

Chelsea stay in hunt

AFP, Blackpool

A double for Frank Lampard and a header by John Terry helped Chelsea to a comfortable 3-1 victory over relegation-threatened Blackpool here on Monday.

This could have been a tricky encounter for Carlo Ancelotti's side but Chelsea's old guard showed their qualities to earn three points and underline that the Premier League title race is very much alive.

They are nine points behind leaders Manchester United with a game in hand.

Chelsea went into this contest in buoyant mood following their comeback victory against Manchester United six days ago which ensured they kept in touch with the trio of sides above them.

Arsenal drew against Sunderland on Saturday and United lost again to Liverpool so this encounter gave Ancelotti's men ample opportunity to maintain the pressure on those sides, and also Manchester City.

Ancelotti had changes to make and played 4-4-2 as he paired £50million Fernando Torres with Didier Drogba up front in a clear sign of intent against their north-west opposition.

Neither side wrested control of the game until Chelsea took the lead after 20 minutes through Terry as he headed home from Lampard's corner.

Jose Bosingwa then forced Richard

Kingson into a blinder of a top-corner save as Chelsea went for the kill against the side they beat 4-0 at Stamford Bridge back in September.

Blackpool would not surrender as meekly this time around though as Jason Puncheon's low effort hit the post after 33 minutes after Petr Cech let the effort slip through his grasp.

However, the Chelsea keeper did show his undoubted class a minute later as Blackpool poured forward again and Ian Evatt's fine effort forced him into a brilliant fingertip save.

After the break, Drogba's recent barren spell continued as he made way within 10 minutes of the restart for Salomon Kalou after another performance that suggested he and Torres have an awful lot of work to do if they are to build a profitable attacking relationship.

In fact, Kalou showed Ancelotti more than enough after coming on to underline that he deserves more of a chance at Stamford Bridge as he had a hand in both of the goals Chelsea scored in quickfire succession.

Firstly, he was fouled in the area by Evatt which allowed Lampard to convert from 12 yards out before Kalou played Lampard through on goal four minutes later and the Chelsea midfielder calmly slotted past Kingson to make it 3-0.

Blackpool tried manfully to give their fans something to smile about and Puncheon did just that with five minutes left as he grabbed one back with a fine left foot shot but it was too little too late.



Chelsea midfielder Frank Lampard (L) scores the third goal against Blackpool during their Premier League encounter at Bloomfield Road on Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

Police detain Brandao

AFP, Marseille

Marseille's Brazilian striker Brandao was detained by police here on Tuesday after a 25-year-old woman accused him of sexual assault, police sources said.

The 30-year-old player was arrested at his home and taken in for questioning as part of the police investigation into the charges.

The woman on Friday accused Brandao of assaulting her at a motorway stop-over as he drove her home from a night club in Aix-en-Provence last week.

"OM was informed on Tuesday morning that the player Brandao would not be able to be at the club this day. Olympique Marseille will make no comment on this private matter," a club statement read.

Brandao has been at Marseille since January 2009, playing his part in the club's French league title win last season.

Tickets sale

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not hurry'. If necessary our activists will distribute the tickets entire day and night."

Alamgir also said that any undisciplined events can embarrass them as ICC officials, journalists and overseas cricket fans are currently staying in the city.

Hoping no unwanted situation takes place in the port city during the World Cup matches, he said, "BCB and local staff are working very hard to ensure that every ticket is given away to the right people."

The second of Chittagong's two World Cup games, the tie between Bangladesh and the Netherlands, will take place at the same venue on March 14.

Hosts optimistic

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"It doesn't matter to me whether the result is 1-0 or 0-0 because our target is to qualify for the next round and I am only thinking about our game. I hope the boys will continue from where they left on home soil," said Kuwait coach Maher Al Shamhari.

Shamhari wasn't also expecting any surprise from the hosts, especially after the way they played in the first game. According to Shamhari Bangladesh played an ultra-defensive game in the last leg and the margin of victory could have been much higher had the strikers not squandered a host of opportunities.

"This is a new game, anything can happen. But I am not expecting any surprise. We will not allow any room to the opponents to score. We are looking forward to the next round," added Shamhari.

Raul wary of Valencia

AFP, Gelsenkirchen



Spanish veteran Raul has warned his Schalke teammates that Valencia will be 'more dangerous' in Wednesday's Champions League Last 16 second-leg clash than in the draw in Spain.

The Royal Blues earned a 1-1 draw at Valencia on 15 February in the first leg and Raul says the Spanish side will come out with all guns blazing, especially after their 2-1 win at Mallorca on Saturday in La Liga.

Goals either side of half-time by Valencia's Pablo Hernandez sealed Valencia's win which leaves them third in the Spanish league.

Raul netted his 71st European goal in the first-leg and is eager to add to his tally against his compatriots.

"I expect them to be even more dangerous in comparison to the first leg," the 33-year-old former Real Madrid and Spanish international icon told uefa.com.

