



Blackburn Rovers midfielder David Bentley (L) races past Arsenal midfielder Freddie Ljungberg during their FA Cup fifth round replay at Ewood Park on Wednesday.

# Gunners woes compound

AFP, Blackburn



A Benni McCarthy super strike handed Arsenal their second Cup disappointment in four days and booked Blackburn Rovers' place in the FA Cup sixth round on Wednesday.

Arsene Wenger's side arrived at Ewood Park still smarting after their bad-tempered League Cup final defeat to Chelsea.

Then just as this fifth round replay appeared to be heading into extra-time, McCarthy produced a superb solo effort to hand Rovers a 1-0 win and a home tie against Manchester City in the quarterfinals.

For the second successive game Rovers manager Mark Hughes named McCarthy among the substitutes after insisting the South African striker was feeling

the effects of his first season in England.

But the Cape Town-born forward provided the perfect response to his boss when he collected the ball wide on the left, cut inside Philippe Senderos, and curled a stunning right foot shot beyond Manuel Almunia.

McCarthy's celebrations spoke volumes -- and the result was particularly sweet for Hughes and his players who had been widely criticised for their negative approach when the sides first met at the Emirates Stadium eleven days ago.

Arsenal's wearying cup campaigns have taken their toll in terms of injuries and suspensions and Wenger was forced to make six changes from the youthful line-up that started against Chelsea.

At least the manager could rely on the presence of right-back Emmanuel Eboue who was cleared to play just two hours before kick-off after opting to appeal the charge of violent conduct imposed by the FA in the wake of Sunday's fracas.

It was hardly ideal preparation for a clash that would determine whether the London club maintained its interest in a competition that represents their most realistic chance of silverware this year.

But Wenger's rapidly developing side responded impressively, picking up from where the two sides left off in the first meeting by forcing Blackburn onto the back-foot and dominating the opening period.

Arsenal's trademark passing and movement were far too sharp for Blackburn to handle and with a little more composure in front of goal they would have been in control long before the break.

Brazilian midfielder Julio Baptista was the biggest culprit, twice fluffing good chances from close range after being pressed in a makeshift attacking role.

His first touch abandoned him at the crucial moment when Rovers right-back Brett Emerton totally misjudged Freddie Ljungberg's right-wing cross in the 27th minute.

Then, even more wastefully, the former Real Madrid man headed

over when he was allowed to rise unchallenged to meet Denilson's free-kick five minutes later.

While Arsenal had only themselves to blame for failing to break the deadlock, Wenger and his players were furious not to receive more assistance from referee Graham Poll when Ljungberg went tumbling under the challenge of Emerton.

The visitors were convinced it was a penalty but Poll, perhaps mindful of Jeremie Aliadiere's theatrical tumble a few minutes earlier, ignored the appeals.

The second half followed a similar pattern although Blackburn did at last pose an attacking threat without ever truly threatening Almunia's goal.

All that changed three minutes from time when McCarthy struck to claim his 16th goal of the season and send Blackburn into the last eight of the competition.

## Rooney learning WC lessons

INTERNET, undated

Wayne Rooney believes England have learned vital lessons from their World Cup disappointment which will stand them in good stead heading into Euro 2008.

The Manchester United striker regrets predicting England would win last year's World Cup in Germany because it cranked up the pressure to impossible levels.

And Rooney now believes England's best chance of success at a major tournament is if both the players and the fans can keep their expectations in check.

"In the two major tournaments I've played in - Euro 2004 and the World Cup in Germany last summer - myself and the rest of the lads were guilty of putting too much pressure on ourselves before we even got out there," Rooney said in an interview to be published in full in Friday's edition of Sport magazine.

"Saying we were going to win it doesn't help, and we were guilty of that.

"Being realistic, I think the whole country would have been delighted if we'd reached the semi-finals, and then seen if we could go on from there.

"But we built ourselves up, and the press whipped the country up into a frenzy and then slaughtered us for not playing well."

England are making hard work of their qualification campaign for the Euro 2008 finals in Austria and Switzerland after drawing at home to Macedonia and losing away in Croatia.

