

TODAY'S EURO '96 FIXTURES

SEMI-FINALS
France vs Czech Republic
Venue: Old Trafford
Time: 9:00 pm BST
England vs Germany
Venue: Wembley
Time: 12:30 am BST

Hefty bets on hosts

LONDON, June 25: British bookmakers are bracing themselves for a huge payout if England with the European Championship, the biggest sports betting event in Britain, reports Reuter.

A total of about 80 million pounds (123 million dollars) will be bet on Euro '96, about five million more than was placed during the 1994 World Cup.

England's run of success had caused thousands of fans to bet on the host nation and bookmakers said they could lose about five million pounds if they won Sunday's final.

About five million pounds has been placed on Wednesday's semifinal against Germany. Most have bet on England to win in the regulation 90 minutes.

England striker Alan Shearer is not the most popular man among bookmakers. He has scored first in three games in the tournament, costing the betting industry many hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Shearer is 3-1 against to score the first goal against Germany.

One of the country's leading bookmakers quote England at evens to win the game with Germany 4-5 on. England are 2-1 to win Euro '96 with Germany and France joint favourites at 15-8. The Czech Republic are 12-1.

Among the big gets is one by a Czech fan who put 100 pounds each way at odds of 200-1 on his side winning the tournament after they lost their opening game to Germany. He stands to win 30,000 pounds.

Crazy punter

LONDON, June 25: A confident punter has backed England to win Euro '96 with a 20,000 pounds sterling (30,000 dollars) bet — the biggest wager so far on a victory for the host nation, reports Reuter.

Bookmakers said it was placed on Monday by phone at odds of 2-1, forcing them to cut England's odds to 15-8 second favourites.

France remain 7-4 favourites with Germany 9-4 and the Czech Republic out to 9-1 from 7-1.

Blazevic quits

ZAGREB, June 25: Croatia coach Miroslav Blazevic has resigned following his side's European Championship quarter-final defeat. Croatian state television reported on Monday night, reports Reuter.

Earlier, Croatian newspapers had quoted Blazevic as saying he was deeply disappointed by Sunday's 2-1 defeat by Germany and indicating he would resign.

"I obviously haven't succeeded and that's why I will leave this job to somebody else," he said.

Many soccer pundits would disagree in the light of Croatia's often exhilarating football in Euro '96, seen at his best in the 3-0 group win over champions Denmark.

But 59-year-old Blazevic is noted for being impulsive. So his decision to quit less than 24 hours after the defeat by Germany is not entirely unexpected.

Since he took over as coach of the national team in March 1994 Blazevic had compiled an impressive record of 16 wins against just three defeats.

Italian inquest into Euro '96 debacle on

ROME, June 25: Italy's league soccer chiefs have asked federation head Antonio Matarrese to stand aside and also to replace national team coach Arrigo Sacchi, newspapers reported today, reports Reuter.

Series A and B president Luciano Nizzola. Serie C boss Giancarlo Abet and amateur league chief Eliogiuvi met Matarrese at Giulioli's Villa on Monday to discuss Italy's poor performance in Euro '96.

The trio made it clear they would back Nizzola for Matarrese's job when he comes up for re-election on August 6.

"Our intention is to start rebuilding the federation and we have identified Nizzola as the right person to do that," Giulioli told reporters after the five-hour meeting.

In exchange, the leagues were reported to have suggested that Matarrese, current a vice-president of the European body UEFA, become honorary federation president with a special brief to represent Italy at international level.

Atlanta cops

UNDATED, June 25 (AP): A glance at the security presence for the Olympic Games: 2,500 federal law enforcement agents.

8,500 military personnel. 1,000 federal civilian employees. 13,000 private security guards. 4,800 state and local law enforcement officers.

Terry's time to retaliate

MARLOW, England, June 25: Revenge will be the driving force for the host nation when England's fierce soccer rivalry with Germany resumes in their Euro '96 semifinal at Wembley on Wednesday, report agencies.

While their epic meeting in the 1966 World Cup final overshadowed all their other meetings, uppermost in the minds of the current squad is the 1990 World Cup semifinal in Turin which Germany won on penalties after the teams finished 1-1 after extra time.

That match represents the high point of English international soccer achievement since 1966 when England beat West Germany 4-2 in extra time to win the World Cup.

The defeat in Turin represented something of a glorious failure for England after a poor start to the tournament.

But for Stuart Pearce, in particular, and David Platt and Paul Gascoigne, the other current squad members who played in that game, victory on Wednesday would bring sweet revenge.

Pearce has lived with the memory of Turin for six years because he missed one of England's two penalties in the shoot-out.

