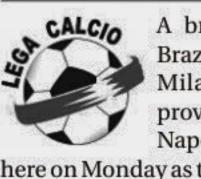
Pato sinks Napoli

AFP, Milan

0 win.



A brilliant performance by Brazilian striker Pato saw AC Milan inflict what could prove to be a fatal blow to Napoli's Serie A title hopes here on Monday as the leaders cruised to a 3-

The 21-year-old -- a somewhat controversial omission from last year's World Cup finals squad -- set up Ghanaian Kevin-Prince Boateng for Milan's second goal and then added a glorious third two minutes later to give them a five point lead over champions Inter Milan while Napoli are six points adrift of the leaders.

Swedish international striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic had opened the scoring for Milan early in the second-half from the penalty spot -- a harsh call by referee Gianluca Rocchi for handball on Napoli defender Salvatore Aronica, who while the ball clearly hit his arm it did not seem to be deliberate on his part.

Milan coach Massimiliano Allegri said he believed from his viewing point that ROcchi had called it correctly.

"Seen from the sidelines it was a penalty," he said.

"But independent of that moment, Milan produced a good performance, and deserved the victory.

"We really played very well, (Christian)

Abbiati didn't have to make a save and we created several chances.

"The thing that really pleased me was that the team was looking to make it 2-0, and even 3-0.

"The six point lead is a tidy advantage, but there are still a lot of matches to go, including the derby with Inter, and Napoli cannot be discounted yet."

Napoli -- who exited the Europa League last week -- gave few problems to Milan and the game went beyond them in the 77th minute when Pato found an onrushing Boateng and the World Cup star slotted the ball home to spark wild celebrations with the former Portsmouth player tearing off his shirt.

The 77,000 spectators were driven delirious with joy in the 79th minute.

Pato advanced with the ball, saw the Napoli 'keeper off his line and chipped into the far corner prompting once again huge celebrations with captain Gennaro Gattuso even mimicking his infamous head butt on Spurs assistant coach Joe Jordan as he embraced Allegri.

Napoli found little in the final 10 minutes to raise their spirits as their two standout players this season Uruguayan striker and scorer of 20 goals Edinson Cavani and Slovakian playmaker Marek Hamsik failed to sparkle when it mattered most.

Milan travel to out of form Juventus, who have lost four of their last six matches, next Saturday.



PHOTO: AFP

Milan striker Alexandre Pato (L) celebrates scoring the third goal against Napoli during their Serie A encounter in San Siro on Monday.

Greats renew rivalries



AP, New York

Calypso

in an under-strength team

taking on the touring

Bangladeshis. Interestingly,

two of the Windies' key

players for the World Cup,

fast bowler Kemar Roach

and captain Darren Sammy,

featured prominently in that

series. Perhaps it was with

that humiliation and their

recent slip in the rankings in

mind that Roach said of his

next opponent, "Bangladesh

are an improving team but

In reality this game is as

important for West Indies as

it is for Bangladesh. Their

slip down to ninth in the

world rankings is not a coin-

cidence; it has come about

because they have won only

seven out of 22 matches

since the start of 2010. They

looked out of their depth in

their first World Cup game

against South Africa. Also,

they have lost key player

Dwayne Bravo, whose

explosive mid-order batting

and medium pace bowling

will be greatly missed, espe-

cially in the subcontinent.

Their bowling stocks, with

the exception of Roach and

Suleimann Benn, look wor-

All things point to a must-

win match on Friday for

both teams, chiefly because

none can be overly confi-

dent of beating the other

bowling show. Ashraful took

two important wickets in the

middle to make a rightful

claim for selection for the

"I'm now very much

confident because I bowled

well and also won the match.

The things will be different if

I failed as a bowler after

disappointing batting. Hope

sounding Ashraful.

Test nations in the group.

Ahsraful

FROM PAGE 16

third game.

ryingly inadequate

we are better than them."

FROM PAGE 16

Pete Sampras held up his hands in apology when his shot ticked off the net and fell in for a winner to give him triple match point against Andre Agassi.

The two were on their best behavior Monday during their exhibition at Madison Square Garden. No repeats of their charity match last March, when Agassi's jokes got a little too personal and Sampras fired a serve at him in reply.