But Steve McClaren's men would be confident of reaching the finals - and then it will be about putting Rooney's plan into action.

He said: "I'd like to think we can win something during my career, because we have got some great players in this country. But the expectation is always far too high, and that is a problem."

# Blatter dubs Magpies 'greedy'



AFP, London

FIFA President Sepp Blatter has accused Newcastle of being greedy in their demands for compensation for the serious injury suffered by Michael Owen at the World Cup in Germany last year.

Newcastle have asked for 6.2 million pounds (12 million dollars) but Blatter insisted the world governing body would not increase a "last offer" of just over 900,000 pounds (1.8 million dollars).

Owen ruptured his cruciate knee ligament in the opening minute of England's World Cup match against Sweden and has not played since.

The wrangling over who bears financial responsibility for his injury has highlighted an issue that some fear could lead to clubs refusing to release their stars for international football.

Blatter said the primary responsibility for paying compensation in cases such as Owen's lay with the English Football Association and Newcastle's insurers.

FIFA also set up its own compensation fund of 17.5 million Swiss francs (14.3 million dollars) to facilitate payments to the clubs of injured players.

But Blatter implied the idea behind this was primarily to provide cover for poorer national associations, notably from Africa, and pointed out agreeing to Newcastle's request would use up 85 percent of the fund for the 2006 finals.

"If you look who is asking for

money (from the fund) then something is wrong if the requests are coming from clubs in the richest league in the world," Blatter said.

"We have made a last offer but this has not worked out. If somebody has a responsibility here it is FA to the player they took to the World Cup."

Newcastle are already receiving 50,000 pounds

(98,000 dollars) per week from the FA's insurers towards Owen's wages. The club argue they are also entitled to a lump sum because they had to spending ten million pounds (19.5 million dollars) buying Obafemi Martins as a replacement for Owen, who cost them 17 million pounds (33 million dollars) from Real Madrid.



Barcelona midfielder Xavi blows kisses to the away crowd after scoring during their King's Cup match against Real Zaragoza at Zaragoza on Wednesday.

## Lampard wasn't punched

INTERNET, undated

Chelsea's Frank Lampard has responded to Arsene Wenger's plea to give his version of events during Sunday's Carling Cup final tussle with Arsenal by confirming he was not punched by Emmanuel Adebayor.

Adebayor was sent-off for his part in the scuffle and was suspended from Wednesday night's FA Cup exit at Blackburn after the FA rejected his appeal about his alleged part in Sunday's clashes.

The Gunners claim Adebayor was red-carded in a case of mistaken identity and information has surfaced that one of the linesmen informed the FA that he had seen the Togolese striker punch Lampard.

"I don't agree with the FA's compliance committee," said Wenger. "And I don't agree with the report of the linesman because, for me, he lies. Adebayor didn't punch anybody. So when the linesman says he punches someone, he lies."

"I would like you to ask Lampard if he was punched. And I want him to say the truth. If it is 'yes', we will accept it. But we have watched it on a microscope and, if you can see Adebayor punching Lampard, I would like you to show me."

Adebayor was also charged by the disciplinary commission with reacting aggressively and failing to leave the field of play immediately after being sent off. His appeal against the initial red card was dismissed on Tuesday but the Togo striker has requested a personal hearing, which will take place next Tuesday.

The melee at the Millennium Stadium was sparked following a confrontation between Chelsea's Jon Obi Mikel and Arsenal's Kolo Toure, who were both also sent-off, with players and coaches from both sides becoming involved.

"I saw a lot of people getting angry and when I first got there it was to stop people and bring [the situation] down. It was a final and I did not want a lot of people to get involved," protested Adebayor.

"When the referee showed me a red card I could not believe it. 'I remember straight away [Arsenal physio] Gary Lewin came to me to say, 'Come on Manu, let's go,' but I said, 'Just leave me to ask one question - why did he [the referee] give me a red card?'"

"A lot of people thought I was going to hit him, but I was not."

