



PHOTO: STAR

Chittagong Mohammedan midfielder Camara (R) evades a tackle from Sheikh Russel's Moroccan striker Touati in their B.League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Lucky Russel win



SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra scraped through to a 2-1 win in their home match against a spirited Chittagong Mohammedan in the B. League at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Moroccan striker Touati Younes celebrated his return to Dhaka with a sublime goal but the visitors cancelled the advantage early in the second half through Mohammed Yousuf before a header by Russel skipper Maksudul Alam Bulbul sealed three points for the capital city side before a poor crowd.

Despite fielding four Moroccans, the Russel backline -- which featured relatively inexperienced

players -- showed their nerves and Dipu came close to give the Chittagong outfit lead after six minutes. But Dipu failed to capitalise on the defensive lapse and blasted a volley over the lone keeper from 15 yards.

Younes, who finished top scorer in his only previous season in Dhaka for Russel in 2004, then fired home from 25 yards with a first-time angled volley that gave Mohammedan's diminutive keeper Raju no chance to react to the overhead shot in the 12th minute.

With Guinea midfielder Camara giving an indefatigable performance, Mohammedan got a grip on the game but Yusuf drove a low shot just wide five minutes later. Five minutes from the breather, substitute Zahid almost equalised but his 30-yard effort was parried by a diving Russel goalkeeper Shakil for a corner.

The pressure told in the second half and Zahid set up Yusuf to level

in the 48th minute. Taking the left-flank pass inside the box, an old-Russel cast Yusuf clinically placed a left-footer into the far post.

Moroccan midfielder Ighir Mohamed forced a fine save by Raju while quick-footed substitute Towhid kept the Russel defence under pressure, twice threatening to score. He, however, was denied by Shakil from close range before a top-of-the-box effort missed the mark by inches.

Russel regained lead against run of play in the 81st minute when Bulbul shrugged off his markers during a low corner by Hassan from the left to put a glancing header into the roof of the net despite saving efforts from Chittagong black and whites' leftback Israfil.

Russel hung on to the advantage this time as Shakil, the under-23 national custodian, blocked a close-range shot by Pavel, who almost pulled off a sensational equaliser with his first touch of the ball.

Chittagong Mohammedan coach Nazrul Islam was happy with an admirable performance in an away match and said that it came after hard and long training.

Wajed Gazi's boys, on the other hand, looked slow and untidy after the break but Russel's veteran coach claimed that the footballers will recover from the early-season sluggishness as they play more matches.

Yellow cards: Touati (Russel) and Israfil, Camara (Chittagong Mohammedan)

TEAMS

Russel: Pradip (Aminul), Shawkat, Jahirul, Hassan, Saad, Ighir, Khoubache, Tanvir (Rikto), Touati and Bulbul.

Chittagong Mohammedan: Raju, Tareq, Saikat, Sohail, Israfil, Daulat (Pavel), Camara, Asif, Azim (Zahid), Dipu (Towhid) and Yusuf.

Referee: Azad Rahman.

Rooney fit for Lille clash

AFP, Manchester

Manchester United striker Wayne Rooney has been given the all clear for Wednesday's Champions League last 16 second-leg clash with Lille at Old Trafford.

Rooney had been in doubt after limping out of Saturday's win over Liverpool with a nasty knee injury after being caught by a high tackle from international team-mate Jamie Carragher. Scans, however, revealed no damage.

"Wayne is fine now and will be fit for selection," confirmed United manager Sir Alex Ferguson.

"We have a couple of doubts for the match but Wayne is not one of them."

United won the first leg 1-0 following a controversial Ryan Giggs goal.

Lille have already had two appeals against the quickly-taken free-kick rejected by UEFA and are still considering whether to mount a further claim to the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

TONIGHT'S MATCHES

(all kick-offs 1945 GMT)

AC Milan v Celtic (0-0)

Arsenal v PSV (0-1)

Bayern Munich v Real Madrid (2-3)

Man Utd v Lille (1-0)

Marseille's European Cup stolen

AFP, Marseille

An investigation has been opened into the disappearance of a European Cup replica from Marseille's Stade Velodrome, a police source said Tuesday.

The trophy marked the French team's 1-0 1993 European Cup triumph over AC Milan.

The disappearance was discovered on Tuesday morning although staff at Marseille said that no door had been forced open, according to a source close to the inquiry.

Marseille confirmed to AFP that the trophy, one of two or three replicas that are passed around former winners, was stolen during the night from Monday to Tuesday.

