

## Maradona to fly to London

REUTERS, Buenos Aires

Diego Maradona said on Sunday he will fly to London next month to study an offer from an English Premier League club, Argentine media reported.

Argentina's two big dailies La Nacion and Clarin quoted Maradona as saying: "In February I'm going to England to listen to a firm offer."

"If they convince me, I may take it up," said the former Argentina coach.



## What to WATCH

ESPN

Sportscentre India

Sports News

Live at 8:30pm

STAR Sports

AFC Asian Cup

North Korea v UAE

Live from 7:30pm

Iraq v Iran



## DAY'S EVENT

Premier Division Cricket League

Old DOHS v Surjo Torun

Venue: KSOAS

BKSP v Gazi Tank

Venue: BKSP-2

Cricket Coaching v Prime Dolleshwar



PHOTO: AFP

Real Madrid star Cristiano Ronaldo is ecstatic after scoring one of his three goals against Villarreal during their Primera Liga encounter at Bernabeu on Sunday.

## C'Ron treble leads Real fightback

AFP, Madrid



Cristiano Ronaldo scored a sensational hatrick as Real Madrid twice came from behind to defeat Villarreal 4-2 on Sunday to maintain their perfect home record and close to within two points of leaders Barcelona.

Portuguese star Ronaldo took his season's tally to 22 league goals with strikes in the eighth, 44th and 78th minutes after third-place Villarreal had threatened an upset after twice going in front in a pulsating first half at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Barcelona's 4-0 win over Deportivo La Coruna on Saturday had put the pressure on Real to respond.

Villarreal twice took the lead only for Ronaldo to pull Real back into the game with his 20th and 21st league goals of the season to cancel out goals from Ruben Cani, after six minutes, and Marco Ruben in the 17th.

In the second half, Ronaldo again took centre stage putting Real ahead in the 78th minute after a mistake from goalkeeper Diego Lopez before Brazilian substitute Kaka celebrated his return to fitness with his first league goal of the season minutes later. Villarreal were without Brazilian top-scorer Nilmar but made a promising start and took a shock sixth minute lead thanks to a fine goal from Cani.

Italian striker Giuseppe Rossi created the goal with a neat turn and pass to release the winger who showed great composure to chip the ball over the advancing Iker Casillas.

It was the first time Real had conceded

first at the Santiago Bernabeu in the league.

However, they responded quickly, equalising two minutes later through Ronaldo.

Karim Benzema slid a pass to Mesut Ozil who squared the ball across the face of goal to give the Portuguese an easy tap-in.

Villarreal restored their lead on 17 minutes with striker Ruben racing on to a through ball before dispatching a brilliant lob over Casillas.

With half-time approaching Real drew level again with Xabi Alonso curling in a free-kick from the edge of the penalty area and the unmarked Ronaldo headed home.

Real were stronger in the second half but the breakthrough didn't come so Mourinho sent on the fit-again Kaka in the final 20 minutes.

However, it was Ronaldo who provided the inspiration taking advantage of a Lopez blunder to turn and shoot home 12 minutes from time.

Kaka scored minutes later to deflate Villarreal who had been on a high after reaching the quarterfinals of the Kings Cup with a midweek win over

Valencia.

In other matches, Valencia bounced back from that cup setback with a 1-0 derby win over Levante to move three points ahead of fifth-placed Espanyol.

Spanish international winger Juan Mata missed a 26th minute penalty but made amends with an 82nd minute winner to clinch the three points.

Espanyol got over their recent blip with a comfortable 4-0 home win over Real Zaragoza at the Cornella-El Prat on Sunday to boost their Champions League hopes and stay in touch with fourth-placed Valencia.

## RESULTS

**Real Mallorca 4** (Ramis 11, Victor 36, Nsue 67, Pereira 88)  
Almeria 1 (Crusat 66)  
Osasuna 0 Getafe 0

**Espanyol 4** (Osvaldo 8, Luis Garcia 30-pen, Alvaro 33, Sergio Garcia 86) Real Zaragoza 0  
Racing Santander 1 (Gregory 29-og)  
Sporting Gijon 1 (Castro 90)

**Real Madrid 4** (Ronaldo 8, 44, 78, Kaka 81) Villarreal 2 (Cani 6, Ruben 17)

## Thriller at San Siro

AFP, Rome



AC Milan and Udinese drew 4-4 at the San Siro on Sunday in a thrilling game that will give hope to Milan's title rivals.

