



Sevilla coach Juande Ramos is unconscious as he is stretchered off the pitch after being hit on the head by a bottle during their King's Cup match against Real Betis in Sevilla on Wednesday.

Klinsmann honoured

AFP, Berlin

Juergen Klinsmann, who coached Germany to third place at last year's World Cup, received the country's highest honour on Wednesday at a private ceremony at the chancellery.

Klinsmann, 42, was awarded the "Cross of the Order Merit" by German Chancellor Angela Merkel for his team's performance at the tournament.

Based in California, Klinsmann did not attend a ceremony in August when the players received their distinctions, not of the same rank.

Klinsmann said he was "very touched" by the honour, adding: "Last summer's World Cup remains an unforgettable experience for me."

Merkel paid tribute to Klinsmann, a World Cup winning striker with Germany in 1990 and European champion in 1996, for "giving so much to our country".

Van Bommel punished by UEFA

REUTERS, London

Bayern Munich's Mark van Bommel has been punished by UEFA for his gesture to the Real Madrid crowd during his side's 3-2 defeat in a Champions League match at the Bernabeu last week.

UEFA said that they had ordered the Dutch midfielder to promote fair play at a UEFA youth competition after making rude gestures to the crowd following his late goal against Real.

Van Bommel, who was also fined 6,200 euros (\$8,196) for the incident, will, however, be free to play in next week's second leg after UEFA decided to defer a one-match ban for a probationary period of a year.

Take it easy Terry

AFP, London

One of Britain's top brain surgeons has urged England captain John Terry not to rush back to action after suffering an horrific head injury last weekend.

Colin Shieff, consultant neurosurgeon at the Royal Free Hospital in London, said he would normally advise similar injury victims to take it easy for at least two weeks.

Terry lost consciousness, swallowed his tongue and stopped breathing after a kick in the head from Arsenal's Abou Diaby during their 2-1 League Cup final win on Sunday.

"Someone who came in to us with a similar story and which was witnessed by so many, I would suggest to them that they take it easy for a couple of weeks," said Shieff.

"Boxers who were rendered unconscious would not be allowed to go back into the ring until they had satisfied the requirements of the regulatory authority. The boxing board of control would not let them fight for two or three months."

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Violence mars Cup night

Football

AFP, Madrid

Violence marred the Spanish Cup quarterfinals on Wednesday as the second leg between Real Betis and city rivals Seville was suspended due to crowd violence after the latter's coach was hit by a bottle.

Seville, held to a goalless draw in the first game, were leading thanks to Frederic Kanoute's goal when the referee called a halt to the game at Betis' Manuel Ruiz de Lopera Stadium.

Kanoute had netted nine minutes into the second half to give the lead to Seville, league title hopefuls and the UEFA Cup holders.

But moments later Seville coach Juande Ramos was carried unconscious from the dugout after someone threw a bottle at him from the stands.

Adolfo Munoz of Seville's medical staff said Ramos would be kept in a Seville clinic overnight for observation.

A Betis spokesman promised the club would do all it could to hunt down the person responsible and punish him.

But Spanish media quoted Spanish Secretary of State for Sport Jaime Lissavetzky as saying he was appalled at what had happened and he would be asking for the toughest of responses.

He added he had contacted the interior ministry and would be calling for Spain's anti-violence commission to hold an "emergency meeting" on Friday to discuss the incident.

"We have to come down as hard as possible," he insisted, drawing a parallel with the recent hooligan problems which have afflicted Italy and saw midweek league matches played during the afternoon at the behest of police.

Spanish matches traditionally are late-night affairs and in the context of a local Cup derby matters booted over even before the match began.

The website of sports newspaper AS also reported trouble outside the

ground sparked by some 200-300 Seville supporters unable to gain entry.

Spanish television showed dozens of supporters setting fire to dustbins in frustration, having strewn the large containers across an access road leading to the stadium.

About half an hour after the incident referee Undiano Mallenco bowed to the inevitable and called off the match.

In games that did finish, European champions Barcelona, resting star striker Samuel Eto'o, overturned a 1-0 first-leg deficit in the late match at Real Zaragoza with a 2-1 win for an away goals success courtesy of early goals from Xabi and Iniesta before Pique hit a consolation.