The Klinsmann factor is bound to have a considerable bearing on Wednesday's semifinal.

Germany's "psychological leader" will miss the Wembley showdown because of a torn thigh muscle.

The Germans are renowned for their professionalism in adversity, but then losing Jurgen Klinsmann is something else.

He is one of the world's deadliest marksmen, having scored 38 times for his country.

How will Germany cope without him against an England defence which has been prised open only twice in four Euro '96 matches?

Franz Beckenbauer, as inspirational as Klinsmann when he captained Germany in their 1974 World Cup triumph, has his doubts that they can ride the body blow of losing their current captain.

"It will be very hard," he said. "We still have a very good team but Juergen is such a key player. In front of their own crowd England are probably favourites."

Goalkeeper Andy Koepke, who has played a key role in Germany's less than impressive run to the last four, said that without Klinsmann they had to pull together as a team.

"Juergen is a great loss because he is our playmaker and psychological leader who lifts us to new heights," said Koepke.

Klinsmann's only hope of lifting his teammates on Wednesday will be from the confines of the substitutes' bench.

"We have to think positively," he said. "At the 1990 World Cup we had a tough win over the Czech in the quarter-finals but came back to beat the English in the semifinals."

Certainly, coach Bert Vogts was remaining positive about the loss of his top striker.

"There is nothing we can do about it so we are just going to get over it," he said.

While the importance of the confrontation has been exaggerated by the tabloids, both coaches have remained dignified and uncontroversial in their approach to the game, which will be played before 76,000 fans at Wembley.

England appears to have everything in their favour. Although Manchester United defender Gary Neville is suspended, the injury doubts surrounding captain and central defender Tony Adams, midfielders Gascoigne and Darren Anderton and striker Teddy Sheringham, should be cleared up.

The 1990 encounter was the third classic World Cup confrontation between the two old rivals following the 1966 final and the 1970 quarter-final which ended in a dramatic 3-2 win for the Germans in Leon, Mexico.

World champions England looked set for a place in the semifinals after rushing into a 2-0 lead with goals from Alan Mullery and Martin Peters.

But the match switched Germany's way when Sir Alf Ramsey, the architect of England's win in 1966, made a poor tactical substitution.

Taking off Bobby Charlton ostensibly to save his energy for the semifinal-Ramsey unwittingly released Franz Beck-

enbauer from marking Charlton. It gave him licence to move upfield and start creating havoc in the England defence.

The Germans fought back with goals from Gerd Muller, Beckenbauer and Uwe Seeler to clinch a dramatic 3-2 victory.

Their only previous meetings in this championship came in a two-leg quarterfinal in 1972, the first leg of which is remembered as the night Gunter Netzer ruled Wembley.

Netzer ran the entire match and scored the third as the Germans beat England 3-1, wrapping up the tie two weeks later with a 0-0 draw in Berlin.

While Germany have dominated the rivalry since 1968, England were unbeatable in its earlier years, winning seven and drawing one of their first eight meetings between their first clash in Berlin in 1930 and the final in 1966.

West Germany's first success came in a friendly in Hannover in 1968, Beckenbauer scoring the only goal of the game.

In the 13 matches since then Germany have won eight times and England just twice.

England have not beaten the Germans in a competitive fixture since the World Cup final 30 years ago, while their last win over them was by 3-0 in a friendly in Mexico City in 1985.

That win was somewhat devalued by the fact the Germans had not yet acclimatised to the altitude.

Following their European Championship win at Wembley in 1972 and in friendlies there in 1982 and 1991, Germany would become the first overseas team to win at Wembley four times if their beat their old foes and break English hearts again.

PROBABLE TEAMS

ENGLAND: David Seaman, Philip Neville, Tony Adams, Stuart Pearce, Darren Anderton, Paul Ince, Gareth Southgate, Paul Gascoigne, Steve McManaman, Alan Shearer, Toddy Sheringham.

GERMANY: Andreas Koepke, Matthias Sammer, Stefan Reuter, Thomas Helmer, Markus Babbel, Mehmet Scholl, Andreas Haessler, Andreas Moeller, Dieter Eilts, Christian Ziege, Stefan Kuntz.

France calm, Czechs charged

MANCHESTER, England, June 25: France visit the adopted home of Eric Cantona on Wednesday seeking final proof they can win Euro '96 without the aid of the most famous Frenchman in England, reports Reuter.

Their semifinal against the Czech Republic, the competition's surprise package, is being seen as merely an appetizer to the main attraction involving the host nation and Germany at Wembley later in the day.