Blatter backs Polish reinstatement

AFP, Warsaw

FIFA president Sepp Blatter has backed the decision to reinstate the Polish Football Federation (PZPN) after a two-month suspension for failing to act on alleged corruption in the game.

"The PZPN has regained the confidence of the FIFA family," Blatter said after crisis talks with Polish President Lech Kaczynski.

World football's governing body FIFA and UEFA, the European Football Union, had been highly critical of the Polish government when Polish Sports Minister Tomasz Lipiec suspended the PZPN in January, accusing them of not doing enough to crack down on match fixing in an affair that stretches back two years.

When Lipiec suspended the federation he appointed a commissioner to oversee the body until new elections are held.

FIFA had called on Lipiec to allow "the Polish federation to organise elections between now and March 31 under the supervision of observers from FIFA and UEFA."

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Henry back for PSV crunch

AFP, London

Thierry Henry is set to return from injury for Arsenal's crucial Champions League second round, second leg clash against PSV Eindhoven on Wednesday.

Henry has missed Arsenal's last three matches with foot and hamstring injuries, but the French striker completed a full training session on Tuesday and manager Arsene Wenger is ready to play him in a match that will define his side's season.

Arsenal trail 1-0 from the first leg in the Netherlands two weeks ago and failure to overturn that deficit would effectively end the London club's season.

Wenger said: "Thierry can start, if I decide to start him. There is no risk for his health, but it is just it could get worse again after the game and that you then start from scratch."

Henry's return is a huge boost for Wenger, who is already without Philippe Senderos (hamstring), Emmanuel Eboue (ankle), Tomas Rosicky (groin), Mathieu Flamini (foot) and Justin Hoyte (hamstring).

Down The World Cup Lane

1999: The shift emerges

MOHAMMAD ISAM

When the World Cup was last played in England in 1983, one-day cricket was small-time, slightly better than what Twenty20 cricket is like these days. But by 1999, cricket was big and one-day cricket was beginning to take a gigantic shape.

Tickets for this World Cup, released a year ahead of the tournament, were sold out in about three weeks. Advertising boards, television rights, etc were all sold several months before Daren Gough even bowled the first ball of the tournament. England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) had both their eyes on the commercial aspect of the tournament, which was a big success three years earlier in the Indian sub-continent. ECB made sure matches were played in Ireland, Scotland and even in the Netherlands, who played in the previous event as associate members.

The full compliment of sub-continent would be playing for the first time and that was also a boost for the ECB and International Cricket Council (ICC). Expatriates from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh were expected to flock in high numbers to watch

their heroes play and that is exactly what happened. Newcomers Bangladesh drew larger crowds than locals Scotland or even England during their Group B matches. The India-Pakistan Super Six affair was the then highest-rated televised match.

Bangladesh, coming in as ICC Trophy champions, and Scotland were playing their first World Cups while Kenya also played through their Malaysia qualification when Bangladesh beat them by one-wicket in a superb final at Kuala Lumpur back in 1997.

Six teams were drawn in each group with three from each qualifying to the next round -- Super Six. The rules of the tournament meant that teams carry points of their fellow qualifiers to the Super Six and as a result could sneak into the semifinals through some loopholes.

The opening ceremony, like the previous year, was a disaster with light drizzle literally spilling water over the organisers' plans at Lord's. The opening match, which ensued the ceremony, was another damp squib. The hosts cruised past the listless defending champions Sri Lanka by eight wickets and all was thought to be as British a World Cup that could ever be. Small crowds, light

clapping and domination of medium-pacers.

But there was another side of this World Cup and that came forth in the next match between favourites South Africa and one of the crowd-pullers India.

New superstar Sourav Ganguly slammed 97 but Hansie Cronje's decision to pick a team with nine batsmen played dividends when young Lance Klusener came in at eight, slammed three fours to clinch a thriller in front of a sell-out 10,000 at Hove.

Australia opened their campaign with a shaky six-wicket win against debutants Scotland as did another favourite Pakistan who beat West Indies by 27 runs with Shoaib Akhtar bowling at blinding speeds. But the first big shock still awaited viewers.

Zimbabwe, lead by Andy Flower, were emerging to be a tough unit to beat and found an Indian side without Sachin Tendulkar, who left the night before to attend his father's funeral, at their disposal.

The southern Africans did just that and beat India after Henry Olunga's three-wicket burst late

SEE PAGE 18 COL 6

Rijkaard loses his cool

AFP, Liverpool



Frank Rijkaard's legendary laid-back style deserted him for once as the Barcelona coach aimed a string of

Liverpool boss Rafael Benitez on the eve of Tuesday's Champions League clash at Anfield.

