



PHOTO: STAR

An early morning storm damaged the canopy over the eastern end of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Ancelotti wants Sheva back

INTERNET, undated

Carlo Ancelotti has come out into the open, confirming, "Milan will do everything possible to bring back Andriy Shevchenko."

The Ukrainian demanded a £30m transfer to Chelsea last summer after seven years at San Siro, but has not settled in at Stamford Bridge and has now denied telling 'The Sun' that he is happy in London.

"Adriano Galliani made our position very clear," commented Ancelotti in today's Press Conference.

"It remains a difficult operation financially, even if Milan will do everything possible to bring him back. He is owned by Chelsea and their intentions are the main factor here."

The Rossoneri have always said they'll keep the door open for a shock comeback and have even invited Shevchenko to Athens as their guest for the Champions League Final against Liverpool on May 23.

He is not the only star linked to the club this week, as rumours of a split between Ronaldinho and Barcelona are hotting up.

"Samuel Eto'o, Ronaldinho and Shevchenko are three world-class players," said Ancelotti.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 8

Chelsea eye home record

AFP, London



Chelsea always hoped the final act of their season would be decisive, but Jose Mourinho could never have imagined that it would be Everton sweating on the result of Sunday's Premiership match at Stamford Bridge.

The Blues manager had planned to stage the final charge of his title tilt against David Moyes' side, aiming to overtake Manchester United on the home straight and claim a third consecutive league crown.

Instead, he finds himself retreating into the wings as Everton, who need a point to be certain of a place in next season's UEFA Cup, march on to centre-stage.

Chelsea's challenge was thwarted last weekend when their failure to beat Arsenal, combined with United's victory over Manchester City, allowed Sir Alex Ferguson to open up an unassailable lead at the top of the table.

Mourinho now has just the FA Cup to play for and the Portuguese manager will make sweeping

changes to his regular starting line-up as he seeks to end a disappointing season on a high at Wembley next week.

Michael Ballack, Ricardo Carvalho and Andriy Shevchenko are already ruled out, while Didier Drogba, Arjen Robben, Ashley Cole and Frank Lampard are all likely to be rested on Sunday.

It is telling that Mourinho has claimed Chelsea's biggest motivation for Sunday's match is the preservation of a remarkable unbeaten run at Stamford Bridge, which currently stands at 62 matches. A win or a draw on Sunday, and the Londoners will match Liverpool's top flight record of 63.

"We have an objective for this game," Mourinho said. "The objective must belong to the whole of Stamford Bridge because it will be magnificent if we can finish three whole seasons without a defeat at home."

"It is the only thing in the Premiership we have left to fight for."

"I can't say at Chelsea we have an incredible atmosphere at home because that is not the culture of our crowd. But there is a big relation between our crowd and the players."

"The players feel comfortable at home and they feel always supported and I think result after result brings that confidence. We play always to win at home, no doubts about it, and at home we are always dominant."

Everton, meanwhile, can reflect with huge satisfaction on another season of progress under Moyes. The Merseysiders have remained ensconced in the top eight for virtually the entire season, despite operating with one of the Premiership's smallest squads, and UEFA Cup qualification would be a fitting reward.

Only a calamitous set of results will see Everton squeezed out at this late stage. The Toffees will only be denied a top-seven finish if they are crushed by a huge scoreline in west London and Reading chalk up a resounding victory at ninth-placed Blackburn Rovers.

Given the likelihood of that scenario, Moyes must be tempted to open the champagne 24 hours early.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4

Lloyd thinks he can convince Fletcher to coach WI

PTI, London

Clive Lloyd thinks Duncan Fletcher can revive the sagging fortune of Caribbean cricket and said he is ready to talk to the former England coach and convince him to take up the job.

Lloyd was all praise for Fletcher, who has been rendered jobless since England's disappointing World Cup campaign.

Asked if he, as the chairman of the West Indies Cricket Board's Cricket Committee, would like to talk to the Zimbabwe-born Fletcher, Lloyd said, "If he's interested, yes. I think Duncan still has a part to play in cricket in general. He is a strong man and a strong character. He has done a good job for England and I'm sure that he or someone of that ilk will be able to do something for the West Indies." Lloyd was also candid in his assessment of the West Indies' prospect in the Test series against England and felt the side, in absence of Brian Lara, lacks fire.