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Christian Karembeu and injured Krestephe Dugarry against the Czechs.

Had Cantona been in the squad, it would surely have presented him with the perfect stage as France seek to reach their first final since winning the title on home soil in 1984.

But Jaquet, who felt Cantona's individual talents would not fit cosily into the settled team he has moulded, still has top-class performers in Youri Djorkaeff and Zinedine Zidane and a defence, marshalled by Marcel Desailly, which has kept 18 clean sheets in those 27 games.

"We're sorry for Eric of course," Desailly said. "But the coach made his decision and that's it. We're in the semifinals so why are we talking about Cantona?"

Talking instead about the Czechs, he said: "I was very surprised when they beat Italy and when they put out Portugal. Now we're in the same position as the Portuguese, who were probably better collectively and individually, but still lost."

If the French, in some danger of being known more for their statistical achievements than their achievements on the pitch are proof that non-qualification for the World Cup in 1994 was a long-term bonus, the same applies to the Czechs.

Dusan Uhrin's team not only survived the "Group of death" but upset Portugal 1-0 in Sunday's quarterfinal, and the 51-year-old coach is unconcerned by France's recent record.

Two years ago we played a friendly in Bordeaux and were leading 2-0 with 10 minutes to go, even though it ended 2-2," said Uhrin. "We are in the same level as France."

Uhrin, nevertheless, was impressed by the French in

the group stages and must do without four players — Radek Latal, Jan Suchoparek, Radek Bejbi and Pavel Kuka — suspended for receiving two yellow cards.

"When you have four new players to bring in, of course it will influence the game," he said. "Obviously it causes us a problem, but I just hope the substitutes will do it."

Suchoparek, for one, has not given up hope of playing another game in Euro '96.

"I fell sorry for the organisers but they'll have to come to terms with it and expect us at

Wembley," he smiled. "It's no surprise to us where we are. As Denmark's triumph in 1992 proved, anything is possible."

PROBABLE TEAMS:

FRANCE: 1-Bernard Lama, 12-Bixente Lizarazu, 5-Laurent Blanc, 8-Marcel Desailly, 15-Liljan Thuram, 10-Zinedine Zidane, 6-Vincent Guerin, 7-Didier Deschamps (captain), 18-Reynald Pedros, 11-Patrice Loko, 9-Youri Djorkaeff.

CZECH REPUBLIC: 1-Petr Kouba, 1-Michal Hornak, 5-Miroslav Kadlec (captain), 12-Lubos Kubik, 8-Karel Poborsky, 11-Martin Frydek or 7-Jiri Nemeč, 6-Vaclav Nemeček, 14-Patrik Berger, 4-Pavel Nedved, 10-Radek Drujak, 17-Vladimir Smicer.

World War II revisited!

LONDON, June 25: The English tabloid editor who resurrected World War II images in the runup to the England-Germany cup semifinal reportedly was rebuked Tuesday and made his apology. But the Germans couldn't resist fighting back anyway, reports AP.

After seeing the Daily Mirror's front page mock-up of England stars Stuart Pearce and Paul Gascoigne wearing British army World War II helmets under the headline "Achtung! Surrender", Tuesday's Bild newspaper responded.

"England has opened the soccer war," Bild wrote. "Dear friends from the island, we won't join you in it, because we actually sort of like you. But we still want to ask a few questions. We're just interested in a few small items."

Bild then listed a number of questions it felt the English should answer. Such as: "Why were you, as the motherland of soccer, never European champions?"

"Why can't you tap a decent beer?"

"Why do you wear your swimming trunks in the sauna?"

"On a sunny day at the beach, why do you look like a cooked lobster?"

"Who won the 1990 world championship semifinal? You or us?"

"When did an Englishman last win at Wembley?"

"Why are you the only ones who still believe that the (1966) Wembley goal was in?"

Germany with a mock-up of England coach Terry Venables posing as Lord Kitchener under the headline "Herr we go."

While the tabloids fought each other, the less sensational broadsheets looked on critically.

According to The Times of London, which is owned by the Mirror's main rival newspaper group, Morgan was reprimanded by his bosses for a front page he said was meant to be humorous and not offensive.

The Mirror declined comment on reports that it had planned to hire an army tank and drive it to Germany and also fly a World War II Spitfire fighter plane over the England team's hotel to further motivate the players.

But The Times quoted Peter Gottwald, spokesman for the German ambassador in London as saying the Mirror's front page Monday was in bad taste.

Sport should not be connected with a war which, for the Germans, is a very strong reminder of a past that they do not brag about," he said.