Sampras won 6-3, 7-5 this time on a night full of nostalgia, a reprise of his final match when he beat Agassi in the 2002 US Open final in New York.

This city was the site of many memorable career moments for both.

"I came back to the people I love to say hello," Agassi said.

Earlier, John McEnroe had the short shorts and big hair ready to pump up the crowd late in his match against old adversary Ivan Lendl. McEnroe never got the chance, twisting his ankle a couple of hours before the match and having to retire leading 6-3 in the oneset, first-to-eight event.

McEnroe was hurt practicing with Sampras but tried to tough it out. He jumped out to an early lead, aggressively going for shots to try to limit how much running he would have to do.

In an on-court interview with younger brother Patrick afterward, McEnroe

revealed he was wearing the "circa 1985" shorts underneath his longer, more modern ones. He said later he also had a wig on hand for the "circa 1982" hair.

Lendl suggested they should return to the Garden next year to play with short shorts and wooden rackets.

That sort of witty banter wasn't likely during their careers, when Lendl and McEnroe faced each other in a record 20 ATP Tour finals. But now they're both in their 50s.

Four tennis greats with 37 combined Grand Slam titles took the court for the event. For guys who are long retired, there's still an edge in the air when the Sampras-Agassi and McEnroe-Lendl rivalries are renewed.



PHOTO: RUETERS

American tennis legend Pete Sampras (L) shakes hands with fellow legend Andre Agassi after winning the exhibition match at the BNP Paribas Showdown at Madison Square Garden in New York February on Monday.

We're better: Roach

off 8.3 overs including a maiden hattrick.

"I feel really great. This is an amazing feeling, getting a hattrick and doing it in the World Cup.

"We needed a win and the captain and the coach asked me to be aggressive and go for the wickets. I knew I had to give it my all and that's exactly what I did.

"At first it [hattrick] was not on my mind. I was just looking to finish off the batsmen and get the win for the team but then the captain pointed out to me that I was on a hattrick. I went for broke and it worked."

Roach, who opened the bowling Monday with left-arm spinner Sulieman Benn, dismissed talk about not having a partner to match his pace especially in a side which was once renowned for hunting in fast-bowling

"I don't feel as though as I am left out. Benn is a very good partner of mine. To see that two guys from Barbados are opening the bowling for the West Indies is great.

"Our bowling is coming on. We have some very good bowlers and once we click we can get the job done. We can definitely repeat this kind of performance [against any other side].

Roach, who has 33 wickets from 17 ODIs, admitted that bowling in sub-continental conditions required special skills.

"It's tough coming here as a bowler to the subcontinent, you have to be very accurate and consistent, once you get that right, you get wickets."

What's on off the pitch

FROM PAGE 18 During the West Indies-

South Africa match at the Delhi venue, the police decided that food won't be allowed into the stadium, starving thousands including players, journalists, volunteers and one very miffed commentator (Geoff Boycott).

And then as an antidote, the famed Eden Gardens in Kolkata decided to give the crowd something more to be interested to come to the venue -- a free health

as a batting all-rounder I can contribute for my team as a check-up. batsman," said a confident With mainly smaller matches in the venue, the

authorities will offer the check for everyone carrying a ticket.

THE PEOPLE

While the Bangladeshi people have told the whole world where the World Cup truly belongs through their invincible enthusiasm, others in India are not too far behind.

Forty-five couples, who tied their knot in a mass wedding in the Indian city of Udaipur, chose the World Cup as the theme of their wedding.

The grooms on horses Feroze Shah Kotla, has been carried cricket bats instead of the customary sword. The journalists for the extra care venue was decorated with he has provided to his work.

Sachin Tendulkar and MS Dhoni posters while couples went around the holy fire holding cricket bats and balls and after the ceremony was over, the brides were asked to bowl to their grooms!

The massive scale of the tournament also means that volunteers in their droves have been required and while most have (just about) done their job, one man in New Delhi won praise through his unique efforts. Dipender, a volunteer at the singled out in praise by

Malaga get a lifeline

AFP, Barcelona

Malaga came from behind in a relegation thriller to beat nine-man Almeria 3-1 and give themselves a survival lifeline on Monday.

