



Urawa Reds forward Yulchi Nagai (R) slots home his side's first goal during their Club World Cup Japan 2007 match against Sepahan in Toyota city on Monday.

PSG ease fears

AFP, Paris

Peguy Luyindula scored the only goal of the game as Paris St Germain brought a controversial week to an end with a much-needed 1-0 win at Auxerre on Sunday to ease the club's relegation fears.

Luyindula headed home in the 49th minute from a cross from Jerome Rothen to clinch the three points which will lift some of the pressure on coach Paul Le Guen.

Rothen had been the target of some vehement fan protests throughout the week and there was simmering tension before the game with riot police firing tear gas to disperse PSG fans.

The win kept PSG just one place above the relegation places.

At the other end of the table, Bordeaux drew 1-1 with Nice to stay third, nine points behind leaders Lyon.

Marseille warmed up for Tuesday's do-or-die Champions League clash against Liverpool with a 2-0 win over Monaco on Saturday.

The win, their fifth of the season, also eased Marseille's relegation fears.

Central defender Julien Rodriguez, in the 53rd minute, and skipper Lorik Cana (70), both scored goals.

A win on Tuesday will put Marseille into the knockout rounds of the Champions League.

Coach Eris Gerets praised the support his team received and said their backing will prove crucial at the Stade Velodrome against Liverpool.

"There's been a change in the behaviour of our fans," said Gerets.

"I'm pleasantly surprised by the support we had throughout the 90 minutes. On Tuesday, against Liverpool, we will need even a little more."

Smith calls for focus

AFP, Glasgow

Rangers manager Walter Smith wants no repeat of the lack of concentration that cost his side against Stuttgart when they face six-time French champions Lyon in Wednesday's decisive Champions League tie at Ibrox.

The Glasgow giants will qualify for the knockout phase of European football's premier club competition if they avoid defeat against French champions Lyon, their rivals for the runners-up spot in Group E.

Rangers have no excuse for being lethargic after they were allowed to postpone their Scottish Premier League fixture against Gretna on Sunday.

Last month, Rangers were beaten 3-2 away to Stugart but Smith believes the make-or-break nature of Wednesday's match will help concentrate minds against a Lyon team his side beat 3-0 earlier in the Champions League.

He told the League Managers' Association website, www.leaguemanagers.com: "We have to make sure that the levels of concentration are as high as they possibly can be."

"Against Stuttgart they weren't and I don't know whether it was just because of the fact that we had a margin of error there or that it didn't matter if we won, lost or drew the game, as long as Lyon took a point against Barcelona we were always going to go to the last game anyway."

"So I don't know whether that was the case because over the European campaign the attitude and levels of concentration have been terrific."

"The one thing that the Stuttgart game did show is that if we do slip a little bit then teams will definitely take advantage of that."

No guarantees for Defoe

AFP, London

Juanito Ramos has told Jermain Defoe that the Tottenham hotspur striker's match-winning came against Manchester City is no guarantee of a regular place in the team.

Defoe came off the bench to score the late goal that gave Ramos's side a 2-1 win over City at White Hart Lane on Sunday.

It was exactly the right response from Defoe, who wasn't in the starting line-up even though Robbie Keane was suspended.

Ramos opted to choose Darren Bent ahead of Defoe, who has made only one league start this season, but the former Charlton player produced another disappointing performance.

So, with Keane still to miss a further two matches, there appears to be an opening for Defoe to partner Dimitar Berbatov.

"We hope this gives us the impetus to go on and move further up the game."

"There are five or six teams with many points so it was absolutely essential to win and that has relieved the pressure on us."

The turning point of a hard-fought clash came when City midfielder Stephen Ireland was sent

forwards I have to choose between. He's one of them.

"There's no one, two, three or four in order. We simply have four centre-forwards to play in two positions, so two can play each game and two have to sit it out."