"I think they have great players who can play great matches away too."

"Although we have a small advantage going into the second leg, it's another 90 minutes in which Valencia have the ability to turn things around and score goals here."

"The starting position is good, but dangerous, the 1-1 looks better than it is."

"We need to make sure we take the lead."

Raul has scored 15 goals, three in the Bundesliga outfit at the start of the season.

He has brought a wealth of experience to Schalke having won the Champions League three times with Real.

With his Dutch strike partner Klaas-Jan Huntelaar out with a knee injury, either Swiss star Mario Gavranovic or Brazil's Edu will be alongside Raul with a place in the last eight at stake.

Schalke have an enviable European record at home this season and have won all three of their Champions League games at their Veltins Arena.

The Royal Blues have only made the Champions League quarterfinals twice before, but Raul says spirits are high.

"We are full of confidence, it would be a great achievement for Schalke 04 to be among the best eight teams in Europe," he said.

Despite his advancing years, Raul insists he has plenty more to offer and hopes he can produce the goal which puts the Germans into the last eight.

"Of course I hope I can score more goals, or even just one in the match against Valencia to help the team succeed," he said.

"It could be that this is my last match in the Champions League - so many things can happen, and only time will tell."

"It's a massive game"

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"Obviously we know that Bangladesh are going to come out hard against us after their disappointing result against West Indies. It is always a difficult side to beat on their home turf. I'm sure the atmosphere will also be fantastic," he added.

Bangladesh have only defeated England once in 14 one-day games but never in their home conditions and though the visitors would have a lot of factors to deal with, Broad was confident of their chances.

"We have played a bit against him (Tamim Iqbal), this time last year in Bangladesh and again in England. He's a very talented player. He looks to get off to an explosive start, but we have some high quality bowlers in our line-up who'd look to get their basics right against him and create pressure that way," said the Nottingham-born pacesman.

"We know what the Chittagong wicket would do. I remember it is quite good for batting, Craig Kieswetter got a fantastic hundred here last year. We look at all their batsmen closely, they are a dangerous team. "Series-wise we have had the better of

them last year but they beat us in Bristol. We know the dangers of the Bangladesh team and we know we have to put in a strong performance," said Broad.

After missing the Ashes victory in Australia because of a torn abdominal muscle, Broad would have hoped of better days in the World Cup but until the South Africa game, difficulty remained by his side. Now, even after his 4-15 against South Africa, it seems a lot more can go wrong though he remained positive of his immediate future in the tournament.

Broad was also happy with the arrival of Eoin Morgan (in Chittagong yesterday afternoon), someone the team rates as its best one-day batsman and though they have lost Kevin Pietersen due to his hernia operation, Broad said that England are keen to have the innovative left-hander in its midst.

"Obviously Kevin going home is a blow to the team. I think a huge positive is that Eoin Morgan is on his way out," he said. "He's been our best ODI batsman for the past year. He's won us quite a number of games. The whole squad is excited that he's joining us."

Away from troubles

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"How can you expect that people will not say anything when a team is shot out for 58 runs? One must accept the criticism. You can give a perfect reply by your performance. I think the team should focus more on their game," he added.

Bashar termed it an unhealthy situation for the team, admitting that he was hurt by the comments and the skipper of the 2007 World Cup strongly advised the players to focus on cricket.

"His [Shakib's] comments really hurt me. What I believe is that as an international player one must have the sense of discretion. It's not good what happened after the West Indies defeat and it was also not healthy for any team. Team discipline means a lot of things," said Bashar.

"They should focus more on their game now because we are really struggling in the tournament, especially we have to work lot with our batting," he said.

Having opened battlefields on two fronts, the question now is whether the Tigers can bounce back. It would be much appreciated if they focus on winning the battle against England and forget the media war.

Let some sense

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has issued a directive asking any member of the squad or those associated with it to refrain from writing columns for any newspaper during the World Cup. It is a matter of freedom of speech, and Shakib may have his own opinion and the right to express it. But at the same time the young and passionate captain should have used that freedom in a dignified manner, which would have spared much criticism and controversy. Let's hope sense prevails for the remainder of the tournament and the team focuses on the performance on the field and stay away from controversy.

Higuain targets Barca return

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid striker Gonzalo Higuain has made a "dramatic" recovery from the injury he suffered in November and could be fit to play against Barcelona in the Spanish Cup final next month, a Spanish sports daily said Tuesday.

The Argentine international had been expected to be out for the rest of season after undergoing surgery for a slipped disc at a hospital in Chicago on January 11.

Coach Jose "Mourinho is delighted with the effort that Higuain has shown and he knows he can count on him for the Cup final on April 20 and for the 'clasico' league match" at Real's Bernabeu stadium against Barcelona four days earlier, the newspaper AS said.

It said he could even be fit for the second leg of the Champions League quarterfinals on April 12 or 13, should Real get past Lyon in the last 16.

