

Cesar rescues Inter

AFP, Rome

Goalkeeper Julio Cesar saved a last minute penalty to rescue a point for 10-man Inter Milan away to Brescia on Friday night.

Samuel Eto'o scored his 31st goal of the season to give the champions a first half lead before Andrea Caracciolo equalised six minutes from time.

But then substitute Ivan Cordoba was sent-off for bringing down Eder in the box only for Cesar to save Caracciolo's spot-kick.

In a bizarre finish, Caracciolo then also received his marching orders for a second yellow card.

The point means AC Milan could extend their Serie A lead to seven points if they beat rock-bottom Bari on Sunday.

Brescia remain second from bottom.

Showing no ill-effects from the trauma and tragedy afflicting his homeland Japanese full-back Yuto Nagatomo made a determined run into the Brescia box on 13 minutes but his attempted cross deflected off Jonathan Zebina and goalkeeper Michele Arcari scrambled the ball behind for a corner.

The champions went in front on 18 minutes as Wesley Sneijder's corner was flicked on by Andrea Ranocchia and Eto'o prodded home from inside the six-yard box.

Brescia's best chance of an uninspiring first half came on 34 minutes as Panagiotis Kone played the ball into the box where Caracciolo lifted it over Cesar

but also the bar.

And the big striker was quickly involved again at the start of the second half as he got across his marker to head a right wing cross just over the bar.

He then shrugged off Ranocchia only to be denied by Cesar under pressure from the back-tracking Dejan Stankovic.

Inter came quickly back into the game and Giampaolo Pazzini lashed wildly off target before Arcari came out quickly to save at Goran Pandev's feet.

Sneijder then fired through a crowd of players from 16 yards but hit his effort straight at Arcari.

Ten minutes from time Pandev had another great chance from eight yards out when teed up by Eto'o but his shot hit Arcari in the face.

But just four minutes later Alessandro Diamanti's corner was headed back into the danger zone by Zebina and Caracciolo headed home from close range.

It could have got worse for Inter as Kone arrived at the back post to hit a volley into the ground that bounced up and just wide of the far post.

Then came the late drama as Diamanti sent Eder running in on goal and Cordoba clipped him from behind, earning a straight red card.

But Cesar plunged to his right to stop Caracciolo's penalty and earn a vital point.

Deep into injury time Caracciolo was dismissed before Stankovic got back to save Inter after Eder had rounded Cesar.



Brescia forward Citadin Martins Eder (L) tussles for the ball with Inter Milan goalkeeper Julio Cesar during their Serie A encounter at the Mario Rigamonti Stadium on Friday. PHOTO: AFP

Marseille move up

AFP, Paris

Beleaguered Marseille relaunched their title bid with a comprehensive 2-0 away win at Rennes which lifted the reigning champions up to third in the French top flight ahead of the weekend's remaining fixtures.

Marseille's battle for glory on three fronts this season -- in the league, league cup and the Champions League -- was overshadowed earlier this week with unwelcome off-field news.

Brazilian Brando was taken off the team sheet after he was accused of rape. Coupled

with reports that coach Didier Deschamps could quit Marseille and return to former club Juventus, their need for a win arguably went beyond a simple three points.

And on the pitch they had lost to league leaders Lille last weekend.

Deschamps said: "A major team performance. It wasn't easy coming after Lille and one shouldn't dismiss either (the effect) of the off-field problem the club has relating to the Brando affair."

Despite missing Brando, Marseille emerged from a lively first half 1-0 to the good after a well-taken goal by summer signing Loic Remy in the 24th minute.

Only two minutes earlier Ghanaian Andre Ayew had missed a great chance for the opener when he ran on to Argentine playmaker Lucho Gonzalez's pass and flashed an angled left-footed drive wide of Nicolas Douchez's upright.

After another defence-splitting move by Lucho, Ayew's weighted cross into the area was met by the diving Remy who gave Douchez no chance with a bullet header from the edge of the penalty area.

Rennes had enjoyed much of the possession in the opening period, but it was Marseille's turn to take a grip on the match -- under the watchful eye of Sir Alex Ferguson, whose Manchester United host Marseille in the second leg of their Champions League last 16 tie on Tuesday, with the score delicately poised at 0-0.

Rennes, however, came close to levelling moments after the restart when midfielder Jerome Leroy delivered a long free kick to the back post from where Yann M'Vila unleashed a shot which forced a smart diving save from Steve Mandanda.

Ten minutes later Ayew turned provider from Remy again, but the striker, with time and space on his hands, saw his close range drive well parried by Douchez.

Andre-Pierre Gignac was next to give Marseille sight of a second goal, but after turning defender Kader Mangane in the area a prone Douchez did well to parry the big France striker's shot with his foot.



Marseille midfielder Lucho Gonzalez celebrates his goal against Rennes during their Ligue One clash at the Route de Lorient Stadium on Friday. PHOTO: AFP

Muktis win big

SPORTS REPORTER

Muktijo d d h a Sangsad reclaimed the top spot in the Grameenphone Bangladesh League 2010 with an emphatic 6-0 victory over Chittagong Mohammedan SC at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

The three points take Muktis to 25 from ten matches, two ahead of defending champions Abahani and four clear of third placed Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club while Chittagong Mohammedan have only 10 points from

same number of matches and floating perilously over the drop zone.

