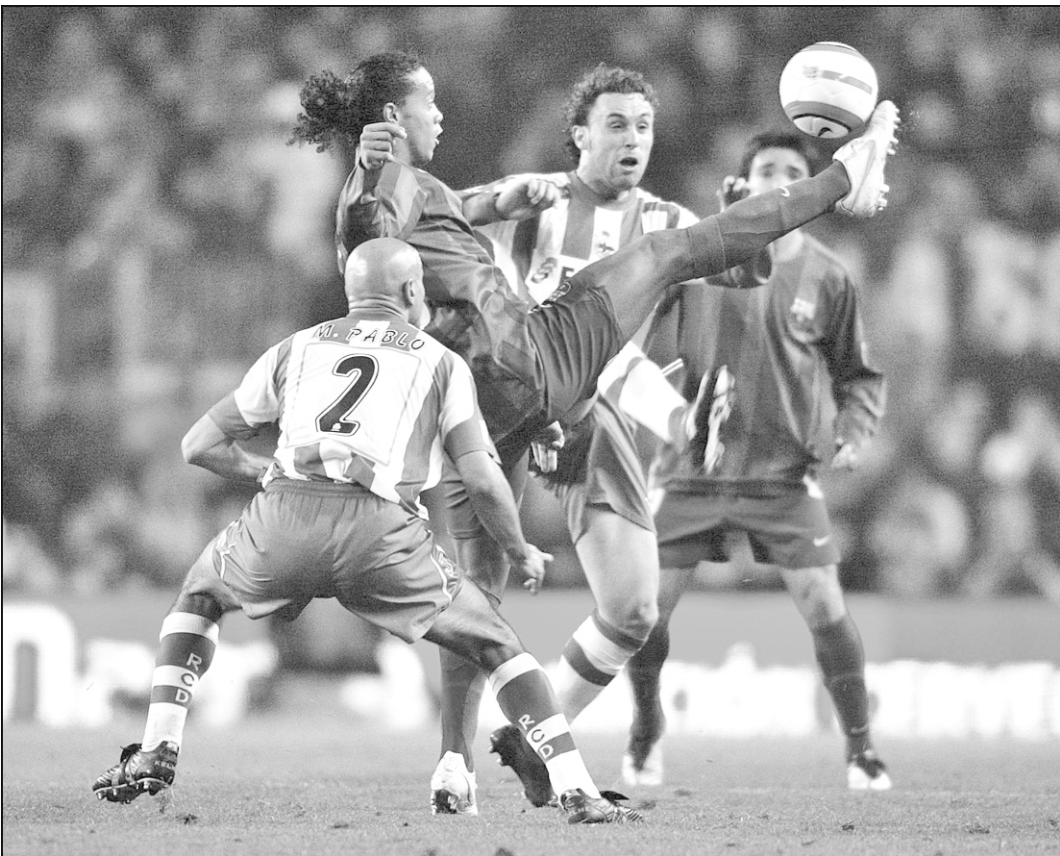


PHOTO: AFP

I CAN TAKE 'EM ALL: Barcelona's master tactician Ronaldinho (C) is under pressure from Deportivo La Coruna's Sergio (R) and Manuel Pablo (L) during their Primera Liga match at the Nou Camp on Saturday.

PRIMERA LIGA

Big guns fire

Football

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid put a turbulent week behind them on Saturday with a 2-1 victory over city rivals Atletico Madrid but Barcelona moved on towards a title defence with Samuel Eto'o securing a 3-2 home win over Deportivo La Coruna.

The win left Frank Rijkaard's side on 61 points from 26 matches, ten ahead of Real, third behind Valencia, who can close the gap on the leaders to eight points if they win at bottom side Malaga on Sunday.

Eto'o was once on Real's books and the capital club could have done with his 19 league goals this term given the erratic form of Ronaldo, dropped for the Atletico test.

Italian Antonio Cassano filled in admirably on his first league start since a January move from Roma, however, heading in after just two minutes before Brazilian Julio Baptista wrapped up the win after Mateja Kezman had given the visitors brief hope. Atletico coach Pepe Murcia bemoaned defensive lapses for the goals.

"Real caught us with two counter punches," he said. "Real were living

on their nerves in the first half."

Real, nine-times European champions, are ten points adrift of Barca after Eto'o close-range poach saw off stubborn Deportivo La Coruna.

Real's win went some way to making up for the shock midweek resignation of Florentino Perez as chairman.

Construction magnate Perez went after six years at the helm having acknowledged that too many cracks had appeared in his 'galactico' empire with the club facing a third straight season without a trophy.