"I don't think people are expecting great things, but we expect

SEE PAGE 18 COL 1

Oldham hold Abahani

Football

UNB, Dhaka

Abahani played out a goalless draw with touring English First Division Club, Oldham Athletic, in the third and last exhibition match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The match produced a lot of excitement with both Abahani and Oldham playing attacking football, but failed to produce any result.

Abahani dominated most of the proceedings and got several chances though failed to convert any of those into goal, much to the disappointment of the local fans in the big bowl.

They came close to scoring as early as in the 14th minute, but Awudu Ibrahim's powerful shot from vantage position whistled past the post. The hosts got another chance in the 22nd minute, this time a feeble shot by Tipu from inside the D-box went straight to the safe hands of Oldham custodian Josh Bell.

Abahani were deprived of a goal in the 38th minute when Ibrahim's powerful shot sailed over the crossbar. After the break,

Tipu missed his second chance to give Abahani the lead when his angular shot from inside the D-box was parried away brilliantly by Josh Bell for a corner in the 65th minute.

The visitors got two good chances in either half of the match, but failed to materialise any of them into goal. They launched the first attack in the 15th minute when Matt Barlow's superb header from inside the D-box off a Deane Smalley cross narrowly missed the target. The English side then missed their second chance in the 78th

minute when a superb shot by substitute Adam Edwards off a Beeley

pass was foiled by Abahani custodian Biplob Chatterjee.

Earlier, the tourists conceded a 1-2 defeat to Mohammedan Sporting in the first exhibition match at the same venue on Wednesday, but managed a 1-1 draw with Bangladesh Under-23 football team at the Sylhet Stadium on Thursday.

Red cards: Parodi (Abahani) and Marcus (Oldham)

Yellow cards: Parodi (Abahani), Marcus and Deane (Oldham)

Referee: Abdul Hannan Miron.

Cannavaro praises Becks

INTERNET, undated

Fabio Cannavaro praised David Beckham for his role in putting Real Madrid back into title contention.

Cannavaro admires Beckham's never-say-die attitude and believes it has been a positive influence on the rest of the Madrid team, which has won six of its last seven league matches.

"Beckham is a player I like very much both for his technique and the way he thinks," the Italian World Cup winner said. "He is a man who always wants to win, and he has transmitted that mentality to the squad."

Beckham's Madrid career looked to be over in January when coach Fabio Capello said the midfielder would not play for the club again after announcing he had agreed to join the Los Angeles Galaxy of Major League Soccer.

But the former England captain refused to concede his career at Madrid was finished and his determination during training camp eventually led to Capello reversing his decision and recalling Beckham to his playing squad after an absence of six matches.

Although he has missed a number of games through injury and suspension since returning to the fold, Beckham has still played an influential role in helping Madrid to second place in the Primera Liga standings, just two points behind Barcelona.

SEE PAGE 18 COL 4



PHOTO: STAR

A mid-pitch action from yesterday's exhibition football match between Dhaka giant Abahani and English Premiership side Oldham Athletics at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.



PHOTO: AFP

Supporters cheer for Spanish star Rafael Nadal as he goes down the tunnel after winning the quarterfinal match against Serbia's Novak Djokovic at the Rome Masters Rome on Friday.

Nadal disposes Djokovic

Tennis

AFP, Rome

Spanish second seed Rafael Nadal swept into the Rome Masters semifinals with a ruthless 6-2, 6-3 win over up-and-coming Serb Novak Djokovic on Friday.

Victory for the world number two extended his record winning streak on clay to 75 matches and set up a last four meeting with Russian fourth seed Nikolay Davydenko.

Fifth seed Djokovic, who leads the ATP with 33 wins, was the last player to beat Nadal having won their hardcourt Miami quarterfinal on March 29.

But reigning Rome champion Nadal is a different proposition on clay and the Serbian 19-year-old, winner of three ATP titles this year, rarely troubled the Mallorcan left-hander.

Nadal has triumphed here for the past two years and is aiming to become the first player to win the Foro Italico event three times in a row.

