

Pizarro heads Peru into quarters

INTERNET, undated



Two goals by new Chelsea signing Claudio Pizarro helped Peru twice come from behind to book their place in the quarterfinals of the Copa America after a 2-2 draw with Bolivia.

Hosts Venezuela and Uruguay also advanced after playing to a goalless draw.

With the other draw, unbeaten host Venezuela won the Group A title with a triumph and two draws. Peru and Uruguay each finished 1-1 but Peru took second on superior goal difference, 5-4 to 1-3.

Uruguay will advance as one of the two top third-place nations as Bolivia is out and winless Colombia, Ecuador and United States cannot reach four points in the other groups.

Venezuela will play a Saturday quarterfinal against the worst third-place qualifier, meaning a possible rematch with Uruguay at San Cristobal. Peru will face the Group C champion, Argentina or Paraguay, in a Sunday quarterfinal.

Wednesday's final Group B matches find unbeaten Mexico, already through to the quarterfinals, facing Chile while the Brazilians meet Ecuador.

Thursday's final Group C matches send Argentina against Paraguay.

Meanwhile, in front of 40,000 fans at the crowded Metropolitano stadium in Merida, Bolivia knew only victory in their final Group A clash was enough to make the last eight and began in promising fashion.

Jhasmani Campos' long-range effort tested Leao Butron before the Peru keeper produced a good stop to deny Lorgio Alvarez.

Hamburg striker Paolo Guerrero called Bolivia keeper Hugo Suarez into action for the first time with an acrobatic attempt before Erwin Sanchez's side took the lead in the 24th minute.

Jaime Moreno gave his side a crucial advantage as the DC United striker cleverly lobbed the ball over goalkeeper Leao Butron from outside the box.

The lead lasted only 10 minutes, however, as Pizarro equalized with a precise header from Juan Carlos Marino's free-kick before Bolivia went ahead for the second time on the stroke of half-time as Joselito Vacafed Campos, whose powerful volley left Butron with no chance.

"All in all we should be happy as we've qualified, but we need to cut

out the errors we committed," Pizarro said. "We can't play like that in the quarter-finals but I'm sure the coach will take the appropriate measures. He will be calm and prepare us for the next game."

However, Peru coach Julio Cesar Uribe did not show much calmness when asked about his team's performance.

"I'm not happy but we obtained our target," the Peru coach said. "We had a plan but once the team got on the pitch, they did something completely different. We played badly in the first half but improved after the break."

Uribe sent on Roberto Jimenez and Ysrael Zuniga during the interval in a bid to give his side more of an attacking threat.

But it was Bolivia who dominated possession with Suarez rarely threatened and Peru's task became even harder on 78 minutes when they were reduced to 10 men as Alianza Lima midfielder Joel Herrera picked up two yellow cards in less than two minutes.

However, another Marino free-kick five minutes from time allowed Pizarro to once again pull his side level with a towering header as the incas sealed their passage to the knockout stages.

Bolivia, on the other hand, exited the tournament without a win to their name after drawing with hosts Venezuela and then suffering a narrow loss to Uruguay.



Peruvian Claudio Pizarro (C) heads the ball during a freekick in their Copa America Group A match against Bolivia at the Olympic Metropolis Stadium in Merida on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Roddick getting hotter

AFP, London



Andy Roddick overturned a 5-0 deficit in a third set tiebreak to beat France's Paul-Henri Mathieu and the weather on another rain-hit day at Wimbledon on Wednesday.

The tiebreak turnaround enabled the American third seed to wrap up the fourth round match he began on Tuesday 6-2, 7-5, 7-6 (8/6) before a downpour forced a lengthy break in play.

Roddick, who now faces the winner of the all-French clash between Richard Gasquet and Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, admitted he had begun to get a little stir crazy hanging around in the changing rooms and was relieved to have got his match finished.

"There's no question the rain makes it tough," he said. "You are

sitting in the locker room the whole time knowing if it clears you could be on court in 20 minutes. That's quite a prospect to carry on for three or four days.

"Then boredom takes over and we all start getting a little loopy."

Despite the delays, the American was reluctant to back Rafael Nadal's criticism of the tournament referee over his decision not to schedule matches on Sunday to help clear the backlog.

Nadal, who took three days to complete his third round win over Robin Soderling, is now facing the prospect of playing every day if he is to repeat last year's run to the final while Roger Federer has not played since last Friday.

"The things that you love about Wimbledon, with the tradition, ended up making it tough this time. But I still love the tradition," Roddick said.

"It has made it tougher especially on Rafa's side which is

maybe why I'm sitting here saying it is okay."

Federer has had an extra rest as a result of the withdrawal of his fourth round opponent, Tommy Haas, through injury.

But Roddick argued that the lay-off would not necessarily help the defending champion's cause.

"There's no question he is probably not going to be as sharp coming off a five-day lay-off than playing every day. But fortunately for him it came at the best possible time, it is not like its been sunny and we've all been getting practice in."

"We've been stuck in a locker room for nine hours a day and he's been chilling out, taking the double-decker red bus tour."

"So I'm not worried about Roger -- I think I'll save the tears on that one."

Roddick is scheduled to meet Federer at the semi-final stage and the American is happy with the way

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Venus vanquishes Sharapova

AFP, London



Venus Williams stayed on course for a fourth Wimbledon crown when she breath-takingly demolished

Maria Sharapova 6-1, 6-3 in a brutal fourth round triumph on Wednesday.

Williams, the champion in 2000, 2001 and 2005, overpowered the Russian second seed, the 2004 winner, and now faces Sharapova's compatriot Svetlana Kuznetsova for a place in the semifinals.