All-star soccer in America

NEW YORK, June 25: John Harkes and Jorge Campos soon could be the weariest men in soccer.

Harkes, a midfielder with DC United of the Major League Soccer, was among 12 US national team members selected Monday to play in the inaugural MLS all-star game July 14, reports AP.

The game at Giants Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, is the first half of a unique doubleheader. A team of FIFA all-stars will play 1994 World Cup champion Brazil in the second half. Proceeds from the game go to FIFA's youth fund.

Harkes of Kearny, New Jersey, was the lone American selected to the FIFA World Stars roster, and will be joined by Campos as the only players to play in both games.

Campos is a Mexican goalkeeper and forward for the Los Angeles Galaxy, the only unbeaten team in the MLS (11-0). Earlier this month, he played both games of a doubleheader as Mexico tied the United States 2-2 in US Cup '96 and the Galaxy beat Tampa Bay 3-2 in a shootout.

The announcement of the two MLS squads and the FIFA teams was made at a Manhattan news conference. Initial selections for the FIFA squad were made in April, with additions coming June 12.

"Americans love an all-star, and these players have certainly earned that distinction in helping the league get off to a great start," MLS commissioner Doug Logan said.

Harkes, who returned to the United States after seven years in England, leads an Eastern Conference team that also includes US national team players Jeff Agoos (DC), Mike Burns and Alexi Lalas (New England), Roy Lassiter and Steve Pittman (Tampa Bay), Brian McBride (Columbus), and Tab Ramos (New York-New Jersey).

The Western Conference team also includes Marcelo Balboa (Colorado), Robin Fraser and Cobi Jones (Los Angeles), and Eric Wynalda (San Jose).

Also selected for the FIFA squad were 1995 world player of the year George Weah, the Liberian forward who plays for AC Milan, Romario, the Brazilian World Cup star, and Juergen Klinsmann, the German forward who tore a calf muscle Sunday during the European Championships and is unlikely to play.

Richard Moeller-Nielsen of Denmark is the coach.

Danes' solace

LONDON, June 25: Champions Denmark, knocked out of Euro '96 at the group stage, remain favourites to win UEFA's fair play award, reports Reuter.

They led the league table, based on booking and sendings-off received, from semifinals England.

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PLACINGS

- 1. Denmark 8.19
2. England 8.14
3. Italy 8.00
4. Netherlands 7.86
5. Romania 7.81
6. France 7.79
7. Scotland 7.62
8. Turkey 7.52
9. Russia 7.43
10. Portugal 7.43
11. Croatia 7.36
12. Germany 7.36
13. Bulgaria 7.14
14. Spain 7.07
15. Czech Republic 6.86
16. Switzerland 6.76

Harris harasses Middlesex

LONDON, June 25: Derbyshire captain Dean Jones said on Monday his team had the right spirit to win the county championship after completing their third consecutive first-class victory with a 363-run win over Middlesex, reports Reuter.

Derbyshire moved into third place in the table after taking just 28 minutes to snap up the last four wickets as Middlesex slumped to 176 all out in their second innings on the final day.

Highly promising paceman Andrew Harris finished with a career-best six for 40 from 16 overs and match figures of 12 for 83 in his home ground.

The team work and team spirit is pretty good and we are working on the three Ws — will, want and work," said former Australian Test batsman Jones. "If you don't have those you don't get anywhere."

Derbyshire's crushing victory was based on centuries in both innings from Chris Adams and the bowling of Harris.

"A couple of boys had to play extremely well to knock them over. Chris batted well in both innings and Andy Harris bowled straight and swung the ball."

Another Australian, Michael Bevan, became the first batsman to complete 1,000 first-class runs this season but his effort could not save Yorkshire from slumping to a crushing defeat at the hands of Leicestershire in Bradford.

The Yorkshire vice-captain passed the landmark in his 15th innings with his fifth boundary which also brought up his 50 from 121 balls.

But he was stranded on 65 not out as Leicestershire took little more than an hour to take Yorkshire's remaining five wickets to wrap up victory by an innings and 151 runs on the final morning.

Jason Ratcliffe and Nadeem Shahid both scored unbeaten half-centuries to guide Surrey to an eight-wicket victory over Durham in Stockton.

Solid start for Steffi

WIMBLEDON, June 25: Steffi Graf, showing no signs of the knee injury which has troubled her, opened her bid for a seventh Wimbledon title Tuesday with a 6-4, 6-1 win over Ludmila Richterova, reports AP.

The top-seeded defending champion started slowly on Centre Court but lifted her

"I practiced for two hours yesterday morning and it was gone," Graf said. "On Sunday afternoon, I wasn't too sure about it, but I really forced it yesterday and it didn't come back."