There was plenty of tension in the air ahead of this Andalusian derby between the bottom two sides in the table and it was Malaga, who had not won in seven games who began the more nervous as passes went astray.

Almeria went ahead after just eight minutes with Sofiane Feghouli slotting home from close range with the ball rebounding to him in the box. It took until the second

half for Malaga to relax and show more composure in possession. Substitute Enzo Maresca

gave them a deserved equaliser and then both teams pushed forward for the all-important winner with a point serving for little. Although Malaga domi-

nated, Pablo Piatti was desperately unlucky when he saw a volley come back off the post. Almeria's Jose Ulloa was

dismissed for a second yellow card and minutes later Jose Rondon headed Malaga into the lead.

Fortune again eluded Almeria as Albert Crusat saw a shot come back off the post and the visitor's night went from bad to worse with the sending off of Antonio Luna followed by Malaga scoring a third through Juanmi Callejon in stoppage time.

Barca's Valencia test

FIXTURES

Wednesday

Getafe v Atletico Madrid, Villarreal v

Hercules, Osasuna v Deportivo la

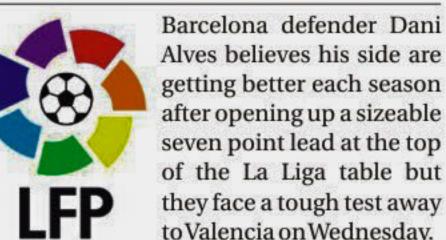
Coruna, Real Sociedad v Levante,

Valencia v Barcelona

Thursday

Almeria v Racing Santander, Real

AFP, Barcelona



Alves believes his side are getting better each season after opening up a sizeable seven point lead at the top of the La Liga table but they face a tough test away to Valencia on Wednesday. Second-placed Real

Madrid saw a glimmer of hope as Barca appeared to struggle in recent weeks but at the weekend they rediscovered their form against Mallorca despite missing several key players.

Without Xavi Hernandez, Victor Valdes, Carles Puyol and Dani Alves they took their

time to find their rhythm but after Leo Messi headed home the opener, they took control and ran out 3-0 win-Real Zaragoza v Athletic Bilbao,

ners. "The most important thing is that we don't doubt ourselves. Our aim is to improve year on year and we know that (Real) Madrid are always going to be very com-

petitive. Barca are better than last year as we have taken a step forward and we will try to keep progressing," said Alves.

"The team will definitely do well and we showed against Mallorca that although we don't have a very big squad we have a lot of

quality." They now face a Valencia side that is

staking a claim for a Champions League place after an impressive run since Christ-

Despite selling important players last summer they are still a dangerous opponent as they showed at the weekend when they came from behind to beat Athletic Bilbao in their intimidating San Mames stadium.

"They are definitely going to be in high spirits after winning at a ground as difficult as Athletic's but we need to keep concentrating on ourselves and we know that seven points is not a particularly big lead," added Alves.

Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho was left criticising the calendar after his team could only draw 0-0 with Deportivo la Coruña on Saturday night.

He felt they should have had an extra day to recover after their mid-week Champions League fixture. As they prepare to face Racing Santander, director Emilio Butragueno has backed the team saying they can still win the league.

"There is no way that the league is lost as there are still a lot of games to be played. We deserved to win against Deportivo but we didn't have the luck," he explained.

Villarreal, who play Hercules, scrambled a 2-2 draw in the final minute against Racing Santander but despite a poor run in the league they have a comfort-

able seven-point cushion over Espanyol

below them.

Espanyol and Athletic are leading the chase for the Europa League places and take on Mallorca and Zaragoza respectively.

Below them Sevilla and Atletico Madrid remain inconsistent and drew 2-2 in a disappointing game at the Calderon with little entertainment despite the quality players in both sides.

Sevilla meet Sporting Gijon while Atletico have a local derby with Getafe.

Real Sociedad need to pick themselves up from their hammering by Espanyol as they face a Levante side which have won four of their last five games with their only defeat away to Real Madrid.

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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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A R E A L E A R O E S D D T

CRYPTOQUIP

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IN MANHATTAN AND BROOKLYN, I ASSUME THEY LIKE MAKING BURROWS IN BOROUGHS. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: G equals T