

# Maradona looks sharp as ever

**SEVILLE, Sept 29:** Diego Maradona had Sevilla fans relishing a promising future with some magical flicks and feints in an auspicious return to soccer on Monday, reports Reuter.

The Spanish side beat German League leaders Bayern Munich 3-1 in the friendly, with the Argentine playing all 90 minutes.

Maradona did not score but hit a post with a superb curling free-kick from close to the goal line.

## Germans praise Maradona's game on comeback

**FRANKFURT, Sept 29:** Diego Maradona received warm praise from German writers Tuesday for his comeback performance after missing 18 months of soccer, reports AP.

"Maradona's return like a fairy tale," said a headline in the mass-circulation Bild newspaper.

The Argentine captain, who was suspended for 15 months for cocaine use and spent three months arguing with his former club Napoli over a transfer, made his comeback Monday evening for his new Spanish club Sevilla, which beat Bayern Munich of Germany 3-1.

Diego showed us what we have been missing for 554 days," Bild said. "These direct passes — a feast for the eyes. His touch — unparalleled. His free kicks — extremely dangerous."

Maradona fed Davor Suker for one of Sevilla's goals and Bild called it a dream pass.

"What a comeback!" Bild said, adding that Maradona came very close to proving that he is the best soccer player in the world.

The sports news agency SID said Maradona had a successful comeback and was as convincing as in his best days in many senses.

"After the long break," the Argentine captain also left a surprisingly good physical impression as well," SID said.

## BAF b' ball

Air Headquarters Unit and BAF Base Zahurul Haque teams entered the final of the Bangladesh Air Force inter-base basketball championship, reports BSS.

Air Headquarters Unit team defeated BAF Base Bashar 60-56 in a keenly contested game while BAF Base Zahurul Haque outplayed BAF Base Matruh Rahman 60-42 in the semifinals at the BAF Base Bashar in Dhaka yesterday.

## Coaching camp

The cricket coaching camp of Surja Tarun Club will begin from tomorrow at 8 am, says a press release.

The cricketers of the club have been asked to report to coach Imran at the club premises.

The match, which ended Maradona's 18-month spell in soccer's wilderness and followed his 7.5 million dollars transfer from Napoli after serving a 15-month ban for cocaine use, was played at a cracking pace.

Sevilla were determined to give Maradona a victory to savour and Bayern were out to prove themselves the better side.

The Sevilla crowd made up for a half-full house in the 70,000 capacity Ramon Sanchez Pizjuang Stadium with their cheering, drumming, flamenco style clapping and

chants of "Diego". Olaf Thon put Bayern ahead early on when he curled a free-kick around the wall and into the top corner of the net.

Sevilla hit back with goals from Davor Suker and two by Ramon Munch after the break — the second from a pass by Maradona.

There were several bookings, including Germany's World Cup captain Lothar Matthaeus. Bayern forward Bruno Labbadia was sent off for dissent near the end of the first half.

Both Maradona and Matthaeus protested to the

referee on Labbadia's behalf but to no avail.

Maradona, unfit and overweight after his long absence, made up for his lack of mobility with some deft, side-footed passes and quick-one-two with teammates.

"He can lose weight no problem, but getting muscle tone will be harder and take a few months," said Maradona's personal trainer Javier Valdecantos.

The crowd for the hastily-arranged friendly following the conclusion last week of Maradona's protracted transfer may have been below expectations.

But club sources said Sevilla have already sold nearly 15,000 more season tickets than last year since the news of the Argentine's impending arrival.

Maradona said: "On the pitch I felt free and a footballer officially once again."

"I'm happy to have played a full 90 minutes and proud to have won with Sevilla against a strong Bayern Munich."

"I must now continue to train hard. It won't be easy. This (Sevilla) is not like Napoli now. We have to work like when I started at Napoli when everyone fought for each ball like it was for life and death."

He said that his league debut would be discussed with coach Carlos Bilardo during the week. "I would like to play against Athletic Bilbao in Bilbao next weekend."

Argentine national coach Alfio Basile said of Maradona's performance: "It was much better than we could have hoped for. He showed his touch of class, those laid off balls that make him different from other players."

## Maradona's feelings

**SEVILLE, Spain, Sept 29:** Diego Maradona said his feelings on his first match for Sevilla on Monday were like his emotions on the births of his daughters, reports Reuter.

"It's not comparable with any of my (other) debuts because I had never been away from football for so long before," he said at his official presentation to the press as a Sevilla player.

"It's comparable only with the births of (daughters) Dalma and Gianina."

The Argentine player, transferred last week from Italian club Napoli for 7.5 million dollars, was speaking a few hours before his first appearance for Sevilla in a friendly against Germany's Bayern Munich in the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuang Stadium.

Maradona, who recently completed a 15-month ban from world soccer for cocaine abuse, was accompanied by

Sevilla president Luis Cuervas.

Maradona hogged the front pages of all Spain's sports dailies on Monday. One said the friendly would attract a capacity crowd and a gate of more than 2 million dollars.

Club sources said they would not give figures until after the match.

Maradona, who began his European career 10 years ago with Barcelona said he felt he would be ready in a week to make his league debut for his second Spanish club.

He said there were two teams in Spain everyone wanted to beat — Real Madrid and Barcelona. "I'm keen to meet Barcelona and win because of my time with that great club," he said.

Asked how he felt about still being talked of as the world's best player, Maradona said: "It gives me greater incentive. I feel no pressure."

He said he was not worried about being injured in the friendly — "My only fear, like that of any player, is of losing."



Argentine soccer idol Diego Maradona, who captained Argentina to the 1986 World Cup victory, at the press conference which announced his inclusion as a new player in the Spanish First Division side Sevilla, on September 28. Maradona made his debut for Sevilla on Monday against Bayern Munich of Germany in a friendly. The Spanish side won 3-1. —AFP photo

## Martinez, Sukova in second round of Leipzig GP

**LEIPZIG, Germany, Sept 29:** Second-seeded Conchita Martinez and fifth-seeded Helena Sukova had easy straight-set victories Monday to advance to the second round of the \$225,000 Leipzig Grand Prix women's tennis tournament, reports AP.

Martinez, of Spain, defeated Isabelle Demongot of France 6-2, 6-4, while Sukova, of Czechoslovakia, ousted the young German hope Meike Babel 6-3, 6-1.

Alexia Dechaume of France needed three hours and four minutes to prevail over Wiltrud Probst of Germany 5-7, 7-6, (7-5), 6-4.

Another German, Claudia Porwik, defeated Petra Holubova of Czechoslovakia 3-6, 6-0, 6-2, while the third Czechoslovak in action, Radka Zrubakova, beat American Katrina Adams 6-3, 6-2.

The top seed in the tournament is Steffi Graf, who did not play singles Monday.

## Ferencvaros poses 'high risk' for Bratislava

**PARIS, Sept 29:** Slovan Bratislava may feel like they are entering the lion's den when they play their European Champions Cup game at Ferencvaros in Budapest on Wednesday, reports AFP.

The game is classed 'high risk' by police and European governing body UEFA. Even border checks have been stepped up because of fears of a repeat of clashes between rival supporters in the first round first leg two weeks ago in Bratislava.

The clashes were not just ordinary hooliganism. The Hungarian champions' notorious fans started the trouble, but suffered about 100 injuries — one of whom has since died — from some heavy handed Slovak police tactics.

Fans and Hungarian officials accused the police of racist violence inspired by the longstanding friction between the Hungarian and Slovak communities. The Hungarian government made an official complaint.

The Czechoslovak champions take a comfortable 4-1 lead to Budapest, but whatever the result on Wednesday there could be a new diplomatic incident.

Ferencvaros has appealed against the 15,000 Swiss franc fine imposed on both clubs by UEFA, but also tried to warn off its troublesome fans before the return.

Ferencvaros hooligans have been criticised by the Budapest press, but the supporters responded by organising a weekend demonstration outside the offices of the Nemzeti Sport newspaper. Border guards, reinforced by extra police, have been ordered to confiscate anything being

brought into the country from Slovakia that might be used as a weapon.