Graf's only problem Tuesday was with her backhand service return, which she missed repeatedly during the match. One of the few which she made was on match point.

"She's a tall girl, looks very athletic and she is," Graf said. "I expected her to serve well. I didn't have a lot of practice. I'm lacking match play. You could see that a little today. That's why it took me a little while to get into the match."

The match was even at 3-3 in the first set until Graf-hit a forehand return pass to break for 4-3. Serving at 5-4, Graf missed three set points before closing it on the fourth with an ace.

Graf dominated the second set, breaking the serve three times. In the fourth game, after Richterova took a bad tumble, Graf showed her ruthless side by hitting a drop shot winner on the next point.

Also advancing Tuesday was fourth-seeded Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, who beat Italy's Adriana Serra-Zanetti 6-3, 6-4.

Fifth-seeded Anke Huber beat Spain's Gala Leon Garcia 6-1, 6-1, and No. 11 Brenda Schultz-McCarthy was a 6-0, 6-3 winner over Joannette Kruger.

In men's play, ninth-seeded Thomas Enqvist of Sweden swept to a 6-4, 6-1, 6-1 win over Canada's Albert Chang. Chang was a lucky loser who replaced injured Alex O'Brien, suffering from a sprained right shoulder.

Marc Rosset, the 14th seed, dropped the first set but downed Scott Draper 4-6, 6-4, 6-3, 6-1.

Steffi Graf

game towards the end of the first set and cruised to victory in 53 minutes.

Graf said she was not bothered by the swollen tendon in her left knee, an injury which forced her to pull out of the Wimbledon warmup tournament in Eastbourne. She had asked for her opening Wimbledon match to be postponed until Wednesday but was turned down.

Joppy's moment of joy

YOKOHAMA, Japan, June 25: William Joppy of the United States, showing speed, confidence and control, stopped holder Shinji Takehara of Japan in the ninth round to win the World Boxing Association middleweight title on Monday, reports Reuter.

British referee John Coyle stopped the scheduled 12-round bout two minutes 29 seconds into the ninth round after Joppy rained a series of unanswered punches on Takehara's face and head.

Joppy floored the champion with a straight right in the first round and appeared close to a knockout when he forced Takehara onto the ropes in the fifth.

Takehara was up quickly but never recovered his confidence in the face of Joppy's faster footwork and spent much of the rest of the bout on the ropes, throwing few punches.

The new champion told reporters he felt Takehara was too slow and that after he floored the champion in the first round, he was certain of victory and simply waited for the chance to put him away.

It was the unbeaten Joppy's 22nd victory. He has drawn one bout. Takehara sustained his first loss after 24 wins in his first defence of the title he captured from Jorge Castro of Argentina in December.

Agassi rides bareback

WIMBLEDON, England, June 25: Andre Agassi insists he still enjoys tennis. His results and demeanor say otherwise.

The truth is, Agassi's career is in a tailspin and he needs to do something fast to re-establish himself.

Agassi's miserable year hit a low point Monday when he lost in the first round at Wimbledon to Doug Flach, a qualifier ranked 281st in the world, reports agencies.

"At some stage you've got to put things in perspective and say, you know, OK, let's just start working on getting it better, getting my game better," the third-seeded Agassi said unconvincedly after the 2-6, 7-6 (7-1), 6-4, 7-6 (8-6) defeat.

Agassi could start by seriously preparing for Grand Slam tournaments for a change. He wrote off the clay-court season and promptly lost in the second round of the French Open to journeyman Chris Woodruff.

Agassi didn't play any grass-court events before Wimbledon, and it showed against Flach. It was only his fifth match — on any surface — in the last three months.

"I probably stayed away from playing for too long, and then the disappointment kept me from really attacking the needs of my game after the French," Agassi said.

ably was part of the reason why I won today — I was really match tough."

Agassi was one of four men's seeds eliminated on the opening day, joining No. 6 Michael Chang, No. 8 Jim Courier and No. 15 Arnaud Boetsch. It's the second time in the Open era that only four of the top eight seeds remain after the first round.

The exits of Agassi, the 1992 champion, and Courier, beaten 6-2, 6-4, 2-6, 6-4 by doubles specialist Jonathan Stark, cleared a path for Boris Becker in the bottom half of the draw.

Becker, who beat Frenchman Jean-Philippe Fleurien for the loss of just five games should now have an easy run as he pursues his fourth title on his favourite grass surface.

Defending champion Pete Sampras, going for his fourth consecutive title, took time to get into his stride but then

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