In yesterday's match, the Chittagong side kept Muktis at bay through the entire first half, but once the shackle was broken in the 50th minute, there was no stopping the onslaught.

James Moga, the Sudanese striker, gave them the lead with a diving header on a Mithun Chowdhury cross and twelve minutes later he made it 2-0 with a placing shot beating the opposition goalie James Paul.

The scoreline became 3-0 seven minutes later when Nigerian striker Alamu Bukola placed one past James before substitute Alamgir Kabir Rana volleyed home the fourth nine minutes later.

Mithun, the leading goal scorer in the league, got in on the act on the last minute of regulation time with a firm right-footer before he scored the team's sixth of the game and his eleventh of the season in the injury time to seal the match.

There are two matches to be played today. Great rivals Mohammedan and Abahani will face off at 5pm in Kamalapur while in Cox's Bazar Chittagong Abahani will entertain Sheikh Russel KC.

No room for Tevez

AFP, Buenos Aires

Barcelona forward Lionel Messi has been named in Argentina's squad for two upcoming friendlies although coach Sergio Batista has left out Carlos Tevez of Manchester City and Atletico Madrid's Sergio Aguero.

Argentina will play the United States on March 26 in New Jersey and face Costa Rica three days later in San Jose as Batista continues preparations for the 2011 Copa America.

In the absence of midfielder Fernando Gago (Real Madrid) and striker Diego Milito (Inter Milan), Batista has turned to Fernando Belluschi (FC Porto) and Eduardo Salvio (Benfica) to fill the respective spots.

Batista has also called goalkeeper Adrian Gabbarini and defender Federico Fazio into the squad for the first time.

In their last friendly Argentina beat Portugal 2-1.

C'Ron to play against Lyon

AFP, Madrid

Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho expects fellow Portuguese Cristiano Ronaldo to play against Lyon in the crucial Champions League last-16 match on Wednesday despite recently suffering a thigh injury.

"I am pretty sure he will play, but I don't like it when players are not 100 per cent fit," Mourinho told a news conference Friday.

"If Cristiano had to play tomorrow he wouldn't because he is not fully fit, but I am sure he will play next Wednesday after training on Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday."

Ronaldo, 26, left the field in the 76th minute of Real's league encounter with Malaga on March 3 after suffering a muscular injury in his left thigh.

Mourinho is set to leave the striker on the sidelines this weekend when Real face Hercules in La Liga in the hope he can battle back to match fitness for Wednesday, when a place in the quarter-finals is at stake.

Lyon held Real to a 1-1 draw at the Stade Gerland last week, meaning there is everything to play for during the second leg at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium.

Nine-time winners Real have fallen at the last 16 stage in each of their last six seasons, and Lyon eliminated Real 2-1 at this stage of the competition last year.

Riyad can't say

FROM PAGE 18

match. We had confidence that we would be able to win the match if we could bat till the last over. After one over Shafiqul [Islam] also said to me 'We will win the match'," informed Riyad.

The all-rounder from Mymensingh also praised his partner Shafiqul with whom he added 58 runs for the unbroken ninth wicket. "All credits must go to Shafiqul because he was really brilliant with his bat. Actually it's impossible to explain the feeling when we won the match. I didn't want to take the match to the last over that's why I took my chance in the last ball of the penultimate over," said Riyad, who smashed the winning boundary against Tim Bresnan in the last ball of the 49th over.

Riyad also informed that they were inspired by a video which bowling coach Ian Pont showed just before the match. "There were a lot of motivational segments in that video which really inspired the team. And later the Prime Minister congratulated us and thanked us for the victory."

Dutch limber up

FROM PAGE 16

The session had a regimented look about it with the media kept as distant from the players for security reasons. Inside, regimentation was followed too in their training as every dropped catch was being penalized with a few rounds of push-ups for all the players.

Why won't they be? Into their fifth World Cup, The Dutch are still looking for their first victory. They came close couple of times in this campaign, running England down close in their first match and India in the latest, before giving in.

With just two matches left for them in this World Cup, those two being Bangladesh and Ireland, the Oranges might feel they are in with a chance at their break. And they will look to Ryan Ten Doeschate, arguably the best player from the Associate members, to fire on all cylinders and among other, to Pieter Seelaar who has made quite a name for himself with his left-arm spin dismissing the likes of Sachin Tendulkar, Virender Sehwag and Kevin Pietersen.

The Dutch later flew to Chittagong in the evening where they will be having their practice session today (Sunday) at the Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium as they prepare for tomorrow's match against Bangladesh in the same venue.

The lean mean

FROM PAGE 16

"Shakib and Tamim bhai also gave me lot of confidence in the dressing room," he added.