Feeling was not improved by the Hungarian champions 2-2 draw on Sunday against Raba Eto. Bclasky, who got both of Raba Eto's goals, is a Slovak.

The match is typical of the chaos reigning in central European football.

Dinamo Bucharest cannot entertain Lathi of Finland, who lead 1-0, in their own stadium because it is being prepared for a Michael Jackson pop concert on Thursday.

But only pride should be at stake in the night's other games.

Defending European champions Barcelona have a vulnerable 1-0 lead to take to Viking Stavanger in Norway. Much will depend on whether Barcelona coach Johan Cruyff decides to sue the Spanish league's top scorer Hristo Stoichkov who was rest for the first time.

Howard Wilkinson, manager of English champions Leeds United, believes his side are "a good sportsman's bet" as they attempt to overturn a three goal deficit at home to German counterparts VfB Stuttgart.

Leeds were hammered 3-0 in the first leg and Wilkinson conceded: "The odds are heavily stacked against us."

"But I am confident we can score goals. It wasn't a problem for us last season and it hasn't been a problem this time."

"The most important goal on Wednesday will be the first one. If we score it, then I'll fancy us to go through."

French star Jean-Pierre Papin has flu so cannot play in AC Milan's game at Olimpija Ljubljana in Slovenia. But with a 4-0 lead and a host of other strikers waiting in the wings, the Italian champions will not be worried.

Similarly PSV Eindhoven of Holland should end Latvia's hopes, going to Skonto Riga with a 6-0 advance. Romario scored another hat-trick at the weekend to prove his form.

Olympique Marseille will be without first choice goalkeeper Pascal Olmeta. Croatian striker Alen Boksic and French inter-

national Franck Sauzee against Glentoran. But the French club won their first leg 5-0 and so the northern Irish champions can still expect a roasting in Marseille.

Glasgow Rangers midfielder Ian Ferguson will use his 10th European game, against Lyngby of Denmark, aiming to lose the tag of million pound misfit and improve the Scottish champions run of spectacular failures on the continent.

The 25-year-old, who has become the driving force in the highly-priced Ibrox midfield this season, still believes that he has to justify his big-money move four years ago.

Ferguson could go a long way towards doing that by ensuring that Rangers successfully defend their 2-0 lead to reach the European Cup second round.

People keep writing about me as the 1 million flop," said Ferguson, who has missed most of the last two seasons due to injury.

"I would simply like to justify coming from St Mirren for the money Rangers paid and get rid of this tag. That means staying in the team and winning some honours at the end of the season."

"After two seasons largely sidelined by injury, his outstanding recent form means he will make his ninth successive start in Copenhagen."

European Cup Winners' Cup holders Werder Bremen take a 3-1 lead to fellow Germans, Hanover 92, and should ease through to the second round.

Atletico Madrid, the other big name in the competition, hold a 3-0 advantage as they prepare to entertain Maribor Brank of Slovenia.

Spartak Moscow face the biggest battle in the Cup winners contest having only drawn 0-0 at home to Avenir Beggen of Luxembourg.

Airdrie of Scotland go to Czechoslovakia training Spartak Prague 1-0 and with problems to resolve.

Goalkeeper John Martin and captain Jimmy Sandison are both hurt. Manager Alex MacDonald said, "Jimmy needed an icepack on a leg

knock while John has strained his neck. At the moment we are monitoring their progress."

The UEFA Cup is overloaded with some of Europe's top names. But most have comfortable leads from the first leg.

Ajax Amsterdam are 3-0 up on Austria Salzburg. Napoli have a 5-1 lead over Valencia of Spain. But Celtic of Scotland entertain the German First Division's bottom club Cologne two goals down.

Cologne saved the job of their coach Jorg Berger by winning the first leg 2-0. But Berger is again under pressure after further league defeats. He is expected to be replaced by Dane Morten Olsen if Celtic pull off an unlikely win.

