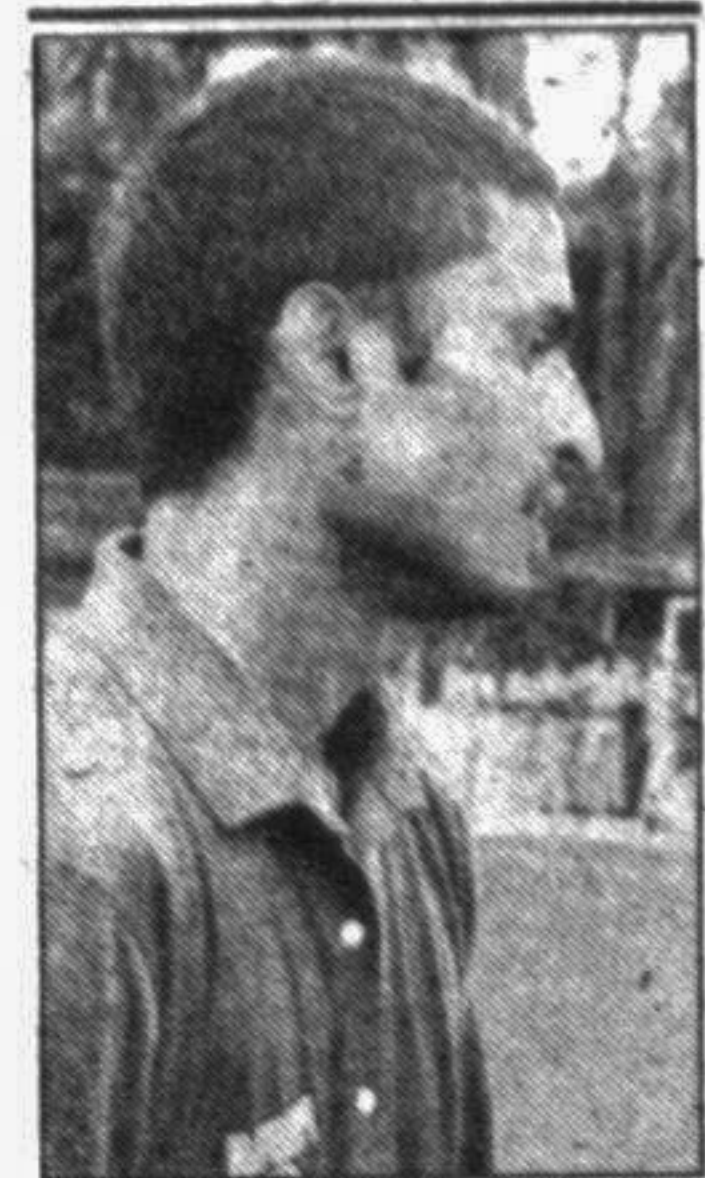


Column One SPORTS TALK



Shahbaz Ahmed (Pakistan hockey super star)

I had a feeling and a fear that had I gone on the tour and had the results not been favourable, the PHF (Pakistan Hockey Federation) would have accused me of conspiring and working against the interest of the national team.

After deciding to skip this month's Pakistan's European tour.

Sports WHIZZ KID COMPETITION FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN

Sports WHIZZ KID competition-42 Tick the Correct Answers (Competition closes: 8 p.m. June 21, 1996)

- 1. The winner of the women's high jump gold in 24th national athletics is... 2. The girls' champion in the school badminton tournament '96 is...