Rijkaard, whose team must overturn a 2-1 deficit after crashing to a shock defeat in the first leg of their second round tie, was clearly irritated by Benitez's confident prediction that the holders would revert to a forward line of Lionel Messi, Ronaldinho and Samuel Eto'o.

"It is great to play against a team whose manager already knows everything," Rijkaard snapped.

"Sometimes people who say they know everything are those who know the least. It is a game of two teams, both of whom have a chance of going through on the night."

Rijkaard -- whose side slipped up

2-1 against Sevilla on Saturday to further turn on the pressure for their domestic title defence -- added a further barb by suggesting that Liverpool were predictable enough for him to have opted out of watching too many of their matches on video.

"The style Liverpool have -- quite physical and tactically disciplined ... once you have seen a couple of their



FRANK RIJKAARD

games you know how they play," he said, in a quip that could come back to haunt him if Barcelona fail to deliver on Tuesday night.

Although he acknowledged that Liverpool's lead made them favourites to progress in many people's eyes, Rijkaard insisted that he had confidence in the ability of his side to turn the tie around.

"I left my crystal ball at home so I can't give you the score but it is a great opportunity for us to put things right from the first leg.

"Some people might be thinking Liverpool are already through. That takes the pressure off us a little bit and maybe they will find things a little bit more difficult in front of their own fans."

Barca could have won the first leg at a canter if they had taken half the chances they generated in the wake of their opening goal.

"Maybe when we scored it was

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Curbishley backed again

AFP, London

West Ham chairman Eggert Magnusson has given under-fire manager Alan Curbishley his "100 per cent" backing after the Hammers' weekend loss that left them languishing 10 points from safety in the English Premiership.

The Hammers lost 4-3 to Tottenham at Upton Park on Sunday having twice thrown away the lead.

But while Curbishley is under intense pressure despite having only taken over from Alan Pardew this season, Iceland manager Magnusson insists the former Charlton manager's job is safe.

"I want everyone to know that Alan Curbishley remains the man who we will build our future success on," Magnusson said.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4

Galaxy not fearful over Becks injury

AFP, Los Angeles

A fragile foundation to the American football universe was bolstered here Monday when Los Angeles Galaxy general manager Alexi Lalas said he was not worried about David Beckham's knee injury.

England star Beckham suffered a strained right knee ligament in Real Madrid's 1-1 Spanish league draw with Getafe on Sunday, the club saying Beckham will need about four weeks to recover.

US supporters and Major League Soccer, which in January signed Beckham to a deal worth 250 million dollars that begins in July, breathed a sigh of relief that the potential high-profile poster man for the sport was not hurt worse.

"We are aware of the injury sustained by David Beckham on Sunday evening," Lalas said. "Obviously, we hope it's not a serious injury so he can get back to helping Real Madrid challenge for the title."

"We do not expect this injury to

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4

Lille seek United revenge

AFP, Manchester



Lille will be hoping it is a case of third time lucky here on Wednesday when they attempt to overturn a 1-0 first leg deficit in their acrimonious Champions League tie with Manchester United.

The French club has failed in two attempts to persuade UEFA to annul the first match on the grounds that the quickly-taken free-kick by Ryan Giggs which decided the outcome should not have been allowed to stand.

The match in France was also marred by a crush involving United supporters which has led to the two clubs engaging in mutual mud-slinging over the security arrangements.

With Lille still considering a possible appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), the second leg will be played against a background of lingering uncertainty over whether the tie could be declared void.

No one at Old Trafford believes

PROBABLE TEAMS

Manchester United: 1-Edwin Van der Sar; 2-Gary Neville, 5-Rio Ferdinand, 15-Nemanja Vidic; 3-Patrice Evra; 7-Cristiano Ronaldo, 16-Michael Carrick, 18-Paul Scholes, 11-Ryan Giggs; 8-Wayne Rooney, 17-Henrik Larsson

Lille: 1-Tony Sylva; 21-Mathieu Chalmel, 4-Efstathios Tzavlaridis, 25-Nicolas Plesiat, 20-Gregory Tafforeau; 17-Jean Il Makoun, 12-Mathieu Bodmer, 23-Kader Keita; 13-Nicolas Fauvergue, 35-Ludovic Obraniak, 14-Peter Odemwingie

Referee: Luis Medina Cantalejo (Spain)

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2



PHOTO: AFP

Manchester United strikers Cristiano Ronaldo (L), Wayne Rooney (C) and defender Wes Brown take part in a training session ahead of their Champions League clash against Lille at their Carrington training ground in Manchester on Tuesday.

