

## Santos bid for Robinho

AFP, Sao Paulo

Brazilian side Santos have put in an offer to Serie A giants AC Milan to bring Brazil star Robinho back to the club he began his career with, the bidding club's president said on Tuesday.

Luis Alvaro de Oliveira Ribeiro admitted their bid fell short of 28-year-old Robinho's personal terms and what Milan wanted, but added it was just the first shot in the battle to get him back to the club where he won two league titles in 2002 and 2004.



**What to Watch**

### ESPN

Sportscenter India  
Sports News  
Live at 8:30pm  
Australia v Sri Lanka  
First Test, Day 1  
Live from 5:30am (Friday)

### STAR Cricket

India v England  
Fourth Test, Day 1



Corinthians forward Paolo Guerrero (R) heads in the all-important goal during their Club World Cup semifinal against Al Ahly in Toyota yesterday.

PHOTO:  
AFP

## Corinthians in final

Football

AFP, Toyota

Brazilian giants Corinthians overcame Egypt's Al Ahly 1-0 in the last four of the Club World Cup in Japan on Wednesday to set up a likely final against European champions Chelsea.

A solitary goal from centre-forward Paolo Guerrero was enough to see the Copa Libertadores winners progress, but it was nowhere near a convincing performance.

Much had been expected from the South American champions, including Chelsea transfer target Paulinho, and the Brazilians dominated possession in the first half with Al Ahly happy to let their opponents knock the ball around.

However, they were unable to turn possession into chances and goal-scoring opportunities were few and far between during the opening period.

Corinthians midfielder Douglas was the first to go close, the number ten's shot from the edge of the box creeping past goalkeeper Sherif Ekramy's right-hand post on nine minutes.

Moments later Ramy Rabia missed a golden opportunity to put Al Ahly in front, heading wide from an unmarked position as the Corinthians' defence stepped forward and failed to catch him offside.

The Brazilian giants breathed a sigh of relief and regrouped, continuing to see most of the ball and on the half-hour mark the Sao Paulo club had their breakthrough, with Douglas again in the thick

of the action.

The left-footed player floated an inch-perfect cross into the box which Guerrero headed across goal into the bottom corner, giving Ekramy no chance and sending the crowds of Corinthians fans into raptures.

Corinthians pressed for a second as midfield dynamo Paulinho started to make inroads into the opposition half, but a second goal inside the first 45 minutes was not forthcoming.

In the second half it was all Al Ahly as the Egyptians surged forward, desperately looking for an equaliser.

Midfielder Ahmed Fathi wasted the best chance with a low shot into the side netting as the Corinthians defence started to look increasingly uncomfortable.

As the clock ran down a spirited Al Ahly began to send the ball into the opposition's box at every opportunity but they were unable to level the game.

The South American champions will probably face Chelsea in Sunday's final in Yokohama, though the English Premier League club first need to dispose of Mexican side Monterrey in the other semifinal on Thursday.

Earlier at Toyota Stadium Wednesday, J-League winners Sanfrecce Hiroshima beat the AFC Champions League holders Ulsan Hyundai 3-2 to secure fifth place at the intercontinental showpiece.

The Japanese champions went 1-0 down, but bounced back to take a 3-1 lead, thanks to two goals from forward Hisato Sato, before conceding a late consolation goal.

## Bradford stun Arsenal

Football

AFP, London

Arsenal suffered one of the most humiliating defeats in their history as League Two minnows Bradford City clinched a stunning triumph on penalties after a 1-1 draw in the League Cup quarterfinals on Tuesday.

The Gunners have endured a traumatic campaign that included their worst start to a Premier League campaign in manager Arsene Wenger's 16-year reign, but this was a new low for a club now in the midst of a full-blown crisis.

Not even Arsenal's most ardent critic would have believed they could produce such a spineless display against a team from English football's fourth tier.

"They defended well and we all know what happened on the penalties. We had many, many chances and their keeper had a good game," Wenger said.

"Whenever you go out it's not a good result for Arsenal. We lost on penalties to a team who played very

well. I cannot fault the effort of my team, we gave everything for the 120 minutes and you have to give credit to Bradford.

"It's not a lack of quality. We'll get over this, it's part of our job. We'll focus on the next game."

Bradford manager Phil Parkinson added: "The lads were terrific, the discipline was first class against such a talented team like Arsenal.

"The talk will be about the penalties but the overall performance was excellent. The way the lads stuck at the task was a credit to them."

After Bradford midfielder Garry Thompson took advantage of woeful Arsenal defending to volley home a free-kick at the far post in the 16th minute, Parkinson's side must have expected to be tested to the limit by their illustrious opponents at Valley Parade.

But instead a strong Arsenal team took until the 88th minute to equalise when Belgian defender Thomas Vermaelen headed home from a Santi Cazorla cross.

The Gunners were just as laboured in extra-time and they paid the price in the penalty shoot-out, which

Bradford won 3-2 as Cazorla's kick was saved by Matt Duke and Marouane Chamakh and Vermaelen both hit the post.

Bradford's ninth successive penalty shoot-out victory booked their first ever appearance in the League Cup semi-finals.

In the night's other quarterfinal, Aston Villa manager Paul Lambert enjoyed a memorable return to Norwich as his side romped to a 4-1 win at Carrow Road.

Lambert, who quit the Canaries to take charge at Villa in an acrimonious close-season move, received a mixed reception from the Norwich fans on his first visit back to the club he led from League One to the Premier League.

But he could afford to ignore the jeers as two late goals from Andreas Weimann sealed victory for Villa after Brett Holman cancelled out Steve Morison's opener for the hosts.