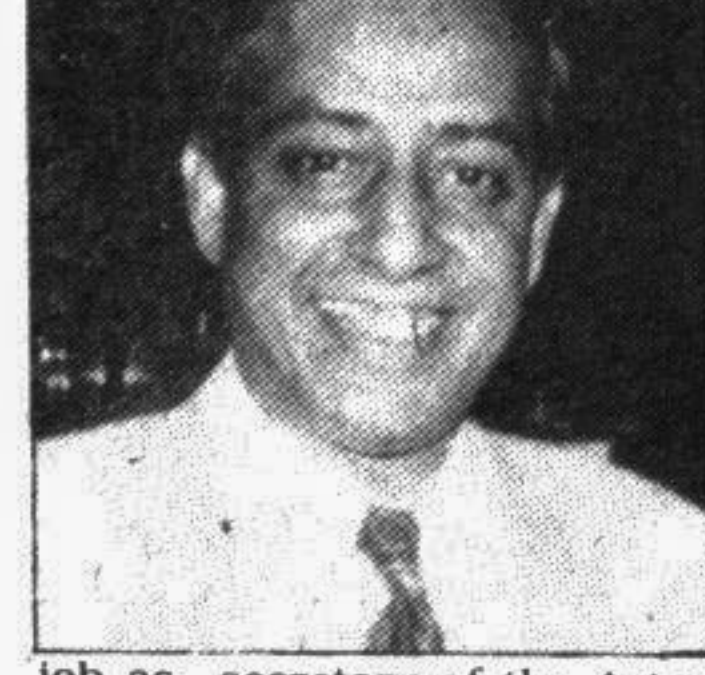
Name: Roll No: School Address: Phone: (if any)

Cricket camp

Sports Reporter All the cricketers except captain Akram Khan have joined the national camp for the forthcoming tour of America and Canada yesterday.

Mahboob retains job

Sport Reporter Syed Mahboob Hossain, general secretary of the Bangladesh Billiards and Snooker Federation, has retained his



job as secretary of the Asian Billiards and Snooker Federation (ABSF) for another two years.

In the annual general meeting, participated by delegates from 15 countries; Ali Asghar Valika of Pakistan was elected president while WY Chin of Malaysia became executive vice president of the ABSF.

TODAY'S EURO '96 FIXTURES

Russia vs Germany Group C Venue: Old Trafford Time: 8:00 pm Croatia vs Denmark Group D Venue: Hillsborough Time: 11:00 pm

Czechs dent Italian ego

LIVERPOOL, England, June 15: The Czech Republic put a serious dent in Italy's Euro '96 ambitions on Friday with an eventual 2-1 victory which completely transformed the situation in Group C, reports Reuter.

Coach Arrigo Sacchi's game plan disappeared out of the window when defender Luigi Apolloni was sent off for receiving two yellow cards and the Czechs took maximum advantage with first-half goals from Pavel Nedved and Radek Bejbl.

Italy has the better of the second half, even with 10 men, and could have snatched a draw in injury time when Pierluigi Casiraghi blazed a great chance over the bar.

They will now have to rely on German and Russian help to reach the last eight.

If the Czechs beat Russia in their final group match next Wednesday, Italy could find themselves requiring a win over Germany, the same night to avoid an early flight home.

Parma's Apolloni, the third player to be sent off at a strenuous tournament and will be forced to sit out the crucial final group game against the Germany.

Czech supporters, subdued last weekend after watching their men beaten 2-0 by Germany in Manchester, greeted the result as if they had won the tournament.

Several Czech players hurled their shirts into the crowd, fully aware they had caused by far the biggest upset of Euro '96 so far.

From the opening comments it was clear Italy's night would not be the straightforward exercise Sacchi seemed to envisage when he named a team showing five changes to the one which beat Russia 2-1 three days earlier.

Czech threats to expose Italy's offside trap were borne out after just four minutes when Karel Poborsky curled a left-foot cross between the central defenders and Slavia Prague teammate Nedved finished expertly from eight metres.

Nedved had not previously hit the target in his handful of international appearances but could have doubled his tally in the 23rd minute when he slipped in the act of shooting when unmarked inside the box.

By then Italy had at least drawn level after stealing possession deep inside their own half.

Enrico Chiesa, tempted away from Sampdoria by Parma in recent weeks for a fistful of lira, cleverly fed Diego Fuser on the right and tucked away the return ball like a seasoned international.