The 20-year-old Spaniard's task was made easier when world number one Roger Federer, whom he beat in last year's Rome final, was knocked out in the third round by Italian wild card Filippo Volandri.

Nadal, whose last defeat on clay was way back in April, 2005 against Russian Igor Andreev in the Valencia quarterfinals, insisted his victory over Djokovic was not as easy as it looked.

"Djokovic is a difficult opponent and he made me work hard for the win, but I was more consistent," he said.

"I played at a high level and I gave 100 percent on every point."

"My fitness was good and my forehand worked very well. My backhand was okay, but could have been better. Overall I am very happy with my performance."

Davydenko fought back from a set down to beat Spanish seventh seed Tommy Robredo 1-6, 6-3, 6-3 in the first quarterfinal of the day.

Davydenko, 25, put his recovery down to his superior fitness.

"It was really difficult for me at the start because Robredo played some superb tennis and had me running all over the place," said the world number four.

"But in the second set he started to tire while I got stronger."

Volandri, ranked 53rd in the world, continued his amazing run by defeating Czech 12th seed Tomas Berdych in straight sets to reach his first Masters Series semifinal in 26 attempts where he will face Chilean sixth seed Fernando Gonzalez, who beat Argentine Juan Ignacio Chela 6-3, 6-4.

"It's my first semi and to do it in Rome, well I couldn't have asked for more," said the 25-year-old, the first Italian to reach the last four at the Foro Italico since Adriano Panatta in 1978.

The claycourt Rome Masters is a warm-up for the French Open, the second Grand Slam of the year, which starts on May 27.

Rijkaard to ring changes

AFP, Madrid

Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard on Saturday promised to bring new blood into the Catalan side next season after the league leaders' humiliating Spanish Cup semifinal exit to Getafe during the week.

The Dutch coach believes that the reigning Spanish champions need fresh talent.

"How long can a team maintain their top level? You can be three or four years at the top level. This team has resisted well but we have to look at changing to stay at the top," said Rijkaard, whose side are just two points ahead of Real Madrid with five games to play.

"Most of the team managed to achieve great things. At certain times practically everyone was talking about Barca, which proves that the players achieved something."

"But that's the past and now we have to give everything to finish the championship as best we can."

Rijkaard admitted that the 4-0 loss Thursday night to Getafe had been tough, particularly as their rivals had been trailing 3-2 from the first leg.

"It was one of the most difficult nights of my life, to lose in such a humiliating way, neither myself or the team were capable of getting into the match," he added.

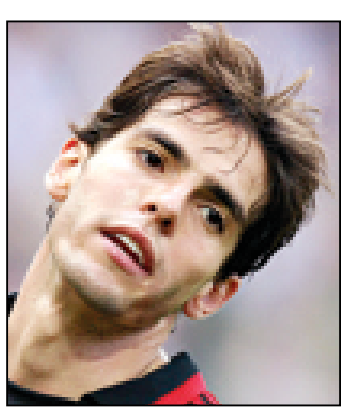
Kaka opts out of Copa America

Football

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

AC Milan's Brazilian striker Kaka has asked not to be included in the national side for this summer's Copa America because he is exhausted after a tough season.

National boss Dunga has counted on Kaka for all of Brazil's international friendlies ahead of the Copa America and qualifiers for the 2010 World Cup which start next October.



KAKA

But all of these matches, in addition to a gruelling schedule with AC Milan who have reached the Champions League final, have left the striker in need of a holiday.

"I haven't had a break for three seasons," Kaka said. "I won't have the form to achieve what is expected of me at an international level."

Brazil hope to line out with a top level team made up mainly of stars from European soccer in the tournament in Venezuela from June 26 to July 15 after their surprise elimination in the quarterfinals of last year's World Cup.

"Dunga has said that the decision taken by Kaka opens the way for other players to take advantage of the Copa America," a spokesman for the Brazilian football federation (CBF) said.

But it is feared that Ronaldinho will also opt out after the Barcelona star complained that he is physically exhausted.

AC Milan, meanwhile, are fourth in the Serie A and will meet English side Liverpool in the Champions League final in Athens on May 23, a repeat of the 2005 final which the English Premiership side won on penalties.