Christian Benteke bagged Villa's fourth goal in stoppage time as the visitors moved a step closer to a Wembley final - Lambert showed good spirit by shaking his former players hands at the end of the match.

## Blame it on referees

AFP, Stoke

Stoke manager Tony Pulis has complained to referees' chief Mike Riley over what he regards as the different treatment his team receives by officials compared to their rivals.

Pulis suggests too many referees approach Stoke games with preconceived ideas about their style of play.

He backs up his argument by pointing to the Potters' position at the foot of the Premier League fair play table with 32 yellow and three red cards this season.

**DAY'S EVENT**

**Bangladesh Premier League**  
Mohammedan v Sk Ruseel  
Time: 4:30pm  
Venue: Bangabandhu

## Black Cats rebound

AFP, Sunderland



Sunderland eased the pressure on under-fire manager Martin O'Neill with a crucial 3-0 win over fellow strugglers Reading on Tuesday.

Black Cats boss O'Neill has been subjected to growing criticism in recent weeks following a woeful run of results which saw his side slip into the relegation zone after Saturday's 3-1 defeat against Chelsea.

But they finally ended a dismal run of just two Premier League wins in 23 attempts thanks to goals from James McClean, Steven Fletcher and Stephane Sessegnon at the Stadium of Light.

A first victory in five matches lifted Sunderland up to 15th place, while Reading remain second bottom of the table with just nine points from 16 matches.

O'Neill was adamant in the run up to the rearranged fixture that he remained the right man for the job, and with owner and chairman Ellis Short a supportive presence at the stadium before kick-off, the club was presenting a united front.

Sources on Wearside had insisted ear-

lier that O'Neill was safe regardless of what happened this evening, but as the first half unfolded it swiftly became clear Reading were no threat to the former Aston Villa manager's job security.

It took O'Neill's side less than three minutes to take the lead when Royals keeper Adam Federici could only punch Adam Johnson's inswinging corner to Republic of Ireland winger McClean and he fired home from the edge of the area.

Sebastian Larsson almost doubled Sunderland's lead within two minutes as his shot was beaten away by Federici.

The hosts doubled their lead in the 28th minute when full-back Danny Rose surged forward and delivered a low cross to the near post, where Scotland striker Fletcher produced a deft flick past Federici.

Johnson, who had earlier been felled by Jobi McAnuff with a crude challenge, failed to reappear after the break and was replaced by Phil Bardsley. But Sunderland remained in control despite that loss.

Federici had to make saves from McClean and Craig Gardner to keep the score down, but deep into stoppage-time Sessegnon applied the finishing touch to Carlos Cuellar's long ball to seal a rare rewarding night for O'Neill.

## Ibrahimovic fires PSG

AFP, Paris



Swedish superstar Zlatan Ibrahimovic fired a superb hat-trick to take his league leading scoring tally to 17 goals as Paris Saint-Germain closed within two points of leaders Lyon with a clinical 4-0 victory over Valenciennes here on Tuesday.

Elsewhere, Nice climbed to joint seventh place as they beat nine-man Rennes 1-0, thanks to a 66th minute penalty from Argentine striker Dario Cvitanich, ending a four game winning streak for the Brittany side.

Ibrahimovic, the former Barcelona, AC Milan and Inter Milan striker, was in inspirational form as he opened the scoring on 29 minutes before two second-half goals put the result beyond doubt and gave the capital side the ideal preparation for the visit of Lyon on Sunday.

It was the sixth time this season that the Swedish 31-year-old captain has scored two goals or more in the same match.

Valenciennes were the dominant team from the kick-off and piled pressure on the PSG back four that resulted in Italian 'keeper Salvatore Sirigu having to intervene on several occasions.

The capital side weathered the early storm and forced the opening goal on 29 minutes thanks to an inspirational pass from Javier Pastore that split the home defence wide open.

His angled pass down the right wing found Jeremy Menez whose shot was parried by Nicolas Penneteau, but it eventually fell to Ibrahimovic, who skilfully redirected the ball past the Valenciennes 'keeper.

Three minutes after the break, Menez

again was the provider as Pastore fed the Frenchman down the left flank and when Penneteau could only push the ball in front of goal, Ibrahimovic gratefully swept home the rebound.

The lively Menez was at the heart of the third PSG goal when the French international stole in behind the defence, before intelligently squaring the ball for the big Swede to easily tap home his third goal in 53 minutes.

As the home side pushed up in a bid to get back into the game, Ezequiel Lavezzi took advantage of that, going on a 40 yard run that had Valenciennes at sixes and sevens and he tucked the ball away for his second league goal of the season.

PSG coach Carlo Ancelotti said that his side had performed well as they recorded their third successive win inside a week.

"After two matches at home, it was a good test for us to show our mentality away from home at a difficult stadium," said Ancelotti, who was under pressure at the beginning of the month after a poor run of form.

"Valenciennes have played well their last few matches at home but we showed good mentality and a good attitude. It was a good performance," added the 53-year-old.

Rennes were trying to make it five wins on the trot away from home as coach Frederic Antonetti took on his former club, now coached by Claude Puel, who had seen his side lose just once this season at home.

A tight match swung the way of the home side 20 minutes into the second half when substitute Yassine Jebbour was shown a straight red card after being on the pitch for just five minutes following a foul on Eric Bautheac.



Paris Saint Germain superstar Zlatan Ibrahimovic (L) celebrates his goal with teammate Mamadou Sakho during their League One match against Valenciennes at the Hainaut Stadium on Tuesday.

PHOTO: AFP