He also scored as a substitute against Belgium last month but, while Sacchi's attacking options are becoming impressive, Apolloni's dismissal put immediate strain on his defence.

It took only six minutes for another Sparta-Prague man Bejbl to take advantage, volleying confidently into the corner direct from Kukas cross for his first goal at the highest level.

Sacchi's tactical response was to switch captain Paolo Maldini into the middle and

sacrifice Dino Baggio in favour of Roma defender Amedeo Carboni.

It appeared to steady the ship and Sacchi also opted to send on Casiraghi in place of the grey-haired Fabrizio Ravanelli early in the second half as the Czech showed signs of relaxing their group on an intriguing game.

But a flying Maldini was just off target with a shot from close range and Casiraghi, the hero against Russia with two well-taken goals, could not repeat the trick a second time, firing wastefully over in the final seconds with only Petr Kouba to beat.

The only sombre note for the Czechs was a last-minute yellow card for captain Miroslav Kaldac, his second of the tournament which will rule him out of the Russian game.

It was the most important goal I've ever scored," admitted Bejbl. "The mood is brilliant."

Coach Dusan Uhrin said: "It was very difficult to get the players motivated after the first game, not just tactically but psychologically as well."

But they concentrated at the right moments. I didn't believe we had won it until after the final whistle."

TEAMS ITALY: 1-Angelo Peruzzi, 8-Roberto Mussi, 3-Paolo Maldini, 2-Luigi Apolloni, 5-Alessandro Costacurta, 17-Diego Fuser, 10-Demetrio Albertini, 11-Dino Baggio (4-Amedeo Carboni 39), 7-Roberto Donadoni, 20-Fabrizio Ravanelli (18-Pierluigi Casiraghi 57), 16-Enrico Chiesa (21-Gianfranco Zola 77), CZECH REPUBLIC: 1-Petr Kouba, 15-Michal Horvath, 5-Miroslav Kaldac, 3-Jan Suchoparek, 2-Radoslav Lalaj (6-Vaclav Nemecek 87), 7-Jiri Nemecek, 13-Radek Bejbl, 4-Pavel Nedved, 14-Patrik Berger (17-Vladimir Smicer 64), 9-Pavel Kuka, 8-Karel Poborsky.

Referee: Antonio Lopez Nieto (Spain).

Maldini's mixed moment

LIVERPOOL, June 15: Italian captain Paolo Maldini is to return home for 24 hours after his wife gave birth to a son, Kristian, on Friday, reports Reuter.

"I'm very happy but let's not mix this up with today's defeat," Maldini said after the Italians' 2-1 Euro'96 loss to the Czech Republic.

Italy play their final game in Group C against Germany on Wednesday.

Sacchi brazens odds out

ALSAGER, England, June 15: Coach Arrigo Sacchi insists Italy are too good to bow out of Euro '96 in the group stages, despite their 2-1 defeat by the Czech Republic on Friday, reports Reuter.

The Italians may now have to beat Germany in their final match on Wednesday to stay in the tournament, but Sacchi is refusing to accept his team have performed below par.

"I do not deserve to go home," said Sacchi on Saturday. "We have been playing a high standard of football and I'm still convinced we had an excellent second half against the Czechs."

"If Pierluigi Casiraghi had scored in injury time I'm sure your questions would have been different. But we learned a lot last night."

Sacchi has persistently nominated the Germans as the most likely winners, yet now has to convince his players they are beatable if Italy's ambitions are not to wither on the vine.



Fernando Couto (C) of Portugal awaits for an obvious celebration from his teammates Paul Souza (L) and Joes Tavers (R) after scoring the all-important goal of his side's 1-0 win over Turkey during their European Championship match in Nottingham on Friday.

