

FIFA charts a careful course

NEW YORK, Dec 7 Soccer's governing body has divided Europe into six groups for 1994 World Cup qualifying and split South America into two groups creating more games with the idea of increasing revenue, reports AP.

The FIFA World Cup Organizing Committee also took measures Friday to prevent Iraq from playing Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iran or the United Arab Emirates in the first round of Asian qualifying. It also eliminated the division between Far Eastern teams and Middle Eastern teams in Asia's opening round.

In addition, FIFA spokesman Guido Tognoni said the organization was leaning toward using the Pontiac Silverdome near Detroit as a World Cup site.

Alan Rothenberg, chairman of World Cup USA 1994, which will stage the 52-game tournament, said the 19 cities still competing to play host to games would be narrowed to the final 12 by April 1. FIFA said it will decide which cities host which rounds — including the opener and the final — at its meeting on July 1 at Zurich, Switzerland.

World Cup 1994 US Organizing Committee also said it had signed US Sprint as its second sponsor. The other is American Airlines.

Finally, Tognoni said FIFA would soon introduce a rule outlawing backpasses to the goalkeeper.

Friday's meeting began three days of sessions that will culminate in Sunday's qualifying draw, which divides the 143 nations entered into qualifying groups. The United States qualifies automatically as the host nation and Germany qualifies as the defending champion.

Europe is guaranteed 13 spots in the 24-team finals, which will be played June 17 — July 17, 1994. South America and Africa are guaranteed three spots each and Asia gets two. The North and Central American and Caribbean region or CONCACAF gets two, and the final spot can go to either Oceania, South America or CONCACAF.

Liechtenstein withdrew from the tournament Friday, leaving Europe with five qualifying groups of six nations and one with seven countries.

"This increases the number of games and hopefully increases the number of receipts," Tognoni said.

Italy, England, Spain, Belgium, the Soviet Union and France are the seeded teams in each group. Since European play is round-robin, with the top two in each group qualifying, that means teams will have to play more games this time than they did in the seven-group system used during qualifying for the 1990 World Cup.

"The big national associations should take responsibility to give the mosquitoes more nice games," Tognoni said. "FIFA will ensure this."

South America's qualifying was changed from three

groups to two. The first two nations in the five-team group will qualify, along with the winner of the four-team group. The second-place team in the four-team group will have a chance to compete for the last spot in the tournament.

Africa's qualifying was

Marino, Faroe Islands, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Israel. South America (One group of five and one of four. Top two teams in group of five and top team of group of four qualify for finals. Second team from group of four go into play-off with winner of Oceania/ North

Mozambique, Malawi. Four: Angola, Burundi, Botswana, Swaziland, Ethiopia, Gambia, Mauritania, Tanzania. Winner preliminary round. Winners of each group qualify for the second round. North and Central America (United States qualify as



Alan Rothenberg, Chairman and chief executive of World Cup 1994 US Organising Committee, speaks in a news conference to discuss the FIFA World Cup qualifying draw to be held on December 8 at the Madison Square Garden in New York. — AFP photo

changed from a series of home-and-home, total-goal series to group play. Sao Tome and Principe will play a preliminary home-and-home series, with the winner reaching the first round.

In addition, St Lucia and St Vincent and Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic will play home-and-home series to get into the first stage of qualifying in the Caribbean region.

FIFA decided to ignore an earlier, non-sanctioned South American draw done in Asuncion, Paraguay, by COMERBOL, the regional federation for South American soccer.

Reuter from New York adds, FIFA on Friday announced the following pools to be used in Sunday's qualifying draw for the 1994 World Cup finals.

Europe (Germany qualify automatically as world champions). Five groups of six teams, one of seven with top two in each group and an extra team from Pool Six will join the Group of seven.

Pool One: Italy, England, Spain, Belgium, Soviet Union, France. Two: Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Netherlands, Scotland, Austria, Ireland. Three: Romania, Denmark, Poland, Hungary, Portugal, Sweden.