Deportivo La Coruna drew 1-1 at Real Valladolid to advance 5-2 on aggregate to the semi-finals while Getafe also made it through despite a 1-0 loss to a Bernardo Romeo goal at Osasuna.

Getafe won 3-1 on aggregate.



PHOTO: AFP

AS Roma forward Francesco Totti pumps his fist in celebration after scoring one of his two goals against Chievo during their Italian Serie A encounter at Verona on Wednesday.

TOTTI SCORES BRACE

Udinese defy Inter

AFP, Rome

Inter Milan's record run of 17 consecutive Serie A wins was brought to an end after they were held to a 1-1 draw at home to Udinese on Wednesday.

Nigerian midfielder Christian Obodo put the visitors ahead with an overhead kick two minutes into the second half, before Inter substitute Hernan Crespo headed home Maxwell's left-wing cross in the 67th minute.

Inter pressed for a winning goal, but found no way through a stubborn Udinese defence.

Goals from Erjon Bogdani and Franco Semoli put Chievo 2-0 up before Roma captain Francesco Totti netted twice for the visitors, taking his league tally for the season to 16.

Inter, who are unbeaten in the league, have 67 points from their 25 matches played, followed by Roma on 53 points.

Inter coach Roberto Mancini said he felt no bitterness at seeing his

team's winning run halted.

"It was bound to happen sooner or later," Mancini told SKY Italia.

"If it didn't happen today, it could have happened at the weekend. But it doesn't change anything."

Mancini insisted his players were still highly motivated in the championship race, despite their huge lead over Roma.

"The players always give their

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Secret of Sachin's energy

BBC ONLINE, undated

Star batsman Sachin Tendulkar says he is fired up by the prospect of helping India win the World Cup.

Tendulkar, 33, is the all-time leading run scorer in one-day internationals but has not been at his best for the past couple of years.

"To be honest, to play well and win the World Cup is our long cherished dream. Not only mine, but it's the team's dream," said Tendulkar.

"I have to admit the huge stage motivates me to showcase my talent."

Despite his legendary status in the game Tendulkar, who will be playing in his fifth World Cup, has yet to win the tournament.

In addition to holding the record for most ODI runs (14,763), he has also scored the most centuries (41) and won the most caps (381).

"No one can deny the importance of an event that comes once in four years," Tendulkar told the Mumbai Mirror newspaper.

"The best will play against the best. That's something which excites any player. I, too, am ready for the challenge."

Tendulkar has slipped down the

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Odoyo sounds WC warning

AFP, Nairobi

Kenyan seamer Thomas Odoyo said he will bid to maintain his aggressive form at the upcoming Cricket World Cup in the West Indies.

Odoyo, who with his opening attack partner Peter Ongondo, set last month's World Cricket League alight with their explosive bowling performances and took a total of 28 wickets in the whole tournament, is upbeat about his prospects in the Caribbean.

"I am going to work hard in the World Cup," Odoyo said on the eve of the team's departure for the West Indies on Thursday. "I look forward to firing on all cylinders."

The 28-year-old aims to continue his dominant showing against fellow minnows Canada when the two sides meet in the opening match at Saint Lucia on March 14.

"This is one match we cannot afford to lose," said Odoyo, whose 4-25 and 27 not out against the Canadians in the 2003 World Cup in Newlands, South Africa earned him the man-of-the-match award.

"We always play well against Canada and this should be our best opportunity before we meet New Zealand and England," Odoyo said.

New Zealand, who for safety reasons refused to travel to Kenya for their preliminary match in 2003, is drawn to play the Kenyans on March 20 and England four days later.

Grip calls for Beckham

AFP, London

Tord Grip, assistant to former England coach Sven-Goran Eriksson, said ex-captain David Beckham should still be playing for his country.

The Real Madrid midfielder, who has 94 caps, has been out of the England squad since Steve McClaren took over the England job after the World Cup and has so far not been used during the Euro 2008 qualifying campaign.

But Grip, who worked alongside Eriksson with England for six years, believes Beckham, who will join LA Galaxy from Real Madrid at the end of the season, can revive the national team's fortunes after four games without a win.

Grip told the Sun newspaper: "You cannot build for the future if you're losing matches – and you can't afford to lose matches now."

"I think you should always pick your best players, whether you're building for the future or not."

"And Beckham was in really excellent form for Real Madrid against Bayern Munich."