Karpov, Kamsky split point

MOSCOW, June 15: Veteran Russian Grand Master Anatoly Karpov and young challenger Gata Kamsky drew the fifth of their 20 games in the World Chess Championship on Friday and Karpov kept his one-point lead, reports Reuter.

The 45-year-old Karpov and Kamsky, 22, who defected from the Soviet Union to the United States in 1988, agreed to the draw after a quick game of 23 moves. Itar-Tass news agency said.

The score is 3-2 for Karpov. The world chess federation (FIDE) title match is being played in Elista, capital of the semi-autonomous Russian Kalmyk republic, between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea.

The winner needs 10.5 points — one point for a victory and half for a draw. If they are level after 40 days and 20 games, the match will continue until one of them wins another game.

Victory for either contestant will be tainted by the fact that would number one Garry Kasparov is not challenging because of a split with FIDE.

The next game will start on Sunday.

BAF aquatic

Sports Reporter Base Matur Rahman dominated the pool on the opening day of six-day annual swimming and water-polo championships of Bangladesh Air Force at the BN central swimming pool, Banani yesterday, says an ISPR press release.

Base Matur Rahman, a traditional force in the annals of the meet, clinched all the five golds decided on the day.

Flight Lt. Haroon, who captured the first gold by winning the 200m back stroke, set the standard for his teammates which, he said, had gone against Russian teams "since 1958 when Russia took the field in the World Cup."

"We are dejected with the low level of refereeing. If the referees are not skillful enough, they should be suspended or replaced."

Speaking at a rare media conference, Vyacheslav Koloskov, president of the Russian Football Federation, said he had made an official protest to UEFA over the refereeing.

"We have drawn UEFA's attention to the fact that referees are an important component of the spirit of fair play that UEFA wants to see."

The Russian squad's other continuing grievance is over the visas they claim were denied to 200 of their supporters by the British embassy in Moscow.

Turks thrown out of track

NOTTINGHAM, England, June 15: A superbly taken goal by central defender Fernando Couto, succeeding where his team's forwards had failed, gave Portugal a 1-0 win over Turkey in their European Championship Group D match on Friday, reports Reuter.

Couto's 66th minute goal, which knocked the gallant Turks out of the competition, came after a succession of misses by his colleagues up front.

Portugal never reached the heights of their first game against Denmark when they enthralled the watching world with their quick passing game.

But they still showed plenty of skill and deserved their win which, after Sunday's draw with Denmark, gives them an excellent chance of reaching the quarterfinals from Group D.

Portugal's biggest problem was again in the last third of the field where their final passes went astray and their shooting was off-target.

It took a defender to break the deadlock. Paulo Sousa's shot from outside the penalty area rebounded off a defender to Couto who hit the ball first time on the volley into the corner of the net.

Couto also made two crucial interceptions at the back as Turkey pressed for a late equalizer. One timely intervention prevented Hakan Bukur from having a clear run on goal.

and in the 79th minute Couto blocked a goalbound shot by Abdullah Ercan.

"We will have to look at the fact that it was a defender who scored the goal," said coach Antonio Oliveira.

Sporting Lisbon striker Sa Pinto produced the most stunning miss in the 32nd minute. He contrived to shoot wide from six metres with goalkeeper Rustu Reber already beaten.

The recall of veteran midfielder, Oguz Cetin, the most capped player in Turkey's history with over 50 appearances, gave them more creativity than in their previous game when they failed to muster a single shot on target.

Sergen Yacin tested Portugal goalkeeper Vitor Baia with two long-range shots, while top marksman Hakan Sukur and striking partner Saffet Sancakli both hooked shots across the goalmouth from good shooting positions.

Portugal took command in the second half, inspired yet again by the deft skills of Rui Costa.

Rustu was forced to make saves from Joao Pinto and Antonio Folha before the Turkish defence finally gave way in the 66th minute.

Substitute striker Jorge Cadete wasted two more chances for a second goal, heading over from close range from Figo's cross from the right and then failing to control the ball after a clever flick by Rui Costa had left him with a clear run at goal.