## Romario up to 992

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

Former Brazil striker Romario scored twice to take his career tally to 992 goals as Vasco da Gama crushed part-timers Fast Club 6-0 in a Copa Brasil tie on Wednesday.

The 41-year-old, who played the full 90 minutes, opened his account by converting a penalty two minutes before halftime and added another in the 76th minute after a one-two with Andre Dias.

Romario has kept the goal tally himself, although it includes goals scored at junior level and friendly matches. He has set himself a target of 1,000 goals before he retires.

Leandro Amaral also scored twice while Renato and Wagner Diniz shared the other goals as Vasco completed an 8-1 aggregate win in the first round tie against the little-known side from Manaus on the Amazon river.

## Chelsea play down Terry scan

INTERNET, undated

Chelsea insist there is 'no cause for concern' over John Terry's scan on Wednesday following the head injury he suffered in the Carling Cup final.

Terry was knocked unconscious during the victory against Arsenal on Sunday after being caught accidentally by Abou Diaby, but the Blues skipper returned to join the celebrations later that evening.

The 26-year-old's scan on Wednesday was a 'routine' assessment of his injury, according to Chelsea officials.

"We stress that the scan was entirely routine and normal procedure for an injury of this type and raised no cause for concern," read a statement from the Premiership champions.

Terry swallowed his tongue and stopped breathing when he was knocked unconscious, and the later thanked Gunners physio Gary Lewin for his swift treatment from the sidelines.

Despite the positive news on Terry's scan, the severity of the injury has raised concern over whether the England skipper should return to action immediately.

Chelsea face Portsmouth on Saturday as they look to make up ground on Premiership leaders Manchester United, then they switch their attention to the Champions League next week when they face Porto.

Terry missed nearly two months earlier in the campaign, a period that coincided with Chelsea losing to Liverpool and dropping home points to Reading and Fulham.

## FRENCH CUP

# Lens, PSG bite the dust



AFP, Paris

Champions League hopefuls Lens were bundled out of the French Cup by determined amateur side Montceau-les-Mines on Wednesday.

A 78th minute penalty proved enough for the Cup minnows to secure a 1-0 home victory over the French top-flight side, who currently sit second in the league behind champions Lyon.

Cup holders Paris St Germain joined Lens on the scrapheap after their 2-1 away defeat to high-flying league side Sochaux.

Sochaux took a two-goal lead before half-time through Mickael Isabey and Moumouni Dagano and held on to book their ticket in spite of David N'gog raising hopes for the visitors with a strike in the 75th minute.

It means Sochaux join

Montceau, Nantes and Marseille -- both of whom booked their last four place on Tuesday -- in Sunday's draw for the Cup semi-finals.

PSG will now return to the more important task of maintaining their top-flight status having slumped to fourth from bottom despite the arrival of former Lyon coach Paul Le Guen from Scottish side Rangers.

Montceau could have given Le Guen's stricken side a lesson in determination.

The Burgundy hosts had dumped top-flight side Bordeaux out of the competition in the previous round and their fighting spirit proved a vital ingredient in their winning formula.

Montceau coach Yannick Chandioux said: "We're very proud of the players."

"When you play a first division side who are also competing in Europe and are in form you have some anxious moments."

"But we played even better than we did against Bordeaux. We had a

lot more openings and the only thing that annoyed me was that we could have let it slip through our fingers by missing those chances."

Lens failed to fulfil their potential, and left their coach Francis Gillot stunned: "It's certainly the worst match we've played in the last two and a half years."

"We came up short in all areas. You have to ask if the players took the game seriously."

Montceau finally earned a chance to pull ahead when Lens' keeper Sebastien Chabbert fouled Julien Serpy in the box.

Striker Christophe Alidor stepped up and made no mistake with the resulting penalty.

In a tense end to the match Montceau hit the post soon afterwards. Lens then Lens failed to grab a crucial equaliser a few minutes before time when several, concurrent shots were blocked by the hosts' defence.

## GERMAN CUP

# Stuttgart reach semis



REUTERS, Berlin

VfB Stuttgart beat Hertha Berlin 2-0 at home in dreadful conditions on Wednesday to advance to the semi-finals of the German Cup and keep alive their hopes of a domestic double.

