



TABANI/2040(E)/94

## Sport

## Stoichkov hungry for goal

PRINCETON, New Jersey, July 8: Germany's plan to gorge themselves on a fourth World Cup title could come unstuck on Sunday in the face of Hristo Stoichkov's equally glutinous

"They are the world champions. Everyone expects them to beat us. We have nothing to lose and everything to win."

Boris Mikhailov, the goalkeeper whose penalty shoot-out saves took Bulgaria through against Mexico, echoed Stoichkov's optimism.

"We have no complex about Germany. We know we can beat them," said Mikhailov, who is hoping to attract the attention of a new club after leaving French side Mulhouse at the end of the season.

"We will have had a few less days to recover than them but I think the heat will count more against them. They won't be able to play their usual pressing game in midfield."

Forecasts suggest the midday match will be fought out in temperatures approaching 110 degrees Fahrenheit, which could make life difficult for the ageing Germans.

Significantly, Germany's most impressive performance in this tournament came in Saturday's win over Belgium, a match played in unusually cool weather.

"When you're hungry you always want to eat more," Bulgaria's star striker, who has helped himself to four goals so far in USA '94, warned the defending champions.

Tuesday's second round win over Mexico, in which Stoichkov scored one of the goals of the tournament, prompted nationwide celebrations in Bulgaria. Whatever happens in Sunday's quarter-final, the squad will fly back to Sofia to a heroes' welcome.

But that has not stopped Stoichkov looking beyond Sunday's match to a meeting with his Barcelona teammates if Spain can come through Saturday's quarter-final against Italy in Boston.

"We have nothing to fear from Germany. They are under more pressure than us," Stoichkov said at the Bulgarians' Princeton Hotel.

## Swedes sing a merry melody

MORAGA, Calif., July 8: Two to go. Before the World Cup, nine players said Sweden would reach the final. One optimist was Klas Ingesson, who is standing by his pre-tournament prediction, reports AP.

"We can beat all teams that are left in the tournament," Ingesson said heading into Sunday's quarterfinal match against Romania at Stanford Stadium. "Tying Brazil (in the first round) gave us so much confidence."

Even without striker Martin Dahlin, who has four goals in the World Cup but was suspended for accumulated yellow cards, Sweden took a 1-0 half-time lead against Brazil on Kennet Andersson's goal.

"Gheorghe is one of my best friends on PSV Eindhoven," Ingesson says. "He's very strong in the air and I think he'll mark Kennet (Andersson)."

Andersson is the tallest Swedish player at 193 centimetres (6-foot-4). He has scored three goals in the tournament, including two in a 3-1 victory over Saudi Arabia in the second round.

Ingesson was inconsistent in midfield during the first round, but played his best game of the tournament against the Saudis. Lack of training was the main reason why Ingesson looked rusty early in the tournament.

In May, he was forced to wear a neck brace for three weeks after hitting a moose with his car on his way to a golf course in Sweden. Then, on his second workout in the United States, he bruised his nose.

Ingesson doesn't look that far, but "I'd be extremely disappointed if we lose on Sunday," he says.

"I've never played on a better Swedish team and I doubt Sweden will ever have a side like this one again."

Ingesson, who turns 26 next month, has 46 caps for Sweden since his 1989 debut and was a member of the team that finished third at the

SANTA CLARA, Calif., July 8: Gheorghe Hagi's nose has found the goal three times so far at the World Cup. Now it's detecting another scent.

"I can smell our victory in the air," the Romanian midfielder said about Sunday's quarterfinal match against Sweden at Stanford. "It's a sweet, adoring smell," reports AP.

Hagi's brilliant passes and three goals at the World Cup have propelled Romania to the World Cup final eight for the first time. Against Argentina in the second round, Hagi set up one goal and scored another to lead a 3-2 victory.

"The match against Argentina proved we can beat any team in the world," Hagi said. "The Swedes are paper favourites, but soccer is not played on paper."

Hagi, dubbed "the Maradona of the Carpathians," is the team strategist who sets the direction and intensity of a

## Share The Passion



## Encouraging figures

DALLAS, July 8: The number of fouls committed at the World Cup finals has shown a dramatic drop since 1990, vindicating FIFA's get tough instructions to referees, reports Reuter.

