



PHOTO: AFP

Sevilla right-back Daniel Alves (L) is over the moon after scoring a late winner in their top-of-the-table Primera Liga clash against Barcelona on Saturday.

FIERY CLASH AT ANDALUCIA Sevilla depose Barca

REUTERS, Madrid



Ten-man Sevilla fought back from a goal down to beat Barcelona 2-1 at home and move to the top of the Primera Liga in an explosive encounter on Saturday.

Ronaldinho headed Barca in front after 13 minutes and when Sevilla defender Aitor Ocio was sent off in the 28th for bringing down the Brazilian for a penalty the home side looked to be out of the match.

But Ronaldinho's spot-kick was saved and Sevilla's Alexander Kerzhakov levelled before the break.

The outstanding Daniel Alves put the Andalusians in front with a freekick early in the second half, and

Barcelona soon lost their numerical advantage as Ludovic Giuly and Gianluca Zambrotta were sent off.

Sevilla are top with 50 points, one ahead of Barcelona who dropped to second.

"We can't cry over one defeat. It was an important game and we let slip a great opportunity, but one match does not decide the league," Barca coach Frank Rijkaard told a news conference.

A Fernando Morientes goal gave third-placed Valencia a 1-0 home win over Celta Vigo and moved them on to 46 points.

The former Liverpool striker volleyed home from Hugo Viana's cross after 67 minutes for his 10th goal of the season.

But it was a laboured performance from Quique Sanchez Flores's side, who had goalkeeper Santiago Canizares to thank for a last minute save from Celta's

Fernando Baiano.

Real Madrid, who are fourth on 43 points, host local rivals Getafe at the Bernabeu on Sunday.

Rijkaard kept Cameroon striker Samuel Eto'o on the bench and started with an attacking trio of Ronaldinho, Giuly and Lionel Messi in Seville.

After a cagey opening Italian fullback Zambrotta broke the offside trap down the right flank and crossed from the byline for Ronaldinho to plant a powerful header just inside the post.

Ronaldinho won himself a penalty, knocking the ball round centreback Ocio, and running round the other side of the player, only to be tripped from behind as he went to shoot in the area.

Ocio was sent off, but goalkeeper Andres Palop blocked the Brazilian's penalty with his legs.

Sevilla's Brazilian fullback Alves

was a continual threat down the right and as halftime approached he crossed low into a crowded area for Kerzhakov.

The Russian striker controlled and spun to fire a left-footed shot low past Victor Valdes.

Alves put Sevilla in front with a superb freekick which seemed to get a slight deflection off the wall in the 61st, and a minute later Barca were reduced to 10 men as Giuly was harshly sent off after tussling for the ball with Alves.

Zambrotta soon followed Giuly off the field as he collected two yellow cards inside a minute in the 76th and only profligate finishing prevented Sevilla from scoring again at the end.

Police had to go into the stands at halftime to break up fighting between Sevilla fans.

Lineker calls for Beckham



AFP, London

Former England striker Gary Lineker has called for David Beckham to return to the international fold on a short-term basis ahead of the crunch Euro 2008 qualifier against Israel on March 24.

Lineker believes the Real Madrid midfielder's experience would be invaluable when the national team travel to Tel Aviv for the critical game with qualification for next year's tournament in Austria and Switzerland looking uncertain.

However, Lineker insists a recall

for the former England captain should only be temporary with Beckham set for a summer move to Los Angeles Galaxy.

In his column in The Sunday Telegraph, Lineker wrote: "David Beckham has made a powerful case for a return to the international fold."

"I think (manager Steve) McClaren would be wise to bring back Beckham as a short-term measure and he should be welcomed back with open arms.

"He has shown his usual determination by battling back into the Real Madrid team after being told that he would never play under (manager) Fabio Capello again.

"Now he is playing as well as anyone at the Bernabeu and, with

England wobbling, he could provide invaluable experience in what is looking like a crucial match.

"Beckham is a proven international class player and, while he might have lost some of the sharpness in his legs, if you look at it objectively he remains one of the top 20 players available to McClaren.

"His passing remains first rate and his ability at set-pieces is still undiminished.

"Beckham knows how to play international football. Yes, he did not play well for England over the past couple of years, but I think he was more of a victim of the way the team played rather than a cause of it.

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Terry misses Porto clash

INTERNET, undated

Jose Mourinho revealed that John Terry will not be back for Chelsea's Champions League match against Porto after the champions ground out a 2-0 win over Portsmouth at Fratton Park.

Terry was knocked unconscious by an accidental kick in the head from Abou Diaby during Chelsea's Carling Cup final win over Arsenal last weekend.