Brazilian striker Cacau finally found a way past Hertha's out-standing keeper Christian Fiedler in the 38th minute to put the hosts in front under steady rainfall in front of 32,000 spectators at Gottlieb-Daimler stadium.

Germany midfielder Thomas

Hitzlsperger doubled 1997 winners Stuttgart's lead 13 minutes from time with a long-range blast.

Favourites Stuttgart joined Nuremberg, VfL Wolfsburg and Eintracht Frankfurt, who all went through on Tuesday, in the semi-finals.

"We didn't set ourselves any goals for the Bundesliga before the season but we said from the start we wanted to make it to Berlin for the Cup final," said Stuttgart coach Armin Veh.

"Now we're close to that goal. We didn't expect to be in second place in the Bundesliga. We've got a young team and never thought we'd be this high in the table."

For Hertha, who are sixth in the Bundesliga table and have long dreamt of playing in the final at home at the Olympic Stadium, it was the frustrating end to another disappointing campaign.

Hertha had held Stuttgart to a goalless draw in the Bundesliga on Friday by packing their defence. Their tactics were similar on Wednesday with Fiedler again making several acrobatic saves.

"On Friday they sat back with a destructive style and got the goalless draw but we knew they'd have to come out and attack more this time and that created more room," said Hitzlsperger.

# Milan close in on Cannavaro



INTERNET, undated

Milan have begun negotiations with Real Madrid to bring Fabio Cannavaro back to Serie A, according to reports in Spain.

Spanish newspaper AS claims that talks between Rossoneri Vice-President Adriano Galliani and Real chief Vicente Calderon have already started.

While negotiating Ronaldo's transfer during the January window, Milan showed their interest for the Italy captain and have received a positive response from the Spanish giants.

However, Cannavaro has recently announced that he misses Juventus and that he would like to return to his former club at the end of the season.

Real Madrid are having a tough time in La Liga this term and the Golden Ball winner has been harshly criticised by both fans and the Press at the Bernabeu.

"I know I am not on top form, but I am happy here in Spain," said the Neapolitan native, who had also been linked with a return to Napoli where he would team up with his younger brother Paolo.

"I've never made so many mistakes in my career, but I'm working hard on getting back to being the player I was at Juventus and the World Cup, I'm sure I'll succeed," he concluded.

According to AS, the



FABIO CANNAVARO

## CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

**ACROSS**

1 Venomous  
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8 "Monopoly" card  
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13 Savings plan  
14 River of England  
15 Elvis hit  
17 Snatch  
18 Still  
19 Peculiar  
20 Teakettle feature  
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22 Feathery accessory  
23 Examine ore  
26 " -- on the Roof"  
30 Carpet style  
31 Play on words  
32 Eat in style  
33 Fizzy drink  
35 Coasters  
36 Glutton  
37 Shock partner

**DOWN**

2 Sandal, e.g.  
3 Look of despair  
4 Ballroom news-paper  
5 Sailor blouse  
6 Cattle driver's tool  
7 Crane  
8 Simple swimming stroke  
9 Modern coin  
10 Jacob's brother  
11 Credit card result  
16 Hunky --  
20 Turf  
21 1997 Dustin Hoffman movie  
22 Crit  
23 Onager  
24 That woman  
25 Actor Mineo  
26 Bear hair  
27 Falsehood  
28 Remnant  
29 Dots' neighbors  
31 Critbage scorer  
34 Menagerie  
35 Use a Q-Tip  
37 Sponsorship  
38 Cisterns  
39 Dietary supplement  
40 Latvia's capital  
41 Timber wolf  
42 Vivacity, in music  
43 Venus' lack  
44 Advertise forcefully  
46 Grumpy leader?  
47 Right angle

**Solution time: 21 mins.**

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## CRYPTOQUIP

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K F Z M E P F M B B L C U J S F O .  
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF SOMEBODY ROUTINELY PUT CASH INTO A BIG COFFEEPOT, I GUESS HIS MONEY WOULD BE WELL-TURNED.  
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals H