

FA CUP
Shock defeats for Chelsea and Man City

REUTERS, London

Premier League leaders Chelsea surrendered a two-goal lead to lose 4-2 at home to third tier Bradford City while Manchester City lost 2-0 at home to Middlesbrough on a day of seismic FA Cup shocks on Saturday.

Goals from Gary Cahill and Ramires had Chelsea cruising after 38 minutes of the fourth-round tie at Stamford Bridge but John Stead pulled a goal back before the break and former Chelsea player Filipe Morais equalised.

Andy Halliday made it 3-2 before Mark Yeates' late goal sent the Bradford fans into raptures.

Manchester City could have few complaints as they were outplayed by Championship (second tier) promotion hopefuls Middlesbrough for whom Chelsea loanee Patrick Bamford scored the opener and Spaniard Kike wrapped it up.

'Odds were against us'

AFP, Cambridge

Manchester United manager Louis van Gaal declared that he was not concerned by his side's performance after their 0-0 draw at fourth-tier minnows Cambridge United in the FA Cup.

Van Gaal selected a strong team for the trip to the Abbey Stadium, but despite the presence of Angel di Maria, Radamel Falcao and Robin van Persie, United could not prevent the fourth-round tie going to a replay.

Although the visitors were 76 places above their opponents in the English league system, Van Gaal claimed that it was actually 11-time cup-winners United who had been playing against the odds in Friday's game.

"Every aspect of the match is against us," said the Dutchman, whose team had overcome third-division Yeovil Town 2-0 in the third round.

"We have to come here, the pitch is not so good, but that can influence also that you play in another playing style."



World number one Novak Djokovic of Serbia pumps his fist after defeating Fernando Verdasco of Spain in the men's singles third round match of the Australian Open in Melbourne yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Novak, Serena power thru'

AFP, Melbourne

Fired-up top seed Novak Djokovic powered into the Australian Open fourth round on Saturday, joining sizzling fellow world number one Serena Williams as Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova was sent packing.

The Serb, whose chances of a fifth Australian crown have vastly improved after Roger Federer's shock exit on Friday, ground down tenacious Spaniard Fernando Verdasco 7-6 (10/8), 6-3, 6-4.

He said he was highly motivated and over the virus that hampered his lead up to the season's opening Grand Slam.

"He (Verdasco) was a former top-10 player. Somebody that loves playing on the big stage, a powerful game. I'm glad to go through in straight sets," he said.

Williams, vying for a sixth Australian title and the first since 2010, was slow to find her groove against 26th-ranked Ukrainian Elina Svitolina, going down 6-4 in the first set.

But she shook off the cobwebs under the blazing sun on Rod Laver Arena to rattle through the next two sets 6-2, 6-0.

It keeps alive her quest to add a 19th Grand Slam title, which would take her to clear second on the all-time Open Era Grand Slam winners list.

She currently has 18 alongside Chris Evert and Martina Navratilova and is four behind Steffi Graf's 22.

"When in doubt just start running as fast as you can, that's what Venus always told me, that helped," said Williams, whose world number one ranking is on the line if she fails to win the tournament.

She added that her elder sister's late-career renaissance was an inspiration.

"She's winning, she's doing so well and I can do better. We always motivate each other. I'm so proud of her and we're so excited."

Venus rallied from behind to defeat Camila Giorgi of Italy 4-6, 7-6 (7/3), 6-1 to make the second week of a Grand Slam for the first time since Wimbledon 2011.

But there was heartbreak for Kvitova, a semi-finalist in 2012, as Lindsay Davenport-coached American teen Madison Keys pulled off a big 6-4, 7-5 upset.

"My hands are still shaking. Right now I can't even process this," said Keys, who set up an all-American fourth round showdown with Madison Brengle.

Victoria Azarenka, the champion in 2012 and 2013 who is unseeded this year after an injury-marred 2014, also kept going, continuing her impressive comeback by downing Czech 25th seed Barbora Zlahavova Strycova.

"There are things that obviously I

want to improve. But it's progress. It's one step closer," said the Belarusian after her 6-4, 6-4 win which set up a clash with last year's beaten finalist Dominika Cibulkova.

Defending men's champion Stan Wawrinka, who beat Rafael Nadal in the final last year, could meet Djokovic in the semi-finals and stayed on track with a 6-4, 6-2, 6-4 victory over Finland's Jarkko Nieminen.

The Swiss, who was always in control, was pleased with his progress.

"It's been three really good matches, I think my game is there and I'm really happy to get through again," said Wawrinka, who will now meet Spain's Guillermo Garcia-Lopez.

Eighth seed Canadian Milos Raonic also went through as did Japan's fifth seed Kei Nishikori.

It was a day to remember for the Williams clan with the evergreen Venus setting up a fourth round clash with dangerous Pole Agnieszka Radwanska.

"That feels fantastic, especially when you have things happen in your life which are out of your control," said Venus, a seven-time Grand Slam winner who has had a long battle with the energy-sapping Sjogren's Syndrome.

Radwanska defeated American Varvara Lepchenko 6-0, 7-5 and has doled out a dreaded 6-0 "bagel" to each of her three opponents at Melbourne Park.

U-19s level with Lankans

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh under-19 cricketers posted a comfortable 60-run victory over their Sri Lanka counterparts in the fourth one-dayer of the five-match series to make it 2-2 at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo yesterday.

The visitors bounced back after losing the first two games of the series and the series will now be decided in today's last game at SSC in Colombo.

In yesterday's match, after a 48-run opening stand between Saif Hassan (29) and Joyraz Sheik (30), Nazmul Hossain Shanto and Zakir Hasan struck half-centuries as the tourists scored 236 for nine in 50 overs. Sahanur Rahman was the other notable scorer with 42 runs.

In reply, the Sri Lankan under-19s were bundled out for 176 runs in 46 overs.

Mehedy Hasan and Abdul Halim claimed two wickets each.

Bale wins it for Real

AFP, Madrid

Gareth Bale scored a late winner from the penalty spot after Cristiano Ronaldo had been sent off as Real Madrid came from behind to beat Cordoba 2-1 on Saturday.

Madrid got off to the worst possible start when Sergio Ramos handled inside his own area and Nabil Ghilas slotted home the resultant penalty.

Karim Benzema levelled from James Rodriguez's corner midway through the first-half, but Ronaldo's frustration at a poor performance by the European champions seemed to have cost his side the chance of victory when he lashed out at Edimar seven minutes from time.

However, the numbers were levelled up when Fede Cartabia was shown a second yellow card for handling Bale's free-kick inside the area, and in Ronaldo's absence, the Welshman took responsibility from the spot to send Madrid four points clear at the top of La Liga.

Cordoba had given their survival hopes a huge boost with seven points from their previous three games and the enthusiasm generated by Madrid's first visit in 44 years ensured there was a full house at the Nuevo Arcangel.

The home fans had plenty to cheer within the first two minutes as Manchester United reject Bebe saw his shot cannon off Ramos's arm and referee Alejandro Jose Hernandez pointed to the spot.

Ghilas had been left out of the Algerian squad for the African Cup of Nations, but his country's loss has been Corboba's gain as he fired home his second goal in three games from the spot.

Bebe was making just his third appearance for Cordoba on loan from Benfica, but he was a constant threat in the first 45 minutes and was inches away from doubling the hosts' lead with a shot across goal that sneaked just wide.



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