The American's win, appropriately coming on the Fourth of July, also sets up the prospect of an all-Williams final with sister Serena due to face top seed Justine Henin in the quarterfinals later Wednesday.

Sharapova was simply blown off the Centre Court.

She failed to win a single break point, allowed her opponent a huge

19 opportunities and managed to win just two points off the Williams serve in the entire second set.

Williams set the tone for the early exchanges without lifting a racquet when she took a toilet break before the first ball was hit as the Russian was left kicking her heels on court.

Sharapova's game was picked to pieces in a hopelessly one-sided opening set when she was broken in the fourth and six games in the tricky, blustery conditions.

A sixth double fault gave the American the set after just 33 minutes with Sharapova unable to make any impression on the Williams serve.

Sharapova was under pressure again early in the second set when she had to save five break points in the third game before rain sent the players off for two hours.

On the resumption, that game became a marathon, lasting for 23 minutes with Sharapova going ahead to 2-1 having saved seven break points.

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Eto'o for wiping out racism

AFP, London

Barcelona's Cameroon stiker Samuel Eto'o has continued his campaign to eradicate racism in football by asking fans to make their opinions known in an internet survey.

Eto'o believes a strong response in the www.feelfootball.com 'What Fans Feel' survey could start a campaign to finally rid the game of racist abuse.

The 26-year-old striker, who has the backing of former Arsenal skipper Patrick Vieira, almost walked off the pitch at Real Zaragoza in February 2006 due to racist chants.

The chants were repeated two months later during Barcelona's encounter with Racing Santander.

Continued abuse has made him determined to act by drawing both fans and his fellow players into taking a hard line on the issue.

Eto'o told Feel Football: "If we experience this in football it means our

society is rotten and that means we're in a dangerous situation. That's what we need to be fighting against. I think that football is a small thing, but society...just imagine!

"I am treated first and foremost as a footballer, as Samuel Eto'o, but away from the cameras a black man is suffering from racism and nobody cares. That's the problem."

"Promises have been made for change, for sanctions to be enforced, but the first move needs to be made and it needs to be made by those who are being subjected to racism. Part of me hopes that one day someone will manage to walk off the pitch (in protest)."

The Cameroon international also criticised some members of the media for "shooting down" his comments on the racist attacks he has suffered and called for them to change their attitude and support his cause.

"I think the media tried to shoot me down (in the past) as if I was making too much of it, but the whole time I was just expressing how I was feeling, something that no one at that time could have felt," he said.

Torres now Liverpool's

Football

AFP, London

Spanish striker Fernando Torres on Wednesday finalised his transfer to Liverpool from Atletico Madrid.

The 23-year-old signed a six-year contract to play for compatriot Rafael Benitez at Anfield and he was unveiled in the number nine shirt vacated by Kop favourite Robbie Fowler.

"I'm very happy to be joining the club. It is a fantastic opportunity to be joining one of the best clubs in Europe with a fantastic history," said Torres who is reported to have cost up to 26.5 million pounds (53 million dollars).

"You don't get opportunities like this every day of your life."

Torres passed a medical at the club's Melwood training ground on Tuesday and briefly flew back to his homeland to say an emotional goodbye to fans in Madrid where he had a record of 82 goals in 214 league games.

He then returned to Merseyside to complete the formalities of the transfer.

Asked what impact manager Benitez had on his decision, the

Spain striker said: "It was important, the confidence shown in me by him. When you hear a club like Liverpool is interested in you it is something that fills you with a lot of surprise and a lot of pride."

Torres insisted he was ready to work hard to live up to his high price tag.

"The figures that have been mentioned are bound to bring an added pressure, but when you sign for a club like Liverpool you've got to bear pressure."

"I know the demands are high but I believe in hard work and think I can work hard to fulfil those expectations."

Asked whether it would be hard to adapt to the English top flight, Torres added: "Liverpool are a slightly different case, I have spoken to my team-mates who have come from the Spanish league so that will help with settling in."

Torres would not be drawn on reports that Chelsea had been interested in signing him last summer.

"I don't think it does any good to speak about what happened in the past. As soon as I heard of Liverpool's interest that was the only club I wanted to consider," he added.

The Torres transfer brings

Benitez's spending spree in the three years he has been at Anfield to a whopping 121 million pounds (180 million euros).

He passed the three-year mark in Merseyside last month and the arrival of his young compatriot will leave him with no excuses for lack of success in the new season.

The Spanish coach has been quick to criticise the supposed lack of funds at Anfield to allow him to compete with the financial muscle of Chelsea, but his three year spending spree is the biggest in the club's history.

Torres is the big name that Benitez believes will fire Liverpool into a title-challenging position challenging the might of Chelsea and arch rivals Manchester United.

He will find himself under pressure to produce the 20 goals a season tally crucial to a title-chasing side.

Fans will certainly expect him to do better than Benitez's previous striking purchases. Fernando Morientes, Craig Bellamy, Dirk Kuyt, and Peter Crouch have all failed to provide the dynamic goals-per-game ratio Benitez craves.

But with Torres on board, the manager now knows excuses will not be tolerated next term if a title challenge fails to materialise.



PHOTO: AFP

Liverpool manager Rafael Benitez (L) welcomes former Atletico Madrid footballer Fernando Torres to Anfield in Liverpool yesterday.



PHOTO: AFP

Maria Sharapova of Russia gestures as she plays American Venus Williams during the fourth round of the Wimbledon Tennis Championships yesterday.