In Italy four years ago there was an average of 39.5 fouls per game but the figure has fallen by almost 30 per cent in the US finals to 28.3.

Alarmed by the generally negative and destructive play in Italy, FIFA banned the tackle from behind and ordered referees to clamp down hard on violent conduct.

The results have been staggering. While players have largely heeded the call for cleaner soccer, match officials have taken Draconian measures against offenders, handing out more than 200 yellow cards.

That represents an increase of more than 50 per cent over the cautions issued at the same stage in Italy.

Players are forced to think twice before launching into a foul as one in every six offences is being punished by a yellow card, compared with one in 12 four years ago.

FIFA have said they are happy with refereeing standards at the finals, though not everyone is so convinced.

FIFA directives have certainly been responsible for the continuing inflation of yellow cards which rose from just 60 at the 1982 finals to 121 in 1986 and 169 in 1992.

This year's final figure looks likely to top 240 - four times as high as it was only 12 years ago. Meanwhile, FIFA is busy congratulating itself on more encouraging statistics from the US finals.

The actual time the ball is in play has gone up by 10 per cent since 1990, goals have risen by 18 per cent and attendances have improved by 33 per cent.

## Dahlin turns Everton down

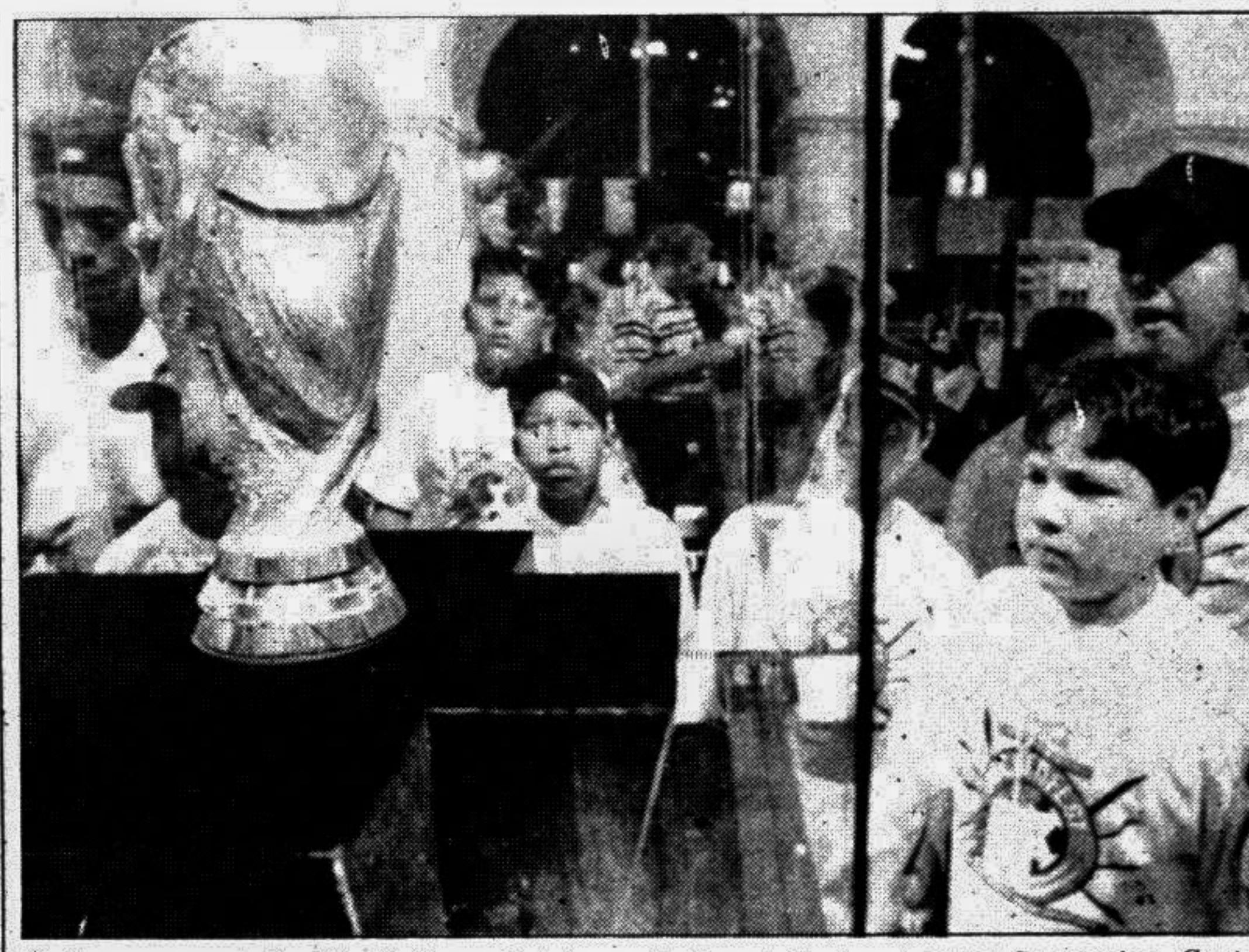
SAN FRANCISCO, California, July 8: Swedish striker Martin Dahlin, who turned down an offer from English Premiership club Everton, said Thursday he did not know where he would play next season, reports AFP.

