



Dale Ervine of the US dribbles past Iranian players Ashgar Akbari Gharetappeh(L) and Sadegh Vermazyar(R) while his teammate Hernan Borja looks on in the semifinal match of the indoor five-a-side world football championship in Hong Kong on November 27. The USA beat Iran 4-2.

Premier League at a crucial stage

LONDON, Nov 27: The English soccer season, shorn of all European club interest, reaches a vital stage this weekend which could uncover the eventual champions of the new Premier League, reports Reuter.

four points clear of Arsenal, but must now meet an Aston Villa side unbeaten in their last 13 matches this season. Villa will be without their influential defender Shaun Teale, who has a knee injury which may require surgery.

"It is great to have him back and, alongside Bryan Robson, I believe you can already see the difference he makes to our attacking form."

China take a new approach to sports

BEIJING, Nov 27: China, which is running an intensive campaign to host the 2000 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing, has made sport a key component of official propaganda and economic development efforts, reports AFP.

car and a comfortable salary much superior to those paid to their Chinese colleagues, diplomatic sources say. All the methods used in the European communist nations' golden days of sport are also seen here: gifted young children are separated from their families to undergo years of rigorous training and indoctrination, while enjoying significant material advantages.

Berlin, Milan, Manchester, Brasilia, Sydney, Tashkent and Istanbul. The Chinese capital, which is covered in billboards praising the Olympic bid, launched a major building programme several months ago in anticipation of September's decision by the International Olympic Committee.

Athletes press IAAF for money

STOCKHOLM, Nov 27: Athletes may boycott next year's World Championships in Stuttgart unless a conflict with the sport's ruling body over prize money is resolved, a top American coach warned on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

But IAAF president Primo Nebiolo on Wednesday dismissed the radical proposal, insisting the IAAF did not have unlimited reserves to pay out prizes.

Watts and Kevin Young who are also backing moves for change, warned: "A boycott of Stuttgart is still an option."



An eleven-member Bangladesh athletics team left Dhaka yesterday for Delhi to take part in the fourth Asian junior championships to be held in the Indian capital from November 30 to December 4.

Voeller's vision

GLASGOW, Nov 27: Rudi Voeller does not relish the prospect of another match against Glasgow Rangers for his Olympique Marseille side next April, reports AFP.

"When we meet them again it will be much more difficult for Marseille," he insisted on Thursday. "It will be tougher because in Marseille the pressure is on the team to succeed," said Voeller, who scored 43 goals in 84 appearances from Germany.

Van Basten Juventus' biggest threat

ROME, Nov 27: Four goals from Marco van Basten in AC Milan's European Cup win over IFK Gothenburg this week will strike fear into the hearts of Juventus fans before the top-of-the-table clash on Sunday, reports Reuter.



MARCO VAN BASTEN

Sunday's game with Milan in the best possible mental and physical condition. Trapattoni may well field the side which defeated

ited performance in the Scottish rain, their best of the season. German striker Rudi Voeller, back from injury, and Alen Bokic of Croatia both scored and look like becoming the most feared duo in the league.

The Italian champions, who lead Juventus by two points with a game in hand, were at their awesome best against Gothenburg with Van Basten turning in a performance which had the normally reserved Milan coach Fabio Capello enthusing: "He's the best player in the world, there's simply no argument about it."

Torino last Sunday, although he hopes that Englishman David Platt, scheduled to have a knee operation next week, may be able to play this last important match before surgery.

German league leaders Bayern Munich, who hold a three-point lead with three games remaining before the Bundesliga's winter break, host Karlsruhe, one of the big surprises of the season.

Second-placed Real Madrid, also only a point behind their arch-rivals Barcelona, expect a straight-forward game at home to Real Oviedo on Sunday. Oviedo last beat Real in the Madrid team's home territory more than 40 years ago.

Drive to stamp out racism in stadium in Italy

ROME, Nov 27: Italian soccer authorities said on Thursday they were planning to launch a publicity drive to stamp out a worrying increase in racist abuse in their stadiums, reports Reuter.