Celtic manager Liam Brady faces one of his toughest weeks since taking over at Parkhead, his support wanting after four defeats in five games.

Celtic are already out of the SKOL Cup, four points behind Rangers in the championship and the defence has conceded 12 goals in five matches.

"Not a lot is going right for us at the moment," said Brady. "It's going to be very difficult against Cologne as they will get a lot of people behind the ball and hit us on the break."

Top striker Gerry Greaney was removed at half-time in the 2-1 defeat by Partick Thistle on Saturday as he was playing so poorly. However, Brady's candidates to play up front, Charlie Nicholas and Tommy Coyne, are not available. Coyne is recovering from a broken arm while Nicholas pulled a hamstring in the reserves at the weekend.

Liverpool have a five goal cushion for their return leg with Apollon Limassol in Cyprus. And they may need it.

After conceding four at Anfield in the League Cup and another three against Wimbledon on Saturday, the once watertight Liverpool defence now looks decidedly leaky.

Goalkeeper Bruce Grobbelaar insisted: "We've got to get it sorted out. We had better or we will be dead and buried."

## Neto — reincarnation of Rivelino!

**RIO DE JANEIRO, Sept 29:** His supporters say he is Brazil's best set piece specialist since Roberto Rivelino, reports Reuter.

His critics say he is an unnecessary luxury who does nothing on the pitch except take free-kicks and corners.

Corinthians captain Neto — full name Jose Ferreira Neto — is one of the most controversial players in Brazilian soccer, a player who alternates moments of breathtaking brilliance with exasperating inconsistency and displays of bad temper.

He has few equals when it comes to scoring spectacular goals from outside the penalty area. In a 10-year career, he has hit many goals from free-kicks around the edge of the box and at least a dozen times direct from corners.

If Neto is at his best, it becomes almost a routine. Corinthians win a free-kick on the edge of the oppositions penalty area. Neto scores with a curling shot and then runs away to perform his favourite commemoration, climbing the fence around the pitch to celebrate with the Corinthians faithful.

One Brazilian newspaper recently published a full page article — complete with graphics — asking what goalkeepers could do to keep out his free-kicks. The conclusion — not much.

Flamengo goalkeeper Gilmar thought he had found the solution during a Brazilian championship match when he decided to dispense with the traditional defensive wall.

Gilmar realised his mistake as the ball whistled past his right ear and rocketed into the net from more than 40 metres. It was one of the most astonishing goals ever seen at the Maracana Stadium.

Neto's ability has led to inevitable comparisons with Rivelino, who played for Brazil

in the 1970s and was famous for his "banana shot."

At one stage, Neto was being linked with Italian club Napoli, who were rumoured to be interested in buying him for dollar 2 million to replace Diego Maradona.

At the same time, Pele declared Neto, who practises 40 to 60 shots after each training session, to be "The best player in Brazilian soccer."

"It makes me proud to be compared to someone like Rivelino," Neto said. "But it makes life difficult as well because it puts a weight on your shoulders."

But Neto is not everybody's favourite. His critics say he does too little on the pitch. Carlos Alberto Parreira said on taking over as Brazil coach: "Neto is very important for Corinthians... For Brazil he would have to take part more in the game."

When Corinthians were reduced to 10 men in a recent game, ex-international Mario Sergio commented: "Corinthians will have to take Neto off because with 10 play-

ers on the pitch, you can't afford to have one who just takes free-kicks and corners."

Neto himself said: "I am not going to alter my characteristics. There's no point in changing."

His career has also been marked by displays of temper. He was involved in rows with coaches at both Guarani and Palmeiras before joining Corinthians in 1990.

Last year he was suspended for four months for spitting at a referee who sent him off during a derby with Palmeiras.

Neto said he is learning to control himself, with the help of his wife. "In my early years, I never accepted that I was wrong. I always said what I thought but you can't do this in football."

"I slipped on a lot of banana skins, I fought with managers but these are things which do not happen anymore. I have changed and my wife has played an important part in this."