Four: Northern Ireland, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Norway, Greece, Wales. Five: Turkey, Iceland, Finland, Albania, Malta, Cyprus. Six: Luxembourg, San

and Central American pool off. One team from each pool in every group).

Pool one: Argentina, Brazil, Two: Colombia, Uruguay, Three: Ecuador, Paraguay, Four: Bolivia, Peru, Five: Venezuela

Asia (Two qualifiers. Five groups of five teams, one of four. Winners qualify for second round. One team from each pool in every group).

Pool One: China, Iran, North Korea, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates.

Two: Bahrain, Iraq, Japan, Kuwait, Qatar, Syria. Three: Hong Kong, Jordan, Malaysia, Oman, Singapore, Thailand.

Four: Taiwan, Lebanon, Macao, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Yemen.

Five: Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Burma, Pakistan. Note: Iraq may not be drawn in group containing Saudi Arabia, Iran or the United Arab Emirates.

Africa (Three qualifiers): Preliminary round: Togo v Sao Tome and Principe

First round (nine groups of four teams each. One team from each pool in every group). Pool One: Algeria, Cameroon, Egypt, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Morocco, Senegal, Zambia, Kenya.

Two: Ghana, Zaire, Congo, Madagascar, Guinea, Tunisia, Zimbabwe, Gabon, Sudan.

Three: Burkina Faso, Uganda, Liberia, Libya, Niger, Mali, Sierra Leone.

hosts). One automatic qualifier plus one team into playoff with Oceania to qualify for playoff with fourth South American team).

Caribbean northern region: First preliminary round: St Lucia v St Vincent, Dominican Republic v Puerto Rico.

Preliminary round (Teams from Pool A to be drawn against teams from Pool B for knockout, winners qualify for first round):

Pool A: Winner St Lucia/St Vincent; winner Dominican Republic/ Puerto Rico, Bermuda.

Pool B: Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica.

Caribbean southern region: Pool A: Netherlands Antilles, Barbados, Guyana.

Pool B: Antigua, Surinam, Trinidad/Tobago.

Central region: First round (teams from Pool A to be drawn against teams from Pool B. Winners qualify for second round):

Pool A: Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador.

Pool B: Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama.

Northern region: Canada and Mexico qualify directly for second round.

Oceania: First round (two groups. Group One with three teams headed by Australia, Group Two with four teams headed by New Zealand):

Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tahiti, Vanuatu and Western Samoa to be drawn into the two groups.

Group winners qualify for second round.

Gazza let off lightly

NEW CASTLE, England, Dec 7: Injured England star Paul Gascoigne was let off with a conditional discharge by a magistrate's court here on Friday for an attack on a man who bumped into his teenage sister, reports AFP.

The 24-year-old Tottenham midfielder player was discharged for a year and ordered to pay 40 pounds costs after admitting to twice punching rail-worker John Beach in the face in New Castle on the night of July 13.

Gascoigne and his sister Lindsey, 17, were walking to a taxi rank to get a cab to the family home in nearby Dunston at the time of the incident.

The former New Castle United hero denied assaulting Gian Fulgenzi, a waiter at the Italian restaurant outside which the incident happened.

Melinda Blackburn, prosecuting, accepted the plea, saying that although Fulgenzi complained to police at the time, he had since reconsidered the matter to spare both Gascoigne and himself unwarranted attention.

Chairman of the bench Edwin Power said: "We are always sorry when a clean record suffers one blot."

The court did not make an order for Gascoigne to pay compensation to Beach because he had "Engineered his own problems."

The Lazio-bound international, who is recovering from a serious knee injury suffered in this year's FA Cup final, commented: "It was all right. It was good."

Punjab to host kabaddi W Cup

CHANDIGARH, Dec 7: Punjab would host the inaugural kabaddi (circle style) World Cup from March 20 to 29 next.

World Kabaddi Federation senior vice-president TC Gupta announced here yesterday, reports PTI.

England, United States, Canada, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia and Pakistan have confirmed participation, Gupta told a press conference.