"I don't know what Steve is planning to do but if Beckham continues to play like he did against Bayern, then it shows what an excellent player he still is."

"David did really well for us over the years and is still excellent."

Down The World Cup Lane

1987: Birth of a dynasty

MOHAMMAD ISAM

India and Australia ended up with 20 points each from their group to reach the semifinals while Pakistan and England made it through from Group B. West Indies missed out of a place in the last four for the first time in the history of the World Cup. This could have been a sign of things to come for the great force from Caribbean islands as they failed to collect close wins and were not good at finishing matches. They were in transition missing their fast bowlers of experience.

It is not inconceivable that Malcolm Marshall could have won the World Cup for them had he played. New Zealand, too, were in transition in the absence of Richard Hadlee. Sri Lanka, in the field, were utterly defensive, and confronted by mountainous totals their talented batsmen were crushed. Like the Sri Lankans, the Zimbabweans returned home without a victory, but they gained many friends by their fielding – giving themselves as professionals never quite could – and many sympathisers by their naive mistakes and run-outs. For sheer heroism, the innings of the World Cup was David Houghton's 142 against New Zealand.

Most of the talk before the two semifinals even began was that of a 'dream final' between hosts India and Pakistan but what transpired in the next three games actually dictated the 1990s. Gaddafi Stadium hosted the first semifinal between hosts Pakistan and Australia. Interestingly, this was Australia's first match on Pakistani soil in the tournament. Nevertheless, their openers Boon and Marsh gave them a solid start with little 'Boony' hitting 65. Unheralded middle-order batsman Mike Veletta struck 48 but it was all-rounder Steve Waugh's 38 off 32 balls, including

18 off the final over off Jaffer that swung the game the Australians' way. They ended up with 267 for 8, and in that day, it was usually a winning score.

Australia rallied around their bowlers and hustled their way towards a place in the World Cup final. They had to remove the experienced duo of Imran and Javed who were looking dangerous with a 112-run partnership in the middle overs but skipper Border, with his innocuous left-

arm spin, had his opposite number caught for 58 by Greg Dyer. The crowd gave Imran a rousing send-off as it was his final appearance in the Pakistan cap. Miandad fell soon after and Australia won by 24 runs. Fast bowler Craig 'Billy' McDermott claimed five wickets in the match.

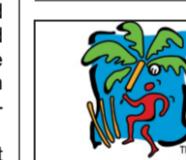
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PHOTO: INTERNET

No Akhtar, no Asif

AFP, Karachi



ICC Cricket World Cup
WEST INDIES 2007

Pakistan pace bowlers Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif were ruled out of the World Cup on Thursday in a move that a cricket chief insisted was due to injury and not doping.

Akhtar has been suffering from knee and hamstring problems and Asif has an elbow injury, but the tainted pair was also living in the shadow of pre-tournament drugs tests ordered by Pakistan.

They will be replaced by Yasir Arafat and Mohammad Sami for the World Cup which starts in the Caribbean on March 13, with the side still reeling from the loss of all-rounder Abdul Razzaq with a knee injury.

"It is a huge blow," coach Bob Woolmer told a news conference with captain Inzamamul Haq. "But their injuries would have taken more time and we couldn't wait anymore."

"It is true that our chances have been hit badly by the absence of these two key bowlers, but we will have to show the kind of spirit and team unity which can win us a big event like the World Cup," he said.

Inzamam added: "This is not an ideal situation for us. We are leaving for the West Indies under tremendous pressure."

The decision brings an end to the saga that began in November when Akhtar was banned for two years and Asif for one year after they tested positive for the steroid handroolone, initially ruling them out of the World Cup.

The bans were later overturned on the grounds that they took the substance unknowingly. The Court of Arbitration for Sport in Switzerland is due to hear an appeal against that decision by the World Anti-Doping Association in April.

Several newspapers here reported that private tests, carried out while Akhtar and Asif were having their injuries reassessed in England, revealed they still have the

banned substance in their systems. Another positive result in official tests could have made them liable for life bans.

"We never conducted private or secret dope tests. It is propaganda against Pakistan," Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Naseem Ashraf told a news conference in Islamabad.

"Their withdrawal has nothing to do with doping. They were due to feature in dope tests once they regained full fitness but for us the chapter is now closed," said Mir, who represented Pakistan in the

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PHOTO: AFP FILE