Whether Ramos rewards Defoe with an extended run or not, the Spanish coach should be grateful that the supersub delivered a crucial three points just as Spurs were seven minutes away from sinking into the relegation zone.

Defoe's first league goal of the season came after City striker Rolando Bianchi had cancelled out Pascal Chimbonda's opener, leaving Ramos to hope Spurs's luck has finally changed.

"We've lost some very important points in the last minutes of games. But it goes to show the game is always alive until the referee blows the final whistle," Ramos said.

"We hope this gives us the impetus to go on and move further up the game."

"There are five or six teams with many points so it was absolutely essential to win and that has relieved the pressure on us."

"It's not a problem. He pays a heavy price for it because he will not play for three games."

"I showed him it on the laptop in the dressing room and there was nothing to say. Of course he is sorry."

off for a crude foul on Lee Young-Pyo just before Defoe scored.

It wasn't the first time Ireland has been in the spotlight for the wrong reasons this season.

He was forced to apologise to then Republic of Ireland manager Steve Staunton after claiming he needed to withdraw from the squad because his girlfriend's grandmother had died when that wasn't the case.

Then he was sent a warning letter by the English FA after celebrating a goal by dropping his shorts to reveal Superman pants.

Eriksson could have been forgiven for losing patience with Ireland after his latest misdemeanour but he insisted the youngster would mature in time.

"The tackle was not a nice one but every player has done that in his career. You shouldn't kill them for that," Eriksson said.

"Stephen is a young, very good player. He will be better. The tackle he did, he shouldn't have done it but sometimes adrenaline goes too high."

"It's not a problem. He pays a heavy price for it because he will not play for three games."

"I showed him it on the laptop in the dressing room and there was nothing to say. Of course he is sorry."

Press stand behind Hatton

Boxing

AFP, London

Despite a knockout victory for American boxer Floyd Mayweather over England's Ricky Hatton, the British press acknowledged Mayweather's dominance but stood behind their "fallen hero" on Monday.

Mayweather knocked Hatton down in the 10th round with a damaging left to the chin as the British fighter was swinging a punch of his own. Hatton rose but the American star followed with a hammering left hook and a dazed Hatton fell moments later.

The American kept the World Boxing Council welterweight crown, and improved to 39-0 when the fight was ended by referee Joe Cortez at 1:35 of the 10th round.

Despite one newspaper's verdict that Hatton was a "fallen hero",

they roundly acknowledged that the bout was a one-sided affair throughout, with the Daily Mail reporting that during the fight, "Hatton was playing golf with Tiger Woods, tennis against Roger Federer."

"The truth is that Hatton was annihilated by the best fighter of his generation, and everyone in a 16,700 crowd knew it."

In the view of The Times, "long before Hatton's horizontal finish, Mayweather had proved that chances aplenty were his and that he would welcome them merrily."

"For Hatton to have pushed his challenge through to the tenth was testament to his tenacity and astonishing reserves of courage, but now that his undefeated record is gone, we can reflect that Mayweather truly is the pound-for-pound champion of the world and Hatton, sadly, a considerable way off."