The concerned kabaddi federations would bear the passage costs while the Organising Committee would provide free boarding and lodging to the participants besides meeting their pocket expenses.

A running trophy is being instituted by the world body besides cash prizes.

Secretary of sports, Punjab government, I S Bindra, who has been named the chairman of the working committee, said the venues of matches would be spread over the entire state.

The opening and closing ceremonies as well as the inaugural and final matches would be organised at Ludhiana. The semifinal matches would be played at Jalandhar and Bathinda, he said.

England-based secretary-general of the World Kabaddi Federation, Sohan Singh Chema, as also present at the press conference.

BFF, MSC reach compromise

Sports Reporter



Mohammedan Sporting Club can go to Doha, Qatar for the finals of the 11th Asian Club Cup soccer championship in full strength.

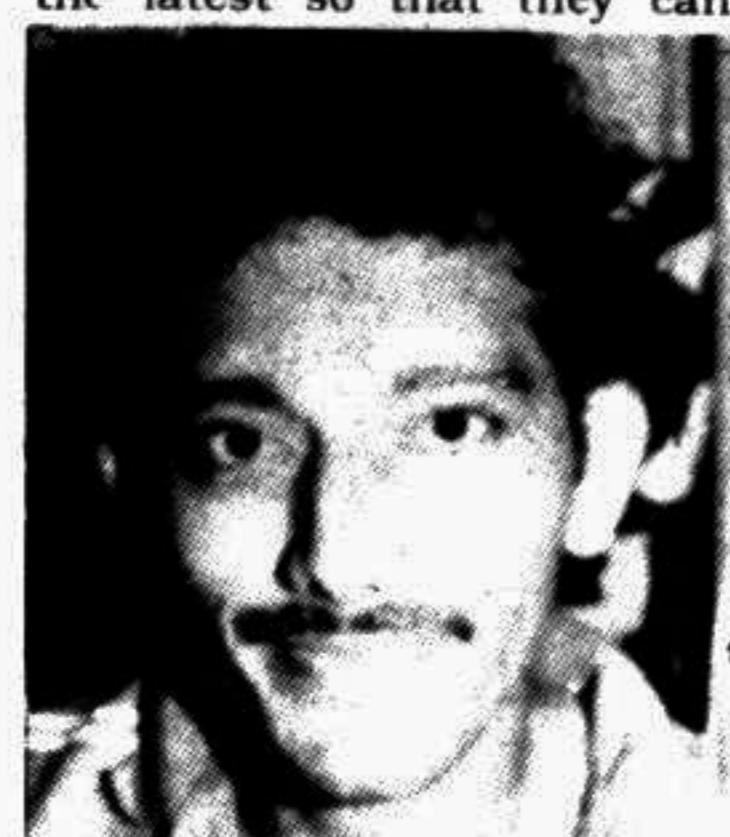
This was decided following an emergency meeting of the Bangladesh Football Federation yesterday to resolve the impasse over the availability of seven Mohammedan stars who have been selected to represent Bangladesh at the forthcoming fifth South Asian Federation (SAF) Games in Colombo scheduled for Dec 22-31.

The local soccer circles had been agog with speculations regarding the BFF's position in this tricky club-versus-country issue and all sorts of conjectures were being proffered by so-called knowledgeable sources. In the end it turned out to be a foregone conclusion with the BFF agreeing to a face-saving compromise.