Cantona signs for M United

LONDON, Nov 27: French international striker Eric Cantona joined Manchester United from English league champions Leeds on Thursday for 1.2 million pounds sterling (1.82 million dollars), reports Reuter.

to lure England's David Hirst from Sheffield Wednesday for 3.5 million pounds (5.3 million dollars).

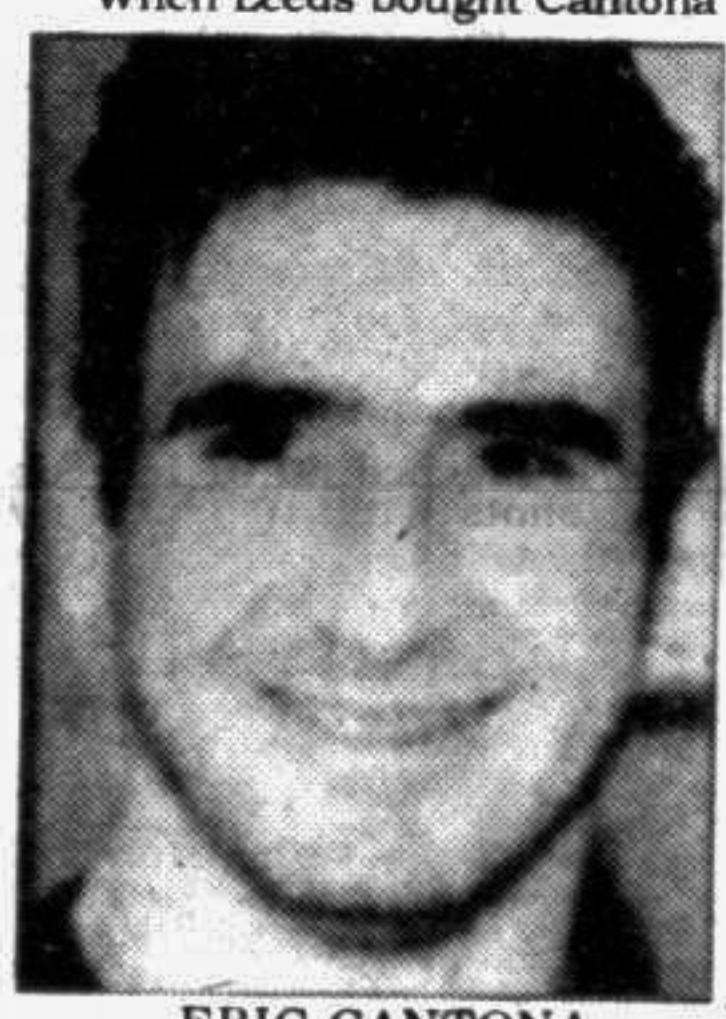
lishing a reputation as a hot-handle character with Auxerre, Bordeaux, Montpellier, Marseille and Nimes.

ANOCA to support SA's Olympic bid

JOHANNESBURG, Nov 27: Africa's top Olympic official said on Wednesday his organization would back South Africa's bid to host the 2004 Games, reports Reuter.

Argentina's unbeaten run continues

BUENOS AIRES, Nov 27: Argentina continued their two-year winning streak on Thursday with a 2-0 (half time 1-0) win over a lacklustre Polish side in a friendly match in Buenos Aires, reports Reuter.



ERIC CANTONA

He rejected French soccer following a sending-off and a two-month suspension after insulting a disciplinary panel.

Chancellor at Austrian soccer coach's funeral

VIENNA, Nov 27: Austrian Chancellor Franz Vranitzky was among thousands of mourners at Thursday's funeral of Ernst Happel, one of Europe's most successful soccer coaches who died of cancer earlier this month, reports Reuter.

Racist violence may ruin Berlin's Olympic bid

BERLIN, Nov 27: Berlin said on Wednesday that racist violence by German neo-Nazis was ruining the city's chances of hosting the Olympic Games in the year 2000, reports Reuter.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

Crossword puzzle grid with clues for Across and Down words. Includes a solution time of 23 mins and a small grid for the word 'CRYPTOQUIP'.

Cryptogram puzzle with a grid of letters and a key: Y K T G M I O W Y N W T I Y O H T R. Includes a solution: W equals L.