Deputy Fernando Martin oversaw his first match as Perez's successor and could not have missed banners reading "thanks Floren, we're with you," and "Florentino, it's not your fault. Mercenaries get out of this club fast."

Martin had called on the squad to shape up and earn the millionaire lifestyle and Cassano showed the wisdom of his selection by scoring on three minutes after a Roberto Carlos cross teed him up.

Kezman backheeled the equaliser in the 27th minute but Baptista sealed matters with a close-range strike after a David Beckham through ball.

Barca show no sign of losing their grip, a first-half lapse aside, after Eto'o struck on the hour mark at the Nou Camp to settle a see-saw affair.

Deportivo made their hosts fight every inch of the way for the points after Ronaldinho's second-minute free kick put the Catalan club ahead.

Sergio powered down the right and Juanma met his cross perfectly to head the Galicians level in the 14th minute and then the visitors went ahead in the 27th minute through a Jorge Andrade header.

Barca roared back, however, and Swedish veteran Henrik Larsson made it 2-2, heading in powerfully off a Ronaldinho corner in the 33rd minute.

Another corner from the mercurial Brazilian fed Eto'o and another three points were in the bag.

Earlier, Argentine playmaker Juan Riquelme fired up Villarreal's bid for a Champions League spot next season by scoring a brace in a 3-2 home win over Alaves with Guille Franco netting an 82nd-minute winner.

Ponting back

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Australia had won three of the four matches between the sides at St George's Park, including a high-scoring match in their most recent encounter four years ago, when they made 326 for three to achieve what was then the highest successful run chase in one-day international.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the Australian innings of the third one-day international against South Africa at St George's Park on Sunday:

AUSTRALIA					
Gilchrist c Boucher b Pollock	25				
Katich run out (De Villiers)	49				
Ponting c Peterson b Pollock	62				
Martyn c Telemachus b Ntini	51				
Clarke run out (Boucher)	25				
Hussey c Gibbs b Hall	22				
Lee not out	6				
Watson not out	4				
Extras: (lb-1, nb-3, w-6)	10				
Total: (For 6 wkts in 50 overs)	254				
Fall of wkts: 1-36, 2-99, 3-173, 4-214, 5-243, 6-244.					
Did not bat: B Hogg, N Bracken, S Clark.					
Super-sub: M Johnson.					
Bowler	O	M	R	W	
Pollock	10	1	45	2	
Ntini	9	0	56	1	
Telemachus	8	0	59	0	
Hall	9	1	39	1	
Peterson	10	1	39	0	
Smith	4	0	15	0	

months.

"I was crying a lot of times (during that time). So this comeback is special for me. And so you can't control that."

Federer admitted the Spaniard was the better player on the day.

"We knew I would be the aggressive player and he would be the consistent player," the world number one said.

"I made some mistakes but I am still pleased with my game and Rafa was better on the day. It was a great effort by him and I think we are going to have a fantastic rivalry."

Asked if he thought he could become world number one himself, Nadal answered: "No! I don't have a chance. For me he's unbelievable. I will continue with my comeback and I am just happy with that."

Nadal's win looked improbable during the first half hour.

Federer came to the net twice and served two aces in the opening game, and broke Nadal as the challenger allowed him plenty of time to take the initiative.

Federer finished that game with a dismissive forehand inside out winner.

Draw after late drama

FROM PAGE 12

shots only after having made the match safe for their team.

The opener reached his half-century in the afternoon when he firmly drove Flintoff through the covers for a four and completed his hundred in the last session with a single to point.

He cracked 12 fours in his 198-ball knock before being caught off an upish drive by Andrew Strauss in the covers off Flintoff.

David also held his end intact for a long time to thwart England, taking no risks and patiently waiting for loose deliveries to punish.

The Indian captain reached his 40th Test half-century when he square-cut Flintoff for a four. He was later bowled by left-arm spinner Monty Panesar – his third wicket of the match for a promising debut.

England had two opportunities to break the Jaffer-David stand but failed to take them.

David was on 17 when he was dropped by wicketkeeper Geraint Jones off left-arm spinner Ian Blackwell, while Jaffer survived a run-out chance on 71 as substitute Matt

Prior's underarm throw missed the stumps by a whisker.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the fifth and final day of the first Test between India and England at the Vidharba Cricket Association Stadium in Nagpur on Sunday:

ENGLAND: First innings 393 (Collingwood 134 not out, Cook 60; Sreesanth 4-95, Pathan 3-92)

INDIA: First innings 323 (Kaif 91, Jaffer 81, Kumble 58; Hoggard 6-57, Panesar 2-73)

ENGLAND: Second innings (over-night 297-3)

Strauss c Dhoni b Pathan 46 Cook not out 104 Bell c Dhoni b Pathan 1 Pietersen c David b Kumble 87 Collingwood not out 36

Extras: (b-12, lb-7, nb-2, w-2) 23 Total: (For three wkts dec in 87 overs) 297 Fall of wkts: 1-95, 2-97, 3-221

Bowler	O	M	R	W	
Hoggard	16	7	29	1	
Harmison	17.2	4	48	2	
Flintoff	17	2	79	2	
Panesar	16	2	58	1	
Blackwell	12	2	43	0	

Result: Match drawn.