The 26-year-old striker, who has scored four goals in two rounds of the World Cup, said he was still open to offers, though his contract with German club Borussia Moenchengladbach reportedly runs through 1996.

"It's still not certain I will play for them next season," Dahlin said.

He is certain he will not play for Everton, though his precise reasons were unclear.

"Everton just did not feel right," said Dahlin. "But it was a very good offer, and I was flattered. Mike Walker is a very good manager. And I liked the brand of football Norwich played when he was with them last season."



Visitors gaze at the World Cup which is on display at the Los Angeles Convention Centre during a preview of SoccerFest theme park which opened on July 7.

— AFP photo

## Soccer alive &amp; kicking in Eastern Europe

SAN FRANCISCO, July 8: The political upheavals which ended communist rule have created an environment in which an Eastern European country can win the World Cup for the first time, reports Reuter.

Thirteen of the Bulgarian squad are with overseas clubs while eight of the Romanian team are "exiles". Some, like Gheorghe Hagi and Florin Raduocu have played for a number of different western clubs in different countries.

Hagi, whose outstanding displays here have made him a leading contender for player-of-the-tournament, says the political changes were funda-

"Before the revolutions throughout Eastern Europe, it is fair to say that most of the nations from that part of the continent played with an inferiority complex," said Jordanesco.

No-one doubted the individual gifts of certain players, that was never the issue. But collectively the teams failed to do themselves justice.

"Since the end of the communist regimes, many more players have gone overseas, they have new-found self-confidence. They see they are the equals of other players around the world and this is reflected in the way they are playing their football."

"Before, psychologically they may not have been tough enough to win the World Cup. That has changed. With the right luck, the World Cup is now open to Eastern Europe."

Jordanesco believes it is no coincidence that two teams from Eastern Europe, his own side and Bulgaria — have reached the last eight.

mental to the football changes.

"It was like we were released from a straight-jacket. Of course the skill was always there, but the platform to express that beauty was not there. There was a different way of thinking. We must still be disciplined, still be tough, but look at the Romanian team now. It is a beautiful side."

"But today's players are different. They do not have such a chip on their shoulder, they are not bitter of other players' rewards and riches. Even if they are playing or a team at home. At least they have the chance to move now. You can see the flair coming out at last, teams from the east have done well before, my team in 1990 was a fine team, but we are seeing something new."

Whether an Eastern European team wins this year or not, Romania have already enjoyed the greatest moment in their soccer history by beating Argentina in the second round last Sunday.

CRYPTOQUIP

O X K B W S S J F S M K C M G V S V

G V Y F O G T K G I F R F C V T

M F G V V G O R F N N O S R

M G F M I V X B Y S K W V

Saturday's Cryptoquip: VEGETARIAN MARATHON RACER AVOIDS HOT DOG STANDS; HE DISLIKES TRACK MEATS.

Today's Cryptoquip clue: M equals C

The Cryptoquip is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.