Udinese led 3-1 at one stage and also moved into injury time with a 4-3 lead but Milan were rewarded for a never-say-die attitude that saw them snatch a share of the spoils.

Milan's lead at the top of Serie A was cut to four points as Napoli thrashed Juventus 3-0 thanks to an Edinson Cavani hatrick.

Udinese's Antonio Di Natale scored a brace with Alexis Sanchez and German Denis also finding the net for the visitors.

But a Pato double, a Medhi Benatia own-goal and Zlatan Ibrahimovic's last gasp leveler ensured the hosts avoided a second successive home defeat following their 1-0 reverse against Roma in December.

Udinese opened the scoring on 35 minutes when midfielder Gokhan Inler's shot beat goalkeeper Marco Amelia but came back off the post to Di Natale who was left alone to slot home into an unguarded net.

Milan equalised on the stroke of half-time when Ibrahimovic crossed for Pato to tuck home from six yards.

Sanchez put the visitors ahead again soon after the restart when he converted Mauricio Isler's cross with a diving near-post header.

And when Di Natale escaped on the counter-attack, turned inside Daniele Bonera and shot home, Milan looked certain to be heading for defeat.

But on 77 minutes Benatia inadvertently headed Thiago Silva's cross beyond his own

goalkeeper Samir Handanovic.

Pato snatched his second eight minutes from time as he pounced on substitute Antonio Cassano's pass, turned his marker and wrong-footed Handanovic.

But there were two more twists to come as Denis struck on the counter-attack as Milan were pushing up looking for a winner themselves.

Then deep into injury time Cassano teed up Ibrahimovic to finish crisply and snatch a draw.

Cavani is now joint top of the Serie A scoring charts as Juve fell to their second three-goal defeat in a row following Thursday's 4-1 reverse at home to Parma.

Cavani scored a pair of headers in the first half and made it a hatrick with his head nine minutes after the break.

Napoli moved above Lazio who blew the chance to close the gap to Milan to three points as they lost 2-1 at home to Lecce, who started the day one off the bottom.

The visitors went ahead on 39 minutes when Jeda's shot hit the post and went in off Lazio goalkeeper Fernando Muslera's back.

Lazio captain Stefano Mauri equalised from close range at the start of the second period but 20 minutes from time Carlos Gossmueller was left unmarked at the back post to score the winner.

Leonardo continued his winning start as Inter Milan boss as his team came from behind to win 2-1 at Catania.

The hosts took a deserved lead when Alejandro Gomez mopped up the loose ball after Dejan Stankovic had headed Maxi Lopez's goal-bound shot off the line.

That shocked Inter into life and Stankovic played in Esteban Cambiasso to finish coolly.

## RESULTS

**Sampdoria 2** (Pozzi 58-pen, Guberti 84) Roma 1 (Vucinic 17)

**AC Milan 4** (Pato 45, 82, Benatia 77-og, Ibrahimovic 90) Udinese 4 (Di Natale 35, 65, Sanchez 52, Denis 89)  
Bari 0 Bologna 2 (Ekdal 37, Di Vaio 68)  
Catania 1 (Gomez 71) **Inter Milan 2** (Cambiasso 74, 79)  
Cesena 0 Genoa 0  
Chievo 0 Palermo 0

**Fiorentina 3** (Ghilardino 72, Santana 86, Ljajic 88) Brescia 2 (Diamanti 29, Cordova 45)

Lazio 1 (Mauri 46) **Lecce 2** (Muslera 39-og, Gossmueller 71)  
Parma 1 (Giovino 53) **Cagliari 2** (Acquafresca 22, 30)



PHOTO: AFP

Milan striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic (L) scores the fourth goal against Udinese during their Serie A clash in San Siro on Monday.

## MU KO Liverpool

AFP, London



Kenny Dalglish's first match back as Liverpool manager ended in a 1-0 FA

Cup third round defeat by Manchester United on Sunday and, to make matters worse, captain Steven Gerrard was sent-off.

Any hopes Liverpool great Dalglish, the last manager to bring the league title to Anfield in 1990, would immediately revive the squad after the six-month reign of Roy Hodgson was ended on Saturday, lasted barely 35 seconds at Old Trafford.

That was how long it took United to earn a penalty scored by Ryan Giggs after striker Dimitar Berbatov was clipped in the box by Daniel Agger.