Man-of-the-match: Matthew Hoggard.

Toss: England.

Umpires: Ian Howell (RSA) and Aleem Dar (PAK)

Second Test: At Mohali (March 9-13)

Ronaldinho launches Chelsea attack

INTERNET, undated

Ronaldinho has said that he has no desire at all to play for a side like Chelsea. The Brazilian superstar reckons he would never play for a team that he claims is keener on kicking opposition players than it is on playing football.

Ronaldinho claims he has still got the bruises from the first leg of Barcelona's UEFA Champions League clash with Chelsea, and he would rather see Frank Lampard and Thierry Henry heading to the Camp Nou instead.

He told the News of the World: "I know Chelsea want to sign me but they are a team I don't want to play for."

"The first leg showed me their style does not interest me. Every time I had possession they went to kick my feet first before trying to get the ball."

"I've been feeling the pain from those kicks from Chelsea and had to pull out of Brazil's friendly because of it."

"That kind of game isn't for me and rather than ever play like that I'd say 'no thank you.'"

"Everybody here is talking about Lampard and Thierry Henry joining. If it was down to me I would buy them both."

UEFA consider use of two refs

AFP, London

European football governing body UEFA is to investigate the use of two referees in matches amid increasing claims of players faking injury.

West Brom boss Bryan Robson on Saturday accused Chelsea's Didier Drogba of diving in the league leaders' 2-1 win.

UEFA chief executive Lars-Christer Olsson told BBC Five Live's Sportswatch programme: "The use of two referees will be discussed in the summer."

"Previous tests haven't been successful because of communication."

Olsson added: "We haven't foreseen any tests in the near future but it is one of the matters that has come up in discussion with clubs in terms of dealing with this behaviour."

The UEFA boss believes that diving has become a real problem for British football.

"It seems it has been significantly more in Britain than in the other parts of Europe, although there have been reports from international games as well."

Petrova spoils Mauresmo party

AFP, Doha

Nadia Petrova dashed Amelie Mauresmo's hopes of grabbing the world number one spot by winning the WTA Qatar Open title 6-3, 7-5 on Saturday.

Petrova, the second seed, also ensured a fourth straight success for Russian players in Doha.

Anastasia Myskina won in 2003 and 2004 with Maria Sharapova claiming the title last year.

Mauresmo, the world number two, was hoping to displace the top-ranked Kim Clijsters by winning the tournament but her defeat on Saturday means she will have to wait another week to reach that goal.

Petrova, who had a solid build-up to the final with some fighting victories was clearly the better player, using her height and reach to good advantage and keeping Mauresmo pinned to the baseline.

ULAB in final

SPORTS REPORTER

Hosts University of Liberal Arts (ULAB) defeated Independent University (IUB) by 96 runs in the second semifinal of the ULAB Fair Play Cup cricket tournament to set a final clash against State University. IUB were bundled out for 97 in reply to ULAB's 193-9 in the 35-overs match at the ULAB ground.

The final will be held on March 10 at the same venue.

Akram wishes

FROM PAGE 12

Sourav Ganguly's exclusion from the Indian team, Akram said that Sourav is going through a difficult time.

"He has given India a lot but I am not in the position to comment about whether he should play or not for India."

Cook hailed

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Compton, Jack Hearn and Sir Len Hutton... and the youngest to do it on debut. How he earned that honour."

The paper also quoted Cook recalling how he'd been told he'd won a new female admirer.

"When I was on about 40, the umpire, Aleem Dar, told me about a girl in the stands holding up a banner, asking me to marry her. I said I'll have to keep my eye out for her. This week has just been unreal."

PREMIERSHIP

Liverpool held again

Football

AFP, London

Liverpool manager Rafael Benitez was left lamenting his goal-shy players and goalkeeper Thomas Myhre's commendable efforts for a spirited Charlton side in a goalless draw at Anfield on Saturday.

Liverpool moved to second place for the day with the draw a point above Manchester United.

Liverpool ran into in-form Charlton keeper Thomas Myhre and then saw Robbie Fowler's late goal 'disallowed' for offside as they endured a frustrating warmup for Wednesday's Champions League clash against Benfica.