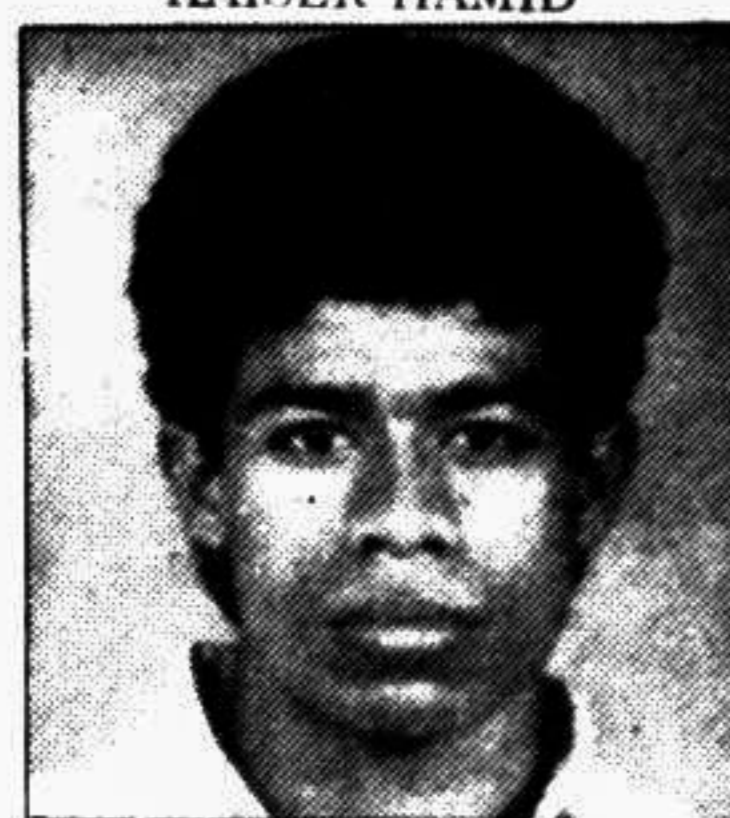
Mohammedan Sporting Club, who had qualified for the eight-team Asian Club Cup finals billed for Doha Dec 12-22, were reluctant to leave for the tourney without seven of their players. They also let the BFF know, in no uncertain terms, and through the demonstrative gestures of their ardent fans who picketed the BFF's Dhaka Stadium offices with banners and slogans, that as far as they were concerned, the club's interests always received the priority rather than any sentimental refrains of patriotism.

The BFF, given a paucity of footballing talent at its disposal, could hardly afford to act in a head-strong manner and do anything drastic in the name of enforcing discipline.

Hence, the compromise. Under the formula agreed to by both the BFF and the Mohammedan officials, the Dhaka soccer giants would send back four of the seven players picked for the SAF squad from Doha by Dec 18 at the latest so that they can



KAISER HAMID



SHABBIR

travel with the Bangladesh contingent to Colombo by Dec 19 or 20. These four — stopper-back Kaiser Hamid, his fellow central defender Jewel Rana, midfielder-winger Rumman bin-Wali Shabbir and striker Imtiaz Ahmed Naquib — are considered indispens-

able in the gameplan of the Bangladesh team coach and officials.

Three others — Saiful Bari Tito, a midfielder, Mahbub Hossain Rony and goalkeeper Sayeed Hassan Kanan — can either come back early from Doha or stay until the very end of that tournament, assuming Mohammedans reach the semifinals or the final, which is scheduled for Dec 22.

Following the resolution of the issue, Mohammedans will now leave for Doha by tomorrow's Gulf Air flight.

The black-and-whites, who also played in the delayed final round of the 10th Asian Club championships held in Dhaka last July, play their first match against Al-Sabah Club, the champion UAE side, on Dec 12. Their second Group A match is against Thailand's Port Authority on Dec 14 and the last robin league match against Al-Raiyan Club of Qatar on Dec 16.

The other robin league clusters Al-Helal of Saudi Arabia, Pyong-yang Club of North Korea, the South China Club of Hong Kong and defending Asian Club Cup champions Esteghlal Club of Iran.

Meanwhile, the SAF games-bound Bangladesh national football beat the Bangladesh national junior under-16 football team by a solitary goal in a friendly match played at the Mirpur National Stadium yesterday.

Kaiser Hamid scored the goal in the 20th minute from a penalty.

The national side will play their next friendly match against Mohammedan Sporting Club at the Mirpur National Stadium today at 5 p.m.

Suhrawardy Cup kicks off

Sports Reporter



The eighth national youth football championship for the Suhrawardy Cup got underway yesterday at

eight zonal venues across the country.

