

Sir Bobby goes under knife

AFP, London

England football great Sir Bobby Charlton underwent "minor surgery" Monday after being taken ill before the Laureus World Sports Awards in London, organisers said.

Manchester United hero Charlton, a member of the England side that won the 1966 World Cup, had been due to receive a lifetime achievement award from the Laureus Foundation, an organisation that promotes youth and community sport programmes around the world.

However, the 74-year-old started to feel unwell on Sunday and then needed an operation, said to be for the removal of a gallstone.

A Laureus statement said: "Sir Bobby Charlton was unable to receive the Laureus Lifetime Achievement Award in person at the Laureus World Sports Awards in London this evening.

"Sir Bobby felt unwell on Sunday and returned to Manchester earlier today for minor surgery."

Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson, who received the award on Charlton's behalf, insisted all was now well with England's record goalscorer.

"Sir Bobby is fine, but it was felt he should go back to Manchester," Ferguson said. "He is very annoyed not to be here to receive this Award.

"I'll be taking the statuette back to Old Trafford for him.

"He loves the work he does for Laureus and I know how delighted he is to have received this tribute."

Charlton, who survived the Munich air disaster, was honoured on the 54th anniversary of the tragedy that claimed the lives of several of his United team-mates.

"It was already a very emotional night for Bobby," Ferguson explained.

"This is the 54th anniversary of the Munich air disaster, when we lost eight of our young players. Through that time, Bobby has kept his fantastic humility, and that makes him very special to me."

Ibrahimovic punished

AFP, Rome

AC Milan's Swedish international striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic will miss the top of the table clash with Serie A leaders Juventus on February 25 after he was suspended for three matches on Monday.

The volatile 30-year-old - who has scored 15 times this season and lies second in the Serie A scorers list - received the ban for slapping Napoli player Salvatore Aronica in the face during Sunday's 0-0 draw for which he was red carded.

AC Milan - who are second a point behind Juve but having played a game more - said they will appeal the ruling by the Italian League's Disciplinary Commission.

However, Ibrahimovic accepted that he had slipped up.

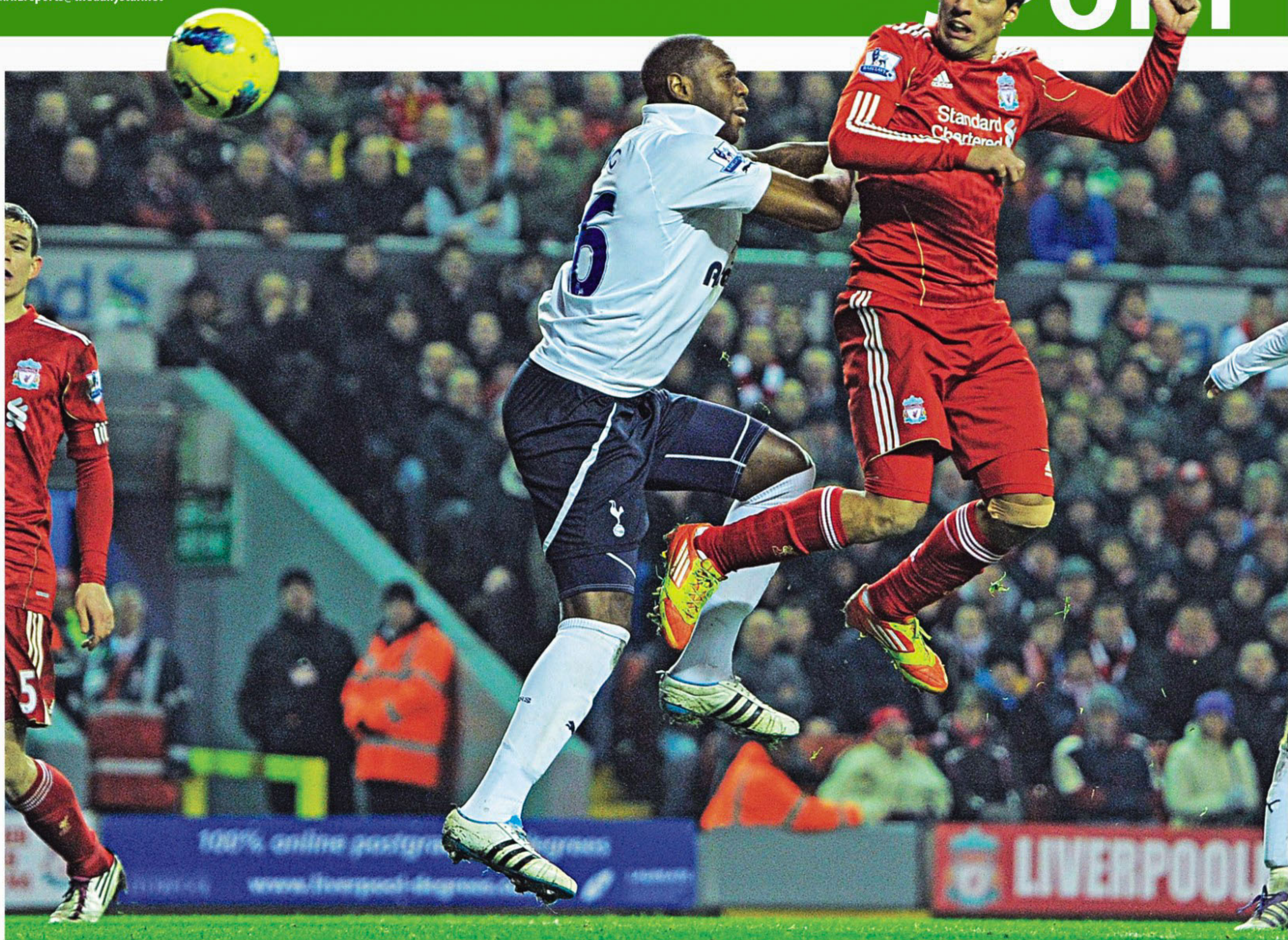
"I made a huge error... It happens, it happens... I must learn from my mistakes," he said.