A truly Turkish tragedy

NOTTINGHAM, June 15: Turkey striker Ertugrul Saglam flew home to Istanbul just a few hours before Friday's Euro '96 match against Portugal after hearing that his sister had died, reports Reuter.

She had a baby 10 days ago. Coach Fatih Terim had not been expected to pick Ertugrul in the starting line-up for the Group D game.

A spokesman for the Turkish squad said: "It is bad news for everybody in our squad and we will have to lift ourselves to get over such a bad shock. Our feelings are very much with Ertugrul and his family at this sad time."

Sa Pinto was set up superbly by playmaker Rui Costa, who slipped between two defenders and pulled the ball back across the goal.

Just before halftime Portugal threw away another excellent chance when Antonio Folha's cross found central

defender Helder at the far post but he could not connect properly with the cross.

Although Portugal created the best chances, Turkey, as against Croatia, had slightly the better of the first half.

Backed by a noisy contingent of fans who disconcertingly jeered constantly when Portugal had possession, they fought hard for every ball and hustled the Portuguese out of their stride for long spells.

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Russia rebuke refs' role

PRESTON, June 15: Russia have protested in UEFA over the standard of refereeing at Euro '96, reports Reuter.

Coach Oleg Romantsev said on Friday that if referees were not up to scratch they should be "suspended or replaced."

Romantsev produced a long list of critical refereeing decisions in Major tournaments which, he said, had gone against Russian teams "since 1958 when Russia took the field in the World Cup."

"We are dejected with the low level of refereeing. If the referees are not skillful enough, they should be suspended or replaced."

Speaking at a rare media conference, Vyacheslav Koloskov, president of the Russian Football Federation, said he had made an official protest to UEFA over the refereeing.

"We have drawn UEFA's attention to the fact that referees are an important component of the spirit of fair play that UEFA wants to see."

The Russian squad's other continuing grievance is over the visas they claim were denied to 200 of their supporters by the British embassy in Moscow.

The Cska Moscow defender injured a knee in the 2-1 Group C defeat by Italy on Tuesday.

It is disrespectful and unfriendly to put it mildly," said Koloskov.

The gloom in the Russian camp was deepened by the news that Yevgeny Bushmanov will miss the rest of the tournament.

The Cska Moscow defender injured a knee in the 2-1 Group C defeat by Italy on Tuesday.

Romantsev had included the relatively inexperienced Bushmanov in his line-up because of injuries and Yuri Nikiforov's one-match suspension.

Nikiforov will return against Germany at Old Trafford on Sunday and Romantsev is contemplating other changes.

He would not be drawn on whether Chelsea goalkeeper Dmitry Kharin would replace Stanislav Cherchesov.

The Russians again showed the assembled media a video which, they claim, made it clear that Pier Luigi Casiraghi was offside before he scored Italy's winning goal.