This year's Suhrawardy Cup for players under-19 years of age is being played on knockout basis by a record 56 teams.

On the opening day eight teams moved into the second round.

Gazipur beat Mymensingh 2-1 at Netrokona. Monir and Salauddin netted once each for the winners. Gazipur DSA will face the winners of the semifinal between the hosts Netrokona and Sherpur DSAs, scheduled for December 11.

At Jhenidha, Patuakhali defeated Satkhira 2-1 to reach the zonal semis.

Bashir and Masud scored one each for the victors.

Patuakhali will face the winners of the Jessore versus Jhalakathi DSAs on December 11.

Magura DSA outplayed Jessore Education Board 2-0 at Kushiha to move into the next round where they will meet the winners of the Dec 11 Khulna-Meherpur zonal semifinal.

Alamgir netted both the goals for Magura.

At Habiganj, Laxmipur trounced Moulvibazar 3-1 to ensure a place in the second round.

Ayenuddin and Naser scored for the winners while Arman reduced the margin for the vanquished.

Laxmipur will meet Noakhali in next round next Monday.

Sylhet DSA moved into the zonal semis edging past Bardanbar DSA by a solitary goal at Brahmanbaria.

Hafiz's goal gave them the ticket to move into the next round where they will take on hosts Brahmanbaria next Monday.

At Kurigram, Thakurgaon

defeated Lalmonirhat 3-0 to move into the next round. The winners will meet the victors of the match between Rangpur and Panchagarh on December 10.

At Narshingdi, Madaripur DSA edged out Narayanganj DSA by a lone goal to win the right of facing the winners of the Tangail-Gopalganj zonal semifinal on December 11.

Bachchus scored the all important goal.

Natore DSA outdid Bogra 2-1 at Gaibandha to book a berth in the zonal semifinal.

Babul and Sohel scored for Natore while Mamun returned one for the losers.

Natore will meet the winners of the Pabna-Nawabganj encounter to be played on December 11.

SOCCER SCENARIO

Cruyff to honour Barcelona contract

BARCELONA, Spain, Dec 7: Barcelona coach Johan Cruyff said on Friday he was flattered to be asked to mastermind the Dutch national team's preparation for the 1994 World Cup but was determined to see out his contract in Spain, reports Reuter.

"It's nice they should have thought of me," he said. "The Netherlands has a good team and I know almost all the players from working with them at one stage or another."

The Spanish news agency EFE reported, however, that he also said he was deter-

mined not to curtail his present contract with the Spanish champions which runs until June 1993.

"I believe in short contracts," said Cruyff, without elaborating. "It's better to sign for just one year."

EFE said the former Dutch World Cup player had not yet replied to the Dutch Soccer Association, who said on Thursday they had asked him to take over the national team next year.

Cruyff said many aspects of the offer remained unclear.

Cruyff was the cornerstone of the Dutch team which reached the 1974 and 1978 World Cup finals. He was voted European footballer-of-the-year three times in the course of a dazzling playing career with Ajax Amsterdam and Barcelona.

Lineker resumes training

LONDON, Dec 7: Gary Lineker trained with his Tottenham Hotspur team mates on Friday for the first time since his baby son was found to have leukaemia last week, reports Reuter.

Manager Peter Shreeves said the England soccer captain had scored a hat-trick in an eight-a-side game but would not play in the home league match against Notts County on Saturday.

"I am still leaving the decision on when he is ready to play again completely up to him," Shreeves said. The London club has given Lineker time off to be with his wife Michelle and nine-week old son George to hospital.

FIFA may ban backpasses in '94 Cup

WASHINGTON, Dec 7: The International Football Federation (FIFA) is likely to ban backpasses to goalkeepers at the 1994 World Cup football championships. The FIFA's press officer said in New York on Friday, reports Xinhua.

Guido Tognoni addressed a news conference in preparation for Sunday's qualifying draw for the 1994 World Cup. He said, "We still don't know what exactly the change will be, but something will happen in this regard soon."