AFP, Munich



Defender Willy Sagnol insists Bayern Munich are in a confident mood to make home advantage count when they host Real Madrid

on Wednesday with a place in the Champions League last eight at stake.

Having netted important away goals in their 3-2 first-leg defeat at the Bernabeu a fortnight ago, Bayern still hold their destiny in their own hands with a win almost certain to put them through.

But injury doubts linger over Brazilian defender Lucio and midfielder Hasan Salihamidzic after the pair pulled up in training on Monday.

Salihamidzic netted Bayern's first goal in their 3-2 Bundesliga win at Hertha Berlin last weekend which Sagnol insists has given the Germans a confidence boost ahead

PROBABLE TEAMS

Bayern Munich: 1-Oliver Kahn; 2-Willy Sagnol, 3-Lucio, 5-Daniel Van Buyten, 21-Philipp Lahm; 18-Andreas Goerlich, 23-Owen Hargreaves, 17-Mark van Bommel, 20-Hasan Salihamidzic, 10-Roy Makaay, 11-Lukas Podolski

Real Madrid: 1-Iker Casillas; 4-Sergio Ramos, 5-Fabio Cannavaro, 21-Ivan Helguera, 3-Roberto Carlos; 10-Robinho, 6-Mahamadou Diarra, 16-Fernando Gago, 7-Raul; 14-Guti, 17-Ruud van Nistelrooy

Referee: Lubos Michel (Slovakia) (Additional reporting by Simon Baskett in Madrid)

of the showdown at Munich's Allianz Arena.

"Real Madrid's individual quality speaks for itself, but our team spirit is stronger," said the French international.

In contrast, Real are struggling for form and have injury concerns of their own following Sunday's disappointing home draw with Getafe.

Argentinian Gonzalo Higuain is suffering from a bruised right quadricep while Real's website reported on Monday that Dutch striker Ruud van Nistelrooy is also carrying a similar problem.

And Ex-England captain David Beckham, Real's chief playmaker from the first leg in Spain, has been ruled out along with on-loan Arsenal winger Jose Antonio Reyes after they both picked up knee

SEE PAGE 18 COL 2

Gunners look down the barrel

REUTERS, London



Arsenal risk a third cup calamity in under two weeks when the troubled north London club host PSV Eindhoven in their

Champions League first knockout round tie on Wednesday. Beaten by Chelsea in the League Cup final on February 25 and knocked out of the FA Cup by Blackburn Rovers three days later, Arsenal are now gazing down the barrel of a Champions League exit after losing the first leg 1-0 in Eindhoven two weeks ago.

The club are also under a disciplinary cloud after a mass brawl in Cardiff which led to three players being banned and the club, along with Chelsea, being charged with misconduct.

On top of the bans for Togo striker

Emmanuel Adebayor and Ivorian defenders Kolo Toure and Emmanuel Eboue, manager Arsene Wenger has been asked by the FA to explain his accusations that a linesman lied in his report after the final.

As if that were not enough, Arsenal's captain and prolific striker

PROBABLE TEAMS

Arsenal: 1-Jens Lehmann; 27-Emmanuel Eboue or 20-Johan Djourou, 5-Kolo Toure, 10-William Gallas, 22-Gael Clichy; 13-Aleksandr Hleb, 19-Gilberto, 4-Cesc Fabregas, 8-Fredrik Ljungberg, 14-Thierry Henry, 25-Emmanuel Adebayor

PSV: 1-Gomes; 28-Sun Xiang, 4-Alex, 18-Eric Addo, 23-Carlos Salcido; 15-Jason Culina, 6-Timmy Simons, 11-Edison Mendez, 8-Phillip Cocu; 10-Arouna Kone, 17-Jefferson Farfan

Referee: Alain Hamer (Luxembourg)

Thierry Henry is a major doubt for Wednesday after a foot injury, while attacking midfielder Tomas Rosicky is definitely out with a groin strain.

Add the absence of long-term injured forward Robin van Persie and the problems are clearly mounting for a club who reached last season's final with eventual winners Barcelona.

The only bright spot is that the three domestic bans do not extend to European competition, though Eboue needs to prove his fitness after an ankle injury last week.

Should Eboue come up short, Swiss central defender Johan Djourou would probably deputise as fullback, as he did for Saturday's welcome 2-1 league victory over Reading.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 8