"I think he was inside but I don't want to blame the officials," said manager Rafael Benitez.

Elsewhere Newcastle's transformation continued as they moved into the top half of the table with a 3-1 win over Bolton while Arsenal belied their poor away record by beating London rivals Fulham 4-0.

Arsenal skipper Thierry Henry, who scored twice as the Gunners moved to within two points of north London foes Tottenham in the race for the fourth Champions League place, said: "We all know we can

play football when we have the ball but, unfortunately, football is not like that all the time."

Magpies captain Alan Shearer marked his return from injury with a goal and afterwards stand-in coach Glenn Roeder said he'd no idea how the club would find a successor to the former England striker, set to retire at the end of the season.

"How the club replace him, I wouldn't have a clue. There's not another player like him in the world."

Second-bottom Portsmouth moved nearer relegation with a 1-0 defeat away to Aston Villa while fellow drop candidates Birmingham missed a chance to climb out of the bottom three in a 1-0 defeat against Middlesbrough.

Meanwhile West Ham were held to a 2-2 draw by Everton.

Shearer was on target as Newcastle built a 2-0 half-time lead.

The 35-year-old headed in a Charles N'Zogbia cross on the stroke of half-time after Nolberto Solano had opened the scoring with a superb 34th-minute free kick.

Shola Ameobi made it 3-0 with 20 minutes left before Kevin Davies scored for the visitors.

Arsenal, who had won just two of their previous eight away games, hit Fulham with two goals in the space of four minutes.

SERIE A

Juve on title-track

Football

AFP, Rome

A half-time dressing-down from coach Fabio Capello helped Juventus to a 1-0 victory at Sampdoria on Saturday, which maintained their 10-point lead at the top of Serie A with 10 games left.

Second-placed AC Milan had put some pressure on Juve by thrashing Empoli in the day's early match and closing the gap between them and the reigning champions to seven points.

But Juve responded to the challenge, breaching Sampdoria's defence in the 68th minute after an uncomfortable first half in Genoa.

Adrian Mutu delivered a free-kick from the right to the back post and Pavel Nedved took advantage of some slack marking to head past Francesco Antonilli from two yards

out.

"In the first half, Sampdoria played at a faster pace and opened us up down the wings and I told the lads at half time that just wouldn't do," Capello said.

"We needed to raise the level of our game and I thought the players did that in the second half. They showed a great deal of personality."

Sampdoria, whose last home league victory to Juve was 10 years ago, went close to taking the lead after half an hour when Sergio Volpi's powerful free-kick struck the bar.

Despite missing injured strikers Zlatan Ibrahimovic and David Trezeguet, who are both expected to be fit in time for the second leg of their last 16 Champions League tie against Werder Bremen on Tuesday which the Germans lead 3-2, Juve dug in to claim their 23rd win in 28 games, keeping them firmly on course to retain the Scudetto.



PHOTO: AFP

Milan striker Filippo Inzaghi celebrates his second goal against Empoli at San Siro on Saturday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	34 Finder's fee	55 Tempo	11 Make a cardigan
1 Isaac Hayes' "South Park" role	36 Tolkien figure	56 It lasts days	22 "Cheers" supply
5 Grain storage structure	37 Equal (Pref.)	DOWN	24 Mass disorder
9 Run up the phone bill	38 Pompous sort	1 Talon	25 Jam ingredi-ent?
12 Jeans-maker	39 Sagan or Sandburg	2 Half (Pref.)	26 Kin of 22-Down
13 Frost	42 Lid for a lad	3 Neck and neck	27 Line
14 Grecian vessel	44 Bloke	4 Manicur-ist's target	29 Check
15 Congrega-tion's cry	48 Eggs	5 Thread-bare	30 9 mm sub-machine gun
16 Mrs. Shake-speare	49 Handle roughly	6 New Rochelle college	31 Favorite
17 Main-lander's memento	50 Charac-terization	7 "Animal House" director	35 Senility
18 Blueprint addition	51 Decom-pose	8 Raw rock	36 Kenneth Branagh role
19 Contem-plate	52 Shrek is one	9 Christmas	
20 Criterion	53 Grand-scale tale	10 Belliger-ent	
21 Recede	54 Ram's fan?		
23 German pronoun			
25 Grinch portrayer			
28 "Can ill"			
32 Isolated			
33 Stupefy			

Solution time: 27 mins

ACROSS	THREE	GUM
10	BAR	ANE
11	TO	NE
12	NO	ETU
13	HOURS	MAIN
14	EBON	RANSACK
15	LOW	PANTS ON
16	MESQUITE	BRO
17	JULI	UNA
18	ICON	CORNAL
19	BLOC	OWED LE
20	SASH	OLDS LA