"I was wrong to spit at the referee. I got angry because the referee was causing problems for Corinthians. I lost my head but that is in the past."

Like all Brazilian professionals he would like to transfer to a European club but in the last year his form has suffered and he has not played for Brazil under Parreira.

Earlier this month, he was substituted during a match. Despite all his claims to have calmed down, Neto reacted by throwing his captain's arm band to the ground in disgust and was dropped for the next game.

On his return, Corinthians drew 0-0 with unrated Noroeste and Neto was jeered off the pitch.

At 26, he has reached a critical stage in his career. Can he regain his form and win back his place in the Brazilian team in time to display his talents at the 1994 World Cup?

Or will he fade into oblivion?



Action from yesterday's First Division basketball relegation play-off between Eagles Club and Backstroke Boys Club at the wooden floor gym. — Star photo

## Kharin — Chelsea's Russian rescuer

**LONDON, Sept 29:** Russian international Dimitri Kharin will try to show Chelsea he is the answer to the English premier league's goalkeeping problems, reports AFP.

The 24-year-old CSKA Moscow regular, who starred for the Commonwealth of Independent States in last summer's European Championship finals, is due here shortly for a week's trial.

"We're speaking to the people over there and trying to arrange something," Chelsea manager Ian Porterfield said Tuesday. "Hopefully he'll be coming over soon."

If Kharin passes his trial he

would probably cost Chelsea, looking for a replacement for the sacked Dave Beasant, a round 500,000 pounds.

Chelsea's current first choice goalkeeper, Kevin Hitchcock, remains on a week-to-week deal, despite keeping three successive clean sheets since taking over from Beasant.

But Porterfield is ready to offer him a new contract, which should be settled next week.

Chelsea are also considering a 500,000 pound bid for Polish international Roman Szewczyk in their bid to find a replacement for the injured Paul Elliott.

Szewczyk has returned to his club Katowice after spending a week on trial at Stamford Bridge and Chelsea will watch him in action for Poland in the World Cup qualifier against Holland before making any decision.

Assistant manager Owen Williams said, "If he can handle Marco van Basten, he should be able to handle anybody."

Peter Beattie, Everton's out-of-favour England B winger, will not be joining First Division West Ham. The Hammers have been put off by Everton's asking price of 750,000 pounds.

Former Northern Ireland and Manchester United midfielder David McCreery has been appointed player-manager of Third Division Carlisle.

The 35-year-old Coleraine star succeeds Aidan McCaffrey, who became the first managerial casualty of the English season on Monday.

## Avendano beats Mayweather

**INGLEWOOD, Calif, Sept 29:** Fidel Avendano of Mexico won a unanimous decision over former WBA junior lightweight champion Roger Mayweather in a scheduled 10-round superlightweight bout Monday night at the Forum, reports AP.

Avendano floored Mayweather, also an ex-WBC superlightweight champion, with a left hook with 20 seconds left in the fifth round. Mayweather barely got off the canvas by the mandatory eight-count and was saved by the bell.

Mayweather finished strong but too late to make up for the knockdown. Judge Lou Moret scored it 96-93 for Avendano, while Lou Filippo had it 95-93 and Larry Rozandilla scored it 95-94.

## White House takes evasive action

**WASHINGTON, Sept 29:** The White House toned down the official response to the resignation of Earvin "Magic" Johnson from the national AIDS Commission to avoid a conflict with the basketball star, sources say, reports AP.

health and Human Services Secretary Louis Sullivan's original statement said: "Clearly, I feel that Mr Johnson is mistaken in his conclusions about the government's and the President's AIDS efforts. More important, I believe that his absence from the commission's work represents a missed opportunity for himself and for the millions of Americans, especially young people, who know and look up to him."

The White House didn't like the sound of that and ordered Sullivan to cut those sentences out, said a department source, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"They basically didn't want to pick a fight," the source said on Monday.

A shorter version was issued later. The two sentences were gone, leaving behind four paragraphs of praise and farewell. Sullivan commended Johnson for his work on raising awareness of the disease and its prevention.

"I wish him success," Sullivan said.