"There is no need of video images to prove what I did, I made a mistake.

"But I have confidence in the team, it will be just as good without me."

'Ibra' has a chequered disciplinary record in Italy - last season he was sent off two matches in a row while seven years ago when he was playing for Juventus he missed a title-deciding match with Milan because he was serving a suspension.

He was suspended after headbutting Inter Milan's combative Serbian Sinisa Mihajlovic and then hit the latter's Inter team-mate Ivan Cordoba.



Liverpool striker Luis Suarez (R) wins a header from Tottenham Hotspur defender Ledley King during their Premier League encounter at Anfield on Monday

PHOTO: AFP

Granada stun Malaga Stalemate at Anfield

AFP, Madrid



Inigo Lopez grabbed a late winner for Granada to boost their hopes of avoiding relegation with a 2-1 home victory over local Primera Liga rivals Malaga on Monday.

Earlier Odion Ighalo had put Granada ahead before Salomon Rondon equalised an entertaining and hard fought Andalusian derby which saw Malaga end the match with 10 men after Argentinian central defender Martin Demichelis was sent-off.

The defeat denied Malaga the chance to go sixth while Granada will welcome the points that lifts them to 14th spot, three points clear of the relegation zone.

Malaga had the better early exchanges as the game started at a fast and furious pace with first Enzo Maresca then Rondon shooting high and wide from good positions in the opening minutes.

Malaga's Argentine centre-half Demichelis then met a corner with a bullet header that had to be acrobatically saved by Julio Cesar in the Granada goal, before the home team started to create some danger of their own.

First Carlos Martins tried from long range

on 36 minutes then again on 52 minutes with Malaga goalkeeper Willy Caballero quick to push both efforts wide.

Granada were now on top and on 57 minutes came the opening goal, man of the match Carlos Martins found Mikel Rico who crossed from the right for Ighalo to head home.

Malaga fought back and levelled 11 minutes later when Seba Fernandez played Nacho Monreal through with a delightful flick that allowed the overlapping full-back to cross for the waiting Rondon who had an easy finish for 1-1.

Demichelis headed just wide from a free-kick on 75 minutes and Malaga seemed the likely winners until Lopez's goal 6 minutes later.

Caballero could not hold a Guillermo Siquiera shot and it was the centre-half Lopez who was the quickest to pounce on the rebound to the delight of the partisan home crowd.

Demichelis was sent-off for a wild challenge on Franco Jara before the final whistle to signal Granada's second consecutive win since the arrival of new coach Abel Resino.

On Saturday Real Madrid won 1-0 away at Getafe with a Sergio Ramos header to stay seven points above Barcelona at the top of La Liga who also won 2-1 at home to Real Sociedad thanks to goals from Cristian Tello and Lionel Messi.

AFP, Liverpool



Luis Suarez's return from an eight-match suspension failed to inspire Liverpool as they were held to a goalless draw by Tottenham at Anfield on Monday.

Suarez received a rapturous reception from Liverpool fans when he came on in the 66th minute - his first action for six weeks - after serving a ban for racially abusing Manchester United's Patrice Evra.

But the Uruguay striker was left frustrated as third-placed Tottenham secured a point in the absence of their manager Harry Redknapp in a scrappy contest.

Liverpool made the stronger start but it spoke volumes about the scrappy nature of the game that home fans were chanting Suarez's name after just half an hour.

The hosts came flying out of the blocks with Gerrard slipping a delightful through ball to Andy Carroll only for Michael Dawson to make a goal-saving fifth minute challenge.

Parker's reckless lunge on Glen Johnson a minute later presented Gerrard with a scoring opportunity from a free-kick, but it came to nothing and set the tone for a frustrating opening 45 minutes.

In a game punctured with misplaced

passes by both sets of players, Niko Kranjcar forced the first save in the 32nd minute when his 25-yard effort was comfortably saved by Pepe Reina.

With Craig Bellamy and Carroll struggling to trouble the Tottenham defence, it was left to midfielder Jay Spearing to go closest for Liverpool with a curling 25-yard effort which whistled narrowly wide of Brad Friedel's post in the 34th minute.