And after goals from Didier Drogba and substitute Salomon Kalou left Chelsea nine points behind leaders Manchester United with a game in hand Mourinho admitted the England skipper would not be rushed back into action.

Chelsea face Porto at Stamford Bridge on Tuesday and Mourinho told Prem Plus: "JT to play against Porto? No chance.

"The man is before the player. JT is more important than a football result and we don't risk him. The medical rules are the medical rules." Asked when Terry might return, Mourinho replied: "Maybe next weekend against Tottenham (in the FA Cup quarter-finals).

Rooney unlikely for Lille

AFP, Manchester

England striker Wayne Rooney could be in doubt for Manchester United's Champions League last 16 second leg clash with Lille at Old Trafford on Wednesday after injuring his knee, United manager Sir Alex Ferguson said on Sunday.

Rooney is to have a scan on his knee to ascertain the extent of the damage he suffered when he was tackled by Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher in United's last minute 1-0 win on Saturday.

Rooney had to go off following the tackle, though, his absence was more than compensated for by his replacement John O'Shea scoring the decisive goal.

"Wayne will go for a scan," Ferguson told the club website.

"It was a bad tackle - Carragher got him right on the knee. We'll have to see how he is."

United led Lille 1-0, though, the match promises to be a tense affair after Ferguson rounded on the French players for the way they reacted after Ryan Giggs goal from a freekick which the home side claimed was unfair as they were still arranging their wall.

'No need of stars'

AFP, Port of Spain

Pakistan shrugged off the absences of strike bowlers Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif when they arrived for the World Cup.

The 1992 world champions saw both Shoaib and Asif limp out of contention last week just two days after all-rounder Abdul Razzaq was also ruled out through injury.

However, a team spokesman insisted that replacements Mohammad Sami, Yasir Arafat and Azhar Mahmood will rise to the challenge.

"The pair (Shoaib and Asif) are world class performers and great bowlers and obviously, they will be missed," said Pakistan media officer Pervez Jamil Mir.

"But we have some excellent replacements in Mohammad Sami who is one of the fastest bowlers in the world and Yasir Arafat. The team morale is as good as anything

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Down The World Cup

Lane

1996: Dogged by controversy

QUAZI ZULQUARNAIN ISLAM

Quite easily the most controversial World Cup ever to take place, the sixth edition of the tournament was co-hosted for the first time by three countries India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, the latter coming to the party after the first two sub-continental giants had played hosts nine years earlier.

However that was just the beginning of the firsts. After contentious debate and much media attention Australia and the West Indies both refused to send their teams to Sri Lanka following the Central Bank Bombing by the Tamil Tigers in January that killed 90 people and injured thousands. For the first time in history, the International Cricket Council awarded both games to Sri Lanka on forfeit. More on that later.

Twelve teams took part, divided into two groups each playing the other five in its group to determine the quarterfinalists. The 'problem' of a well-rounded group format arose when the extra teams were accommodated by a complete change from the successful 1992 system, a round-robin producing four semi-finalists. Instead, the teams were divided into two groups of six, from which not four but eight sides would proceed to the knockout rounds. The effect of this, obvious in advance, was to reduce virtually a month of cricket to the status of little more than practice games. In other words, it took 30 matches to eliminate Zimbabwe and the three newcom-

ers (Holland, Kenya, United Arab Emirates), then seven more to reduce the remaining Test nations to one winner.

All this could have been avoided, and a genuinely competitive group programme installed, by discarding the idea of quarterfinals and going straight to a last four. Presumably, the attraction of four big crowds, four big television games, was too great, but this was a decision taken on flawed grounds. The people were not all fooled; the group games in Pakistan, particularly, drew very small crowds.

The tournament suffered from logistical chaos which stemmed largely from the decision, laudable in theory but utterly unrealistic, to spread the tournament to virtually every corner of the vast country of India. The 17 games scheduled for the country were all staged in different cities and insufficient attention had been paid to the practicalities of moving teams (let alone television crews and media people) between games.

But that was not all. The opening ceremony, attended by more than 100,000 people, most of whom must have left wondering what on earth they had been watching. The laser show malfunctioned and the grand launch was a complete flop -- so much so that there were subsequent calls at Calcutta government level for the arrest of the Pilcom convenor, Jagmohan Dalmiya, on a charge

of wasting public money.

But on now to the cricket.

With two victories under their belt without a ball being bowled, Sri Lanka were on short odds to finish top of Group A and they did so with aplomb, winning their three remaining games, albeit two against the minnows Zimbabwe and Kenya. But at the Ferozeshah Kotla, they ran into India or more appropriately, Sachin Tendulkar. The Little Master hit a century but was overshadowed by the blazing strokeplay of Sanath Jayasuria, the Sri Lankan benefitting from the fifteen over field restrictions and taking the Indian attack to sword. It was the day that Manoj Prabhakar's India career ended on his home turf as Sri Lanka successfully chased down a stiff target of 271.