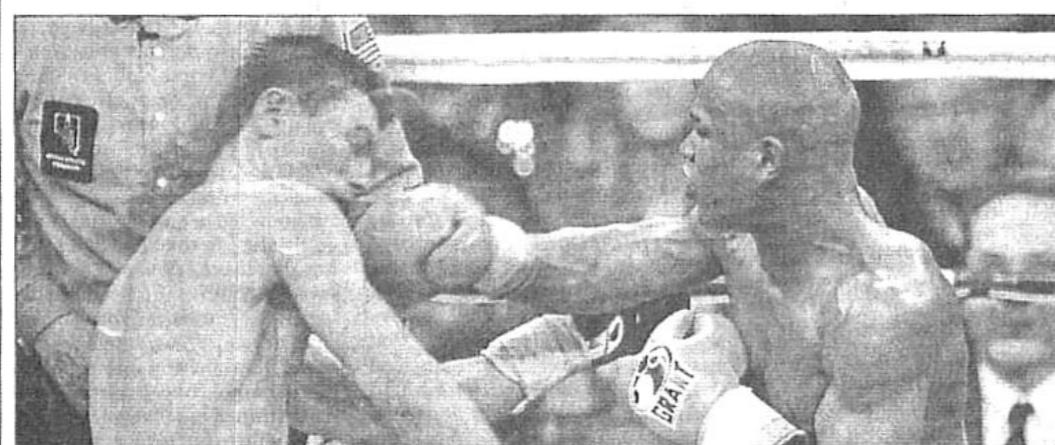
The Independent said that

"Time moved slowly and painfully for Hatton in the Las Vegas ring as he tried to fight his way out of a lost cause, but he was caught easily and moved back to the ropes by Mayweather's fists."

"The record books will say one min 35 seconds of round 10 but they will not tell the story of this truly remarkable fight and they will fall desperately short of explaining exactly what went wrong."

There was more adoration of Mayweather's supremacy in The Sun tabloid, which said that the English boxer "was given the harshest lesson of his career as Floyd Mayweather retained his WBC world welterweight title by demonstrating the full depth of his amazing talent."

"The Hitman (Hatton) stumbled and bumbled to his first defeat in 44 contests, the victim of sublime skills and venomous, pinpoint accuracy that knocked him out in the 10th round."



Floyd Mayweather (R) connects with a solid right-hook on Ricky Hatton in the 10th round of their WBC world welterweight bout at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas on Saturday.

WORLD CLUB CUP
Urawa better Sepahan

AFP, Toyota

Japan's Urawa Red Diamonds repeated their excellent performance at the continental final by beating Iran's Sepahan 3-1 on Monday to set up a match against AC Milan in the Club World Cup semi-finals.

The opening goal came in the 32nd minute when midfielder Takahito Soma produced a cross from the left for Yuichiro Nagai, who fired home from close range.

In the 54th minute, Brazilian striker Washington got the ball in the area, then passed Sepahan goalkeeper Mohammad Savari and fired in a right-footer from close to the goal line.

Rained on by a partisan home crowd, Urawa controlled the game from the beginning and threatened the Sepahan goal repeatedly.

Another Brazilian Nene's shot was saved by Savari, while Makoto Hasebe's shot went over the bar in the 29th minute.

The visitors found their passes often interrupted by Urawa, but they had a good chance in the 26th minute with Abdul Wahab Abu Al Hail sending a pass to Emad Mohammed on the right.

Kabir Bello slid to the goalline, but he failed to reach the ball.

In the 31st minute, Jaba Muhiri received a nice pass in the area, but he was beaten in a one-on-one against Urawa keeper Ryota Tsuzuki.

Sepahan continued to struggle to create a clear chance in the second half, with captain Mohamad Seyed Salehi and Hadi Jafari hitting a couple of desperate shots, too long and too blunt.

The game was put well beyond doubt in the 70th minute when Sepahan defender Aghily's headed clearance off Nagai's header went into his own goal.

Sepahan got a consolation when substitute forward Mahmoud Karimi saw his blunt shot get past Tsuzuki and rolled into the net in the 80th minute.

In the AFC Champions League final

Urawa beat Sepahan 3-1 on aggregate.

Urawa will play European champions AC Milan of Italy in the semi-final at the Yokohama stadium on Thursday.

Boca wary of Etoile

AFP, Tokyo

Argentine giants Boca Juniors said Monday they would take nothing for granted when they face Tunisian's Etoile Sahel in the Club World Cup semi-final on Wednesday.

Boca coach Miguel Angel Russo admitted he had been expecting to play Mexico's Pachuca, until Etoile surprisingly beat them 1-0 Sunday in the tournament of continental champions.

"I myself and the Argentine press had thought all along that Pachuca would be our likely opponents," Russo said, adding: "In football top favourites have lost many times. We cannot rule out such a possibility here."