The second half started with Gareth Bale booked for pushing Daniel Agger after the Tottenham player's blatant dive before Friedel denied Martin Kelly with a full length dive to keep out the Liverpool's defender's angled drive.

With the game drifting towards a stalemate, Liverpool boss Kenny Dalglish introduced Suarez.

It did not take long for the 25-year-old to get booked after leaving Parker in a heap while challenging inside the visitors area.

Liverpool looked the more likely to score in the closing stages.

Carroll spurned a fine chance in the 74th minute when, unmarked, he blazed over the bar from a good position.

And a scrappy contest ended with Reina standing his ground to deny Bale, who was victim of a hefty challenge by Martin Skrtel, after the Tottenham player found himself clean through in the 85th minute.

Long layoff for Frimpong

AFP, London

Arsenal midfielder Emmanuel Frimpong said Monday he could be out of action for up to nine months after a knee injury cut short his loan spell at top-flight rivals Wolves.

The 20-year-old ruptured the anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee in Saturday's Premier League match at QPR.

Frimpong limped off in the 24th minute of the 2-1 win at Loftus Road, and a scan has revealed the severity of the injury.

"Bad News is that I'm out for 6-9 months with my knee," he told his Twitter followers on Monday. "I wanna thank all the wolves fans for their support since I've been here and really Hope wolves stay up this season."

SPORTS POLL

WEEKLY QUESTION

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Cat becomes internet hit

REUTERS, London

A cat that invaded the famous Anfield turf for three minutes during Liverpool's 0-0 Premier League draw with Tottenham Hotspur on Monday has become an internet celebrity.

Several Twitter sites claiming to be the real deal sprung up within hours of the moggy's Lionel Messi-like slalom across the pitch during the first half.

One, @AnfieldCat, had already attracted 17,368 followers early on Tuesday while video footage of the feline's antics were proving popular on the internet.

The latest post on the Twitter site had a gentle dig at Liverpool's city rivals: "Everton rumoured to be interested in signing me, Bill Kenwright too paw to stomp up the money."

Liverpool fans, known for their humour, serenaded the tabby moggy on the night with the chant "A cat, a cat... a cat, a cat" to the tune of the Kop battle cry "Attack... Attack"

Teams prefer Poland

AFP, Warsaw



An overwhelming 13 of the 16 teams qualified for Euro 2012 have opted for base-camps in Poland, tournament organisers said Monday, leaving fellow-host Ukraine virtually out in the cold.

"It's a fact that 13 teams have chosen Poland as their base for the duration of the European Championships," Adam Olkiewicz, boss of the country's organising committee, said at a ceremony after a deadline expired for picking training locations.

Despite the fact that eight teams will play their group-stage matches in each host country, only three will set up shop in Ukraine -- the Ukrainians themselves, plus France and Sweden.

In contrast, Germany have picked the northern Polish city of Gdansk as their base-camp, even though that means shuttling back and forth to the Ukrainian cities of Lviv and Kharkiv, which lie a respective 750 kilometres and 1,600 kilometres away.

Holland, who will play their games in the same locations, have meanwhile picked Krakow in southern Poland for their camp.

The choice of Krakow has been echoed by England, who will be playing in the Ukrainian capital Kiev, 870 kilometres away, and the eastern city of Donetsk, almost 1,600 kilometres from their camp.

Those both playing and staying in Poland are the Poles, plus Croatia, the Czech Republic, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Russia, and reigning champions Spain.

Euro 2012 is the first-ever edition of the quadrennial championships behind the former Iron Curtain, in a region where infrastructure challenges outweigh anything in previous Western European host nations.

The issue of accommodation for teams, officials and fans alike has been a hot topic, with Ukraine in the spotlight due concerns over skyrocketing prices and a scarcity of rooms for supporters.

While scooping the lion's share of training camps is a clear thumbs up for Poland, organisers here have been anxious not to play up the subject at the expense of their Ukrainian neighbours.

"The issue was what are the best sites for the teams, the places their football associations were happy with," said Tomasz Szulc, head of the Polish organising committee's base-camp division.

"It didn't depend if these were in Poland or Ukraine. What mattered was providing the best conditions possible," he added.

European football's governing body UEFA has also sought to minimise the issue, previously underlining that while it presented a list of accredited potential base-camp locations in both countries, teams were free to go where they liked.

Euro 2012 kicks off on June 8 in Warsaw, and ends on July 1 with the final in Kiev.



AC Milan star Zlatan Ibrahimovic leaves the pitch after receiving a red card during their Serie A clash against Napoli at San Siro on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP



ESPN & STAR Cricket

India v Sri Lanka
Triangular Series
Live from 10:20am

ESPN
Sportscenter India
Sports News
Live from 8:30pm



Premier Division Cricket

League, Round 11
CCS v Victoria
Venue: Fatullah

Kalabagan v Brothers Union
Venue: BKSP-2
All matches start at 9:00am

Bangladesh Premier League
Feni Soccer v MuktiJoddha
Venue: Feni Stadium
Time: 3:00pm

Farashganj v Sk Jamal
Venue: Bangabandhu National Stadium
Time: 3:15pm