

Gazza returns for England

LONDON, Oct 13: Fit-again Paul Gascoigne will line up for England for the first time in 20 months Wednesday when the national team takes on Norway in its first qualifying game for the 1994 World Cup, reports AP.

The game at Wembley is vital not only for the Lazio midfielder but also for team manager Graham Taylor who has come under fire after England's poor performance in the European Championships.

A semifinalist when England played in the last World Cup in Italy two years ago, England failed to win a game at the European event in Sweden and critics have demanded a better show against Norway.

England-Norway is one of 10 World Cup games being staged with Italy also in action for the first time against Switzerland and European Champion Denmark hosting

Ireland.

The Netherlands receives Poland, Scotland meets Portugal, Northern Ireland hosts Spain, Romania goes to Belgium, Wales visits Cyprus, Russia welcomes Iceland and Austria visits France.

World Cup holder Germany, which does not need to qualify, also is in action in an exhibition game against Mexico in Dresden. Midfielder Lothar Matthaus, who has been sidelined for several months with a knee injury, is set to make his

comeback while striker Rudi Vobler makes his farewell appearance.

The return of Gascoigne, however, has caught the imaginations of his fans in England and also in Italy, where he plays.

The 23-year-old midfielder needed two knee operations after he collecting an injury in the Football Association Cup final in May 1991. He has played three games for Lazio this season although is yet to complete a full 90 minutes play, and has not pulled on an England shirt



GAZZA ... returns

DSB to expand drug testing programme

FRANKFURT, Oct 13: German sport, still reeling from two recent drugs scandals involving double world athletics sprint champion Katrin Krabbe, plans to expand its dope testing programme next year, reports Reuters.

The German Sports Federation (DSB) said on Monday it would increase its annual spending on testing by more than 100,000 marks (68,000 dollars) to around one million marks (680,000 US dollars) in 1993.

DSB doping expert Juergen Barth said 4,000 random tests in training were planned during the year, the same number as in the 1992 Olympic year.

The testing covered 27 Olympic sports but the body also planned to introduce tests in the non-Olympic sports of taekwondo, karate, squash and triathlon.

German dope testing teams have already carried out 3,300 tests so far this year. DSB figures do not include athletes tested during competition which comes under the control of the country's individual sports federations.

Krabbe, the 100 and 200 metres world champion, is presently involved with fellow ex-East German Grit Breuer and Manuela Dert in a battle to avoid a four-year ban after the trio tested positive for the catle-fattening drug Clenbuterol in July.

Less than a month before the unannounced DSB tests during training, Krabbe, Breuer and compatriot Silke Moeller had avoided a ban for manipulating urine samples on a legal technicality.

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"He tries to provoke the other players."

Norway has six points from three games, including a 10-0 hammering of San Marino and a victory at Wembley will make the team a clear favourite to gain one of the two qualifying places from group two.

With Gary Lineker now retired from international soccer, England has Blackburn's 15-goal striker Alan Shearer and Arsenal's Ian Wright in attack with Gascoigne and Juventus player David Platt providing the ammunition from midfield.

Asked by TV crew if he had a message for the people of Norway, Gascoigne, unaware the cameras were rolling, replied: "Yes. F--- off."

He later apologised and claimed he was "just joking", an explanation accepted by the more diplomatic Norwegian manager Egil Olsen.

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since a game against Cameroon in February 1991.

Even Gascoigne does not believe he will be on the field at the end of the game against Norway.

"I don't think I'm fit enough to last the full 90 minutes," he said. "I need more games."

The Norwegians have been riled by a two-word obscenity Gascoigne jokingly made to a Norwegian TV crew who went to interview him after training.

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ment, said he did not believe the cameras were rolling when he said it.

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Pargat announces retirement

NEW DELHI, Oct 13: Indian hockey captain Pargat Singh has decided to quit international hockey after his side's debacle in the Barcelona Olympic Games, it was reported Monday, reports AFP.

The 27-year-old fullback has informed the Indian Hockey Federation (IHF) of his decision to retire, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported from Chandigarh, capital of Pargat Singh's home state of Punjab.

No reasons were cited for



PARGAT SINGH

the decision which came in the wake of India's seventh place showing in Barcelona, where his side matched the country's previous worst Olympic performance after a confident pre-tournament buildup.

He will however continue to play on the domestic circuit for his employers, the state-owned Punjab Alkalies and Chemicals Ltd, and will coach young hockey players in a promotion programme the company is launching, PTI said.

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Scotts need a win to stay on course

PARIS, Oct 13: Scotland's bid to qualify for a sixth successive World Cup could lie in tatters on Wednesday night if Andy Roxburgh's men lose to Portugal in their second Group One match, reports AFP.

Having lost their opening match 3-1 to Switzerland in Berne, the Scots need a win to get their campaign back on course but they will have to do it without key defender Richard Gough, suspended after being sent off for hand ball against the Swiss.

Gough's normal central defensive partner for club and country Dave McPherson is also injured and Roxburgh has had to callup Aberdeen youngster Gary Smith and Rangers' John Brown as cover.

Portugal will be without injured Monaco striker Gil Rui Barros while Benfica forward Rui Aguas and Antonio Pacheco are also doubtful with knocks.

The Swiss meanwhile play host to an Italian side starting their first qualification campaign since 1980. In 1986 they qualified as the defending champions and then in 1990 they hosted Italia 90.

In the likes of Gianluigi Lentini, Roberto Baggio and Gianluca Vialli, Arrigo Sacchi has the core of a team capable of winning in the United States.

But he faces a tough task in finding someone to fill the gap created by the retirement of AC Milan sweeper Franco Baresi from international football.

Baresi's team-mate, Paolo Maldini, who has played international football since the age of 19, is seen as the natural successor but Sacchi seems to be leaning towards Riccardo Ferri, the Inter Milan stopper.

"If he's fit, Ferri is a safer bet," the coach said.

Expectations for the side's campaign are high. More than 18,000 people turned up on Sunday to watch the team beat a Fiorentina youth team 6-1 on Sunday.

The players are in good condition but we are a bit biased towards the front of the team," Sacchi said.

France, following the 2-0 defeat in Bulgaria last month, are without a win for 10 matches and struggling to bounce back from a disastrous European Championship in June.

They will be putting their faith in Eric Cantona's renewed strike partnership with Jean-Pierre Papin against Austria in a Group Six match in Paris.

The big Leeds striker managed only 70 minutes of last Friday's European Cup replay against Stuttgart in Barcelona but should have fully recovered from a bout of tonsillitis.

The temperamental striker was persuaded to return by coach Gerard Houllier after declaring that he wanted a rest from international football after the Swedish campaign.

Papin, who has hardly played since moving to AC Milan in the summer because of the excess of foreign players at the Italian champions, will be out to prove a point to coach Fabio Capello.

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Like Scotland's Roxburgh, Wales coach Terry Yorath has been hit by injury problems as he prepares for the crucial Group Four trip to Cyprus. The Welsh must win to have any hope of qualifying after their 5-1 defeat by Romania in May.

Yorath will be without Manchester United winger Ryan Giggs and Swind defender Paul Bodin.

Giggs controversially pulled out with a hamstring injury on Thursday night, robbing Yorath of a vital attacking alternative from the bench, while full back Bodin withdrew with knee ligament problems.

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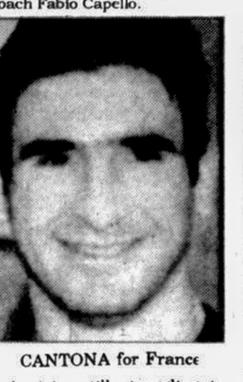
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