Worse followed for Dalglish when Liverpool captain Gerrard was sent-off by World Cup final referee Howard Webb for jumping into a challenge on fellow England midfielder Michael Carrick in the 32nd minute.

Elsewhere second-tier Leicester held big-spenders Manchester City to a 2-2 draw at the Walkers Stadium.

Leicester, managed by former City and England boss Sven-Goran Eriksson, made a sensational start when they took a first minute lead through Sol Bamba.

But goals from James Milner and Carlos Tevez

## RESULTS

**Chelsea 7** (Kalou 33, Sturridge 33, 52, Edwards 41-og, Anelka 49, Lampard 78, 79) Ipswich 0  
Leicester 2 (Bamba 1, King 64)  
Manchester City 2 (Milner 23, Tevez 45)  
**Manchester United 1** (Giggs 2-pen) Liverpool 0  
**Tottenham 3** (Townsend 49,

appeared to have eased City into the fourth round until a blunder from England goalkeeper Joe Hart gifted Leicester's Andy King an equaliser.

FA Cup holders Chelsea, bidding to win the trophy for a third straight season, thrashed Ipswich Town 7-0 just days after the Champi-

onship club sacked Roy Keane as their manager.

Chelsea may be struggling to defend their Premier League title but the result of this match was never in doubt after Salomon Kalou and Daniel Sturridge both scored in the 33rd minute at Stamford Bridge to ease the pressure on beleaguered boss Carlo Ancelotti.

Carlos Edwards's own-goal made it 3-0 before half-time and Nicolas Anelka added a fourth goal early in the second half.

England midfielder Frank Lampard piled on the misery for Ipswich with two goals in as many minutes late on.