Under the tutelage of the insightful Dav Whatmore, Sri Lanka revolutionised the face of one day cricket. Although the fifteen over rule had been in effect since 1992, where Mark Greatbatch and the New Zealanders had used it quite proficiently, no one had followed through or picked up on it. But the Lankans did and they promoted Jayasuria and wicketkeeper Ramesh Kaluwitharana to up the rate in the first fifteen before Asanka Gurusingha and Aravinda de Silva provided middle order stability. Captain Arjuna Ranatunga followed and he too was backed up by Roshan Mahanama and Hashan

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Bring back '96: Harper

AFP, Daniel Town



73-run defeat to the African minnows during the 1996 tournament.

West Indies were still a potent force at the time with the likes of Richie Richardson, an emerging Brian Lara, and the ageless fast bowling pair of Courtney Walsh and Curtly Ambrose in their side.

The Kenyans, however, posted their first ever World Cup win at Pune in India when they dismissed West Indies for 93 to successfully defend a modest target of 166.

But West Indies manager Tony Howard says his side is intent on winning the World Cup this time round.

"We have some quite detailed plans for the tournament and we plan to come hard," he said ahead of the match at the Trelawny stadium.

"We will think hard and play hard. We are in it to win it. We want it all. We want to win in front of our home supporters. We are prepared to beat the best no matter what. We have no real doubts about our ability at this stage."

The hosts have another incentive to motivate them against the Kenyans -- Roger Harper, the former West Indies off-spin all-rounder, is now their coach.

Roy ready to test arm

CRICINFO, undated

Andrew Symonds is set for his first net session since injuring his right biceps but Ricky Ponting said the allrounder was still three to four weeks away from being 100 per cent fit. Another three weeks on the sidelines would mean Symonds would miss all of Australia's group matches.

Symonds, also known as Roy, will have throw-down training with a tennis ball in St Vincent on Sunday but will not throw or bowl, the Sunday Herald Sun reported. Symonds had surgery on his ruptured muscle a month ago and Ponting said it had been a risk naming him in the World Cup squad.

"We have taken a bit of a gamble with him coming here, but it's one that we think is very worth taking," Ponting told the paper. "Andrew Symonds is going to get picked in any World XI one-day team over the last couple of years and will probably be picked over the next three or four years. He's a very important player to our team. That's why we've taken that risk."

Ponting said Australia remained confident Symonds would be ready to play at the business-end of the tournament. "We've got lots of great back-up players back in Australia, guys we could have brought and left Andrew out," he said.

"But with the advice we've been given, we think in another three to four weeks he should be right and 100 per cent ready to go. If he is then he'll play a big part for us in the World Cup, no doubt about it."

Adriano a fitness doubt

AFP, Rome

Brazilian striker Adriano is racing against the clock to be fit in time for Tuesday's crucial Champions league last 16 tie away to Valencia.

The first leg at the San Siro ended in a 2-2 draw and Inter must either win or get a higher-scoring draw at the Mestalla stadium to reach the quarter-finals.

Adriano pulled his left hamstring in Wednesday's 1-1 Serie A draw against Udinese, forcing him to miss Saturday's 2-1 victory at Livorno which saw Inter stretch their lead at the top of the table to 16 points.

Hernan Crespo, suspended for the Livorno match, is likely to partner Zlatan Ibrahimovic in attack if Adriano fails to prove his fitness.

Inter's dynamic French midfielder Patrick Vieira has already been ruled out due to a torn right hamstring, while Argentine midfielder Esteban Cambiasso is struggling to recover from the right leg injury he picked up in the first leg against the Spaniards.

Olivier Dacourt is expected to replace Vieira as the holding midfielder, flanked by Dejan Stankovic on the right and Javier Zanetti on the left.

Julio Cesar is almost certain to keep goal, protected by a back four of Maicon, Ivan Cordoba, Marco Materazzi and Nicolas Burdisso.

Del Horno makes debut

REUTERS, Madrid

Spain fullback Asier del Horno made his debut in Valencia's 1-0 home win over Celta Vigo on Saturday, eight months after moving from Chelsea.

He played the full 90 minutes in the Mestalla.

The 26-year-old moved from Chelsea for about 7.5 million euros (\$9.87 million) last July but has struggled with an Achilles tendon problem that kept him out of the World Cup.



PHOTO: AFP

Chelsea forward Soloman Kalou (R) is chased by fellow goalscorer Didier Drogba after netting a late goal to seal the champions win over Portsmouth at Fratton Park on Saturday.