"If we want more offensive soccer, we'll have to take some measures," Tognoni said.

FIFA has been strongly criticized for the increasingly defensive and dull style of play that has developed over the last few years.

The 1990 World Cup in Italy was the lowest scoring championship in history, with an average of 2.21 goals per game.

The rule banning backpasses to the goalkeeper in situations where no team was threatening an opponent's goal, was instituted for the FIFA Under-17 championship in August in Italy and the first World Women's Championships in China. A violation of the rule results in a change of possession and an indirect free-kick.

Samaranch explains IOC stand on Croatia and Slovenia

LAUSANNE, Switzerland, Dec 7: IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch said on Friday the Olympic door was open to the Yugoslav republics of Croatia and Slovenia, but said the International Olympic Committee could not act until the two had gained international political recognition, reports Reuter.

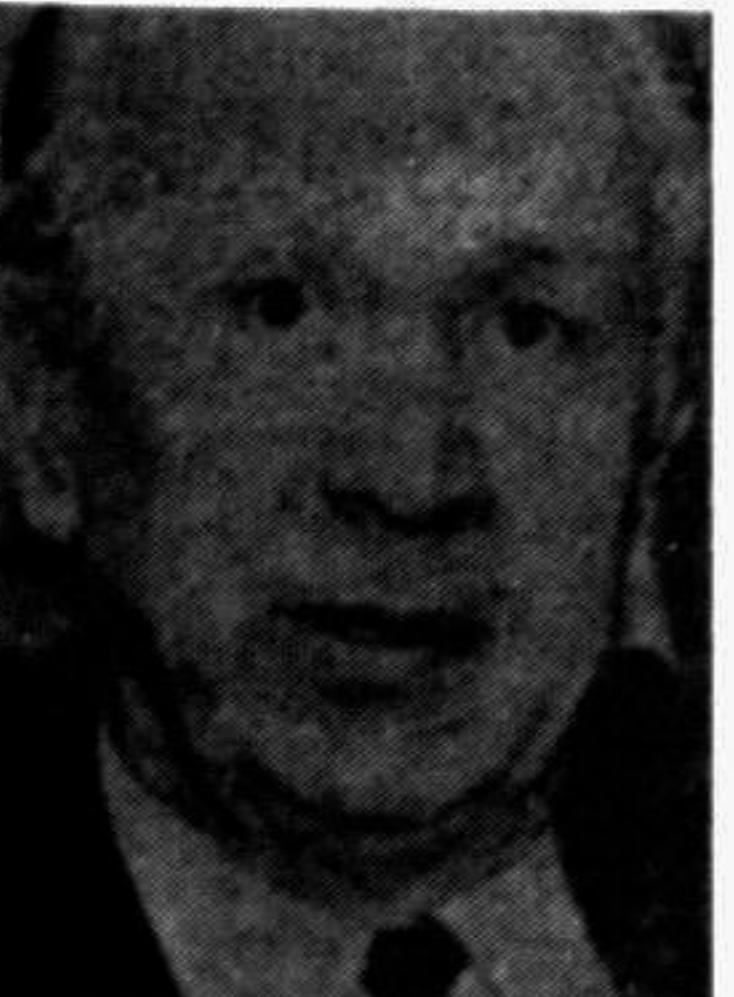
"If these countries are recognised by Europe, the United Nations and other states, then we can make a decision," Samaranch told a news conference.

The IOC has an official freeze on accepting new members until 1993, but Samaranch said this need not apply to the breakaway Yugoslav republics.

"Our policy is that we have closed the door for new national Olympic committees,

but we open the door to national Olympic committees that split in two or three," Samaranch said.

"We think their case is



J. A. SAMARANCH

quite different." Samaranch did not say whether Croatia or Slovenia might participate independently at either of next year's Olympic Games, but said the IOC's Executive Board had given him and the four IOC vice-presidents the power to take full decisions on such questions.

Slovenia, a strong skiing power, is keen to participate in the forthcoming Albertville Winter Games.