It is outstanding the way the youngster bounced back against Ireland after a setback against India in the opening match and delivered a match-winning bowling (4-21) performance against the ICC Associate Member country, and following that up by playing an unbeaten, match-winning knock of 24 against England was even more worthy of praise. On both occasions, though, he missed out on the man-of-the-match awards.

Shafiqul however was hardly bothered with that.

"Nothing is more precious than winning the game. And to me the best rewards are the love of the people. You know I was thrilled to play the World Cup and my dream came true and now I'm looking forward to making more contributions for my team in the World Cup. You know that calls have been coming continuously to my cell phone and everybody is congratulating me, so what more do you want," questioned the jubilant Shafiqul.

Every chance to be

FROM PAGE 16

It is safe to say that the bowlers, in both ways and in both victories, have played a vital role. The batsmen, on the other hand, either failed completely or in the case of the skipper, the deputy and the top-scorer, didn't capitalise on the starts they got, two of them unnecessarily running themselves out and three others being carried by a rampant Ajmal Shehzad, deliveries that Siddons called 'three fantastic balls' while referring to Rokibul, Mushfiqur and Naeem's dismissals.

"Tamim should have gone forward and I think Imrul and Shakib both knew they went out at the wrong time. I told Imrul that you almost cost us the game with that run out."

"Running between the wickets is all about two-way communication. Imrose was at fault on the first occasion (against Ireland) and the second time, it wasn't his fault," he added.

It has been one rough week for the Tigers, especially for captain Shakib Al Hasan in the aftermath of the scandalous 58 all out, though Siddons was seen comforting the sobbing skipper after the thrilling win and later telling this reporter that the pressure that had built up has indeed come off.

"It was a tough week for everyone. We had one hiccup but we have done very well in the recent past. We lost only four of the 13 big games we have played before this and people got stuck into us. Everyone needs to understand that this is a young team and Shakib's a young captain. There will be ups and downs but this team is winning like it hasn't done in the past," explained Siddons.

So after such a dramatic turnaround, with the nation firmly behind the team once again, how would Siddons motivate the group ahead of their next game against a much weaker side? For starters, the Tigers enjoyed a rest day after an early recovery session, a few of them going off to Patenga beach. "After the loss to West Indies, the boys were reluctant to get out of their hotel rooms. Now they want to mix with the public," said Siddons.

"We are focusing on the Netherlands game now and the boys have motivation enough. We have given ourselves every chance to be in the quarterfinals," he added.

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Mariano Andujar (Catania/ITA), Adrian Gabbarini (Independiente/ARG), Sergio Romero (AZ Alkmaar/NED)

Defenders: Javier Zanetti (Inter Milan/ITA), Nicolas Burdisso (AS Roma/ITA), Pablo Zabaleta (Manchester City/ENG), Ezequiel Garay (Real Madrid/ESP), Gabriel Milito (Barcelona/ESP), Nicolas Otamendi (FC Porto/POR), Federico Fazio (Sevilla/ESP), Marcos Rojo (Spartak Moscow/RUS)

Midfielders: Javier Mascherano (Barcelona/ESP), Mario Bolatti (Internacional/BRA), Ever Banega (Valencia/ESP), Fernando Belluschi (FC Porto/POR), Esteban Cambiasso (Inter Milan/ITA), Lucas Biglia (Anderlecht/BEL), Javier Pastore (Palermo/ITA), Jose Sosa (Napoli/ITA)

Strikers: Lionel Messi (Barcelona/ESP), Ezequiel Lavezzi (Napoli/ITA), Angel Di Maria (Real Madrid/ESP), Eduardo Salvio and Nicolas Gaitan (Benfica/POR)

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Eastern potentate

5 Knock

8 Wash

12 Bollywood costume

13 Id counterpart

14 Alkali neutralizer

15 Raindrop sound

16 Unsolved mystery, maybe

18 Martial arts instructor

20 Not so quietly

21 Aleutian island

23 Away from

24 "Price Is Right" jackpot

28 Bullets, for short

31 Cushion

32 Coasters

34 Author Fleming

35 Came to land

37 Piece of luggage

39 Rowing tool

41 "Nerts!"

42 Pieces of work

45 Salary

49 Potential precedent

51 Swear

52 Capri or Wight

53 Scratch

54 Take out of context?

55 High-protein beans

56 Sullivan McMahon

Solution time: 24 mins.

HOSTS CLAMOR
NITWIT LOCAL
ARTIER AGENDA
PEON AMMO TED
GATE NOR
PTA RITA HALO
JENNIFER LOPEZ
SATE YORE SOS
ETA RAID
BAR EASY REEF
ABOARD ISOLDE
GLORIA NEWBIE
SEMPER GENET

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CRYPTOQUIP

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YKQPBFQSU DTBUP EZK URQ
YQKEQHU WZWQSU UZ THU,
BP RQ LBFQS RBP UBWQ?

Saturday's Cryptoquip: PHASE OF A TYKE'S LIFE WHEN HE'S ENORMOUSLY PICKY ABOUT WHAT HE'LL EAT: THE TERRIBLE CHEWS.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: U equals T