The striker "has worked in earnest over the last two weeks and has had a dramatic recovery from the slipped disc... In fact, he is expected to be given the all-clear at the end of the month."

Higuain had already returned to the pitch for some training last week for the first time since he underwent the operation.

Higuain scored 27 league goals for Real last season, making him La Liga's second-most prolific scorer behind fellow Argentine Lionel Messi of Barcelona.

Spurs set to attack

AFP, London



Harry Redknapp has promised Tottenham will go on the attack when they face AC Milan in the second leg of their Champions League last 16 tie at White Hart Lane on Wednesday.

Redknapp's side are in pole position to reach the quarter-finals after Peter Crouch's goal secured a 1-0 win in a tempestuous first leg at the San Siro last month.

In the circumstances it would be easy for Redknapp to employ a low-risk defensive strategy aimed at frustrating Milan, but the Spurs boss is adamant he will stick to the cavalier approach that has already produced several high-scoring wins in the competition.

"I think we've got enough to hurt Milan at home. We'll be positive," Redknapp said. "We will play an attacking team. We'll play (Aaron) Lennon and probably Gareth Bale and have a go."

Redknapp's commitment to attack is understandable given the wealth of creative talent as his disposal, especially since Wales winger Bale returned from six weeks out with a back injury in Sunday's 3-3 draw at Wolves.

Dutch playmaker Rafael Van der Vaart could also feature after recovering from a calf injury, but it is the presence of Bale that is most likely to worry Milan.

His virtuoso displays against Inter Milan in the group stage established Bale as one of Europe's brightest young stars and Redknapp can't wait to unleash him on the Italian league leaders.

"When Gareth came on and started to run with the ball at Wolves it was exciting. We've missed that for the last five or six weeks," Redknapp said.

"That was his first real exertion for six weeks. He started straight away to run with the ball and, when he does that, he scares people to death."

"He carries the game at the opposition and that makes a massive difference."

"Peter Crouch has had a great European campaign as well. And Van der Vaart

has a good chance for Wednesday. I hope he will be fit."

Massimiliano Allegri's side have been the most formidable team in Serie A this season, but Italian football is at a low ebb at present and it would be little surprise if Tottenham followed in the footsteps of Arsenal and Manchester United after their Premier League rivals also dumped out Milan in recent years.

Milan underlined their dominance in Italy with a 1-0 win at Juventus on Sunday, but they will be without several experienced players at White Hart Lane.

Gennaro Gattuso is serving a suspension after being booked in the first leg, although his absence might be a blessing as the veteran midfielder had enraged Tottenham with his astonishing touchline row with Redknapp's assistant Joe Jordan.

Andrea Pirlo and Massimo Ambrosini are also sidelined and Allegri will need exceptional performances from Robinho and Zlatan Ibrahimovic to overturn the deficit.

If Milan are to successfully subdue a sell-out Spurs crowd that is sure to be at fever pitch, Allegri could do with former Arsenal midfielder Mathieu Flamini keeping his emotions in check on his return to north London.

Flamini's ugly first-leg foul left Spurs right-back Vedran Corluka with badly damaged ankle ligaments, but the Frenchman insists he isn't a dirty player.

"In four years in the Premier League I've never injured an opponent. I was never sent off in England," he said.

Broad's WC

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But obviously I'll be bitterly disappointed if it is the end of my World Cup," he said in the afternoon press conference.

The England selectors will decide on a player replacement in due course before submitting an application to the ICC event technical committee, said the statement, but it is certain that Chris Tremlett, who has been flying with the squad as a reserve player.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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9 Moving vehicle
12 Practice pugilism
13 News, for short
14 Praise in verse
15 What the "food pyramid" involves
17 Smoked salmon
18 Pact
19 Be
21 Denial
22 Deserve
24 Street
27 Scatter seed
28 Passport endorsement
31 Upper limb
32 Color
33 Lord's Prayer start
34 "Dragnet" star

DOWN

1 "— It Romantic?"
2 Boot attachment
3 Tardy
4 Gofer's job
5 Compassions
6 Blackbird
7 Venusian vessel?
8 Hermit
9 Free will
10 Commotions
11 On deck
16 Judge Lance
20 Louis —
22 Grievance

23 Basin accessory
24 Uncultured
25 Tramcar contents
26 Drive
27 Mets' old home
29 — generis
30 Illustrations
35 Automation, for short
37 Tiny tom?
39 Used a paper towel
40 Omega predecessor
41 Won't shut up
42 Hodge-podge
43 Mideast gulf
44 Take on
45 Peat source
46 Picnic invaders
49 Before
50 Genetic stuff

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CRYPTOQUIP

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Yesterday's Cryptoquip: MY PLANTS LOOKED SICKLY WHEN I USED THAT ORGANIC GARDENING MULCH. IT'S NOT WORTH RE-PEATING.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: A equals O