The 12-member European Community might grant Croatia and Slovenia political recognition as independent states at their summit in the Netherlands next week.

Samaranch also said he was inviting sports officials from the 12 Soviet republics to the Swiss headquarters of the IOC to hammer out the terms of their participation in next

year's Summer Games in Barcelona.

The 12 Soviet republics agreed two weeks ago to compete in Albertville under the old Soviet flag and anthem.

But some have already said they want a new emblem and new uniform for Barcelona.

IOC Director general Francois Carrard said the 12 would use the meeting in Lausanne on March 9, to hammer out an accord on a new flag, uniform and possibly a new name.

Samaranch refused to comment on the most explosive issue on the IOC Executive Board agenda this week — proposals to change the method of choosing Olympic host cities.

He confirmed that changing the voting system — traditionally choosing the host cities is the sole prerogative of the IOC's 92 rank and file members — had been discussed.

He said the Board would discuss the issue again and hoped to make a decision in Albertville in February ahead of the 1992 Winter Games.

But he added: "This is a matter we consider confidential."

Samaranch is believed to be keen to stop bidding cities spending vast amounts of money supporting applications that often have no chance of success.

The proposals have been given added impetus by recent unsubstantiated allegations of IOC members taking bribes during the election process.

Reacting to the allegations made last month by the German magazine Der Spiegel, Samaranch said, "I trust IOC members 100 per cent. I trust them and I have to trust

them."

One proposal is to set up a separate selection commission that will reduce the number of bidding cities, or even be entrusted with the final decision.

Many IOC members are unhappy at the prospect of change, however, and say they will oppose any plans that weaken their role in the selection process.

Any decision taken by the Executive Board in Albertville would have to be passed by a session of all IOC members immediately afterwards.

Samaranch also said that from 1998 the IOC had decided to impose limitations of the number of athletes competing in the Games who were not Olympic standard.

Under the plan, smaller countries who did not produce Olympic-quality athletes might only have a token presence.

Perhaps two athletes and one official would come to the Olympic village and study, Samaranch said.

"The next time they come back we would hope they will have not the right of presence but the right of participation."

"The next time they come back we would hope they will have not the right of presence but the right of participation."

Samaranch said the IOC paid 800 dollars to bring each athlete to the Games, even though many were below standard.

"We are encouraging some national Olympic committees to send athletes who have no right to take part in Games legally, yes, but morally no."

At present only team sports have Olympic qualification procedures.

Red Star, Colo Colo both optimistic

TOKYO, Dec 7: The managers of Chile's Colo Colo and Red Star Belgrade of Yugoslavia each predicted victory Saturday, one day before the Intercontinental Cup soccer match to decide the world's top soccer club, reports AP.

The two teams ran through light training sessions Saturday for Sunday's match in Tokyo's 60,000-seat National Olympic Stadium. Kickoff time is noon (0300 GMT).

Red Star manager Vladimir Popovic said his team would score "as many points as we need to win the cup."

"We are the European champions. We play aggressively. Our players know how to play and win," he added.

Colo Colo manager Mirko Jozic also voiced confidence.

"We play an aggressive game, that is our style. We take the initiative and then keep our rhythm for the victory," he said.

Jozic, a Yugoslav who has coached Colo Colo for 14 months, said he knows the style of many Red Star players, while they have little information about us."

But he acknowledged his team has not been in peak condition since winning the

Unfancied German wins giant slalom

SANTA CATERINA VALFURVA, Italy, Dec 7: Unheralded German Katja Seizinger on Saturday captured her first World Cup victory, edging Austrian Barbara Sailer by two hundredths of a second in a women's super-giant slalom, reports AP.

South American club championship, known as the Libertadores Cup.

"We still feel fatigue because we played too many games this season," he said.

Captain Jaime Pizarro has played 84 matches this season, including 40 international matches, Jozic said.

"It's too much. I think 60-65 matches a year is suitable," he added.

Asked about the level of play in Europe compared to