It's party time at Czech camp

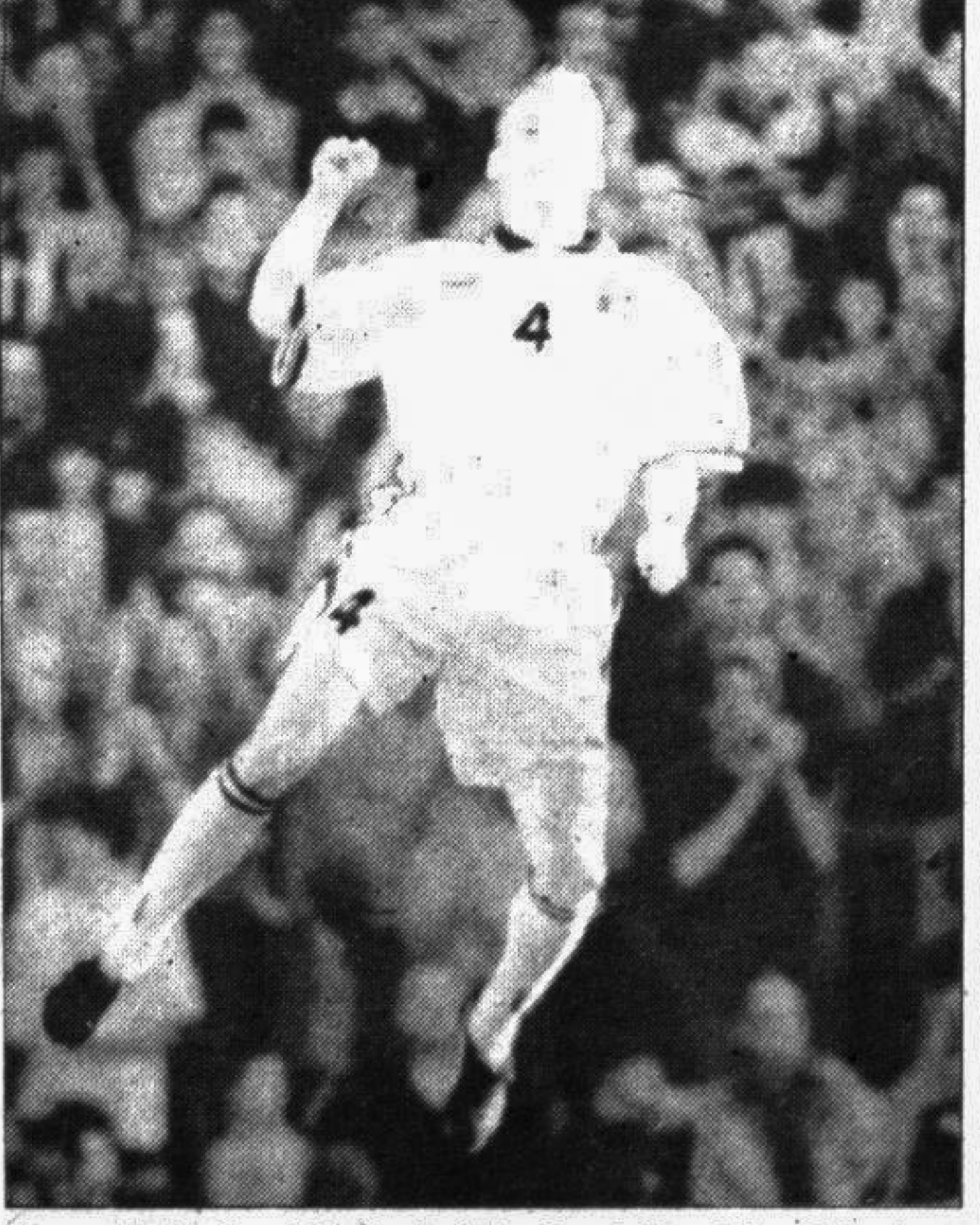
PRESTON, June 15: Czech coach Dusan Uhrin cancelled a scheduled training session and gave his players a day off today after their unexpected 2-1 Euro '96 victory over Italy on Friday, reports Reuter.

The team celebrated in the early hours at their hotel, sampling some of the Czech beer specially brought over for them.

"They have a leisure day until 11 tonight," said a relaxed Uhrin.

Italy's defeat threw Group C wide open, but Uhrin said it was not a complete surprise to him. "I expected the (Czech) team to play much better than against Germany. Italy played just as they did against Russia. It depends on the other team what they allow Italy to do."

The win brought increased attention to the Czechs — radio and television crews queued to interview Uhrin today and an enterprising local menswear shop owner arrived to measure the coach for a free suit.



An aesthetic Pavel Nedved of the Czech Republic celebrates after scoring the match decider against giants Italy, who suffered a stunning 2-1 defeat in their European Championships Group C match at Liverpool on Friday.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer. Includes crossword clues and a Cryptoquip puzzle.