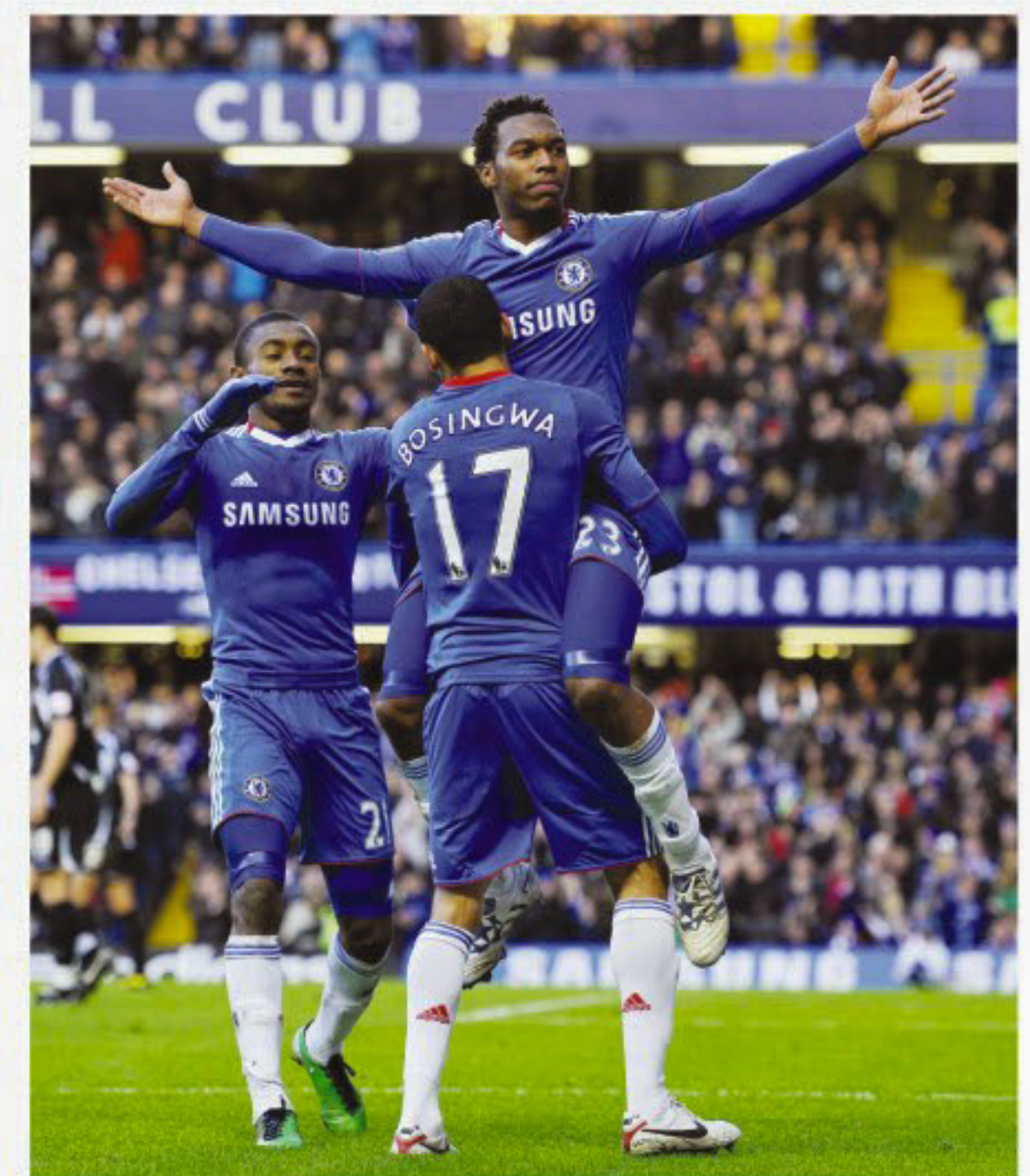


PHOTO: AFP

Chelsea striker Daniel Sturridge (top) celebrates his second goal with teammates during their FA Cup third round tie against Ipswich at Stamford Bridge on Sunday.

## Syrians stun Saudis



Football

AFP, Doha

Saudi Arabian football chiefs sacked coach Jose Peseiro on Sunday immediately after his demoralised side slumped to a shock 2-1 defeat at the hands of unfancied Asian Cup outsiders Syria.

The 2007 finalists and three-time champions announced that Nasser Al Johar will take over from the 50-year-old Portuguese for the remainder of the showpiece event in Doha.

The Saudis had been expected to compete for the title alongside the likes of Japan, Australia and South Korea, but a brace from

Abdulrazak Al Husein consigned them to defeat against Syria.

Peseiro -- the first coaching casualty of the Asian Cup -- had already faced heavy criticism after failing to steer his side to the World Cup last year and has had tetchy relations with the Saudi press ever since.

Saudi media again questioned Peseiro's tactics and team selection in the post-match press conference, and there were several laughs of derision when he declared his team would still win the Asian Cup.

With Japan and Jordan drawing 1-1 earlier in the day, the unheralded Syrians top the Group B table after one of the biggest victories in their footballing history.

## IN brief

## Becks arrives at Spurs

AFP, London

David Beckham arrived at Tottenham's training ground on Monday, with the Premier League club still hoping they can take the former England captain on loan.

The Los Angeles Galaxy midfielder turned up at Spurs' facility in Chigwell, northeast London, but did not speak to reporters.

Tottenham, who have reached the knockout phase of the Champions League, have said Beckham will only be training with them but manager Harry Redknapp is still hopeful of signing the player on loan during the rest of the US off-season.

## Ribery eyes fresh start

AFP, Berlin

Bayern Munich's French star midfielder Franck Ribery vowed Monday to bounce back after a disastrous 2010, which saw him embroiled in scandal off the pitch and underperforming on it.

Speaking to sports magazine Kicker, the 27-year-old attacking midfielder said he was "very happy" to put his annus horribilis behind him.

"It was a very hard year with many difficulties. But now a new one is starting," Ribery told the magazine from Bayern's training camp in Qatar.

"I will not be making again the mistakes I made in 2010. I learned a lot in 2010 and changed a few things," he said, citing, "the events of the World Cup, my injuries and my private life."

## 'World is watching'

AFP, Doha

Iran coach Afshin Ghotbi on Monday pleaded with people in Qatar to fill stadiums at the Asian Cup, saying the "world is watching" after the tiny country won the right to host the World Cup in 2022.

The Gulf emirate and its football administrators are hoping to silence sceptics who have pointed to a lack of football pedigree after being controversially chosen to host the 2022 tournament.

But local people need to start filling stadiums that in most cases have been no more than three-quarters full at the ongoing Asian Cup, Ghotbi said.

## Socceroos crush India

AFP, Doha

An impressive Australia crushed India 4-0 to get their Asian Cup campaign off to a decisive start Monday with red-hot Everton star Tim Cahill collecting two goals.

Played at an Al-Sadd Stadium packed with noisy expatriate Indians, Cahill got the opener in the 11th minute before former Liverpool man Harry Kewell made it 2-0 14 minutes later.

Brett Holman added a third on the stroke of half-time before Cahill completed the demolition