The African champions stole the game with an 85th-minute goal through midfielder Mousa Narry, having soaked up waves of Mexican attacks and played on the break.

"Etoile had four midfielders deep in midfield and they finally scored the goal," the Boca coach said. "But I haven't analysed yesterday's match in detail."

Boca's Uruguayan midfielder Alvaro Gonzalez said: "Honestly speaking, we have mainly studied Pachuca and just a little about Etoile."

"Etoile had a very effective defence-line," the 23-year-old acknowledged.

"But we are used to fighting defensive sides in Argentina and we have penetrated their backlines and scored goals. We are confident to break down the opponents' defence-line," he added.

Russo also emphasised Boca's attacking prowess.

"We will score goals no matter what and when. That is our style and I'm not going to change it against any opponents," he said. "In any way, we will shake them off balance and turn their errors into our goals."

Boca are widely expected to see off Etoile to reach the final, where they should play Italy's AC Milan, who face Thursday the winners of a match between Asian champions Urawa Reds of Japan and Sepahan of Iran later Monday.

Boca and Milan won three times the intercontinental Cup, a traditional South American-European championship which was merged into the Club World Cup in 2005.

Etoile coach Bertrand Marchand admitted Sunday his team's chances of beating Boca were slim.

"I think the final showdown will be fought between South American and Europe," he said. "Boca and Milan are at a high level. We feel happy being just able to fight such a team."

He added: "Playing the Argentinians was a good experience for his young side, which he took over in June."

"It is important for them to feel what a high level means. They have come to know the world through the African Champions League. They are just like living in a dream at the moment."

FA open Capello talks

Football

INTERNET, undated

The Football Association will this week hold talks with Fabio Capello as their search for a new England coach moves into the final stages.

Chief executive Brian Barwick is expected to meet the 61-year-old Italian and his representatives in the next few days, and he could be installed on a four-year contract before Christmas.

The FA haven't entirely ruled out Jose Mourinho, despite speculation that he has withdrawn from the running after signing a pre-contractual agreement with a top European club to take over next season.

And last night Sir Bobby Robson revealed that he has been acting as a middle-man in talks between the FA and the former Chelsea manager.

Speaking after receiving a Lifetime Achievement Award at the BBC Sports Personality of the Year, 74-year-old Robson, who remains England's most successful manager since World Cup winner Sir Alf Ramsey, said: "It would depend on how Jose feels. But he's a clever lad. He's intelligent, he's bright, he's

confident.

"The fact that he speaks very good English and he knows the English league gives him an advantage."

The two men struck up a close relationship in the mid-nineties when Mourinho acted as translator for Robson when he managed Sporting Lisbon and Porto in Mourinho's native Portugal, and later Barcelona in Spain.

Robson added: "Jose would be a very strong candidate indeed. We are in dialogue. I've also had a chat with Brian Barwick and passed on my views. Most of us would prefer an Englishman to manage England. I would feel strongly about that."

"But the FA want the best man regardless and if they feel there isn't a really strong candidate who ticks all the boxes, because they want the best, then they have to do something about it and go abroad."

Barwick has yet to meet Mourinho, although preliminary talks have taken place with his agent and the FA chief executive wants to hear from the former Chelsea manager himself that he is no longer interested.

He would also insist that any interview with Mourinho is held in London to prevent a repeat of the fiasco in 2006 when Barwick travelled to the FA to meet him.

Barwick is keen to talk to all the candidates this week and will then report back to the FA with his final recommendation. While Mourinho remains the populist choice, the continuing uncertainty and apparent prevarication may not have helped his cause.

Capello, on the other hand, has said unequivocally that he wants the job from the start and since then has maintained a dignified silence.

The former AC Milan, Roma, Juventus and Real Madrid manager is expected to bring Chelsea legend Gianfranco Zola as part of his team to help with coaching and translation while he improves his command of English.